



Department of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation

Report on the Assessment of Government Evaluations

Review of the first 10 years of the National Science Week programme of the Department of Science and Technology

Date Evaluation was completed: 20 October 2011

Name of assessor: Ray Basson

Evaluation Number: 95

Date Assessment Completed: 07 February 2013

Evaluation Assessment Details

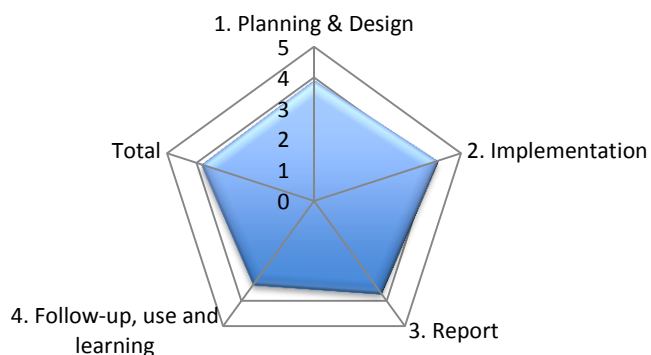
Title of evaluation report	Review of the first 10 years of the National Science Week programme of the Department of Science and Technology
Completion Date of Evaluation	20 October 2011
Name of Assessor	Ray Basson
Evaluation Number	95
Completion Date of Assessment	07 February 2013
Initiated by	Department of Science and Technology
Evaluation undertaken by	Feedback Research and Analytics
Evaluation area / sector	Education
	Additional
National Outcome	Outcome 1
	Additional
Type of Evaluation	Impact
	Implementation
	Additional
What is being evaluated	Event
	Additional
Geographic Scope	National
Period of Evaluation	April-October 2011
Known Cost of Evaluation	R1 000 000.00+ approximately

Quality Assessment Scores

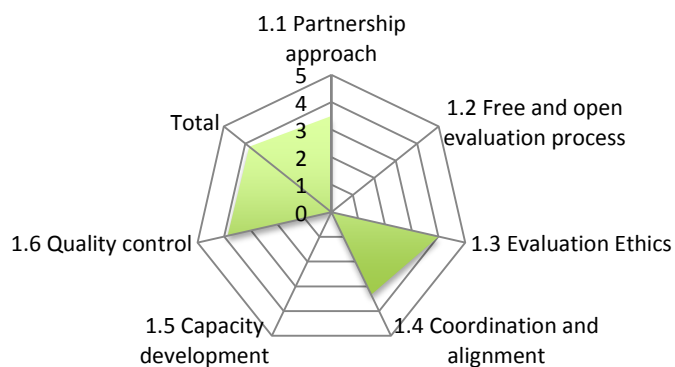
Phase of Evaluation	Score
Planning & Design	3.90
Implementation	4.21
Report	3.69
Follow-up, use and learning	3.33
Total	3.83

Overarching Consideration	Score
Partnership approach	3.50
Free and open evaluation process	Not Applicable
Evaluation Ethics	4.00
Coordination and alignment	3.33
Capacity Development	Not Applicable
Quality control	3.89

Scores: Phases of Evaluation



Scores: Overarching Considerations



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 ToR provides various evaluation questions to be responded to in the evaluation, in addition to the 2 main questions. These 8 questions were negotiated with the client. The ToR is listed as Appendix A but was not attached to the evaluation report, and was not obtained from interviewees.

Rating 3

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

Comment and Analysis

The purpose of the evaluation was to assess the "impact" of the RSW after its 10th anniversary, with the view to using its results to report to the Minister of DST and key stakeholders and use them to develop a medium-term strategy for the NSW 2012-2016. Its "Purposes" are stated as Objectives: one, to assess impact of the NSW against its 5 objectives; two, identify implementation achievements of the NSW including benchmarking it against international science week standards; and three, respond to questions asked of the NSW [about 50, grouped under 8 headings [such as: value for money, inclusivity, synergies with other similar national weeks, timing, branding,

Rating 4

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

Comment and Analysis

3 major Objectives serve in lieu of evaluation questions. Each was comprised of multiple complex questions: 5 for each of Objective 1 and 2, and more than 50 for Objective 3. It should be noted, that the 50+ questions in Objective 3, made the evaluation more complex than usual, making it go beyond what ordinarily can be expected of a limited timeframe and budget impact evaluation.

Rating 3

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

The evaluation is referred to as an, "impact/summative", "implementation" and "process" evaluation. It seems closest to an impact evaluation. Impact here is more like an end-of-term, what have we achieved, and how to strengthen and improve evaluation, which is appropriate to the purpose and scope of the evaluation ToR. It is not a real world evaluation or RCT.

Rating 3***STANDARD: Intended users and their information needs were identified in the TOR*****Comment and Analysis**

The highest level of users of the evaluation findings are identified namely, the Minister of DST, and with his/her approval, will be shared with key stakeholders in the National System of Innovation. It will be used to strengthen the NSW 2012-16.

Rating 4***STANDARD: Key stakeholders were involved in the scoping of the TOR and determining the purpose of the evaluation*****Comment and Analysis**

Whilst this is not explicit, it is hard to think of the evaluation being scoped and purposes being decided without key stakeholder participation in the process.

Rating 4

1.2. Evaluation was adequately resourced

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

Comment and Analysis

The time allocated to the evaluation is not explicitly stated. Interviewees indicated it was planned and completed in 6 months.

Rating 4

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

Comment and Analysis

An interviewee indicated that the evaluation cost R1 million +

Rating 4

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

Comment and Analysis

This appears to be the case. A team of 4 "researcher experts" conducted the evaluation, with oversight by a Project Manager, and, an editor was appointed. The evaluation also draws on the expertise and experience of an established consultancy: Feedback Research and Analytics.

Rating 4

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

Comment and Analysis

Capacity building of partners/staff responsible for the evaluand was not a planned element of this evaluation.

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

Relevant policy and programme environments were not reviewed in planning the evaluation. Literature on similar international science and technology weeks were reviewed, and appear to be used in planning the study.

Rating 3

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

Relevant documents relating to the NSW, HSRC and others including literature on science expos internationally, were reviewed, and appear to be used in planning by the evaluators.

Rating 3

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

Explicit mention is made to a "theory of change" in planning the evaluation of the NSW. It is couched in terms of "country coverage" [the NSW changing from being deployed in selected provinces annually, to being deployed in all provinces annually], and in terms of its "grant funding" [ie: the selection Grant Funders who present during the NSW, how they "leverage" additional funds on the back of grants, to increase the reach [coverage] of NSW into communities in the country [rural, rural-urban, urban]. This appears assumed in the study.

Rating **3**

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

Comment and Analysis

Key stakeholders appear to have been consulted on the design and methodology of the evaluation.

Rating **3**

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

Comment and Analysis

There is a comprehensive planned methodology for this evaluation [pps 13-27]. Its 3 broad elements [Literature Review and Desktop analysis of secondary data; Document review and analysis of primary data; Primary data collection and analysis]. Methods are tied in closely with Objectives/questions asked in the ToR, and where answers are provided in the report. The Literature Review trawled NSW documents and documents from international equivalents to respond to question, likewise the Document Review. Primary data collection used a variety of interviews [focussed group, one-one-one, telephonic - some were in-depth]. Observations were of NSW grant holder practices

Rating **5**

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

Sampling was appropriate for primary data collection: by year, grantholder, learners; by HEI scientist; and the like. Generally speaking, the first was selected "randomly", thereafter and working through contacts who recommended others, using "snowball" sampling procedures. This combination, with variations on it, enabled the evaluators to track down potential informants from across the country, by grant holder type, rural-urban location, and the like, and were in the main "African". Sampling was carefully articulated in the report, and linked to data gathered, how it was presented [transcribed] and analysed.

Rating 5***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 of using the findings of the evaluation. Use was planned to commence with the Minister of DST and ends with the NSW managers and grantholders, and was for the purpose of developing a medium-term, revised approach to the next cycle of the NSW as a flagship project from 2012-16.

Rating 4**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***

There is no evidence of this.

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

Ethical sensitivities were observed in the evaluation. Learners when interviewed signed an ethical clearance form to participate in the study. More generally, data collected in interviews was kept confidential [only accessible to the Review Team]. Grant holders were guaranteed anonymity, to create a safe space from them to have a candid dialogue of their experiences. Persons names were not used in reporting findings and any quotes used were anonymous. Where quotes were used, permission was obtained beforehand. And, a list of Grant Holders was been omitted from the Report.

Rating 4

2.2. Evaluator independence

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

Comment and Analysis

As an external team. The evaluators appear to have been able to work freely without significant interference.

Rating 4

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

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

Rating 4

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

No explicit mechanism appears to have been in place for consultation with stakeholders. Evaluators, however, had strong contacts with stakeholders to gather the wide range of documents they required for the evaluation.

Rating 3

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

Capacity building of partners responsible for the evaluand was not appropriate to this type of evaluation, and thus not incorporated in it.

Rating N/A

2.4. Methodology

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

Comment and Analysis

Methods in the plan were consistent with those employed in the evaluation process.

Rating 4

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

Comment and Analysis

Data collection was not compromised by field work level problems or diversions.

Rating 4

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

Comment and Analysis

Forms of data gathering were appropriate to the scope of the evaluation.

Rating 5

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

Comment and Analysis

Data analysis and methods were appropriate and sufficient given the purpose of the evaluation.

Rating 5

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

Comment and Analysis

Key stakeholders were involved as part of the methodology.

Rating 4

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

Comment and Analysis

Beneficiaries were included as key source of data and information, as planned in the methodology.

Rating 5

2.5. Project management

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

Comment and Analysis

No shifts to scheduled project milestones and timeframes were made explicit during the evaluation.

Rating 4

3. Report

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

STANDARD: Executive summary captured key components of the report appropriately

Comment and Analysis

The executive summary captures key components of the evaluation as reported. It is comprehensive and detailed. But, it is also a hard read, and would benefit by its logic being stated [eg: response by evaluation objective/question; by the importance of findings; another?]. And, it is very long [pps 14].

Rating 3

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

Comment and Analysis

The context of the NSW was made explicit, and was clearly relevant to the evaluation. An impact evaluation was needed following 10 years of NSW implementation, to learn from this experience and develop a 'new NSW' going forward.

Rating 4

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

The rationale for the evaluation captured in the 3 evaluation objectives/questions was: to find if the NSW had met its objectives; find if it was culturally sensitive and others; address 52 specific questions clustered into 8 categories requiring a response by the DST [client]. The rationale is to strengthen and address challenges in a new NSW 2012-6. The large number of questions in Objective 3 appear to make the rationale less clear than intended.

Rating 3**STANDARD: The scope or focus of the evaluation was apparent in the report****Comment and Analysis**

The evaluation had a national scope which was apparent in the report.

Rating 5**STANDARD: A detailed methodology was outlined in the relevant section of a report (full report or 1/3/25) to the point that a reader could understand the data collection, analysis and interpretation****Comment and Analysis**

The evaluation methodology was outlined in the "Research Design" section of the report [pps 13-27]. It is clear, and details the data collection, analysis and interpretation approaches used [desk top search and analysis of documents, different types of interviews, observations, and the others].

Rating 4**STANDARD: Key findings were presented in a clear way; they were made distinct from uncertain or speculative findings; and unused data was not presented in the body of the report**

Comment and Analysis

Key findings were presented clearly and had a clear focus on responding to questions. These could readily be distinguished from speculative responses to questions. Because of the large number of questions for a finding, ordering of findings was at times difficult to follow, and one is not sure if all questions were responded to.

Rating 3

STANDARD: Conclusions and recommendations were clear and succinctly articulated

Comment and Analysis

As with findings, Conclusions and Recommendations are clear, but they could have been written more succinctly. This in part may have been a result of the large number of questions asked. Had the logic of presentation followed from Question/Objective 1 through 3, these may have been easier to follow. Also, because of the large number of Questions/Objectives it is not readily noted if all have a conclusion and /or recommendation.

Rating 3

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

Comment and Analysis

Limitations of the evaluation, if not made explicit, are clear, one amongst these being the large number of questions asked in it. Desktop searches and analyses evaluators acknowledge can get certain evidence not others, telephonic interviews have challenges [tightness of time and budget, absence of kinesthetics, difficulty to set up, et al], and the like.

Rating 4

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 writing in the Report is adequate: it is clear, if at times wordy, reminds the reader of the question, presents the data usually explaining strengths and challenges, draws conclusions, and makes recommendations. As mentioned above, a sense of the order in the presentation of Findings, Conclusions and Recommendations would strengthen it. It is substantially free of typos, errors. Reference is made to informants [quotations particularly], but it is not clear if these have been added to a list of References [not included in the Report received].

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

Appropriate conventions are used in the report as is expected in a qualitative study.

Rating 4

3.3. Presentation of findings

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

Comment and Analysis

The use of figures and tables were used and supported the communication and comprehension of results [eg: attendees at NSW, grant holders, branding, et al].

Rating 4

STANDARD: Data analysis appeared to have been well executed

Comment and Analysis

Data analysis appear to have been well executed [eg: content analysis].

Rating 4

STANDARD: Findings were supported by available evidence

Comment and Analysis

Findings were supported by evidence [eg: strengthes and challenges of NSW et al].

Rating 4

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

Comment and Analysis

Evidence appears to have been sufficiently analysed [eg: for a "new NSW"].

Rating 4

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

Comment and Analysis

Alternative interpretations were garnered for debate by the evaluation team and stakeholders.

Rating 4

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

Comment and Analysis

Yes, the report appeared free of significant methodological and analytic flaws.

Rating 4

3.4. Conclusions

STANDARD: Conclusions were derived from evidence

Comment and Analysis

Conclusions were derived from evidence.

Rating 4

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

Comment and Analysis

Conclusions took into account relevant empirical studies on other similar Science weeks internationally [Australia, UK, Canada, Spain - from 14 found].

Rating 3

STANDARD: Conclusions addressed the original evaluation purpose and questions

Comment and Analysis

Conclusions addressed the original objectives/questions.

Rating 3

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

Whilst no explicit reference was made in Conclusions to the theory of change, it is apparent these underlie those made in the Report.

Rating **3**

3.5. Recommendations***STANDARD: Recommendations were made in consultation with appropriate sectoral partners or experts*****Comment and Analysis**

Experts internal to the NSW and the evaluation were consulted in making recommendations.

Rating **3**

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

Government officials and stakeholders were involved in shaping recommendations. A mechanism was in place which made this possible.

Rating **4**

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

Recommendations were relevant to the NSW and for policies around it which were aimed to strengthen co-ordination between partners in government as well as to give greater security of tenure to grant holders.

Rating 4**STANDARD: Recommendations were targetted to a specific audience sufficiently - were specific, feasible, affordable and acceptable****Comment and Analysis**

Recommendations appear feasible, if challenging with respect to achieving greater co-ordination between government partners in all aspects of the organization of this event. They are in the main specific too. It is hard to gauge if they are all affordable.

Rating 3**3.6. Relevant limitations of the evaluation have been noted****STANDARD: Relevant limitations of the evaluation were noted****Comment and Analysis**

If not made explicit, limitations of this evaluation were in the first place time [which had to be renegotiated with the client to 6 months, from 4]. Then of qualitative methods used, as well as of the large number of questions the evaluation was to address. As mentioned above, the latter seems to press too hard on what evaluation can ordinarily deliver.

Rating 3

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

Yes, the report documented procedures intended to ensure confidentiality. The usual procedures were followed: anonymity protocols were followed, grant holders particularly sought protection for what they said in interviews which might influence their funding going forward. Where quotations were used, individuals were approached for permission to use them.

Rating 4

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

Comment and Analysis

Apart from the usual risks accruing to an individual when going public, none other appeared to affect participants.

Rating 4

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

Comment and Analysis

Apart from the usual risks to institutions, [eg: a negative evaluation], none other appeared to affect them.

Rating 4

4. Follow-up, use and learning

4.1. Presentation to stakeholders

STANDARD: *Results were presented to all relevant stakeholders*

Comment and Analysis

Results were handed to stakeholders and director of institutions with an interest in the evaluation. These were also passed up the government hierarchy to senior state officials and the Minister of the DST.

Rating 4

4.2. Resource utilisation

STANDARD: *The evaluation was completed within the planned timeframes*

Comment and Analysis

Yes - the 6 month timeframe was met.

Rating 5

STANDARD: *The evaluation was completed within the agreed budget*

Comment and Analysis

It was also met within the agreed budget.

Rating 5

4.3. Transparency

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

Comment and Analysis

It is not clear if the report was published on websites.

Rating N/A

4.4. Lessons learnt

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

Comment and Analysis

A stakeholder Workshop was held at the end of the evaluation, but it is not clear if reflection on the evaluation process was on the agenda for discussion to strengthen future evaluations.

Rating 4

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

Stakeholders saw the evaluation to add symbolic value to the NSW, and policies sustaining it, which raised its profile for organizing it in future.

Rating 3

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

Comment and Analysis

The evaluation was of conceptual value for understanding a large number of issues relating to the NSW, which it appears will assist shape future policy and practice. How so is not clear at this stage.

Rating 3

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

not applicable

Rating N/A

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

not applicable

Rating N/A

References

Feedback RA (2011). Review of the first ten years of the NSW programme on the DST.
[mimeo]

List of Interviewees

F Hoosen, Evaluator, Feedback; Telephonic interview, 25/1/2013.

T Heiman, Project Manager, Feedback; Telephonic Interview 25/1/2013.