



THE PRESIDENCY
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

DEPARTMENT: PERFORMANCE MONITORING AND EVALUATION

DPME Guideline No 3.1.4

Improving the Operation of M&E in Offices of the Premier

Created 27 July 2011

Updated 14 March 2013

Addressed to	Head of M&E, Office of the Premier
Purpose	The purpose of this guideline is to give guidance to Offices of the Premier on operating an M&E system (the how).
Reference documents	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. This guideline draws from the following document: <i>The Role of Offices of the Premier in Government-wide M&E: A good practice guide.</i> 2. Links to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy Framework of the Government-Wide Monitoring and Evaluation System • DPME Guideline No 3.1.3: <i>Content Focus of Offices of the Premier in M&E</i>
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1 Introduction

- 1.1 This guideline summarises some of the roles the Office of the Premier needs to play in relation to improving the operation of monitoring and evaluation (the how).

2 Creating a demand for M&E – changing the M&E culture

- 2.1 Offices of the Premier need to strive to promote a **culture of M&E**, learning and continuous improvement, including a common understanding of what M&E is and what it intends to achieve. This is not only for M&E practitioners but far more important are the managers who need to integrate M&E and learning into their management practice.

Action point:

- 2.1.1 Line managers should be sensitized to the need for M&E and the use of M&E findings through training, capacity building, M&E forums and other modalities. DPME is also facilitating a national M&E learning network to stimulate sharing around M&E issues. PALAMA now has a course on M&E for managers

- 2.2 It is important that M&E units produce work of **high quality** so these reports influence executive decision-making in regard to policy formulation, refinement and alignment across the three spheres of government. The Outcomes Approach – with its focus on regular, systematic monitoring of progress – will assist in this regard. In addition, M&E should also feed into the MTEF process and the allocation of resources within all three spheres of government. On an operational level, M&E should feed into the ongoing management of service delivery (e.g. through option analysis of various service delivery modalities). Finally M&E should also play a role in legislative oversight. Much of the rest of this practice note discusses aspects about improving quality.
- 2.3 Any M&E strategy should consider ways in which departments and other institutions – as well as individual managers - can be **incentivised** to implement M&E systems and use M&E findings.

Action points:

- 2.3.1 Some tools that can be used include: high level endorsement from provincial EXCOs and departmental top management, awareness raising workshops to demystify M&E and alleviate anxieties about the introduction of M&E, awareness of the need for compliance with non-financial reporting regulations in order to prepare departments for audits of non-financial information, relating M&E to the budget proposal process, requiring performance exception reporting where there is material under-performance, benchmarking M&E progress of a public sector institution against other similar institutions.
- 2.3.2 Incentives can be provided for individual managers including: specifically mentioning M&E responsibilities of line managers, having awards, prizes or other forms of acknowledgement in recognition of good practices-. The performance agreements of line managers should include competences in the analysis and use of evidence, including the use of M&E information.

3 Improving the quality of data

- 3.1 The ability of Offices of the Premier to conduct effective M&E will depend fundamentally on the credibility and robustness of the underlying M&E systems within individual provincial departments and within municipalities. Instead of concentrating efforts on setting up elaborate and often parallel reporting structures, Offices of the Premier could play a support role in leading **improvement in the quality of data** emanating from systems in the provincial line departments and the municipalities.
- 3.2 Much of the effort of Premiers' Offices to date has been ensuring that information is provided timeously and in the correct reporting formats. There has been less emphasis on **verification** of the information (not surprisingly given binding human resource capacity and budget constraints).

Action points:

- 3.2.1 Premiers' Offices need to devise a five year plan for the implementation of the South African Statistics Quality Assurance Framework whereby departmental administrative data can be accredited as official statistics.
- 3.2.2 Premiers' Offices should monitor provincial Performance Information Plans and their implementation to ensure consistent progress in data quality.
- 3.2.3 The National Treasury Handbook on Performance Information in addition offers guidance on linking data system audits to internal audit processes. Offices of the Premier can play an important role in monitoring provincial Performance Information Plans and the steps taken by departments to improve the quality of data. This should be a short to medium term goal of the various Premiers' Offices.

4 Avoiding duplication of reporting

- 4.1 There is often a degree of **duplication** where provincial departments report virtually the same information multiple times to the Premiers' Offices, the provincial Treasury, the National Treasury and the relevant national sector department.

Action points:

- 4.1.1 Premiers' Offices should conduct an audit of all existing reporting requirements by provincial line departments. This should include reporting under the Outcomes Delivery Agreements.
- 4.1.2 Based on this audit, duplicate reporting should be eliminated, and mechanisms should be put in place to share information.

5 Accessing data sets for concurrent functions and Treasury

- 5.1 National departments which are concurrent functions (e.g. health, education, housing etc) often have fairly sophisticated systems for gathering and analysing non-financial data from departments. Often Offices of the Premier do not have access to these systems. **National concurrent data** – including reporting on the priority national outcomes - should be made easily accessible to Offices of the Premier. This would prevent duplicate reporting lines and enable the Premier’s Office to focus more on the analysis of the data. While the national sector departments would be conducting analyses to compare performance of a particular sector across provinces, the Offices of the Premier would be using data from each sector department in order to get a province-wide view.

Action points:

- 5.1.1 The Presidency should facilitate access by Premiers’ Offices to national Department data, particularly data generated in the implementation of the Outcomes Approach.
- 5.1.2 Premiers’ Offices should, as far as possible, prioritise the analysis of these data sets, rather than requesting the same data directly from departments.

- 5.3 Provincial departments are collectively already reporting on more than 500 indicators to the National Treasury. Most Premiers’ Offices have not fully utilised this rich source of data. Accessing and analysing **National Treasury datasets** would therefore be useful.

Action points:

- 5.3.1 Provincial Treasury should share data with Offices of the Premier for use in provincial monitoring.

6 Strengthening spatial aspects

- 6.1 Many of the Provincial Growth and Development Strategies do not really have a strong spatial dimension. This inhibits spatial integration with the IDPs of municipalities and could compromise, for instance, the “massification” of infrastructure projects or seamless integrated service delivery. **Greater spatial referencing** could contribute to assessing the geographic impact of national, provincial and local government on particular locations, especially those classified as poor and under-served.

Action point:

- 6.1.1 Premier’s Offices should improve the spatial referencing of the PGDS.
- 6.1.2 Premier’s Offices should use a GIS to analyse the spatial impact of policies, service delivery implementation and public resource allocation on communities and other key stakeholder groups in the province.

7 Moving from data gathering to analysis and communication

- 7.1 To some degree, Premiers’ Offices are already engaged in the analysis of monthly and quarterly data within the fiscal year, as well as longer-term reviews. Nevertheless, given the newness of some of the reporting requirements, a lot of effort has been aimed at getting the relevant line departments to report on time, and on the completeness and accuracy of reporting. Access to data, is however, not equivalent to useful information. The **data must be analysed** in order to give rise to M&E insight, and the learnings and implications for improving performance. For example these include quarterly reports on outcomes focus on learnings, action needed and decisions. It is also essential to prioritise the **communication of the messages** in user-friendly ways for policy-makers, as well as other audiences.
- 7.2 As these reporting procedures become institutionalised, increasing attention can be paid to the detailed analysis of departments’ work and their progress in relation to cluster objectives. Greater

emphasis on analysis will require enhanced skills, and therefore a greater emphasis on capacity development and recruitment of specialised skills.

Action points:

- 7.2.1 In the planning of provincial M&E units, ensure emphasis is placed on allocating time and people on the analysis of data, not just data collection, and ensuring that learnings and action points arising from M&E data are drawn out.
- 7.2.2 It is also important to ensure that the key messages for different audiences emerging from the M&E findings are drawn out for communication.

8 Capacity building and technical support

- 8.1 Considerable attention needs to be given to capacitating officials in local and provincial government on the technical and statistical dimensions of monitoring, evaluation and indicator development as well as skills on communication and knowledge management. Furthermore, a clear understanding of local government is needed in provincial departments.
- 8.2 The level of technical support and training in rolling out M&E systems to date is often perceived as being insufficient. Provinces which have conducted training needs analysis have highlighted the need not only for elementary M&E training in the basic concepts and principles, but also more advanced training in the design of baselines and indicator selection, analytical and statistical skills.
- 8.3 Training should speak to the varying needs of M&E practitioners, M&E managers and M&E users (line managers). Training standards should be assessed on the basis of the PALAMA M&E curriculum to ensure the creation of the necessary skills.
- 8.4 There are very few technical specialists, even internationally, who have hands-on experience in rolling out government-wide M&E systems. DPME, through partnerships with multi-lateral organisations, could play an important role in sourcing technical expertise and making this available to the relevant provinces.
- 8.5 The National Treasury's *Handbook on Programme Performance Information* also provides guidance and tools to assist departments in developing suitable indicators, improving data systems and ensuring that the information is used effectively in departmental management. Assistance by the Technical Assistance Unit in the National Treasury is available on request, but requires an evaluation of needs by the Unit. Premiers' Offices can potentially deepen the assistance available across the public sector by supporting provincial departments in their application of the tools and techniques offered in the Handbook.

Action points:

- 8.5.1 Premier's Office should conduct a training needs assessment not only for their internal M&E component, but in relation to M&E for the provincial government.
- 8.5.2 The PALAMA curriculum for M&E training should be built into the province's capacity building strategy.
- 8.5.3 The guidance offered by the National Treasury *Handbook on Programme Performance Information* is another source for the development of indicators and strengthening of data generation and use systems and should also be factored into provincial capacity building strategies.
- 8.5.4 The capacity building strategy should outline the arrangements for training provision both within the Premier's Office' M&E unit and for line departments, including budget arrangements.
- 8.5.5 Offices of the Premier are encouraged to participate actively in the national M&E Learning Network convened by DPME (more information can be found on the Presidency: DPME website <http://www.thepresidency-dpme.gov.za>).

9 Future acquisition of electronic systems

- 9.1 There is no single standard when it comes to IT systems and much work is needed to generate generic user requirements; systems design that can be used by provinces; and systems integration with existing government systems. Where a province is contemplating the acquisition of an electronic system to support province-wide M&E, it is important that the user specification is able to ensure that the system meets the requirements of the GWM&E Policy Framework. Integration of this system with administrative systems within line departments is critical to prevent the proliferation of stand-alone systems and prevent duplicate capture of data.

Action points:

- 9.1.1 The user specifications of all new electronic systems should include compliance with DPME's *Policy Framework for the Role of Offices of the Premier in M&E*, National Treasury's *Programme Performance Information Framework* and Statistics South Africa's *South African Statistics Quality Assurance Framework*.
- 9.1.2 In order to ensure systems integration, inter-operability of data and information and elimination of duplicate data capture, each proposed system should deal with these issues in a systems integration master plan.

Signed



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Date: 29 March 2013

