



Department of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation

Report on the Assessment of Government Evaluations

Evaluating the decline in THRIP applications between 2006/7 and 2008/9 and possible scenarios for intervention

Date Evaluation was completed: January 2010

Name of assessor: Stephen Rule

Evaluation Number: 237

Date Assessment Completed: 1st March 2013

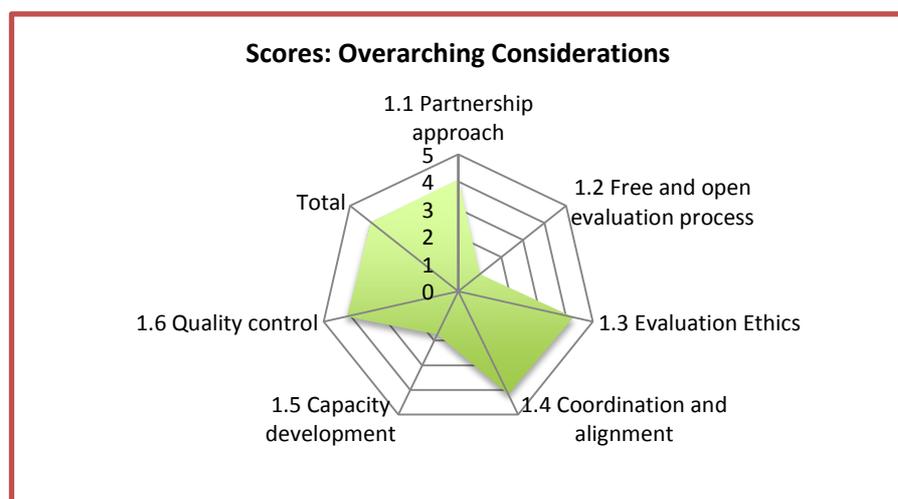
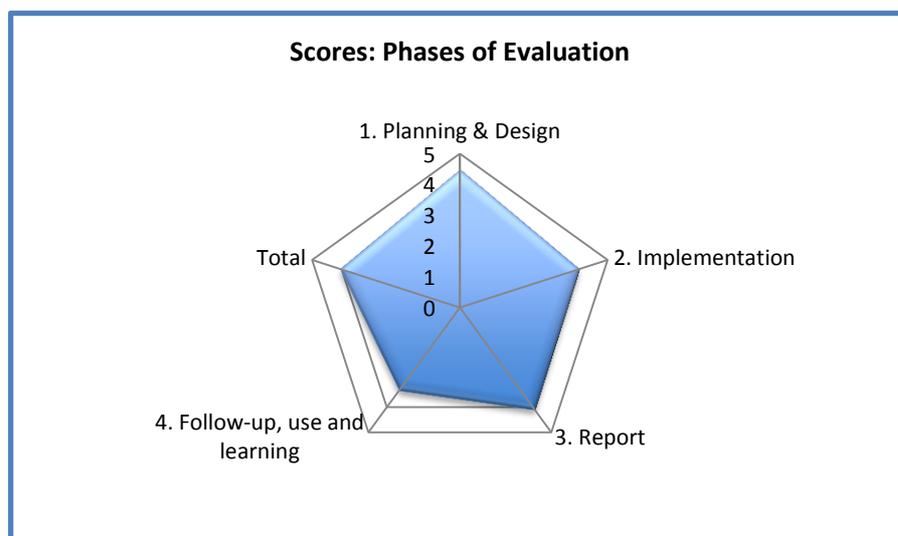
Evaluation Assessment Details

| | |
|-------------------------------|--|
| Title of evaluation report | Evaluating the decline in THRIP applications between 2006/7 and 2008/9 and possible scenarios for intervention |
| Completion Date of Evaluation | January 2010 |
| Name of Assessor | Stephen Rule |
| Evaluation Number | 237 |
| Completion Date of Assessment | 1st March 2013 |
| Initiated by | Trade and Industry |
| Evaluation undertaken by | Technoscene (Dr AP Botha) |
| Evaluation area / sector | Science and Technology Skills |
| | <i>Additional</i> |
| National Outcome | Outcome 5 |
| | <i>Additional</i> |
| Type of Evaluation | Diagnostic |
| | <i>Additional</i> |
| What is being evaluated | Decline in THRIP applications 2006-9 and intervention possibilities |
| | <i>Additional</i> |
| Geographic Scope | National |
| Period of Evaluation | Six months |
| Known Cost of Evaluation | R248,500 plus VAT |

Quality Assessment Scores

| Phase of Evaluation | Score |
|-----------------------------|-------------|
| Planning & Design | 4.48 |
| Implementation | 4.04 |
| Report | 4.09 |
| Follow-up, use and learning | 3.32 |
| Total | 4.04 |

| Overarching Consideration | Score |
|----------------------------------|-------|
| Partnership approach | 4.09 |
| Free and open evaluation process | 1.00 |
| Evaluation Ethics | 4.28 |
| Coordination and alignment | 4.17 |
| Capacity Development | 1.75 |
| Quality control | 4.14 |



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

Both Technoscene (service provider) and the DTI confirmed their satisfaction that the TOR had been comprehensive in respect of purpose, scope, objectives, expectations, time and resource allocations, reporting requirements, process and deliverables.

Rating 5

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

Comment and Analysis

Not applicable.

Rating N/A

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

Comment and Analysis

Not applicable.

Rating N/A

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

Comment and Analysis

Not applicable.

Rating N/A

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

Comment and Analysis

Not applicable.

Rating N/A

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

Comment and Analysis

Not applicable.

Rating N/A

1.2. Evaluation was adequately resourced

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

Comment and Analysis

Not applicable.

Rating N/A

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

Comment and Analysis

Not applicable.

Rating N/A

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

Comment and Analysis

Not applicable.

Rating N/A

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

Comment and Analysis

Not applicable.

Rating N/A

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

The DTI and NRF (and its predecessors in the FRD) were closely acquainted with the THRIP Programme and were fully conversant with the policy environment of the THRIP Programme.

Rating 5

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

The DTI and NRF had published a THRIP Strategic Plan shortly before commissioning this project. The Strategic Plan provided evidence of appropriate literature having been factored into the programme and thus into the present evaluation exercise.

Rating 4

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

Not applicable.

Rating N/A

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

Comment and Analysis

Not applicable.

Rating N/A

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

Comment and Analysis

The planned methodology involving stakeholder interviews and a literature review was appropriate to the questions being asked.

Rating 4

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

Comment and Analysis

The sampling of respondents appeared to be appropriate for the purposes of this evaluation.

Rating 4

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

Comment and Analysis

The DTI and NRF commissioned the evaluation precisely because of a decline in participation in THRIP and out of a desire to increase participation again. The outcome of the evaluation was thus intended from the start to produce meaningful analysis and policy recommendations that could be implemented.

Rating 5

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

Not applicable.

Rating N/A

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

Although no ethics board was involved, Technoscene indicated that no responses or feedback was reported in a way that the individual respondents could be identified.

Rating 4

2.2. Evaluator independence

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

Comment and Analysis

The service provider indicated that there was no interference by the client in the implementation of the evaluation.

Rating 5

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

Comment and Analysis

The DTI and Technoscene were both of the view that there was no conflict of interest involved in the evaluation process.

Rating 5

2.3. Key stakeholder involvement

STANDARD: Key stakeholders were consulted through a formalised mechanism or institutional arrangement during the evaluation

Comment and Analysis

The web-based survey collected feedback from a wide range of stakeholders.

Rating 5

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

Comment and Analysis

Capacity development was one of the main foci of the THRIP Programme, so it could be argued that the evaluation project was aimed at capacity development. However, capacity development during the evaluation itself was limited to continual liaison between service provider and client in respect of processes and progress.

Rating 2

2.4. Methodology

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

Comment and Analysis

Not applicable.

Rating N/A

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

Comment and Analysis

A delay in the response by some respondents was the only hiccup in the data collection process, resulting in an extension of the project timeline.

Rating 4

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

Comment and Analysis

The web-based data collection method, together with some desktop research, were highly appropriate for this project.

Rating 4

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

Comment and Analysis

The analytical approach was adequate for the purposes of this specific brief, but the service provider was of the view that a more comprehensive evaluation of THRIP would have been desirable.

Rating 4

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

Comment and Analysis

Key stakeholders were at the focus of the data gathering process.

Rating 4

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

Comment and Analysis

Beneficiaries of the THRIP Programme formed the bulk of the realised survey sample.

Rating 5

2.5. Project management

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

Comment and Analysis

Not applicable.

Rating N/A

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

The executive summary captured the essence of the lengthy evaluation report.

Rating 5

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

Comment and Analysis

The context of the developmental thrust of THRIP was explicit and integral to the purpose of the evaluation.

Rating 5

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

The primary question was in respect of the reason for declining numbers of applications for THRIP funding. As such the rationale was clear.

Rating 4

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

Not applicable.

Rating N/A

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**

The methodology was explicitly outlined in the report introduction and elaborated where appropriate in other sections of the report.

Rating 4

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

The key findings of the study were clearly presented and were distinguished from any unsubstantiated speculation.

Rating 4

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

Comment and Analysis

The conclusions and recommendations were clearly presented in the form of three well-developed scenarios and the implications of each.

Rating 5

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

Comment and Analysis

Mention of some limitations of the study could be found in the report, such as the delay in research publication outputs that might underestimate the impact of THRIP.

Rating 2

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

The quality of writing and presentation was good, including layout, formatting and consistency. Some slightly awkward grammar in places did not impact significantly on the high quality of the report.

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

The statistical data emerging from the survey were presented simply in either tables or graphs, using appropriate conventions.

Rating 4

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

A total of 66 figures and 8 tables were used throughout the report, to illustrate the survey findings. A comprehensive logframe tabulation summarised the characteristics of THRIP and similar programmes in South Korea, Australia and the USA.

Rating 5

STANDARD: Data analysis appeared to have been well executed

Comment and Analysis

The data were analysed in a simple and accessible manner.

Rating 4

STANDARD: Findings were supported by available evidence

Comment and Analysis

The findings were supported by the survey, stakeholder interviews and international evidence.

Rating 5

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

Comment and Analysis

The evidence was sufficient and appropriate to support the three postulated scenarios.

Rating 4

STANDARD: There was appropriate recognition of the possibility of alternative interpretations

Comment and Analysis

Different interpretations of the context and the decline in applications emerged in the stakeholder workshops. These were presented in the report.

Rating 3

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

Comment and Analysis

Methodological and analytical flaws were not discernible in the report.

Rating 4

3.4. Conclusions

STANDARD: Conclusions were derived from evidence

Comment and Analysis

The conclusions and three scenarios were based on the evidence gathered.

Rating **5**

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

Comment and Analysis

The conclusions factored in the trends discovered in the three international comparative case studies (Australia, USA, South Korea).

Rating **4**

STANDARD: Conclusions addressed the original evaluation purpose and questions

Comment and Analysis

The conclusions addressed the original evaluation questions and proactively went substantially beyond these into future scenario conceptualisation.

Rating **5**

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

Comment and Analysis

Not applicable.

Rating N/A

3.5. Recommendations

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

Comment and Analysis

The recommendations were presented and refined in consultation with the NRF and the THRIP Advisory Board.

Rating 4

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

Comment and Analysis

The relevant officials at the NRF and THRIP made inputs into the recommendations.

Rating 4

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

The recommendations took into account the policy context, including competing interests and priorities in the academic and commercial industry sectors.

Rating 4

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

Recommendations were targetted at the NRF and the academic and industrial sectors (both large companies and SMMEs) with a view to stimulating interest in applying for THRIP funding.

Rating 4

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

Some limitations of the evaluation were mentioned in the report.

Rating 2

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 full report did not explicitly document procedures to ensure confidentiality, but the service provider indicated that this had been done.

Rating 2

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

Comment and Analysis

Risks to individual participants in the evaluation were minimal as far as dissemination of findings on a public website is concerned.

Rating 5

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

Comment and Analysis

The number of individual respondents from each of the participating institutions was illustrated in Figure 10 but no pronouncements by any specific institution were identified in the report, thereby preserving confidentiality and reducing unfair risks.

Rating 5

4. Follow-up, use and learning

4.1. Presentation to stakeholders

STANDARD: Results were presented to all relevant stakeholders

Comment and Analysis

The results were presented to the THRIP Advisory Board and NRF and to other stakeholders through dissemination of the report.

Rating 3

4.2. Resource utilisation

STANDARD: The evaluation was completed within the planned timeframes

Comment and Analysis

Not applicable.

Rating N/A

STANDARD: The evaluation was completed within the agreed budget

Comment and Analysis

Not applicable.

Rating N/A

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 obtainable but could not be sourced on a website.

Rating 1

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

There was no explicit evidence of a specific reflective process after the evaluation.

Rating 2

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

The interviewed stakeholders were of the view that the evaluation added value to the development and modification of THRIP policy.

Rating 4

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

Comment and Analysis

The study was of conceptual value in understanding reasons behind the decline in applications for THRIP funding.

Rating 4

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 recommendations were factored into THRIP policy to encourage more applications.

Rating 4

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 evaluation had a clear positive impact in that it resulted in modifications to policy with a view to increasing industry and academic participation in the THRIP Programme.

Rating 4

References

DTI, 2009. THRIP: An initiative of the DTI, Strategic Plan 2009-2013, DTI & NRF, 16th April 2009.

AP Botha, 2010. Report on Evaluating the decline in THRIP applications between 2006/7 and 2008/9 and scenarios of possible intervention, DTI & NRF, (Technoscene), January 2010.

List of Interviewees

Dr Anthon Botha, CE of Technoscene, (012-8070869, anthon@technoscene.co.za), telephone conversation (22/2/2013), and comprehensive electronic response to questions, 28/2/2013.

Mr Ephraim Baloyi, Department of Trade & Industry (Ebaloyi@thedti.gov.za), electronic response to questions, 27/2/2013.