



Department of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation

Report on the Assessment of Government Evaluations

Ezimbuzini Economic Development Node: Phase 1 Project Evaluation

Date Evaluation was completed: March 2008

Name of assessor: Mike Leslie

Evaluation Number: 130

Date Assessment Completed: 21 February 2013

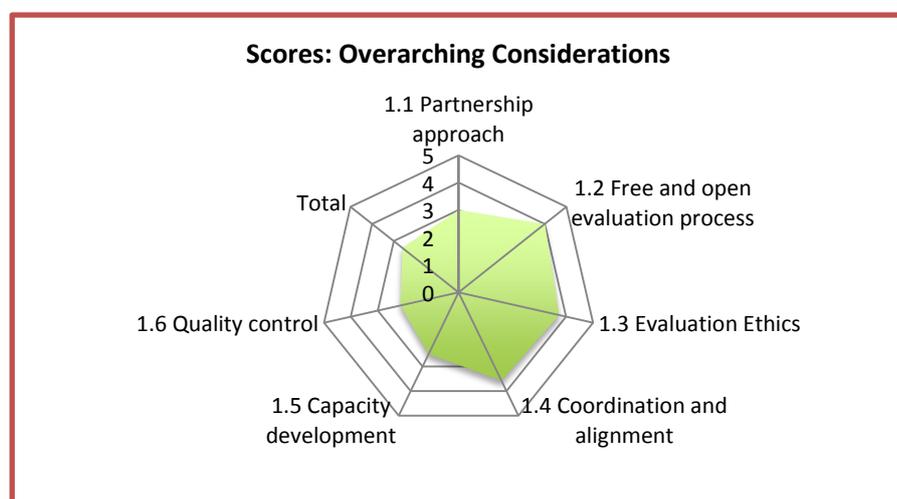
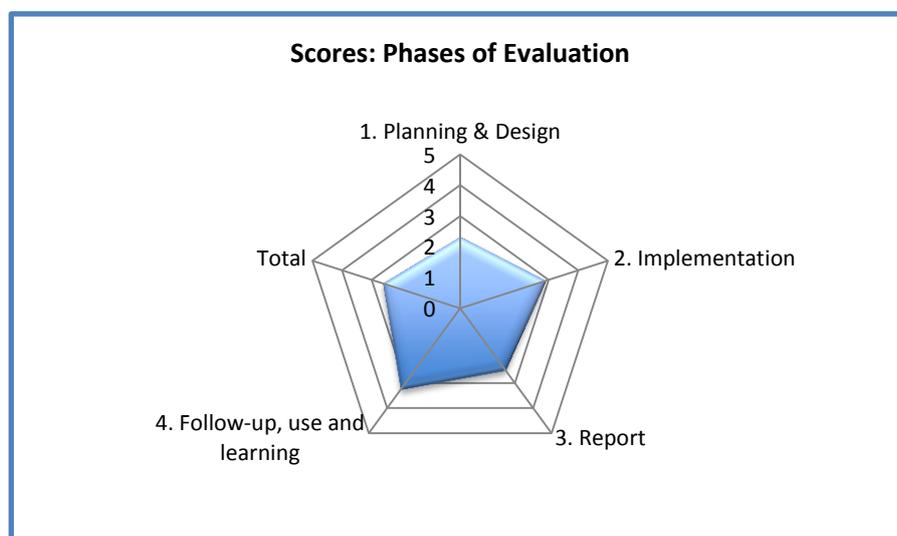
Evaluation Assessment Details

Title of evaluation report	Ezimbuzini Economic Development Node: Phase 1 Project Evaluation
Completion Date of Evaluation	March 2008
Name of Assessor	Mike Leslie
Evaluation Number	130
Completion Date of Assessment	21 February 2013
Initiated by	Development
Evaluation undertaken by	Umhlaba Development Services
Evaluation area / sector	LED, SMEs & local development projects
	Economic planning and development <i>Additional</i>
National Outcome	Outcome 5
	<i>Additional</i>
Type of Evaluation	Implementation
	Impact <i>Additional</i>
What is being evaluated	Project
	<i>Additional</i>
Geographic Scope	Local
Period of Evaluation	January 2008- March 2008
Known Cost of Evaluation	Less than R100 000 (approximately)

Quality Assessment Scores

Phase of Evaluation	Score
Planning & Design	2.31
Implementation	2.89
Report	2.47
Follow-up, use and learning	3.24
Total	2.66

Overarching Consideration	Score
Partnership approach	3.00
Free and open evaluation process	4.00
Evaluation Ethics	3.73
Coordination and alignment	3.57
Capacity Development	2.50
Quality control	2.16



1. Planning & Design

1.1. Clarity of Purpose and Scope in TOR

STANDARD: *The evaluation was guided by a TOR with at least the following sections explicit: purpose, scope and objectives; expectations regarding design and methodology; resources and time allocated; reporting requirements; expectations regarding evaluation process and products.*

Comment and Analysis

The evaluation was guided by a ToR that set out a general evaluation approach for 8 projects that were evaluated as part of one contract, of which this was one project. The ToR did meet the basic requirements of this standard.

Rating 3

STANDARD: *The purpose of the evaluation was clear and explicit in the TOR*

Comment and Analysis

According to the the Project Manager of the evaluation team, the ToR was explicit with regards to the purpose of the evaluation.

Rating 4

STANDARD: *The evaluation questions were clearly stated in the TOR and appropriate to addressing the evaluation purpose*

Comment and Analysis

It was indicated that the evaluation questions were stated clearly, although providing general questions for such a diversity of 8 projects was not entirely appropriate given the various stages at which the projects were in terms of their life cycles and implementation.

Rating 2

STANDARD: The approach and type of evaluation was suited to the purpose and scope of the evaluation TOR

Comment and Analysis

The approach and type was orientated towards implementation and impact evaluations, although this project would have benefited from an evaluation with a more formative orientation.

Rating 2

STANDARD: Intended users and their information needs were identified in the TOR

Comment and Analysis

It was reported that KZN DED was a clear user of the information in the ToR, but there was not much more consideration given to the different stakeholders.

Rating 3

STANDARD: Key stakeholders were involved in the scoping of the TOR and determining the purpose of the evaluation

Comment and Analysis

It was not reported that this was the case.

Rating 1

1.2. Evaluation was adequately resourced

STANDARD: The evaluation was adequately resourced in terms of time allocated

Comment and Analysis

The evaluation was delayed due to data collection challenges and was therefore not adequately resourced as originally provided for, but timeframes were adjusted via the project steering committee.

Rating 2

STANDARD: The evaluation was adequately resourced in terms of original budget

Comment and Analysis

Considering the number of different evaluations that were commissioned as part of one evaluation contract, planning and budget resourcing was not differentiated and in this respect inadequate.

Rating 2

STANDARD: The evaluation was adequately resourced in terms of staffing and skills sets

Comment and Analysis

Interviewees indicated that the staffing complement for the evaluations was adequate.

Rating 3

STANDARD: Where appropriate, the evaluation planned to incorporate an element of capacity building of partners/staff responsible for the evaluand

Comment and Analysis

There did not appear to be any clear planning to incorporate capacity building in the process although comments suggested that the process itself was implicitly orientated towards learning both within the Department and amongst project managers.

Rating 2

1.3. Alignment to Policy Context and Background Literature

STANDARD: There was evidence that a review of the relevant policy and programme environments had been conducted and used in the planning of the evaluation by the evaluators

Comment and Analysis

It was unclear to what extent the relevant policy and programme environments were reviewed by the evaluators during the planning of the evaluation.

Rating N/A

STANDARD: There was evidence of a review of appropriate literature having been conducted and used in the planning of the evaluation by the evaluators

Comment and Analysis

It was unclear to what extent appropriate literature was reviewed during the planning of the evaluation by the evaluators.

Rating N/A

1.4. The evaluation methods planned were appropriate to the project

STANDARD: There was explicit reference to the intervention logic or the theory of change of the evaluand in the planning of the evaluation

Comment and Analysis

There was no reference to the intervention logic or the theory of change in planning the evaluation by the commissioning Department or by the evaluators themselves.

Rating 1

STANDARD: Key stakeholders were consulted on the design and methodology of the evaluation

Comment and Analysis

It is unclear to what extent stakeholders were consulted on the design and methodology of the evaluation. Not applicable.

Rating N/A

STANDARD: The planned methodology was appropriate to the questions being asked

Comment and Analysis

It appears that the planned methodology was inappropriate to the evaluation objectives and evaluation parameters set out in the evaluation report. Namely, the parameters sought to answer mainly summative questions, however the project evaluation was assessed against the first phase of an ongoing project, the intervention element of which still remained to be implemented. Thus, it was inappropriate to ask summative questions of a project still in its formative stages.

Rating 2

STANDARD: *Planned sampling was appropriate and adequate given the focus and purpose of evaluation*

Comment and Analysis

Given the nature of the overall evaluation, planned sampling was not specified for this project at the planning phase.

Rating 2

STANDARD: *There was a planned process for using the findings of the evaluation prior to undertaking the evaluation*

Comment and Analysis

Given that the project was evaluated for its completion at the close of Phase One, there seemed an implicit rationale for using the evaluation findings going forward. However, there was never explicit mention of plans for use.

Rating 2

1.5. Inception phase

STANDARD: *The inception phase was used to develop a common agreement on how the evaluation would be implemented*

Comment and Analysis

It was reported by the evaluation team that an inception phase was used to refine the ToR and projects selected for evaluation.

Rating 3

2. Implementation

2.1. Ethical Review and Considerations

STANDARD: *Where data was gathered in contexts where ethical sensitivity is high, appropriate clearance was obtained through an ethics review board; e.g. in evaluation involving minors, institutions where access usually requires ethical or bureaucratic clearance, and situations where assurances of confidentiality was offered to participants*

Comment and Analysis

Ethical sensitivity was not high and no additional ethical clearance was required. A representative of the commissioning Department indicated that consideration was given to the ethical implications of the work and that no serious risks were noted in the identification of informants.

Rating 3

2.2. Evaluator independence

STANDARD: *Where external, evaluation team was able to work freely without significant interference*

Comment and Analysis

The external service provider appeared free to work without significant interference from DED and reported a constructive relationship between the two.

Rating 4

STANDARD: The evaluation team was impartial and there was no evidence of conflict of interest***Comment and Analysis***

There was no evidence of a conflict of interest between the evaluation team and DED and the service provider reported an ability to work freely and impartially.

Rating 4

2.3. Key stakeholder involvement***STANDARD: Key stakeholders were consulted through a formalised mechanism or institutional arrangement during the evaluation******Comment and Analysis***

A Project Steering Committee for the project was engaged as part of the evaluation and key stakeholders were included in the persons interviewed.

Rating 4

STANDARD: Where appropriate, an element of capacity building of partners responsible for the evaluand was incorporated into the evaluation***Comment and Analysis***

There was no explicit element of capacity building of partners incorporated into the evaluation process but the approach taken by the commissioning Department indicated an implicit commitment to this.

Rating 2

2.4. Methodology

STANDARD: The methods employed in the process of the evaluation were consistent with those planned

Comment and Analysis

Based on what was reported generally regarding the ToR, it would appear the methods employed were consistent with those planned.

Rating 3

STANDARD: Data collection was not compromised by fieldwork-level problems or unplanned diversions from original intentions

Comment and Analysis

Some data collection did appear to be comprised by difficulty obtaining information. For instance, "The Project Manager only informed some of the beneficiaries and partners of the evaluation process and this created an obstacle for researchers when they tried to set up dates with partners and beneficiaries who had not been contacted. Accessing documentation from the Project Manager was slow and inconsistent, which created a long lead time between the site visits and the report writing phase and resulted in researchers having to do numerous follow-ups over an extended time period." This statement from the evaluation report was reaffirmed by the interviewees.

Rating 2

STANDARD: Forms of data gathering were appropriate given the scope of evaluation

Comment and Analysis

Although quantitative and qualitative data was said to be gathered, there is no analysis of any quantitative data in this report and it would appear that only qualitative data was obtained for this evaluation, making it inappropriate to some extent.

Rating 2

STANDARD: The data analysis approach and methods were appropriate and sufficient given the purposes of the evaluation

Comment and Analysis

There is not a clear indication as to how the qualitative data was analysed nor was it clear how the methods might have been appropriate given the evaluation objectives/parameters set out for the project.

Rating 2

STANDARD: Key stakeholders were significantly engaged as part of the methodology

Comment and Analysis

Key stakeholders were significantly engaged as part of the methodology. They comprised a significant portion of the informants interviewed for the evaluation.

Rating 4

STANDARD: The methodology included engaging beneficiaries appropriately as a key source of data and information

Comment and Analysis

Beneficiaries were engaged as a key source of data and information, comprising a significant portion of the informants interviewed.

Rating 4

2.5. Project management

STANDARD: The evaluation was conducted without shifts to scheduled project milestones and timeframes

Comment and Analysis

It is unclear to what extent project milestones may have been shifted for the study, but this was not reported to be an issue by either the evaluation team or the commissioning Department.

Rating 3

3. Report

3.1. Report was well-structured and presentation was clear and complete in each of these areas

STANDARD: Executive summary captured key components of the report appropriately

Comment and Analysis

There was no executive summary provided for the report.

Rating 1

STANDARD: The context of the development intervention was explicit and presented as relevant to the evaluation

Comment and Analysis

The context of the intervention was explicit and a rationale provided as to why the project was implemented where it was.

Rating 4

STANDARD: There was a clear rationale for the evaluation questions**Comment and Analysis**

The rationale for the evaluation objectives/parameters was unclear given that the project was still in formative stages for planning the intervention.

Rating 2

STANDARD: The scope or focus of the evaluation was apparent in the report**Comment and Analysis**

The scope of the evaluation was not entirely clear as it was difficult to distinguish to what extent the work of the service provider responsible for the project was scrutinised by the commissioning Department and whether any of the "research undertaken was both quantitative and qualitative" as claimed in the evaluation report, since the report appeared to be based almost exclusively on qualitative data.

Rating 2

STANDARD: A detailed methodology was outlined in the relevant section of a report (full report or 1/3/25) to the point that a reader could understand the data collection, analysis and interpretation**Comment and Analysis**

A short methodology was outlined in the report but there was no explanation of how the qualitative data was analysed or what the interpretation approaches that may have informed the evaluation were.

Rating 2

STANDARD: Key findings were presented in a clear way; they were made distinct from uncertain or speculative findings; and unused data was not presented in the body of the report

Comment and Analysis

Key findings were presented clearly although without any indication of the data analysis approach or primary quotes, it cannot be certain to what extent they are distinct from uncertain or speculative findings.

Rating 2

STANDARD: *Conclusions and recommendations were clear and succinctly articulated*

Comment and Analysis

Conclusions and recommendations were clearly and succinctly stated in the report.

Rating 4

STANDARD: *Acknowledgement of limitations of all aspects of the methodology and findings were clearly and succinctly articulated*

Comment and Analysis

There was not any acknowledgement of the limitations of the methodologies employed for the purpose of this evaluation.

Rating 1

3.2. Writing and presentation

STANDARD: *Quality of writing and presentation was adequate for publication including: adequate layout and consistent formatting; complete sentences and no widespread grammatical or typographical errors; consistency of style and writing conventions (e.g. tense, perspective (first person, third person); levels of formality; references complete and consistent with cited references in reference list and vice versa; etc)*

Comment and Analysis

Quality of writing and presentation was adequate for publication and the overall presentation of the report was good.

Rating 4

STANDARD: *Appropriate conventions were used in presentation of data (e.g. use of appropriate statistical language; reporting of p-values where appropriate; not reporting statistically insignificant findings as significant; clarifying disaggregation categories in constructing percentages; not using quantitative language in reporting qualitative data, etc.)*

Comment and Analysis

There was no specific data presented, only a general narrative of the findings and analysis. No tables, graphs, or quotations or references were given in the presentation of data in the findings and analysis sections. Not applicable.

Rating N/A

3.3. Presentation of findings

STANDARD: *The use of figures and tables was such that it supported communication and comprehension of results; and data reported in figures and tables was readily discernible and useful to a reader familiar with data presentation conventions*

Comment and Analysis

There was no use of figures or tables to substantiate the findings presented in the evaluation.

Rating N/A

STANDARD: Data analysis appeared to have been well executed**Comment and Analysis**

Data analysis did not appear to be well executed as little information was given to indicate how the qualitative data obtained was analysed prior to drawing conclusions from the data.

Rating 2

STANDARD: Findings were supported by available evidence**Comment and Analysis**

It is unclear as to whether the findings were supported by evidence as no evidence was presented through direct quotes, references or tables of data.

Rating 2

STANDARD: The evidence gathered was sufficiently and appropriately analysed to support the argument**Comment and Analysis**

It would appear that the evidence gathered was analysed to support the argument, but how is unclear. Furthermore, it remained unclear what exact data was obtained outside of the interviews with stakeholders and so the evaluation was lacking in this regard.

Rating **2**

STANDARD: There was appropriate recognition of the possibility of alternative interpretations**Comment and Analysis**

There was no recognition of the possibility of alternative interpretations.

Rating **1**

STANDARD: The report appeared free of significant methodological and analytic flaws**Comment and Analysis**

There appeared to be some methodological and analytical flaws, especially in light of the stated evaluation objectives/parameters that have a summative orientation. Referencing interviews with only 7 individuals, albeit indirectly, and an absence of any explanation as to how the qualitative data was analysed is a flawed means of presenting the findings.

Rating **2**

3.4. Conclusions

STANDARD: Conclusions were derived from evidence

Comment and Analysis

Conclusions appeared to be drawn from evidence but since no direct quotations were used or transcripts provided, it was unclear.

Rating 2

STANDARD: Conclusions took into account relevant empirical and/or analytic work from related research studies and evaluations

Comment and Analysis

Conclusions did not take into account any other empirical and/or analytic work from related research studies.

Rating 1

STANDARD: Conclusions addressed the original evaluation purpose and questions

Comment and Analysis

The conclusions did address the original evaluation objectives/parameters as stated previously, although the extent to which the data collected could address those objectives was doubtful. Nevertheless, the report stayed true to the original purpose and questions in this regard.

Rating 3

STANDARD: Conclusions were drawn with explicit reference to the intervention logic or theory of change

Comment and Analysis

There was no intervention logic or theory of change for the process referenced anywhere in the planning of the evaluation and so it could not be expected in the conclusion. Not applicable.

Rating N/A

3.5. Recommendations

STANDARD: Recommendations were made in consultation with appropriate sectoral partners or experts

Comment and Analysis

There did not appear to be consultation with sectoral partners or experts in formulated recommendations.

Rating 2

STANDARD: Recommendations were shaped following input or review by relevant government officials and other relevant stakeholders

Comment and Analysis

As the commissioning Department KZN DED was involved throughout the evaluation process and was given the opportunity to provide input on the recommendations.

Rating 3

STANDARD: Recommendations were relevant to the policy context**Comment and Analysis**

Recommendations were relevant to the policy context as they specifically addressed the gaps between the functions, and the planning and implementation of the public sector, with due consideration of the role of M&E and the need to build capacity in the process.

Rating 4

STANDARD: Recommendations were targetted to a specific audience sufficiently - were specific, feasible, affordable and acceptable**Comment and Analysis**

Recommendations were clearly targetted to DED staff and managers involved in the Ezumbizini Node Project. The recommendations appeared to be light in terms of considerations of additional stakeholders on how to improve the programme.

Rating 3

3.6. Relevant limitations of the evaluation have been noted**STANDARD: Relevant limitations of the evaluation were noted****Comment and Analysis**

No limitations to the evaluation were noted.

Rating 1

3.7 Protection of participants and risk considerations

STANDARD: *The full report documented procedures intended to ensure confidentiality and to secure informed consent where this was needed (in some cases this is not needed - e.g. evaluation synthesis - in which case N/A should be recorded)*

Comment and Analysis

The report did not document any procedures to ensure confidentiality and no reference was given to informed consent for members of the public or representatives of organisations. However, given the nature of the project the ethical considerations made earlier during planning, this was not necessarily appropriate.

Rating N/A

STANDARD: *There were no risks to participants in disseminating the original report on a public website*

Comment and Analysis

There did not appear to be any risks to participants in disseminating the response report on a public website.

Rating 4

STANDARD: *There were no unfair risks to institutions in disseminating the original report on a public website*

Comment and Analysis

There were no unfair risks to the institutions in disseminating the original report and it was put online.

Rating 4

4. Follow-up, use and learning

4.1. Presentation to stakeholders

STANDARD: Results were presented to all relevant stakeholders

Comment and Analysis

According to a representative of the Department, the findings were presented to the relevant stakeholders, especially project managers, and that the response was positive at municipal and provincial levels of engagement.

Rating 4

4.2. Resource utilisation

STANDARD: The evaluation was completed within the planned timeframes

Comment and Analysis

Despite some delays, it appears the project was completed without major shifts to the planned timeframes.

Rating 3

STANDARD: The evaluation was completed within the agreed budget

Comment and Analysis

It was reported that the project was completed within the agreed budget by the evaluators.

Rating 3

4.3. Transparency

STANDARD: The report was publicly available (website or otherwise published document), except where there were legitimate security concerns

Comment and Analysis

The report was publicly available prior to undertaking this assessment.

Rating 4

4.4. Lessons learnt

STANDARD: After completion of the evaluation, a reflective process was undertaken by staff responsible for the evaluand to reflect on what could be done to strengthen future evaluations

Comment and Analysis

Although a planned reflected process does not appear to have occurred, the representative of the Department indicated that evaluation did provide an opportunity for reflection and was a learning experience for programme and project managers involved.

Rating N/A

4.5. Symbolic and conceptual value

STANDARD: The evaluation study was seen by interviewed stakeholders as having added significant symbolic value to the policy or programme (eg raised its profile)

Comment and Analysis

According to the representative of the Department, the evaluation conducted was reported as having a symbolic value for the project managers.

Rating 3

STANDARD: The evaluation study was of conceptual value in understanding what has happened and possibly in shaping policy and practice

Comment and Analysis

The evaluation seemed to be of limited conceptual value because it attempted to summatively assess an intervention that had yet to be implemented. An opportunity was missed to add conceptual value to the project through the formative approach of design evaluation.

Rating 2

4.6. Utilisation of findings and recommendations

STANDARD: There was clear evidence of instrumental use - that the recommendations of the evaluation were implemented to a significant extent

Comment and Analysis

The report was concluded after the initiation of Phase Two of the project, thus limiting the potential for conclusions and recommendations to inform the next stages of the project. It was reported more generally that the evaluation was of use to project managers, particularly at the municipal level, although this was not specifically supported by example.

Rating 3

STANDARD: There was clear evidence that the evaluation has had a positive influence on the evaluand, its stakeholders and beneficiaries over the medium to long term

Comment and Analysis

The medium to long term influence of this evaluation on the intervention cannot be determined because the approach of the evaluation was inappropriate given the stage of development of the intervention assessed.

Rating N/A

References

Umhlaba Development Services, 2008. KwaZulu-Natal Department of Economic Development, Ezimbuzini Economic Development Node: Phase 1 Project Evaluation. March 2008.

List of Interviewees

Danny Das, Project Manager: Umhlaba Development Services, Telephonic Interview, 28 January 2013.

Bheki Nowele, Senior Manager: Monitoring and Evaluation. KZN Department of Economic Development. Electronic self-administered questionnaire, 18 February 2013.