

Guidance to Programmes for Developing an Evaluation Policy

Introduction

1. The General Assembly and the Secretary-General have made many calls for evaluation to be strengthened at the Secretariat. Putting in place an evaluation policy framework is a key element in strengthening the Organization's evaluation system.
2. The Inspection and Evaluation Division of OIOS has prepared this guidance to assist programme managers in developing an evaluation policy. Recommendation 5 of the 2007 OIOS report entitled "*Assessment of Evaluation Capacities and Needs in the United Nations Secretariat*" (IED-2006-006, 24 August 2007) requires that all programmes that do not yet have established evaluation policies develop an explicit policy statement on evaluation. OIOS committed itself in the aforementioned report to preparing the present guidance document in order to assist programme managers in that process.
3. All evaluation policies should share common elements, independent of the size, mandates and budget of the programme within which the evaluation activities take place. These core elements can be found in United Nations Evaluation Group's (UNEG) *Norms for Evaluation in the UN System* and *Standards for Evaluation in the UN System*. Ultimately, the policy that is developed must be relevant and meaningful to that organization; there may be additional elements programmes may want to include.
4. It is also important to note that for very small organizations, given the serious resource constraints they face, carrying out evaluation activities does not necessarily mean setting-up a distinct evaluation unit. On the other hand, the Joint Inspection Unit report entitled "*Oversight Lacunae in the United Nations System*" (JIU/REP/2006/2) proposed minimum standards (benchmarks) for an organizations' evaluation budget and staffing levels.

Basis for an evaluation policy

5. The Secretary-General's bulletin entitled "*Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation*" (SGB/2000/8), commonly referred to as PPBME, mandates the conduct of evaluation in the Secretariat decision-making cycle, but it does not define in detail the concept, use and roles of individual programmes in the planning and conduct of evaluation.
6. Since the PPBME cannot be used as a substitute for a programmes' own evaluation policy, it is therefore essential that programmes develop a policy explaining the role of evaluation, internal processes and related issues.
7. Complementing PPBME, the UNEG Norms and Standards also stress the need for an evaluation policy. Specifically, such a policy requirement is addressed in Norm 3 and Standard 1.2 as follows:

UNEG Norm 3- “Each organization should develop an explicit policy statement on evaluation. The policy should provide a clear explanation of the concept, role and use of evaluation within the organization, including the institutional framework and definition of roles and responsibilities; an explanation of how the evaluation function and evaluations are planned, managed and budgeted; and a clear statement on disclosure and dissemination.”

UNEG Standard 1.2-“UN organizations should develop an evaluation policy and regularly update it, taking into account the Norms and Standards for Evaluation in the UN system.”

8. Additionally, under Standard 1.2, the importance of obtaining approval for the evaluation policy at the highest level is emphasized: “The evaluation policy should be approved by the Governing Bodies of the organizations and/or Head of the organization, and should be in line with the applicable UNEG Norms for Evaluation, and with organizational corporate goals and strategies”.

9. Evaluation, in its most generic sense, is defined as the systematic process of determining the merit, value, and worth of something. In the context of the UN Secretariat, and in operational terms, *evaluation* is a systematic and discrete process, as objective as possible, to determine relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact, and/or sustainability of any element of a Programme’s performance relative to its mandate or goals. Evaluation can be used for accountability, learning and/or decision-making purposes. A report of an evaluation is a written document which contains a description of the methodology used, evidenced-based findings, conclusions and recommendations (where applicable).

Elements of an evaluation policy

10. An evaluation policy should contain:

- A clear explanation of the concept and role of evaluation
- General Evaluation Standards
- Clearly define the institutional framework, roles and responsibilities
- Stress the need to operationalize the policy through evaluation guidelines
- How evaluations are prioritized and planned
- How evaluations are organized, managed and budgeted
- The mechanisms for the follow-up of evaluations
- The disclosure and dissemination procedures for evaluations

11. In order to assist in the drafting of an evaluation policy, each of these elements is elaborated below. In addition, we have provided the web addresses to existing evaluation policy from various UN agencies for convenient reference at the end of this document.

1) Clearly explain the concept and role of evaluation within the organization¹

The role of the self-evaluation activities need to be stated at the outset. This section should also stress the value of promoting an evaluation culture and evaluative thinking within the organization.

Questions to consider²:

- How is evaluation defined by the Programme?
- What is the purpose of the evaluation function?
- How will the evaluation function be used?

2) Contain General Evaluation Standards³

Evaluation professionals, independent of their area of work, are guided by a series of principles. The principles address, among others, ethical, legal, validity and utility issues.

Include a statement highlighting the accepted professional principles, commonly referred to as Programme Evaluation Standards. These are:

- Utility Standards: how evaluation will serve the needs of users
- Feasibility Standards: ensure that an evaluation is viable
- Proprietary Standards: consider ethical and legal implications of an evaluation
- Accuracy Standards: ensure that an evaluation produces reliable information

3) Clearly define the institutional framework as well as the roles and responsibilities of the evaluation professionals, senior management and programme managers⁴

It is essential that the policy establishes a framework for the evaluation function to operate under in order to avoid confusion and misunderstandings.

Questions to consider:

- Where is the evaluation function placed in relation to other organizational units?
- What are the reporting lines of the evaluation function?
- Is the evaluation function independent?
- How are evaluation plans approved?
- What are the responsibilities of the evaluators?

¹ Norms 1, 3, 13 and Standards 1.2

² “Questions to consider” are not exhaustive and are presented in order to facilitate the drafting process.

³ Norm 11 and Standards 2.5, 2.6, 2.7, 2.8, 3.10

⁴ Norms 2, 6, 9, Standards 1.1, 1.3, 1.5, 1.6, 1.7, 2.1, 3.10, 3.11

- In general terms, what are the competencies that the evaluators must have?
- What are the expectations on senior and programme staff in relation to evaluations?

4) Emphasize the need to operationalize evaluation activities through a common set of guidelines

Evaluation Guidelines is a separate document containing a more detailed explanation of the process and methodologies to be used for conducting evaluations. Evaluation Guidelines are the means to operationalize the policy. It is therefore important to link both documents.

5) Explain how evaluations are prioritized and planned⁵

A clear set of general criteria for selecting and planning evaluations promotes transparency in the planning process. A systematic approach to help determine the scope and subsequently the resources required to conduct an evaluation is very important. Evaluations should also feed back into the programme planning and budget cycle.

Questions to consider:

- What are the general criteria for selecting evaluations?
- Will evaluability assessments be required?
- Will a strategic framework be prepared to outline the areas to be evaluated?

6) Describe how evaluations are organized, managed and budgeted⁶

The success of an evaluation depends to a great extent on how well designed and managed the exercise is. The funds available determine, in practice, what can be done and thus it is important to know how evaluations will be financed.

Questions to consider:

- What types of evaluations will be conducted?
- Who will manage evaluations? (if there are different types foreseen)
- How will evaluations be designed so as to deliver timely, valid and reliable information?
- How participatory will the process be?
- How will the evaluation function be funded?
- How are evaluation exercises to be funded?

⁵ Norms 7, Standards 3.1

⁶ Norms 4, 8, 10, Standards 3.1, 3.2

7) Emphasize the mechanisms for the follow-up of evaluations⁷

Follow-up mechanisms to evaluations should be created within the organization, ensuring that recommendations are implemented in a timely fashion and that evaluation results are used to inform future activities.

Questions to consider:

- How will evaluation results be followed-up?
- How will the evaluation results feed into organizational learning/knowledge management systems?
- Who decides if recommendations are accepted or not?
- Who will monitor the implementation of recommendations?

8) Clearly state the practice on disclosure and dissemination of evaluations⁸

The disclosure policy aims to ensure transparent dissemination of evaluation results, beyond the primary intended user to the Governing Bodies and the public. Exceptions occur in cases where the protection and confidentiality of stakeholders requires it.

Questions to consider:

- What will be the disclosure parameters?
- How will evaluations be disseminated?

Suggestions for Drafting Process

12. Programs are at different stages in their evaluation capacity development and must therefore adapt the suggestions contained in this document to best suit their needs. Some good practices include:

- The person/team tasked with drafting the evaluation policy should be/include those who will manage and carry out evaluation activities.
- The Head of the organization should be actively engaged and supportive of the overall effort.
- The drafting of an evaluation policy should be the culmination of a consultative process.
- The policy should be simple and clear so as to allow all programme managers, staff and key stakeholders to understand it and appreciate the benefits of evaluation.
- The policy should be endorsed by the Head of the organization or Governing body.

Useful Resources

1. United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG)

⁷ Norms 2, Standards 1.4, 3.17

⁸ Norms 2, Standards 1.4

Website: uneval.org

The Norms, Standards, Evaluator Competencies as well as examples of Evaluation Policies can be found at their website.

2. OIOS

Website: <http://iseek.un.org/M210.asp?dept=631>
<http://www.un.org/Depts/oios/evaluation.htm>

Useful resources including an online manual entitled "*Managing for Results: A Guide to Using Evaluation in the Secretariat*".

3. Program Evaluation Standards

Website: <http://www.wmich.edu/evalctr/jc/>

4. Organization for Economic Development and Co-operation (OECD)
Development Assistance Committee (DAC)

Website: http://www.oecd.org/site/0,3407,en_21571361_34047972_1_1_1_1_1,00.html

Evaluation resources are available, including a tri-lingual evaluation glossary.

5. Examples of Policies

Various Funds and Programmes have produced evaluation policies. Examples include:

UNIDO

Website: <https://unido.org/en/doc/52817>

IFAD

Website: http://www.ifad.org/evaluation/policy/new_policy.htm

UNDP

Website: <http://www.undp.org/eo/policy.htm>

OCHA

Website:

<http://ochaonline.un.org/ToolsServices/EvaluationandStudies/tabid/1277/Default.aspx>

UNICEF

Website: http://www.unicef.org/evaluation/index_13477.html

ILO

Website: <http://www.ilo.org/eval/Evaluationpolicy/lang--en/index.htm>

UNODC

Contact the Independent Evaluation Unit at ieu@unodc.org