planning, monitoring & evaluation

Department:
Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Report on the Assessment of Government Evaluations

Evaluation Title:	Implementation Evaluation of the Broadcasting Digital Migration Communication Strategy
Evaluation Number:	610
Start Date:	Friday, 05 May 2017
Completion Date:	Thursday, 19 October 2017
Period of Evaluation:	5 months
Submitted:	Friday, 23 February 2018 by Cara Hartley
Approved:	Friday, 23 February 2018 by Mike Leslie

Evaluation Details

Evaluation Title:	Implementation Evaluation of the Broadcasting Digital Migration Communication Strategy
Evaluation Number:	610
Evaluation Completion Date:	Thursday, 19 October 2017
Created:	Tuesday, 16 January 2018 by Cara Hartley
Submitted:	Friday, 23 February 2018 by Cara Hartley
Approved:	Friday, 23 February 2018 by Mike Leslie
Period of Evaluation:	5 months
Known Cost:	R 500 000,00
Known Cost Type:	Estimate
Initiated By:	National Department of Communications
Initiated By Internal:	Yes
Service Providers:	Pan Africa TMT
Undertaken By Internal:	No

Assessors

Cara Hartley	cara@pdg.co.za

Assessment Documents

Document Name:	Document Type:	Added By:	Added On:
00_Evaluation of BDM Communication Strategy (FINAL) Pan_Africa_TMT_1.1.pdf	Evaluation report	Cara Hartley	Tuesday, 16 January 2018
01_Evaluation of BDM Communication Strategy - Summary 1-5-25 Report.pdf	Evaluation report	Cara Hartley	Tuesday, 16 January 2018
Management response on the implementation evaluation.pdf	Any other relevant documentation pertaining to the evaluation process	Cara Hartley	Tuesday, 16 January 2018
Memo Management response on the implementation Evaluation.pdf	Any other relevant documentation pertaining to the evaluation process	Cara Hartley	Tuesday, 16 January 2018
Improvement plan for the Evaluation revised.docx	Any other relevant documentation pertaining to the evaluation process	Cara Hartley	Saturday, 27 January 2018
BDM PUBLIC AWARENESS QUESTIONNAIRE_V3.pdf	Assessment tools	Cara Hartley	Saturday, 27 January 2018
Provincial_Questions List for Interviews Focus Groups.pdf	Assessment tools	Cara Hartley	Saturday, 27 January 2018
02_Literature Review and International Benchmarking_Final.pdf	Any other relevant documentation pertaining to the evaluation process	Cara Hartley	Saturday, 27 January 2018
Minutes of the Close up meeting.pdf	Minutes or notes of meetings with stakeholders	Cara Hartley	Sunday, 28 January 2018
Steer Com Min for 2 June Lit rev and Tools.pdf	Minutes or notes of meetings with stakeholders	Cara Hartley	Sunday, 28 January 2018

Ster Com meeting 4 May Inception.pdf	Minutes or notes of meetings with stakeholders	Cara Hartley	Sunday, 28 January 2018
ToRs on Evaluation Steering Committee.docx	Any other relevant documentation pertaining to the evaluation process	Cara Hartley	Sunday, 28 January 2018
Final_Inception_Report final with amendments.docx	An inception report	Cara Hartley	Sunday, 28 January 2018
DOCs 201718 to 201920 Evaluation Plan.pdf	Any other relevant documentation pertaining to the evaluation process	Cara Hartley	Sunday, 28 January 2018
Service Level Agreement on evaluation of BDM Com Strategy.pdf	A letter of engagement or contractual agreement with the service provider	Cara Hartley	Sunday, 28 January 2018
Pan_Africa_TMT_Presentation_04 Oct 2017_1.0.pdf	Presentations of evaluation findings and recommendations	Cara Hartley	Monday, 19 February 2018
TOR Communications Strategy.docx	Terms of Reference (ToR) for the evaluation	Cara Hartley	Monday, 19 February 2018
Assessment Report at Moderation.pdf	Assessment Report at Moderation	Mike Leslie	Tuesday, 20 February 2018

Quality Assessment Summary

This evaluation scores 3,24 out of 5, indicating an evaluation of above adequate quality. This was the first evaluation undertaken by the Department of Communications (DoC) in terms of the Standards for Evaluation in Government, and with relatively limited technical assistance from centre-of-government departments. The evaluation came at an appropriate time to influence planning and budgeting for the continued roll-out of the Broadcasting Digital Migration communication strategy.

The Planning & Design phase scored 3,24. Strengths of this phase included the good Terms of Reference (TOR) was developed for the evaluation; the appointment of a well-suited service provider team with high quality international experience in the subject matter as well as some exposure to evaluation theory; and good cooperation between all concerned in the inception phase. However, the tight time frames and budget available for the evaluation were challenging from the outset.

The Implementation phase received quite a good score of 3,80. This score is partly due to the high ethical standards maintained in the data collection, and the great commitment demonstrated by the steering committee to allowing the evaluation team to work freely and without interference. The methodology was also implemented relatively consistently with what was planned and included engaging beneficiaries in both a survey and in-depth interviews. Furthermore, there was exceptional secretariat support for the evaluation that helped the project achieve its objectives despite the time and budget constraints. The lack of systematic piloting of data collection instruments weighed this score down. It should also be noted that the evaluation was guided by a steering committee consisting only of DoC officials, whereas arguably some implementing partners of the BDM strategy (SABC, Post Office etc.) could have contributed meaningfully to decisions about what and how to evaluate, data sources, validating findings and informing recommendations. However, the DoC considered this a more internal exercise.

The Reporting phase scored 2,91, which is just below adequate. The report is adequate in terms of its structuring and user-friendliness, and the findings it presents are reasonably credible. Nevertheless there are some shortcomings to the depth and transparency of the analysis, and there could have been more systematic recognition of limitations of the evaluation, and possible alternative interpretations of the results. Nevertheless, the report is adequate to give considerable evaluative insight into the communication strategy; and puts forth recommendations that have been adequately consulted upon and are seen by interviewed stakeholders as extremely useful for improving implementation.

The Follow-up, use and learning phase also scores a more than adequate 3,33. This reflects the fact that the evaluation stayed within time and (from the DoC's point of view) within budget, and the particularly high level of management engagement with the evaluation and findings. Not only was this first departmental evaluation a significant learning curve and positive experience for the department in terms of monitoring and evaluation, but four months after its completion the insights and recommendations it yielded have already started positively shaping the way that DoC implements the strategy.

It should be noted that the quality assessment standards employed here are strongly utilisation-focused and attach particular weight to participatory, collaborative evaluation approaches. This reflects in the fact that the evaluation achieved a good score despite some analytical shortcomings. Even though there was room for improvement in the quality of reporting and some of the technical aspects of the evaluation, the high level of departmental buy-in to the process and the exceptionally constructive relationship between the service provider and steering committee meant that great value was derived from the exercise. It bodes well for the M&E function at DoC and there are some project management aspects that others in government could hold up as good practice.

Quality Assessment Scores

Phase of Evaluation	Score
Planning & Design	3,24
Implementation	3,80
Reporting	2,91
Follow-up, use and learning	3,33
Total	3,24

Overarching Consideration	Score
Partnership approach	3,32
Free and open evaluation process	3,11

Evaluation Ethics	3,70
Alignment to policy context and background literature	3,47
Capacity development	2,60
Quality control	2,88
Project Management	3,76
Total	**3,24**

Scores: Phases of Evaluation
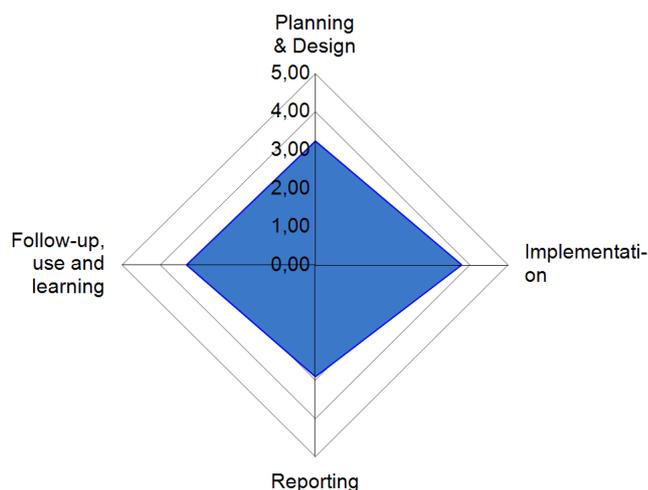
Scores: Overarching Considerations
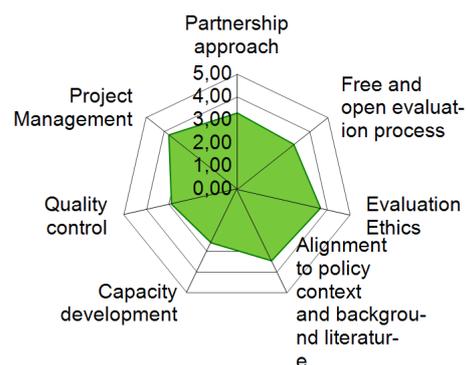
Phase of Evaluation	Area of Evaluation	Score
Planning & Design	Quality of the TOR	3,06
Planning & Design	Adequacy of resourcing	3,14
Planning & Design	Appropriateness of the evaluation design and methodology	3,36
Planning & Design	Project management (Planning phase)	4,00
Implementation	Evaluation ethics and independence	4,50
Implementation	Participation and M&E skills development	3,57
Implementation	Methodological integrity	3,37
Implementation	Project management (Implementation phase)	4,50
Reporting	Completeness of the evaluation report	3,50
Reporting	Accessibility of content	3,00
Reporting	Robustness of findings	2,45
Reporting	Strength of conclusions	2,67
Reporting	Suitability of recommendations	3,00
Reporting	Acknowledgement of ethical considerations	3,57
Follow-up, use and learning	Resource utilisation	3,00
Follow-up, use and learning	Evaluation use	3,42
Total	Total	3,24

Planning & Design

Quality of the TOR

Standard:	The evaluation was guided by a well-structured and complete TOR or a well-structured and complete internal evaluation proposal (e.g. Background, Purpose, Evaluation Questions, Design & Methodology, Deliverables & Timeframes, Resource requirements, Intended Audience & Utilisation, etc).
Comment and Analysis:	The evaluation was guided by a well-structured and adequately complete TOR. It did not include a discussion of the intended audience and utilisation. However, in all other respects it described the programme and the desired evaluation approach, methodology and team in a structured and comprehensive way, serving as a good foundation for the development of appropriate proposals and to start planning the evaluation in the inception phase.
Rating:	3: The evaluation was guided by a well-structured and complete TOR or internal evaluation proposal of an adequate standard

Standard:	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 approach was relatively conventional for a national government evaluation - a participatory process involving stakeholder workshops, and a mixture of qualitative and quantitative methods was sought. The evaluation type was an implementation evaluation. In line with this, the stated purpose was "to assess the effectiveness of the implementation" of the strategy. The scope was defined geographically, to focus on the two provinces where the Strategy had been rolled out most extensively. Thus there was a good complementarity between the intended approach and type of evaluation, and its purpose and scope in the TOR.
Rating:	4: The approach and type of the evaluation was well-suited to the purpose and scope of the evaluation TOR

Standard:	The TOR (or an internal evaluation proposal) identified the intended users of the evaluation and their information needs
Comment and Analysis:	The TOR did not explicitly identify the intended users and specify their respective information needs. Implicitly however, the detailed evaluation questions gave a good sense of what kind of information was sought and it was apparent that the evaluation results needed to give DOC information to inform potential adjustments of the Communication Strategy, and its way forward in replicating/expanding its Communication Strategy in other parts of the country.
Rating:	2: The TOR made only implicit or indirect mention of the users of the evaluation and their information needs

Standard:	Key stakeholders were involved in the scoping of the TOR and choosing the purpose of the evaluation
Comment and Analysis:	The following persons were involved in scoping the TOR and choosing the purpose of the evaluation: the Director: Strategic Planning and Performance Monitoring in the DOC; the Chief Director: Broadcasting Digital Migration (i.e. the manager of the programme to be evaluated); and an Evaluation Director from DPME. This is adequate to ensure an appropriate TOR from a programme relevance as well as evaluation quality perspective.
Rating:	3: Key stakeholders were involved in the scoping of the TOR and choosing the purpose of the evaluation

Adequacy of resourcing

Standard:	The evaluation was adequately resourced in terms of time and budget allocated
Comment and Analysis:	All parties agreed that the budget and time frames (May to October) allocated to the evaluation were somewhat inadequate given the requested scope of work. This was clear to all from the outset, although it was noted that where challenges and risks to the time frames arose there was good cooperation and support from all stakeholders. Without this cooperation and support, the time and budget constraints would have had a worse impact on the quality and usefulness of the evaluation.
Rating:	2: The evaluation was resourced with tight timeframes and budget which were challenging from the outset

Standard:	The team conducting the evaluation was adequately resourced in terms of staffing and skills sets
Comment and Analysis:	The team had an in-depth understanding of what the programme entails, from a communications strategy as well as technical implementation perspective. The team leader had previously worked for the Southern African Development Community (SADC) as the programme manager for digital migration with a team reporting to him; he also represented SADC in other international networks. This brought a high level of international expertise to the evaluation, with the DOC highlighting this as extremely valuable. Another member of the team had done an evaluation course at a South African university and was familiar with the South African evaluation system, but the team did not have the same extensive experience of implementing evaluations as what they had with regard to the subject matter. The team was also large enough to implement an evaluation within the required time frames.
Rating:	4: The evaluation was well resourced in terms of staffing and skills sets

Appropriateness of the evaluation design and methodology

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:	The evaluation TOR and Inception Report reflected the intention to develop a theory of change (TOC) at the start of the evaluation, and to revise it based on lessons of the evaluation at the end. These documents did not however present this TOC yet.
Rating:	3: There was explicit reference to the intervention logic or the theory of change of the evaluand in the TOR or the Inception Report

Standard:	The planned methodology was appropriate to the questions being asked
Comment and Analysis:	The planned methodology ensured the analysis of programme documentation, and primary data collection from the public as well as the officials and implementing agents involved in the Communication Strategy. This was appropriate to address the majority of the evaluation questions, which were about implementation from an operational perspective. Two questions about communication effectiveness were also sufficiently addressed by the inclusion of primary data from the public. There was also an evaluation question about the comparison between the SA strategy and other countries, and therefore the planned methodology included an international benchmarking literature review. Thus overall, the planned methodology was appropriate for all the evaluation questions. There was no explicit discussion at the planning stage, showing how the available data was being taken into account in planning the evaluation methodology (e.g. a table showing the match between the existing programme data and the evaluation questions, which would have been grounds to allocate a score of 4 on this standard).
Rating:	3: The planned methodology was appropriate to the questions being asked

Standard:	The sampling planned was appropriate and adequate given the focus and purpose of evaluation
Comment and Analysis:	The plan was to conduct field research in the two provinces (Northern Cape and Free State) where the most consumer awareness work had already been done. Variety was also taken into account, as these two provinces represented two quite different approaches - the SKA region of the Northern Cape had already migrated entirely and all in the region were eligible for a decoder, while the Free State will only migrate in December 2018 and there is a more differentiated eligibility framework. The draft data collection tools indicate that 60 to 100 consumers would be randomly sampled in each municipality; it also gives details on the number and spread of respondents in key stakeholder entities (government entities and partners) and role players in the provinces and municipalities. It appears that the planned sampling approach would yield a good, varied dataset informed by the different implementation contexts, which would serve the purpose of assessing implementation.
Rating:	4: The sampling planned was good given the focus, purpose and context of the evaluation

Project management (Planning phase)

Standard:	The inception phase was used to develop a common agreement on how the evaluation would be implemented
Comment and Analysis:	The inception report and interviews suggest that stakeholders achieved a good level of agreement about the key aspects of the evaluation. By the end of the inception phase the scope and the tight timeframes were agreed and there was consensus on how to move forward.
Rating:	4: The inception phase was used to good effect to achieve a common agreement and understanding of how the evaluation would be implemented

Implementation

Evaluation ethics and independence

Standard:	Where data was gathered in contexts where ethical sensitivity is high, informed consent, assurances of confidentiality and appropriate clearance were achieved; e.g. through an ethics review board, in evaluation involving minors, institutions where access usually requires ethical or bureacratic clearance
Comment and Analysis:	Ethical sensitivity was not exceptionally high given the subject of the evaluation. Still, the steering committee and evaluation team prioritised ethical considerations, as evidenced by the addition of an informed consent section to the final public awareness questionnaire (giving information about risks and benefits, respondents' rights etc. and requiring respondents' written consent), as well as in the letters of invitation sent to the interviewees and focus group participants in the various entities, which gave background information about the study and stressed that the sessions would be confidential. The final meeting's minutes note that it was agreed the service provider would hand over all materials at the end of the process. Almost all key ethical considerations were thus taken into account, with ethics review board approval not being necessary given the nature of the research. A pilot of the instruments may also have been valuable to pick up on sensitive issues not foreseen in the planning.
Rating:	4: There was clear evidence that ethical protocols were observed for most data collection instances including: informed consent agreements; confidentiality; documenting and storing data notes, recordings or transcripts; 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 bureacratic clearance, and situations where assurances of confidentiality was offered to participants

Standard:	Where external, the evaluation team was able to work without significant interference and given access to existing data and information sources
Comment and Analysis:	All respondents agreed that the evaluation was given access to all the documents and data sought, that there was an effort to ensure access to the relevant respondents for interviews and focus groups (minutes show that the DoC undertook to draft letters and inform all the respondents of the intended research). Respondents also agreed that the evaluation team maintained a high level of independence. The departmental respondents made a point of describing the service provider's insistence that no interference would be entertained, and that the steering committee was committed to upholding this. For instance, there was an occasion where an aspect of the implementation was criticised by focus group participants, and the steering committee members responsible for that aspect felt that the criticism was untrue - but the steering committee agreed to allow the service provider to report the criticism if the service provider considered the criticism valid given the evidence.
Rating:	5: The evaluation team was able to work freely and independently without interference and significant efforts were documented to ensure unfettered access to all existing data and information sources

Participation and M&E skills development

Standard:	Key stakeholders were involved in the evaluation through a formalised mechanism or institutional arrangement
Comment and Analysis:	A steering committee was formed, with representatives from the three most pertinent Chief Directorates in DOC for the purpose of this evaluation, namely: Broadcasting Digital Migration; Technology and Engineering Services; and Corporate Services (which includes the evaluation function). All three Chief Directors were members, as were some of their directors. There was reportedly good engagement (regular attendance; inputs on deliverables) from these members throughout the evaluation process. It is notable that the steering committee included only DoC stakeholders , and not, for instance, the State-Owned Enterprises (e.g. SABC, Post Office) and district municipalities involved in implementing strategy. While these entities were thoroughly included as participants in interviews and focus groups, it could be argued that they had much to contribute and to gain from participating in the steering committee. Some interviewed stakeholders however felt that involving them as respondents was sufficient. An Evaluation Director from DPME was also officially involved, but by all accounts did not find the time to be involved as intended (did not attend any steering committee meetings and did not input on deliverables).
	Noting the caveats above, since all the key DoC departmental stakeholders were represented and were regularly and actively involved, a score of 4 (good) is awarded.
Rating:	4: Key stakeholders were regularly, actively involved in the evaluation and contributed through a formalised mechanism or institutional arrangement (e.g. a steering committee or reference group)

Standard:	Where appropriate, an element of capacity building of partners responsible for the evaluand and evaluators was incorporated into the evaluation process
Comment and Analysis:	Some interns of DOC participated in the evaluation by conducting data collection and other activities with the evaluation service provider. Since this was the first evaluation conducted in DOC, the steering committee also found value in the overall process of undertaking it, in the Theory of Change workshop which was conducted with support from an Evaluation Director at DPME (a different one from the one mentioned above), and in participating in the data collection. Though the learning was not specifically structured nor documented, interviewees all stressed how much they have learned about evaluations as well as the DBM Communication Strategy programme content, and how this has subsequently been shaping DoC's management and decisions.
Rating:	3: An element of capacity building of partners responsible for the evaluand and evaluators was incorporated into the evaluation process

Methodological integrity

Standard:	A literature review was developed which informed the analytical framework and findings of the evaluation
Comment and Analysis:	A literature review was developed, starting with a brief theoretical framework (the dialogical model of communication); then describing the Strategy based on programme documents; and finally presenting an international benchmarking study which consisted of three country case studies. The dialogical model of communication is discussed very briefly, drawing only on one source, and is described by the literature review rather than critically analysed. Nevertheless its usefulness as a framework for the evaluation is clear and it is then also applied in the programme description and case studies that follows. The final evaluation report clearly shows how the framework informed the analysis and helped the evaluators to identify strengths and weaknesses of the implementation of the South African strategy. The country case studies are interesting, but findings from them were not integrated to the same extent into the evaluation. As the final report shows, these countries learned some valuable lessons within their context. The report also points to some differences between them and South Africa but does not go so far as to clearly highlight what South Africa should change or reconsider based on their example. Under the circumstances, the extent of engagement with the literature in this evaluation is an achievement, despite its shortcomings. It served as an adequate foundation for the evaluation.
Rating:	3: An adequate literature review was developed in terms of coverage and analysis which informed the analytical framework and findings of the evaluation

Standard:	The methods employed in the process of the evaluation were consistent with those planned and implemented adequately
Comment and Analysis:	As planned, the data collection methods included interviews, focus groups and a survey - judging by the fieldwork report and final report, these were implemented adequately. Not everything went as planned, for instance there was the discovery (only once in the field) that the survey was somewhat too long, leading to a change from administering in shopping malls to administering at homes and in clinic queues. As planned, mixed methods were employed to analyse the data from these sources, and as planned, the dialogical model of communication was used as a broad analytical framework. Methods were implemented within similar time frames as originally planned, covered the intended geographic areas and entities, and provided answers to the intended evaluation questions. Overall, the methods employed contributed to the objectives of the evaluation.
Rating:	4: The methods employed in the process of the evaluation were consistent with those planned and implemented well (in terms of time, coverage, and content)

Standard:	A pilot of basic data collection instrumentation occurred prior to undertaking data collection and it was used to inform the research process
Comment and Analysis:	The final report mentions a pilot study. According to the interviewees this only consisted of informal piloting among the evaluation team members around the office. Because of time constraints, none of the data collection tools were tested on real potential respondents before going to the field. Thus although an element of testing was present, it was not such that it yielded real field experience that could inform changes to the wording of questions or the mode of administering them.
Rating:	2: A pilot of data collection instrumention occurred but not in a way that could meaningfully test or improve upon instrumentation

Standard:	Data was collected from key stakeholders (e.g. implementers, governance structures, indirectly affected stakeholders) as data sources
Comment and Analysis:	As noted earlier, the planned sampling included a good spread of the key role players, and it appears that a variety of role players were indeed interviewed. It appears that all the main national entities were represented in either interviews or focus groups. While the documentation does not present a clear report of how many respondents of what category had been planned vs. who was reached, it appears that a good spread and size of sample was obtained. It is also notable that while conducting fieldwork in the provinces, the evaluation team had a degree of flexibility and would adjust their plans to reach the key stakeholders, e.g. moving their data collection to Keimoes when it transpired that most key role players for the area were in Keimoes rather than Kakamas. The report notes that the survey yielded 320 valid survey responses but does not show how many responses were from each of the different municipalities.
Rating:	4: Data was collected from the intended key stakeholder groupings in line with the envisioned range and type of stakeholders (approx. 80-89% of intended)

Standard:	The methodology included engaging beneficiaries appropriately as a key source of data and information
Comment and Analysis:	Beneficiaries (citizens who have televisions and were the target of the communications strategy) were engaged not only through a survey but also in-depth interviews. This yielded both quantifiable as well as rich qualitative information. They were thus thoroughly included as a key source of data and information, although the sample was not representative.
Rating:	4: The methodology included meaningfully engaging beneficiaries as a primary source of data and information (or if based on secondary data, includes data from beneficiaries and beneficaries consulted on emerging findings)

Project management (Implementation phase)

Standard:	The steering committee, technical working group and service provider worked together adequately to facilitate achievement of the objectives of the evaluation
Comment and Analysis:	By all accounts, there was a high level of commitment and cooperation between the steering committee and the service provider. One DoC interviewee described the level of engagement as "very critical" (i.e. really engaging with the evaluation), "with the intention to achieve the same objective". Stakeholders are of the view that this is what made it possible to achieve the objectives of the evaluation in such a short time frame. For instance, there was an open discussion about the trade-offs between the desired data collection activities, time frames and budget; this discussion led to an agreement to select data collection sites in a way that optimised travel.
Rating:	4: The steering committee, technical working group and service provider worked together in a flexible and constructive manner facilitating achievement of the objectives of the evaluation

Standard:	Support provided by the evaluation secretariat (e.g. the administrators responsible for the evaluation) facilitated achievement of the objectives of the evaluation (eg turnaround times, addressing problems, preparation for meetings etc)
Comment and Analysis:	The Directorate: Strategic Planning and Performance Monitoring of the DoC provided secretariat support. All the interviewees expressed satisfaction with this; the programme manager chose the word "excellent" to describe the secretariat support. After the delay of about a month between appointment of the service provider and the commencement of the inception period, there were no further administrative delays; the service provider received consolidated comments on each of their deliverables within a reasonable time period. There was no mention of delays in receiving documents or data from the DoC. It was specifically noted that the secretariat's support in contacting respondents for the data collection was valuable. Meeting scheduling took place without glitches, and detailed minutes of meetings were kept and made available for review in this quality assessment. In all, the secretariat support appears to have been very good. The service provider noted that "given the time frames, they enabled us".
Rating:	5: Excellent support was provided by the evaluation secretariat helping to ensure an effective evaluation

Reporting

Completeness of the evaluation report

Standard:	The first draft evaluation report was of a sufficient quality to go to stakeholders and did not require major changes
Comment and Analysis:	While the first draft still had some unnecessary repetition, needed some proofreading and was not structured to the steering committee's liking, they were generally satisfied with the content and felt that it served as a useful starting point for feedback and engagement. According to interviewees, there was no need for major changes to the content between the first draft and the final report.
Rating:	3: A first draft of the evaluation report was of a sufficient quality to go to stakeholders and did not require major changes prior to sharing

Standard:	The final evaluation report is well-structured and complete in terms of the following: executive summary; context of the development evaluation; evaluation purpose, questions and scope; methodology; findings and analysis; conclusions and recommendations
Comment and Analysis:	The evaluation report is well-structured and includes an executive summary; context (under background); evaluation purpose, questions and scope; findings and analysis (section 6), conclusions and recommendations. It also includes a literature review and programme description that help the reader gain a detailed understanding of the intervention. In all, the key components are well presented in the report, despite some shortcomings in their content (see below) and occasional inclusion of passages whose relevance is not obvious to the section in which they appear (e.g. repetition of some questionnaire findings in section 6.6.4).
Rating:	4: The final evaluation report is well-structured, complete and presents the following report components well: executive summary; context of the development evaluation; evaluation purpose, questions and scope; methodology; findings and analysis; conclusions and recommendations

Accessibility of content

Standard:	The final evaluation report is user-friendly, written in accessible language and adequate for publication (e.g. adequate layout and consistent formatting; complete sentences and no widespread grammatical or typographical errors; consistency of style and writing conventions; levels of formality; references complete and consistent with cited references in reference list and vice versa; etc.)
Comment and Analysis:	The report is written in clear language. It has some small formatting and layout errors throughout (e.g. repetition of a graph in section 6.1.1; text poorly spaced in several graphs; heading 6.5 "quantitative" should read "qualitative"). At some points the writing is somewhat abstract or vague (see for instance, section 3.6) or unnecessarily repetitive or wordy; and in a few isolated cases the relevance of a heading to the text beneath it is a bit unclear (see for instance, 4.4.1 and 4.4.2). Still, these issues do not substantially detract from the basic logic and message of the report. It provides an adequate description of the project implementation and results.
Rating:	3: The final evaluation report is user-friendly, written in accessible language and adequate for sharing (e.g. some spelling, grammar or formatting mistakes but these do not seriously detract from the report)

Standard:	Figures, tables and 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.) and are readily discernible to a reader familiar with data presentation conventions
Comment and Analysis:	Any reader familiar with basic descriptive quantitative analysis and with qualitative analysis will easily understand the data as it is presented and will see the relevance of the data to the argument. Data visualisation in graphs and tables is notably clear (less unnecessary detail than usual). The qualitative findings are reported in a way that is not entirely appropriate. Where qualitative findings are presented for the first time, the discussion is somewhat vague, making it hard to discern the strength of qualitative evidence on which the statements are based. Some sentences are clear (e.g. "according to the local authorities"; "there was a general view") - here there is sufficient transparency about what the claims are based on. But some sentences are more vague, saying for instance that "the research finds that", "the findings purport that", or "there was a concern that". The reader is left uncertain of whether these claims are based on the views of one or many respondents, or which type of respondents. However, this is a short subsection of the data discussion. The presentation of data is still adequate overall.
Rating:	3: Figures, tables and appropriate conventions are used in presentation of data and are readily discernible to a reader familiar with data presentation conventions

Robustness of findings

Standard:	Data analysis appears to have been executed to an adequate standard
Comment and Analysis:	Data analysis appears to have been adequately done, although there is room for deeper and more integrated analysis. There is nothing incorrect about the way the quantitative data appears to have been analysed, although when the results are initially presented the discussion is brief and does not yet make the link back to the overarching arguments. The qualitative data may have been sufficiently analysed, but it is hard to assess this because of the vagueness mentioned above. In this regard, a better balance could have been struck between protecting the confidentiality of the respondents and being transparent about the weight and source of evidence underpinning the statements.
Rating:	3: Data analysis appears to have been executed to an adequate standard for most datasets

Standard:	Findings are supported by evidence which is sufficiently and appropriately analysed to support the argument, integrating sources of data
Comment and Analysis:	The results of the quantitative and qualitative data collection are presented separately in section 6, which is unfortunate. The reader must get to section 6.6 before key points are triangulated and then integrated (also with some application of key points from the literature review) and presented by evaluation area. In that section, the discussion sometimes moves from findings about the implementation that has been done so far (based sufficiently on the preceding evidence) to "findings" about what needs to be done (based implicitly on the authors' expertise rather than explicitly on evidence). The way that referencing is done in this important section, does not sufficiently assist the reader in linking the statements back to the evidence. Despite the shortcomings identified here, the problem is mostly about ensuring that the link between evidence and findings is presented in a transparent and well-integrated way; this does not necessarily call into question the validity of the findings themselves.
Rating:	2: The evidence gathered has been analysed to support the argument to an extent but this is not enitrely sufficient or appropriate, and different data sources may be presented separately rather than integrated

Standard:	There is appropriate recognition and exploration of the possibility of alternative interpretations
Comment and Analysis:	The discussion moves fairly quickly from describing the results of the data collection to rendering judgments of the strategy. The authors appear very confident in their expertise and rarely defend or question their interpretations. For instance, there are not many instances of explicitly weighing up different ways of interpreting the results. Nevertheless the report does occasionally acknowledge some differences of opinion among role players, and softens its interpretive claims by using phrases like "it appears that..." or "it seems that..." where appropriate.
Rating:	2: There is an implicit or indirect recognition of alternative interpretations

Standard:	The report appears free of significant methodological and analytic flaws
Comment and Analysis:	As discussed above, there are some methodological and analytic flaws in the report, but flaws are not so significant as to call into serious question the overall findings. The evaluative claims made are mostly convincing and appear to be founded on relevant and adequately analysed evidence.
Rating:	3: The report appears free of significant methodological and analytic flaws

Standard:	Limitations of all aspects of the methodology and findings are clearly articulated (e.g. limitations of scope or evaluation design, recommendation for additional research, data collection challenges, etc)
Comment and Analysis:	The paragraph under the heading "Limitation of the Evaluation" is too vague to be informative. The detailed description of the data collection methodology gives some insight into what the data does and does not consist of, e.g. it notes that the sampling approach was not representative but rather a "dip-stick approach". The report also notes some shortcomings in the programme documents that existed at the time of the evaluation. Overall, there is some acknowledgement of limitations, but these are not presented systematically.
Rating:	2: There is some acknowledgment of the limitations of the methodology and findngs but these are not clear or exhaustive

Strength of conclusions

Standard:	Conclusions are derived from evidence
Comment and Analysis:	The conclusions mostly have a clear link back to the findings that have been presented in the report. Noting the caveats of the reported findings, the conclusions are appropriately based on those findings. They do not, for instance, introduce new information, or make unsupported logical leaps.
Rating:	3: Conclusions are derived from evidence

Standard:	Conclusions address the original evaluation purpose and questions
Comment and Analysis:	The conclusions address the original evaluation purpose by presenting concluding evaluative discussions in relation to the original analytical framework, and briefly in relation to the OECD-DAC criteria that were applied. The preceding section 6.6 presents the main findings in relation to the evaluation questions in such a way that one can infer the overall judgement in relation to the key questions. Together these sections seem to address the original purpose and questions adequately.
Rating:	3: Conclusions adequately address the original evaluation purpose and questions

Standard:	Conclusions are drawn with explicit reference to the intervention logic or theory of change
Comment and Analysis:	There is no explicit reference to the theory of change in the conclusions. One could hypothetically link some of the conclusions with elements of the theory of change (particularly at the activity level) that were confirmed to be particularly important, for instance, the use of local languages in communicating the message. The recommendations that follow after the conclusions, do mention that "not all assumptions of the Theory of Change have proven to hold and implementation fidelity was broken down in practice," but they do not elaborate. In short, there is inadequate explicit reflection on the implications of the evaluation findings for the Theory of Change.
Rating:	2: Conclusions make implicit or indirect reference to the intervention logic or theory of change

Suitability of recommendations

Standard:	Recommendations are made in consultation with relevant government officials, stakeholders and sectoral experts
Comment and Analysis:	The recommendations were drafted by the service provider and then engaged with by the steering committee (which consists of key departmental role players). These consultations were valuable; a departmental stakeholder noted that the consultation on the draft recommendations helped the steering committee to understand how the proposed recommendations could be made more feasible, and to ensure correct terminology so that departmental users of the evaluation would understand what was meant. Interviewees felt there was sufficient consultation on the recommendations given the implementation-oriented nature of the evaluation, but again it could be argued that the key implementing entities (e.g. SABC) could have added value if they had been consulted on the draft recommendations.
Rating:	3: Recommendations are made in consultation with relevant government officials, stakeholders and sectoral experts

Standard:	Recommendations are useful- they are relevant, specific, feasible, affordable and acceptable
Comment and Analysis:	Most of the recommendations are carefully elaborated to the extent that they appear relevant and likely to be actionable for the department. Recommendations 4 and 7 are too briefly stated, pointing the department in a direction of something that was found to be important rather than specifying what it should do - but this is perhaps sufficient and can be elaborated on in an improvement plan. Nevertheless, interviewees are generally very satisfied with the recommendations and appear to have engaged with them sufficiently to have confidence in how they can be actioned.
Rating:	3: Recommendations are useful- they are relevant, specific, feasible, affordable and acceptable to an extent

Acknowledgement of ethical considerations

Standard:	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 full report includes a section on ethical considerations. It does not state the specific actions that were taken to ensure observation of ethics. Instead it speaks broadly about maintenance of the highest ethical standards, applying the Human Sciences Research Council's standards and exercising due care when interacting with participants. The limited detail given in the full report is unfortunate since, as noted above, there was in fact thorough provision for informed consent for each of the main types of respondents. The version of the survey questionnaire that was included as an appendix also unfortunately does not include the introductory informed consent statement and declaration, only the questions. (Yet these elements were included in the standalone, neatly formatted version of the questionnaire that was actually used in the field and was shared for this quality assessment.)
Rating:	3: The full report documents some procedures intended to ensure confidentiality and to secure informed consent where necessary

Standard:	There are no risks to participants or institutions in disseminating the evaluation report on a public website
Comment and Analysis:	None of the interviewed stakeholders are aware of any unfair risks in publishing the full report on a public website, nor are any such risks apparent in a reading of the report.
Rating:	4: There are no risks to participants or institutions in disseminating the original full evaluation report on a public website

Follow-up, use and learning

Resource utilisation

Standard:	The evaluation was completed within the planned timeframes and budget
Comment and Analysis:	The evaluation was completed within the planned timeframes and budget. The DoC spent no more than the contractually agreed and budgeted amount on the evaluation, although the service provider indicated that may have overrun in terms of costs.
Rating:	3: The evaluation was completed within the planned timeframes and budget

Evaluation use

Standard:	Results of the evaluation have been presented to relevant stakeholders
Comment and Analysis:	The results have been presented to a meeting of the department's top management committee (MANCO), chaired by the acting Director-General of DoC. The results were also submitted to the office of the Minister. No presentations have been made to external stakeholders.
Rating:	3: Results of the evaluation have been presented to relevant stakeholders in government

Standard:	A reflective process has been undertaken by the steering committee with the service provider (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:	There was a final close-out meeting between the steering committee and the service provider in which the approval of the report was discussed and next steps were agreed to. The minutes show that both parties thanked each other in this meeting. The departmental interviewees considered this an instance of reflection. Considering that it appears from the minutes to have constituted only an exchange of thanks, and since there seems to have been no explicit mention of what could be done to strengthen future evaluations, the intent of this standard is not entirely met. (This does not preclude the reflection that took place through the development of a management response on the part of the DoC, but this standard is specifically about sharing a reflective discussion between the steering committee and service provider.)
Rating:	2: The steering committee undertook a meeting in which some form of reflection occurred, but not in a clear, reflective process

Standard:	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:	All interviewed stakeholders agreed wholeheartedly that the evaluation was of significant value. The evaluation experience has increased management's interest in evaluations and in the Departmental Evaluation Plan (raised the profile of M&E in the department). It also reportedly gave the manager responsible for evaluations clear practical understanding and more confidence around the integration of M&E into managerial decisions.
Rating:	4: The evaluation study is seen by interviewed stakeholders as being of substantial symbolic value to the policy or programme and has noticeably raised its profile amongst stakeholders

Standard:	The evaluation study is of conceptual value in understanding what has happened and possibly in shaping future policy and practice
Comment and Analysis:	The evaluation was clearly of value in understanding what has happened in the Communication Strategy. This was affirmed by all interviewees. The programme manager in his interview cited several specific insights that the evaluation yielded about the way the strategy is being implemented and how it can be improved. Also, according to interviewees, the evaluation has already started influencing the department's practices, including (1) increased messaging through the SABC (since this had proven to be the most effective communication channel), (2) more thoroughly measuring / monitoring the takeup of services as a key indicator of the communication strategy's effectiveness, (3) the DoC and the implementing entities responsible for implementing the strategy have established a new steering committee which focuses specifically on communication of the BDM strategy. Furthermore, in the latest budgeting cycle, the evaluation provided supporting evidence that enabled the DoC to motivate successfully for more funding from Treasury, to strengthen the communications component of the DM strategy. Based on this, the evaluation was clearly of good conceptual value. However, there was a lack of reflection on the Theory of Change, which means some opportunity for conceptual learning was missed.
Rating:	4: The evaluation study is of conceptual value in understanding what has happened and some interviewed stakeholders indicated the likelihood of it constructively shaping policy and practice

References

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List of Interviewees

Ms Kedibone Phetla, Director: Strategic Planning and Performance Management, Department of Communications. Telephonic interview, 17 January 2018.

Dr Fhatuwani Mutuvhi, Chief Director: Digital Migration Programme, Department of Communications. Telephonic interview, 24 January 2018.

Mr Malesela Kekana, Chief Executive Officer: Pan Africa, TMT Group. Telephonic interview, 19 January 2018.