BETTER CRITERIA FOR BETTER EVALUATION

OECD/DAC Network on Development Evaluation

@OECD_EVALNET | #EvalCriteria
What is EvalNet?

Network in the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC)

Evaluation heads of 30 OECD countries, regional development banks, the World Bank, IMF and UNDP

Forum for dialogue, exchange, coordination, knowledge sharing

Meetings every 8-9 months

Chaired by Per Bastøe (Norway). Vice-chairs Jorg Faust, Germany and Wendy Brusse Asbeek, the Netherlands

Supported by Secretariat in the Development Co-operation Directorate of the OECD
The SDGs and the Paris Climate Agreement create an urgent learning imperative.

To maximise impact we need evidence on what works, for whom, why, and under what circumstances.

To produce this evidence, we need both more and better evaluation.

- Better evaluation requires asking **the right questions**, paying attention to **quality** and focusing on **use**.
What do we do?

- Strengthen systems and capacity
- Improve quality of evaluations by addressing methodological challenges; standards, guidance, coordination
- Support decisions, learning, accountability by cultivating and communicating evaluation lessons and evidence
Guidance, norms and standards

EVALUATION PRINCIPLES

Impartiality and Independence
Credibility
Usefulness
Participation
Co-operation (Harmonisation)
Programming (Coverage)
Design and Implementation
Reporting, Dissemination And Feedback

EVALUATION QUALITY STANDARDS

Describe the attributes of quality process and products, including transparency, partnership, ethics, human rights
What are the criteria?

First set out by the OECD DAC in 1991. Defined in Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Results Based Management (2002), the criteria encourage a focus on effectiveness and results (beyond inputs and activities).

Though originally developed for use in the context of development co-operation, they are now very widely used and referenced. Demand-driven spread.

Five original criteria:

- Relevance
- Effectiveness
- Efficiency
- Impact
- Sustainability
Why adapt them?

- Experience of implementation...
- Advent of 2030 Agenda & new development landscape
- Request by OECD DAC to consider their adaptation (2017)
Global consultation March-October 2018
Interviews with key stakeholders
Consultation workshop (March 2018)
Discussions at international meetings/seminars in Asia, Africa and Europe
Discussions within United Nations and Multilateral Evaluation Groups
OECD DAC Network member survey
Public survey (691 responses)
Discussion of experiences with the criteria and adaptation at international evaluation events

Drafting & Consultations on text

Developing Guidance
Findings from consultation

- Broad agreement on the strengths of the criteria (simplicity, clarity & broad applicability)
- But - room for improvement and clarification
- Majority plea for ‘Revision not reform’
- Many perceived challenges = more to do with how the criteria are applied than with the criteria themselves
Reflections on the consultation

Huge importance for global evaluation community

Feedback went beyond the criteria, and beyond evaluation: Also heard about the general state of development co-operation (including aid effectiveness issues).

Challenge to manage expectations and focus on the criteria concepts, avoid overloading.
Discussion
Adapted criteria: Improving clarity

- New and improved definitions
- Retaining conceptual clarity and keeping the definitions as simple as possible
- Better responding to equity, gender equality and the leave no one behind imperative
- One major new criterion: Coherence – to better capture synergies, linkages, partnership dynamics, and complexity.
**Intervention** used to refer to the subject of the evaluation. Encompasses all the different types of efforts: project, programme, policy, strategy, thematic area, an institution, financing mechanism, etc.

The criteria can be used to evaluate international co-operation activities, as well as private sector, non-government actors, and national or local governments in domestic policy contexts.

**Beneficiaries** is defined as, “the individuals, groups, or organisations, whether targeted or not, that benefit directly or indirectly, from the development intervention." Other terms, such as rights holders or affected people, also used.

**Notes** are part of the definition, further detail in document: oe.cd/criteria
Each criteria is a lens, giving a different perspective on the intervention – both the implementation process & the results...
EVALUATION CRITERIA

- EFFECTIVENESS: Is the intervention achieving its objectives?
- COHERENCE: How well does the intervention fit?
- IMPACT: What difference is the intervention making?
- SUSTAINABILITY: Will the benefits last?
- RELEVANCE: Is the intervention doing the right things?
- EFFICIENCY: How well are resources used?
...together, they provide a more complete picture.
Is the intervention doing the right things?
The extent to which the intervention objectives and design respond to beneficiaries’, global, country, and partner/institution needs, policies, and priorities, and continue to do so if circumstances change.

Note: “Respond to” means that the objectives and design of the intervention are sensitive to the economic, environmental, equity, social, political economy, and capacity conditions in which it takes place. “Partner/institution” includes government (national, regional, local), civil society organisations, private entities and international bodies involved in funding, implementing and/or overseeing the intervention. Relevance assessment involves looking at differences and trade-offs between different priorities or needs. It requires analysing any changes in the context to assess the extent to which the intervention can be (or has been) adapted to remain relevant.
How well does the intervention fit?
**COHERENCE**

The compatibility of the intervention with other interventions in a country, sector or institution.

Note: The extent to which other interventions (particularly policies) support or undermine the intervention, and vice versa.

*Internal coherence* addresses the synergies and interlinkages between the intervention and other interventions carried out by the same institution/government, as well as the consistency of the intervention with the relevant international norms and standards to which that institution/government adheres.

*External coherence* considers the consistency of the intervention with other actors’ interventions in the same context. This includes complementarity, harmonisation and co-ordination with others, and the extent to which the intervention is adding value while avoiding duplication of effort.
Is the intervention achieving its objectives?
EFFECTIVENESS

The extent to which the intervention achieved, or is expected to achieve, its objectives, and its results, including any differential results across groups.

Note: Analysis of effectiveness involves taking account of the relative importance of the objectives or results.
How well are resources used?
Efficiency

The extent to which the intervention delivers, or is likely to deliver, results in an economic and timely way.

Note: “Economic” is the conversion of inputs (funds, expertise, natural resources, time, etc.) into outputs, outcomes and impacts, in the most cost-effective way possible, as compared to feasible alternatives in the context. “Timely” delivery is within the intended timeframe, or a timeframe reasonably adjusted to the demands of the evolving context. This may include assessing operational efficiency (how well the intervention was managed).
Figure 1  Efficiency and effectiveness in the logical framework

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IMPACT

What difference is the intervention making?
**IMPACT**

The extent to which the intervention has generated or is expected to generate significant positive or negative, intended or unintended, higher-level effects.

Note: Impact addresses the ultimate significance and potentially transformative effects of the intervention. It seeks to identify social, environmental and economic effects of the intervention that are longer term or broader in scope than those already captured under the effectiveness criterion. Beyond the immediate results, this criterion seeks to capture the indirect, secondary and potential consequences of the intervention. It does so by examining the holistic and enduring changes in systems or norms, and potential effects on people’s well-being, human rights, gender equality, and the environment.
Will the benefits last?
SUSTAINABILITY

The extent to which the net benefits of the intervention continue, or are likely to continue.

Note: Includes an examination of the financial, economic, social, environmental, and institutional capacities of the systems needed to sustain net benefits over time. Involves analyses of resilience, risks and potential trade-offs. Depending on the timing of the evaluation, this may involve analysing the actual flow of net benefits or estimating the likelihood of net benefits continuing over the medium and long-term.
Adapted criteria: Supporting use

- Encourage thoughtful adaptation and prioritisation
- Developing guidance to support use
- More interconnected approach
- Ensuring applicability across diverse interventions, use beyond development co-operation
Key principles for use

1. THINK FIRST

The criteria should be applied thoughtfully to support high quality, useful evaluation.

They should be contextualized – understood in the context of the individual evaluation, the intervention being evaluated, and the stakeholders involved.

Purpose is the guide!

2. NOT A STRAIGHT JACKET

Use of the criteria depends on the purpose of the evaluation.

Covered according to the needs of the relevant stakeholders and the context of the evaluation.

While they all apply, more or less time and resources may be devoted to each criterion.
Next steps: we need your help!

Developing guidance

Supporting members and partners as they adapt the definitions to their own contexts, translate them, and institutionalise them

Further work to address other weaknesses in evaluation systems and practice:
  - Blended finance
  - Gender equality and women’s empowerment
  - Climate change mitigation and adaptation
  - Harmonisation and capacity development
Thank you

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