



# Department of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation

## Report on the Assessment of Government Evaluations

Evaluation Title:	Evaluation of the Impact of Agricultural Learnership in the Western Cape
Evaluation Number:	437
Evaluation Completion Date:	30 June 2014
Period of Evaluation:	January - June 2014
Submitted:	04 October 2014 by Meagan Jooste
Approved:	06 October 2014 by Mike Leslie

## Evaluation Details

Evaluation Title:	Evaluation of the Impact of Agricultural Learnership in the Western Cape
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Created:	17 July 2014 by Mike Leslie
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Period of Evaluation:	January - June 2014
Known Cost:	R 221,160.00
Known Cost Type:	Referenced
Initiated By:	Western Cape Government: Department of Agriculture
Initiated By Internal:	Yes
Undertaken By:	Urban-Econ Development Economists
Undertaken By Internal:	No

## Assessors

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## Assessment Documents

Document Name:	Document Type:	Added By:	Added On:
Main Document.docx	Evaluation report	Mike Leslie	17 July 2014
Main Message.docx	Presentations of evaluation findings and recommendations	Mike Leslie	17 July 2014
Annexure A.docx	Any other relevant documentation pertaining to the evaluation process	Mike Leslie	17 July 2014
Annexure B.docx	Any other relevant documentation pertaining to the evaluation process	Mike Leslie	17 July 2014
Annexure C.docx	Any other relevant documentation pertaining to the evaluation process	Mike Leslie	17 July 2014
Annexure D.xlsx	Any other relevant documentation pertaining to the evaluation process	Mike Leslie	17 July 2014
Executive Summary.docx	Any other relevant documentation pertaining to the evaluation process	Mike Leslie	17 July 2014
TOR FOR IMPACT ASSESSMENT 15 NOVEMBER 2013 FINAL.DOC	Terms of Reference (ToR) for the evaluation	Meagan Jooste	27 August 2014
Urban-Econ Proposal.docx	The proposal selected to conduct the evaluation	Meagan Jooste	27 August 2014

PRESENTATION TOR.pptx	Terms of Reference (ToR) for the evaluation	Meagan Jooste	27 August 2014
Centre Managers Survey.docx	Any other relevant documentation pertaining to the evaluation process	Meagan Jooste	27 August 2014
Farmers Survey.docx	Any other relevant documentation pertaining to the evaluation process	Meagan Jooste	27 August 2014
Focus Group Questions.docx	Any other relevant documentation pertaining to the evaluation process	Meagan Jooste	27 August 2014
Learner Survey.docx	Any other relevant documentation pertaining to the evaluation process	Meagan Jooste	27 August 2014
Final Draft Agri Learnership ME Framework_7 February 2014.xlsx	Any other relevant documentation pertaining to the evaluation process	Meagan Jooste	27 August 2014
Agri Learnership Impact Assessment Report_Draft 3 June.pdf	Evaluation report	Meagan Jooste	27 August 2014
Assessment Report at Moderation.pdf	Assessment Report at Moderation	Mike Leslie	01 October 2014

## Quality Assessment Summary

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The overall score of this evaluation has been rated at 3.39 out of 5 on the Likert-type scale applied to assess the quality of government evaluations. This rating implies that the evaluation is of a fairly good quality. This score was awarded to the evaluation as the interviews conducted for the assessment indicated that the evaluation was done to a fair standard despite some challenges in engaging with key stakeholders. However, while the evaluation is documented as an impact evaluation, it presents major threads of an implementation evaluation given its emphasis on understanding the effectiveness of the programme and gaps requiring improvement. In effect, it is a hybrid of an impact and implementation evaluation rather than solely the former. A gap in the impact component of this evaluation is the lack of comparison to a control (non-programme beneficiary) group so as to comprehend the relative impacts of the programme. It is for these reasons that the lowest overarching consideration score of 3.04 was assigned for 'quality control'. All parties interviewed for this assessment expressed immense gains in knowledge through the evaluation's implementation. This view was held by both the commissioning department (who has already taken the experience learned through this evaluation to inform its 5 year strategic plan for future evaluations and is actively seeking to expand its M&E personnel constituency), as well as the evaluation team whose younger team members (new graduates) expanded their evaluations expertise through it. The highest overarching consideration score of 3.75 was thus allocated to the 'capacity development' component of the evaluation. A particularly valuable component to this evaluation was the involvement of an external evaluation specialist through the duration of the study. This specialist's role was important to ensuring the evaluation's alignment to its intended objectives and that the quality of the evaluation conformed to best practice. This specialist's role could have been initiated even earlier in the evaluation, at the stage of formulating the Terms of Reference, but the department reports that this approach will be applied to forthcoming and future evaluations. The overarching considerations of 'coordination and alignment' and 'partnership approach' were thus scored next highest at 3.74 and 3.73 respectively. This assessment supports the view held by parties interviewed that the evaluation was of a fair quality and provides a key compilation of perceptions on the Western Cape Government: Department of Agriculture's FET programme as well as where there are opportunities for enhanced efficiencies.

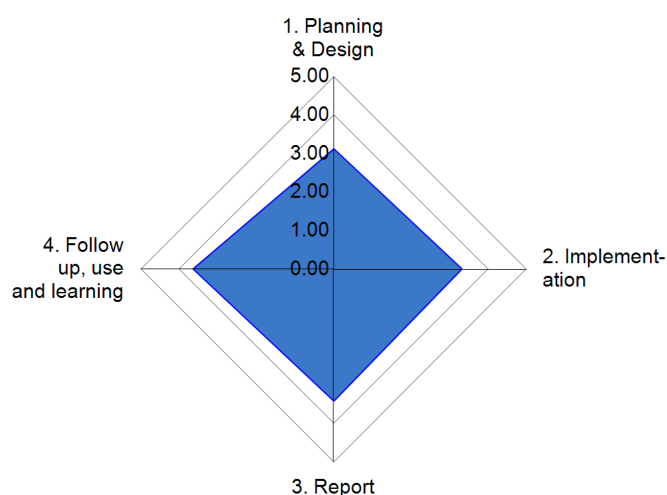
## Quality Assessment Scores

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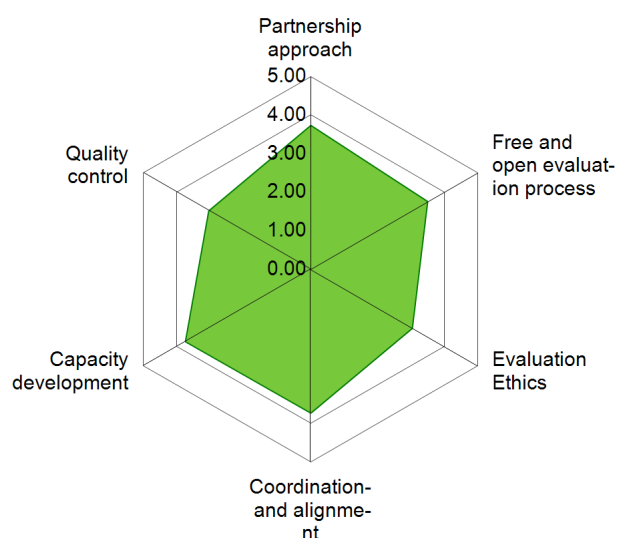
Phase of Evaluation	Score
1. Planning & Design	3.11
2. Implementation	3.34
3. Report	3.42
4. Follow-up, use and learning	3.65
<b>Total</b>	<b>3.39</b>

Overarching Consideration	Score
Partnership approach	3.73
Free and open evaluation process	3.51
Evaluation Ethics	3.06
Coordination and alignment	3.74
Capacity development	3.75
Quality control	3.04
<b>Total</b>	<b>3.39</b>

Scores: Phases of Evaluation



Scores: Overarching Considerations



Phase of Evaluation	Area of Evaluation	Score
1. Planning & Design	1.1. Quality of the TOR	3.54
1. Planning & Design	1.2. Adequacy of resourcing	3.45
1. Planning & Design	1.3. Alignment to policy context and background literature	1.80
1. Planning & Design	1.4. Appropriateness of the evaluation design and methodology	2.56
1. Planning & Design	1.5. Project management (Planning phase)	4.00
2. Implementation	2.1. Evaluation ethics and independence	3.55
2. Implementation	2.2. Participation and M&E skills development	3.60
2. Implementation	2.3. Methodological integrity	3.16
2. Implementation	2.4. Project management (Implementation phase)	3.00
3. Report	3.1. Completeness of reporting structure	3.96
3. Report	3.2. Accessibility of content	3.20
3. Report	3.3. Robustness of findings	3.41
3. Report	3.4. Strength of conclusions	2.14
3. Report	3.5. Suitability of recommendations	4.00
3. Report	3.6. Consideration of reporting risks and ethical implications	3.54
3. Report	3.7. Project management (Reporting phase)	3.00
4. Follow-up, use and learning	4.1. Resource utilisation	2.80
4. Follow-up, use and learning	4.2. Evaluation use	3.93
<b>Total</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>3.39</b>

# 1. Planning & Design

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## 1.1. Quality of the TOR

Standard:	1.1.1. The evaluation was guided by a well-structured and complete TOR or a well-structured and complete internal evaluation proposal
Comment and Analysis:	The evaluation was guided by a well-structured and complete ToR or internal evaluation proposal of a good standard. The ToR is clear and concise and provides a useful indication of the key components of the methodology expected by the Western Cape Government: Department of Agriculture (WCG: DoA).
Rating:	4
Standard:	1.1.2. The purpose of the evaluation stated in the TOR (or an internal evaluation proposal) was clear and explicit
Comment and Analysis:	The purpose of the evaluation is explicitly outlined as there being "...a need to objectively evaluate the socio- and agro-economic returns on this [Further Education Training] investment as well as to evaluate the alignment of the programme with agricultural industry needs". The purpose stated was thus clear, explicit and provided good reason for the evaluation particularly in terms of the need for an objective assessment to be done.
Rating:	4
Standard:	1.1.3. The evaluation questions in the TOR (or an internal evaluation proposal) were clearly stated and appropriate for addressing the evaluation purpose
Comment and Analysis:	The evaluation questions in the ToR were clearly stated in a section detailing the 'focus of the evaluation'. They relate to a review of the socio-economic impacts, knowledge transfer, added value and appropriateness of the WCG: DoA FET programme. These key questions were well-suited to addressing the evaluation purpose.
Rating:	4
Standard:	1.1.4. The approach and type of evaluation was suited to the purpose and scope of the evaluation TOR (or an internal evaluation proposal)
Comment and Analysis:	The purpose of the evaluation was broadly to objectively determine the socio- and agro-economic returns on the investment into Further Education and Training and alignment to the needs of the agricultural sector. To this end, an independent (external) impact evaluation was selected. This choice of evaluation was well suited to the purpose and scope of the evaluation as outlined in the ToR.
Rating:	4

Standard:	1.1.5. The TOR (or an internal evaluation proposal) identified the intended users of the evaluation and their information needs
Comment and Analysis:	The ToR identified the intended users of the outputs of the evaluation as the Structured Agricultural Education and Training programme as they strive for excellence with regards to all training services they deliver. The ToR also mentions that the information gathered through the evaluation would facilitate their review, and if necessary, amendment of the approach employed for addressing skills shortages in the Western Cape.
Rating:	3
Standard:	1.1.6. Key stakeholders were involved in the scoping of the TOR and choosing the purpose of the evaluation
Comment and Analysis:	The WCG: DoA compiled the ToR. The project's external Monitoring and Evaluation adviser/specialist was not part of the process of developing the ToR. It may have been helpful to involve the external M&E adviser however, to ensure the ToR was more clearly outlined in terms of the methodological approach sought by the WCG: DoA but also in ensuring the pitch of the ToR was right in terms of requiring an objective/external evaluation.
Rating:	2

## 1.2. Adequacy of resourcing

Standard:	1.2.1. The evaluation was adequately resourced in terms of time allocated
Comment and Analysis:	The time period originally allocated for the evaluation was three and a half months (13 December 2013 - 31 March 2014). From the interviewees engaged for this assessment, it was viewed that this was an adequate amount of time to complete the impact evaluation.
Rating:	3
Standard:	1.2.2. The evaluation was adequately resourced in terms of original budget
Comment and Analysis:	Views on the budget's adequacy for the type of evaluation were mixed but it was felt that the scope of work was amicable to adjustment to the budget allocated. As such, the evaluation was seen to be fairly resourced.
Rating:	3
Standard:	1.2.3. The evaluation was adequately resourced in terms of staffing and skills sets
Comment and Analysis:	The core team from the WCG: DoA comprised 4 key individuals including the Chief Director: Structured Agricultural Education and Training, Director: Business Planning and Strategy, Acting Director: Further Education and Training and an independent (external) evaluation specialist. The evaluator's team comprised development and agricultural economists and an evaluations expert. All in all, the evaluation was thus well resourced in terms of staffing and skills sets though the addition of an external education specialist may well have added value to the team.
Rating:	4

Standard:	1.2.4. Where appropriate, the evaluation planned to incorporate an element of capacity building of partners/staff responsible for the evaluand
Comment and Analysis:	The WCG: DoA and the evaluator viewed the evaluation as an opportunity to build capacities within their entities as well as across the beneficiaries of the FET programme. The appointment of a dedicated external evaluation specialist to support the FET Programme Manager in the implementation of the evaluation also presented an important opportunity for knowledge transfer to the WCG: DoA and the evaluation team. As such, the evaluation was intended to contain an element of capacity building of those responsible for the evaluand through informal knowledge transfer for the duration of the project.
Rating:	5

### 1.3. Alignment to policy context and background literature

Standard:	1.3.1. There was evidence that a review of the relevant policy and programme environments had been conducted and used in planning the research
Comment and Analysis:	While this impact evaluation was meant to identify some of the strengths and weaknesses of the FET programme, the department was already taking remedial action to address challenges it had identified through its implementation of the programme. As an example, whereas the department used to issue an open call for applicants to the FET programme, it had acknowledged that a more strategic and selective process was necessary to acquire an intake of students with a genuine interest in agricultural stewardship. Further, in issuing the call for proposals for this impact evaluation, the WCG: DoA was seeking to align with a national scale effort to improve the quality of FET programmes in South Africa. As such, it is evident that in planning the research, the WCG: DoA made an effort to review the relevant policy and programme environments.
Rating:	3

Standard:	1.3.2. There was evidence of a review of appropriate literature having been conducted and used in planning the research
Comment and Analysis:	It is not evident from engagements with parties responsible for the evaluation that a review of appropriate literature was conducted and used to plan this research.
Rating:	1

### 1.4. Appropriateness of the evaluation design and methodology

Standard:	1.4.1. 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 an indirect reference to the intervention logic in the planning of the evaluation as evidenced by the ToR and Urban-Econ's proposal outlining the need for an understanding of; the impact of the FET programme, what the programme's intended and unintended outcomes have been as well as where there are opportunities to improve the programme's effectiveness.
Rating:	2



Standard:	1.4.2. Key stakeholders were consulted on the design and methodology of the evaluation
Comment and Analysis:	The design and methodology for the evaluation, as outlined in the ToR, was developed by the WCG: DoA Acting Director for FET as well as the Director: Business Planning and Strategy. The Director: Business Planning and Strategy (D: BPS) is the key departmental individual responsible for overseeing evaluations and is thus viewed as a strategic adviser. It is understood that the scope of work in the ToR was adapted after the compulsory briefing session to align better with the proposed budget. As such, the combined inputs obtained from the D: BPS and queries raised at the briefing session represented engagement with stakeholders to refine the design and methodology of the evaluation. An additional key stakeholder who could have been engaged is the independent evaluation specialist whose role mainly came into effect at the implementation phase of the project.
Rating:	3
Standard:	1.4.3. The planned methodology was appropriate to the questions being asked
Comment and Analysis:	The key evaluation questions related to a review of the impacts of the FET programme (including the socio-economic and skills base impacts) as well as the aspects of the programme's design which could be revised to enhance efficiencies. While the combined methodology of reviewing available literature on the programme design as well as engaging stakeholders to gather insight on the programme's impacts, was well suited to the questions being asked, there was no comparison made to a control group of stakeholders/non-learnership beneficiaries, to establish the relative impact of the programme. In addition, the evaluation questions spilled over into probing stakeholders on the effectiveness of the implementation of the programme and as such represented traits of an implementation evaluation. Thus, the planned methodology was not entirely appropriate for addressing all of the questions being asked.
Rating:	2
Standard:	1.4.4. Sampling was appropriate and adequate given focus and purpose of evaluation
Comment and Analysis:	The sample covered included: officials of the WCG: DoA, learners (programme beneficiaries), farmers and other agricultural related stakeholders. To reiterate, the focus and purpose of the evaluation was to understand the impacts of the FET impacts as felt by those involved and affected by its implementation. While the selected sample aligned well with the purpose and focus of the evaluation, no comparative (non-programme beneficiary) group was sampled to contrast the experiences/impact of the programme to. Thus the sampling planned was not entirely appropriate given the focus and purpose of the evaluation.
Rating:	2
Standard:	1.4.5. There was a planned process for using the findings of the evaluation
Comment and Analysis:	The ToR clearly indicates that the information compiled through the evaluation was meant to be used "...as a resource, amongst others, to review and if necessary amend the approach that is being employed to reach the goal of addressing skills shortages in the Western Cape." Further to this, the WCG: DoA reported that the evaluation was intended to help the department stay abreast of sectoral skills demand in the agricultural sector such that the FET programme can expose learners to integrated learning through partnerships with the sector to forge internship/employment opportunities for learners. There was thus a well planned process for using the evaluation findings.
Rating:	4

1.5. Project management (Planning phase)

Standard:	1.5.1. The inception phase was used to develop a common agreement on how the evaluation would be implemented
Comment and Analysis:	The inception meeting was effectively utilized to clarify the interview sample, identify key interview questions as well as to affirm the project milestones and elaborate on the sub-components linked to each milestone.
Rating:	4

## 2. Implementation

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### 2.1. Evaluation ethics and independence

Standard: 2.1.1. Where data was gathered in contexts where ethical sensitivity is high, appropriate clearance was achieved 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: The data collected for this evaluation were treated with due sensitivity. At the outset of engaging with stakeholders the interviewer verbally confirmed the stakeholder's anonymity. All interviews were conducted by Urban-Econ and the full dataset of feedback handed over to the WCG: DoA assigned unique numerical identifiers to respondents which meant that individuals cannot be identified/brought into question on their comments.

Rating: 3

Standard: 2.1.2. Where external, the evaluation team was able to work freely without significant interference

Comment and Analysis: The external evaluation team (Urban-Econ) felt complete freedom to conduct the evaluation and were able to do so without interference. Rather, they viewed the support of the WCG: DoA valuable particularly when it came to the WCG: DoA helping Urban-Econ in securing interviews with key officials. In developing the evaluation's recommendations, the evaluation team took steps to ensure independence in formulating them by engaging only with the external evaluation specialist but not the department. This ensured an objective view on the strengths, weaknesses and proposed areas for improvement in the programme, were identified.

Rating: 5

Standard: 2.1.3. The evaluation team was impartial and there was no evidence of conflict of interest

Comment and Analysis: The evaluation team (Urban-Econ) were impartial and had no apparent conflict of interest in completing the evaluation. Urban-Econ had previously conducted research for the WCG: DoA, but not on the FET programme.

Rating: 3

## 2.2. Participation and M&E skills development

Standard:	2.2.1. Key stakeholders were consulted through a formalised mechanism or institutional arrangement
Comment and Analysis:	Key stakeholders were regularly consulted through conversations on the approach of the evaluation as well as how it was being undertaken. The evaluation team (Urban-Econ) engaged most significantly with the WCG: DoA FET Programme Manager. The WCG: DoA FET Programme Manager also interacted with the independent evaluation specialist to ensure the project's alignment to evaluation's practice as well as to garner advice on how to adjust to unexpected obstacles where these arose. In addition, the various FET Centre Managers played a supportive role to the evaluator team in securing interviews with learners. The WCG: DoA FET Programme Manager facilitated this communication.
Rating:	4
Standard:	2.2.2. Where appropriate, an element of capacity building of partners responsible for the evaluand was incorporated into the evaluation process
Comment and Analysis:	The WCG: DoA FET Programme Manager as well as the Director: Business Planning and Strategy reported that immense capacity development occurred through this evaluation. The FET Programme Manager was able to work closely with Urban-Econ throughout the project to understand both the content and feedback obtained through the assessment as well as where there were challenges observed and opportunities for the evolution of the programme. Further, as the FET Programme Manager was new to the field of evaluations, the interaction with Urban-Econ formed an important basis for the department's capacity-development in the Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) sphere.
Rating:	4
Standard:	2.2.3. Where appropriate, the evaluation team incorporated an element of skills development amongst the evaluators (e.g. students, interns, recent graduates, etc)
Comment and Analysis:	The evaluation team (Urban-Econ) was multidisciplinary (development and agricultural economists and monitoring and evaluation practitioners) and able to expand its capacity in the evaluation as well as qualitative research fields. In particular, the time spent reviewing programme information and overcoming fieldwork obstacles (in terms of securing contact with programme beneficiaries), represent important learnings to the team. In addition, Urban-Econ conducts an internal peer review of draft project reports and thought this, colleagues external to the project provided insightful comment on the draft report and helped the team (which comprised a number of new economics graduates) to formulate a more succinctly and clearly pitched document. This supported the internal skills development of young graduates new to Urban-Econ.
Rating:	4

Standard:	2.2.4. Peer review of the agreed evaluation design and methodology occurred prior to undertaking data collection
Comment and Analysis:	An external evaluation specialist supported the WCG: DoA in reviewing the design and methodology of the evaluation before undertaking data collection. The specialist's role was particularly important as the evaluator's team misinterpreted the ToR in terms of the focus of the literature review. The specialist identified that the evaluator drafted it with a focus on M&E practice and experience but with no focus on the experiences of other learnerships in South Africa or abroad. The specialist ensured that attention was also afforded to the latter as it would inform the methodology for the stakeholder engagement process. In addition, the challenge of limited contact information for stakeholders was brought to the attention of the specialist fairly late. Had the specialist been informed earlier, this could have reduced the effort expended by the evaluator's team as the specialist could have advised them on an appropriate strategy to overcome this challenge. Thus, while the specialist was engaged from the point of the appointment of the evaluating team, this role could have been introduced even earlier, at the point of drafting the ToR for this work as some of the challenges in interpretation of the brief/sampling could have been circumvented earlier on in the process.
Rating:	2

### 2.3. Methodological integrity

Standard:	2.3.1. The methods employed in the process of the evaluation were consistent with those planned
Comment and Analysis:	In general, the methods employed in the process of the evaluation were consistent with those planned. In particular, the evaluation comprised both a desktop and fieldwork component to gather information on the design and impact of the FET programme on learners who went through the programme. This included understanding how the programme has to date impacted the lives of its beneficiaries in terms of employment opportunities, income generation and skills development as well as the impact which the programme has had on the skills development in the agricultural sector in the province. One limitation of the method employed was that no comparative group (non-beneficiary) learner group was engaged to contrast the relative impacts of the programme to date. This was not planned to be done in this evaluation but would have aligned with best practice.
Rating:	2

Standard:	2.3.2. A pilot of data collection instrumentation occurred prior to undertaking data collection
Comment and Analysis:	The data collection instruments were piloted across 3 of the 5 FET centres. This pilot revealed some issues with the clarity of questions. As a consequence, some amendments were made to improve the clarity of questions in the questionnaires.
Rating:	4

Standard:	2.3.3. Data collection was not compromised by fieldwork-level problems or unplanned diversions from original intentions
Comment and Analysis:	One significant challenge posed to the evaluation team was the inaccuracies of the beneficiary database provided by the WCG: DoA. This database represents a record of all FET beneficiaries over the evaluation period (2005 - 2012). The challenge with the database was that much of the contact information for beneficiaries had expired as they either changed addresses or phone numbers and were unreachable even through contact with fellow beneficiaries/trainers. The evaluation team exercised tremendous effort to engage with as many beneficiaries as possible but was ultimately only able to engaged with 52% of the intended sample. In general, data collection thus experienced some fieldwork-level problems from original intentions but these did not seriously compromise data collection overall.
Rating:	2
Standard:	2.3.4. Forms of data gathering were appropriate given the scope of evaluation
Comment and Analysis:	Data gathering was done in the form of a desktop literature review and key stakeholder interviews (with a focus on programme beneficiaries). The purpose of the evaluation was to articulate the programme's design, the impact it has had to date as well as where there is opportunity for enhanced efficiencies. In effect, the evaluation took the shape of a hybrid of an impact and implementation evaluation as it performed a dual purpose of: 1. measuring changes in outcomes and the well-being of programme learners and 2. assessing whether the programme's operational mechanisms have supported achievement of the objectives or not. While the forms of data gathering were appropriate to such a hybrid evaluation, they were not entirely appropriate to the scoped evaluation.
Rating:	2
Standard:	2.3.5. The data analysis approach and methods were appropriate and sufficient given the purposes of the evaluation
Comment and Analysis:	The data analysis approach entailed a combination of a desktop literature review and stakeholder engagement process. This information was then collated into an 'Evaluation Framework' comprising the key objectives (including its intended outcomes), performance indicators (including its impact components) and scoring of the FET programme. The feedback provided a useful view into the key findings, identified issues/notable observations and recommendations for the enhanced efficiency of the programme. Given that the evaluation was intended to identify the design elements for improvement and the impacts of the programme, the data analysis approach and methods were fairly appropriate given the purpose of the evaluation. However, as the evaluation did not make any comparison to a control (non-beneficiary) group, it was insufficient for the purpose of an impact evaluation.
Rating:	2
Standard:	2.3.6. Key stakeholders were significantly engaged as part of the methodology
Comment and Analysis:	Key stakeholders engaged as part of the methodology included Centre Managers, Lecturers, Farmers and Learners in proximity to the 5 FET centres as well as key departmental officials from the WCG: DoA. These engagements were important to ensure a clear understanding of the design and implementation of the FET programme. The methodology was premised on obtaining a representative view on the impacts, perceived strengths and weaknesses and areas of improvement in the FET programme. It is viewed that these were the key stakeholders and they were well engaged as part of the methodology.
Rating:	5

Standard:	2.3.7. The methodology included engaging beneficiaries appropriately as a key source of data and information
Comment and Analysis:	In as far as the accuracy of database contact records permitted, beneficiaries (present and past FET learners) were extensively engaged to gather primary data and information. Learners were either engaged on a one-on-one level or through focus groups. Despite the database constraints the evaluation team were able to engage with 52% of the learner sample for the 2005-2012 period, which is viewed as a fairly representative sample. The information gathered from these beneficiaries complemented, confirmed or contrasted to that obtained from other key stakeholders.
Rating:	5

## 2.4. Project management (Implementation phase)

Standard:	2.4.1. The evaluation was conducted without significant shifts to scheduled project milestones and timeframes
Comment and Analysis:	The evaluation did experience one slight change in the scheduled project milestones and timeframes but these were not significant. The reason for the shift was a delay in the WCG issuing a project order number. As a result, before the evaluation team could be paid this issue had to be resolved. The team were thus advised to halt the project while this issue was addressed. Ultimately this meant the project was shifted out by approximately 2 weeks.
Rating:	3

## 3. Report

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### 3.1. Completeness of reporting structure

Standard: 3.1.1. Executive summary captures key components of the report appropriately

Comment and Analysis: The executive summary captures the key components of the report appropriately and concisely. It includes the purpose and context of the evaluation, the evaluation approach as well as the key findings and recommendations for improved efficiencies.

Rating: 5

Standard: 3.1.2. The context of the development intervention is explicit and presented as relevant to the evaluation

Comment and Analysis: The context of the development intervention is succinctly and well outlined in the introductory and context sections of the main report. These sections provide a useful overview of the WCG: DoA FET programme as well as the purpose and intention of this evaluation in relation to the strategic intentions of the programme. Further to this, there is a useful contextual background presented in the literature review relative to lessons drawn from other learnership programmes in South Africa.

Rating: 5

Standard: 3.1.3. There is a clear rationale for the evaluation questions

Comment and Analysis: The evaluation questions are presented as relevant to its overarching objective in terms of assessing the effectiveness of the Learnership Programme by identifying success areas and gaps in the programme which require improvement.

Rating: 3

Standard: 3.1.4. The scope or focus of the evaluation is apparent in the report

Comment and Analysis: The report clearly indicates that it is an assessment of the Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Learnership Programme to determine its impact for the period between 2005 and 2012. Further the report stipulates upfront that its key objective is to evaluate the effectiveness of the Learnership Programme by identifying success areas and gaps in the programme requiring improvement. The introductory section of the report also eludes to the methodological approach to its comprehensive analysis of the programme.

Rating: 5



Standard:	3.1.5. A detailed methodology is outlined in the relevant section of the report to the point that a reader can understand the data collection, analysis and interpretation approaches used
Comment and Analysis:	Section 3.3 of the report outlines the Evaluation Framework employed for the evaluation (which is detailed in Annexure B). This framework represents the template into which the outcomes of the desktop literature review and stakeholder engagement processes culminated into the data analysis (which is then captured in Section 4 and Annexure 3). Within this section, there is also reflection upon the data collection process. The methodological approach was thus well outlined to the reader within the main report and corresponding annexures.
Rating:	4
Standard:	3.1.6. Acknowledgement of limitations of all aspects of the methodology and findings are clearly and succinctly articulated
Comment and Analysis:	Within the data collection section of the report there are footnotes explaining some of the limitations corresponding to the fieldwork process. There is also mention that the recommendations should be viewed with cognisance of changes to the FET programme already underway by the time of the evaluation's initiation. In general, while there is some acknowledgement of limitations, these are not exhaustive.
Rating:	2
Standard:	3.1.7. Key findings are presented in a clear way; they are made distinct from uncertain or speculative findings; and unused data is not presented in the body of the report
Comment and Analysis:	The main report succinctly presents the key findings and important data outputs which underpin these. There is no apparent presentation of unused data in the body of the report and only the key results from the stakeholder engagement process are presented. This makes for a succinct report.
Rating:	5
Standard:	3.1.8. Conclusions and recommendations are clear and succinctly articulated
Comment and Analysis:	The report outlines the main conclusions and recommendations well through, in some cases, the use of either summary paragraphs at the end of a section or within the respective review of each of perceptions on the programme's objectives (i.e. section 4.2). It would however have been ideal to see a dedicated and elaborated conclusion section to guide the reader into the proposed recommendations better.
Rating:	3

## 3.2. Accessibility of content

Standard:	3.2.1. The final evaluation report is user-friendly, written in accessible language and its content follows a clear logic
Comment and Analysis:	The final evaluation report is user-friendly and written in accessible language. There is an apparent logic to its structure insofar as it provides an overview of the programme followed by a synthesis of the perceptions of its impact (relative to its intended objectives). These components then culminate in the presentation of a set of accessible, relevant and clear recommendations for the improvement of the programme. It would however have been ideal to see a dedicated and elaborated conclusion section to guide the reader into the proposed recommendations better.
Rating:	3
Standard:	3.2.2. Quality of writing and presentation is 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 in the report is adequate for publication. There are some minor grammatical and typographical errors but these are not widespread. As it stands the main report is missing its own reference list (though one is linked to Annexure A: Literature Review). It is suggested that a reference list is made for the main report at the least to present the key references relevant to it (e.g. South African Qualifications Authority (2006), Skills Development Act 97, GWMES, HSRC (2012), etc.).
Rating:	3
Standard:	3.2.3. Appropriate conventions are 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:	Appropriate conventions are utilised in the presentation of data. In general the data reported reflected on the perspectives of various stakeholders engaged and a useful, clearly articulated overview of the quantitative and qualitative feedback from these engagements is provided within the Analysis of Objectives section in particular. This feedback is aggregated to the level of overarching groups engaged (e.g. 'farmers', 'learners', 'officials', etc.) as well as in terms of providing overarching qualitative statements/views held (so no direct quotations are made) so as not to single out individual comments in any way. The quantitative information is presented in a tangible manner.
Rating:	3

Standard:	3.2.4. The use of figures and tables is such that it supports communication and comprehension of results; and data reported in figures and tables are readily discernible and useful to a reader familiar with data presentation conventions
Comment and Analysis:	The report makes significant use of tables to reflect upon the study's key findings but only one figure is used (a pie chart). In general, the use of tables is effective in succinctly communicating the key points. This is the case with the exception of the table which reviews the 'Analysis of Objectives'. While the use of a table does provide a cleaner look to this section, it could have been reduced in terms of the amount of text. However, in general the use of tables and figures complements the communication of results well and is effective. It may have been useful to see more use of figures to diversify the presentation of data (which is predominantly done through the use of tables), but it is not a notable absence in the report.
Rating:	4

### 3.3. Robustness of findings

Standard:	3.3.1. Data analysis appears to have been well executed
Comment and Analysis:	The data analysis comprises both a qualitative and quantitative review of the outcomes of the stakeholder engagement process. This includes providing overview descriptive statistics to reflect upon trends observed in the 2005-2012 period, as well as complimentary commentary to add perspective to the observed trends. In general, the data analysis appears to have been well executed and is usefully documented in the report.
Rating:	5

Standard:	3.3.2. Findings are supported by available evidence
Comment and Analysis:	The reports main findings are well supported by evidence from interviews with a variety of stakeholders (officials of the WCG: DoA, the agricultural sector (employers, farms and other industry role-players) and learners). The reports findings were also indirectly informed by the outcomes of the literature review of the case studies of learnerships in other parts of South Africa. In effect, the findings are well supported by both quantitative and qualitative evidence that is triangulated to enrich, examine or explain data.
Rating:	5

Standard:	3.3.3. The evidence gathered is sufficiently and appropriately analysed to support the argument
Comment and Analysis:	The evidence gathered through the stakeholder engagement process in particular, was well analysed to support the arguments surrounding the perceived and actual impacts which the FET programme has had to date.
Rating:	4

Standard:	3.3.4. There is appropriate recognition of the possibility of alternative interpretations
Comment and Analysis:	The report does make some recognition of the possibility of alternative interpretations. For example, in regards to stakeholder interpretations of the Learnership Programme. While the programme is viewed as a skills training programme, the report indicates that: 1. officials interpret the learnership in terms of its overall purpose (of reducing unemployment), while the learners view it in terms of its content (courses offered). Annexure C presents the results of the learner survey and is useful as an additional reference for alternative perceptions across learners. It would have added value to the report had these alternative perceptions been more explicitly highlighted.
Rating:	3
Standard:	3.3.5. The report appears free of significant methodological and analytic flaws
Comment and Analysis:	The Evaluation Framework developed for this evaluation is an invaluable tool to the WCG: DoA in understanding the impact of the programme and where there is room for its improvement. However, a major methodological flaw in the evaluation is the fact that the report suggests it to be an impact evaluation and yet it has major threads of an implementation evaluation in it. While it would not be fair to suggest that the evaluation does not contain impact evaluation components, it does not achieve best practice in completing such an assessment as it lacks a comparison to a control (non-beneficiary) group.
Rating:	1
Standard:	3.3.6. Relevant limitations of the evaluation are noted
Comment and Analysis:	There is an implicit recognition of the limitations of the evaluation as a whole but these are, with the exception of footnotes 1 and 2, these are not clearly outlined.
Rating:	2

### 3.4. Strength of conclusions

Standard:	3.4.1. Conclusions are derived from evidence
Comment and Analysis:	There is no dedicated conclusionary section to the main report. The conclusions are briefly reflected upon in Section 6 (Recommendations). These are based on the evidence as gathered mainly through the stakeholder engagement process.
Rating:	3
Standard:	3.4.2. Conclusions take into account relevant empirical and/or analytic work from related research studies and evaluations
Comment and Analysis:	The conclusions do not explicitly account for additional empirical or analytic work from related research studies and evaluations. The conclusions as summarised in the recommendations section seem to solely relate to the outcomes of the stakeholder engagement process.
Rating:	1

Standard:	3.4.3. Conclusions address the original evaluation purpose and questions
Comment and Analysis:	The main report documents that the objective of the evaluation was to assess the effectiveness of the FET programme in terms of success areas and areas for improvement. The conclusions address the original evaluation purpose and questions in terms the areas for improvement in the effectiveness of the programme but do not highlight the main successes of the programme. It would also have been ideal for the conclusions to emphasize some of the observed socio-economic impacts of the programme for example.
Rating:	3

Standard:	3.4.4. Conclusions are drawn with explicit reference to the intervention logic or theory of change
Comment and Analysis:	The conclusions make no explicit reference to the intervention logic.
Rating:	1

### 3.5. Suitability of recommendations

Standard:	3.5.1. Recommendations are made in consultation with appropriate sectoral partners or experts
Comment and Analysis:	The reports recommendations were developed by Urban-Econ in consultation with the external evaluation specialist assigned by the department to provide advisory support on the evaluation (i.e the external peer reviewer). In addition, Urban-Econ conducted an internal peer review of the draft report with colleagues (who are sectoral experts in the field of development and agricultural economics) in the organization, before its finalization.
Rating:	4

Standard:	3.5.2. Recommendations are shaped following discussions with relevant government officials and other relevant stakeholders
Comment and Analysis:	The recommendations developed for the report were shaped based on feedback obtained through engagements with various parties including: relevant government officials, agricultural industry representatives and the programme beneficiaries. While these parties were not part of the evaluation review committee (a committee which, due to limited internal department capacities, could not be established), their inputs were invaluable to the formulation of the recommendations. To ensure the recommendations were objectively derived, the evaluation team did not develop them with the WCG: DoA.
Rating:	4

Standard:	3.5.3. Recommendations are relevant to the current policy context
Comment and Analysis:	The reports recommendations are particularly well formulated and relevant to the current policy context. They are clearly and succinctly outlined, with reference to the logic underpinning them and provide a proactive indication of how the department can take them forward.
Rating:	4

Standard:	3.5.4. Recommendations are targetted at a specific audience sufficiently - are specific, feasible, affordable and acceptable
Comment and Analysis:	The recommendations are well directed to specific parties. For example, there is mention of the specific agricultural organisations operational in the province who should be engaged as part of an Industry Needs Assessment. Another example is where reference is made to the importance of FET lecturers overseeing the practical training of FET learners. In general, parties interviewed for this assessment report that the recommendations are sufficiently specific, feasible, and acceptable.
Rating:	4

### 3.6. Consideration of reporting risks and ethical implications

Standard:	3.6.1. Peer review of the draft evaluation report occurred prior to finalisation of the evaluation report
Comment and Analysis:	The draft report was reviewed by an external evaluation specialist assigned to support the WCG: DoA on the evaluation. This review occurred prior to the report's finalization and peer review comments were mostly addressed prior to finalisation of the evaluation report and its annexures. The peer reviewer's guidance was particularly valuable in ensuring the main report was ultimately succinct and that further information relevant to the evaluation was reserved for the report's annexures.
Rating:	5

Standard:	3.6.2. The full report documents procedures intended to ensure confidentiality and to secure informed consent where necessary (in some cases this is not needed - e.g. evaluation synthesis - in which case N/A should be recorded)
Comment and Analysis:	The report does not document any procedures undertaken to ensure confidentiality or to secure informed consent where appropriate.
Rating:	1

Standard:	3.6.3. There are no risks to participants in disseminating the original report on a public website
Comment and Analysis:	There are no apparent risks to participants of disseminating the original main report on a public website as there is no mention of specific individuals names/affiliations/designations even. All commentary on perceptions is done at an aggregated level. For example in relation to views held by 'officials', 'learners' or 'farmers', which ensures the anonymity of study participants.
Rating:	4

Standard:	3.6.4. There are no unfair risks to institutions in disseminating the original report on a public website
Comment and Analysis:	There are no apparent unfair risks to institutions in disseminating the original main report on a public website. The main report is dominated by commentary on the design and impact of the WCG: DoA FET programme and does not call into question any institutions which perform a role in its functioning.
Rating:	4

### 3.7. Project management (Reporting phase)

Standard:	3.7.1. A project closure meeting that reflected on the challenges and strengths of the evaluation process occurred
Comment and Analysis:	As a limited time has lapsed since the completion of the evaluation, a formal project closure meeting is yet to occur to reflect upon the challenges and strengths of the evaluation process. However, many of these aspects of the evaluation have been acknowledged through informal discussions amongst the FET Programme Manager, evaluation team and the external evaluation specialist through the duration of the study. These discussions informed the follow-up engagements within the WCG: DoA in the reflective process they've undertaken regarding the evaluation.
Rating:	3

## 4. Follow-up, use and learning

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### 4.1. Resource utilisation

Standard:	4.1.1. The evaluation was completed within the planned timeframes
Comment and Analysis:	The evaluation was completed outside of the planned timeframes but with approval from the WCG: DoA as the reason for a slight change in the timeframe was a consequence of a supply chain procedure delay.
Rating:	2

Standard:	4.1.2. The evaluation was completed within the agreed budget
Comment and Analysis:	According to the WCG: DoA FET Programme Manager and the evaluation team, the budget was sufficient to complete the evaluation. However, the evaluation team did have to adapt their efforts to match the budget cap especially as a large proportion of the project time was expended on the stakeholder engagement process.
Rating:	4

### 4.2. Evaluation use

Standard:	4.2.1. Results of the evaluation have been presented to all relevant stakeholders
Comment and Analysis:	A limited amount of time has lapsed since the completion of the evaluation in June 2014 and this assessment is thus being completed fairly soon after its close-out. Since then however the WCG: DoA have already been actively engaging with the outputs of the evaluation amongst management staff in the department. Work is underway to extend the exposure the report's findings obtained through presentation to other relevant stakeholders.
Rating:	3



Standard:	4.2.2. A reflective process has been undertaken by the steering committee (if no steering committee exists then by the evaluation management team or the involved department officials) to reflect on what could be done to strengthen future evaluations
Comment and Analysis:	The evaluation's outputs were presented at the WCG: DoA annual strategic plan meeting and the lessons learned from it have been used to shape the department's 5 year strategic plan. Interviewees reported that there were significant learnings from the evaluation and through the strategic plan and the coordination of evaluations by the Director: Business Planning and Strategy, a set of guiding principles for future evaluations have been established. These include that procurement processes need to be very explicit about the scope of work and specific expectations of service providers, Programme managers need to spend sufficient time on developing ToR's to make the implementation of project's easier and Programme Managers need to drive and lead the implementation of evaluations. The department has also previously, and through this evaluation, recognised the need for a dedicated staff member to advise Programme Managers on the methodology for evaluations. In the case of this evaluation an external evaluation specialist was appointed to assist the department but in the long-term they would like someone internal to the department to perform this role. The department has tried for about 18 months to identify such an employer but to no avail as yet. Until the position can be filled the department will rely on the support of external evaluation specialists.
Rating:	5
Standard:	4.2.3. The evaluation study is seen by interviewed stakeholders as having added significant symbolic value to the policy or programme (e.g. raised its profile)
Comment and Analysis:	The evaluation is viewed by interviewees as having added significant value to the programme particularly given the accuracy and potential impact-fulness of the conclusions and recommendations. The recommendations made in the report are viewed as vital to enhancing the effectiveness of the programme and the FET Programme Manager in particular, has embraced them fully and is effecting change already.
Rating:	5
Standard:	4.2.4. The evaluation study is of conceptual value in understanding what has happened and possibly in shaping policy and practice
Comment and Analysis:	The evaluation is viewed as being important in firstly, objectively identifying issues and concerns for the department's consideration and secondly, in helping the department reaffirm issues it has previously pinpointed as well as the means to overcome challenges and optimise on opportunities. The FET Programme Manager is already putting plans into action to overcome some of the identified challenges (such as those relating to the strategic selection of applicants as well as the transformation of the learner database records).
Rating:	5
Standard:	4.2.5. Development of a draft improvement plan has been started, but not completed, based on the findings and recommendations set out in the evaluation
Comment and Analysis:	The department has begun developing a management action plan and plan to, within the next 3 months, determine how to implement all the evaluation's recommendations.
Rating:	3

Standard:	4.2.6. The report is publicly available (website or otherwise published document), except where there were legitimate security concerns *Note: only apply if sufficient time has elapsed since completion of the evaluation
Comment and Analysis:	As the report is still under discussion by the WCG: DoA and is yet to be presented to all stakeholders, it is not yet publicly available. Sufficient time is yet to lapse.
Rating:	N/A
Standard:	4.2.7. There is clear evidence of instrumental use - that the recommendations of the evaluation were implemented to a significant extent *Note: only apply if sufficient time has elapsed since completion of the evaluation
Comment and Analysis:	Sufficient time is yet to elapse since the completion of the evaluation to comment on the extent to which the recommendations have been implemented. As noted, the FET Programme Manager has already begun adjusting programme elements to address some of the issues raised through the evaluation (and previously identified by the department). However, it would not be fair to comment on the extent to which the other recommendations have been internalised or adapted to.
Rating:	N/A
Standard:	4.2.8. There is clear evidence that the evaluation has had a positive influence on the evaluand, its stakeholders and beneficiaries over the medium to long term *Note: only apply if sufficient time has elapsed since completion of the evaluation
Comment and Analysis:	Sufficient time is yet to elapse since the completion of the evaluation to comment on the extent to which the evaluation has had a positive influence on the evaluand, its stakeholders and beneficiaries. It is possible that some of the actions being put in place by the FET Programme Manager will improve the efficiencies of the programme, but even these actions are in their infancy and would take time to result in impacts.
Rating:	N/A

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## List of Interviewees

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- Dr Kevin Kelly, Director: Strategic Intelligence and M&E (Strategic Evaluation, Advisory and Development Consulting (SEAD)). Telephonic interview. 27 August 2014.
- Ms Nianda van der Westhuizen, Office Manager: Senior Development Economist (Urban-Econ Development Economists). Face-to-face interview. 21 August 2014.

Ms Maritjie Cornelissen, Acting Director: Further Education & Training (Western Cape Government: Department of Agriculture). Telephonic interview. 8 August 2014.

Dr Dirk Troskie, Director: Business Planning and Strategy (Western Cape Government: Department of Agriculture). Telephonic interview. 29 August 2014.