



planning, monitoring & evaluation

Department:
Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Report on the Assessment of Government Evaluations

Evaluation Title:	Evaluation of the Integrated Strategy for the Promotion of Entrepreneurship and Small Enterprises (ISPESE)
Evaluation Number:	615
Start Date:	Tuesday, 06 December 2016
Completion Date:	Friday, 09 March 2018
Period of Evaluation:	2016-2018
Submitted:	Wednesday, 02 May 2018 by Lerato Shai
Approved:	Thursday, 03 May 2018 by Cara Hartley

Evaluation Details

Evaluation Title:	Evaluation of the Integrated Strategy for the Promotion of Entrepreneurship and Small Enterprises (ISPESE)
Evaluation Number:	615
Evaluation Completion Date:	Friday, 09 March 2018
Created:	Monday, 26 March 2018 by Cara Hartley
Submitted:	Wednesday, 02 May 2018 by Lerato Shai
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Period of Evaluation:	2016-2018
Known Cost:	R 2300000.00
Known Cost Type:	Estimate
Initiated By:	Department of Small Business Development
Initiated By Internal:	Yes
Service Providers:	DNA Economics; RebelGroup Advisory Southern Africa; SBP
Undertaken By Internal:	No

Assessors

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Assessment Documents

Document Name:	Document Type:	Added By:	Added On:
SMME Strategy Full Report V12 12032018 STC.pdf	Evaluation report	Cara Hartley	Monday, 26 March 2018
Evaluation of the ISPESE Summary Report 12032018 STC.pdf	Evaluation report	Cara Hartley	Monday, 26 March 2018
1. Signed Briefing Session Minutes 17 01 19.pdf	Minutes or notes of meetings with stakeholders	Lerato Shai	Monday, 16 April 2018
2. Signed SteerCo Minutes to approve TORs.pdf	Minutes or notes of meetings with stakeholders	Lerato Shai	Monday, 16 April 2018
3. TOR SMME Strategy Evaluation 16 10 23 Final Clean.pdf	Terms of Reference (ToR) for the evaluation	Lerato Shai	Monday, 16 April 2018
4. Draft SMME SLA Part 1 16 12 14.docx	A letter of engagement or contractual agreement with the service provider	Lerato Shai	Monday, 16 April 2018
5. Final signed minutes of inception meeting 081216.pdf	Minutes or notes of meetings with stakeholders	Lerato Shai	Tuesday, 17 April 2018
5.1 SMME Strategy Evaluation Inception Report Final 18122016 STC.doc	An inception report	Lerato Shai	Tuesday, 17 April 2018
6. SMME Policy Evaluation Framework V3 03042017 STC.docx	Any other relevant documentation pertaining to the evaluation process	Lerato Shai	Tuesday, 17 April 2018

7. SMME Policy Evaluation Framework V4 15052017 STC.docx	Any other relevant documentation pertaining to the evaluation process	Lerato Shai	Tuesday, 17 April 2018
8. Draft TORs for Steering Committee SMMEs Strategy Eval 16 10 17.docx	Any other relevant documentation pertaining to the evaluation process	Lerato Shai	Tuesday, 17 April 2018
9. Consultations Progress Report v02 25072017 STC.docx	Progress reports	Lerato Shai	Tuesday, 17 April 2018
10. Focus Group Guide V06 12092017 STC.docx	Assessment tools	Lerato Shai	Tuesday, 17 April 2018
11. Piloting Report v03 15062017 STC.docx	Assessment Report at Moderation	Lerato Shai	Tuesday, 17 April 2018
11.1 Sample List Update SMME Evaluation v02 04082917 STC.docx	Assessment tools	Lerato Shai	Tuesday, 17 April 2018
11.2 SMME Policy Evaluation Sample List V1 05042017 STC.docx	Assessment tools	Lerato Shai	Tuesday, 17 April 2018
12. South Africa Literature and Document Review SMME Evaluation 15052017 STC.docx	Assessment Report at Moderation	Lerato Shai	Tuesday, 17 April 2018
14. SMME Policy Country Benchmarking V1 28022017 STC.docx	Assessment Report at Moderation	Lerato Shai	Tuesday, 17 April 2018
15. SMME Policy Country Benchmarking V2 10032017 STC.docx	Assessment Report at Moderation	Lerato Shai	Tuesday, 17 April 2018
16. SMME Provincial Case Studies_Consolidated_ V2 03112017 STC.docx	Assessment Report at Moderation	Lerato Shai	Tuesday, 17 April 2018
17. SMME Strategy Evaluation Interview Guides V02 05042017 MM.docx	Assessment tools	Lerato Shai	Tuesday, 17 April 2018
18. Notes of Project Team Meeting 17 05 23.docx	Minutes or notes of meetings with stakeholders	Lerato Shai	Tuesday, 17 April 2018
18.1 161018 SteerCom Attendance Reg.pdf	Any other relevant documentation pertaining to the evaluation process	Lerato Shai	Tuesday, 17 April 2018
19. Approved Steercom minutes 28 March 2018.pdf	Minutes or notes of meetings with stakeholders	Lerato Shai	Tuesday, 17 April 2018
20. Evaluation of the ISPESE Summary Report 12032018 STC.pdf	Evaluation report	Lerato Shai	Tuesday, 17 April 2018
21. ISPESE Evaluation Long Presentation 19032018.pptx	Presentations of evaluation findings and recommendations	Lerato Shai	Tuesday, 17 April 2018
22. SMME Strategy Consultations - Emerging Themes - 11082017 STC.docx	Assessment Report at Moderation	Lerato Shai	Tuesday, 17 April 2018
23. SMME Strategy Full Report V12 12032018 STC.pdf	Evaluation report	Lerato Shai	Tuesday, 17 April 2018
24. ISPESE Cluster Presentation.pptx	Presentations of evaluation findings and recommendations	Lerato Shai	Tuesday, 17 April 2018
Assessment Report at Moderation.pdf	Assessment Report at Moderation	Cara Hartley	Thursday, 26 April 2018

Quality Assessment Summary

With an overall score of 4.06, this quality assessment has found the evaluation to be of a high standard. The evaluation's overall score is particularly driven by a strong planning and design phase which scored 4.16. This score is a combination of an exceptional TOR that provided clear guidance to potential bidders and ensured adequate resourcing through clear articulation of expectations for the evaluation and good project management to ensure agreement on the evaluation plan.

The implementation phase was completed successfully, largely carrying out the evaluation plan as intended. This phase scored 4.30 which is mainly the result of a good working relationship between all the stakeholders involved that facilitated relatively smooth data collection with minor delays and quick responses to the change in scope for the provincial case studies.

The lowest scoring phase, although still of a high standard, is the reporting phase with a score of 3.78. This phase's strengths include the completeness of the report, the robustness of the findings and the suitability of the recommendations. The accessibility of the report is the weakest aspect and is largely due to incorrect references to figures in the report that take away from the readability.

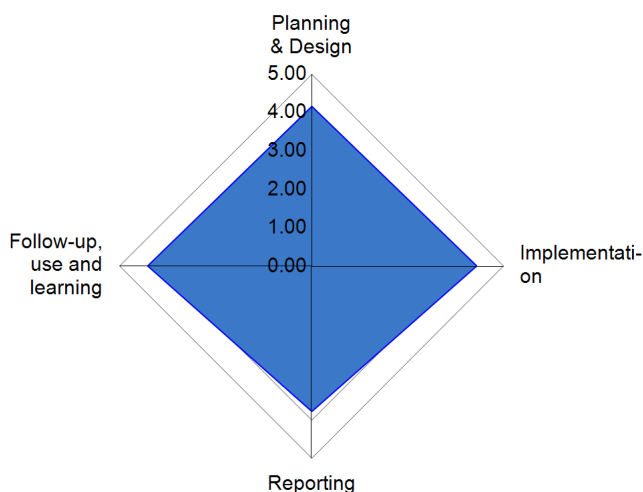
The follow-up, use and learning phase is of a similarly high standard with a score of 4.27. Most notable is that the evaluation is the first in the DPME's history to be successfully completed within a financial year while at the same time creating significant conceptual and symbolic value for the stakeholders who participated. Key reasons for this achievement include exceptional project management, a collaborative working relationship among stakeholders and genuine stakeholder buy in into the process and recognition of the importance of the evaluation. The stakeholders interviewed all expressed confidence that the insights and learning gained from the evaluation will shape future policy, playing a particularly important role in the revision of the strategy.

Quality Assessment Scores

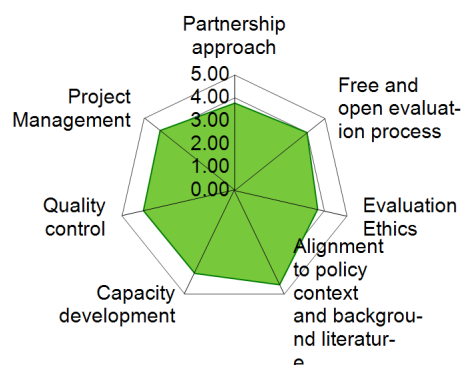
Phase of Evaluation	Score
Planning & Design	4.16
Implementation	4.30
Reporting	3.78
Follow-up, use and learning	4.27
Total	4.06

Overarching Consideration	Score
Partnership approach	3.76
Free and open evaluation process	4.00
Evaluation Ethics	3.70
Alignment to policy context and background literature	4.53
Capacity development	4.00
Quality control	4.04
Project Management	4.14
Total	4.06

Scores: Phases of Evaluation



Scores: Overarching Considerations



Phase of Evaluation	Area of Evaluation	Score
Planning & Design	Quality of the TOR	4.13
Planning & Design	Adequacy of resourcing	4.57
Planning & Design	Appropriateness of the evaluation design and methodology	4.00
Planning & Design	Project management (Planning phase)	4.00
Implementation	Evaluation ethics and independence	4.00
Implementation	Participation and M&E skills development	4.00
Implementation	Methodological integrity	4.42
Implementation	Project management (Implementation phase)	4.50
Reporting	Completeness of the evaluation report	4.00
Reporting	Accessibility of content	3.00
Reporting	Robustness of findings	3.85
Reporting	Strength of conclusions	4.33
Reporting	Suitability of recommendations	3.50
Reporting	Acknowledgement of ethical considerations	3.57
Follow-up, use and learning	Resource utilisation	5.00
Follow-up, use and learning	Evaluation use	4.08
Total	Total	4.06

Planning & Design

Quality of the TOR

Standard: The evaluation was guided by a well-structured and complete TOR or a well-structured and complete internal evaluation proposal (e.g. Background, Purpose, Evaluation Questions, Design & Methodology, Deliverables & Timeframes, Resource requirements, Intended Audience & Utilisation, etc).

Comment and Analysis: The evaluation was guided by an exceptional TOR that was comprehensive and provided clear guidance on the purpose, key questions, scope, design and methodology. The background maps the legislative background leading up to the development of the strategy, the challenges that government is facing with supporting small business development and the role of the Department of Small Business Development (DBSD). The purpose is concise and clear and it is followed by a comprehensive list of evaluation questions. In addition to the scope and time frames, the TOR also clarifies what is not in the scope, in particular noting that an assessment of the impact of the strategy is not a requirement of the evaluation. A proposed design is outlined however, where required the TOR notes that service providers are expected to give proposals on approach and methodology. The evaluation plan and milestones clearly lay out what is expected of the service provider and when. Management arrangements, inclusive of a detailed description of the role of the steering committee and peer reviewers, set clear expectations for bidders. Lastly, the TOR describes the resource requirements and gives guidance on the structure of the proposal. The evaluator noted that the scope was well defined which made it quite easy to respond to and budget against.

Rating: 5: The evaluation was guided by a well-structured and complete TOR or internal evaluation proposal of exceptional quality, exhaustive and thorough in content

Standard: The approach and type of evaluation was suited to the purpose and scope of the evaluation TOR (or an internal evaluation proposal)

Comment and Analysis: The evaluation was both a design and implementation evaluation of a national strategy with a participatory approach. The TOR makes it explicit that the evaluation is not intended to attribute cause to the strategy but rather assess whether the outcomes have been achieved. This is due to the difficulty of assigning specific interventions to the strategy over the period of analysis. Hence, a design and implementation evaluation are well-suited to the focus on the effectiveness of the strategy and whether the anticipated outcomes have been achieved. The participatory approach ensures the involvement of all key stakeholders throughout all the phases of the evaluation.

Rating: 4: The approach and type of the evaluation was well-suited to the purpose and scope of the evaluation TOR

Standard: The TOR (or an internal evaluation proposal) identified the intended users of the evaluation and their information needs

Comment and Analysis: The TOR lists the intended users and differentiates them by their expected use of the findings. A table is provided with 9 users and a brief description of how they are expected to use the findings. However, it does not state the information needs of each user.

Rating: 3: The TOR (or an internal evaluation proposal) identified the intended users of the evaluation and their information needs

Standard:	Key stakeholders were involved in the scoping of the TOR and choosing the purpose of the evaluation
Comment and Analysis:	The minutes of a steering committee held to approve the TOR prior to publication indicates full involvement of the steering committee in the scoping of the TOR and crafting of the purpose. This meeting was attended by all key stakeholders, namely DSBD, DPME, StatsSA, National Treasury and the Small Enterprise Development Agency (SEDA). The minutes indicate balanced discussion from all the stakeholders that were present in raising key issues regarding the scope, the governance structure and possible limitations to data collection. The interview with the evaluation manager confirmed that these minutes are an accurate depiction of the involvement of stakeholders during the planning stages.
Rating:	4: A wider range of stakeholders (i.e. beyond government stakeholders) were meaningfully involved in the scoping of the TOR and choosing the purpose of the evaluation

Adequacy of resourcing

Standard:	The evaluation was adequately resourced in terms of time and budget allocated
Comment and Analysis:	The evaluation was planned to take place over a 13 month period starting on 1 December 2016 and ending on 15 December 2017. The budget for the project was R2.5 million (R1 million from DPME and R1.5 million from DSBD). The time and budget ensured that the evaluation was well resourced and could realistically achieve the intended outcomes. There was some room for flexibility in terms of time but not in terms of budget.
Rating:	4: The evaluation was well resourced in terms of the time and budget allocated (i.e. there was some room for flexibility)
Standard:	The team conducting the evaluation was adequately resourced in terms of staffing and skills sets
Comment and Analysis:	The evaluation team comprised three key experts and 7 senior and junior researchers from a collaboration between DNA Economics, Rebel and SBP with DNA Economics as the lead project manager, Rebel providing international evaluation expertise and increased the capacity, and SBP were included as key sector specialists. The evaluation manager noted that together the three companies' skill sets complemented each other to competently address the requirements of the evaluation. The programme manager noted that DNA Economics and Rebel provided the requisite evaluation skills and mentioned that SBP is very well known in the sector for their understanding of small business development.
Rating:	5: The staffing and skills sets required for the evaluation were ideal for the evaluation purpose, sector and incorporated high quality international expertise

Appropriateness of the evaluation design and methodology

Standard:	There was explicit reference to the intervention logic or the theory of change of the evaluand in the planning of the evaluation
Comment and Analysis:	The TOR for the evaluation requires the service provider to review the existing theory of change and revise it. Moreover, the evaluation manager noted in the interview that the key evaluation questions were drawn from the theory of change and the methodology was then created to respond to these questions. The final inception meeting minutes indicate a discussion of the theory of change and agreement on the expected deliverables. Finally, the final inception report provides a narrative of the theory of change together with a graphic showing the indicative theory of change.
Rating:	4: The intervention logic or theory of change meaningfully informed and shaped the TOR or the Inception Report, including a visual representation

Standard:	The planned methodology was appropriate to the questions being asked
Comment and Analysis:	The planned methodology was well suited to the evaluation questions including a mix and synthesis of quantitative and qualitative approaches. It included a literature and document review, stakeholder interviews, initial theory of change, benchmarking studies, data analysis, provincial SMME case studies, a final theory of change, reporting and recommendations. The inception report lists all the evaluation questions that will be answered with each key component. For each research phase, the plan describes the approach and available data to answer the questions e.g. it provides an initial list of interviewees, possible literature and recommends countries for the benchmarking exercise based on an initial scan of the literature.
Rating:	4: The planned methodology was well suited to the questions being asked and considered the data available

Standard:	The sampling planned was appropriate and adequate given the focus and purpose of evaluation
Comment and Analysis:	The planned sampling was appropriate and adequate for the purpose of the evaluation. Samples were required for the stakeholder interviews, the benchmarking studies and the provincial case studies. The inception report only states that interviews will be with senior officials and provides an initial list of consultations to be undertaken but does not explicitly describe how sampling will be undertaken for the stakeholder interviews. However, the evaluator noted that specific stakeholders that played a role in the design of the strategy were targeted for interviews. A list of criteria is provided for the countries that will be included in the benchmarking studies namely population size, development, evidence of substantive SMME policy framework and government preferences. Lastly, the inception report proposes three criteria (location of the business, the type of support received and the sector) to inform which SMMEs will be chosen for inclusion in each province but does not specify how the provinces will be selected. This is, however, outlined in the TOR.
Rating:	4: The sampling planned was good given the focus, purpose and context of the evaluation

Project management (Planning phase)

Standard:	The inception phase was used to develop a common agreement on how the evaluation would be implemented
Comment and Analysis:	The final inception meeting minutes indicate common agreement on how the evaluation would be implemented. The service provider, DPME and the DSBD were in attendance and discussed the expectations for the inception phase and amendments to the proposal submitted by the service provider. Each of the key deliverables were discussed in turn and agreement reached on what is required. A key point of departure that needed to be resolved was how the National Development Plan was to be incorporated in the evaluation. It was agreed to include a question regarding how well the strategy aligns to the NDP. Additional amendments included among others, DSBD keeping the service provider informed about the 2016/17 annual review of SMMEs so that they can input into the questionnaire design and make use of the data, three workshops and additional information on how the outcomes of the strategy can be assessed.
Rating:	4: The inception phase was used to good effect to achieve a common agreement and understanding of how the evaluation would be implemented

Implementation

Evaluation ethics and independence

Standard: Where data was gathered in contexts where ethical sensitivity is high, informed consent, assurances of confidentiality and appropriate clearance were achieved; e.g. through an ethics review board, in evaluation involving minors, institutions where access usually requires ethical or bureaucratic clearance

Comment and Analysis: The data was gathered in a context of low ethical sensitivity. The evaluator noted that the evaluation team ensured that ethical processes were followed in all the interviews and focus group sessions. The purpose of the sessions was clearly explained and participants were informed that their personal information would be kept confidential and their names removed from any recordings and transcripts. The pilot report also notes the process followed in the focus groups sessions including a note to the interviewer to highlight confidentiality of responses.

Rating: 4: There was clear evidence that ethical protocols were observed for most data collection instances including: informed consent agreements; confidentiality; documenting and storing data notes, recordings or transcripts; Where data was gathered in contexts where ethical sensitivity is high, appropriate clearance was achieved through an ethics review board; e.g. in evaluation involving minors, institutions where access usually requires ethical or bureaucratic clearance, and situations where assurances of confidentiality was offered to participants

Standard: Where external, the evaluation team was able to work without significant interference and given access to existing data and information sources

Comment and Analysis: The evaluator noted that the evaluation went very smoothly and the team could work without any interference. The evaluation manager did an excellent job of laying down a good working relationship upfront. All communication went through the DPME and they were able to mediate the relationship between the DSBD and the service provider to ensure that there was no interference and all required data was provided to the team.

Rating: 4: The evaluation team was able to work freely without interference and was given access to all sought data and information sources

Participation and M&E skills development

Standard: Key stakeholders were involved in the evaluation through a formalised mechanism or institutional arrangement

Comment and Analysis: The key stakeholders were involved in the evaluation through a steering committee and a technical committee. The evaluation manager noted that the stakeholders were very involved in both committees and based on their observations, participation was good. The programme manager noted that there were strict deadlines and good communication from stakeholders which facilitated compliance on providing feedback on deliverables.

Rating: 4: Key stakeholders were regularly, actively involved in the evaluation and contributed through a formalised mechanism or institutional arrangement (e.g. a steering committee or reference group)

Standard:	Where appropriate, an element of capacity building of partners responsible for the evaluand and evaluators was incorporated into the evaluation process
Comment and Analysis:	Two main capacity development initiatives are cited in the final report. The first was the involvement of a DPME staff member in the country case studies and the other was assistance provided by the service provider to an official at DSBD conducting their own evaluation. The former only happened to a limited extent and comprised the employee's assistance with preparing the country selection. The evaluation team was then informed that due to capacity limitations at DPME, the employee was being diverted to other internal projects. The latter included the DSBD official's participation in meetings with the evaluation team on the design of the data instruments, the evaluator's input into the official's own questionnaires and data collection process. Additionally, it is noteworthy that the evaluation was preceded by a design clinic hosted by DPME to build the capacity of the commissioning department (DSBD) in evaluation practices and techniques prior to the evaluation. This process included sessions to develop the theory of change and formulate the purpose of the evaluation.
Rating:	4: Structured capacity building of evaluators and partners responsible for the evaluand was incorporated into the evaluation process

Methodological integrity

Standard:	A literature review was developed which informed the analytical framework and findings of the evaluation
Comment and Analysis:	The evaluation manager noted that the literature review was very helpful and it was particularly useful that the evaluation team referred back to the actual strategy to inform the evaluation matrix and provide context for the rest of the evaluation. The evaluator noted that the collaboration with SBP meant that the team had ready access to all the relevant literature and data on SMMEs due to the company's expert knowledge of the sector. Their input facilitated a comprehensive literature review which was used to inform the theory of change, benchmarking study and the data collection.
Rating:	5: An excellent literature review was developed covering international and national literature, a diversity of view points, which informed the analytical framework and interpretation of issues relevant to the findings
Standard:	The methods employed in the process of the evaluation were consistent with those planned and implemented adequately
Comment and Analysis:	The methods employed in the process of the evaluation were consistent with those planned with the exception of the data collection for the provincial case studies. The planned approach set out in the TOR and agreed upon at inception was to conduct 24 case studies of SMMEs. However, during the data collection one of the respondents critiqued the approach to collect data from SMMEs in an evaluation of the implementation of a strategy noting that this would not be beneficial. Instead, the respondent recommended investigating the institutional arrangements within the provinces to understand how the strategy was implemented. This suggestion was presented to and discussed in the steering committee and all stakeholders agreed that the focus should change as recommended. All other methods were implemented to an adequate standard.
Rating:	3: The methods employed in the process of the evaluation were consistent with those planned and implemented adequately

Standard:	A pilot of basic data collection instrumentation occurred prior to undertaking data collection and it was used to inform the research process
Comment and Analysis:	The evaluation team conducted both an internal and external pilot of the data collection instrument. After incorporating feedback from the steering committee and peer reviewers on the draft instruments, the internal pilot was undertaken with two staff members that were not part of the evaluation team, one at DNA Economics and the other at SBP. The staff members had extensive knowledge of small business development in South Africa and could provide design and content feedback. The external pilot was conducted with staff members at the DSBD that could provide a policy perspective. The process led to revisions of the questionnaire such as a reduction of the number of questions from 38 to 31, improved clarity of some of the questions and removal of inappropriate questions. The questionnaire was also split into a government one and a non-government one. Lastly, the evaluation team recognised that there was an opportunity to meet with groups of respondents during regular government meetings. A shorter questionnaire was prepared and handed out at any meetings where a majority of key stakeholders would be present.
Rating:	5: All components of data collection instrumentation were piloted considering implications of the diversity of application (e.g. tools, representative sites, mediums, languages, etc) which allowed for further refinement of all data collection instrumentation and informed the research process to an excellent quality standard
Standard:	Data was collected from key stakeholders (e.g. implementers, governance structures, indirectly affected stakeholders) as data sources
Comment and Analysis:	The evaluation data collection plan included gathering data from key national and provincial government officials that were involved in the design and conceptualisation of the strategy, the private sector and SMMEs. National and provincial government officials were interviewed as key informants. SMMEs were included in focus group discussions with other stakeholders. The envisioned range of stakeholders in terms of type was accomplished, however a key change is the type of representation of SMMEs which were initially going to be included through 24 case studies and instead were interviewed as part of the parallel review by the DSBD which included interviews with approximately 1600 SMMEs. The service provider was provided with the data to include the findings in the evaluation.
Rating:	4: Data was collected from the intended key stakeholder groupings in line with the envisioned range and type of stakeholders (approx. 80-89% of intended)
Standard:	The methodology included engaging beneficiaries appropriately as a key source of data and information
Comment and Analysis:	The key beneficiaries of the strategy are SMMEs and they were thoroughly and meaningfully included as primary sources of data and information. They were included in two ways in the evaluation. The first was through the focus groups in the provincial case studies and the second was through incorporation of data from a parallel review by the DSBD. The service provider was given an opportunity to contribute five questions to the DSBD's annual review survey where data is collected from 1600 SMMEs across the country. These questions addressed the perspective of SMMEs on the implementation of the strategy.
Rating:	5: Beneficiaries were thoroughly and representatively included as the primary source of data amongst multiple sources of data and information (or if based on secondary data, includes data from beneficiaries and beneficiaries consulted on emerging findings and provide meaningful input to recommendations)

Project management (Implementation phase)

Standard:	The steering committee, technical working group and service provider worked together adequately to facilitate achievement of the objectives of the evaluation
Comment and Analysis:	The programme manager noted that the sessions were interactive with everyone actively involved. Moreover, their perception was that the various stakeholders understood the importance of the strategy and the evaluation. In terms of the relationship between the evaluation team and the rest of the stakeholders, the programme manager described it as very good and thought that the evaluation team was very accommodating even with requests that were not in the specifications. The evaluator noted that most of their meetings were with the technical committee which comprised DPME and DSBD and these were well attended and characterised by a collaborative working relationship. Lastly, the inception meeting and final steering committee minutes also suggest robust discussion and contribution in the meetings from stakeholders present.
Rating:	4: The steering committee, technical working group and service provider worked together in a flexible and constructive manner facilitating achievement of the objectives of the evaluation
Standard:	Support provided by the evaluation secretariat (e.g. the administrators responsible for the evaluation) facilitated achievement of the objectives of the evaluation (eg turnaround times, addressing problems, preparation for meetings etc)
Comment and Analysis:	The secretariat role was played by the DPME. The evaluator noted that from the evaluation team's perspective, the role was performed extremely well. There was consistency in reviewing the deliverable schedule and keeping it updated. All documents for meetings were prepared, printed and shared ahead of meetings where necessary. There is also evidence that beyond the administrative tasks, the DPME acted as gatekeeper between the DBSB and the service provider to ensure independence which was an important role. Moreover, they provided extensive support and feedback on all deliverables. The programme manager noted that the tools, templates and controls that they have in place are excellent and the DSBD has incorporated some of these in their own M&E processes.
Rating:	5: Excellent support was provided by the evaluation secretariat helping to ensure an effective evaluation

Reporting

Completeness of the evaluation report

Standard: The first draft evaluation report was of a sufficient quality to go to stakeholders and did not require major changes

Comment and Analysis: The evaluation manager noted that the draft report was of good quality and did not require major changes. It mainly required changes to ensure accessibility to a wider audience, formatting issues and clearly presenting some of the findings regarding whether the outcomes were achieved. The programme manager noted that they requested the evaluation team to clearly link recommendations to the findings that inform them. The first draft evaluation report underwent four revisions prior to finalisation inclusive of two versions of the summary report.

Rating: 4: A first draft of the evaluation report was of a good quality and required only minor changes prior to finalisation

Standard: The final evaluation report is well-structured and complete in terms of the following: executive summary; context of the development evaluation; evaluation purpose, questions and scope; methodology; findings and analysis; conclusions and recommendations

Comment and Analysis: The report is very well structured and includes a comprehensive executive summary, introduction, methodology, theory of change, policy review and an overview of SMME performance over the analysis period. This is followed by the benchmarking study, provincial case studies, key evaluation findings and an assessment of how the findings compared to the theory of change. The report ends with conclusions and a set of recommendations. Overall, the report flows well from each section to the next and guides the reader through the content.

Rating: 4: The final evaluation report is well-structured, complete and presents the following report components well: executive summary; context of the development evaluation; evaluation purpose, questions and scope; methodology; findings and analysis; conclusions and recommendations

Accessibility of content

Standard: The final evaluation report is user-friendly, written in accessible language and adequate for publication (e.g. adequate layout and consistent formatting; complete sentences and no widespread grammatical or typographical errors; consistency of style and writing conventions; levels of formality; references complete and consistent with cited references in reference list and vice versa; etc.)

Comment and Analysis: The accessibility of the report was one of the issues flagged by the steering committee during the review of the draft. This was addressed and led to a final report that is user friendly and written in an accessible language for a wider public audience. This is achieved through simple language, optimal formatting for readability, layout and good use of graphics to present information simply. References are consistent between in text citations and listed references. One crucial drawback is that a number of references to figures and tables within the text refer to the wrong object. It appears some of the figure and table numbering within the text were not updated following later revisions of the report.

Rating: 3: The final evaluation report is user-friendly, written in accessible language and adequate for sharing (e.g. some spelling, grammar or formatting mistakes but these do not seriously detract from the report)

Standard:	Figures, tables and appropriate conventions are used in presentation of data (e.g. use of appropriate statistical language; reporting of p-values where appropriate; not reporting statistically insignificant findings as significant; clarifying disaggregation categories in constructing percentages; not using quantitative language in reporting qualitative data, etc.) and are readily discernible to a reader familiar with data presentation conventions
Comment and Analysis:	The final report follows all appropriate conventions to present figures, tables and maps. However, the figure number is incorrect in some instances e.g. the first figure in the report is Figure 30. It makes use of a diversity of figures to draw the reader to key findings. All graphs include a source to reference the data source.
Rating:	3: Figures, tables and appropriate conventions are used in presentation of data and are readily discernible to a reader familiar with data presentation conventions

Robustness of findings

Standard:	Data analysis appears to have been executed to an adequate standard
Comment and Analysis:	The analysis of the data was three-fold: (1) analysis of existing secondary data to understand the performance of the SMME sector over the period of analysis, (2) analysis of interview data from the national and provincial consultations, (3) analysis of literature and data for the benchmarking study. All three analyses are executed to a good standard. The analysis on the performance of the SMME sector is comprehensive and covers key aspects of performance. The benchmarking study draws the key lessons from each country into a table and compares South Africa's practice against the lesson and rates how the country fares. The interview responses largely include comparing the differences in perception of different stakeholders on key issues related to the priorities of the strategy and its implementation.
Rating:	4: Data analysis appears to have been well executed for all datasets

Standard:	Findings are supported by evidence which is sufficiently and appropriately analysed to support the argument, integrating sources of data
Comment and Analysis:	The report does a good job of integrating the various sources of data used in the analysis to arrive at the key findings. The perception of key informants is balanced with information from government reports, national statistics and the experience in the provinces. The analysis underpinning the findings is well executed where required, and where it is directly cited from secondary sources, relevant data and sources are cited.
Rating:	4: The evidence gathered is well analysed, integrated and supports the argument in key sections of the report, without presenting data which are not used in the argument

Standard:	There is appropriate recognition and exploration of the possibility of alternative interpretations
Comment and Analysis:	There is evidence of good exploration of alternative interpretations in the report, with a number of instances where a different plausible explanation is provided e.g. alternative explanations for a trend observed from data on the reduction of informal activity are provided. Moreover, the programme manager noted that the findings were interrogated and explored alternative explanations where relevant in a working session with stakeholders.
Rating:	4: There is clear recognition of the possibility of alternative interpretations and these are concisely presented without detracting from other findings

Standard:	The report appears free of significant methodological and analytic flaws
Comment and Analysis:	The report is free of significant methodological and analytical flaws. Moreover, it lists that two peer reviewers were part of the evaluation to ensure methodological and analytical rigour. One peer reviewer was responsible for content while the other was primarily tasked with reviewing the methodology. The evaluator did note, however, that while comments were received from the reviewers, they could have been more involved in the evaluation.
Rating:	4: The report documents some of the methodological and analytical processes used to ensure that it is free of methodological and analytic flaws

Standard:	Limitations of all aspects of the methodology and findings are clearly articulated (e.g. limitations of scope or evaluation design, recommendation for additional research, data collection challenges, etc)
Comment and Analysis:	The report discusses the methodological and data collection limitations that arose from the fact that the evaluation was for a strategy and not a programme. From a design perspective, the lack of an assigned implementing agent is noted as a limitation to obtaining data on inputs and activities. Additionally, data gaps limited the assessment of the extent to which the strategy itself contributed to certain results. While the main limitations are listed, the report could be more comprehensive in distinguishing between different kinds of limitations.
Rating:	3: Limitations of all aspects of the methodology and findings are articulated

Strength of conclusions

Standard:	Conclusions are derived from evidence
Comment and Analysis:	The conclusions are well supported from the multiple sources of data analysed and presented using the project evaluation criteria. The overall achievement of outputs is summarised in a table and key reasons for the lack of achievement in some areas are drawn from the evidence presented and clearly outlined.
Rating:	4: Conclusions are derived from evidence and well supported by multiple sources of data that has been well analysed

Standard:	Conclusions address the original evaluation purpose and questions
Comment and Analysis:	The conclusions address the original evaluation purpose and questions well. The structure of the conclusion section is not presented in a question and answer format, but rather uses the project evaluation criteria of relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability to answer the five key evaluation questions presented in the methodology section of the report. A succinct summary of how well the strategy meets each criteria as suggested by the evidence provided addresses each of the original questions and the purpose of the evaluation.
Rating:	4: Conclusions address the original evaluation purpose and questions well

Standard:	Conclusions are drawn with explicit reference to the intervention logic or theory of change
Comment and Analysis:	The conclusions section of the report explicitly references the theory of change. It is also preceded by a dedicated section that assesses the strategy's alignment to various aspects of the theory of change i.e. assumptions, inputs, activities, strategic outputs and outcomes. The report concludes that overall, a number of assumptions did not hold and suggests an additional assumption highlighted by the evaluation. Some gaps are identified for inputs, however the report concludes that sufficient funding is available. Similarly, the a number of activities took place and a few outputs were delivered, however significant gaps are identified. Overall, a large number of outcomes are not realised as a result of the gaps in delivery of outputs. The discussion is accompanied by a useful visual representation of the theory of change that now includes small pie charts that indicate the degree of achievement of each item.
Rating:	5: The conclusions are exceptional in the manner that they provide a judgement on the intervention logic or theory of change and are clearly linked to design recommendations

Suitability of recommendations

Standard:	Recommendations are made in consultation with relevant government officials, stakeholders and sectoral experts
Comment and Analysis:	The evaluation team presented the draft findings at a stakeholder workshop which was reasonably well attended and included key members from the DSBD and DPME, however it did not include any beneficiary representatives. The team held back on developing recommendations and instead presented and interrogated the findings and used the session to jointly develop recommendations with all present. This was critical to ensure buy in from the future implementers.
Rating:	3: Recommendations are made in consultation with relevant government officials, stakeholders and sectoral experts
Standard:	Recommendations are useful- they are relevant, specific, feasible, affordable and acceptable
Comment and Analysis:	The recommendations are well articulated and easy to differentiate between different users. Ten recommendations are listed in the report; of these eight are for the DSBD, one for the Minister and another for the DPME. The programme manager noted that these were not challenged by the executive management team at the DSBD due to the appropriateness of the recommendations and alignment with findings from other studies undertaken by the department. The recommendations are specific to key problems identified in the findings and are feasible to implement. The programme manager noted that during the improvement plan workshop the recommendations were further aligned to the Department's mandate as stated in the annual plan and converted to action plans.
Rating:	4: Recommendations are well-formulated for use- they begin to differentiate by user and are relevant to the current policy context, specifically targeted, feasible to implement, affordable and acceptable to key stakeholders

Acknowledgement of ethical considerations

Standard: The full report documents procedures intended to ensure confidentiality and to secure informed consent where necessary (in some cases this is not needed - e.g. evaluation synthesis - in which case N/A should be recorded)

Comment and Analysis: The focus group guide in the appendix of the report documents the process followed to ensure that focus group participants are assured of confidentiality and are well informed about the purpose of the session. A similar account is not available for interviews, however the evaluator noted that it was also followed in the interviews. No informed consent forms were signed and as such, these are not included in the report.

Rating: 3: The full report documents some procedures intended to ensure confidentiality and to secure informed consent where necessary

Standard: There are no risks to participants or institutions in disseminating the evaluation report on a public website

Comment and Analysis: The evaluation manager and programme manager both noted that there are no known risks to disseminating the full report, however the report has to go through the formal process of approval in Cabinet prior to public release.

Rating: 4: There are no risks to participants or institutions in disseminating the original full evaluation report on a public website

Follow-up, use and learning

Resource utilisation

Standard:	The evaluation was completed within the planned timeframes and budget
Comment and Analysis:	<p>The budget for the evaluation was R2.5 million (R1 million from DPME and R1.5 million from DSBD). It was completed with a total cost of R2.3 million, coming in just under the original anticipated amount. An important and notable achievement of the evaluation is the fact that it is the first in DPME's evaluation history to be successfully completed within a financial year. Moreover, the evaluation was awarded well before the intended start date. The following reasons noted by the evaluator, evaluation and programme managers that explain the achievement:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">(1) The different role players played their part. The service provider was active, very cooperative and ready to solve problems.(2) The team from DSBD were enthusiastic and actively involved in the evaluation. The department viewed the evaluation as good evidence and a tool to inform their decisions.(3) The DG sent staff members to attend the evidence based policy course at UCT which provided an appreciation for the value of the exercise and led to buy in early on.(4) There was continuity of the project team at DSBD and it was the first time the team saw a project from inception to finalisation.(5) The service provider brought in the necessary expertise and did not attempt to do the evaluation themselves. <p>Overall, the exceptional project management and good collaboration on this evaluation facilitated deeper insight while creating value for all relevant stakeholders.</p>
Rating:	5: The evaluation was completed within the planned timeframes and budget with much more value and insight achieved as a result of exceptional project management

Evaluation use

Standard:	Results of the evaluation have been presented to relevant stakeholders
Comment and Analysis:	The results of the evaluation were presented to the steering committee, the management team at the DSBD and to the economic cluster. The stakeholders did not include relevant stakeholders outside of government.
Rating:	3: Results of the evaluation have been presented to relevant stakeholders in government
Standard:	A reflective process has been undertaken by the steering committee with the service provider (if no steering committee exists then by the evaluation management team or the involved department officials) to reflect on what could be done to strengthen future evaluations
Comment and Analysis:	A reflective process took place in the close out meeting of the project and stakeholders discussed how the evaluation went and noted key achievements and areas of improvement. The evaluation manager also requested written feedback that can be collated. To date only the service provider has submitted written feedback.
Rating:	4: A reflective process has been undertaken by the steering committee with the service provider and reflections on how to strengthen future evaluations have been documented

Standard:	The evaluation study is seen by interviewed stakeholders as having added significant symbolic value to the policy or programme (e.g. raised its profile)
Comment and Analysis:	The evaluation is perceived to have raised the profile and importance of the strategy among key stakeholders, particularly the staff at the DSBD and provincial stakeholders that took part in the data collection. There is recognition of the revised strategy as an important guiding document that provincial and local governments can align their programmes and initiatives to.
Rating:	4: The evaluation study is seen by interviewed stakeholders as being of substantial symbolic value to the policy or programme and has noticeably raised its profile amongst stakeholders

Standard:	The evaluation study is of conceptual value in understanding what has happened and possibly in shaping future policy and practice
Comment and Analysis:	In terms of the conceptual value, all interviewed stakeholders noted the importance of this evaluation as important evidence to support the DSBD's own ideas on future policy and interventions. The evaluation reinforced the need for evidence based policy making and there is strong indication that it will shape future policy, notably the revision of the strategy. An improvement plan workshop was hosted after concluding the evaluation and this process prioritised the recommendations from the evaluation, the annual review and other studies and developed clear actions.
Rating:	5: The evaluation study is of great conceptual value and all interviewed stakeholders expressed confidence that it would constructively shape policy and practice

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DNA Economics. 2017. Evaluation framework version 4

DNA Economics. 2017. Project team meeting notes

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List of Interviewees

Matthew Stern, Director, DNA Economics, Telephonic interview, 10 April 2018

Dominique Vincent, Director: Policy & Research, Department of Small Business Development, Telephonic interview. 12 April 2018

Jabu Mathe, Senior Evaluation Specialist, Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation, Telephonic interview. 9 April 2018