National Guiding Principles and Standards for M&E of Public Sector Policies & Programmes in South Africa

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By Prof Levin, DG DPSA
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Introduction

- At its 2004 May lekgotla, Cabinet formally adopted a resolution in support of the development framework, subsequent to this resolution, the President, in his State of the Nation Address further emphasised and entrenched the importance of monitoring, evaluation and reporting for government. The Governance and Administration (G&A) Cluster was mandated with the overall responsibility of designing and implementing a government wide Monitoring and Evaluation Framework.
The South African Government has over the past ten years recognised the challenges arising from having to transform the state into a developmental one while simultaneously trying to deliver and redress the legacy of the past social imbalances.

To ensure that tangible results are achieved, there is an increasing recognition of the attendant and urgent need for greater effectiveness in the way that government monitors, evaluates and reports on its policies, projects and programmes.
To realise the creation of such a Framework, the G&A Cluster has established a special Monitoring and Evaluation Task team to oversee this task. As part of its programme of action, the M&E Task Team has identified a range of activities that need to be undertaken, one such activity includes the development of principles and standards for monitoring of government policies, programmes and projects.
Rationale

- These principles were developed in the context of African cultures, particularly South Africa, and reflect the experiences of that context. The relevance of these principles may vary across other cultures, and across subcultures within the African continent.
The document sets out the national M&E principles and practices, including minimum norms and standards for monitoring and evaluating government policies, projects and programmes.

It also focuses on procedures to be adopted by national, provincial, local and public entities in the monitoring and evaluation of implementation of government policies and programmes/projects.
The purpose of documenting guiding principles is to foster continuing development of the profession of monitoring of evaluation/impact assessment, and the socialization of its members.

The principles are meant to stimulate discussion about the proper practice and use of M&E among members of the profession, sponsors of evaluation, and others interested in Monitoring & Impact Assessment.
Constitutional / Legislative Requirement for M&E

- Basic values and principles governing public administration are enshrined in the Constitution of South Africa, Act 108 of 1996, Chapter 10 and includes the following principles:
  - Accountability of Public administration
  - Transparency to the public fostered through provision of timely, accessible and accurate information
  - These principles apply to administration in every sphere of government; organs of state and public enterprises.
The constitution also sets out the grounds on which independent bodies such as the Public Service Commission must ensure effective and efficient performance within the public sector. The Constitution does not preclude other non-governmental bodies to perform monitoring and evaluation function. Many government Acts and policies empower Ministers of different departments to determine norms and minimum standards for monitoring and evaluation of their own programmes and projects. Provinces also determine their own norms based on national guidelines. These principles therefore underlie the national minimum standards for Monitoring and Evaluation for which various Ministries are required to determine frameworks related thereof.
Institutional Areas of Coverage

- To ensure full coverage of the public service, the document recognises that at one level, there are practices and systems that are government wide and, at another level, there are systems and practices that are particular to provinces, sectors, departments and/or clusters. The document ensures that the institutional map serves to cover all of the institutional terrains within which M & E practices and systems are established.
Monitoring & Evaluation Coverage

- Monitoring & Evaluation, including systematic reporting, must be undertaken for all programmes and projects regardless of duration and budget.
Standards: 1...as guide to professional practice

- The principles are intended to guide the professional practice of M&E practitioners, and to inform clients and the general public about the principles they can expect to be upheld by professional M&E practitioners. Of course, no statement of principles can anticipate all situations that arise in the practice of monitoring & evaluation. However, principles are not just guidelines for reaction when something goes wrong or when a dilemma is found. Rather, principles should proactively guide the behaviours of professionals in everyday practice.
2...as a matter of choice

- The six principles proposed in the document are not independent, but overlap in many ways. Conversely, sometimes these principles will conflict, so that evaluators will have to choose among them. At such times evaluators must use their own values and knowledge of the setting to determine the appropriate response. Whenever a course of action is unclear, evaluators should solicit the advice of fellow evaluators about how to resolve the problem before deciding how to proceed.
3...as official government position

- These principles are not intended to supersede any previous work on standards, principles, or ethics adopted by other organizations, such as Evaluation Research Societies and the Evaluation Networks.
- These principles will be adopted as the official position of government of RSA on these matters.
4...nor replacement

- These principles are not intended to replace standards supported by evaluators or by the other disciplines in which evaluators participate
5...not rules to provide basis for sanctioning violators

- Each principle is illustrated by a number of statements to amplify the meaning of the overarching principle, and to provide guidance for its application. These illustrations are not meant to include all possible applications of that principle, nor to be viewed as rules that provide the basis for sanctioning violators.
6...as part of evolving process of self examination

- These principles are part of an evolving process of self-examination by the profession, and should be revisited on a regular basis;
- Mechanisms might include officially-sponsored reviews of principles at annual meetings, and other forums for harvesting experience with the principles and their application. On a regular basis, but at least every five years, these principles ought to be examined for possible review and revision;
- In order to maintain government-wide awareness and relevance, all relevant stakeholders are encouraged to participate in this process
7...as a first milestone in SA’s debate

- As a first milestone in South Africa’s debate, the guiding principles will be confronted by members with their own M&E practices with a view to further development;
- All stakeholders will be invited to apply this reference text to documents adapted to their specific needs, particularly in the area of quality monitoring and evaluation standards.
Summary: Guiding Principles for Evaluation/ Impact Assessment

- **Stakeholder Identification** -- Persons involved in or affected by the evaluation should be identified, so that their needs can be addressed;

- **Evaluator Credibility** -- The persons conducting the evaluation should be both trustworthy and competent to perform the evaluation, so that the evaluation findings achieve maximum credibility and acceptance;
Information Scope and Selection--Information collected should be broadly selected to address pertinent questions about the programme and be responsive to the needs and interests of clients and other specified stakeholders;

Values Identification--The perspectives, procedures, and rationale used to interpret the findings should be carefully described, so that the bases for value judgments are clear;
Guiding Principles for Evaluation/Impact Assessment (cont)

- **Report Clarity**—Evaluation reports should clearly describe the programme being evaluated, including its context, and the purposes, procedures, and findings of the evaluation, so that essential information is provided and easily understood;

- **Report Timeliness and Dissemination**—Significant interim findings and evaluation reports should be disseminated to intended users, so that they can be used in a timely fashion;

- **Evaluation Impact**—Evaluations should be planned, conducted, and reported in ways that encourage follow-through by stakeholders, so that the likelihood that the evaluation will be used is increased.
Feasibility Principles

- Feasibility Principles The feasibility principles are intended to ensure that an evaluation will be realistic, prudent, diplomatic, and frugal;
- Practical Procedures--The evaluation procedures should be practical, to keep disruption to a minimum while needed information is obtained
Feasibility Principles

- **Political Viability**--The evaluation should be planned and conducted with anticipation of the different positions of various interest groups, so that their cooperation may be obtained, and so that possible attempts by any of these groups to curtail evaluation operations or to bias or misapply the results can be averted or counteracted;

- **Cost Effectiveness**--The evaluation should be efficient and produce information of sufficient value, so that the resources expended can be justified
The propriety standards are intended to ensure that an evaluation will be conducted legally, ethically, and with due regard for the welfare of those involved in the evaluation, as well as those affected by its results;

Service Orientation--Evaluations should be designed to assist organizations to address and effectively serve the needs of the full range of targeted participants;

Formal Agreements--Obligations of the formal parties to an evaluation (what is to be done, how, by whom, when) should be agreed to in writing, so that these parties are obligated to adhere to all conditions of the agreement or formally to renegotiate it;
Propriety Principles

- **Rights of Human Subjects**—Evaluations should be designed and conducted to respect and protect the rights and welfare of human subjects;

- **Human Interactions**—Evaluators should respect human dignity and worth in their interactions with other persons associated with an evaluation, so that participants are not threatened or harmed.
Propriety Principles (cont)

- **Complete and Fair Assessment** -- The evaluation should be complete and fair in its examination and recording of strengths and weaknesses of the program being evaluated, so that strengths can be built upon and problem areas addressed;

- **Disclosure of Findings** -- The formal parties to an evaluation should ensure that the full set of evaluation findings along with pertinent limitations are made accessible to the persons affected by the evaluation, and any others with expressed legal rights to receive the results;
Propriety Principles (cont)

- **Conflict of Interest**--Conflict of interest should be dealt with openly and honestly, so that it does not compromise the evaluation processes and results;

- **Fiscal Responsibility**--The evaluator's allocation and expenditure of resources should reflect sound accountability procedures and otherwise be prudent and ethically responsible, so that expenditures are accounted for and appropriate.
The accuracy standards are intended to ensure that an evaluation will reveal and convey technically adequate information about the features that determine worth or merit of the programme being evaluated.

- **Program Documentation**--The program being evaluated should be described and documented clearly and accurately, so that the program is clearly identified;

- **Context Analysis**--The context in which the programme exists should be examined in enough detail, so that its likely influences on the program can be identified;
Described Purposes and Procedures--The purposes and procedures of the evaluation should be monitored and described in enough detail, so that they can be identified and assessed;

Defensible Information Sources--The sources of information used in a program evaluation should be described in enough detail, so that the adequacy of the information can be assessed;

Valid Information--The information gathering procedures should be chosen or developed and then implemented so that they will assure that the interpretation arrived at is valid for the intended use.
Accuracy Standards (cont)

- **Reliable Information**—The information gathering procedures should be chosen or developed and then implemented so that they will assure that the information obtained is sufficiently reliable for the intended use.

- **Systematic Information**—The information collected, processed, and reported in an evaluation should be systematically reviewed and any errors found should be corrected.

- **Analysis of Quantitative Information**—Quantitative information in an evaluation should be appropriately and systematically analyzed so that evaluation questions are effectively answered.
Accuracy Standards (cont)

- **Analysis of Qualitative Information**—Qualitative information in an evaluation should be appropriately and systematically analyzed so that evaluation questions are effectively answered.

- **Justified Conclusions**—The conclusions reached in an evaluation should be explicitly justified, so that stakeholders can assess them.

- **Impartial Reporting**—Reporting procedures should guard against distortion caused by personal feelings and biases of any party to the evaluation, so that evaluation reports fairly reflect the evaluation findings.
Recommendations

It is recommended that the Conference

- Note the content of the document titled: “Monitoring & Evaluation Principles and Standards for South Africa (attached on cd provided)
- Input from this conference be incorporated into the document;
- Document be submitted to Cabinet for consideration;
- Upon approval by Cabinet, there should be ongoing review by all stakeholders
- Regulations be developed