



THE PRESIDENCY  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

DEPARTMENT: PERFORMANCE MONITORING AND EVALUATION

## DPME Evaluation Guideline No 2.2.1

### How to develop Terms of Reference for Evaluation Projects

Created 29 June 2012

<b>Addressed to</b>	Government departments who are undertaking evaluations (programme managers and M&E staff).
<b>Purpose</b>	The purpose of this Guideline is to give practical guidance on how to develop terms of reference for evaluations.
<b>Policy reference</b>	This guideline should be read in conjunction with the National Evaluation Policy Framework approved by Cabinet on 23 November 2011 (available on the DPME website).
<b>Contact person</b>	Jabu Mathe, Evaluation and Research Unit (ERU) E-mail: <a href="mailto:jabu@po.gov.za">jabu@po.gov.za</a> Tel: 012 308 1466

## Introduction

This Guideline for Evaluation Terms of Reference is designed for adaptation and use by government departments. The Guideline provides an outline of the key issues to be covered, although specific methodologies will depend on the object, type and purpose of the specific evaluation.

### Action Points:

- It is very important that terms of reference are drawn up jointly by the M&E/Research Section, the managers of the intervention in question, and other key stakeholders (where relevant). DPME must be involved in TORs for all evaluations in the National Evaluation Plan, and Offices of the Premier for Provincial Evaluation Plans.

This is a critical stage where the information needs for the evaluation are clarified, an outline methodology developed to answer those information needs, and where the key stakeholders in the intervention can agree what they want to get out of the evaluation. This will be revisited during the inception stage where there is interaction between the evaluator and the steering committee, and where the service provider is likely to suggest improvements to the methodology.

The evaluation and so the proposal from the service provider should address the principles shown in Box 1.

### Box 1: Guiding principles in evaluation from the Policy Framework for the GWMES

- Evaluations should be development-orientated and should address key developmental priorities of Government and of citizens.
- Evaluations should be utilisation orientated.
- Evaluations methods should be sound.
- Evaluations should advance Government's transparency and accountability.
- Evaluations must be undertaken in ways which are inclusive and participatory.
- Evaluations must promote learning.
- Evaluators display honesty and integrity in their own behaviour, and attempt to ensure the honesty and integrity of the entire evaluation process.

Make it clear when the evaluation is meant to follow standard guidelines from DPME on evaluation, where these are available. This will apply to all evaluations falling under the National Evaluation Plan.

The suggested contents of the TORs include:

- 1 Background information and rationale
- 2 The focus of the evaluation
- 3 Evaluation design
- 4 Evaluation plan
- 5 Budget and payment schedule
- 6 Management arrangements
- 7 The proposal to be submitted
- 8 Enquiries

We go through these sections in turn.

See also “Writing Terms of Reference for an Evaluation: A How-to-Guide”, Independent Evaluation Group, World Bank, from which elements of this Guideline are drawn<sup>1</sup>.

---

## Title of the evaluation

This must specify the evaluation object and type of evaluation, e.g. “Impact Evaluation of the Child Support Grant” or “Diagnostic Review of the ECD Sector”.

## 1 Background information and rationale

### 1.1 Background to the intervention being evaluated

This section covers a brief description of the intervention (policy, plan, programme or project), its development and priorities. It should not be longer than 2-3 pages. This should include the following elements amongst others:

- Evidence of the need for the intervention, the societal problem/issue the intervention is supposed to address or the needs of the citizens that led to the development of this intervention.
- The legislative/ policy framework/strategy used by government to address the situation.
- A brief description of the intervention, its scope, its beneficiaries.
- How the intervention falls within the mandate(s) of the department(s) (where applicable).
- An outline of the outcomes (purpose), the main outputs and activities expected to have contributed to the outcome, and the key indicators for these. If there is a logical framework for the intervention, then annex this.
- What is the main theory of change that underpins the intervention?
- The participants, partners and stakeholders involved.
- The duration of the intervention and the current implementation stage (where are we with the implementation e.g. 4<sup>th</sup> year).
- Highlights of progress towards achievement of planned outcomes.

---

<sup>1</sup> [http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EXTEVACAPDEV/Resources/ecd\\_writing\\_TORs.pdf](http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EXTEVACAPDEV/Resources/ecd_writing_TORs.pdf)



- The reason why an evaluation of the intervention is being done at this time, and any decisions that may be made using the results of the evaluation.

## 1.2 Purpose of the evaluation

This section answers the question: What is it that we want to understand about the intervention? Table 1 shows the generic questions each type of evaluation aims to answer. The main questions may be about impact level, outcome level, output level or how activities and outputs are leading to outcomes and impacts. There is likely to be a high level question, e.g. Is the child support grant leading to sustained impacts on the levels of education and longer term benefits for children.

Some examples of purpose statements for each type of evaluation are also shown in Table 1. These take the question and turn it into a summary of what you want to achieve.

**Table 1: Core question (purpose) for each type of evaluation**

Typical questions	Example, rephrased as purpose	Type of evaluation
What is the current situation and root cause of the problem?	To assess the current situation of malnutrition in South Africa and the root cause of the problem.	Diagnostic
Is the logic of the intervention design robust and likely to work?	To review the likely success of the design of the National Integrated Plan for Early Childhood Development (ECD) and how the design can be strengthened.	Design
Is the intervention being implemented as specified (and in some cases are the outcomes being achieved), and why?	To assess whether the ECD Plan is being implemented as specified (and in some evaluations you may ask are the outcomes being achieved), and to explain the performance.	Implementation
How have beneficiaries' lives changed as a result of the intervention?	To assess whether the child support grant is leading to sustained impacts on the levels of education and longer term benefits for children.	Impact
What are the costs in relation to the benefits? Is the programme providing value for money?	To assess the costs in relation to the benefits of early childhood development centres, compared to home-based provision.	Economic
What is the evidence from all evaluations related to the topic in question?	To assess what is emerging from all evaluations undertaken of programmes addressing contact crimes and the implications for the future.	Evaluation synthesis

There will be sub-questions and the types of questions determine the type of evaluation that will be appropriate. These more detailed questions are covered in the next section.

## 2 The focus of the evaluation

### 2.1 Evaluation questions

This section indicates the detailed evaluation questions which are being asked (which provide the detail within the overall core question), and for which answers are sought. They need to be high level and few. These questions need to be seen as appropriate by stakeholders. In general questions are likely to cover issues such as:

1. Have the right things been done? (addresses relevance, effectiveness)
2. Have things been done well? (efficiency, effectiveness)
3. What results have been achieved? (effectiveness, impact, cost/effectiveness).

4. Can you attribute the results to the intervention? (attribution/contribution compared to counterfactual)
5. How do the results compare with an alternative intervention to achieve the same objective? (relative effectiveness, impact, cost/effectiveness)
6. Are other government programmes/policies/ procedures hindering or helping achievement of programme results?
7. How could things be done better in the future?
8. Are the results sustainable?

In table 2 we use these questions as “orientation” of the evaluation.

**Table 2: Relating evaluation type and core question to subquestions**

Example Purpose of the Evaluation <sup>2</sup>	Type of evaluation	Orientation	Typical Sub-questions
To assess the current situation of malnutrition in South Africa and the root cause of the problem.	Diagnostic	Relevance of evidence on what works, for whom and when Relevance of undertaking action Clarification of issues (situation and root causes)	Is there a need for the programme? What do we know about this problem that the programme will address? What is recognised as best practice in this area? Have there been other attempts to find solutions to this problem? How could things be done better in the future? Are other government programmes/policies/ procedures hindering or helping achievement of programme results?
To review the likely success of the design of the National Integrated Plan for Early Childhood Development (ECD) and how the design can be strengthened.	Design	Clarification of likely links between design, implementation and results Relevance of Plan	What is the underlying rationale for this Plan? What are the intended outcomes and how is the Plan designed to achieve them? Does the theory of change seem realistic/plausible? Are the assumptions reasonable? Are the indicators appropriate? Which elements of this Plan are amenable to subsequent monitoring or impact assessment?
To assess whether the ECD Plan is being implemented as specified (and in some evaluations you may ask are the outcomes being achieved), and to explain the performance	Implementation	Efficiency of implementation Effectiveness of implementation Relevance of implementation to the target group	Is the Plan reaching the target population? Has the Plan been implemented as planned? Is implementation meeting the benchmarks in the Plan? How can we fine-tune the Plan to make it more efficient or effective? Does the implementation strategy lead to intended outcomes?
To assess whether the child support grant is leading to sustained impacts on the levels of education and longer term benefits for children.	Impact	Effectiveness of results of the intervention Sustainability of the change	What results have been achieved? What are the intended and unintended impacts on the target group? Can you attribute the results to the intervention? How do differences in implementation affect intervention outcomes? Is the intervention more effective for some participants than for others? How do the results compare with an alternative

<sup>2</sup> Adapted from: John M. Owen, *Program Evaluation: Forms and Approaches* (3rd edn.; New York ; London: Guilford Press, 2007) xx, 298 p.

Example Purpose of the Evaluation <sup>2</sup>	Type of evaluation	Orientation	Typical Sub-questions
			intervention to achieve the same objective? Are the results sustainable?
To assess the costs in relation to the benefits of early childhood development centres, compared to home-based provision.	Economic	Economy	Has the programme been cost-effective? How does provision at ECD centres compare to home-based provision in terms of benefits, in terms of costs, and in cost-benefits? Should we be expanding one of these rather than the other?
To assess what is emerging from all evaluations undertaken of programmes addressing contact crimes and the implications for the future.	Evaluation synthesis	These could be for all of the above, depending on the approach taken.	Synthesis of evidence on what works, for whom and when . What works based upon the weight of international/national evaluation evidence? How are outcomes mediated by the context and mechanisms?

Box 2 shows an example from the Integrated Nutrition Programme. As can be seen these have been made specific for the programme in question.

**Box 2: Example of purpose and evaluation questions drawn from an Implementation Evaluation of the Integrated Nutrition Programme**

***Purpose of the evaluation***

*The evaluation will focus on identifying the critical system and implementation issues inhibiting or enabling people's access to, and the scaling-up of, nutrition-related interventions targeting children from conception to below the age of five.*

***Key questions to be addressed***

- 1. Are the policies and interventions coherent across the sectors?*
- 2. To what extent are nutrition interventions from different agencies reaching under 5 children across the country (from secondary data and facility monitoring)?*
- 3. What interventions are being implemented effectively, what aren't?*
- 4. Why are some interventions not being implemented effectively and efficiently and what is needed to strengthen and sustain them?*
- 5. Are there some changes needed to ensure that high impact interventions are prioritised (and there is international evidence of which should be high impact interventions)*
- 6. What institutional arrangements are needed within and across departments and agencies to improve the effectiveness of nutrition interventions*

It is critical that these questions are well thought through and can be answered with the type of data and resources that are available. The questions will dictate what sort of evaluation is needed, and the type of methodology, instruments and analysis which is appropriate to answer them.

**Action Points:**

- Limit the number of high level questions to 4-6. All too often terms of reference try to cover too much and so are difficult to implement;
- It would be useful to get peer reviewers to provide feedback on these.

## 2.2 Intended users and stakeholders of the evaluation

This should indicate key potential users of the evaluation results and how they may use it.

## 2.3 Scope of the evaluation

This section describes what to focus on in the evaluation (and so what not to cover). This should include:

- Time period of the intervention to focus on (eg from 2005-2010);
- Intervention components to be covered by the evaluation (eg in relation to nutrition this could be a focus on primary health care and not clinical interventions);
- Geographic and institutional coverage of the evaluation, in broad terms;
- Sector and thematic areas (eg the overall evaluation may focus on the Comprehensive Rural Development Programme, but the evaluation concentrates on the agricultural aspects);
- Any other key issues that you wish to cover that are not already indicated by the evaluation questions (eg we are interested to see how x is covered);
- Other issues that are outside the scope of this particular evaluation and should not be considered.

## 3 Evaluation design

This section covers the approach, design and key elements of the methodology to be used by the evaluation team. For specific guidance refer to the Guideline for the specific type of evaluation being considered. The approach should reflect the extent to which the issue in question is well understood or complex and emergent. It should also reflect how ownership, capacity and learning will be built in the main stakeholders to maximise the likelihood of the use of evaluation results.

It is important to provide an overall approach to the evaluation design, with the minimum level of methodology expected. It is important to provide enough background so that the people producing proposals are able to interpret what you want to achieve and apply their expertise to suggest an evaluation design. This is likely to be one of the best ways you can see their expertise. In addition during the inception phase this methodology will be refined once there has been direct interaction with the service provider, and the revised methodology will be in the inception report and form the basis for contractual agreement on what is to be covered.

Some key areas to describe here are:

1. The overall methodological framework (see Box 3).
2. Any literature and document review expected.
3. Expected data collection and analysis methods and plan, including whether there is already a comparison group, or one needs to be included.
4. How participatory the evaluation is expected to be.
5. The likely sample size and geographical focus, eg urban/rural.
6. Other relevant data which should be used (eg from StatsSA or the National Income Dynamics Study).
7. The level of rigour expected and realistic with the resources available (will a rapid survey with a convenience sample be enough, or is a through study needed with high levels of statistical

### Box 3: Methodologies

Methodologies may include quantitative/qualitative/mixed methods eg:

- Document review/analysis of programme/project records;
- Interviews;
- Research synthesis;
- Participatory methodologies with citizens/key stakeholders/partners;
- Econometric and statistical analysis;
- Identification strategy and selection of counterfactual (for impact evaluations)
- Case studies.



confidence, how do you ensure rigour all the way from design through to final report). This will need to be higher for an impact evaluation (and with the same rigour for baseline and final impact evaluation).

8. Meetings or consultations expected with particular stakeholder groups (including those commissioning the evaluation).
9. The need for skills transfer of stakeholders and PDI evaluators.

Annex 1 has some guidance on possible methodologies and likely costs.

#### Action Points:

- Provide some indication of the sample expected e.g. provinces to be covered, strong/weak units to be covered, numbers of service points, and if a survey – the minimum number of respondents and the actors who need to be interviewed.

## 4 Evaluation plan

### 4.1 Products/deliverables expected from the evaluation

A description of the product(s) that the evaluation owner/commissioning organisation(s) wants to see and the format, if appropriate. The core products may include the list below, depending on the complexity of the evaluation. The ones which will be in all evaluations are shaded:

- **Inception Report** by the service provider as a follow-up to the proposal with a revised evaluation plan, overall evaluation design and detailed methodology and content structure for the final report. This forms the basis for judging performance;
- Literature review;
- Final data collection instruments and other tools;
- Analysis plan;
- Other technical or process reports, eg field work report;
- **Draft evaluation report** for review, full and in 1/3/25 format (see Action Points);
- Possibly a workshop with stakeholders to discuss the draft report;
- **The final evaluation report**, both full and in 1/3/25 format, in hard copy and electronic;
- Proposed changes to the intervention design if needed - if the design is found to be inadequate then the evaluators will need to suggest what revisions to the logic model (outcomes and outputs) are needed, and the theory of change. The department may then need to redesign the intervention (eg using the DPME Guideline on Planning of New Implementation Programmes). This may be part of the final report.
- **Provision of all datasets, metadata and survey documentation** (including interviews) when data is collected.
- **A Powerpoint or audiovisual presentation of the results.**

In addition if there are components which justify separate reports, these may be required (e.g. individual school reports, district reports, provincial reports and national report). If a standard format is required (apart from the 1/3/25 page) this should also be specified here.

#### Action Points:

- The 1/3/25 rule for evaluation reports should apply to all Government Departments ie a one page policy summary of implications for policy, a three page executive summary of the whole report and a 25 page main report (Arial 11 point, single space, exclusive of appendices). There is likely also to be a long report or a series of short reports on findings. The 1/3/25 is what will be distributed widely, but the long report will also be posted onto the website.

Note the evaluation should also have a broader project plan including the activities happening beyond the evaluation report (eg development of management response and improvement plan), as well as activities that the department may need to do (eg briefing Minister).

## 4.2 Activities

You may want to specify here the activities required to undertake the project, which will make it easier for the service provider to draw up the proposal. You may also want to specify the roles that the custodian or commissioning department will play (eg contact provincial departments to ensure they are supportive of the evaluation). Make clear any meetings expected between the service provider and the evaluation commissioner.

## 4.3 Time frame for the project

Set out a timeframe for the evaluation process making clear the duration of the assignment, including the milestones shown in Table 3 and the expected start and finish of the assignment.

**Table 3: Outline project plan and payment schedule** (check against deliverables, those in bold will be present in all evaluations)

Deliverable	Expected milestones	% payment if 3-4 month evaluation	% payment if 18 month evaluation
<b>Inception Report</b>		20%	20%
Literature review			
Final data collection instruments and other tools			20%
Analysis plan			
Other technical or process reports, eg field work report			20%
<b>Draft evaluation report</b> for review, full and in 1/3/25 format (see Action Points)		40%	20%
Possibly a workshop with stakeholders to discuss the draft report			
<b>The final evaluation report</b>		30%	10%
Proposed changes to the intervention design if needed - this may be part of the final report			
<b>Provision of all datasets, metadata and survey documentation</b> (including interviews) when data is collected (see Annex 1)			
<b>Powerpoint or audiovisual presentation of the results</b>		10%	10%

## 5 Budget and payment schedule

Make clear where funding is coming from, which may be from more than one source. Set out the payment schedule as per the examples in Table 3 (these are suggestions) for shorter and longer evaluations. For longer term evaluations potentially involving extensive fieldwork, the benchmarks should be identified allowing payment that is more often, but smaller amounts.



In some cases the amount available is indicated in the National Evaluation Plan, in which case the service providers will have to adapt their methodology to this amount. Make sure the scope is realistic for the amount indicated.

## 6 Management Arrangements

### 6.1 Role of steering committee

Evaluations should have a steering committee comprising the main departments and agencies involved in the intervention in question. For those in the National Evaluation Plan this will include DPME. This should approve the inception report, the terms of reference and other main deliverables, prior to payments. In many cases this will need to be referred to the DGs in question for final approval. Make it clear which department is actually commissioning the evaluation. A template for terms of reference of a steering committee is available on the DPME website.

A Management or Technical Working Group may be needed where there is a lot of technical complexity, or to do deal with practical issues quickly.

### 6.2 Reporting arrangements

Indicate who the evaluation project manager from the commissioning department will be, to whom the service provider will report.

#### Action points:

- A high quality evaluation is more likely to be achieved when the steering committee, manager and evaluator work together effectively. It is not sufficient to leave the evaluator and partners to their own devices and wait for milestones on reports. Development of a good working relationship is essential with regular communication and feedback throughout the life of the evaluation. This also requires keeping key policy-makers informed so they know what to expect and are comfortable with what is emerging, or are aware that a challenging result may emerge.

## 7 The proposal to be submitted

### 7.1 Structure of proposal

A potential structure of a good proposal is shown in Box 4.

#### Box 4: Potential structure of a proposal

The tenderer must provide the following. Failure to provide this will lead to disqualification.

- 1 Understanding of the intervention and the TORs
- 2 Approach, design and methodology for the evaluation (eg literature and documentation review, data collection, tools, sample, suggestions for elaboration or changes to scope and methodology as outlined in the TORs, examples of evaluation questions suggested, process elements)
- 3 Activity-based evaluation plan (including effort for different researchers per activity and time frame linked to activities)
- 4 Activity-based budget (in South African Rand, including VAT)
- 5 Competence (include list of related projects undertaken of main contractor and subcontractors, making clear who did what, and contact people for references)
- 6 Team (team members, roles and level of effort)
- 7 Capacity development elements (building capacity of partner departments and PDI/young evaluators)

## 8 Quality assurance plan (to ensure that the process and products are of good quality)

### Attachments

Example of a related evaluation report undertaken

CVs of key personnel

Completed supply chain forms, tax clearance etc

## 7.2 Information for service providers

The service providers should be asked to provide a proposal following the structure above. In addition they should be given opportunities for clarification (eg a bidders briefing); any format requirements and length; deadline and mode of transmission of proposals; number of copies expected (if hard copy).

In many cases short-listed candidates will be asked to come and present their proposal as part of the selection process.

If any key documents are available that are relevant, provide the names and ensure these are provided to the service providers. These could be programme documents, previous evaluations etc.

## 7.3 Evaluation criteria for proposals

This refers to the criteria for assessing the received proposals and the scores attached to each criterion. There are standard government procurement processes. Two main criteria are functionality/capability and price. Functionality/capability factors include:

- Quality of proposal;
- Service provider's relevant previous experience including of any subcontractors;
- Team leaders' levels of expertise;
- Qualifications and expertise of the evaluation team;
- Inclusion of PDI members in the evaluation team who will gain experience.

The supply chain forms should be attached to the TORs including the detailed evaluation criteria and scores.

## 7.4 Evaluation team

Here details are provided on the number of evaluators expected to be part of the team, their areas of expertise and their respective responsibilities.

In many cases even where evaluation is largely undertaken by an external service provider, it would be highly beneficial if some staff of the commissioning departments participate extensively, although care would need to be taken in key interviews which might be biased if a government staff member participates. This will be particularly relevant for implementation evaluations, where the way the intervention is operating is the key factor to understand. Clearly there can be a tension with independence which needs to be considered carefully, and for outcomes and impact evaluation this is more important. This approach is highlighted in the National Evaluation Policy Framework as "joint evaluation".

Indicate who are the key contacts from departments who will be playing an active role in the evaluation and the roles they will play.

## 7.5 Competencies and skills-set required

DPME is in the process of developing standards for evaluations and competences for evaluators. Meanwhile the following is a list of generic competencies. Many of these will be relevant but will have to be tailored to specific evaluations. Indicate what competencies are expected for this assignment. Some of the generic competencies include:

- Strong understanding and knowledge of the sector in question;
- Strong understanding of the use of logical frameworks, results chains, and theories of change for planning and M&E;
- Good knowledge of government systems and practical implementation issues in the relevant sphere of government (may need to specify specific areas in relation to the evaluation focus);
- A good knowledge of evaluation methodologies, and experience in applying them. This would be required in relation to (specify which are appropriate, or request others):
  - Applied research, eg for diagnostic evaluations;
  - Quantitative and qualitative research, including for impact assessments;
  - Conducting of Randomised Controlled Trials in the social and economic sectors;
  - Conducting of research synthesis, eg rapid evidence assessments or systematic reviews;
  - Economic evaluations including cost-benefit and cost-effectiveness;
  - Public Expenditure Tracking Surveys (PETS);
  - Formative and summative evaluation;
  - Policy analysis and policy evaluation.
- Cultural competence – the ability to deal effectively with the different stakeholders involved in the evaluation, including appropriate language skills;
- Demonstrated experience of building ownership of evaluations and evaluation results, working in ways which build capacity and commitment amongst stakeholders;
- Ability to write short reports (using a 1/3/25 rule) and to communicate effectively to different audiences;
- Strong project management skills, including field coordination and implementation where needed;
- Knowledge of and exposure to international good practice would be an advantage, particularly in middle-income and African countries.

## 8 Intellectual property rights

Evaluation material is highly sensitive. The ownership of the material generated during the evaluation shall remain with the commissioning department. However evaluations that are part of the national evaluation plan will be made publically available, unless there are major concerns about making them public.

Signed



**Dr Sean Phillips**

**Director General**

**The Presidency: Performance Monitoring and Evaluation**

**Date:** 29/06/12



**Annex 1: Requirements for metadata**

A metadata should accompany any datasets produced. It should include, amongst other issues, the following:

1. Explanation of what format the data is in and how one might convert the data into another format if needed (eg from Excel to Stata).
2. Description of the data: What the units of analysis are, how many variables (columns) there are, etc.
3. Data structure: Description of whether the data is contained in a single data file or in several data files. If there are separate data files there should be an explanation of how to merge the various data files (eg what unique identifiers should be used to merge the data files).
4. Explanation of variable labelling and how the variable names correspond to the questionnaires.
5. A discussion about the weights. Which weights should be used when doing various types of analysis?
6. Data quality issues. Are there any variables that should be treated with caution due to reliability issues?
7. A discussion of non-response and what procedures were followed to deal with it, if any (eg imputation).
8. A discussion of coding: What coding was used to identify "unspecified", "don't know", "Not Applicable, etc.
9. Derived variables: Are there any derived variables (eg minimum infrastructure standards combining water, electricity, toilets, etc)? How were these calculated?