the **dpme**

Department:
Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation
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Report on Awareness and use of Evaluation Guidelines and Templates

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GLOSSARY

DALRRD: Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development
DBE: Department of Basic Education
DCS: Department of Correctional Services
DOH: Department of Health
DPE: Department of Public Enterprises
DPME: Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation
DSAC: Department of Sports Arts and Culture
DSBD: Department of Small Business Development
DSD: Department of Social Department
DWYPD: Department of Women Youth and Persons with Disabilities
EC: Eastern Cape
FS: Free State
GP: Gauteng Province
HOD: Head of Department
KZN: KwaZulu-Natal
LP: Limpopo Province
M&E: Monitoring and Evaluation
MEC: Member of the Executive Council
MP: Mpumalanga
NC: Northern Cape
NEP: National Evaluation Plan
NT: National Treasury
NW: North West
SAPS: South African Police Service
SOE: State Owned Entity
TOR: Terms of Reference
WC: Western Cape

1. INTRODUCTION

Evaluation guidelines and templates are developed to close the gaps of various challenges outlined in the National Evaluation Policy Framework (NEPF), 2019 such as limited state capacity to undertake evaluations, lengthy evaluation processes and mainstreaming critical issues affecting vulnerable groups were not prioritised in evaluations. The guidelines and templates provide a structured framework of the evaluation processes to enhance the reliability and credibility of evaluations and ensures that evaluations are conducted in a consistent, rigorous, and fair manner. Consistency and fairness in the evaluation process, allows for objective and unbiased assessments.

The Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME) through the Chief Directorate Evaluation develops and continuously review and update evaluation guidelines and templates to outline the standards against which an evaluation should be conducted. The aim is to provide common understanding of what is expected and provide a basis for comparison across different evaluations.

A need to undertake a survey in order to determine the awareness, utilisation and usefulness of evaluation guidelines and templates was identified at the strategic planning session on the unit held in March 2023. This document outlines how the survey was undertaken, the findings, provides a conclusion and recommendations thereof.

2. PURPOSE OF THE SURVEY

The survey was undertaken to assess the awareness and utilisation of evaluation guidelines and templates amongst government officials.

The objectives of the survey were to:
2.1.   Explore the relevance of evaluation guidelines and templates across all spheres of government;
2.2.   Assess the usefulness of evaluation guidelines and templates;
2.3.   Determine which evaluation guidelines and templates are mostly used and how user-friendly are these evaluation guidelines and templates;
2.4.   Identify barriers and concerns in accessing evaluation guidelines and templates; and
2.5.   Explore how evaluation guidelines and templates can be strengthened.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Online Survey

The method assesses the awareness and utilisation of evaluation guidelines and templates was through self-administration of an online survey questionnaire. The online survey questionnaire was developed using Microsoft forms to obtain respondents views. The survey employed a combination of methods: quantitative, featuring closed ended questions allowing respondents to answer with a simple yes or no, and qualitative, incorporating open-ended questions for respondents to elaborate and provide deeper insights into the questions administered. The respondents were anonymous and all the questions were made mandatory. The survey questionnaire consisted of three (3) sections with questions focusing on demographic, evaluation guidelines and evaluation templates. Both evaluation guidelines and evaluation templates sections consisted of questions on awareness and utilisation, accessibility and usefulness, relevance and ease of use. Estimated time to complete the survey was approximately twenty (20) minutes.

3.2. Sample size

The targeted respondents for the survey were monitoring and evaluation (M&E) officials, evaluation officers, evaluation practitioners and evaluation managers who are using evaluation guidelines and templates and have access to these tools. All nine (9) offices of the premiers (i.e. EC, FS, GP, KZN, LP, MP, NC, NW and WC) were selected to participate in the survey. About four-teen (14) national departments (Presidency, DSD, DALRRD, DBE, DCS, NT, DOH, DHS, DPE, DSBD, DSAC, DWYPD, DOT and SAPS) were selected based on the knowledge of relevant DPME officials (who are responsible for providing evaluation technical support to national departments) that those respective national departments are undertaking or have undertaken evaluations and are actively participating in the National Evaluation System. Other national departments, municipalities and state

entities were not sampled due to our internal experience on their low interaction with the National Evaluation System and minimal use of evaluation guidelines and templates. Of the sampled nine (9) offices of the premiers and four-teen (14) national departments, it was stated in the communication that only two (2) officials should complete the survey questionnaire.

3.3. Data Analysis

The data was analysed using the descriptive methods and the findings are presented in the form of tables and graphs. Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected from Microsoft forms data collection system and analysed using Microsoft Excel even-though the application was smart as it was self-administrative and dynamic (which allowed collection of required information i.e. on awareness and usage of evaluation guideline and templates). Data was collated into a database as soon as the questionnaire was completed/submitted.

4. LIMITATIONS OF THE SURVEY

- Microsoft forms system being unable to extract some of the data, that is having blanks in a yes or no question
- The system not being able to restrict (mandatory) as instructed respondents not to skip questions.
- Respondents administering questionnaire more than once as respondents felt that they did not receive acknowledgment email of survey being completed or received by the DPME. A thank you message was sent to all participants for completing the survey.
- Even though all offices of the premiers were sampled, only two (2) officials per province were required to administer the survey. The provinces of FS, NC and WC did not respond to the survey questionnaire while the other six (6) provinces which have responded to the survey questionnaire, not all two (2) officials per province responded to the survey.

5. FINDINGS FROM THE SURVEY

SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

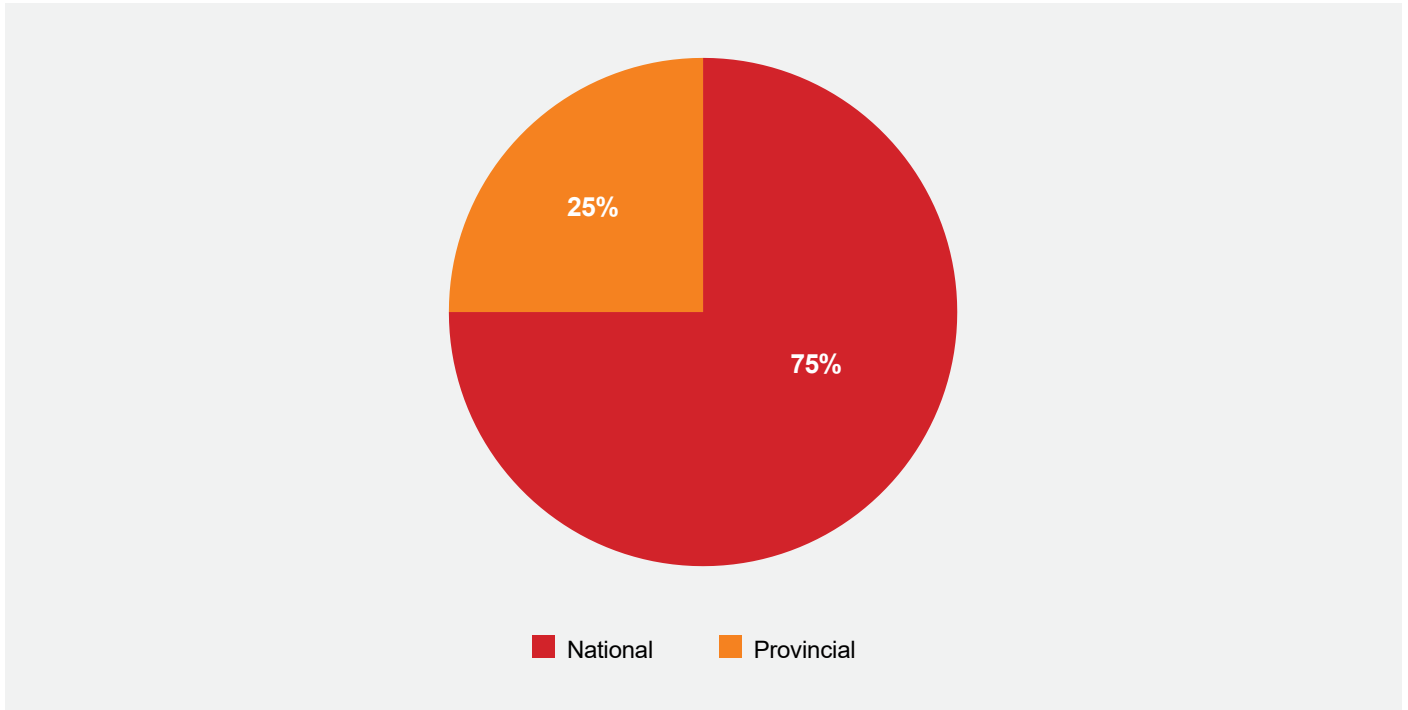**Figure 1: Respondents by sphere of government**

Figure 1 above shows that out of thirty-two (32) respondents, both from National and Provincial sphere, about twenty-four (24) respondents representing seventy five percent (75%) were from National governments whereas eight (8) respondents representing twenty five percent (25%) were from Provincial offices.

Figure 2: Respondent by evaluation role
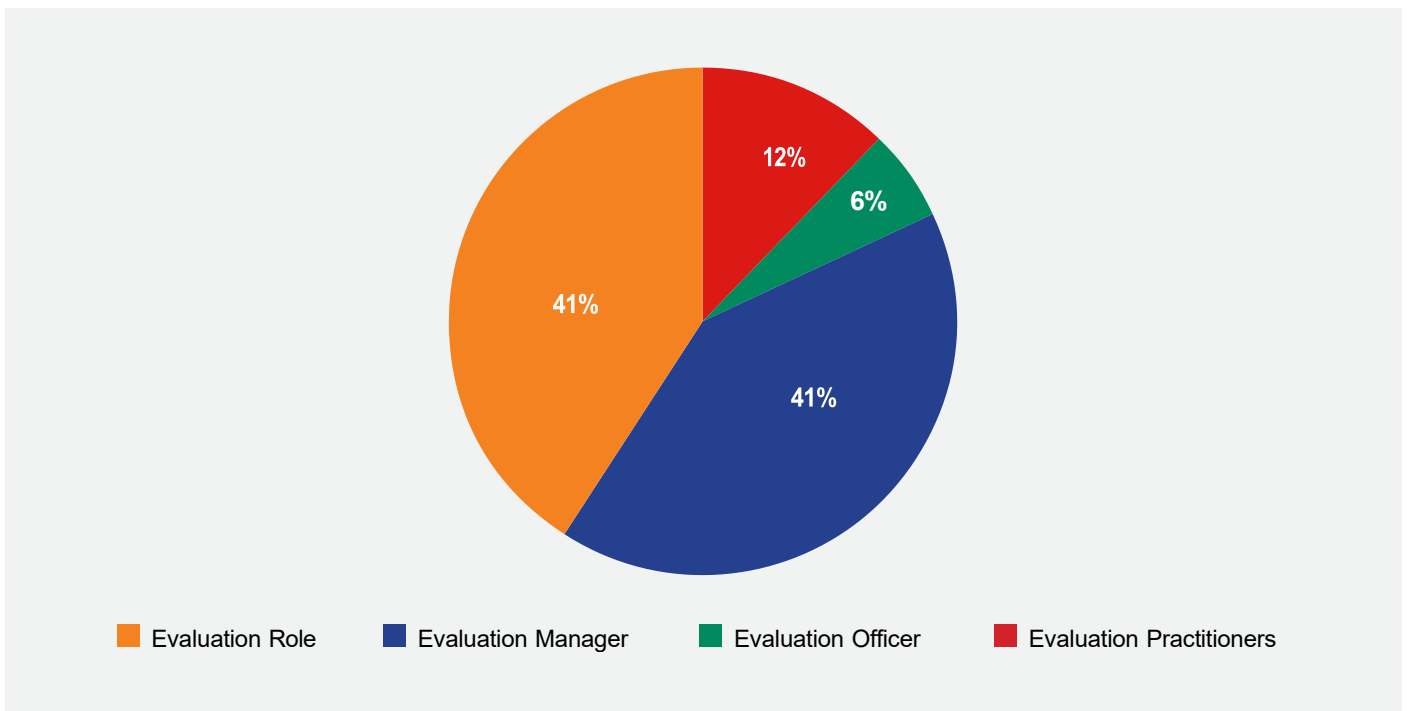
The figure above indicates that forty one percent (41%) of the respondents were Evaluation Managers and M&E Official respectively, which constitutes the highest number of respondents. Twelve percent (12%) were evaluation practitioners and six (6%) were evaluation officers.

Figure 3: Years of service in the evaluation role
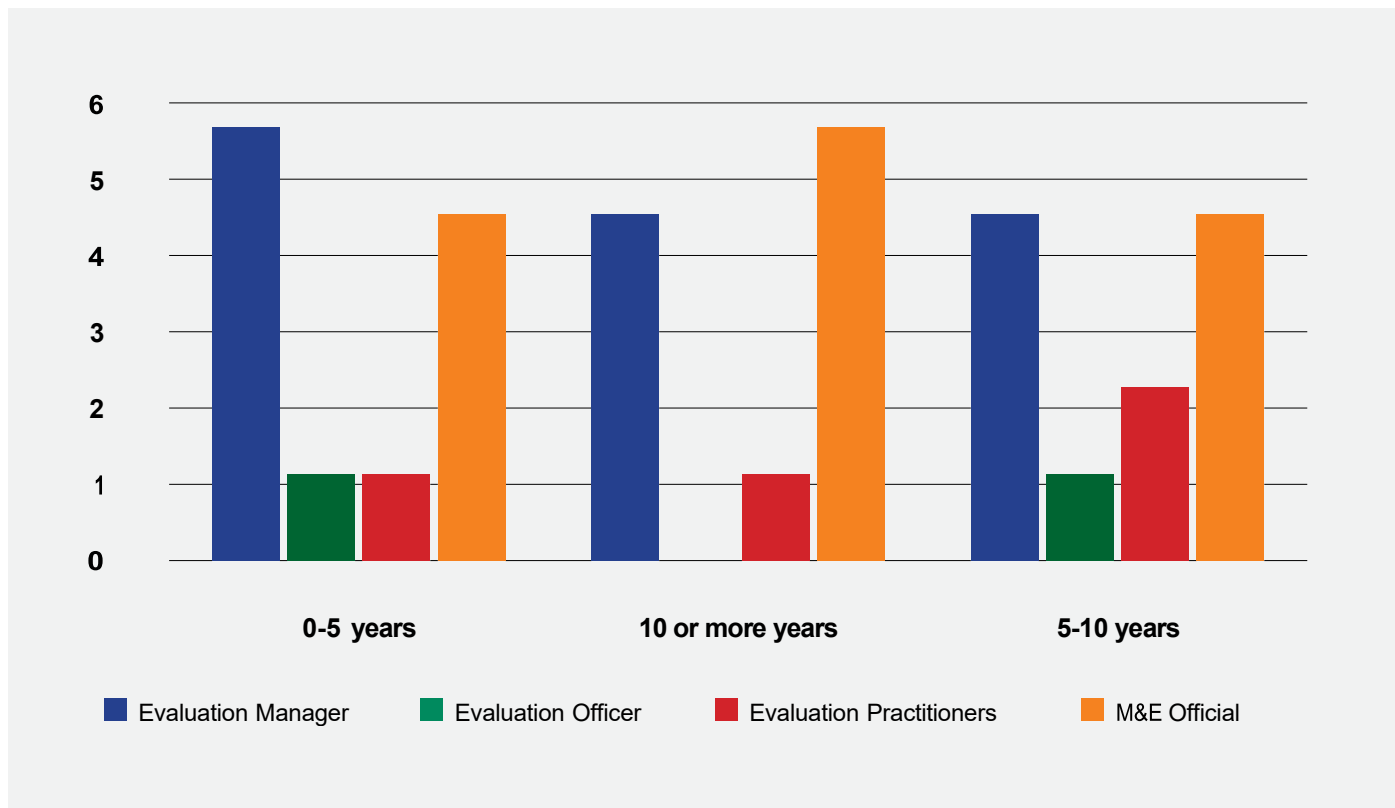
On the number of years of service in the evaluation role, the evaluation managers and M&E officials have the highest number of services in the evaluation role with evaluation officers having the least number of years.

SECTION B: AWARENESS AND UTILIZATION OF EVALUATION GUIDELINES AND TEMPLATES

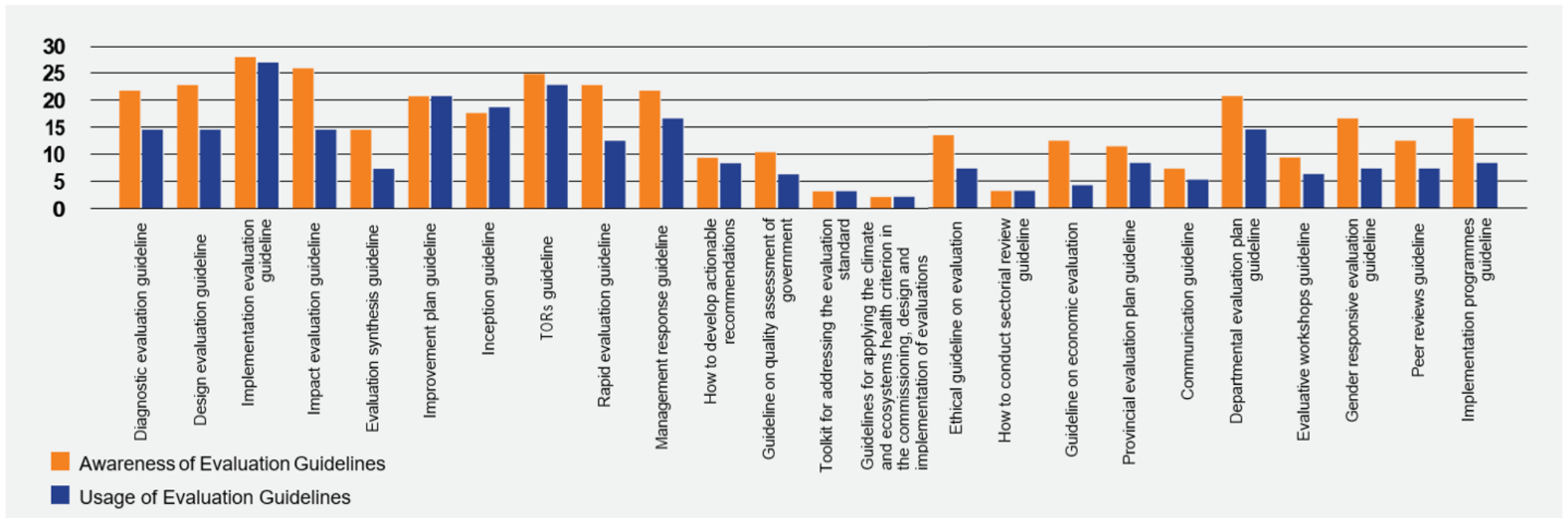**Table 1: Awareness of evaluation guidelines and templates**

	Are you aware of any evaluation guidelines?		Are you aware of any evaluation templates?	
	No	Yes	No	Yes
Evaluations Manager		13		13
Evaluations officer		2		2
Evaluations Practitioner		4		4
M&E Official	2	11	3	10
Grand Total	**2**	**30**	**3**	**29**

A total of thirty (30) respondents indicated that they are aware of the evaluation guidelines while twenty-nine (29) respondents indicated that they are aware of evaluation templates. This represent majority of the respondents being aware of both the evaluation guidelines and templates. Only two (2) respondents indicated not being aware of the guidelines and three respondents also not being aware of the evaluation templates. The respondents not being aware of the guidelines and templates were mainly M&E officials. They indicated that they were they were not exposed to them due to their allocated responsibilities which are on monitoring, evaluation and reporting quarterly and annual organisational performance instead of focusing on evaluations or having a dedicated unit focusing on monitoring and evaluation.
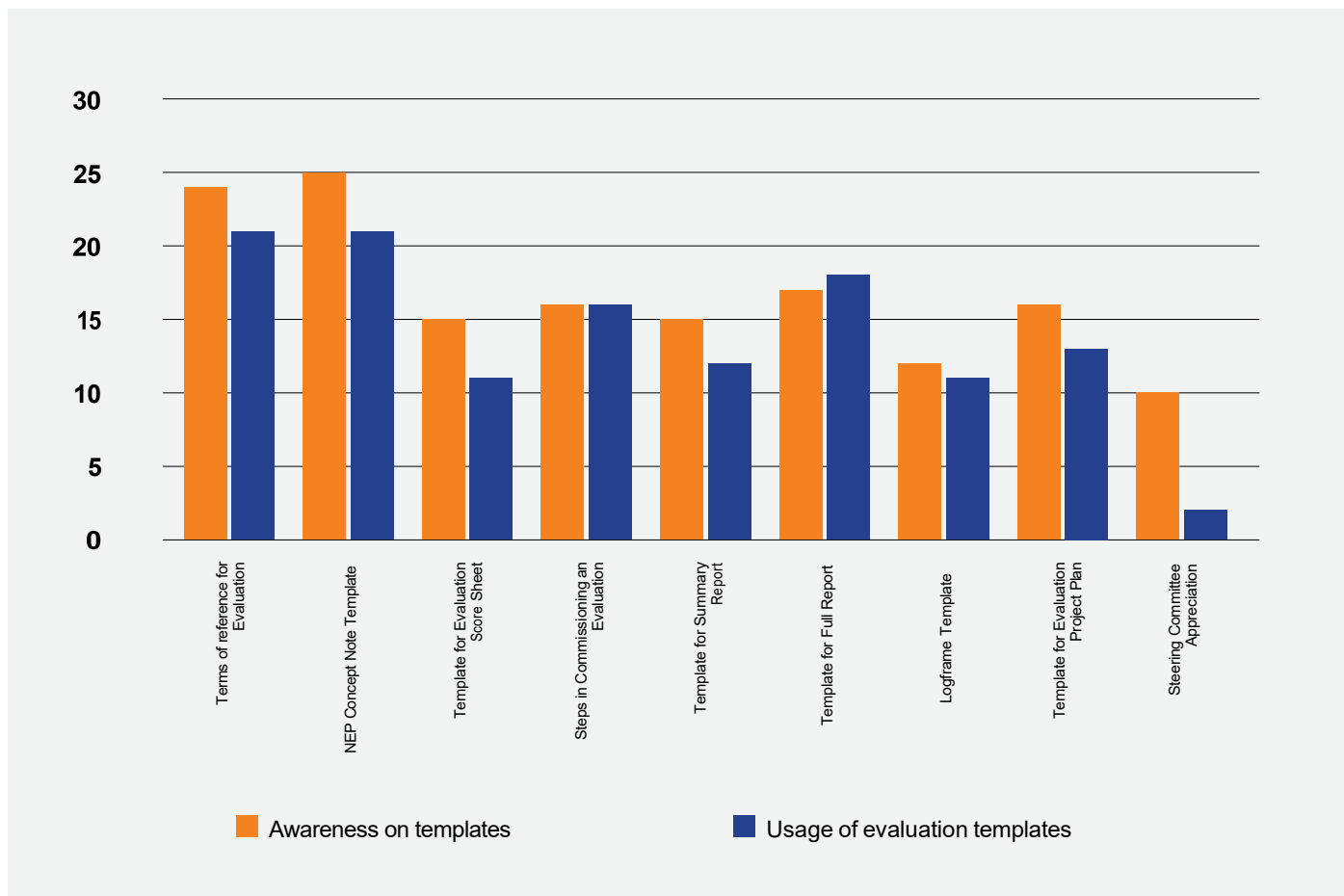
Figure 4: Awareness and usage of Evaluation Guidelines

The figures above show awareness and usage of evaluation guidelines. The differences between respondents who are aware of evaluation guidelines compared to the response on use of guidelines is minor. Guidelines such as implementation evaluation, impact evaluation, terms of reference, rapid evaluation, improvement plan, management response, diagnostic and design evaluation are the types of guidelines which most of the respondents were aware of. On the use of the guidelines, respondents reported that the mostly used guidelines are implementation evaluation, terms of reference, improvement plan, diagnostic evaluation, design evaluation and inception guidelines.

The least aware and used guidelines are on the quality assessment of government evaluations, how to develop actionable recommendations guideline, toolkit for addressing the evaluation standards in the management performance assessment tool, guidelines for applying the climate and ecosystems health criterion in the commissioning, design and implementation of evaluations and integrating a transformative equity criterion into evaluations or promoting transformative systemic change. The reason for this is that the guidelines for applying the climate and ecosystem health criterion in the commissioning, design and implementation of evaluations and integrating a transformative equity criterion into evaluations or promoting transformative systemic change were recently developed and adopted for use.

Figure 5: Awareness and utilisation of evaluation Templates

Chart data (approximate values):

Template	Awareness on templates	Usage of evaluation templates
Terms of reference for Evaluation	24	21
NEP Concept Note Template	25	21
Template for Evaluation Score Sheet	15	11
Steps in Commissioning an Evaluation	16	16
Template for Summary Report	15	12
Template for Full Report	17	18
Logframe Template	12	11
Template for Evaluation Project Plan	16	13
Steering Committee Appreciation	10	2

The evaluation templates that respondents are mostly aware of and use are: terms of reference for evaluation steering committees, the National Evaluation Plan (NEP) and concept note template. They are followed by evaluation templates such as template for full Report, steps in commissioning an evaluation, evaluation score sheet, summary report 1-5-25 and evaluation project plan. Though respondents are aware of the steering committee appreciation certificate evaluation template, it is the least used evaluation template.

Of noting, three (3) respondents indicated that they are not aware of the evaluation templates. Their reasons are that as M&E officials they focus on quarterly and annual organisational performance monitoring, evaluation and reporting, and not on the impact evaluation or evaluations overall. Also, that there is a need for a dedicated unit apart from the M&E unit that deals specifically with evaluations. Others indicated that they have never been introduced to evaluation templates and they have never used them.

Table 2: Utilisation of Evaluation Guidelines and Templates

	How often do you use those guidelines?	How often do you use the templates?
Daily	3%	0%
Monthly	13%	6%
Quarterly	22%	38%
Weekly	13%	9%
Yearly	44%	38%
(blank)	6%	9%

About forty four percent (44%) of respondents indicated that they use guidelines yearly while thirty-eight (38%) also reported that they use templates annually. Evaluation guidelines and templates are mostly used on an annual basis, followed by those who used the evaluation guidelines and templates on a quarterly basis (22% and 38% respectively). Those who used guidelines and templates daily are very minor, i.e. 3% and 0%.

Figure 6: Last usage of Evaluation Guidelines and Templates
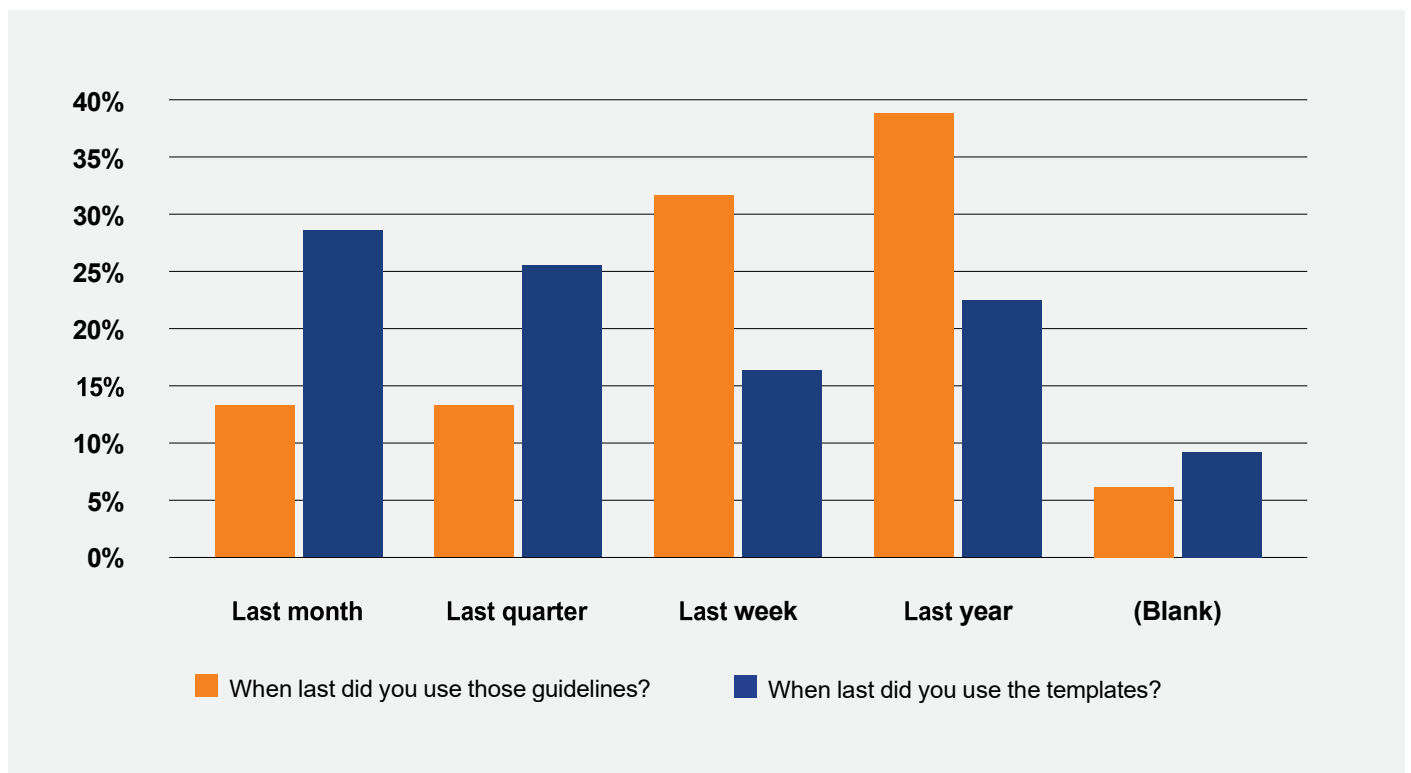
Majority of the respondents last used the evaluation guidelines in the previous year (38%), whereas 31% indicated that they used the guidelines the previous week preceding data collection. Those who used the evaluation guidelines either previous quarter or month were only 13% respectively.

For the use of evaluation templates, a different representation is noticed whereby a high number of respondents indicated that they used the templates in previous month (28%), followed by previous quarter 25% and previous year 22%. Previous week being the least with 16%.

SECTION C: ACCESSIBILITY AND USEFULNESS OF EVALUATION GUIDELINES AND TEMPLATES

**Table 3: Accessibility of Evaluation Guidelines and templates**

	Do you find evaluation templates easily accessible?		Do you find evaluation guidelines easily accessible?	
	No	**Yes**	**No**	**Yes**
Evaluations Manager	2	11	3	10
Evaluations officer	1	1	0	2
Evaluations Practitioner	0	4	0	4
M&E Official	3	10	1	12
Total	**6**	**26**	**4**	**28**

Table 3 above illustrates that overall there is a high number of respondents who have easy access to both evaluation guidelines (28) and templates (26). Respondents who indicated that they did not easily access the guidelines were M&E officials (3), Evaluation Manager (2) and Evaluation Officer (1). For the evaluation templates only, Evaluation Manager (3) and M&E Officials (1) did not easily have access to evaluation templates.

The reasons stated by respondents for not having easy access to both the evaluation guidelines and templates were that they do not know where to get the documents as they are not easily accessible on the website and that some guidelines are not uploaded, there is no separate link to download templates, no proper communication when revised templates are uploaded and lastly the respondents suggested that they need to be (trained) on the use of the templates. Whilst those who can access them indicated that only the old version of the documents is available on the website. They only get new versions in the workshops.

Figure 7: How to access guidelines

Legend: Website, E-mail, E-mail & Website, Other
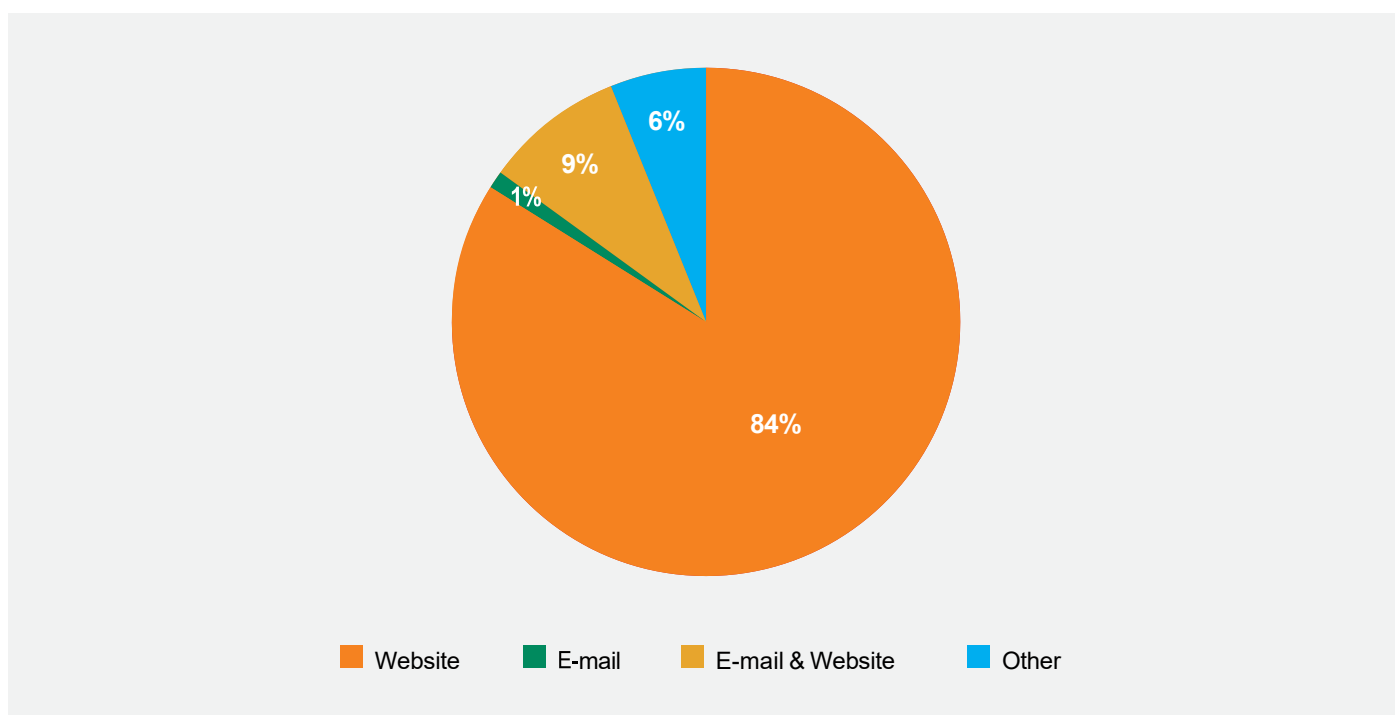
Majority of the respondents (84%) indicated that they access guidelines from the DPME website even through it is difficult as the website does not function most of the time. About 9% indicated accessing guidelines through both emails and website and 6% indicated that they are able to access guidelines through either their supervisors/managers, other evaluators or from DPME evaluation colleagues.

Figure 8: Suggestions to improve accessibility of evaluation guidelines
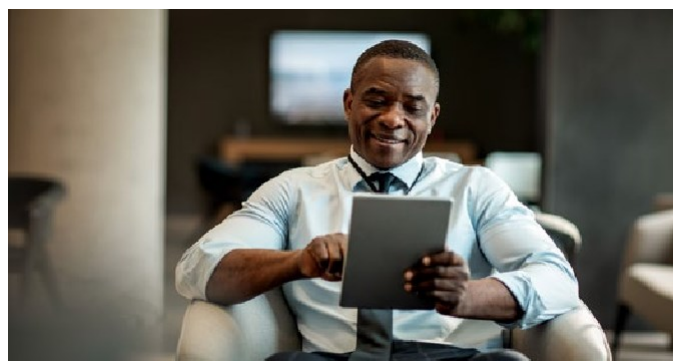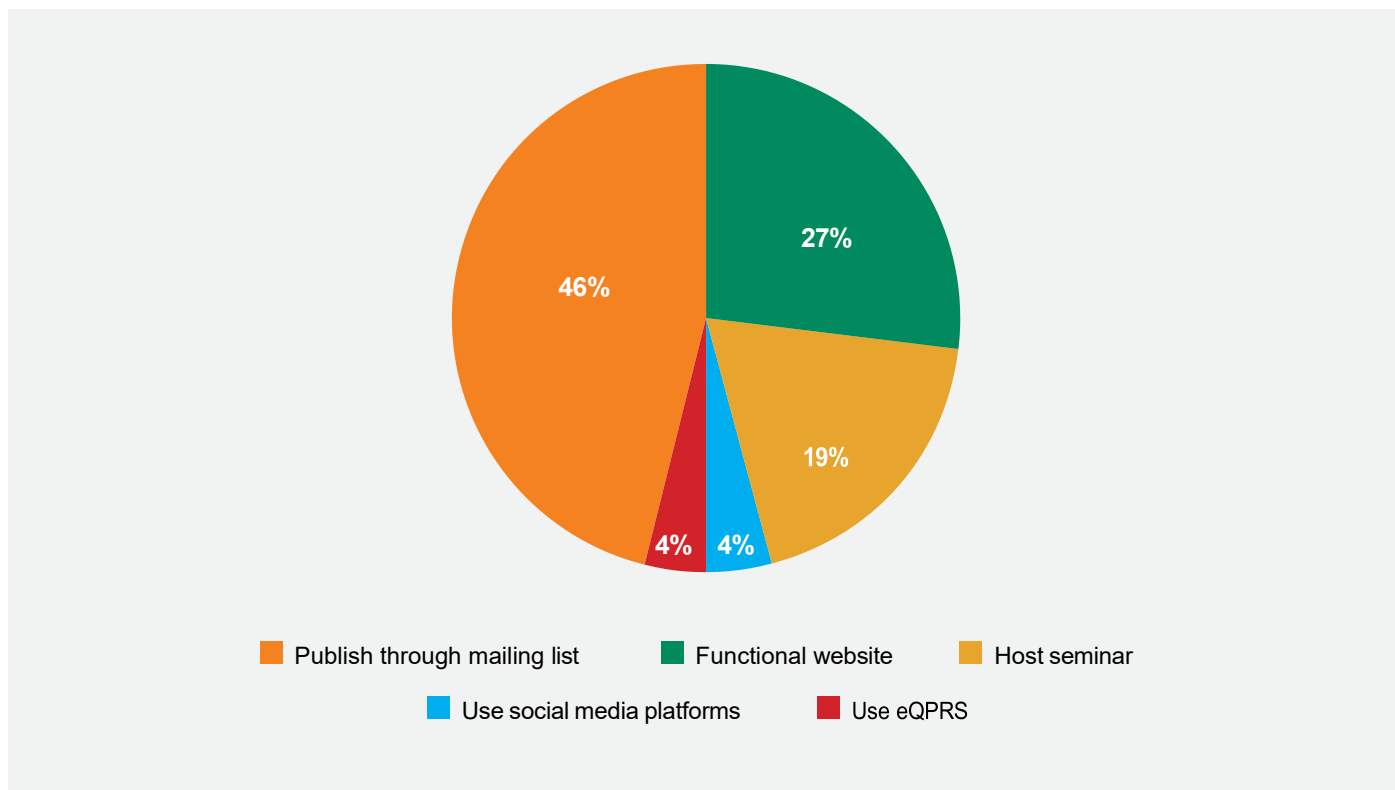
There are a number of suggestions respondents provided in making it easy to access the guidelines. The suggestions include the need for DPME to develop readily and easily accessible website, have a notification when additional or revised guidelines are uploaded and submitted, sending email users on the DPME group, conducting a scoping exercise on the use and availability of guidelines in all government departments, conducting seminars as it will be most helpful and target operational managers together with senior managers.
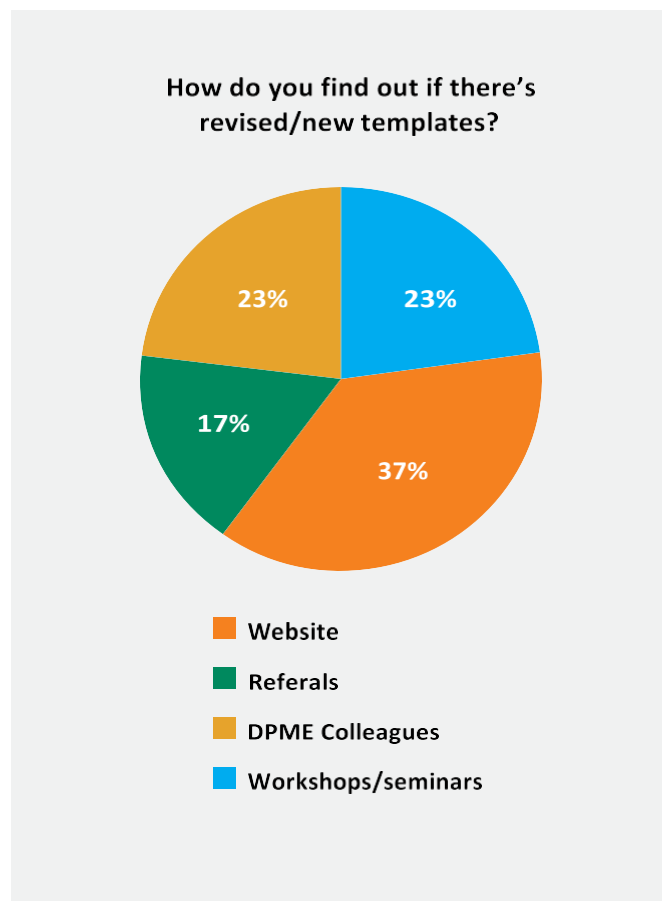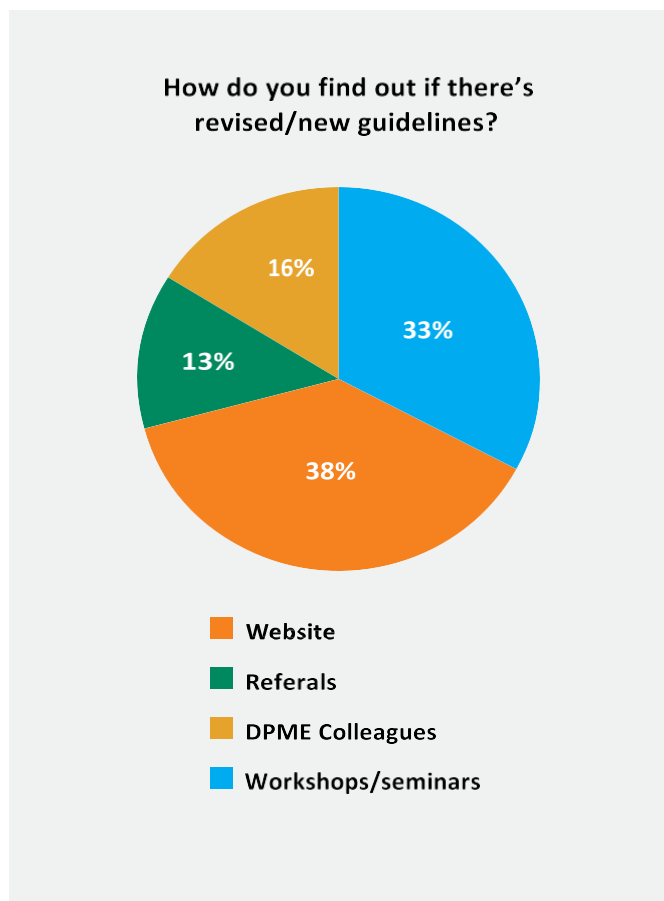
Table 4: Finding evaluation Templates and Guidelines

	Do you know where you are supposed to find evaluation Templates?		Do you know where you are supposed to find evaluation guidelines?	
Evaluation Role	No	Yes	No	Yes
Evaluations Manager	1	12	3	10
Evaluations officer	1	1	0	2
Evaluation Practitioner	0	4	0	4
M&E Official	1	12	1	12
Total	3	29	4	28

Almost all respondents indicated that they know where to find the evaluation guidelines and templates. About twenty-nine (29) of the respondents indicated that they knew where to find the evaluation templates and twenty-eight (28) respondents also knew where to find evaluation guidelines. Amongst those who knew where to find evaluation templates, twelve (12) were evaluation managers, one was an evaluation

officer, four were evaluation officers and ten (10) were M&E officials. Of the total twenty-eight (28) respondents who indicted they knew where to find evaluation guidelines, twelve where M&E officials, followed by ten (10) respondents who were evaluation officers, followed by four (4) respondents who were evaluation practitioners and two respondents who were evaluation officers.

Figure 9: Finding out if there are revised/ new evaluation guidelines and templates

How do you find out if there's revised/new guidelines?
- 33% Workshops/seminars
- 38% Website
- 13% Referals
- 16% DPME Colleagues

Legend:
- Website
- Referals
- DPME Colleagues
- Workshops/seminars

How do you find out if there's revised/new templates?
- 23% Workshops/seminars
- 37% Website
- 17% Referals
- 23% DPME Colleagues

Legend:
- Website
- Referals
- DPME Colleagues
- Workshops/seminars

The respondents who were able to find evaluation guidelines and templates (revised and new ones) indicated that they found them through searching the DPME websites for latest version, google/ internet search, resource centres while others said they were provided by their managers during meetings, through other government department website, as well as through email list and colleagues from DPME, awareness during SAMEA and other evaluation workshops, by checking the date and name of the manuals, through DPME's Evaluation Advisory Committee and word of mouth from DPME staff.

The reasons indicated by respondents who did not know where to find either revised or new evaluation guidelines and templates where that they did not know where to get them, evaluation guidelines and templates were not easily accessible on the website, and some indicated that they have never been introduced to either the evaluation guidelines nor templates. Other reasons ranged from respondents finding it very difficult to know

when new templates are available, others indicated that they are almost not aware of new templates released as they are attached to guidelines whilst others are not involved when evaluations are conducted thus, they are not looking for the guidelines and templates.

Usefulness of evaluation guidelines and templates

All respondents find evaluation guidelines and templates useful, only one person does not find templates useful only because they have not had an opportunity to use them.

A total of thirty-four (34) respondents indicated that the evaluation guidelines are relevant, clear and understandable. Further, they indicated that the guidelines are appropriate tools in guiding when undertaking evaluations. A total of thirty-three (33) respondents also indicated that the information in the evaluation templates are relevant. Only one (1) respondent reported that she has never used the templates.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are based on the suggestions made by officials who responded to the survey.

Themes	Recommendations
Improving accessibility of Evaluation Guidelines and templates	R1. DPME Evaluation unit to conduct workshops, training and capacity building after developing evaluation guidelines and templates on a regular basis to touch base with other evaluators.
	R2. An online recording tutorials or infographics attached with examples explaining either the newly developed evaluation guidelines and templates should be on DPME website for ease of access.
	R3. There is a need to create common language/application procedures across all departments as this will assist in eliminating misinterpretation of information. DPME can do this by simplifying and shortening the evaluation guidelines and templates so they are easily understood.
	R4. There is a need to expand on methodologies and sampling used for ease of understanding.
	R5. New guidelines and templates should be first piloted before introducing the final ones. The feedback from the pilot will help DPME to improve what is suggested by users to strengthen the guidelines and templates.
	R6. DPME needs to support departments during the implementation of the evaluation guidelines and templates.
Recommendations on Guidelines needed but not catered for	R7. Develop a guideline designed for Local Government departments and SOE's to guide evaluation processes as the current ones do not have complete steps to help achieve desired results.
	R8. Develop a policy for specific evaluation tools and Impact especially for rapid approach guidelines.
	R9. Develop a guideline on approaches, methodologies, sampling and data analysis for different evaluation types.
	R10. Develop a guideline on differentiating rapid and traditional evaluations.

	R11. Develop a guideline on allocation of funds/costing evaluations in government.
Recommendations on Guidelines needed but not catered for	R12. Develop a guideline in developing standard operating procedures for evaluation.
	R13. A guideline on how to prepare a literature/documents review should be developed.
	R14. A guideline in benchmarking report and case study for evaluation should be developed.
	R15. Guidelines on how to conduct data collection, analysis and report writing evaluation is needed.
	R16. Develop a Theory of change guideline.
	R17. Guidelines on participatory approaches for program beneficiaries in the evaluation process should be developed.
	R18. Develop a guideline on closure report and assessment of final report.
	R19. Develop a guideline on Evidence based monitoring of improvement plans.
Recommendation on Templates needed but not catered for	R20. Develop a template for decision makers (i.e. senior officials, HODs and MECs) so as to assist them in terms of how to engage content (findings and recommendations) for implementation.
	R21. Develop a template on logic model.
	R22. Develop a template on M&E Framework and Evaluation matrix.
	R23. Develop a template on theory of change.
	R24. Develop a template on costing model for evaluation project implementation
	R25. Develop a template on Inhouse conducted evaluation.
	R26. Develop a template on Literature review and Case studies.
Recommendations on how to improve usefulness of evaluation templates	R27. Create awareness of templates to users.
	R28. Regular awareness campaigns are required - especially for Concept Notes and Improvement Plan templates. The how to populate the templates is still a challenge.
	R29. Please provide templates for all the key deliverables in an evaluation.
	R30. Templates should also be flexible to ensure evaluation practitioner and manager can contextualize and adapt according to their Departmental structure.
	R31.Templates are to be in word format.
	R32. Involve evaluation practitioners, evaluators, evaluation managers and researchers.
	R33. Workshop those that used the templates to share their experience

7. CONCLUSION

Evaluation guidelines and templates provide the existing and limited capacity with a framework to conduct evaluation in a structured, consistent, rigorous, and fair manner. The development and continuously review as well as the update of evaluation guidelines and templates are useful and relevant to provide a common understanding of the evaluation process.

Almost all respondents indicated that they are aware of both evaluation guidelines and templates, found them to be useful and relevant. These enable them to conduct their work effectively. In general, both the evaluation guidelines and templates are easily accessible and utilised other than few suggestions made on how to improve the system. On the awareness of evaluation guidelines and templates most officials indicated that they are aware of the guidelines and templates. There is a difference between respondents who are aware of evaluation guidelines and respondents who use of guidelines, the latter is minor.

Lastly, DPME should consider benchmarking the practices of other organisation doing similar work of producing guidelines and standards for evaluations. One of the most useful practice that can be adopted to improve accessibility and public profiling and discoverability of guidelines is to package them in a single webpage in a manner that is easy to navigate. Examples are United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Norms and Standards for Evaluation https://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/1914 and the European Commission Better Regulation: Guidelines And Toolbox https://commission.europa.eu/law/law-making-process/planning-and-proposing-law/better-regulation/better-regulation-guidelines-and-toolbox_en

Signed

Mr Godfrey Mashamba
Deputy Director-General
Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation
Date:15 March 2024

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