



Department of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation

Report on the Assessment of Government Evaluations

State of Local Government Report

Date Evaluation was completed: 31 August 2009

Name of assessor: Nishendra Moodley

Evaluation Number: 59

Date Assessment Completed: 10 December 2012

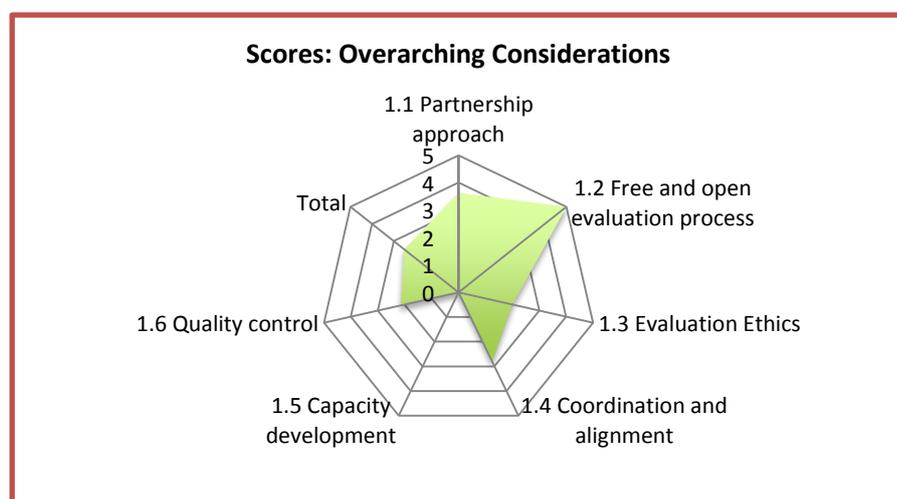
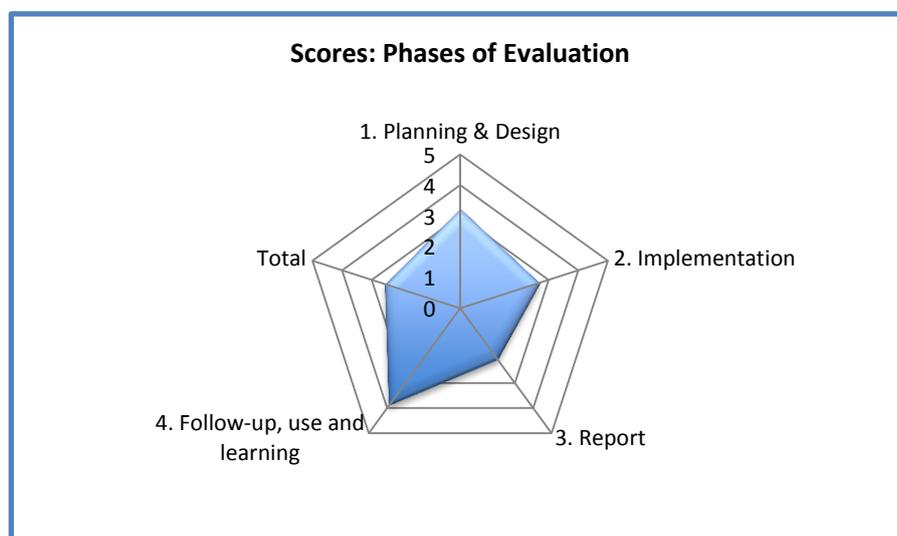
Evaluation Assessment Details

Title of evaluation report	State of Local Government Report
Completion Date of Evaluation	31 August 2009
Name of Assessor	Nishendra Moodley
Evaluation Number	59
Completion Date of Assessment	10 December 2012
Initiated by	COGTA
Evaluation undertaken by	COGTA
Evaluation area / sector	Local government
	<i>Additional</i>
National Outcome	Outcome 9
	<i>Additional</i>
Type of Evaluation	Diagnostic
	Evaluation Synthesis <i>Additional</i>
What is being evaluated	Sector
	<i>Additional</i>
Geographic Scope	National
Period of Evaluation	April to August 2009
Known Cost of Evaluation	Unknown

Quality Assessment Scores

Phase of Evaluation	Score
Planning & Design	3.25
Implementation	2.67
Report	2.04
Follow-up, use and learning	3.88
Total	2.53

Overarching Consideration	Score
Partnership approach	3.64
Free and open evaluation process	5.00
Evaluation Ethics	2.00
Coordination and alignment	2.80
Capacity Development	Not Applicable
Quality control	2.15



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 state of local government review was a diagnostic evaluation synthesis driven by newly appointed Minister Sicela Shiceka in 2009, recognising the distress in the local government system. This evaluation synthesis was entirely internally undertaken and mainly resourced by three key officials. As it was internally undertaken, at high speed and under immense pressure, there was no clear terms of reference for the undertaking. The interview undertaken with the lead author and programme manager allude to the process not having the luxury of time for proper planning or conceptualisation, or adequate resourcing. However, because this was internally undertaken, the requirement of a TOR is treated as not applicable.

Rating N/A

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

Comment and Analysis

The purpose of the evaluation is clear from the documentation: it derives from other evaluations to provide a diagnostic evaluation of the root causes of local government problems with a clear intention of informing a Turnaround Strategy for Local Government, in a way that mobilises broad stakeholder support.

Rating N/A

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

Comment and Analysis

The evaluation question is stated quite simply, possibly oversimply, "What is the state of local government in 2009 and what must be done to restore the confidence of our people in this sphere of government by 2011 and beyond?" This evaluation question unfortunately does not do justice to this assessment.

Rating N/A

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

The diagnostic nature of the evaluation was particularly important in this phase of national transition, with a new minister, in a new president's cabinet. The diagnostic was to inform a new strategy for LG and the department. Using an evaluation synthesis is particularly fitting for diagnostics like this. However, reliance was placed on other studies not sufficiently reviewed in the report itself.

Rating N/A

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

While there is no explicit statement referring to the intended users of the report, it is apparent that the report is intended for broad intergovernmental use across the LG sector to mobilise for a Turnaround Strategy.

Rating N/A

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

While there is evidence of broad stakeholder involvement in the evaluation process, there is little to indicate significant stakeholder involvement in the scoping of the evaluation.

Rating N/A

1.2. Evaluation was adequately resourced

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

Comment and Analysis

The interviews reveal that the process was very poorly resourced in terms of time. There was not the luxury of time for the full potential of this process to be explored.

Rating N/A

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

Comment and Analysis

The process was not well resourced in terms of budgets. No external support was mobilised for this process.

Rating N/A

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

Comment and Analysis

Firstly, this process was entirely run on internal departmental energy, with three key officials driving the process, without adequate additional internal support from departmental officials and monitoring systems. Under the circumstances they produced a useful synthesis of other studies conducted within the department.

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

There is no explicit reference in the documentation to building of capacity considered in the planning and design process, nor have the interviewers alluded to the space for such thinking.

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

Particularly as this arose as a new diagnostic initiative of a new minister under a new presidency, there was a strong re-alignment with the electoral mandate of the incoming government. This diagnostic would however be used to set the policy and programme context.

Rating 4

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

There is little evidence to show that the assessment is rooted in the body of literature on local government and it particularly glosses over a very key body of research that had been conducted by that department previously in the Policy Review of Provincial and Local Government.

Rating 2

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 is no reference to the theory of change.

Rating N/A

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

Comment and Analysis

There is no evidence to show that the wealth of stakeholder engagement extended to the design and methodology of evaluation.

Rating N/A

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

Comment and Analysis

The planned methodology involved facilitated workshops at provincial level with a municipal questionnaire, and submissions from municipalities themselves. The methodology of involving municipalities is not documented but appears from interviews to rely on a mixed approach, of questionnaire completion and workshop participation.

Rating 4

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

Comment and Analysis

Not relevant.

Rating N/A

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

Comment and Analysis

There was a planned process for using and responding to the detailed findings of the evaluation but detailed action associated with municipal Turnaround Strategy (TAS) has not come to pass.

Rating 3

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 relevant.

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

Not relevant.

Rating N/A

2.2. Evaluator independence

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

Comment and Analysis

The team were closely managed by the Minister for COGTA.

Rating N/A

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

As the evaluation team were national and provincial officials, who are part of the 'system' being evaluated, they were not ideally independent.

Rating 2

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

While the report does not capture this in detail, interviews and other reports at the time indicate a very significant involvement of the local government sector and at one stage a full assembly of all three spheres of government.

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 is no indication of capacity building as part of the process. Not relevant.

Rating N/A

2.4. Methodology

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

Comment and Analysis

There is no clear articulation of what was planned methodologically, but there is no evidence otherwise.

Rating N/A

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

Comment and Analysis

Not relevant.

Rating N/A

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

Comment and Analysis

Although this is an evaluation synthesis that relies on collating other studies, no methodological review is presented of other studies. It has also been argued by lead authors that they had very poor departmental monitoring systems on which to rely and did their best with what they had. The use of the municipal questionnaire is not sufficiently explained.

Rating 2

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

Comment and Analysis

If a municipal questionnaire was used as a key instrument, the findings should have been presented in some way.

Rating 2

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

Comment and Analysis

There is very significant evidence of key stakeholder participation in the evaluation, with municipalities, provinces, sector departments and SALGA playing substantive interface roles. At one stage the first ever assembly of the three spheres of government was held with all Mayors and Municipal Managers in attendance.

Rating 4

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

Comment and Analysis

There is no evidence to show the direct involvement of citizens and residents in this assessment of local government other than an articulation of what drives service delivery protests and levels of distrust.

Rating 2

2.5. Project management

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

Comment and Analysis

This evaluation was conducted in time for the development of the LGTAS. While timeframes were met, the methodology as a whole may have been compromised because of these timeframes.

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

There is no known executive summary. However, the introduction functions partly as such.

Rating 2

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

Comment and Analysis

The context of the evaluation both in terms of the newly elected government's programme of action and emerging signs of distress in the local government system are made explicit.

Rating 4

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

The oversimplified evaluation question that the evaluation addresses is "What is the state of local government in 2009 and what must be done to restore the confidence of our people in this sphere of government by 2011 and beyond ?" Not only is this question not sufficiently rationalised, but it could have been refined significantly.

Rating 2

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

The scope and focus is not made explicit in the report itself.

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**

There was no documentation of the methodology. Neither was there a methodological review of the studies on which the evaluation synthesis relied.

Rating 1

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

Findings were not always presented with evidence, and there is much data that is presented that is not used in arguments.

Rating 2

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

Comment and Analysis

The report does not intend to provide recommendations as this was the intention of the Local Government Turnaround Strategy to follow. Conclusions are captured at the end of each section, unevenly paid attention to. They are not sufficiently synthesised at the end of the report.

Rating 2

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

Comment and Analysis

There are many limitations to this review, which include the limitations of the data collection process undertaken from municipalities, the reliance on others studies and evaluations conducted by the department and the absence of reliable monitoring systems on local government. None of these are acknowledged in the report.

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

The quality of writing is 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

Data is unevenly presented. Workshop findings in a provincial workshop with number of votes for each item are given as much statistical standing as the Auditor-General's audit opinion.

Rating **2**

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

Not relevant.

Rating N/A

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

Data was not always well used in the assessment. Superfluous data was presented. Limitations of data were not always discussed.

Rating 2

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

Particularly in relation to the core data collection and analysis process of employing a municipal questionnaire and provincial workshops, there was little discussion of direct evidence supporting the findings.

Rating 2

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

Particularly in relation to the core data collection and analysis process of employing a municipal questionnaire and provincial workshops, there was little discussion of direct evidence supporting the findings.

Rating 2

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

Not relevant.

Rating N/A

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

Not relevant.

Rating N/A

3.4. Conclusions

STANDARD: Conclusions were derived from evidence**Comment and Analysis**

There is little analysis of evidence, to show alignment between conclusions and evidence.

Rating 2

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

There is no evidence to show alignment with other research not drawn into the evaluation synthesis.

Rating 2

STANDARD: Conclusions addressed the original evaluation purpose and questions**Comment and Analysis**

As the evaluation question is quite broad, the conclusions did not adequately address these. However, this is to be expected within the timeframes and resources of this evaluation.

Rating 2

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

Comment and Analysis

Not relevant.

Rating N/A

3.5. Recommendations

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

Comment and Analysis

The report does not contain recommendations which have taken the form of LGTAS. Not relevant.

Rating N/A

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

Comment and Analysis

The report does not contain recommendations which have taken the form of LGTAS. Not relevant.

Rating N/A

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

The report does not contain recommendations which have taken the form of LGTAS. Not relevant.

Rating N/A

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

The report does not contain recommendations which have taken the form of LGTAS. Not relevant.

Rating N/A

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

The study has many limitations, methodologically. No attention is paid to these in the report.

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

Not relevant.

Rating N/A

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

Comment and Analysis

Not relevant.

Rating N/A

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

Comment and Analysis

Not relevant.

Rating N/A

4. Follow-up, use and learning

4.1. Presentation to stakeholders

STANDARD: Results were presented to all relevant stakeholders

Comment and Analysis

Results were widely shared intergovernmentally and with the public.

Rating 5

4.2. Resource utilisation

STANDARD: The evaluation was completed within the planned timeframes

Comment and Analysis

The process was completed within its intended timeframes.

Rating N/A

STANDARD: The evaluation was completed within the agreed budget

Comment and Analysis

The process was completed within its resource constraints.

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 immediately widely available.

Rating 5

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 is no evidence of this.

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

The intensive intergovernmental stakeholder process and resulting document has had huge symbolic value to the sector. It started to set the agenda for not just the LGTAS, but also the Outcome 9 delivery agreement.

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

Having led to the LGTAS and then the Outcome 9 delivery agreement, the State of Local Government Assessment has set the agenda for local government differentiation, professionalisation and improved human resources, review of powers and functions, together with its predecessor, the Policy Review on Provincial and Local Government.

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 that arise are contained in the LGTAS, but have shown little momentum in implementation.

Rating 2

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 policy changes intended to be brought about by the Evaluation have yet to be implemented, and have thus not yet impacted on people. Not relevant at this time.

Rating N/A

References

COGTA, 2009. State of Local Government in South Africa - Overview Report.

COGTA, December 2009. Turnaround Strategy for Local Government

List of Interviewees

Sheila Hughes, Chief Director: Intergovernmental Relations, DCOG (Programme Manager and Lead Author of Report), Telephonic interview, 9 December 2012.

Unable to reach Seabelo Melifi from M&E branch.