

Global Evidence Policy Units

SOUTH AFRICA:

Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME)



"DPME aims to build managerial accountability, improve policy planning across all government & encourage ministries to work together toward joint goals."



KEY FACTS

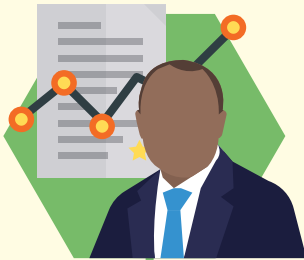


- The Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME) is the South African Government's monitoring and evaluation unit.
- It was established in 2009 and sits in the Ministry of Performance, Monitoring and Evaluation in the Office of the Presidency.
- DPME facilitates, influences and supports effective planning, monitoring and evaluation of government programs.
- It focuses on three key areas: *monitoring*, *evaluation* and *ministry performance*.
- It aims to make ministries more accountable and more collaborative, to encourage better service delivery and policy planning, and to monitor and evaluate the impact of these policies on society.
- DPME is also working to build a culture of evidence use through capacity development and trainings.

HOW WAS THE UNIT SET UP?



Despite increased expenditure on service delivery across South African ministries, a government assessment found that few had achieved the outcomes needed to impact citizens (DPME, 2010). In 2009, in his first month in office, President Jacob Zuma set up the Ministry of Performance, Monitoring and Evaluation to become a critical part of government. It was created to sit within the Office of the Presidency.



The ministry aimed to build managerial accountability, improve policy planning across all of government and encourage ministries to work together toward joint goals (Centre for Public Impact, 2016). The first minister, Collins Chabane, was brought in specifically from Cabinet where he had been the Minister of Public Works.



One of the ministry's first tasks was to establish DPME in 2011. The department set about examining existing evaluations and found a general lack of strategic policy direction. Evaluations were occurring sporadically, and it was rare to find published evaluation reports. In 2011, only 13% of government departments were undertaking any form of evaluation (federally and provincially). There were several reasons for this:

- First, there was confusion about what constituted an evaluation and many focused on auditing rather than analysis.
- Second, there was inadequate use and institutionalisation of evaluations, which led to the perception that they were a luxury not a necessity.
- Finally, results were rarely applied and did not sufficiently inform planning, policy making and budgeting. This was a missed opportunity to improve the Government's effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability.

HOW WAS THE UNIT SET UP?



A task team was established with representatives from DPME, the Department of Basic Education, the Department of Social Development, the Office of the Public Service Commission and the Government Communication and Information Systems. The team undertook a study tour in 2011 to learn from other existing monitoring and evaluation policy units in Colombia, Mexico, USA and later Malaysia.

The National Evaluation Policy Framework

Following this research, DPME's priority was to institutionalise the use of evaluations in ministries, prioritising federal ones and then focusing on provincial and program-level departments. Staff developed the National Evaluation Policy Framework, a set of guidelines to define evaluations and their importance, and to outline competencies needed to carry them out.

The first draft of the framework was produced in 2011 by DPME. Other government ministries, universities, civil society and the South African Monitoring Association were consulted and the final version was submitted to Cabinet for approval later that year. The first evaluations were carried out in October 2011.

The framework set out key components and the process for carrying out evaluations. For example, while DPME can participate, departments are required to do the evaluations themselves and participate in the policy drafting process.

The framework relies heavily on an 'outcomes approach'. This focuses on clear results and direct improvements to the lives of South Africans by making explicit the chain of logic in the department's planning, and linking outputs to impact.

The framework defines evaluation as a "systematic collection and objective analysis of evidence". It specifies five different types of evaluation that can be used at any stage of a policy cycle (see Figure 1).

HOW WAS THE UNIT SET UP?

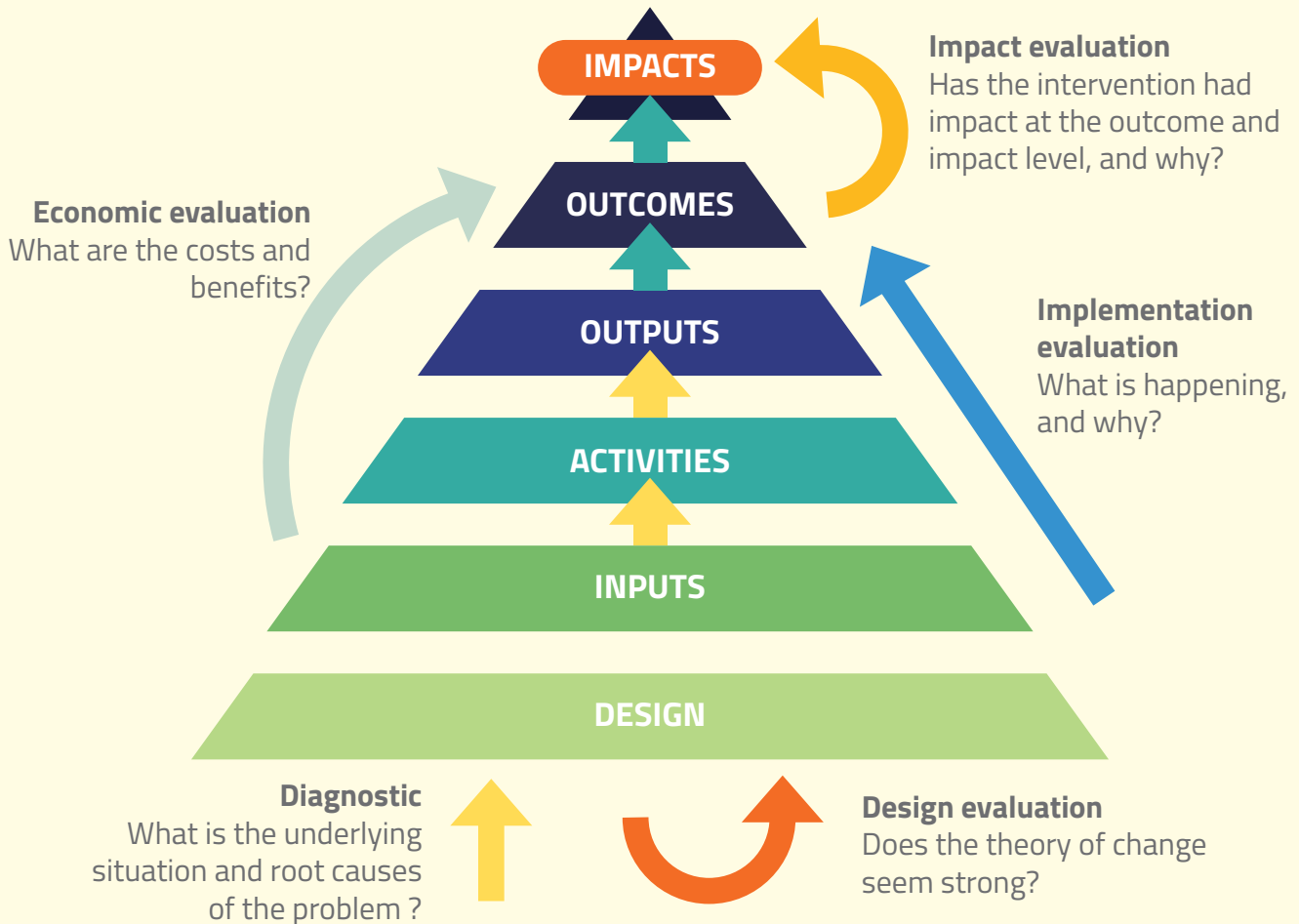


Figure 1: Different types of evaluations: the outcome model (Jabu, 2015).

EVOLUTION OF THE UNIT



DPME will conduct between eight and 10 evaluations annually. Typically, they take eight to 12 months. Evaluations can be conducted by in-house experts, or by approved external consultants from universities or private sector companies.

DPME supports departments by offering funding, technical support and advice. DPME directors also sit on evaluation steering committees. Evaluations are peer reviewed by the department, and quality assessed by independent assessors. They are then submitted to the National Evaluation System to provide information for performance agreements between the president and ministers. The findings are presented at Cabinet and published on DPME's website. This outward accountability provides incentives to work towards the performance agreements.

EVOLUTION OF THE UNIT

The Evaluation Process

DPME works with government institutions in three ways:



Monitoring

It focuses on integrating monitoring and reporting into key governmental outcomes. DPME incorporates key indicators and targets into strategic, development and annual performance plans.



Evaluation

Evaluations are used to improve performance, accountability, learning and decision making, during and at the end of programs. They can be conducted in any department and in partnership with DPME.

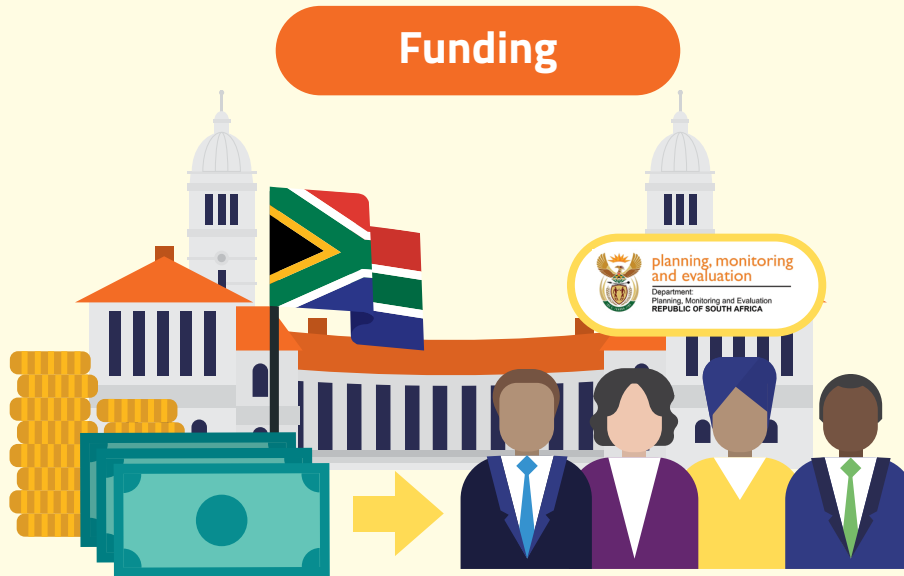
- Evaluations are mandatory for the five priority policy areas (health care, education, job creation, rural development and land tenure). They are embedded in the National Evaluation Plan and focus on key indicators. They must be approved by Cabinet and follow the National Evaluation System.
- Evaluations of other policies, plans, implementation programs, projects or systems can examine any of the five types depicted in Figure 1. The goal is to help departments learn to improve performance.
- For all evaluations, technical support is offered by DPME, including evaluation training.



Ministry Performance

The president personally signs 34 draft agreements with each minister and assesses the minister's performance against these agreements.

EVOLUTION OF THE UNIT



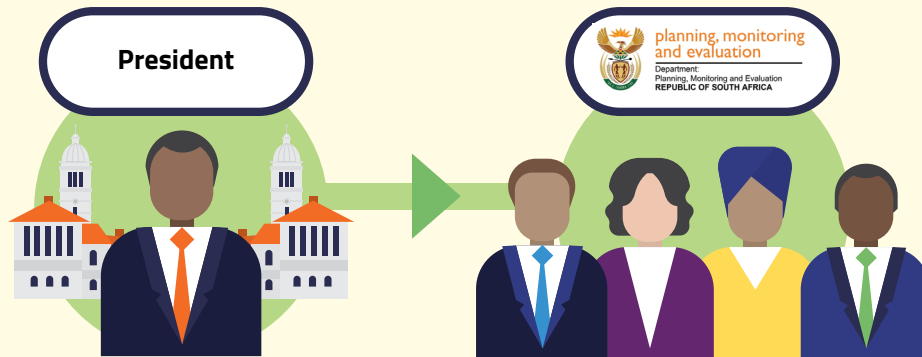
DPME is 100% funded through the state budget. The UK Department for International Development (DFID) Evaluation Development Initiative also supported DPME to build capacity within government departments. It has also received €5 million from the Programme to Support Pro-poor Development (European Union/the Presidency of South Africa) from 2006 to 2012.

In 2016/2017, the total budget for DPME was 30.9 million rands or US\$ 2.285 million. About one third of the budget is used for staff salaries, while 18.58 million rands or US\$ 1.393 million is reserved for evaluations, some 60% of the total budget.

Evaluations are only partly funded by DPME, at approximately 50% of the total evaluation budget. When departments submit evaluation concept notes, they are expected to indicate internal budget availability. DPME injects funds for initial planning, including hosting design clinics and theory of change workshops. As soon as the tentative plan has been finalised, DPME and the partner department produce a design summary that is submitted to the National Evaluation Plan for approval. It includes a budget with the proposed contribution from DPME.

EVOLUTION OF THE UNIT

Leadership



Senior government influence has been critical to the development of DPME, particularly from the president through the Ministry of Performance, Monitoring and Evaluation. Government ministries have embraced the new approach and have been heavily engaged (particularly the Ministry of Health and Education). The Treasury has made a significant contribution to building the accountability of the civil service by “implementing a program performance information reporting system that requires ministries to report data, linking financial inputs to actual outputs” (Centre for Public Impact, 2016).

While DPME has no legislative mandate to compel ministers to sign and commit to specific performance agreements, having the President’s support provides the political strength to get things done. Given that many of the agreements are personally signed by the President, it is in the ministry’s interest to be engaged with DPME and follow progress. The approach seeks to be as collaborative as possible to encourage buy-in.

Leadership in DPME comes from within existing government ministries and departments.

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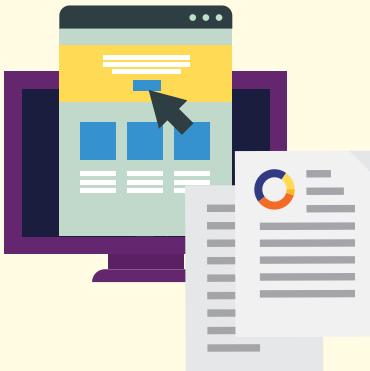
Staffing & Recruitment



DPME has 14 staff. This includes a deputy director general who is also the head of evaluation and research, and four further directors of evaluation, two assistant directors and four evaluation officers who support each director. To support the administration, there is one deputy director and two administrators.

Positions are filled through open recruitment. Several roles have been filled by civil servants from other departments who have a keen interest in evaluation.

Knowledge Sharing & Communications



All evaluation reports must be accompanied by a one-page summary, a five-page executive summary, and a 25-page report to share findings with different levels of government (this is best practice to ensure reader-friendly reports, as demonstrated by the Canadian Health Service Research Foundation). For every report, a management response and an improvement plan is published on the department and DPME website. Results are presented to stakeholder committees. Further, customised communications materials are tailored to specific audiences, such as news releases and/or ministerial briefings/Cabinet meetings. In 2017, DPME is also trialling the use of multimedia.

An evaluation repository on the DPME website highlights evaluation quality and determines if it has passed inspection. The repository acts as a knowledge hub for other departments of the South African Government, but is also accessible to the public.

EVOLUTION OF THE UNIT

Building Demand for Evidence

DPME provides capacity development and training for government.



Training

DPME has developed four evaluation courses for civil servants at all levels of seniority, with more than 600 government staff now trained. It has also designed a three-day, evidence-based policy making and implementation workshop for top managers, in collaboration with the University of Cape Town. The workshop has buy-in from deputy directors general and directors general. Those who have attended have subsequently submitted proposals for evaluations. DPME is currently planning a technical course for middle managers.



Evaluation Panel

To help build wider research capacity in South Africa, more than 42 departments and government agencies have collaborated to develop an evaluator repository. This includes not only established evaluation experts, but also emerging evaluators and researchers.



Tools and Processes

DPME has developed tools including an evaluation quality assessment tool for departments and organisations.

EVOLUTION OF THE UNIT



DPME has also designed a post evaluation process to promote ownership by the custodial departments. This is important as it allows departments to find and manage potential solutions for their own problems, and gives them an opportunity to agree or disagree with the recommendations and findings.

Other support includes helping departments to develop a theory of change when planning, so that they can understand what they are evaluating.

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Knowledge Sector Initiative

www.ksi-indonesia.org

The Knowledge Sector Initiative (KSI) is a joint program between the Governments of Indonesia and Australia that seeks to improve the lives of the Indonesian people through better quality public policies that make better use of research, analysis and evidence.

KSI is a consortium led by RTI International in partnership with the Australian National University (ANU), the Nossal Institute for Global Health and the Overseas Development Institute (ODI).

This series is written by Caroline Cassidy and Josephine Tsui from the Research and Policy in Development (RAPID) programme at ODI.

We would like to thank Jabu Mathe for his input to this brief.

