	DPME Evaluation Guideline 2.2.8
planning, monitoring & evaluation Department: Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA	**Communication of Evaluation Results** Created: March 2013 Updated: February 2021

Addressed to	Government staff planning or managing evaluations.
Purpose	This Guideline provides practical guidance on how to communicate evaluation results.
Reference documents	1. National Evaluation Policy Framework 2019 2. UNDP Handbook on Planning, Monitoring and Evaluating for Development Results 3. Government Communications Information Service (GCIS) Guideline
Contact person	Evaluations Unit, DPME E-mail: Evaluations@dpme.gov.za Tel: 012 312 0162

1   Introduction

For evaluation results to have maximum impact it is essential that the results are known by key actors who need to make decisions. This is important for the evaluation to succeed as well as for public accountability of what government does.

Communication is critical throughout the evaluation cycle, starting from the initial process whereby top management meets to decide on the evaluations for the annual and five-year cycle; to drawing together stakeholders relevant to the intervention to discuss the key areas the evaluation should focus on and the questions that need to be asked (scoping workshop); to the stage of engaging internal and external stakeholders on evaluation findings.

Evidence from evaluations has not been used sufficiently to inform decision-making, planning, policy-making or budgeting. For evidence to be used, it must be known and understood. In most cases, the intended users are not involved in the evaluation process and they are not informed about the results. It is often difficult to find evaluation results and evaluation reports displayed on departmental websites. One reason for this difficulty is that evaluation is seen as a punitive exercise and not as a tool for continuous improvement, and all too often the reports are not publicised by the people commissioning the evaluation.

2   Key stages when communication is important

Communication should happen around different stages in the evaluation process as indicated below.

2.1   In **commissioning** the evaluation:
- the first step is to conduct a stakeholder analysis which involves identifying key stakeholders who need to "own" the results from the evaluation and to determine whether these results are likely to have an impact. Key stakeholders need to be involved throughout the key stages of the evaluation process;
- key principals must be briefed and made aware of the evaluation and its focus;
- before the evaluation terms of reference (TORs) are developed it is critical to have a scoping meeting with stakeholders to discuss the theory of change, evaluation questions and focus of the evaluation. This meeting will inform the development of the terms of reference. External stakeholders can add a lot of value at this point. It may also be worth discussing what research and evaluation evidence exists, possibly getting researchers to present on this.

2.2   In **managing** the evaluation (during the implementation phase):
- the programme staff / owners of the evaluation should participate in the evaluation process as members of a Steering Committee, so they are party to discussions at all stages of the evaluation process;
- key principals must be briefed regularly – so they are kept on board with the evaluation process. This may mean regular updates at management meetings, or during one on one briefings. It is particularly important that if the draft evaluation report is signalling some challenging findings, the principals are briefed on these and they have a chance to internalize them.

2.3   In disseminating **evaluation results** (post approval of the report):
- The Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME) / Office of the Premier (OTP) will request a management response once the evaluation report has been approved by the Steering Committee. With regard to departmental evaluations and state-owned entities, the Director General (DG) will request this from the affected branch/unit.
- formal communication channels are used, namely departmental executive management, Cluster, Portfolio Committees, Provincial EXCO/Cabinet;
- and dissemination channels using media and publications to communicate widely. This is discussed further in the next section.

3   Ways of communicating Information from evaluations

There are numerous ways of sharing information from evaluations after the approval of the evaluation report. Below are some examples:

Validating the findings

3.1   Stakeholder workshop to discuss the draft evaluation report. The purpose is to validate findings and recommendations, whether they are technically sound, clear, feasible, implementable and relevant;

3.2   Meeting of the Steering Committee to approve the report.

Ensuring the results are taken through formal decision-making channels

3.3 Presentation of findings and lessons at departmental management meetings, relevant Cluster meetings, relevant Portfolio Committee meetings and Cabinet, all these should be done within 5 months of the approval of the report by the Steering Committee.

3.4 Incorporating the implications of evaluation findings and lessons in the organization's planning documents including APPs.

3.5 Sharing findings, recommendations and lessons learned at relevant training sessions and workshops for staff.

3.6 Ensuring that evaluation results inform departmental planning, policy and budgeting processes.

Making results accessible

3.7 Providing feedback to those interviewed as part of the evaluation process.

3.8 Organising a press conference to discuss results or submitting press statements on the evaluation findings to the media.

3.9 Developing summaries of findings tailored to different audiences, e.g. within government, practitioners, etc.

3.10 Workshopping the results with stakeholders, potentially with different workshops for different user groups.

3.11 Organising Thematic Seminars, for example the DPME organised a successful seminar on children bringing together a range of evaluation findings and a very good seminar was organised on human settlements bringing together the findings of the 7 evaluations being undertaken in the sector, as well as the expenditure review. These seminars serve to inform emerging policies in a particular sector.

3.12 Uploading approved evaluation reports and other knowledge products based on evaluations on the DPME and Department's website. These should include the 1/5/25 report (a 1-page policy summary, 5-page executive summary and 25-page outline of the full report), the full report, the assessment of the quality of the evaluation (if available), the management response and the improvement plan. In a case where the Management Response and the Improvement Plan are not received from the responsible programme manager within four months of approval of the report by the Steering Committee, it will be taken that there are no reservations and therefore it can be taken to the next stages of the process. This includes dissemination processes such as posting the report on the website for the public to access it.

3.13 Publicising evaluation findings and lessons learned in the organisation's existing publications, such as annual reports, newsletters or bulletins.

3.14 Developing a policy brief with a concise summary in plain language and circulating widely.

Generating wider knowledge from the findings

3.15 Publishing an article for an academic journal based on the evaluation findings.

3.16 Presenting a paper at a conference related to the evaluation subject area.

3.17   Developing a poster including photographs, diagrams, graphs, tables, charts, drawings, and text on poster-size boards.

3.18   The DPME/ OTP/ Department/ State-Owned Entities should upload approved evaluation reports and other knowledge products based on evaluations on their websites, including the 1/5/25 report (a 1-page policy summary, 5-page executive summary and 25-page outline of the full report), the full report, the assessment of the quality of the evaluation, the management response and the improvement plan.

3.19   Produce policy briefs from evaluation reports, building on the 1/5 pages from the 1/5/25 page report.

4   Practical steps for developing and disseminating communication material from evaluations

The most commonly applied dissemination methods for evaluation products mentioned in section 2 above are discussed in this section. Departments should follow the following steps for communicating evaluation results (adapted from UNDP Handbook on Planning, Monitoring and Evaluating for Development Results, 2009, p 183-189):

1. Identify target audiences for evaluation results and their information needs (this should be done during development of the terms of reference).
2. Collect stakeholder contact information.
3. Determine types of products or processes that meet the different audience's information needs including use of appropriate languages.
4. Determine efficient forms and dissemination methods per user and evaluation knowledge product.
5. Monitor feedback and measure results of dissemination efforts.

These steps are discussed below:

4.1   Step 1: Identify target audiences and their information needs

Communication must be informed by an understanding of who we are trying to reach, what they are thinking, how they are best reached (Government Communications Information Service Guideline). The evaluation users should be identified at the terms of reference stage of an evaluation with their information needs.

The key target audiences for most evaluations in the National Evaluation Plan[1] are the following:

▪   Cabinet;

---

[1] PEP, DEP, SOE-EP, MEP will identify their relevant target audiences accordingly.

- National or provincial legislatures, notably portfolio committees;
- Relevant government clusters;
- Government counterparts (other departments) who may or may not be directly involved in the intervention being evaluated but can facilitate the changes recommended by the evaluation;
- Other stakeholders in the intervention of study, such as private sector, donors, NGOs, academic and research institutions, parastatals;
- Specific groups affected by the intervention in a particular sector and the evaluation, e.g. NGOs, sector practitioners and experts, intervention participants, etc;
- Voluntary Organizations for Professional Evaluation (VOPEs), for example, South African Monitoring and Evaluation Association (SAMEA), and African Evaluation Association (AFREA);
- General public;
- Media.

4.2   Step 2: Collect stakeholder contact information

The success of dissemination is dependent on having stakeholder contacts. The contact details may already be held by the department but otherwise these need to be compiled. The contacts of those interviewed during the evaluation should be gathered by the evaluation team and shared with those responsible for disseminating and sharing the evaluation results (so long as this does not prejudice confidentiality).

4.3 Step 3: Determine types of products/processes that meet the audience's information needs

Different knowledge products or processes may be needed to communicate effectively with different users. The department should consider the appropriate mechanisms for the key user groups mentioned above. The style of language used in the product should be appropriate for the technical levels of the targeted audience. In all cases except academic papers it is best to avoid technical jargon and heavy acronym usage. Communication material could be translated into local languages where needed. Reports should be accessible (see Box 1).

> **Box 1: 1/5/25 page reports**
> Most people in government do not have the time to read long reports. In addition to a long report with the detail, each evaluation should produce a 1/5/25 report – which has a 1-page policy statement, a 5-page executive summary and a 25-page summary of the whole report. Each of these 3 summaries can be used as stand-alone products to enhance the readership of the evaluation.

Examples of different products relevant to different audiences are shown in the table below:

User	Relevant types of products/processes
Cabinet	Policy summaries, e.g. in policy briefs or 1/5/25 reports

User	Relevant types of products/processes
	Will require briefings for evaluations in the National Evaluation Plan (NEP)
Portfolio committees	Policy briefs, or policy summaries May well require briefings
Relevant Cluster	Policy briefs, or policy summaries Will require briefings
Stakeholders such as development partners, donors, NGOs, academic and research institutions, parastatals, private sector etc	1/5/25 report Workshop around the findings Electronic communications: such chat rooms, teleconferencing, web- and video conferencing Posters and poster sessions. DPME evaluation updates.
Government counterparts (other departments) who may or may not be directly involved in the intervention being evaluated but can facilitate the changes recommended by the evaluation	1/5/25 report Workshop around the findings DPME evaluation updates.
Specific groups affected by the intervention and the evaluation, e.g. NGOs, sector practitioners and experts, intervention participants, etc;	Specific short communications on the particular elements of interest. These may well need to be in different languages. 1/5/25 report Workshop around the findings DPME evaluation updates.
Voluntary Organizations for Professional Evaluation (VOPEs) (e.g. SAMEA, AFREA;	1/5/25 report – some may be interested in full report with methodological detail Electronic communications: such chat rooms, teleconferencing, web- and video conferencing Posters and poster sessions DPME evaluation updates.
General public	Short summaries in accessible formats. Entries on websites Radio spots on the topic
Media	Short summaries in accessible formats.

For each knowledge process, the contact details for the relevant manager should be included for enquiries and further information.

4.4   Step 4: Determine efficient forms and dissemination methods per evaluation knowledge product

Most evaluation reports can be shared as an electronic copy. In order to enhance the efficiency in terms of time and cost, the department's public webpage and the e-mail list should be strategically used as means for dissemination. For example, the evaluation reports should be uploaded on departmental internal and external webpage with some text that summarises the key information in the report. Additionally, knowledge from monitoring and evaluation can be shared widely by incorporating them in existing reports and publications, such as the department's annual report, newsletter.

Where dissemination is needed to a broader public, then hard copy versions may be needed, e.g. short summaries targeting practitioners, or use of websites. In addition, more dynamic communication methods such as use of radio or television are likely to be the most effective. Products or media events may need to be in different languages.

4.5   Step 5: Monitor feedback and measure results of dissemination efforts

It is important to get feedback on the information conveyed arising from the evaluation, as well as the effectiveness of the dissemination strategy and quality of the particular knowledge product or process.

Action Points:

Departments could use the following methods to get feedback on communication processes:
1. A quick satisfaction survey among the recipients of knowledge products or developing a feature on departmental websites where users provide a direct feedback online. This could include questions such as: "What was the most important thing you learned from this exercise? "To what extent has the evaluation information been useful for you? How would this information be more accessible for you? The lessons should be analysed and recommendations made for improvement in dissemination.
2. Within workshops or focus groups, asking people about the value of the information and the

Lessons and experience from the feedback should be used to contribute to learning around the intervention in question as well as the communication process, and should lead to the enhancement of future communication material.

5   Conclusion

The best evaluation will have little effect if the results are not accepted by the key principals, not accessible to people who need to hold the intervention accountable (e.g. Parliament) or not known by the wider community. This is not extraneous to the evaluation, it is a key part of ensuring the utilization of evaluation results. Adequate funds need to be made available for communication of evaluation findings (and they could easily be 10% of the total cost).

Signed

Mr Robert Nkuna
Director-General
Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation
Date: 19/05/2021