

Report on the Evaluation of the National Evaluation System

Summary Report

15 February 2018

Evaluation of the National Evaluation System



**planning, monitoring
& evaluation**

Department:
Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

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This report has been independently prepared by Genesis Analytics. The Evaluation Steering Committee comprises representatives from the Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation, Centre for Learning on Evaluation and Results Anglophone Africa (CLEAR AA), the South African Monitoring and Evaluation Association (SAMEA), Gauteng Provincial Government, Western Cape Provincial Government, the Department of Basic Education (DBE), National Treasury, the Department of Social Development, and the Department of Rural Development and Land Restitution. The Steering Committee oversaw the operation of the evaluation, commented and approved the deliverables and reports.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BPS	Business Process Services
CLEAR AA	Centre for Learning, Evaluation and Results Anglophone Africa
COG	Centre of Government
COGTA	Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs
DBE	Department of Basic Education
DEP	Department Evaluation Plan
DFID	Department for International Development
DG	Director General
DHS	Department of Human Settlements
DJCD	Department of Justice and Constitutional Development
DotP	Department of the Premier, Western Cape
DPME	Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation
DPSA	Department of Public Service and Administration
DSD	Department of Social Development
EBPM	Evidence-Based Policy-Making
EMIS	Evaluation Management Information System
EPWP	Expanded Public Works Programme
ERU	Evaluation and Research Unit (now Evaluation Unit in Evidence and Knowledge Systems Branch)
ETWG	Evaluation Technical Working Group
GWM&E	Government-Wide Monitoring and Evaluation
HOD	Head of Department
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MIS	Management Information System
MPAT	Management Performance Assessment Tool
NEP	National Evaluation Plan
NEPF	National Evaluation Policy Framework
NES	National Evaluation System
NSG	National School of Government
OTP	Office of the Premier
PEP	Provincial Evaluation Plan
QA	Quality Assurance
RCME	Research Coordination, Monitoring and Evaluation
SAMEA	South Africa Monitoring and Evaluation Association
SAPS	South African Police Service
SINERGIA	The M&E section of Colombia's Department of National Planning
StatsSA	Statistics South Africa
the dti	The Department of Trade and Industry

POLICY SUMMARY

The National Evaluation Policy Framework (NEPF), introduced in 2011, recognised that there was “a missed opportunity to (use evaluations to) improve government’s effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability” and inform planning, policy-making and budgeting. It adopted a utilisation-focused approach which aimed to use evaluation for programme improvement, enhanced accountability, effective evidence-base decision-making, and the promotion of knowledge creation and dissemination. The evaluation of the National Evaluation System (NES) sought to assess the extent to which the NES is meeting its objectives.

Overall the evaluation found that since the inception of the NEPF in 2011, great strides have been made in developing the system. The Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME) has established itself as the champion of evaluation in the public sector, providing considerable support across provinces and departments, and is a strong advocate for evaluation. Guidelines on evaluations have been developed and made public, quality assurance systems have been developed and capacity building has been provided across the system. Since the establishment of the NES, 69 evaluations were included in National Evaluation Plans (NEPs), of which eight were cancelled. In addition to NEPs, eight provinces, through their Offices of the Premier (OTPs), have developed Provincial Evaluation Plans (PEPs), and 68 departments have developed Departmental Evaluation Plans (DEPs). Evaluation has however not been consistently undertaken across the public sector, and work needs to be done on institutionalising evaluation and streamlining it into planning, budgeting and management.

The conclusions of the evaluation are that considerable progress has been made in terms of establishing the system particularly through the evaluation plans, capacity building, quality assurance mechanisms and communication. From a cost perspective, the bulk of DPME’s budget has been put towards conducting evaluation. Going forward, a better balance between conducting evaluation and institutionalisation activities, should be achieved. From a stakeholder perspective, the role of DPME needs to be clarified, while the roles of DPSA, National Treasury and NSG, need to be strengthened. There are encouraging signs of evaluation use in the system. However, improvement plans need to be tracked more systematically to better understand use.

The following are the key policy recommendations:

Evaluation Mandate

- R1 Evaluation should be embedded in legislation as a mandatory component of public management and organisational improvement, with DPME as the custodian, and the roles of OTPs and departments defined.
- R2 Planning and budgeting must systemically draw from the results of monitoring and evaluation (M&E). This should be monitored through Annual Performance Plans (APPs), quarterly and annual reports, and performance agreements.
- R3 New phases of programmes should not be funded until an evaluation of the previous phase is completed.
- R4 The role of impact evaluations needs to be strengthened and considered from the beginning of a programme.
- R5 The role of key stakeholders in the evaluation ecosystem including DPSA, National Treasury, SAMEA and civil society, notably think tanks, needs to be clarified.

Budgeting for Evaluative Processes

- R6 DPME should initiate and develop guidelines for rapid evaluative exercises which can be conducted internally and when budgets are limited or time is limited.
- R7 Programmes must be required to budget a % of programme budgets for evaluation, or M&E. Typically this should be in the range 0.5-5% depending on the size of the programme.

- R8 DPME/national departments should promote the sharing of evaluation plans across spheres of government so that evaluation resources can be pooled across government departments, for evaluations that examine similar programmes, or cross-departmental evaluations.
- R9 DPSA with technical input from DPME should develop clear requirements for specific evaluation staff with competences, job descriptions, and posts in standard M&E units. M&E units should have at least one evaluation specialist.

Capacity Development

- R10 DPME must strengthen its investment in capacity development, including working with Treasury and Public Service Education and Training Authority (PSETA) to ensure that budget is available for courses/learnerships, and with additional dedicated staff time to focus on capacity development.
- R11 DPME to work with NSG, DPSA and SAMEA to ensure that suitable post-graduate courses and continuous professional development opportunities are available for evaluation professionals within the public sector (and the extended evaluation system).
- R12 DPME to work with stakeholders to establish a Community of Practice for learning and sharing around evaluation for government.
- R13 The national Evaluation Technical Working Group (ETWG) should suggest how internal evaluations should be encouraged to encourage learning, bearing in mind the need for independence for major evaluations.
- R14 Build-in specific skills transfer elements into Service Level Agreements with evaluation service providers.
- R15 DPME needs to use both capacity development and procurement tools to ensure that emerging evaluators are brought into the system, and encourage a broader variety of universities to participate in the system.

Managing and Tracking Evaluations

- R16 DPME to work to strengthen the quality of foundational documents including Terms of Reference (TORs). This requires expanding the training, refinements to the guideline and more consistency in application of the guideline
- R17 DPME to work to strengthen the quality of foundational documents including TORs. This requires expanding the training, refinements to the guideline and more consistency in application of the guideline
- R18 The management information system is the 'backbone' of the NES and it needs to be strengthened and used across all evaluation in government, not only for the NEP. This will allow transparent monitoring of the state of the system, as well as extraction.
- R19 DPME must use the results of this tracking to ensure that departments are following up on improvement plans, reporting to Cabinet, and naming and shaming departments who are not doing so.

Strengthening use through communication and improvement plans

- R20 DPME, provinces and departments need to allocate significant resources for evaluation communication, both financial and human. This will ensure full value is obtained from the investment currently being made, and that stakeholders are aware of the findings. This will also help to build trust in government.
- R21 DPME should hold some resources to be used during the improvement plan stage of NEP evaluations to enable funding of exercises such as costing. The same would be beneficial for OTPs for provincial evaluations.
- R22 DPME should develop mechanisms for tracking changes from evaluations beyond the current two years of the improvement plan. This would include later evaluations on programmes which have been revised from evaluations.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. Introduction

The South African NEPF was approved in November 2011. It had been in operation for 5 years when Genesis Analytics (“Genesis”) was contracted in November 2016 by DPME to conduct the inaugural Evaluation of South Africa’s NES. The purpose of this evaluation is to assess whether the implementation of the NES is having an impact on the programmes and policies evaluated, the departments involved, and other key stakeholders; and to determine how the system needs to be strengthened to maximise its impact and value for money across government.

2. Approach, Method and Implementation of the Evaluation

The evaluation made use of a theory-based approach as a departure point, including document analysis; literature review and international benchmarking; stakeholder mapping; case studies; key informant interviews; and a survey. The evaluation team conducted 112 key informant interviews and received 86 survey responses and conducted a cost-benefit analysis of a sample of evaluations. Departments and provinces were selected as case studies to represent a range of levels of engagement within the NES. Departmental case studies included the Departments of Basic Education (DBE), Human Settlements (DHS), Justice and Constitutional Development (DJCD), Social Development (DSD), and Trade and Industry (**the dti**). The provincial case studies consisted of the Eastern Cape, Gauteng, Limpopo and the Western Cape.

3. Key Findings from the Literature Review

- 3.1. A NES is defined as “...one in which evaluation is a regular part of the life cycle of public policies and programmes, it is conducted in a methodologically rigorous and systematic manner in which its results are used by political decision-makers and managers, and those results are also made available to the public”.¹ It is important to emphasise that the concept of an evaluation system needs to be viewed in terms of a systems approach that recognises the importance of both an ability to provide sound evidence (the supply side) as well as the capacity within the system for individuals and institutions to use information (the demand side).² The development a NES is dependent on the political will for change in the country and the pace of the development of evaluation infrastructure.³ Once the ‘building blocks’ for an evaluation system are in place, the focus shifts to embedding evaluation, or in other words, institutionalising evaluation.
- 3.2. There is considerable variation in country approaches to evaluation in the public sector. A 2013 study found that 33% of the countries assessed did not have a policy in place, or an indication that a policy was going to be developed. 30% of the countries assessed routinely conducted evaluations without a formal policy in place, while 20% were in the process of developing a policy, and 17% had legislated evaluation.
- 3.3. Benin and Uganda in Africa, and Colombia and Mexico were selected as countries to benchmark with, Mexico and Colombia as international pioneers from which DPME drew much inspiration in designing the NES, and Benin and Uganda being partners with which DPME is working closely. While all five countries have national evaluation plans in place, only Colombia and Mexico have legislated evaluation. However, legislating the system did not equate to there being sufficient capacity to implement it. There was there a need to “catch-up” from a capacity building perspective. All of the countries’ evaluation systems are housed in a central coordination and oversight unit. Mexico appears to better communicate evaluation results to the public through the media, which the other four countries can draw from. Ensuring evaluation use is a key challenge across the five countries. In South Africa, steps have been taken towards creating an enabling environment for evaluation use. In Benin, no clear process for use appears to be in place, but reports are developed for ministers and other relevant stakeholders. Similarly, in Colombia results are presented to Congress and then made public in SINERGIA⁴s

¹ (Lazaro, 2015, p. 16)

² (UNEG, 2012, p. 7)

³ (UNEG, 2012)

⁴ SINERGIA is the M&E section of the Department of National Planning

annual report. In Uganda, while the Policy on M&E in the Public-Sector highlights that the purpose of the evaluation system is “to produce evidence of performance and results which can inform public policy”, actual utilisation of evaluation outputs appears to be low. This is also a challenge in Mexico.

4. South Africa’s NES

From 1994 to 2005, there was no central coordination of M&E in the South African government with elements led by the Presidency, the Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA), National Treasury, and the national statistics agency (StatsSA). With no national system, evaluation practice in the public sector emerged in different ways. The policy framework for the Government-Wide Monitoring and Evaluation (GWM&E) system indicated the need for evaluation.⁵ In November 2011, Cabinet approved the NEPF.⁶ The NEPF and the development of the NES includes among others systems for national, provincial and departmental evaluation plans; standards; guidelines; courses; national and provincial champions (DPME and Offices of the Premier) and a follow-up system for evaluations.

5. Findings and Analysis

5.1. How the NES is Working as a Whole

- 5.1.1. *Evaluation Plans and Selection of Evaluations.* The NES currently operates as a balance between an internally-initiated approach where evaluations are proposed by departments, strategic demand arising from agents such as DPME, Treasury, Parliament, with eventual selection on criteria of importance and link to the NDP/MTSF. While at early stages most were proposed by departments, for the 2018/19 NEP six of the eight evaluations were proposed by DPME or National Treasury, which respondents felt was the way to go. However, to ensure utilisation, efforts should still be undertaken to maximise departmental ownership. In selecting evaluations for NEPs and PEPs, DPME and OTPs generally follow the specifications of the NEPF in terms of evaluation prioritisation. Departments and provinces see the creation of a DEP or Provincial Evaluation Plan (PEP) as valuable. However, the link to the NEPF and the NDP needs to be made clearer for the overall vision and purpose of evaluation to be articulated. The extent to which a department or province has an evaluation plan in place is a good indication of the breadth of the NES, but not the depth or quality of the system. There are eight PEPs (of nine provinces) and 68 DEPs from 155 national and provincial departments (with only 29 DEPs the previous year). Therefore, great strides have been made in terms of breadth. Early adopters such as **the dti** and DBE, have internalised systems and are ensuring that evaluations are aligned to the departments and their needs.
- 5.1.2. *Key Stakeholders in the NES.* A view that came out strongly during the interviews is that the roles of DPME and other actors in the evaluation space are not always clear and there is not always a shared vision for the NES across the centre of government institutions, a view most strongly held by the DPSA. More work is needed to clarify the roles of universities, SAMEA, centre of government departments, civil society organisations and programme beneficiaries.
- 5.1.3. *Time and Costs in the NES.* The bulk of the DPME’s budget (77% in 2016/17 and 83% in 2015/16) is spent on funding evaluations, while proportionally less is spent on institutionalisation⁷ activities such as capacity building (0% in 2016/17 and 8% in 2015/16) and communication (1% in 2016/17 and 0.3% in 2015/16), although DFID support was used for this between 2012 and 2015. To support institutionalisation this spread needs to be more even. Respondents on both the supply side (evaluators) and the demand side (departments and provinces) noted that the evaluation process is a lengthy process which requires a considerable investment in time. A considerable amount of time appears to be spent on pre-design and design, and the communication of results. The latter specifically (as a non-core evaluation activity) can potentially be reduced to improve the efficiency of the evaluation process.

⁵ (Goldman & Mathe, 2014)

⁶ (DPME, 2011)

⁷ “A process of channelling isolated and spontaneous programme evaluation efforts into more formal and systematic approaches, on the presumption that the latter provide a better framework for fully realising the potential of the evaluation practice” (Gaarder & Briceno, 2010)

5.1.4. *The Value of the NES.* Cost-benefit ratios were calculated of three sample evaluations, which ranged from 1:7⁸, to 1:10⁹, and 1:13¹⁰. These ratios show that in these instances the cost of evaluation is heavily outweighed by the benefits, and implies that investing in evaluation is very beneficial for government. While there is certainly value in the system, tracking the costs and benefits of the system as a whole and of individual evaluations needs to be done more systematically, so that the value of the system can be accurately assessed.

5.2. Capacity Building, Quality Assurance and Communication in the NES

5.2.1. *Capacity Development.* Capacity development has been a large focus of the NES. DPME's capacity building plan has included establishing guidelines and templates, promoting learning networks and forums, short courses, and developing an Management Performance Assessment Tool (MPAT) evaluation standard. DPME has developed 18 guidelines and 9 templates. Overall, these have been very helpful to departments and provinces. Later adopter provinces in particular highlighted the need for upskilling staff on evaluation, and the need for additional staff to manage evaluations in the provinces. A number of respondents suggested that senior staff as well as programme managers should receive technical training including practical considerations such as budgeting for evaluations.¹¹ 989 participants undertook training between 2012/13 and 2016/17. Overall, respondents from key informant interviews and from the survey found the training provided very useful. A number of respondents highlighted the importance of "on-the-job" training, and more experienced officials noted that deepening their training would be useful. However, the amount spent on capacity building has decreased considerably since the UK's Department for International Development (DFID) funding ceased in late 2015, and there is a concern that the NSG is not meeting the demand for evaluation training adequately.

5.2.2. *Quality Assurance.* The *quality assurance* mechanisms of the NES are important for the credibility of evaluations coming out of the NES. These mechanisms range from design clinics, steering committees, guidelines, support from DPME directors, peer reviews and independent quality assessment. Respondents noted that peer reviewers are not always included from the beginning of the evaluation which can cause challenges later. Peer reviewers noted that the compensation for peer reviewing is too small for the amount of work required. Respondents highlighted that the quality assessment mechanism worked best when there was communication between the assessors, the programme managers, external evaluators and other key members of steering committees.

5.2.3. *Communication.* The DPME has developed a *communication* strategy, and implemented a variety of strategies including presentations related to the NES, communicating results through the media and 31 editions of its newsletter (Evaluation Update), conferences and exchanges, and the development of publications such as policy briefs and annual reports. DPME sends Parliamentary portfolio committees the evaluation reports, but other communication with Parliament is occasional and could be enhanced. Areas that could be strengthened include work with the media, and wider sharing of learnings (formally or informally) within the public sector.

5.3. Impact of the NES

The DPME has invested in creating an enabling environment for use of evaluation findings. The improvement plan system is seen as a key element in enhancing use in the system and is seen as one of the key benefits the NES has brought about. There is currently no mechanism to mandate the creation of, or funding of the proposals from an improvement plan, which can lead to difficulties in implementing the recommendations. There is a need for a stronger system to track evaluation improvement plans, and a centralised system would be beneficial where departmental reporting on improvement plans can be entered, and reviewed by DPME.

The case study departments highlighted examples of instrumental use¹¹ and process use¹². The preliminary evidence for use of evaluations therefore appears to be encouraging. Departments and provinces appear to

⁸ The Evaluation of the Impact of Agricultural Learnerships in the Western Cape.

⁹ The Evaluation of the Funza Lushaka Scheme for DBE

¹⁰ The Evaluation of the BPS Programme for the dti

¹¹ When evaluations are used instrumentally, the recommendations and findings generated, could inform decision-making and lead to changes in the intervention." (Ledermann, 2012)

¹² Process use is where evaluation participants benefit from the process of partaking in the evaluation itself.

understand the value of evaluations and attempt to use them to inform decisions. In the majority of cases there is little conscious consideration of budget implications arising from evaluations, with those evaluations concerned with the economy best in this regard. Beyond the objectives of the NES, other key benefits are improved strategic vision in departments and provinces as a result of using theories of change; the use of good practice examples in internal research after having been exposed to external evaluations; and an enhanced use of evaluative thinking and the consideration of the need to harmonise learning across structures.

5.4. Institutionalisation of the NES

Establishing the NES is a 20-year project, with the first five years creating the building blocks of the system, and establishing the credibility of evaluations. Departments highlighted the positive role that the NES has played in developing evaluation culture, and a common language around evaluation. Later adopters raised legislation as an option for institutionalisation, while in earlier adopters, the focus was more on developing evaluation culture in the departments. A key frustration voiced by departments was the overall lack of a systematic link between evaluation, budgeting and planning and finding funds to conduct evaluations. The provincial case studies show provinces have taken different steps in institutionalising the NES, but that a provincial evaluation champion is essential. A few areas that are seen as important in further institutionalising and expanding the system include strengthening senior-level buy-in; the use of internal evaluations to develop an evaluative culture; the promotion of evaluative thinking; and drive from individual champions. Specific levers identified as necessary in the institutionalisation of the NES include ensuring financial allocations for evaluations; accountability to conduct evaluations; and addressing issues related to fear of evaluation.

6. Conclusions

In terms of *relevance, effectiveness and efficiency*, considerable progress has been made in terms of establishing the system particularly through the evaluation plans, capacity building, quality assurance mechanisms and communication. From a cost perspective, the bulk of DPME's budget has been put toward conducting evaluation. Going forward, a better balance between conducting evaluation and institutionalisation activities, should be achieved. From a stakeholder perspective, the role of DPME needs to be clarified, while the roles of DPSA, National Treasury and NSG, need to be strengthened. Related to *impact*, there are encouraging signs of evaluation use in the system. However, improvement plans need to be tracked more systematically to better understand use. In terms of *sustainability and upscaling*, it is suggested that the evaluations included in the NES are expanded beyond those internally-initiated to include some of national and provincial strategic importance in order to achieve the objectives of the NES. The next phase of the NES relates to institutionalisation. This can be done through more systematic use of evaluation findings in financial allocations, accountability to conduct evaluations, and promoting the development of an evaluation culture.

7. Recommendations

Evaluation Mandate

- R1 Evaluation should be embedded in legislation as a mandatory component of public management and organisational improvement, with DPME as the custodian, and the roles of Offices of the Premier (OTPs) and departments defined.
- R2 Planning and budgeting must systemically draw from the results of M&E. This should be monitored through APPs, quarterly and annual reports, and performance agreements.
- R3 New phases of programmes should not be funded until an evaluation of the previous phase is completed.
- R4 The role of impact evaluations needs to be strengthened and considered from the beginning of a programme.
- R5 The role of key stakeholders in the evaluation ecosystem including DPSA, National Treasury, SAMEA and civil society, notably think tanks, needs to be clarified.

Budgeting for Evaluative Processes

- R6 DPME should initiate and develop guidelines for rapid evaluative exercises which can be conducted internally and when budgets are limited or time is limited.
- R7 Programmes must be required to budget a % of programme budgets for evaluation, or M&E. Typically this should be in the range 0,5-5% depending on the size of the programme.
- R8 DPME/national departments should promote the sharing of evaluation plans across spheres of government so that evaluation resources can be pooled across government departments, for evaluations that examine similar programmes, or cross-departmental evaluations.
- R9 DPSA with technical input from DPME should develop clear requirements for specific evaluation staff with competences, job descriptions, and posts in standard M&E units. M&E units should have at least one evaluation specialist.

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- R13 The national ETWG should suggest how internal evaluations should be encouraged to encourage learning, bearing in mind the need for independence for major evaluations.
- R14 Build-in specific skills transfer elements into Service Level Agreements with evaluation service providers.
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Managing and Tracking Evaluations

- R16 DPME to work to strengthen the quality of foundational documents including TORs. This requires expanding the training, refinements to the guideline and more consistency in application of the guideline
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- R19 DPME must use the results of this tracking to ensure that departments are following up on improvement plans, reporting to Cabinet, and naming and shaming departments who are not doing so.

Strengthening use through communication and improvement plans

- R20 DPME, provinces and departments need to allocate significant resources for evaluation communication, both financial and human. This will ensure full value is obtained from the investment currently being made, and that stakeholders are aware of the findings. This will also help to build trust in government.

- R21 DPME should hold some resources to be used during the improvement plan stage of NEP evaluations to enable funding of exercises such as costing. The same would be beneficial for OTPs for provincial evaluations.

1 INTRODUCTION

Genesis Analytics ('Genesis') was contracted by the DPME in November 2016 to conduct the inaugural Evaluation of South Africa's NES. The purpose of this evaluation is to assess whether implementation of the NES is having an impact and determine how the system can be strengthened to maximise its impact and value for money across government. The NEPF was approved by Cabinet in November 2011 and so the NES has only been running for five years. It is important to assess whether the establishment, institutionalisation, and thus potential impact of the NES, is ultimately 'on the right track'.

The purpose of this report is to provide a summary of the key findings of the evaluation, and outline recommendations to strengthen the NES. This section (*Section 1*) provides a brief background to the NES and outlines the key evaluation questions. *Section 2* provides an overview of the implementation of the evaluation, while *Section 3* outlines the key findings from the literature, *Section 4* elaborates on the NES, and *Section 5* provides the key findings of the evaluation. *Sections 6* and *7* provide the conclusions and recommendations.

1.1 Background to the NES

The NES¹³ was established in response to the problem that "evaluation was applied sporadically" and not informing planning, policy-making and budgeting sufficiently. The NEPF, introduced in 2011, recognised that there was a missed opportunity to improve government's effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability¹⁴ and adopted a utilisation-focused approach to ensure that evaluations are used to improve programme performance, promote accountability in government, support effective evidence-base decision-making and promote knowledge creation and dissemination.¹⁵ The NES was established to implement the NEPF, and aims to promote accountability and evidence-based decision-making in the public sector in order to ensure the efficient and effective focus of government decisions and resources.¹⁶

1.2 Purpose of this Evaluation

The DPME commissioned this evaluation to "assess whether implementation of the NES is having an impact on the programmes and policies evaluated, the departments involved, and other key stakeholders; and to determine how the system needs to be strengthened to maximise its impact and value for money across the government. This evaluation will cover how the theory of change is working in practice and whether the outcomes and impacts look likely to be achieved". With this in mind, the main questions this evaluation seeks to address, as categorised by the OECD DAC criteria for evaluating development effectiveness are¹⁷:

- **Impact:** • Is there initial evidence of symbolic¹⁸, conceptual¹⁹ or instrumental²⁰ outcomes from evaluations?
 - If evaluations findings are not being used, why is this?
 - What evidence is there of evaluations contributing to planning/budgeting, improved accountability, decision-making and knowledge?
- **Relevance, Effectiveness and Efficiency:** • How is the evaluation system working as a whole? • Who is involved and what are the consequences of involvement? • How are the specific components working nationally and provincially and how can they be strengthened? • What is the value for money of establishing the NES? • Are there other evaluation mechanisms that need to be included to maximise the benefits accrued to the government?

¹³ An evaluation system is "...one in which evaluation is a regular part of the life cycle of public policies and programmes, it is conducted in a methodologically rigorous and systematic manner in which its results are used by political decision-makers and managers, and those results are also made available to the public".¹³ Evaluation systems are a function of values, practices and institutions (Lazaro, 2015).

¹⁴ (DPME, 2016)

¹⁵ (DPME, 2011)

¹⁶ (DPME, 2016)

¹⁷ (DPME, 2016)

¹⁸ "Symbolic use refers to examples when a person uses the mere existence of an evaluation, rather than any aspect of its results, to persuade or to convince." (Johnson, et al., 2009)

¹⁹ Conceptual use is the type of use where an evaluation results in an improved understanding of the intervention and its context, or a change in the conception of the evaluand." (Ledermann, 2012)

²⁰ When evaluations are used instrumentally, the recommendations and findings generated, could inform decision-making and lead to changes in the intervention." (Ledermann, 2012)

- **Sustainability and Upscaling:** • How should the internally-initiated approach evolve to strengthen the NES?
 - How should the balance between internal and external evaluations be managed going forward?
 - What are the implications for expanding the system?
 - What changes should be made to policy and the evaluation support system to improve the quality of evaluations?
 - What changes should be made to policy and the evaluation support system to improve the quality of evaluations?

2 APPROACH, METHOD AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EVALUATION

2.1 Approach and Method

The evaluation made use of a theory-based approach as the departure point. The benefit of a theory-based approach is that theories of change systematically depict key objectives, and the steps required to achieve these and any inherent assumptions. The theory of change formed the basis for the analysis framework²¹ of the progress of the NES towards the objectives defined within the theory of change. The literature review uncovered a useful theoretical framework with which to organise information and data on NESs in developing countries. This framework is Holvoet and Renard's six characteristics of emerging NESs²². This framework outlines six characteristics of policy, methodology, organisation, capacity, participation of other actors and use. These elements are helpful in describing emerging NESs.

The analysis framework, was used to answer the evaluation questions and in doing so drew on the following data collection methods: document analysis, case studies, literature review and international benchmarking, key informant interviews, stakeholder mapping, and a survey.

The evaluation drew on findings from the literature review, a selection of departmental and provincial case studies and a value for money assessment as further tools to support the findings of the evaluation. In order to assess value for money of the NES, indicative projects were analysed at the national and provincial level. A cost-benefit ratio was derived in each case to convey the value of conducting evaluations in these cases. In doing so, three evaluations (two at the departmental level, and one at the provincial level) were sampled. In collaboration with key stakeholders from the departments and province, as well as a document review, the evaluation team put together key costs and benefits for each evaluation. These were compared to inform a cost-benefit ratio. A case study approach was included to assess how different elements of the NES fit together (particularly the role and experience of line departments and provinces), and how these different elements contribute towards the desired objectives captured in the NES theory of change. The departments and provinces that were selected for the case studies were representative of different levels of engagement with the NES. The provincial case studies that were selected were the Eastern Cape, Gauteng, Limpopo and the Western Cape. The departmental case studies that were selected were the Department of Basic Education (DBE), the Department of Human Settlements (DHS), Department of Justice and Constitutional Development (DJCD), the Department of Social Development (**DSD**), and the Department of Trade and Industry (**the dti**). Using the adoption of innovation curve²³ as a model, DBE and DSD are innovator²⁴ departments, **the dti** is an early adopter²⁵ department, DHS is an early majority²⁶ department, and DJCD is part of the late majority²⁷. Of the provinces, the Western Cape is an innovator province, Gauteng is an early adopter, and the Eastern Cape and Limpopo are part of the late majority. This is discussed further in section 4.2.

2.2 Evaluation Implementation

This evaluation was conducted over six phases. Phase 1 was the inception phase; while Phase 2 was the literature review phase; Phase 3 focused on the theory of change of the NES and the evaluation design; and Phase 4 consisted of field work. During the fieldwork (data collection) phase of the evaluation, the evaluation

²¹ The analysis framework is a matrix of key questions categorised by theme and potential sources of information.

²² (Holvoet & Renard, 2007)

²³ (University of Oklahoma, n.d.) citing (Rogers, 2003)

²⁴ Innovators are eager to try new ideas, and will be more likely to pilot new ideas (University of Oklahoma, n.d.) citing (Rogers, 2003).

²⁵ Early adopters are key levers of adoption of innovation, and are essential to spreading innovation (University of Oklahoma, n.d.) citing (Rogers, 2003).

²⁶ The early majority tend to take longer to make decisions and are deliberative in adopting new ideas (University of Oklahoma, n.d.) citing (Rogers, 2003).

²⁷ The late majority is a skeptical group and tend to adopt innovation after the average members of the system. The late majority typically adopt innovation as a result of economic necessity or social pressure (University of Oklahoma, n.d.) citing (Rogers, 2003).

team conducted 112 key informant interviews, and 86 survey responses were received²⁸. The final two phases consisted of analysis and synthesis of the data collected (Phase 5), and reporting and close-out (Phase 6).

3 KEY FINDINGS FROM THE LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 Evaluation in the Public Sector

3.1.1 National Evaluation Systems – Key Definitions

Evaluation²⁹ is one tool in public sector management. Other tools include monitoring³⁰, performance monitoring³¹, public policy monitoring³², performance, audit, inspection and oversight³³, and quality assurance³⁴. A NES is defined as "...one in which evaluation is a regular part of the life cycle of public policies and programmes, it is conducted in a methodologically rigorous and systematic manner in which its results are used by political decision-makers and managers, and those results are also made available to the public".³⁵ An evaluation system needs to be viewed as a system including both an ability to provide sound evidence (the supply side) as well as the capacity within the system for individuals and institutions to use information (the demand side), within a particular social-economic-political context and societal needs.³⁶ On the supply side, external service providers, public sector evaluation units, universities and training institutions, and evaluation associations, are essential. On the demand side, central organisations and institutions include evaluation coordination units in the public sector, ministries and sector departments, local, provincial and national government, and government planning and budgeting functions.³⁷ An evaluation system works at the intersection of supply, demand and need.³⁸

3.1.2 The Development and Institutionalisation of National Evaluation Systems

The development of a NES is dependent on the political will for change in the country (including vision of leadership, and an enabling environment) and the pace of the development of evaluation infrastructure (including the capacity demand and use evaluation information, and the technical capacity to supply evaluation).³⁹ Once the 'building blocks' for an evaluation system are in place, the focus shifts to embedding evaluation, or in other words, institutionalising evaluation. There are six factors that influence the development, evolution, and institutionalisation of evaluation systems. These include democratic quality; scientific, technical and public sector management traditions; high levels of public investment in certain sectors; existence of driving forces exogenous to the system that are favourable to evaluation; institutional context and characteristics of the

²⁸ The key informant interviews conducted included respondents from the following stakeholder groups: M&E officials from DPME, other national departments and provincial departments; members of the ETWG; officials in departments that have been conducting evaluations since the inception of NES; relevant executive authorities, Director Generals, Heads of Department for National Departments and provincial government; key stakeholders in the three departmental case studies and key stakeholders in the three provincial case studies – including programme managers, ETWGs, and case study departments; key stakeholders involved in capacity development, quality assessment and communication; international partners in evaluation; and stakeholders that are not directly involved in NES, including: parliament, SAMEA, CLEAR AA and service providers that have undertaken evaluations within the NES

²⁹ "Evaluation is an applied inquiry process for collecting and synthesising evidence that culminates in conclusions about the state of affairs, value, merit, worth, significance, or quality of a programme, product, person, policy, proposal, or plan. Conclusions made in evaluations encompass both an empirical aspect (that something is the case) and a normative aspect (judgement about the value of something). It is the value feature that distinguishes evaluation from other types of inquiry, such as basic science research, clinical epidemiology, investigate journalism, or public polling."²⁹ Scriven²⁹ adds to this by noting that "Evaluation determines the merit, worth, or value of things. The evaluation process identifies relevant values or standards that apply to what is being evaluated, performs empirical investigations using techniques from social sciences, and then integrates conclusions with the standards into an evaluation or set of evaluations" (Fournier, 2005)

³⁰ "...a continuous function that uses the systematic collection of data on specified indicators to provide management and the main stakeholders of an ongoing development intervention with indications of the extent of progress and the achievement of objectives and progress in the use of allocated funds" (Kusek & Rist, 2004).

³¹ Performance monitoring focuses on organisations/units and is conducted fairly regularly. Performance monitoring draws primarily on quantitative methods; it is commissioned by units charged with the monitoring function in general; and it is typically conducted within the public sector. Performance monitoring can relate to financial and / or non-financial monitoring (Lazaro, 2015).

³² Public policy monitoring focuses primarily on policies and programmes. Like performance monitoring, public policy monitoring is conducted fairly regularly using quantitative methods; it is commissioned by units charged with monitoring and can include units charged with budgetary control and/or human resources; and it is typically conducted within the public sector (Lazaro, 2015).

³³ Performance, audit, inspection and oversight focuses on public organisations and leadership. This function is typically carried out by public sector related institutions such as national audit offices (Lazaro, 2015).

³⁴ Quality assurance can be a done both internally and externally. There is an overlap between evaluation and quality assurance in that the latter can be done on the former (Lazaro, 2015).

³⁵ (Lazaro, 2015, p. 16)

³⁶ (UNEG, 2012, p. 7)

³⁷ (Casado, 2009)

³⁸ (Casado, 2009)

³⁹ (UNEG, 2012)

political system; and administration and reform processes.⁴⁰ There are broadly three pathways to the establishment of a NES:⁴¹ through ad hoc studies; beginning in specific sectors and then spreading; and in the third, evolving from government-wide performance monitoring.

3.2 National Approaches to Evaluation

In some countries there is a strong evaluation culture (as opposed to policy) characterised by learning from experience, accepting constructive criticism, sharing ideas and practices, transparency, and flexibility; while other countries have formal policies in place.⁴² In 2013 Dr Barbara Rosenstein undertook a mapping study which looked at: which countries had a legislated national evaluation policy; which countries routinely conducted evaluations without a policy; which countries were currently developing a policy; and which countries were not conducting evaluations and did not have a policy. The largest portion (33%) of the 115 countries included in the study sample did not appear to have a policy or an indication that one was going to be developed at the time. Countries with a legislated evaluation policy were in the minority (17%), while 30% of the countries routinely conducted evaluations without a formal policy. Finally, 20% of the 115 countries were in the process of developing a policy.⁴³

3.3 Benchmarking South Africa to Benin, Uganda, Colombia and Mexico

Using Holvoet and Renard's six characteristics as a guide, the following provides a summary of the key comparisons of South Africa to Benin, Uganda, Colombia and Mexico⁴⁴:

- **Policy:** All five countries have an evaluation plan in place. Mexico and Colombia have formally legislated systems while South Africa, Benin and Uganda do not. All five countries make allowances in their policies for the alignment of M&E, to planning and budgeting. In South Africa, Colombia, Mexico and Uganda⁴⁵ the evaluation systems are aligned to, and prioritised according to the countries' development objectives.
- **Methodology:** All of the five countries reviewed outline what methodologies should be used in their M&E systems.
- **Organisation:** All five countries have a central coordination and oversight structure in place.
- **Capacity:** In South Africa⁴⁶ and Colombia, shortcomings in capacity are acknowledged and used to inform training plans. In both Benin and Uganda, evaluation capacity in the evaluation system appears to be more constrained than in South Africa and Colombia, despite a number of initiatives having been undertaken.
- **Participation of other Actors:** The role of parliament across the countries reviewed appears to be of an oversight nature where annual reports are presented to parliament (and in South Africa's case these are quarterly). In all five countries academic institutions play an important learning function in the development of evaluation culture and practices. The role of media in evaluation systems appears to be most developed / formalised in Mexico where the media is active in publishing the findings of evaluations, and civil society research institutions focus on increasing accountability in the system.
- **Quality and Use:** In South Africa, steps have been taken towards creating an enabling environment for evaluation use. In Benin, no clear process for use appears to be in place, but reports are developed for ministers and other relevant stakeholders. Similarly, in Colombia results are presented to Congress and then made public in SINERGIA⁴⁷'s annual report. In Uganda, while the Policy on M&E in the Public-Sector highlights that the purpose of the evaluation system is "to produce evidence of performance and results

⁴⁰ (Lazaro, 2015)

⁴¹ (Bamberger, et al., 2015)

⁴² (Rosenstein, 2013)

⁴³ (Rosenstein, 2013)

⁴⁴ It is important to note that the comparison between the national evaluation systems of South Africa, Benin, Uganda, Mexico and Colombia was based on a review of available documents and literature on the evaluation systems. The information available was largely descriptive in nature, and not focused on critiquing the evaluation systems. The information included in this report is therefore descriptive for the four comparator countries, and more detailed for South Africa, as the focus of this evaluation. Furthermore, more information is contained in the full literature review of this evaluation.

⁴⁵ The process by which evaluation focus areas are selected is unclear from the literature reviewed on Benin.

⁴⁶ In South Africa the private sector and universities have provided some support to work on evaluation capacity, such as CLEAR AA.

⁴⁷ SINERGIA is the national M&E system, a section of the national Department of National Planning

which can inform public policy”, actual utilisation of evaluation outputs appears to be low. This is also a challenge in Mexico.

4 SOUTH AFRICA'S NES

4.1 The Evolution of South Africa's NES

In the years 1994 to 2005, M&E in the South African government was not formally coordinated and was driven primarily by departments at the centre of the government (COG)⁴⁸ which included the Presidency, the DPSA, National Treasury, and Statistics South Africa (StatsSA) – the national statistics agency.

Table 1 below provides a timeline for the establishment of the NES. Evaluation practice in the public sector emerged in different ways and was not informed by policy⁴⁹. This changed in 2007 with the introduction of the policy framework for the GWM&E system. The aim of the GWM&E system was to provide an integrated framework of standards, principles and practices that can be used as a reference point for all government departments in all matters relating to M&E. The third element of the GWM&E system was evaluation.

Table 1: Timeline of the Development of the NES

2007
Policy framework for the GWM&E system ⁵⁰
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The GWM&E system was established because it was recognised that M&E in South Africa was being conducted inconsistently, and was not being informed by policy.⁵¹ The GWM&E consisted of four areas of work, of which one was evaluation. M&E seen as a key lever for improving services and a Ministry in the Presidency was created
2010
DPME ⁵² was established in the Presidency
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DPME was established as the custodian of the M&E system.
2011
DPME's services were expanded to include the incorporation of an evaluation system ⁵³
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DPME's initial focus was on monitoring, and the development of the MPAT which is a frontline service delivery monitoring system. In focusing on evaluation, an initial consultation was held with departments already undertaking evaluations⁵⁴. This led to a group being formed to lead on evaluation development.
Study tour to Mexico, Colombia and the United States of America (USA)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The study tour group included the departments that had been doing evaluations (DBE, DSD, PSC), the DPME's Deputy Minister, and the DPME's Director General (DG).
The NEPF was approved by Cabinet
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Following the study tour a “write shop” was held with the travel team and key evaluation figures in the country, drafting the policy framework which was sent out for consultation⁵⁵ in September 2011, and approved by Cabinet in November 2011.⁵⁶ The NEPF sought to formalise a government⁵⁷ evaluation system. This process was an innovative way to draft a policy paper very rapidly with broad buy-in.
DPME's Evaluation and Research unit (ERU) was established
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The ERU was established as the custodian of the NEPF, and it was created in September 2011.
2011 – 2012
Pilot evaluation conducted on Early Childhood Development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The pilot was started in October 2011, to develop the system through practical application. The evaluation was completed in June 2012 with the first guideline drafted (on developing TORs) based on this experience in February 2012.⁵⁸
2012
First NEP developed and approved

⁴⁸ The centre of government refers to the institution or group of institutions that support a country's chief executive (president or prime minister) in leading the political and technical coordination of the government's actions, strategic planning of the government's program, monitoring of performance, and communication of the government's decisions and achievements. (DPME, 2010)

⁴⁹ (Centre for Learning on Evaluation and Results in Anglophone Africa, 2012)

⁵⁰ (Goldman & Mathe, 2014)

⁵¹ (Centre for Learning and Evaluation Results, 2012)

⁵² When it was first established, DPME was the Department of *Performance, Monitoring and Evaluation*.

⁵³ (Phillips, et al., 2014)

⁵⁴ For example, the Department of Education, the Department of Social Development, and the Public Service Commission

⁵⁵ The South African Monitoring and Evaluation Association (SAMEA) was included in the group that was consulted on the policy framework.

⁵⁶ (Goldman, et al., 2015)

⁵⁷ The extent to which an NES should be a government-wide system versus a country-wide system (IIED, 2016), is discussed in *Section 5*.

⁵⁸ (DPME, 2017)

- The NEPF recognised that capacity to implement evaluations is limited and aimed to focus on a limited number of strategic evaluations through a NEP. Underlying the system is a demand-driven approach⁵⁹.
- The concept for a NEP was developed in January 2012. In most cases the evaluations are co-funded by DPME and the custodian line department through programme budgets. In addition to outlining planned evaluations, the NEP also summarises the status of ongoing evaluations including progress made, emerging issues and challenges.⁶⁰
- The first NEP (for 2012/13) was approved by Cabinet in June 2012, and the first NEP evaluations began in October 2012.⁶¹




In 2011, DPME⁶², developed the NEPF informed by research and international study tours to those countries with formal evaluation systems in place.⁶³ The NEPF sets out four clear purposes for evaluation: 1. improving decision-making; 2. improving performance; 3. generating knowledge; and 4. ensuring accountability.⁶⁴ The NEPF provides a background to evaluation; a rationale for evaluation; the approach to evaluation; an overview of the uses and types of evaluation; an approach to assuring credibility and quality in evaluations; details on the process of evaluation; ways in which evaluation can be institutionalised; and provisions for the management and coordination of evaluation across the public sector. As outlined in the NEPF, the NES consists of guidelines on evaluation types⁶⁵; guidelines on prioritising evaluations⁶⁶; quality management mechanisms (including quality assurance and peer review); national, departmental and provincial evaluation plans; and capacity building mechanisms.

The NEPF established a number of milestones outlining when various components and activities were expected to be implemented. Table 2 below shows that the NEPF has implemented most of the activities outlined in the NEPF. The NES has therefore made great strides, in a short period of time. Of the planned activities, the areas where these have not been implemented largely relate to training (where the NSG was originally envisioned to run the process); and lower-than-expected levels of improvement plan uptake in terms of monitoring and reporting which means that the evaluation team is unable to assess the extent to which recommendations have been used. There is therefore a need for DPME to focus on enhancing the system for tracking intervention improvement, as a result of evaluations.

South Africa’s NES has evolved significantly since its formal inception in 2011, through the NEPF. Since its establishment, 69 evaluations identified in the NEPs, of which eight were cancelled. In addition to NEPs, provinces, through the OTPs, develop Provincial Evaluation Plans (PEPs), and departments develop DEPs. There are currently eight PEPs, and approximately 68 DEPs⁶⁷ at the level of provincial and national departments.

In collaboration with the NES Evaluation steering committee, and incorporating the above information, the evaluation team drafted the NES theory of change (see Figure 1 below). The updated theory of change (drawing on the findings of this evaluation), is provided in Annex 1 of this report.

Table 2: Status of Selected Planned Activities in the NEPF

Key:	 Achieved	 In Progress	 Not Achieved
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⁵⁹ The idea behind this is that the most productive mechanism to encourage use of evaluation findings (and therefore the institutionalisation of evaluations) is to allow departments to undertake evaluations in areas they see the most potential for benefit.

⁶⁰ (UNDP, 2015)

⁶¹ (DPME, 2016)

⁶² In 2009, the Department of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME, and now called Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation) was created with the intention of improving government performance by emphasising M&E. When the GWM&E System framework was developed in 2007, it stipulated that the Presidency would be responsible for the development of an evaluation framework, or system which would be accompanied by guidelines and support materials, to facilitate the overall implementation of evaluation systems across the three spheres of government. This leadership role played by the Presidency was aligned to the provisions of the GWM&E system. The core functions of DPME in the context of the NES are: thought leadership with a focus on a utilisation-focused approach, the development of evaluation champions, the establishment of a common language for evaluation, and the development of standards and competences; technical support with a focus on the provision of a range of guidelines, the development of courses and training for M&E staff / programme managers, systems support from DPME staff, quality assurance systems development, and the establishment and management of an evaluation repository; and financial support in partnering with national departments to co-fund NEP evaluations (DPME, 2016).

⁶³ (Goldman & Mathe, 2014)

⁶⁴ (DPME, 2011)

⁶⁵ Design evaluation, diagnostic evaluation, implementation evaluation, economic evaluation, impact evaluation and synthesis evaluation.

⁶⁶ Large evaluations, where the intervention costs more than R500 million or where a large portion of the population is affected by the intervention, and the intervention has not had a major evaluation in five years; interventions that are part of the health, education, crime, rural development, and employment outcomes of the NDP; interventions that are of strategic importance, and have not been evaluated in three years; interventions that are innovative – where innovation can be learned from, for other interventions; Interventions that have a significant public interest; interventions where there are concerns around the design of the intervention; and Interventions where decisions need to be made about the continuation of the programme or project.

⁶⁷ This figure is based on the number of departments that received a Management Performance Assessment Tool (MPAT) score of 3 and over. A score of 3 and over signifies that a department has a DEP.

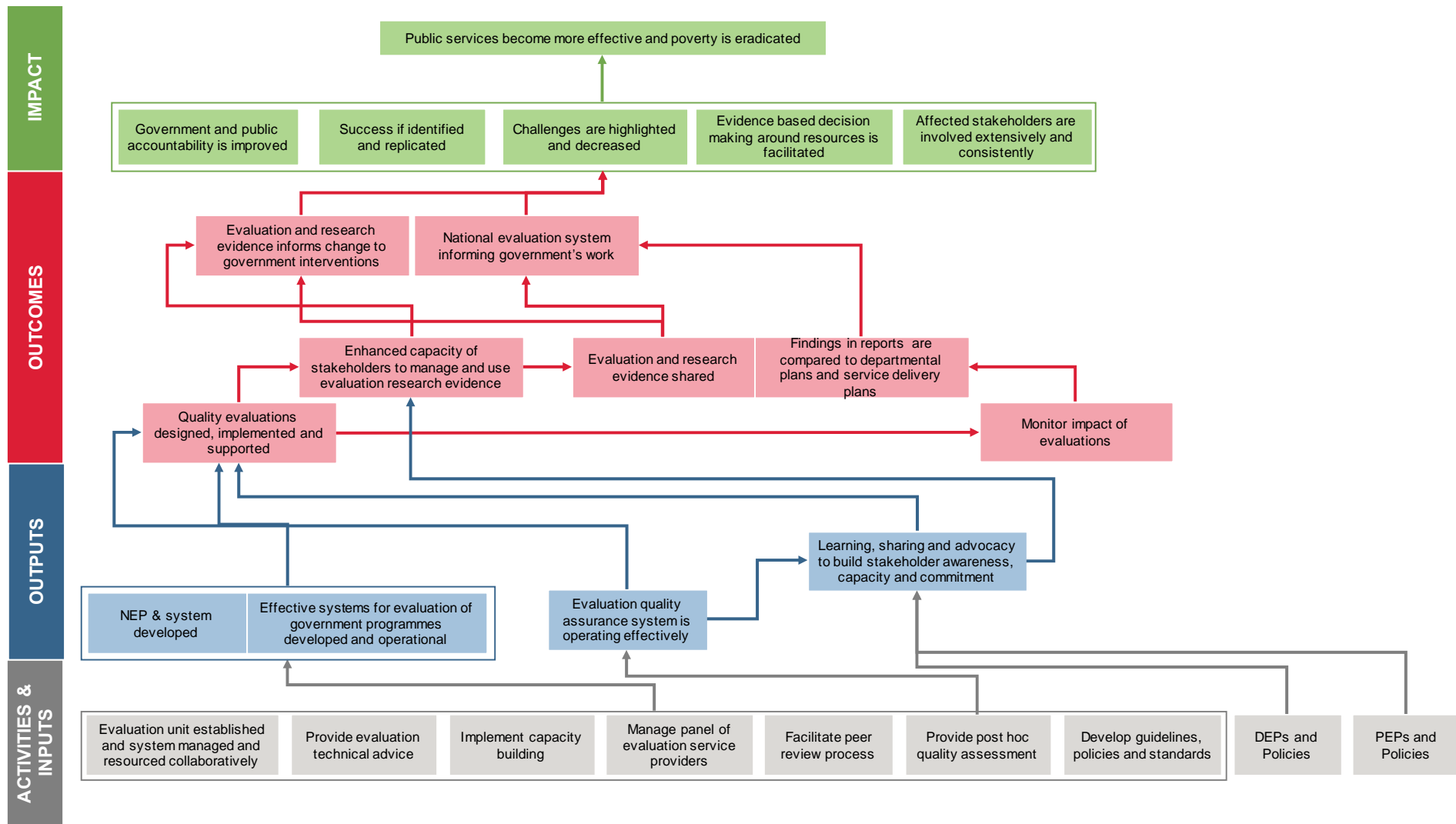
Year	Status	Planned Activity
2011/12	●	Evaluation Policy Framework adopted by Cabinet
	●	Practice notes developed on key elements of the NES
	●	Evaluation unit created in the NES
	●	NEP developed
	●	NSG courses designed to support this approach to evaluation (<i>At the system's inception, CLEAR AA provided the training.⁶⁸ This training has been moved to the NSG this year.</i>)
	●	Schedule of competencies for evaluators developed ⁶⁹
	●	Panel of evaluators created in DPME (<i>This panel is no longer in use, and instead evaluations go through an open tender process</i>)
	●	Support agreed with international partners
	●	Minimum standards agreed by Cabinet for programme and project plans ⁷⁰
	●	Audit completed of all evaluations in the public sector, and all evaluations hosted on the DPME website (<i>The audit was completed in 2011. This activity has been completed for a large number of evaluations in the public sector, but not all as DPME relied on other departments and provinces for the information which was not always forthcoming</i>)
	●	ETWG starts operation
●	Capacity development process designed	
2012/13	●	System of standards for evaluators developed
	●	NEP in place and implemented
	●	At least 60% of recommendations from evaluations implemented (<i>Between March 2013 and September 2015, as part of DFID's Strengthening Performance Monitoring and Evaluation (SPME) programme, DPME achieved its targets related to 'Percentage of recommendations by FLSD, CBM & evaluations implemented'. Overall however, more systematic tracking of improvement plans is required to accurately assess the extent to which recommendations are implemented.</i>)
	●	Training of at least 200 people using the NSG materials (<i>This was achieved, but through CLEAR AA and not the NSG</i>)
2013/14	●	At least 70% of recommendations from evaluations implemented (<i>An accurate assessment of the progress made in this regard requires improved tracking of improvement plans</i>)
	●	NEP in place and implemented
	●	Training of at least 500 people using NSG materials (<i>363 people were training and the target was later revised downwards to 200. The training and the development of curricula was not conducted by NSG</i>)
2014/15	●	NEP in place and implemented
	●	At least 75% of recommendations implemented (<i>An accurate assessment of the progress made in this regard requires improved tracking of improvement plans</i>)
	●	Evaluation of the impact of evaluations carried out to date (<i>Underway</i>)

⁶⁸ CLEAR AA developed the curriculum with DPME for in-line service training between 2013 and 2015,

⁶⁹ A schedule of competences for evaluators was developed in August 2012, made public and used for terms of reference and recruitment. This was not, at the time agreed with DPSA. Work is currently being done with DPSA to agree on evaluation competences.

⁷⁰ Evaluation standards were developed and made public in August 2012. These standards were used to develop the quality assurance system.

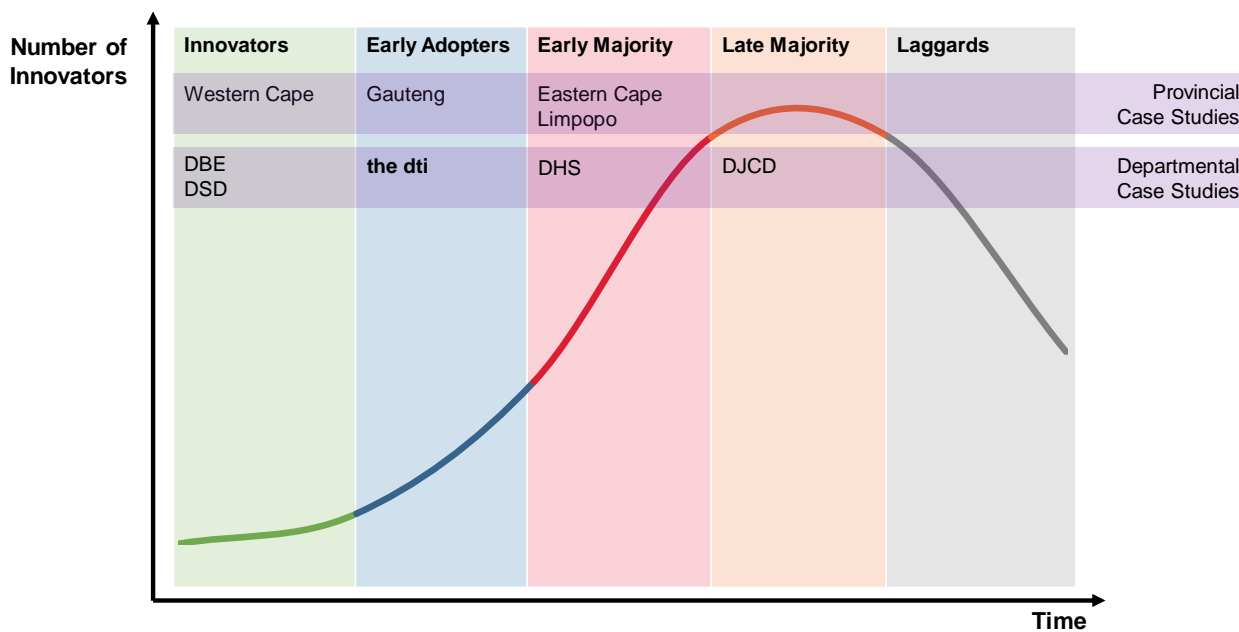
Figure 1: NES Theory of Change (As at the Outset of the Evaluation)



4.2 Departmental and Provincial Case Studies

As part of this evaluation, case studies were conducted at the provincial (Eastern Cape, Gauteng, Limpopo and Western Cape) and departmental (DBE, DHS, DJCD, DSD and **the dti**) levels. Of these case studies, the Western Cape, Gauteng, DBE, DSD and **the dti** are early adopters of evaluation. This is shown in Figure 2 below which shows where the provincial and departmental case studies fit on the adoption of innovation curve.

Figure 2: Departmental and Provincial Case Studies Located on the Adoption of Innovation Curve



Source: Application of (University of Oklahoma, n.d.) citing (Rogers, 2003)

4.2.1 Departmental Case Studies

This section provides a brief overview of the case study departments' engagement with the NES, and additional findings are provided throughout the evaluation findings section (*Section 5*):

- DBE is an innovator department and has a strong culture of research and evaluation. There is evidence of senior-level buy-in DBE with the senior managers in the Research Coordination, Monitoring and Evaluation Directorate being evaluation champions. DBE's evaluation prioritisation is guided by its Draft Departmental and Evaluation Research Plan which provides details of evaluations planned over a three-year period. Evaluations at DBE are managed by the Chief Directorate, Strategic Planning Research and Coordination with the Research Coordination, Monitoring and Evaluation Directorate (RCME) as the unit responsible. Including 2017/18, DBE has been involved in 6 NEP evaluations.
- DSD, like DBE is an innovator department in that the department was conducting evaluations prior to the establishment of the NES. The M&E function of the DSD falls within the Chief Operations branch. The Chief Director of M&E is responsible for service delivery monitoring, strategic information analysis and monitoring, impact assessment coordination, and organisational performance. Currently, there is a DEP which feeds into the provincial DEPs; and going forward, an M&E policy is being drafted for the national department which will make evaluations mandatory. In its current form, DSD has a multi-year evaluation strategy which the DG signs off on. Including 2017/18, DSD has been involved in 8 NEP evaluations.
- **the dti** is an early adopter department. **the dti** has high capacity for, and buy-in to evaluations, with five evaluations on the evaluation repository. **the dti** seems to fit into the NEPF and NES approach easily and it has adapted its internal systems to match the NEP very quickly, while also maintaining the use of rapid

appraisals. From an organisational perspective, **the dti** has established internal planning, M&E teams. That is, their internal structure reflects that of the DPME. the dti has separated the M&E threads of work in a deliberate way. Including 2017/18, dti has been involved in 5 NEP evaluations.

- DHS is an early majority department. DHS has been conducting evaluations prior to the establishment of the NEPF and NES. Respondents however noted that evaluations took place on an ad hoc basis prior to this. Despite not submitting a full DEP⁷¹, DHS remains committed to furthering evaluation practice and use in their department. From an organisational perspective, the Chief Director of Programme M&E is charged with evaluation in DHS. The office of the Programme M&E Chief Director is located within the Programme and Project Management Unit branch of DHS. DHS is different to other departments in that the M&E unit is not located within a strategy or planning branch. The DHS's M&E unit is well-capacitated with individuals and budget assigned to conduct evaluation tasks. The majority of M&E officials' time is however spent on monitoring and reporting. DHS has been involved in 8 NEP evaluations.
- DJCD is currently engaged in their 2014 – 2017 DEP and is currently involved in one evaluation within the NEP. Hence DJCD is fairly new to the NES and is a late majority department. From an organisational perspective, DJCD's M&E unit is located within the Chief Directorate of Strategy, Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation. DJCD became involved in the NEP after sending a management team to the UCT/DPME training for senior managers in evidence, which convinced them of the importance of evaluations.

4.2.2 Provincial Case Studies

A brief overview of the case study provinces' engagement with the NES is provided below, with additional findings being elaborated on throughout the evaluation findings section (*Section 5*):

- The Western Cape is an innovator province. The Western Cape Department of the Premier (DotP), was selected in 2012 as a target province receiving support and encouragement since the early stages of establishment of the NES. Further, WC departments were conducting evaluations prior to the NEPF. Every three years the Provincial Evaluation Plan (PEP) ⁷² has been published. In the first PEP (2013/14 to 2015/16), the provinces conducted 23 evaluations, the findings and recommendations of which have reportedly been used to improve performance and accountability through the improvement plans. DEPs form part of the PEP and aim to evaluate programmes that are a priority for the province. The DEPs are strategically aligned to departmental objectives and Government priorities which are articulated in the NEPF; Strategic Framework for Province-wide Monitoring and Evaluation (2015) and the NEP. ⁷³ In the province, it was recognised that DotP facilitates the departments evaluation 'journey' from concept note, to implementation, and the improvement plan. However, some respondents felt they could not rely on the DotP for technical evaluation assistance such as methods, and would rather liaise with the DPME.
- Gauteng is an early adopter province. Gauteng was involved in drafting the NEPF and developed its first PEP in parallel to development of the NES. It was also a pilot in extending the NES to provinces. The Office of the Premier (OTP) initiated evaluations linked to the Mid-Term Review in 2011/12 and completed two evaluations that year. In 2012, the Provincial Executive Council adopted the NEPF as well as the Provincial Evaluation Framework and Plan. This covered the period 2012/2013 to 2014/15. Gauteng's evaluation plans are coordinated through the Office of the Premier (OTP). 79 evaluations have been completed in Gauteng since 2013. Gauteng is classified as an early adopter as it really only engaged with evaluation once the NEPF provided impetus to evaluation, and has mirrored the NEPF for the province, however; there has been inconsistent political support over the past years, and institutionally, and despite the efforts of the OTP, evaluation has not been intentionally adapted and adopted to really take across the province.

⁷¹ (DHS, n.d.)

⁷² (Western Cape Government, 2017)

⁷³ (Western Cape Government, 2017)

- The Eastern Cape is an early majority province. The first PEP was developed in the Eastern Cape in 2016/17⁷⁴. One evaluation⁷⁵ has been completed in the Eastern Cape, with another⁷⁶ currently being implemented. The process followed by the Eastern Cape in developing provincial DEPs and PEPs is aligned to the NEPF and the DPME's guiding documentation. In terms of organisational structure, the OTP is central to coordinating evaluation in the Eastern Cape. The OTP supports other departments in developing the terms of reference for evaluations; is included in all evaluation steering committees; and oversees departments in their data collection (primarily for monitoring and reporting), and is intended to coordinate the tracking of improvement plans.
- Like the Eastern Cape, Limpopo is an early majority province. The first PEP⁷⁷ in Limpopo was approved by the Executive Council in September 2015 with six evaluations agreed as per the provincial priorities. Limpopo produced the PEP using the *Guideline on How to Develop Provincial Evaluation Plan*. The PEP process is coordinated by Limpopo's OTP. The Limpopo Office of the Premier has two M&E units, one responsible for transversal (cross cutting) M&E and another responsible for internal M&E. Four evaluations are being undertaken.

5 FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

In seeking to address the evaluation questions which are outlined in Table 1 of this report, this section looks at: how the NES is working as a whole (*Section 5.1.*); capacity building, quality assurance and communication in the NES (*Section 5.2.*); the impact of the NES (*Section 5.3.*); and institutionalisation of the NES (*Section 5.4.*).

5.1 How the NES is Working as a Whole

5.1.1 Selection of evaluations in Evaluation Plans

The first NEP was developed in 2011. The NES started as an internally-initiated approach which saw the evaluations being conducted for programmes whose departments who demand them, where the evaluations are important (for example, for programmes over R500 million), and a priority for the National Development Plan / Medium Term Strategic Framework. The selection has been undertaken by the cross-government ETWG. This approach has emerged in various manifestations:

1. Evaluations conceived and proposed by the department and selected because the programme is of considerable size and importance.
2. Evaluations of programmes conceptualised by the DPME or National Treasury where the department is encouraged to submit the proposal. Having the lead department submit the proposal achieves a degree of ownership.
3. Evaluations of programmes conceptualised centrally (for example, by the DPME or National Treasury) and the department is obliged to undertake it.

Like the DPME at the national level, in provinces the OTPs play a strategic role in deciding which programmes should be evaluated to determine if key provincial priorities are being achieved. Provinces follow similar selection criteria to those mentioned above.

The first of these was the practice for many of the evaluations in early stages of the NES, e.g. evaluations proposed by **the dti**, DSD etc. Examples of the second includes the Human Settlements evaluations, where there was a strong push from the DPME to get these evaluations implemented, but they were implemented through the Department, who funded them. An example of the last is one proposed on scholar transport by Parliament's Standing Committee on Appropriations. The latest version of the NEP for 2018/19 approved by

⁷⁴ The process for developing the PEP included: Sensitisation of the provincial stakeholders to the NEPS and on how to populate concept notes; a call for concept notes on potential evaluations; submission of concept notes which were signed off by the HODs.

⁷⁵ "Evaluation of the Grade 12 Learner Support Intervention" (2015)

⁷⁶ "Evaluation of the CFO Support Programme"

⁷⁷ (Limpopo Office of the Premier, 2015)

Cabinet in December 2017, six of the eight evaluations have been proposed by DPME or National Treasury, so most are in the second category above.

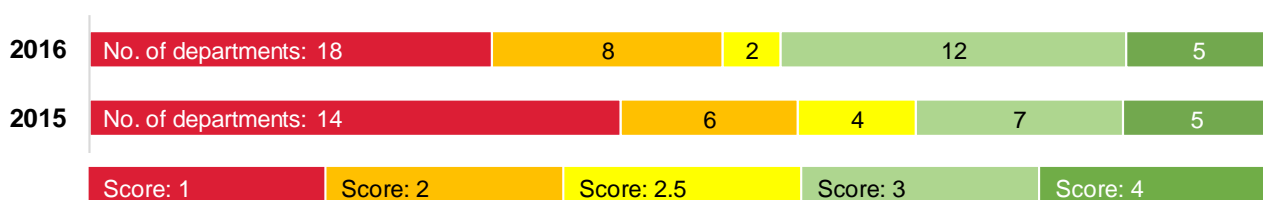
These examples illustrate that demand for evaluations can come from both inside and outside of the department. That is, departments or provinces have no legal obligation to engage in the NES. However, they are incentivised to participate in order to improve their MPAT scores.

The NES seeks to increase demand for evaluation across the government. The internally-initiated approach is intended to ensure departments are committed to implement the findings and recommendations, and is balanced with the strategic demand arising from agents such as DPME, Treasury, or Parliament. Early adopter departments and provinces only see the internally-initiated approach as having been successful in the presence of high level political buy-in. Overall, respondents preferred sticking to the internally-initiated approach but did suggest that adjustments to the approach would be necessary to achieve the objectives of the NES, particularly encouraging demand from the centre of government focusing on strategic priorities. In this way, some evaluations would be proposed centrally, and others by the relevant departments (as is currently the case). A number of respondents commented on the need for a mandated minimum number of evaluations which are conducted to a minimum standard and include structured milestones for e.g. final reports, recommendations and improvement plans.

In selecting evaluations for NEPs and PEPs, DPME and OTPs generally follow the specifications of the NEPF in terms of evaluation prioritisation. In practice however, there is an additional informal criterion which relates to the selection of evaluations from departments that are not yet in the system. In these instances, there is seen to be a trade-off between getting a new department into the system, and complying with the formal specifications of evaluation selection. Drawing on figures from the DPME’s Evaluation Management Information System (EMIS), there have been 69 evaluations in the NEP since 2011/12, at various stages of implementation. Of these 69 evaluations, six evaluations have been cancelled; 10 are at the concept phase; and four are at the design phase. The majority of the evaluations (25) in the NEP are in the implementation phase and improvement plan phases; and five are closed.

At departmental and provincial levels, the NES is articulated through DEPs and PEPs. Departments and provinces see the creation of a DEP or PEP as a valuable consolidation exercise. However; the link back to the NEPF and the NDP needs to be made clearer for the overall vision and purpose of evaluation to be articulated. Related to evaluation plans, all departments and provinces that have a score of 3 or 4 in the MPAT have multi-year plans in places that follow the NES. Figure 3 shows that 17 national departments scored a 3 or 4 in 2015 and 2016, indicating that 17 national departments have DEPs that align to the NES. It is important to note that these scores are indicative of the breadth of the development of DEPs, but not the depth of plans, or the use of the plans.

Figure 3: MPAT National Department Scores, 2015 and 2016



Source: (DPME, 2016b)

In 2016, five provinces achieved a score of 3 or above – an increase from just two provinces that received a score of 3 or above. This indicates that more provinces now have PEPs in place that align to the NES. There is variation across departments and provinces in terms of the extent to which evaluation plans align to the NES. This variation is not along the lines of early adopters vs. later adopters. In fact, in the case of early adopters

such as **the dti** and DBE, while evaluation is firmly entrenched, the evaluation plans are less aligned to the NES, and arguably more aligned to the departments and their needs.

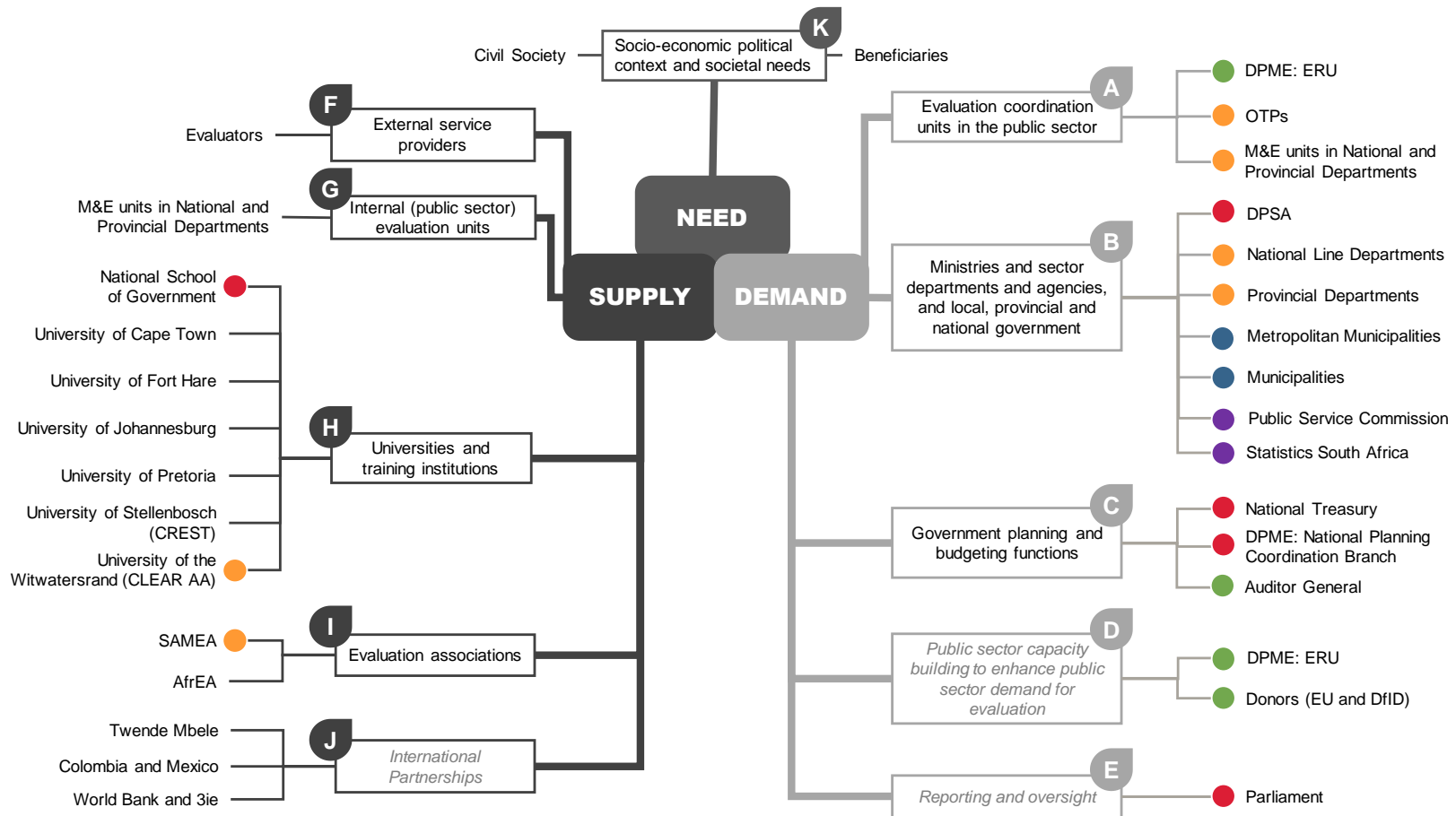
5.1.2 Key Stakeholders in the NES

An effective NES occurs where demand, supply and need are aligned, and the services are used by those that need them.⁷⁸ Figure 4 below applies this classification⁷⁹ to South Africa's NES, and shows which stakeholders form part of the supply, demand, and need of the system. Figure 4 also highlights where stakeholders that have a high level of engagement with the NES (●); stakeholder roles in the system need to be strengthened (●); there is variation in the extent of the involvement of stakeholders in the system (●); stakeholder involvement is currently limited (●); and where the level of interaction in the system is low, but the extent to which this should be strengthened, is unclear (●).

⁷⁸ (Casado, 2009)

⁷⁹ (Casado, 2009)

Figure 4: NES Stakeholder Map



Key

- Strong level of engagement / involvement
- High levels of variation in engagement / involvement
- Currently limited engagement / involvement
- Role needs to be strengthened / clarified
- Level of interaction is low, but the extent to which this is a problem, or should be strengthened, is unclear

Adapted to the South African context from (Casado, 2009)

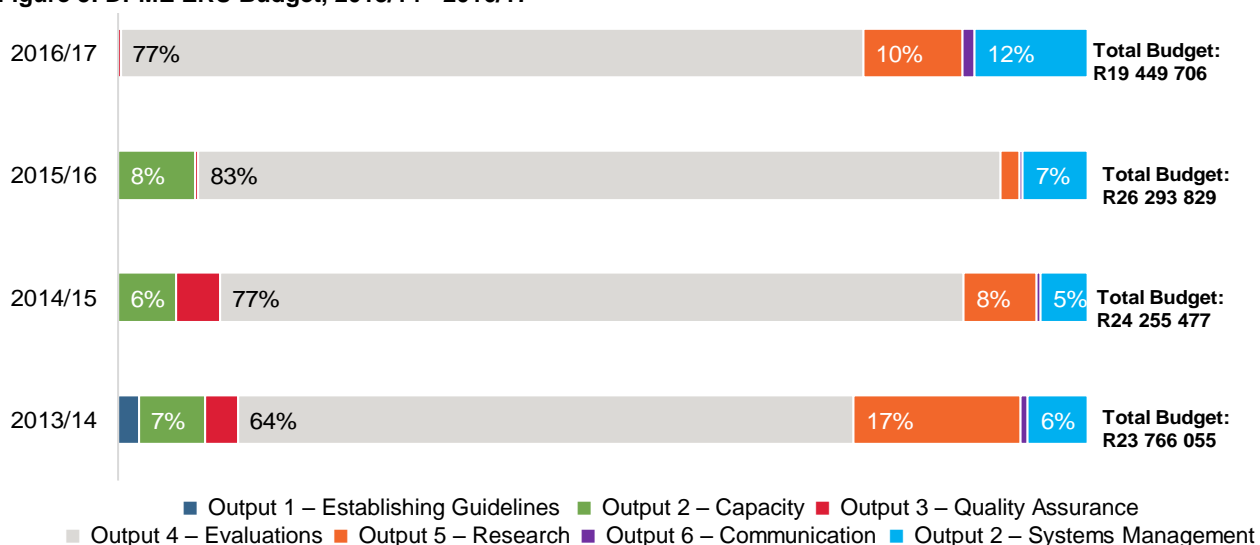
Figure 4 above shows that:

- The roles of DPME and other actors in the evaluation space are not always clear and there is not always a shared vision for the NES. More work needs to be done to clarify the roles of institutions such as universities, SAMEA, centre of government departments, civil society organisations and programme beneficiaries in the NES. Related to civil society organisations in the NES, specifically, a view that emerged from some of the interviews conducted was that civil society is under-utilised and under-engaged in the NES.
- Regarding key stakeholders, the following are a priority for the NES:
 - The role of DPME in the NES has evolved with the DPME playing a stronger technical role in the NES. While some departments and provinces welcomed this, other (early adopter) departments felt that DPME is over-extending its mandate. Overall, the role of DPME and its vision needs to be clarified. This extends beyond the ERU, to include the DPME’s internal links to planning.
 - The role of DPSA as a stakeholder that can clarify the extent to which M&E officials must focus on evaluation, needs to be strengthened.
 - The link between National Treasury, and DPME, must also be strengthened in that there needs to be more systematic ways in which evaluation findings are incorporated with National Treasury’s planning for budget allocation.
 - The role of the NSG in providing capacity building within the NES, and the funding sources for training in the NES needs to be clarified as soon as possible. The training role of NSG was originally fulfilled by CLEAR AA, but has now moved to NSG.

5.1.3 Time and Costs

The bulk of the DPME’s budget is spent on funding evaluations in the NEP (**Error! Reference source not found.**) while proportionally less is spent by DPME on institutionalisation activities such as capacity building and communication). Departmental and provincial evaluations outside of the NEP are funded by departmental and provincial budgets. As the NES develops and deepens, institutionalisation becomes more important. Going forward, this spread needs to be more balanced. In addition to internal funding, DFID was a key early funder⁸⁰ for DPME’s ERU, particularly in terms of capacity building. In addition, as part of the Programme to Support Pro-Poor Policy Development (PSPPD), the European Union provided funding⁸¹ for capacity building.

Figure 5: DPME ERU Budget, 2013/14 - 2016/17



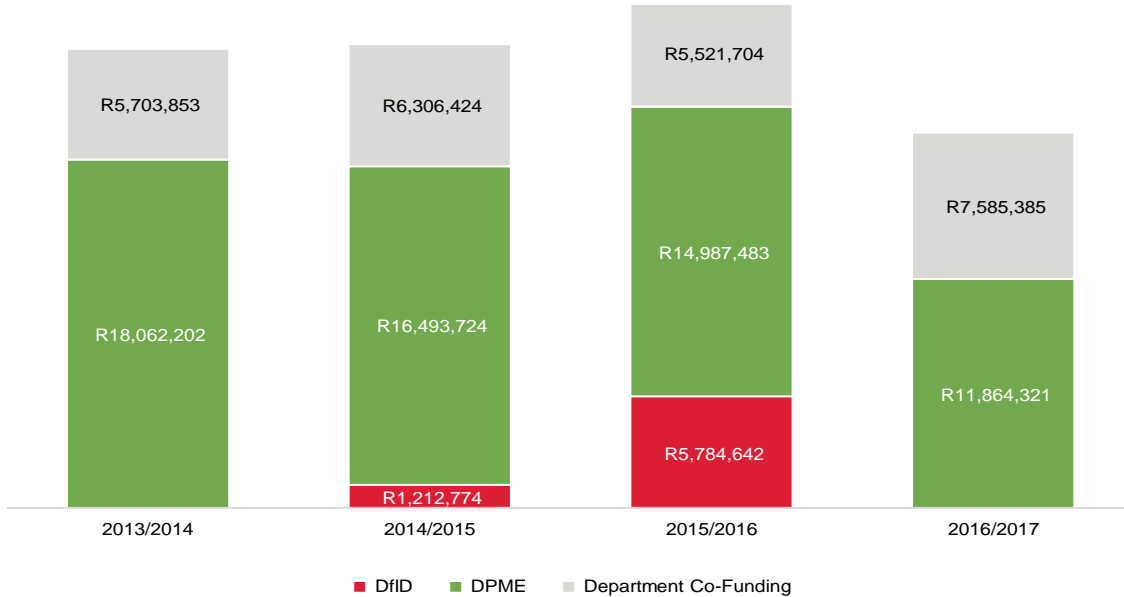
⁸⁰ Between April 2013 and March 2014 DFID contributed GBP309 198; between April 2014 and March 2015, DFID contributed GBP557 326; and between April 2015 and September 2015, DFID contributed GBP818 313.

⁸¹ This was specifically related to the Evidence-Based Policy-Making (EBPM) course. The funding provided by the EU was approximately R1 105 309.

Source: (DPME, 2017d)

The DPME is a top-performing department in terms of its Auditor General outcomes. This implies that DPME has the capacity to effectively use its funding. Figure 6 below indicates the budget per stakeholder on evaluations. Total spend has decreased with the loss of DFID funding, while co-funding has increased in absolute terms to R7.6 million in 2016/2017. This is a positive indication of departmental interest in the NEP.

Figure 6: Budget by Stakeholder Group per Year, for Evaluations

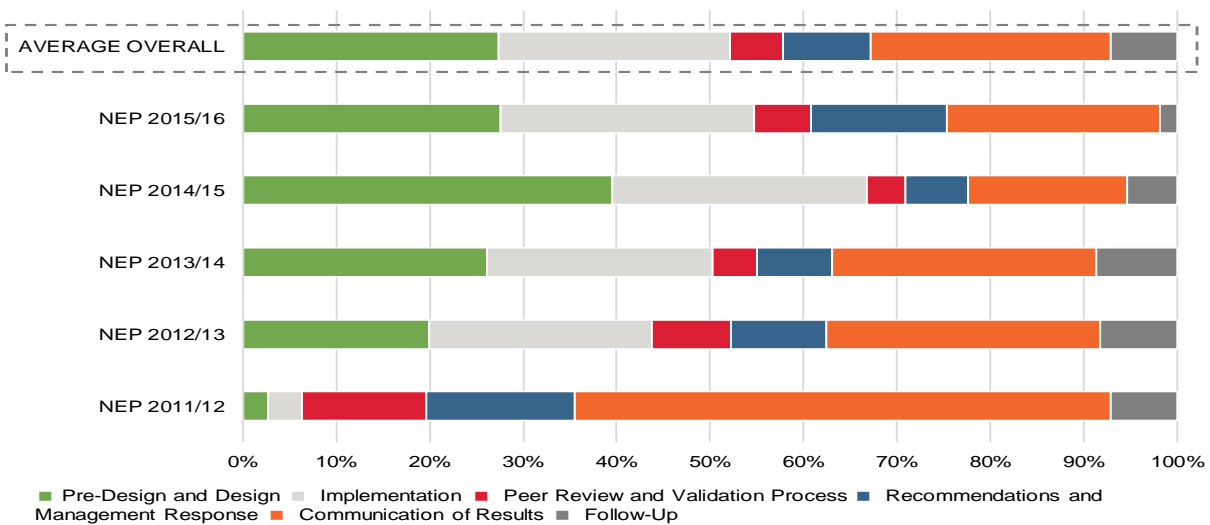


Source: (DPME, 2017d)

Respondents on both the supply side (evaluators) and the demand side (departments and provinces) noted that the evaluation process is a lengthy process.

Figure 7 below shows that a considerable amount of time appears to be spent on pre-design and design, and the communication of results. A potential reason for this, is that time is required to attain buy-in for evaluation. There is a need for non-core activities such as communication to be conducted more efficiently.

Figure 7: Overview of Time Spent, by Activities



Source: (DPME, 2017c)

5.1.4 The Value for Money of the NES

Cost-benefit ratios were calculated for three sample evaluations⁸². The findings of the cost-benefit analyses are shown in Table 3 (for DBE's Funza Lushaka Bursary Scheme evaluation), Table 4 (for the dti's Business Process Services (BPS) evaluation, and Table 5 (for the Western Cape Department of Agriculture's evaluation of agricultural learnerships).

Table 3: Summary of the Costs and Benefits of the Funza Lushaka Bursary Scheme Evaluation

Costs / Benefits	Description	Quantity	Value / Unit	Total Value
Costs	Labour – Assistant Director ⁸³	50 days	R1 302.68	R65 134.10
	Labour – Director ⁸⁴	24 days	R2 298.85	R55 172.41
	Labour – Administration ⁸⁵	36 days	R957. 85	R34 482.76
	Catering ⁸⁶	-	-	R9 000.00
	Direct Evaluation Costs ⁸⁷	-	-	R3 000 000.00
	Quality Assessment ⁸⁸	-	-	R30 000.00
	Total Costs			
Benefits	Management Information Systems (MIS) Funding ⁸⁹	-	-	R1 500 000.00
	Additional Funding Received for Recommendations ⁹⁰	-	-	R3 274 483.00
	Grant Application ⁹¹	-	-	R27 902 913.00
	Total Value of Benefits			
Cost-Benefit Ratio (Benefits / Costs)				10.23

Table 4: Summary of the Costs and Benefits of the BPS Evaluation

Costs / Benefits	Description	Quantity	Value / Unit	Total Value
Costs	Labour – Assistant Director	14.96 days	R1 302.68	R19 483.95
	Labour – Director	7.18 days	R2 298.85	R16 504.06
	Labour – Administration	10.79 days	R957. 85	R10 315.03
	Direct Evaluation Costs	-	-	R897 408.00
	Cost of Review of Sector Skills Plan ⁹²	-	-	R500 000.00
	Quality Assessment	-	-	R30 000.00
	Total Costs			
Benefits	Key Performance Indicator (KPI) Tracking and Job Performance Tracking Systems and Sector Analysis ⁹³ ⁹⁴			R18 944 500.00
Total Benefits				R18 944 500.00
Cost-Benefit Ratio (Benefits / Costs)				12.85

⁸² As part of the evaluation, the evaluation team reached out to a number of provinces and departments requesting information on the costs and benefits of their evaluations. These three evaluation examples were selected because the information provided was the most complete.

⁸³ Quantity based on estimates provided by DBE. Assistant Director salary estimated to be R340 000 per annum, based on data from StatsSA and the INDEED job site which advertises government positions. There are 261 working days per annum. The daily rate is therefore R1 302.68.

⁸⁴ Two directors for 12 days each. Quantity based on estimates provided by DBE. Director salary estimated to be R600 000 per annum, based on data from StatsSA and the INDEED job site which advertises government positions. There are 261 working days per annum. The daily rate is therefore R2 298.85.

⁸⁵ Three administrators for 12 days each. Quantity based on estimates provided by DBE. Administrator salary estimated to be R250 000 per annum, based on data from StatsSA and the INDEED job site which advertises government positions. There are 261 working days per annum. The daily rate is therefore R957.85.

⁸⁶ Based on estimates provided by DBE.

⁸⁷ Based on estimates provided by DBE.

⁸⁸ Estimated at R30 000 per evaluation.

⁸⁹ As a result of the evaluation, additional funding worth R1 500 000 was received from National Treasury for developing a MIS. Funding had previously been turned down, but was approved after the evaluation.

⁹⁰ The evaluation improvement plan noted that R3 274 483 for the implementation of two of the 15 recommendations. The funding for 13 of the 15 recommendations was incorporated into the operational plan of the ITE Directorate.

⁹¹ The unit has applied for a grant of R27 902 913 to deliver one of the specific improvement plan activities emerging from the evaluation. This entails linking Grade 12 data with that of post-schooling and measuring the difference and trends in the placement of Grade 12 learners in universities and colleges.

⁹² The recommendations from the evaluation included reviewing a sector skills plan. Figure calculated according to the evaluation team's estimation of the market value of this information if it were to be conducted by a contractor (Moody & Walsh, 1999).

⁹³ As a result of the evaluation, monitoring KPIs improved to cater for additional services, and differentiated between complex and non-complex jobs. These jobs amount to 37 889 jobs. The evaluation team estimates that monitoring jobs would, based on the team's field work experience, cost R500 per person (or job). The total is therefore R18 944 500.00.

⁹⁴ The assumption here is that better tracking of information results in better quality information to be used for decision-making.

Table 5: Summary of the Costs and Benefits of the Evaluation of the Impact of Agricultural Learnerships in the Western Cape

Costs / Benefits	Description	Quantity	Value / Unit	Total Value
Costs	Labour – Assistant Director	3.69 days	R1 302.68	R4 801.69
	Labour – Director	1.77 days	R2 298.85	R4 067.31
	Labour – Administration	36 days ⁹⁵	R957.85	R2 542.07
	Direct Evaluation Costs	-	-	R221 160.00
	Quality Assessment	-	-	R30 000.00
Total Costs				R232 571.07
Benefits	Added Return-on-Investment due to Fewer Failures ⁹⁶	-	-	R300 000.00
	Added Benefit to Farmers Sending Workers for Learnerships ⁹⁷	-	-	R1 584 000.00
Total Value of Benefits				R1 884 000.00
Cost-Benefit Ratio (Benefits / Costs)				7.18

In these three cases the cost of evaluation is heavily outweighed by the benefits implying that evaluation is a very good investment in improving the cost-effectiveness of programmes. It is difficult to discern a relationship between the cost, duration and quality of evaluations. Tracking the costs and benefits of the system as a whole, and of individual evaluations, needs to be done more systematically so that the value of the system can be accurately assessed.

5.2 Capacity Building, Quality Assurance and Communication in the NES

5.2.1 Capacity Building

The literature review demonstrated that capacity development is a key element of building an evaluation system. Capacity development has been a large focus of the NES, including establishing guidelines and templates, promoting learning networks and forums, short courses, and developing an evaluation MPAT standard to drive establishment of evaluation capacity in departments.

DPME has developed 18 guidelines and 9 templates. Overall, the majority of respondents in this evaluation, both in the key informant interviews (KIIs) and in the survey, noted that these have been very helpful to departments and provinces. Newer departments and provinces in the NES found the guidelines and templates are difficult to put into practice when you are new to the field. Departments and provinces with more experience suggested that the guidelines need to be more flexible, and that additional guidelines are needed for undertaking complex evaluations and different kinds of evaluations.

Figure 8 below shows NEP evaluations between 2012/13 and 2017/18, by evaluation type.⁹⁸ Overall, most of the evaluations in the NEPs have been implementation evaluations, followed by impact evaluations, design, a combination of implementation and impact evaluations, diagnostic evaluations, economic, and a combination of implementation and design evaluations. This is consistent with the interviews that the vast majority of evaluations conducted to date are implementation evaluations.

An emphasis on implementation evaluations is rational because of weak implementation. A number of respondents noted that impact evaluations were a preference, but that data availability inhibited their ability to conduct impact evaluations. Going forward as the system matures, and more departments and provinces buy into the system, it is expected that more impact and design evaluations will be conducted as a result of better

⁹⁵ Three administrators for 12 days each. Quantity based on estimates provided by DBE, and adjusted

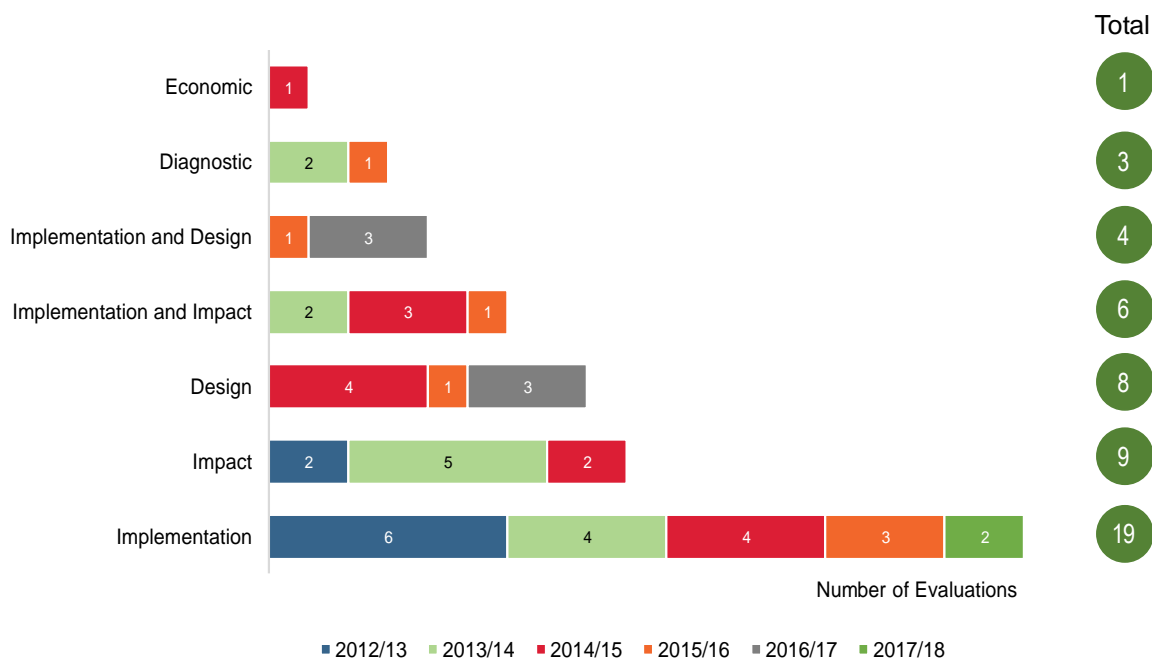
⁹⁶ The evaluation team assumed that as a result of higher quality learnerships, less students would fail the training. The evaluation team assumes that the value of this is R300 000. R300 000 is based on the difference between the initial investment's primary return and what would be expected after the programme change (training less learners) was made. If students failed the learnership, then R300 000 was lost outright as a sunk investment. With the re-designed programme, with less students, the assumption is made that there will be less failures as a result of a better quality of learnership. The gain is therefore R300 000.

⁹⁷ In terms of wages, the difference between skilled and unskilled labour is R96 000 per annum. The evaluation team assumes that there is a 30% improvement in the odds of farmers getting back skilled labourers from the pool of 50. This equates to 16.5 people transitioning from unskilled to skilled labour. This was then multiplied by the R96 000 to get R1 584 000.00.

⁹⁸ This is not the complete list of evaluations in the NEP as some evaluations were not classified by type.

data through implementation evaluations and improved data management practices and a better understanding of the need for evaluation throughout the intervention process. A broader range of evaluative information will provide a greater depth of information for decision-making and planning.

Figure 8: NEP Evaluations by Type, 2012/13 to 2017/18



Source: (DPME, 2017)

1 989 participants undertook training between 2012/13 and 2016/17 on courses ranging from theory of change to introduction to evaluation. The delivery of this training was as a result of the successful collaboration between CLEAR AA and DPME’s ERU. Annex 3 shows the detailed breakdown of this training. Overall respondents from the key informant interviews and from the survey found the training provided very useful. A number of respondents highlighted the importance of “on-the-job” training, and more experienced officials noted that deepening their training would be useful.

While DPME has made progress in terms of capacity development, many of the interviews and case studies pointed to this as an ongoing priority. Respondents from DSD noted that capacity development in the system has been successful, and as a result of capacity development activities, their staff are now able to conduct the majority of evaluation design elements independently. Respondents from DBE noted that while they are relatively well-capacitated now, if their evaluation work expands, the team will be spread too thin.

The later adopter provinces highlighted the need for upskilling staff on evaluation, and the need for additional staff to manage evaluations in the provinces. Gauteng has a fair complement of M&E staff, but the majority of the staff’s time is spent on monitoring or research rather than evaluation. The majority of departments interviewed in Limpopo expressed a concern related to the lack of recruitment for M&E officials. However, officials that had attended DPME training noted that it was useful. in shaping the PEPs especially since training took place immediately before the design of the PEPs.

Respondents from the Western Cape noted that as a result of budgetary restrictions, respondents were unable to hire the necessary M&E staff to perform the work required. Related to training, respondents from the Western Cape suggested that senior staff as well as programme managers should receive technical training including practical considerations such as budgeting for evaluations.

Training for senior officials has been helpful in advocating for evidence and evaluation (for example in the DJCD case study) but it has been suggested that training of programme managers is needed in the future⁹⁹.

There is a concern related to budget allocation to capacity building. The amount spent on capacity building has decreased considerably since DFID funding ceased. There is furthermore, a concern about training since DPME's partnership with CLEAR AA on training ended. The intention was for the training to be moved to NSG. NSG has however only trained 38 officials in evaluation over the last six months (2017). There is therefore a concern about whether NSG can meet the need or demand for evaluation training. There is a plan for a rapid rollout of some courses by NSG in February March 2018.

5.2.2 Quality Assurance

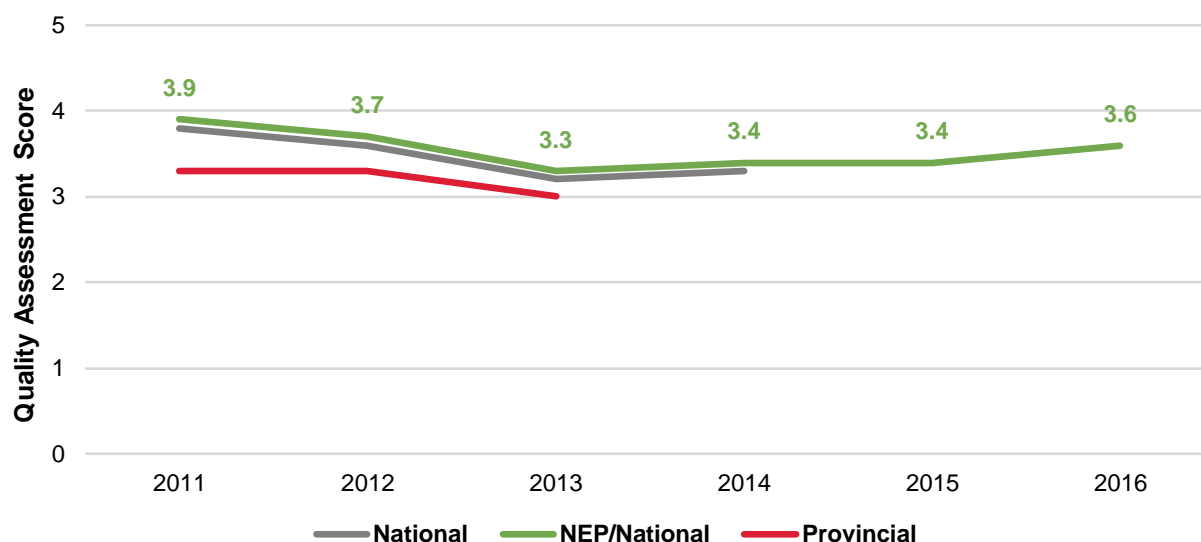
The quality assurance mechanisms of the NES are important for the credibility of the evaluations coming out of the NES, and the extent to which these evaluations can be used. A wide range of tools are used to promote quality assurance, including design clinics, steering committees, support by DPME directors, guidelines, peer reviews etc. Related to the peer review system, there was a general consensus from respondents that the system is useful in principle, contributing to the production of better quality evaluations but it would be helpful if peer reviewers could be included from the beginning of the evaluation. Peer reviewers noted that the compensation for peer reviewing is too small for the amount of work required. DPME conducted a review of the peer review system in 2015 and the findings from this review were incorporated into an updated peer review guideline. However, some of these findings have not been implemented. Respondents highlighted that the quality assurance mechanisms worked best when there was communication between the assessors, the programme managers, external evaluators and other key members of steering committees.

In order to measure the quality of evaluations being produced, the DPME does quality assessments on evaluations with a system managed by an independent service provider, and a web-based EMIS has been developed to manage the system. These assessment scores are reported on when evaluations are tabled in Cabinet and gives users of the evaluation repository an idea of the validity and reliability of evaluation findings. According to the EMIS 159 evaluations have been quality assessed. Of these, 27% were provincial evaluations, 53% were national evaluations, 19% were national evaluations in the NEP, and 1% were non-governmental evaluations. Quality assessments are seen as an important indicator of whether evaluations in the system are improving over time. It is difficult to discern a trend (see Figure 9) in terms of evaluation quality assessment scores, perhaps as the NES is currently only five years into implementation. On average national evaluations that are in the NEP perform better.

Respondents highlighted that the quality assurance mechanisms worked best when there was communication between the assessors, the programme managers, external evaluators, peer reviewers and other key members of steering committees.

⁹⁹ DPME is planning a technical course in evidence to be run by NSG, which potentially could be a compulsory course for all managers

Figure 9: Average Quality Assessment Score, by Evaluation Start Year and Evaluation Classification (2011 - 2016)



Source: (DPME, 2017)

5.2.3 Communication

The DPME has developed a communication strategy, and has done a considerable amount of communication work including conducting presentations related to the NES, communicating results through the media and its Evaluation Update newsletter (31 editions published), conferences and exchanges, and the development of publications. DPME sends the evaluations when complete to Parliamentary portfolio committees and approximately once a year does a presentation on the NES to the chairs of portfolio committees. There have also been ad hoc presentations to Parliamentary researchers. There are increasingly more engagements in recent years. This is evident in Table 6 below. The scale in Table 6 ranges from no activity (●) to high levels of activity (●).

Table 6: Indication of the Number of Communication Activities taken per Quarter between 2014 and 2015

Work Area	Indication of Level of Activity per Work Area							
	Q1 2014	Q2 2014	Q3 2014	Q4 2014	Q1 2015	Q2 2015	Q3 2015	Q3 2015
Presentations	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Communication of Evaluation Results	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Advocacy and Communication around Evaluations	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Website	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Conferences and Exchanges	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Stakeholders and Countries	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Development of Publications	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Evaluation Update	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Update to Parliament	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
FAQs	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Communication Strategy	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●

Source: (DPME, 2017e)

The DPME website was visited 12 064 times between April and September 2017. The most visited page on the site is the page that hosts the links to DPME’s guidelines and templates. Guidelines and templates were noted by respondents as particularly useful elements of the NES. Evaluation report pages were also among the most viewed, showing that users are interested in the content of the work.

While a lot of work has been done in terms of communication, respondents noted that a number of areas should be strengthened. These include the need to work more through the media, and to promote the sharing of learnings (formally or informally) within the public sector. Respondents from DHS and from provincial departments highlighted the need for a consolidated message about evaluation for provincial offices. Provincial departments highlighted the need for more direction on, and engagement around, ongoing and planned evaluations from national departments.

5.3 Impact of the NES

5.3.1 Use in the NES

Previous sections have talked about elements in the NES ecosystem. However, key in evaluating the system is to what extent evaluations are being used (the wider outcome in the theory of change). The improvement plan system is seen as a key element in supporting use in the system and as one of the key benefits the NES has brought. In general, the work of DPME is seen as a potential enabler of use, with a respondent noting that the presence of DPME enhances the credibility of the evaluation, and pushes the improvement plan forward.

According to the DPME, there are currently 25 evaluations with an improvement plan in place. These reports should typically be submitted every six months. For some evaluations, the process seems to have stalled on the side of the departments. An example of this is the *implementation evaluation of nutrition programmes addressing children under 5* where an improvement plan workshop was held in 2014, but an improvement plan was, according to the DPME's system, never approved. This evaluation was however presented to Cabinet. Cabinet's response was that the evaluation findings be incorporated into the National Food and Nutrition Strategy. This is a fairly significant example of use, but it is not reflected in DPME's tracking system.

Error! Reference source not found. summarises the instances of use¹⁰⁰ observed in the departmental and provincial case studies. The highest reported instance of use is instrumental use at seven out of nine (78%). While these reports are varied in depth it is clear that by and large evaluations are perceived as valuable and are integrated to some extent in decision-making processes. The second highest recorded use is process use at five out of nine (56%). This implies that at a minimum, respondents felt that they gained value from being part of an evaluation process.

The preliminary evidence for use of evaluations is encouraging. Departments and provinces appear to understand the value of evaluations and attempt to use them to inform decisions. However, this process of use has not yet been captured accurately through the system for monitoring of improvement plans. For this reason, it is not possible to reliably assert the extent of use. In order to support greater value, the improvement plan process requires greater adherence and a stronger system to track evaluation improvement plans. Legislation will assist.

A key challenge raised by respondents was the capacity needed to use evaluations. Capacity (in terms of number of people, time and level of skill) is a challenge when implementing evaluation recommendations, particularly at provincial level. Capacity development is discussed further in 5.2.1.

An additional challenge is in resourcing what emerges from evaluation improvement plans. The evaluation team conducted a document review of the recommendations provided in a sample of evaluation reports. In doing so, the evaluation team categorised the recommendations in terms of whether or not they had financial implications. For example, recommendations that relate to setting up a new unit, developing a new system, hiring additional staff, and increasing funding, all have financial implications. Of the 400 recommendations in the 24 evaluations, only 22% had financial implications. The bulk (70%) have non-financial recommendations which largely relate to strategy, policy and operations. In other words, this data indicates financial constraints would only impact the

¹⁰⁰ As outlined in Section 1.2, there are four types of use. "Symbolic use refers to examples when a person uses the mere existence of an evaluation, rather than any aspect of its results, to persuade or to convince." (Johnson, et al., 2009). Conceptual use is the type of use where an evaluation results in an improved understanding of the intervention and its context, or a change in the conception of the evaluand." (Ledermann, 2012). When evaluations are used instrumentally, the recommendations and findings generated, could inform decision-making and lead to changes in the intervention." (Ledermann, 2012). Process use refers to the value derived from partaking in the evaluation process (Ledermann, 2012).

¹⁰⁰ (Holvoet & Renard, 2007)

implementation of 22% of the evaluation recommendations that were assessed. Capacity constraints¹⁰¹ on the other hand, would impact a far larger proportion of recommendations which, while they might not be financial, they do have capacity (staff and time) implications.

Those evaluations concerned with the economy have the highest rates of actively considering the budgetary implications of their evaluations. However, in the majority of cases there is little conscious consideration of budget implications. As indicated capacity constraints may nevertheless limit implementation, and the capacity (in terms of number of people, time and level of skill) needed to use evaluations was a key challenge raised by respondents when implementing evaluation recommendations. While this was also a view held at the national departments, the challenge is particularly acute at the provincial level.

5.3.2 Evidence of Unintended Benefits from the NES

The key unintended benefits of the NES are the results of process use. Case study departments and provinces reported process use as the second highest form of use. The following are the broader unintended benefits experienced by the departments and provinces in this study: (I) An improved strategic vision as a result of using theories of change; (II) The use of “good practice” in internal research after having been exposed to external evaluations; and (III) An enhanced use of evaluative thinking and the consideration of the need to harmonise learning across structures.

5.4 Institutionalisation of the NES

Institutionalisation is a requirement for an effective NES.¹⁰² As a respondent from DPME stated, the establishment and institutionalisation of evaluation is a 20-year project, of which we are only through the first five years, establishing the building blocks of the system. Once these are firmly established, institutionalisation should become the focus. Currently, there are a few areas that are seen, by both national and provincial level respondents, as important in strengthening institutionalisation and expansion of the system. These include senior-level buy-in; the use of internal evaluation to help to develop an evaluative culture; the promotion of evaluative thinking; and drive from individual champions. Practically, there were specific levers identified as necessary in the institutionalisation of the NES:

- **Financial allocation:** Challenges in budgets for evaluations were raised by DJCD, DSD, and dti as well at provincial level. A positive example is that the Western Cape government has recently allocated R10 000 000 of its budget to conducting evaluations. A wide range of departments and provinces supported the idea of evaluation budgets being prescribed by Treasury. With financial guidance at this level they believed Programme Managers would begin incorporating evaluation into budgets more regularly.
- **Accountability to conduct evaluations:** Doing evaluation “...should be a part of the performance agreement of every DG and Head of Department (HOD)”. In the Eastern Cape, this has been incorporated in management contracts by the provincial government to encourage uptake, and is also evident in KZN COGTA, where KPIs reflect the percentage of recommendations implemented.
- **Promotion of an evaluation culture:** Respondents from DBE noted that while the department had a pre-existing evaluation culture, this culture has been strengthened by the NES. The DBE’s perception is that as

¹⁰¹ Capacity constraints were found across the system, along with multiple solutions that had been used to increase evaluation capacity within the system. Interestingly, no respondent pointed to a solid capacity building plan that had been implemented, rather the impression from the respondents was that the current capacity building was done on an *ad hoc* basis. Capacity-related challenges that were highlighted during the interview process include: ● Early adopter departments and provinces tend to have better evaluation expertise, and opportunities for on-the-job training, while the converse is true of departments and provinces that are newer to the system. There is therefore a considerable skills gap across departments and provinces. ● When departments and provinces are hiring M&E staff, respondents noted that there do not appear to be enough skilled people to fill these positions. Furthermore, job descriptions do not place enough emphasis on what skills are needed to sufficiently conduct evaluation tasks. There is therefore the risk that candidates that are selected are not adequately skilled to complete evaluation work.

A practical manifestation of capacity challenges is in the balancing of monitoring and evaluation practices within the NES. South Africa’s NEPF clearly distinguishes between monitoring and evaluation. The relationship between monitoring and evaluation is prone to conflation. In general, monitoring is afforded a greater priority for departments and provinces, taking the bulk of resources, both human and financial. This is driven by a number of compliance-driven monitoring and reporting tasks such as Annual Performance Plans (APPs), quarterly reporting to Treasury, reporting to the Auditor General, and completing the Management Performance Assessment Tool (MPAT). The general consensus is that this imbalanced perspective is due to that fact that decisions are “...biased on spending, therefore biased to monitoring. This is partly because it was driven from National Treasury. Evaluation was neglected”.

¹⁰² (Gaarder & Briceno, 2010)

a result of the NES evaluations have improved, procurement processes have been simplified, and departments are given access to technical support. Respondents from DHS acknowledged that they see the value of the NES, but that the department is resistant to changing their evaluative norms. The case study provinces all highlighted the importance of an evaluation champion in expanding the NES provincially and developing an evaluation culture. For example, in the Eastern Cape, an evaluation champion has recently begun the process of enhancing evaluation in the province. The roles of evaluation champions were also emphasised in the early adopter provinces of the Western Cape and Gauteng.

A potential inhibitor to the institutionalisation of evaluation is a fear of evaluation findings, where evaluation is seen as punitive. A key finding in the interviews conducted was that some departments do not submit evaluations to the NEP because they are averse to the findings being made public, and that they are averse to the findings being presented to Cabinet¹⁰³. M&E officials noted that although evaluation is intended for learning and as a problem-solving mechanism, people still view it as an audit or performance assessment. The Evidence-Based Policy-Making (EBPM) course for DGs/DDGs aims to change this perspective of senior managers. Overall, this training was found to be beneficial to participants. Specific responses from participants are provided in Annex 3 of this report.

6 CONCLUSIONS

The key findings of this evaluation are summarised in the points below, and are categorised according to the OECD DAC criteria for development effectiveness.

6.1 Relevance, Effectiveness and Efficiency

How is the system working as a whole? How are the specific components of the system working nationally and provincially and how can they be strengthened?

- **Evaluation Plans:** Evaluation plans are a key mechanism through which the NES is spread to, and articulated at the departmental and provincial levels. The extent to which a department or province has an evaluation plan in place is a good indication of the breadth of the system, but not the depth or quality of the system. There are eight PEPs (out of a potential nine) and 68 DEPs (out of a potential 101 departments). Therefore, in terms of breadth, great strides have been made incorporating all but one province and the vast majority of departments, however; more needs to be done to track the implementation and progress of the plans.
- **Capacity:** Capacity development has been a large focus of the NES, with provisions having been provided in the NEPF. DPME's capacity building plan has been broad, and included establishing guidelines (18) and templates (9), promoting and facilitating learning networks and forums, short courses, and developing the MPAT system. Overall, the provision of guidelines and templates is seen as useful, particularly if they are adapted to the context and capabilities of the department or province. 1 989 participants undertook training between 2012/13 and 2016/17. Overall, respondents from the KII, and from the survey conducted, found tremendous progress arising from the training provided, deepening the knowledge of many relevant public officials within the NES. However; capacity remains a priority area of development in the NES to continue to build on the momentum achieved.
- **Quality Assurance:** Overall the quality assurance mechanisms are appropriate and necessary, but to date have not fully achieved the full potential influence, or level of maturity on the evaluations. Related to the peer review system, the system is in principle seen as a useful and valuable process. Peer reviewers are however not always included from the beginning of an evaluation which can cause challenges later. Related to quality assessment, 159 evaluations have been quality assessed. Respondents highlighted that quality assurance

¹⁰³ This is being addressed through the Director General (DG) / Deputy Director General (DDG) courses where government officials are being educated about the purpose and use of evaluations to improve programmes and policies

mechanisms worked best when there was open communication between the assessors, the programme managers, external evaluators and other key members of steering committees.

- **Communication:** While a lot of work has been done in terms of communication, particularly in the most recent years, respondents noted that a number of areas should be strengthened. These include the need to work more through the media, and to promote the sharing of learnings (formally or informally) within the public sector.
- **Time and Costs:** The bulk of the DPME's budget is spent on funding evaluations, while proportionally less is spent on institutionalisation activities such as capacity building and communication. Going forward, this needs to be more balanced to continue to see depth and institutionalisation of evaluation. Respondents on both the supply side (evaluators) and the demand side (departments and provinces) noted that the evaluation process is a lengthy process which requires a considerable investment of time, much of which can and should be truncated through implementing more efficient processes around planning, procurement, and communication of results. This includes procurement and SCM-related issues that introduce a myriad of challenges outside of the commissioners, managers and service providers' control.

Who is involved and what are the consequences of involvement?

- The roles of DPME and other actors in the NES are not always clear and there is not always a shared vision for the system. More work needs to be done to clarify the roles of institutions such as universities, SAMEA, centre of government departments, civil society organisations and programme beneficiaries. The role of DPME in the NES has evolved from the provisions of the NEPF with the DPME playing a stronger technical role in the NES. There are mixed views on this in provinces and departments. Therefore, DPME's vision and role needs to be clarified. The role of DPME as a stakeholder that can clarify the extent to which M&E officials must focus on evaluation, needs to be strengthened. The link between National Treasury, and DPME, must also be strengthened in terms of linking evaluation to strategic planning and budgets. The role of the NSG in providing capacity building within the NES, and the funding sources for training in the NES needs to be clarified as soon as possible.

What is the value for money of establishing the NES?

- The cost-benefit ratios of the three sample evaluations demonstrate that the cost of evaluation, in these instances, is heavily outweighed by the benefits. Tracking the costs and benefits of the system as a whole, and of individual evaluations, needs to be done more systematically so that the value of the system can be accurately assessed.

Are there other evaluation mechanisms that need to be included to maximise the benefits accrued to the government?

- Respondents from departments and provinces, particularly the early adopters, highlighted a need for more evaluation types to be included in DPME's guidelines, particularly around rapid evaluation options, including those led internally.
- Given the wide spread adherence to MPAT, MPAT should be further leveraged to extend and progress the standards for evaluation.

6.2 Impact

Is there initial evidence of symbolic¹⁰⁴, conceptual¹⁰⁵ or instrumental¹⁰⁶ outcomes from evaluations? If evaluations findings are not being used, why is this? What evidence is there of evaluations contributing to planning/budgeting, improved accountability, decision-making and knowledge?

- Of the levers to enable use, the *improvement plan* is seen as a key element in enhancing use in the system and is seen as one of the key benefits that NES has brought about. It is however important to note that there is currently no mechanism to mandate the creation or funding of an improvement plan. Furthermore, there is a need for a better mechanism to track evaluation improvement plans. The preliminary evidence for use of evaluations is encouraging. Departments and provinces appear to understand the value of evaluations and attempt to use them to inform decisions, despite many challenges that they face. Looking at budgetary considerations arising from evaluations, those evaluations concerned with the broader economy have the highest rates of actively considering the budgetary implications of their evaluations. However, in the majority of cases there is little conscious consideration of budget implications. A key challenge raised by respondents was the capacity needed to use evaluations. Capacity (in terms of number of people, time and level of skill) is a challenge when implementing evaluation recommendations. While this was also a view held at the national departments, the challenge is particularly acute at the provincial level.

6.3 Sustainability and Upscaling

How should the internally-initiated approach evolve to strengthen the NES?

- Overall, respondents preferred sticking to the internally-initiated approach but did suggest that adjustments to the approach would be necessary to achieve the objectives of the NES, particularly encouraging demand from the centre of government focusing on strategic priorities.

What are the implications for expanding the system?

- The first five years of the NES have focused on the building blocks of the system. The next, important phase of the NES relates to institutionalisation. This can be done through more systematic use of evaluation findings in financial allocations, accountability to conduct evaluations, and promoting the development of an evaluation culture which includes ongoing capacity building efforts.

7 RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 Evaluation Mandate

There is a need for a clear and formalised mandate for systematic evaluation across the government. Evaluation has not yet reached a point within the government, where one could confidently say, that there is an evaluative culture, or a systematic approach to doing evaluation. Given the lack of mandate currently for 'late adopters' to embark on an evaluation process, and also, the fact that even early adopters from a substantive and technical perspective have lost financial support, there is a need for a formal mandate to shift the approach to evaluation. One way to do this is to make evaluation mandatory and embedded in legislation. DPME is currently drafting a Planning, M&E Bill. However, there are potential drawbacks to this, namely that evaluation becomes an additional compliance task, and loses its learning and evaluative thinking functions. The implementation of the requirement will therefore need to be done with a clear developmental pathway/phasing that allows departments and provinces to build their evaluation function incrementally, as has been the case to date.

¹⁰⁴ "Symbolic use refers to examples when a person uses the mere existence of an evaluation, rather than any aspect of its results, to persuade or to convince." (Johnson, et al., 2009)

¹⁰⁵ Conceptual use is the type of use where an evaluation results in an improved understanding of the intervention and its context, or a change in the conception of the evaluand." (Ledermann, 2012)

¹⁰⁶ When evaluations are used instrumentally, the recommendations and findings generated, could inform decision-making and lead to changes in the intervention." (Ledermann, 2012)

DPME's Evaluation Unit (previously ERU) is the natural custodian of evaluation and it is a trusted partner of provinces and departments. It has undoubtedly contributed to, and continues to support, the deepening and strengthening of the NES across the government. However, the role and mandate of DPME, and its legal mandate for M&E needs to be clarified, as well as the roles of provinces, departments and state-owned entities.

R1 Evaluation should be embedded in legislation as a mandatory component of public management and organisational improvement, with DPME as the custodian, and the roles of OTPs and departments defined.

The use of evaluation evidence needs to consistently feed into the planning and budgeting cycles in a formalised way. Planning of new programmes as well as improvements, to existing policies and programmes needs to be based on evidence generated through evaluations and other sources. Currently, departments and provinces have to make their own plans to fund evaluations, which often leaves them in a position where funds are lacking to implement their evaluation plans (both provincial and national). Fiscal challenges will continue into the foreseeable future, so if evaluation is to really take root in the government's toolkit of public management, real consideration for funding needs to be determined. In order to do this, at the departmental and provincial levels, better linkages are required between M&E units, budgeting units and planning units. Evaluations should be aligned to both the budget and planning cycles at the national and provincial levels, to provide timely inputs into planning and budget allocation. Once this process is refined at the national level, this can be used as a guide to inform provincial processes.

R2 Planning and budgeting must systemically draw from the results of M&E. The findings from evaluations and implementation of improvement plans should be codified in departmental strategic plans¹⁰⁷, APPs, annual and quarterly reports. DPME should incorporate this as it updates the Framework for Strategic Plans and APPs¹⁰⁸. In addition, they should be part of senior managers performance agreements. This will support the promotion of evaluation champions in the public sector.

R3 New phases of programmes should not be funded until an evaluation of the previous phase is completed. For this to succeed, buy-in is required from provincial treasuries and National Treasury.

R4 The role of impact evaluations needs to be strengthened, particularly for large policies or programmes, programmes that have already had an implementation evaluation, and in new programmes where there is an opportunity to design in for impact evaluation from the beginning.

Currently the use of impact evaluations has been limited due to poor data, and lack of designing in from the outset of programmes. This is often the result of impact evaluations not having been planned for (from a data perspective) from the beginning of the programme. There is a need for quality data to be generated and better planned for.

R5 The role of key stakeholders in the evaluation ecosystem including DPSA, National Treasury, SAMEA and civil society, notably think tanks, needs to be clarified.

More work needs to be done to clarify the roles of institutions such as universities, SAMEA, centre of government departments, civil society organisations and programme beneficiaries. Related to civil society organisations, specifically, a view that emerged from the interviews conducted was that civil society is under-utilised and under-engaged in the NES.

7.2 Budgeting for Evaluative Processes

Evaluation-related tasks include a range of tasks from internally conducted rapid annual reviews and / or evaluative thinking exercises, to robust externally-conducted evaluations. More evaluation types should be

¹⁰⁷ Which include Medium-Term Expenditure Frameworks (MTEF).

¹⁰⁸ APPs can also be used to provide insight into what departments have planned in terms of evaluation.

considered and added to the menu of options including options requiring less resources, those that can be done quicker (rapid evaluations), and also more options for 'learning by doing', and internal evaluation types as appropriate.

R6 DPME should initiate and develop guidelines for rapid evaluative exercises which can be conducted when budgets are limited or time is short, and which potentially can be conducted by M&E units. This should include when internally conducted evaluations are relevant.¹⁰⁹

Currently, departments and provinces have to make their own plans to fund evaluations, and funds are often lacking to implement their evaluation plans. Budget needs to be allocated to ensure that funding is available for evaluation activities. Cabinet has approved that programmes should allocate a % of funding for evaluation. There is also the potential for cost sharing across government.

R7 Programmes must be required to budget a % of programme budgets for evaluation, or M&E. Typically this should be in the range 0,5-5% depending on the size of the programme. Programme plans must include an evaluation cycle, as in the DPME Guideline for Planning.

R8 DPME/national departments should promote the sharing of evaluation plans across spheres of government so that evaluation resources can be pooled across government departments, for evaluations that examine similar programmes, or cross-departmental evaluations. In doing so, an 'evaluation competency centre' could be established by the DPME.

Most departments have more than one M&E official (or are supposed to, based on approved structure). Because of the high demand of monitoring on 'M&E' officials, evaluation takes a back seat to the monitoring requirements of these staff. Evaluation-specific 'posts' need to be created in departmental structures, as already happens in some departments, for example Rural Development and KZN COGTA.

R9 DPSA with technical input from DPME should develop clear requirements for specific evaluation staff with competences, job descriptions, and posts in standard M&E units. M&E units should have at least one evaluation specialist.

7.3 Capacity development

In extending evaluation to a public management requirement there is a risk of falling into a capability trap in which there is not sufficient capability to manage, conduct or use evaluation outputs. A combination of capacity development options will need to be strengthened and resourced.

R10 DPME must strengthen its investment in capacity development, including working with Treasury and PSETA to ensure that budget is available for courses/learnerships, and with additional dedicated staff to focus on capacity development.

In addition, current M&E staff should be offered an option of specialising to become evaluation specialists with expert training and exposure to undertaking evaluations within/ for government.

R11 DPME to work with NSG, DPSA and SAMEA to ensure that suitable post-graduate courses and continuous professional development opportunities are available for evaluation professionals within the public sector (and the extended evaluation system).

As the experiences of evaluation is growing rapidly within the government, there are increasing lessons to be learned from each other, for example at the recent National Evaluation Seminar (June 26 and 27, 2017). This 'sharing' cannot be replicated by theoretical training and the 'exchange' of on the ground cross-learning, and management of resource-constraints is needed.

R12 DPME to work with stakeholders to establish a Community of Practice (COP) for learning and sharing around evaluation for government. The COP must focus on technical and experiential

¹⁰⁹ Note DPME is already testing out some rapid models.

learning, not administrative or bureaucratic functions. The COP can take the form of an online platform, or the form of in-person engagements.

Learning from smaller internal evaluations provides an excellent capacity building opportunity. One of the provinces reported that they relaxed the criteria on their first PEP because it was a learning curve for the province and so they just wanted to start evaluations in this formative stage.

R13 The national and provincial ETWGs should suggest how internal evaluations should be encouraged to encourage learning, bearing in mind the need for independence for major evaluations.

The 'capacity building' component of evaluation contracts should be strengthened. This could include workshops on building a Theory of Change, developing an Analytical Framework, report writing, etc. However; it is also imperative that the department avails staff to participate in skills transfer activities and allows the identified candidates to commit the time.

R14 Build-in specific skills transfer elements into Service Level Agreements with evaluation service providers.

At present there is insufficient diversity of evaluators, with many of the contracts going to a limited pool of evaluation organisations. There is therefore a need to expand this pool, and provide space for established evaluators to partner with emerging evaluators.

R15 DPME needs to use both capacity development and procurement tools to ensure that emerging evaluators are brought into the system, and encourage a broader variety of universities to participate in the system.

7.4 Managing and tracking evaluations

Improvements need to be made in managing evaluations. When evaluation service providers are procured, evaluations' foundational documents need to be better including Concept notes, Terms of reference, and input documents. Improving these foundational documents will help to improve the quality of evaluation processes and products.

R16 DPME to work to strengthen the quality of foundational documents including TORs. This requires expanding the training, refinements to the guideline and more consistency in application of the guideline

R17 The system needs to be strengthened to track evaluations from end-to-end. The existing MIS system was developed to allow for the possibility of departments feeding in their data to one central location. Departments that have participated in the NEP or PEPs must be accountable to input their data and this needs to be enshrined in legislation – consequences need to be imposed if not complying with the improvement plan reporting. The MIS/tracking system, should be able to show the value and efficiency gains from evaluation experienced by departments. This would allow the DPME to make a comparative case for evaluation and to track evaluation spend.

R18 The management information system is the 'backbone' of the NES and it needs to be strengthened and used across all evaluation in government, not only for the NEP. This will allow transparent monitoring of the state of the system, as well as extraction.

R19 DPME must use the results of this tracking to ensure that departments (both national and provincial) are following up on improvement plans, reporting to Cabinet, and holding departments who are not doing so accountable.

7.5 Strengthening Use through Communication and Improvement plans

DPME and departments have invested significantly in communication around evaluation results. However, this is not sufficient and additional investment is needed, working with the media, with think tanks, and with Parliament to distribute information more broadly, including outside of South Africa.

R20 DPME, provinces and departments need to allocate significant resources for evaluation communication, both financial and human. This will ensure full value is obtained from the investment currently being made, and that stakeholders are aware of the findings. This will also help to build trust in government.

Challenges have been found in how far improvement plans are being implemented and monitored. The first challenge is data – and R10 addresses improving the tracking of improvement plans. Another challenge is that development of these plans does not necessarily imply resources are available to implement the changes that are recommended. In some instances, costing exercises have been conducted (for example, on ECD), which allowed prioritisation of the services that were proposed.

R21 DPME should hold some resources to be used during the improvement plan stage of NEP evaluations to enable funding of exercises such as costing. The same would be beneficial for OTPs for provincial evaluations.

R22 DPME should develop mechanisms for tracking changes from evaluations beyond the current two years of the improvement plan. This would include later evaluations on programmes which have been revised from evaluations. Linking evaluations to planning and budgeting (as expanded on above) would assist in tracking improvement plans.

7.6 Revisions to the theory of change

Based on the findings and recommendations of this report, a number of changes have been made to the theory of change of the NES. The revised theory of change is provided in Annex 2 of this report, and the changes made to it include:

- The inputs to the system have been explicit in the revised theory of change. In the first version of the theory of change, many of the inputs were assumed to be in place. The evaluation has however found that this is not the case. As a result, the following are now included in the theory of change as inputs: funding for evaluation, funding for capacity development, human resources (including government officials and service providers), and the development of a capacity building plan.
- Additional outcomes related to quality assurance, have been included in the theory of change, as quality assurance is an essential part of the system.
- Additional outcomes related to improvement plans, as the initial version of the theory of change did not address improvement plans. Improvement plans are important in closing the evaluation cycle. Specifically, the revised theory of change looks at the development of improvement plans, the implementation of improvement plans, the funding of evaluation recommendations, and monitoring the impact of evaluations.

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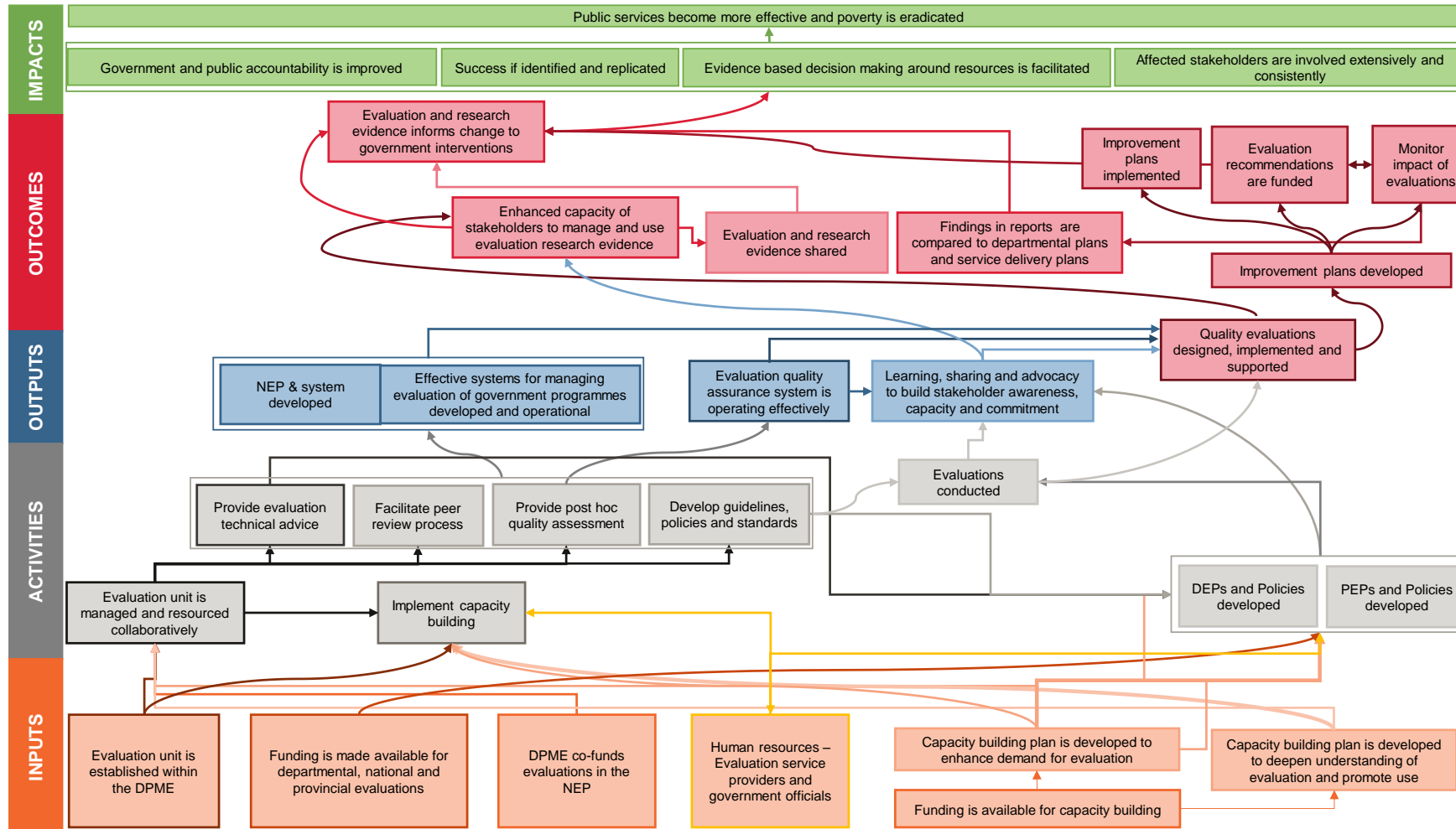
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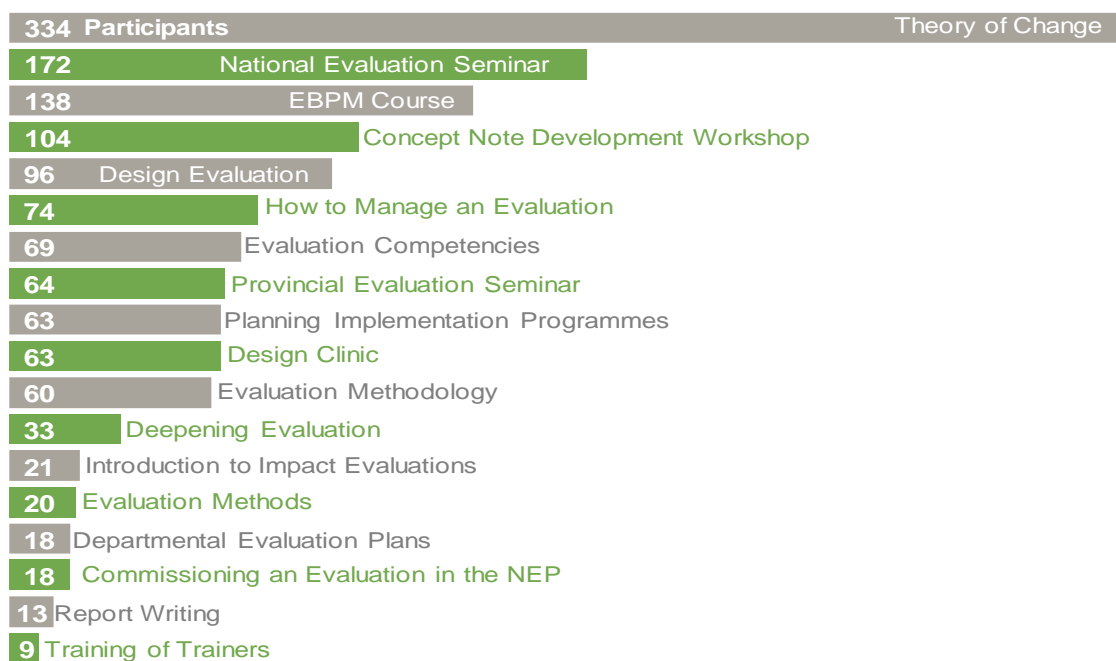
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ANNEX 2: PROPOSED REVISED THEORY OF CHANGE



ANNEX 3: TRAINING COORDINATED BY DPME BETWEEN 2014/15 AND 2016/17

Figure 10: Training Coordinated by DPME between 2014/15 and 2016/17



Source: (DPME, 2017c)

Table 7: Examples of the Benefits of the EBPM Course

Type of Example	Description
Examples of using evidence to inform strategy	A participant used the knowledge gained to develop a traditional affairs and partnerships strategy using evidence sourced at the implementation and beneficiary levels.
	A participant collected evidence to inform the development of a funding model for service centres, as part the National Waste Management Strategy for South Africa. The same respondent noted that “the gathering of the evidence was crucial to help inform the key research questions and the development of the policy and funding options”.
	A participant noted that “I have specifically used the theory of change during our strategic planning session earlier this year”.
Examples of evaluations conducted, and measuring success, after the course	A participant noted that after the course they conducted a diagnostic and design evaluation of the services required by the clients of their department.
	A participant noted that they have worked on “ensuring that all projects are adequately documented with clear deliverables and impact desired to ensure that all are monitored and evaluated over time to determine impact in the long term”.
	A participant noted that ETWGs have been introduced for various research projects.
	A participant noted that they have benefited from “applying the theory of change to plan an intervention programme that targets the improvement of language and mathematics skills among Grade – 3 learners in selected schools”.
Examples of overall benefits of the course	A participant noted that “in my responsibilities to evaluate approval processes on technical work done in the department, the understanding of evidence-based policy-making is invaluable”.
	A participant noted that “I was able to sell the benefits of the course”.

	A participant noted that benefits included “consistently applying the theory of change; thinking more critically about the problem and the evidence, prior to developing the solution”.
	A participant noted that “the quality of decisions and policies has improved”.
	A participant noted that there is now have a “structured process on evidence gathering for policy changes”.
	A participant noted that since the course, there is “improved organisational performance”.
	A participant noted that “I am more conscious of the evidence-base for decisions”.

Sources: Survey Conducted for this Evaluation, (DfID, 2015), and (European Union, 2017)