



planning, monitoring and evaluation

Department:
Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation
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Functions of an M&E Component in National Government Departments

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Addressed to	Director-Generals and Heads of M&E in National Government Departments
Purpose	The purpose of this guideline is to provide generic guide on the functioning of M&E units in national government departments.
Reference documents	<p>This guideline draws from the DPME discussion document on <i>“Performance Monitoring and Evaluation: Principles and Approach”</i>.</p> <p>Links to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Policy Framework on the Government-wide Monitoring and Evaluation System (GWM&ES) (2007)▪ Improving Government Performance: Our Approach (2009)▪ MPAT Framework (2011)▪ DPME National Evaluation Policy Framework (2011)▪ A Framework for Strengthening Citizen-Government Partnerships for Monitoring Frontline Service Delivery (2013)
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1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 This guideline was first issued in 2012 and is now revised in line with the discussion document on ‘Performance Monitoring and Evaluation: Principles and Approach’ that was approved by Cabinet in 2014.
- 1.2 The development of the guideline is informed by extensive consultations with Heads of M&E and the Forum of South African Directors-General (FOSAD).
- 1.3 The experience of government in implementing M&E programmes since 2009 and evidence from research indicates a need for DPME to regularly update existing guidelines; and produce comprehensive guidance on key M&E principles and practices for public service institutions. Much of the contents of this guideline will be applicable to provincial departments as well.
- 1.4 This guideline should be read with Guideline 3.1.6 and Guideline 3.1.7.

2. INTRODUCTION

2.1 Monitoring

- 2.1.1 Monitoring is a management function that should, in principle, be undertaken by all managers. It involves “collecting, analysing, and reporting data on inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes and impacts as well as external factors, in support of effective management.” It is thus important that all managers include monitoring as one of their key managerial functions in their performance agreements.
- 2.1.2 Departmental monitoring data should come from the normal business processes in a department, in other words, through the department’s administrative data systems. Monitoring and reporting extracts key information points (often in the form of indicators) from these sources.
- 2.1.3 Departments should also collect and analyse data related to their sectors from other sources. For example, the Economic Development Department will need to collect and analyse data on the economy from a wide range of sources. Departments that are responsible for concurrent functions need to collect and analyse data from provincial and/or local governments as well. Citizen feedback (citizen-based monitoring) is also an essential part of achieving a complete picture of departmental performance. These data and analyses can be used for situational monitoring, strategic planning, socio-economic impact assessments; as well as reporting, including for purposes of making recommendations.
- 2.1.4 Managers should monitor many other issues on a regular basis. This includes monitoring of expenditure against the budget for which they are responsible, and monitoring of progress against programme and project plans. Examples of programme plans include plans for the Maternal Health Programme, the Early Childhood Development programme, and the Expanded Public Works Programme. Examples of project plans include plans for individual infrastructure projects and projects such as the Square Kilometre Array project. Relevant programme and project managers in a department should monitor such programmes and projects.
- 2.1.5 When monitoring and reporting, managers should not just use ‘tick-box’ and ‘post-box’ approaches. Managers should engage with information in reports. They should assess and review progress made in line with initial measurable objectives and associated indicators. Thus, each report should assist managers to identify areas where improvements are required in policies, plans and their implementation. Monitoring is in essence a management tool for improving performance.
- 2.1.6 When establishing an M&E unit in a department, there is a risk of an unintended consequence of managers believing that it is no longer their responsibility to engage in monitoring and reporting work related to their sections. There is a risk that managers will take a view that monitoring and reporting is now the responsibility of the M&E unit, and no longer their responsibility. This does not mean that departments should not establish M&E units. Heads of Department should however make it clear to all managers that they are still responsible for monitoring and reporting related to their areas of work, despite the establishment of the departmental M&E unit. Their respective roles and responsibilities should be set out in relevant policies and procedures.

2.1.7 Other corporate units in departments have monitoring and reporting responsibilities. These include, amongst others, the internal audit, finance and human resource management sections of departments. The creation of an M&E unit in a department does not mean that other corporate units should stop carrying out their existing monitoring and reporting responsibilities. M&E should facilitate these processes by means of reporting templates.

2.2 Evaluation

2.2.1 The definition of evaluation is the “periodic and systematic collection and objective analysis of evidence on public policies, programmes, projects, functions and organizations to assess issues such as relevance, performance (effectiveness and efficiency) and value for money, and recommend ways forward.” Evaluation is critical for generating in-depth evidence for improving performance and decision-making. This implies that some evaluations will have to be outsourced.

2.2.2 The evaluation aspect of M&E is a highly specialised function that requires highly skilled human resources. It requires the use of sophisticated research methodologies, applying these to policies, plans, programmes, projects or organisations.

2.2.3 All major programmes should have their impact assessed every 3-5 years, and many programmes need implementation evaluation during the implementation phase to strengthen them.

2.2.4 Cabinet approved the National Evaluation Policy Framework (NEPF) for national and provincial government. The framework provides for the development of annual and three year national and provincial evaluation plans, minimum quality standards for evaluations, and the development of improvement plans to address evaluation findings. It states that line function departments should lead evaluations in the National Evaluation Plan. DPME shall provide technical support.

2.2.5 DPME has established a specialist evaluation unit to provide technical support to national and provincial departments to carry out evaluations. Departments should also strive to increase their internal capacities, including by means of having a dedicated budget for this purpose.

3. GENERIC ROLES OF A CENTRAL M&E UNIT IN A NATIONAL DEPARTMENT

An M&E unit in a national government department shall perform some or all of the following functions:

3.1 Development of a departmental monitoring framework

Department are expected to have a monitoring framework or plan which sets out what needs to be done by whom and when for the various aspects of monitoring described in section 3.2 to 3.7 below.

3.2 Monitoring of the sector

3.2.1 As mentioned in section 2 above, departments should collect and analyse data related to their sectors from other sources. Departments that are responsible for concurrent functions have to collect and analyse data from provincial and/or local governments as well.

- 3.2.2 The central M&E unit shall collect, coordinate, analyse, and present performance information and ensure that various branches develop and maintain data sources, and that they use data and analyses to improve their performance.
- 3.2.3 The central M&E unit shall coordinate and lead the annual MPAT self-assessment process, subsequent challenge (if any), report final results back to principals and top management, draft an annual MPAT improvement plan and ensure its placement on Exco's agenda for purposes of implementation monitoring.

3.3 Reporting against predetermined objectives in annual performance plans

- 3.3.1 Work with the planning unit (if the planning unit is a separate unit) to ensure that indicators and targets in the strategic plan and annual performance plan are SMART and in line with the National Treasury's Framework for Managing Programme Performance Information (FMPPPI).
- 3.3.2 Check that each branch of the department has adequate plans and business processes in place to collect the required information to report against each of the targets in the annual performance plan, and provide technical advice to branches in this regard where necessary.
- 3.3.3 Verify performance data produced by branches of the department in conjunction with Internal Audit to ensure that it meets the requirements of the FMPPPI and, where necessary, engage with branches to improve the quality of their performance data
- 3.3.4 Collect and collate branch quarterly and annual progress reports against measurable objectives and ensure that they are used in subsequent planning and budgeting.
- 3.3.5 Engage with the branches of the department to improve the quality of the branch progress reports against the predetermined objectives
- 3.3.6 Using branch inputs, compile whole-of-department quarterly and annual progress reports against predetermined objectives, including for the department's annual report
- 3.3.7 Coordinate with top management secretariats to discuss the draft whole-of-department quarterly and annual progress reports against predetermined objectives before they are finalised, and focus on areas where there is under-performance and recommend ways of addressing under-performance with the support and approval of the department's Director-General.

DPME has established a 'Planning Alignment Unit' to provide technical support to national and provincial departments in relation to departmental strategic plans, annual performance plans and quarterly reporting against these.

3.4 Reporting against Medium Term Strategic Framework (MTSF) outcomes (for departments which make substantial contributions to MTSF outcomes)

- 3.4.1 *Coordinating departments for Medium Term Strategic Framework (MTSF) outcomes*

- a) An outcome-coordinating department is responsible for producing quarterly progress reports against the outcome to Cabinet, and populating the Programme of Action (PoA) with regard to progress against the delivery agreement.
- b) This involves:
 - Ensuring that each department which contributes to the outcome is aware of their precise commitments and has translated these into measurable indicators and targets and incorporated these into their departmental programmes
 - Liaising with the planning units of all the contributing departments to ensure that each department's commitments to relevant delivery agreements are translated into appropriate indicators and targets in their APPs, and where relevant, plans and shareholder agreements for public entities
 - Timeously collecting information from contributing departments to prepare quarterly progress reports and capture data on the POA
 - Analysing information collected from contributing departments and preparing a quality outcome progress report for Cabinet
 - Liaising with DPME to obtain technical support to ensure that the above system works and that reports meet the requirements as approved by Cabinet
- c) The coordinating department should ideally use its M&E unit to coordinate outcomes reporting and not create a separate unit.

3.4.2 *Contributing departments for outcomes*

- a) Liaise with the planning unit (if a separate unit) within the department to ensure that the department's commitments to relevant delivery agreements are translated into appropriate indicators and targets in the department's APP
- b) Be the liaison point between the department and the M&E unit in the coordinating department with regard to making contributions to quarterly reports
- c) Provide the M&E unit in the coordinating department with quarterly progress information on all relevant indicators and targets timeously

3.5 **General reporting requirements**

Institutions such as Parliament and Chapter 9 organizations frequently request departments to provide reports. Another example is to report on the department's contribution to South Africa's international agreement commitments. Where such reports require the integration of inputs from various branches of the department, it is useful for the M&E unit to play an integrating role. However, where a report only requires input from one branch, the branch head should be responsible for producing the report. The reason for this is that branch officials are the most knowledgeable people about the work of the branch, and monitoring and reporting are management functions of all managers.

3.6 **Departmental monitoring**

- 3.6.1 Departments may have other monitoring programmes to be managed or coordinated by a central M&E unit. For example, a department which delivers services directly to the public (such as Home Affairs) may have a frontline service delivery monitoring programme or a turn-around programme

which involves the monitoring of a range of efficiency indicators, and which cuts across the various branches of the department. A department responsible for a concurrent function may be involved in various initiatives to monitor the performance of provincial counterparts, such as the national Department of Health is currently doing with regard to the facilities audit.

- 3.6.2 A department may wish to monitor other indicators in addition to those required for quarterly reports against the APP, Outcomes, or institutional operational plans. While individual branches may monitor these for their own purposes, a central M&E unit may need to use some of this data to be able to show top management or senior management what progress is occurring and where problems lie.

3.7 Citizen-Based Monitoring (CBM)

- 3.7.1 Cabinet approved the Framework for Strengthening Citizen-Government Partnerships for Monitoring Frontline Service Delivery (CBM framework). CBM is an initiative to strengthen government-wide citizen involvement in service delivery monitoring. In the first phase of the initiative, DPME conducted a pilot with selected service delivery departments to derive key practical lessons and approaches for bringing citizen voice into routine monitoring of government services.

- 3.7.2 The second part of the CBM framework outlines various roles and responsibilities of different aspects of the government systems. For sector departments, the CBM framework indicates that those that deliver services directly to the public have a responsibility to incorporate CBM into their performance monitoring and management and ensure that:

- a) M&E frameworks are updated to include facilitating citizen monitoring and using the information for decision-making;
- b) Management effectively encourages independent data sources as a necessary management strategy and budgets for this;
- c) Relevant staff are trained on CBM approaches and on the use of CBM results as a source of evidence in decision-making; and
- d) All CBM systems and tools have feedback mechanisms to ensure that in addition to information received from citizens, there is also accountability and responsiveness to citizens.

3.8 Monitoring of public entities

- 3.8.1 Management of a public entity can include functions such as negotiating shareholder contracts and processing applications in terms of various clauses of the PFMA.

- 3.8.2 Departments with public entities falling under them have monitoring responsibilities. The central M&E Unit, or a separate public entity management unit, or units, or a branch shall monitor the public entities. Monitoring shall involve the review of entity reports; including quarterly reports and any self-initiated studies such as entity evaluations and other speciality reports. Findings should be collected and collated by the central M&E unit and periodically reported to Exco.

- 3.8.3 Departments should encourage their respective public entities to set up their own M&E units.

3.9 Rationalising monitoring and reporting

- 3.9.1 Ideally, a department's administrative data systems should provide departmental monitoring data to meet various reporting requirements. However, some administrative data systems are under-developed and consequently each new reporting requirement leads to the development of a new and separate data collection and monitoring system. This can result in overlapping, duplicate and parallel data collection and monitoring systems in a department. One of the key roles of a central M&E unit in a department should be to work with branch managers to avoid this.
- 3.9.2 There is a general problem in government of overlapping and duplicate reporting requirements. A wide range of bodies request departments to provide the same information in different reporting formats. One of the roles of a central M&E unit in a department shall be to liaise with the bodies requesting the reports to negotiate rationalisation for different bodies to use the same reports, to reduce the reporting burden on the department.

3.10 Development of departmental information management systems

- 3.10.1 The central M&E unit should work with branch managers to improve the quality of information management systems in the department, or to establish them. 'Information management systems' includes data flows, business processes for managing data, and roles and responsibilities for capturing and managing data, in addition to IT systems. They should as far as possible, be integrated with management systems used to manage work in the department. For example, managers in the Department of Home Affairs regularly collect and analyse productivity data for various units in the department that manufactures ID books and passports. Managers thus take actions to improve productivity. The same information produces departmental reports on the production of ID books and passports.
- 3.10.2 The central M&E unit should be involved in the procurement of IT systems for monitoring and reporting. Branch managers with the support of the IT unit and supply chain management unit lead the procurement process of the department. The M&E unit should also be involved to avoid duplication of effort and lack of integration among various information systems in the department and sector.

3.11 Evaluations

- 3.11.1 Liaise with programme managers to identify the programmes which should be evaluated, and ensure that they are budgeted for
- 3.11.2 Carry out design evaluations on behalf of the department to check that programme and project designs are robust and likely to succeed
- 3.11.3 Coordinate the development of a three-year departmental evaluation plan
- 3.11.4 Liaise with programme managers to suggest evaluations to be included in the annual and three-year national evaluation plan

- 3.11.5 Work with DPME on evaluations included in the National Evaluation Plan, as well as for technical support on other evaluations
- 3.11.6 Facilitate and coordinate the implementation of evaluations in the department, provide technical support to the programme managers commissioning evaluations, and ensure that evaluations are of good quality
- 3.11.7 Ensure the development and monitoring of improvement plans based on evaluation results, and incorporate findings in subsequent planning and budget processes. For those in the National Evaluation Plan, reports will be provided to DPME for submission to Cabinet
- 3.11.8 Ensure that suitable communication materials are developed and disseminated to different audiences based on evaluation results
- 3.11.9 Maintain a departmental website where all evaluations conducted by the department are accessible (unless there are security concerns), including the data and metadata.

4. ORGANISATIONAL DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

4.1 The relationship between planning and M&E

- 4.1.1 Planning, monitoring and evaluation inextricably link to each other. It is not possible to monitor and evaluate effectively if there are no clear plans against which to monitor and evaluate.
- 4.1.2 When establishing an M&E unit in a department, there is the risk of alienating the M&E function from the planning function. For example, a department may have a planning unit that is responsible for the production of the strategic plan and the annual performance plan, and a separate unit that is responsible for M&E, including the preparation of parts of the annual report that deal with reporting of performance against the measurable objectives in the annual performance plan. This is likely to result in problems if the two units do not work closely together. There is also the risk that the planning unit may formulate indicators and targets in the annual performance plan in such a way that the M&E unit struggles to measure them. In addition, the planning unit might include indicators for which the department does not have the necessary information management systems in place.
- 4.1.3 The ultimate purpose of carrying out M&E is to inform improvements in performance and service delivery. It is therefore imperative that the planning processes incorporate results of M&E. In addition, there is the risk of creating a separate M&E unit without close links to the planning unit, which might lead to planning processes not incorporating the results of M&E.
- 4.1.4 Departments should consider the links between planning and M&E carefully when designing their organisational structures. For small departments, it may be best to locate the planning and M&E functions together in one unit. For larger departments that require larger planning and M&E staff complements, it may be necessary to have separate planning and M&E units. However, a recommendation is to integrate the work of planning and M&E if the functions are located in separate units. For example, departments might consider having the planning and M&E units report directly to the same person in the DG's Office or the DG himself or herself.

4.2 The relationship between M&E and implementation support

Some national departments, such as those responsible for concurrent functions, need to provide implementation support to other bodies such as their provincial counterparts. The results of monitoring and evaluation will inform this support. It may therefore be logical to place the personnel providing such support in the same unit as the M&E personnel or in a unit that reports to the same supervisor.

4.3 Location of the M&E unit

4.3.1 A central M&E unit is likely to function more effectively if it is located in the office of the Director General, and if the Director General personally manages the work of this unit. This is due to the roles of the M&E unit to (i) integrate the reports of various branches, (ii) provide a quality control function over these reports, and (iii) provide evidence to inform strategic planning and budgeting processes, and (iv) gain the protection of the DG so as to be able to produce reports and evaluations without fear or favour. If a department has an organisational design where a Chief Operating Officer (COO) is in charge of the other Deputy Director Generals, then an M&E unit may also function effectively if it is located directly under the COO. If the COO does not oversee the work of other DDG's, then it is best if the central M&E unit reports directly to the DG.

4.3.2 In addition to the centralised departmental M&E unit, which should be under the DG or in some cases the COO (if other DDG's report to the COO), some departments might need to create specialised monitoring units within individual branches, especially in cases where the department has a very strong monitoring role to play in the sector or transversally in government. An example is the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) branch of the Department of Public Works (DPW) that focuses on monitoring and reporting related to the implementation of the EPWP by other national departments, provinces and municipalities. There is therefore a motivation for the EPWP branch to have a specialised monitoring unit that is separate from the central M&E unit in DPW, given that the central M&E unit in DPW focuses on the work of DPW itself.

4.3.3 Evaluation is a form of research, and if a department has a research function, it would make sense to link these two functions.

4.4 M&E Competencies

If the M&E unit is to be effective, senior officials in a central M&E unit need to be fully informed and up to date on the policy and strategy issues of the department concerned.

In order to carry out the functions described above, an M&E unit should include staff with the following competencies:

- a) M&E leadership – able to develop and communicate the importance of M&E
- b) Ability to formulate SMART indicators
- c) Have good knowledge and understanding of the theory of results-based management and the application of results-based management
- d) Knowledge of the theory of monitoring and in a large department. One official should at least have solid grounding in evaluation and research

- e) Information management, data analysis and reporting skills (being able to produce quality reports timeously)
- f) Ability to clearly articulate and communicate key messages about the work and performance of the organisation at the highest levels
- g) Coordination, interpersonal and facilitation skills, to work effectively with and through different branches, as well as with external stakeholders
- h) Familiarity with the whole-of-government planning, budgeting, M&E and reporting cycles, and the role of oversight bodies (e.g. Parliament and Chapter 9 institutions)
- i) A strong grasp of compliance issues [e.g. Public Finance Management Act (PFMA), Public Service Act (PSA), Treasury Regulations, Public Service Regulations (PSR), Framework for Managing Programme Performance Information (FMPPi), Auditor General Act] and policy environment [FMPPi, National Evaluation Policy Frameworks, Government-Wide Monitoring and Evaluation Systems (GWMES)].
- j) A good understanding of the context of departmental planning, including the Medium Term Strategic Framework (MTSF), Programme of Action (PoA).

DPME has developed an Evaluation Competency Framework for government staff who commission evaluations (programme staff as well as M&E staff) and for evaluators.

5. CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1 In principle, all managers should undertake the management functions of monitoring and reporting. The creation of central M&E units in departments should not negate this fundamental principle.
- 5.2 Evaluation is a specialised function that requires highly skilled human resources with research skills.
- 5.3 A central M&E unit can be an important resource for a department. Managers, especially top management should look for synergies amongst research, analysis, monitoring, evaluations, socio-economic impact assessments, and reporting.
- 5.4 A central M&E unit in a department should carry out certain generic roles and responsibilities. This unit may take many forms. In some departments, it may be a unit under the Director General, who may also be responsible for departmental planning, while in other departments it may be a unit responsible for both M&E and planning. Key principles are that the unit should report directly to the DG (or to the COO if the COO supervises the other DDGs), and that the work of the M&E unit should be closely integrated with the work of the departmental planning unit.
- 5.5 M&E will not add value if departmental strategic and annual performance plans, as well as plans for implementation programmes, are not of good quality. If the plans do not correctly identify the strategic interventions required to improve the performance and service delivery of the department or sector, then an emphasis on M&E will not add much value. It could result in good quality measurement of the wrong things.

Signed



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