

2024 Review of the Quality and Use of DFAT Evaluations – management response

The 2024 Review of Quality and Use of DFAT Evaluations analyses the use of DFAT development evaluations during 2023-24. The [Performance of Australian Development Cooperation Report 2023-24](#) reported the key findings and case studies of the use of evaluations.

RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSE	ACTION PLAN
<p>1. The Development Evaluation and Assurance Section (EVS) broaden the definition of evaluation use in DFAT’s Development Evaluation Policy and share this definition throughout the agency. A broadened definition would take account of the range of ways programs can use evaluations in addition to the ways already noted in the policy. The broader definition could note the importance of evaluations for learning, signalling intentions and contributing to the field. The policy could also note the importance of using both the evaluation process and outputs.</p>	<p>Agree in principle.</p> <p>The Development Evaluation Policy describes evaluations as supporting learning, and as a policy, definitions are broad and high level. The DFAT Design and Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Standards and the International Development Programming Guide are the appropriate places to expand on the definition and provide additional examples of ways evaluations can be used.</p>	<p>During next reviews of IDPG and the Standards EVS will include more examples of use and the importance of using both the evaluation process and the outputs. During workshops and training PRD will refer to additional examples of use, including use of the evaluation process.</p>
<p>2. The Design and Program Advice Section (DPA) broaden the definition of evaluation quality in the DFAT Design, Monitoring and Evaluation Standards (Standard 10). The current focus in the evaluation standard is on technical quality of the final report. It would be useful to broaden Standard 10 to incorporate dimensions of evaluation process quality. This could include relevant elements such as “The evaluation process enabled positive engagement with key stakeholders; The evaluation process enabled the DFAT management team to learn; The evaluation process informed relevant DFAT decisions”.</p>	<p>Agree in principle.</p> <p>The Standards cover specific documents (Terms of Reference, Evaluation Plans, Evaluation Reports), not processes. This change would require detailed information about the evaluation process to be captured in the evaluation report in order to be assessed. A broadened definition is more appropriate to be applied in DFAT’s methodology for assessing the quality of evaluation reports (through the Review of Quality and Use of Evaluations and other assessments). DFAT reflections on the evaluation process and its positive impacts could also be included in management responses to evaluations.</p>	<p>During DFAT’s next review of the methodology used to assess the quality of evaluations, consideration will be given to broadening the assessment beyond just the technical quality of the report, to also include the quality of the process.</p> <p>EVS will encourage evaluation managers to consider including reflections on the process in management responses.</p>

RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSE	ACTION PLAN
<p>3. EVS to continue to promote “top tips” in procuring and managing an evaluation. EVS currently shares “top tips” with DFAT staff which emphasise the need to plan an evaluation early, signal early to the market and be flexible with timing. These tips help to ensure teams can find appropriately qualified and experienced evaluators and teams with complementary skill sets. It will be useful for EVS to continue to promote these tips to ensure broad reach of these messages especially given turnover in staffing.</p>	<p>Agree.</p>	<p>PRD will continue to convey top tips through workshops and training, P&Q Network events and Evaluation Helpdesk advice, especially at the planning stage. “Top tips” will be documented and made easily accessible to all PRD staff to draw on when delivering workshops, training and providing advice.</p>
<p>4. EVS to continue to support staff in aspects of their role as an evaluation manager that they may not have done before and are not familiar with. Staff noted they were least confident in reviewing evaluation plans and reports in relation to DFAT Standards. In contrast, staff were most confident in developing an evaluation ToR, managing an evaluation and working with evaluation implementing partners to meet DFAT standards. EVS can continue to provide and promote support available through the Evaluation Helpdesk in the areas of evaluation management that staff are least familiar with. EVS can also continue to convene Performance and Quality events on these issues where staff and external specialists can share experience and expertise.</p>	<p>Agree.</p>	<p>The next Review of Quality and Use of Evaluations will focus on evaluation plans, which will identify areas to target support, advice and guidance. EVS Helpdesk lead will review the current Helpdesk protocol to include proactive outreach to evaluation managers after the TORs stage. Targeted Evaluation Improvement Program (TEIP) Post Support Teams will include workshops on evaluation plans and reports to build staff confidence and capability in quality assuring these products. P&Q events on managing quality evaluations will include a strong focus on what a quality evaluation plan and report looks like.</p>

RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSE	ACTION PLAN
<p>5. EVS to provide examples to share with staff on evaluation findings communication and dissemination. Staff noted how useful evaluations can be in programming and policy development and decision-making. However, the evaluations were often not shared across teams or with other key stakeholders in the sector. It may be useful for EVS to share examples of effective communication and well disseminated reports. EVS can also provide advice regarding planning for findings communication and dissemination.</p>	<p>Agree.</p>	<p>EVS will explore the opportunities to collect this information through the reporting on Development Partnership Plans (which include a Consultation, Evaluation and Learning Plan). EVS will also capture examples identified opportunistically in the posts participating in the TEIP. Examples will be documented and made accessible for all EVS and EIS Support Contract staff to use during TEIP and Evaluation Helpdesk advice.</p>
<p>6. EVS to consider the revised definitions of quality and use in its annual review of evaluations. EVS undertakes annual reviews of evaluation quality and use. The revised definitions noted above can also be applied to future reviews. While this may reduce the comparability of results over time, the use of revised definitions would still be worthwhile.</p>	<p>Agree in principle. There are a range of considerations for DFAT to factor in when considering future annual reviews of evaluation quality and use, including comparability over time and findings from each review.</p>	<p>DFAT will take into account the findings from this review as it considers the approach to the next and subsequent annual reviews of evaluation quality and use. This includes reflecting whether expanded understandings of quality and use can be factored into the methodology alongside other considerations.</p>