



planning, monitoring & evaluation

Department:
Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

DPME Evaluation Quality Assurance Framework

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Addressed to	Monitoring & Evaluation Units in Government Departments/ State Owned Enterprises/ Municipalities and programme managers who are undertaking evaluations
Purpose	The purpose of this framework is to outline the quality assurance process to be implemented throughout the four evaluation phases namely; Planning & design, Implementation, Reporting and follow up, use & learning.
Reference Documents	National Evaluation Policy Framework, 2019 GL 2.2.19 Guideline on quality assessment of government evaluations
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1. Introduction

The National Evaluation System (NES) outlines the process to be followed when implementing evaluations in government. To ensure credible and quality evaluations are produced, the Evaluation Quality Assurance Framework (EQAF) has been developed to set out the steps for applying systematic quality assurance throughout the evaluation process considering the relevant evaluation guidelines. The EQAF seeks to ensure that the evaluation process is conducted in a way that meets the highest standards of quality, integrity, and that the findings are credible and actionable. It provides a set of standards, guidelines, and best practices that can help evaluators to plan, design, implement, report and use evaluations in a way that is transparent, reliable, and valid. The quality assurance process is undertaken to ensure continuous improvement of evaluation processes and to improve accountability.

This QAF should be read in conjunction with the DPME Evaluation Guideline 2.2.19 – Guideline for Quality Assessment of Government Evaluation. The Quality Assessment Guideline exists to clarify the arrangements, responsibilities, timing and processes followed for undertaking quality assessments. It recognizes the overarching goals of the quality assessment system as improving evaluation practice, assessing gaps and identifying technical support to evaluation practice. The guideline was applied after the implementation stage. However, the EQAF seeks to ensure that the whole evaluation process is of quality.

2. Purpose of the Framework

The purpose of this framework is to set out the quality assurance process and align it to relevant guidelines throughout the various evaluation phases (i.e. plan and design, implement, report and use evaluations to ensure quality evaluations).

3. Process guide for quality assurance

This section focusses on providing a step by step guide for each individual evaluation phase, it represents activities, the roles of stakeholders and guidelines/templates to

refer to for the four evaluation phases: 1) Planning and design 2) Implementation 3) Reporting 4) Follow up, use and learning.

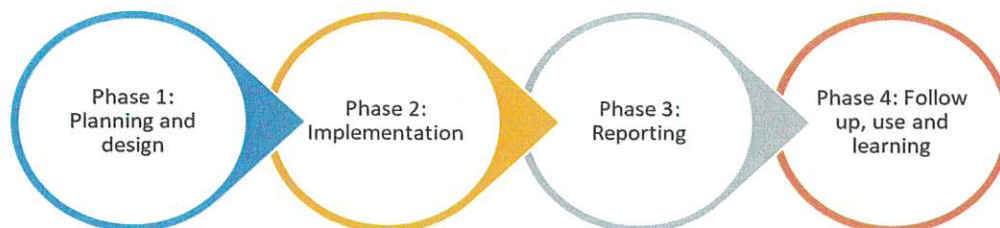


Figure 1: Evaluation Phases for quality assurance

Phase 1: Planning and design

Planning

A call for evaluations to be included in either the National Evaluation Plan, Departmental Evaluation Plan, Provincial Evaluation Plan, Municipal (Local and District) Evaluation Plan and State-Owned Entities Evaluation Plans. At this phase, a concept note is developed for the evaluation which specify what is required and appropriate for the policy, programme, or project being evaluated considering that the resources provided for the evaluation are adequate in terms of funds, staff and skills, to ensure that the objectives of the evaluation can be fulfilled effectively. The feasibility of an evaluation is assessed to determine whether or not the intervention is adequately defined and its results verifiable, and if evaluation is the best way to answer questions posed by policy makers or stakeholders. Relevant stakeholders (i.e. civil society and developmental partners) are involved early on in the evaluation process and given the opportunity to contribute to evaluation design, including identifying issues to be addressed and evaluation questions to be answered.

Once concept notes are developed and received the relevant structures in different spheres of government will select and prioritise evaluations according to the selection criteria. If the proposed evaluation project is not part of the evaluation plans, this planning phase will entail gaining an understanding of the programme or policy. It will require engagements with the custodian department and other stakeholders to explore

the programme or project context and gather background materials, a review of previous evaluations to identify issues, designs and data collection strategies used. Further, a review and refine or development of theory of change for the programme is undertaken.

Design

The planning stage culminates into the design stage which involves drafting of a Terms of Reference (TOR), which identify the type of evaluation, the purpose, scope, objectives of the evaluation, identifying the evaluation question and sub-questions, the methodology to be used including selecting measures for each questions and sub-questions. Additionally, identifying the data sources for addressing each question or sub-question, developing a data collection strategy including instruments, sampling methods and data analysis strategy.

Further, determining resource and time allocation as well as reporting requirements; and any other expectations regarding the evaluation process, the resources, and evaluation governance structures are established, which includes the steering committee and technical working group constituted by key stakeholders. The steering committee will then meet to approve the, inception report, and other key reports relating to evaluation design. The steering committee safeguards credibility, inclusiveness, and transparency of the evaluation.

Should there be no capacity to undertake the evaluation internally, a service provider is appointed in line with government policy on supply chain management. A service level agreement which includes deliverables and scheduled payments for the evaluation is signed with the service provider. Service provider prepares the inception report, where the scope of work is elaborated, and the methodology is detailed. This report is approved by the Steering Committee.

For internal evaluations TORs are developed, governance structures are established (i.e. Evaluation Steering Committee and Technical Working Group). It is also critical to identify data available and ensure access, as well as key documents and recruit internal team and get permission for them to dedicate time to the evaluation.

Peer review for an evaluation undertaken within Government is used to review and provide an expert judgement on approaches, methods as well as the content area within the sector or field of the evaluation. Involving an expert evaluation peer reviewer can provide assurance that the evaluation approach and methods are appropriate and credibly executed. The National Evaluation System recommends that two independent peer reviewers be appointed to assess and provide feedback on the evaluation. One peer reviewer to focus on the content while the other peer reviewer focuses on the methodology of the evaluation.

Phase 2: Implementation

At this phase, an evaluation is conducted as per the approved inception report and workplan. Reviewing and testing of the methodology including pre-testing of instrument and training data collectors and developing protocols is undertaken. Gathering of data and analysis is undertaken. An evaluation can be outsourced or conducted internally. Where an evaluation is outsourced, evaluators are independent from the development intervention, including its policy, operations and management functions, as well as target group of the intervention. Possible conflicts of interest are addressed openly and honestly. The evaluation team is able to work freely and without interference. It is assured of co-operation and access to all relevant information. In case where the evaluation is conducted internally, peer review is particularly important to ensure that there has been adequate impartiality in the conduct of the evaluation and that it is credible.

The full range of stakeholders are consulted during the evaluation process and given the opportunity to contribute, most particularly the clients of the programme or policy in question. The rights and welfare of participants in the evaluation are protected, an ethical guideline for evaluation is used to review procedures, if needed. Anonymity and confidentiality of individual informants is protected when requested or as needed.

As the evaluation is conducted per approved inception report including the workplan, the results are made available to commissioners in a timely manner to achieve the objectives of the evaluation. Where appropriate, intermediate reports are provided including: final data collection instruments and other tools; analysis plan; other technical or process reports, e.g. fieldwork report. These are specified in the TORs.

The evaluation is carried out efficiently and within budget. Changes in conditions, circumstances, timeframe and budget are reported. Any changes are explained, discussed and agreed between the relevant parties.

Phase 3: Reporting

At this stage the evaluation is designed, conducted and reported to meet the needs of the intended users. Findings, conclusions, recommendations and lessons are clear, relevant, targeted and actionable so that the evaluation can be used to achieve its intended learning and accountability objectives. Draft evaluation report is produced and validated with relevant stakeholders. Thereafter, final evaluation report including a full and 1/5/25 report is delivered in time to ensure optimal use of the results. Templates of these reports are available on the DPME website.

Phase 4: Follow-up, use and learning

A formal management response letter is then prepared by the Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME) in case of a NEP evaluation and by M&E units for DEPs, PEPs and SOEEPs addressed to the departments to state which recommendations from the evaluation they agree and disagree with, and why. The departments involved are given thirty (30) days after the approval of the final report by steering committee to provide a management response to the evaluation findings. A management response provides an opportunity to respond to each recommendation and indicate which ones are disagreed upon and which ones are not and why; ensure that those recommendations that are agreed upon are identified for taking forward through the development of an Improvement Plan (IP) to indicate how the agreed recommendations will be implemented.

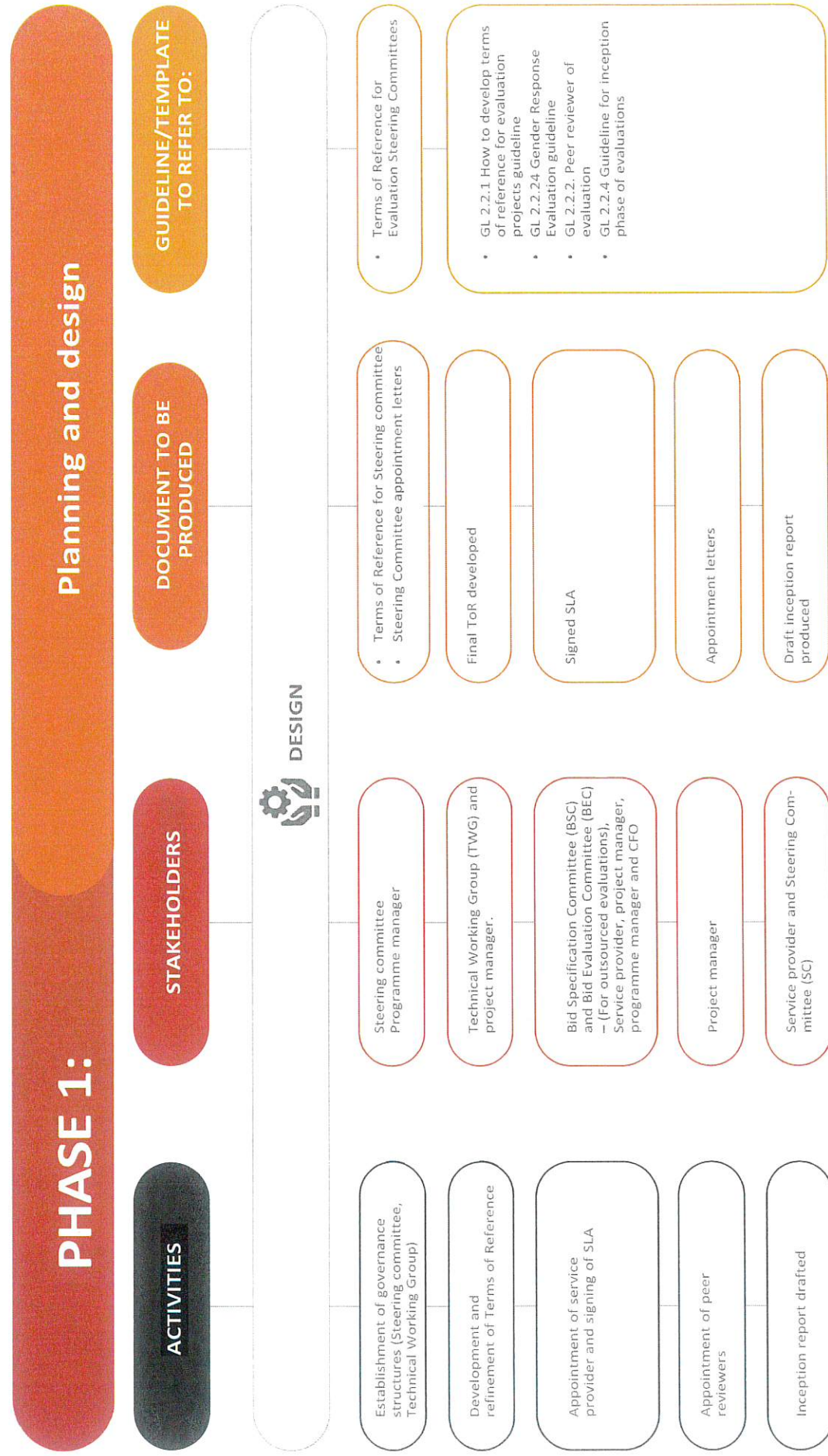
The Improvement Plan is prepared within four (4) months after the evaluation report is approved by the steering committee. In case of NEP evaluations, the DPME tracks progress with the implementation of the IP for a period of two (2) years where a progress report on the implementation of the recommendations is produced biannually. In case of other evaluation plans this role should be played by the M&E unit. The improvement plan is tracked to ensure accountability for implementation. Systematic dissemination, storage and management of the evaluation reports is ensured to provide easy access to all development partners, to reach target

audiences, additional interested parties, and to maximise the learning benefits of the evaluation.

4. Stakeholders supporting the quality assurance process

The table below outlines the quality assurance process to be undertaken at each phase of an evaluation, the relevant stakeholders to conduct the quality assurance and the relevant documentation to use for reference.

Table 1: Quality assurance process stakeholders and guiding documents



PHASE 2:

Implementation

ACTIVITIES

STAKEHOLDERS

DOCUMENT TO BE PRODUCED

GUIDELINE/TEMPLATE TO REFER TO:



IMPLEMENTATION

Service provider conduct the evaluation, which includes Literature review; Report structure; data collection and analysis, draft evaluation report; validation of the draft report; the final evaluation report, presentation of the final report; provision of all datasets and presentation.

The steering committee will comment/input on all deliverables to oversee and take decisions on the overall evaluation process. Project administrator, Project Manager and TWG will ensure that the service provider is delivering the evaluation as per the TORs and that the service provider gets paid according to the payment schedule.

Peer reviewers will review and provide an expert judgement on approaches, methods as well as the content area within the sector or field of the evaluation

Service provider, TWG and SC

Project administrator, Project Manager, TWG and SC

Project administrator, project manager and peer reviewers

- Literature review produced
- Report structure produced
- Data collection and analysis instruments
- Draft evaluation report
- Final Evaluation report
- Presentations and datasets

- Literature review approved
- Report structure approved
- Data collection and analysis instruments approved
- 1st Draft evaluation approved
- Final Evaluation approved
- Presentations and datasets approved
- Payment schedule

- Inputs by peer reviews on the following deliverables:
- Literature review
 - Report structure
 - Data collection and analysis instruments
 - 1st Draft evaluation Report
 - Final Evaluation Report

- GL 2.2.23 Ethical guideline for evaluations
- GL 2.2.4 Guideline for inception phase of evaluations
- GL 2.2.24 Gender Response Evaluation guideline
- GL 2.2.19 Guideline for quality assessment of government evaluations
- GL 2.2.2 Peer review of evaluations
- Terms of Reference for Evaluation Steering Committees template
- Refer to all 7 types of evaluations guidelines - depending on the type of evaluation undertaken

PHASE 3:

Reporting

ACTIVITIES

STAKEHOLDERS

DOCUMENT TO BE PRODUCED

GUIDELINE/TEMPLATE TO REFER TO:

PRODUCTION OF THE REPORT

Evaluation Quality Assessment (EQA) Once an evaluation has been selected for implementation the process of appointing and assigning an assessor and moderator for the quality assessment of the evaluation project is initiated. As part of the overall quality assurance process, the quality assessment process is expected to be implemented as soon as the evaluation report is approved by the Steering Committee.

The results of the quality assessment shall determine if the report is of good quality based on its weighting or scoring.

The assessor will do data collection, analysis and write-up of the draft and final evaluation reports.

The moderator will check the completeness of the quality assessment and ensure consistency in the application of ratings throughout the assessment tool.

Project administrator and Manager

Assessor

Moderator



- Quality assessment report produced



- Moderation report produced

The EQA process follows the following steps as outlined in the DPME Guideline 2.2.19– Guideline for Quality Assessment of Government Evaluation.

PHASE 4:

Follow-up, use & Learning



FOLLOW UP, USE AND LEARNING

Note: All guidelines/templates mentioned on the table above are available on the DPME website.

5. Evaluation Quality Assessment Process

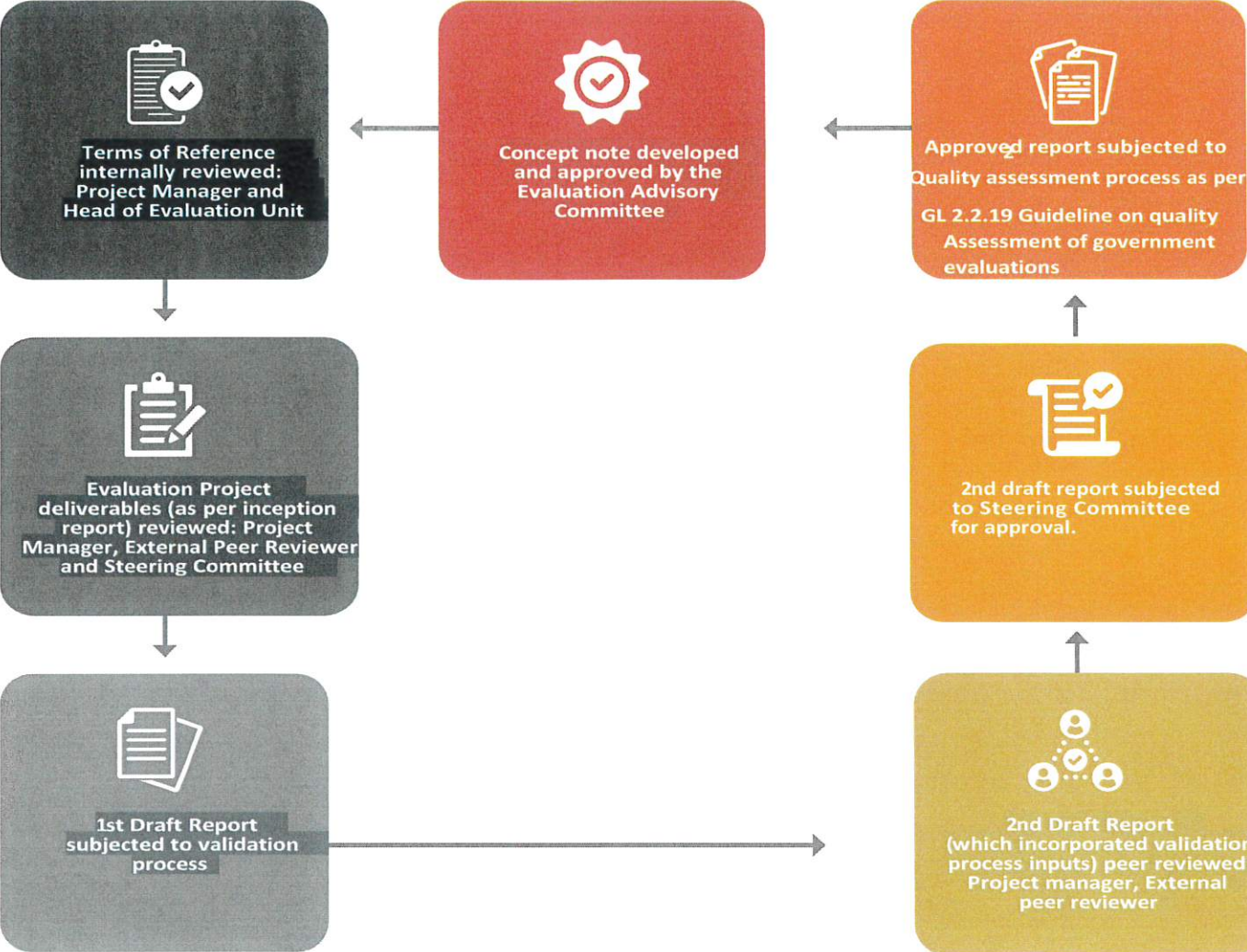
Evaluation Quality Assessment (EQA) is part of a process of evaluating the quality of an evaluation. The EQA process is undertaken once the final report is approved by the steering committee. The results of the quality assessment shall determine if the report is of good quality based on its weighting or scoring. The EQA process follows the following steps as outlined in the DPME Guideline 2.2.19 – Guideline for Quality Assessment of Government Evaluation.

Figure 2: Quality assessment steps



The Project administrator and project manager facilitates the process of appointing and assigning an assessor and moderator for the quality assessment of the evaluation project. As part of the overall quality assurance process, the quality assessment process is expected to be implemented as soon as the final report is approved by the steering committee.

Figure 3: Quality Assessment process



6. Conclusion

This document outlines the quality assurance process to be undertaken throughout the evaluation phases. Once the 2nd draft report has been produced, steering committee may approve the report. The final approved report by the steering committee, will be subjected to the Quality Assessment Process as per DPME Guideline 2.2.19 Guideline on Quality Assessment of government evaluation. The final approved report should be communicated accordingly as outlined in the DPME GL 2.2.8 Communication of evaluation results and both reports published via the DPME/ Office of the Premier/ Departmental/Entities/Municipalities website. By making this information publicly available, the intention is to deepen the discussion and debate on evaluation practice and highlight evaluations practice that is above adequate standards.