

CLEAR-AA Seminar on Rapid Evaluation

9 June 2020

Introduce two areas

- What the guideline covers (W Cape version, DPME version, Benin version)
- What I learnt from the remote training



planning, monitoring
& evaluation

Department:
Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Evaluation Guideline No 4 How to undertake rapid evaluations

Created March 2019
Updated: 12 May 2020

Addressed to	Government departments and entities who are undertaking evaluations (programme staff and M&E staff) as well as evaluators of government programmes and policies.
Purpose	The purpose of this Guideline is to provide technical guidance on undertaking <i>rapid evaluations</i> – either internally, facilitated or undertaken externally
Policy reference	This guideline should be read in conjunction with DPME's National Evaluation Policy Framework 2020; the Guideline on Developing Evaluation terms of Reference and all DPME Evaluation Guidelines (available on the DPME website ¹).
Main changes in this version	
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Part A: Introduction to rapid evaluation

Guideline

Part A: Introduction to rapid evaluation


1. Introduction
2. Purpose of Guideline
3. What do we mean by Rapid Evaluations
4. Deciding when to use rapid evaluations (why consider, advantages/disads, which situations)
5. Deciding how to implement rapid evaluations
6. Summary of the main features of rapid evaluations

Part B: Designing a rapid evaluation

Structured as per DPME Guideline:

What do we mean by rapid

- 6-12 weeks to production of report
- How can we do it in 8 weeks and also do it better?
- How can we reduce the time on processes around (before and after)?
- How can we do with a predominantly internal team?
 - Is there a possibility of a facilitated evaluation?

Stage/activity	Time now (wks)	Time revised
Preparation		
Develop TORS and decide - internal/facilitated/outsourced	2 weeks	
Possibly establish Evaluation Steercomm and Technical Working Group	1 week	
Identify data available and ensure access, as well as key documents	2 weeks	
If part of team is external, recruit (full SCM process).	Min 2 m	
For internal team get permission for them to dedicate time (How the work gets allocated in a dept is a challenge; people often feel they don't have dedicated time to work on the evaluation specifically its additional)		
Inception		
Inception meeting	1 week	
Team works on revised proposal and detailed methodology, report structure	1 week	
Presentation of methodology to ESC and sign-off	1 week	
Steercomm ensures permission to interview, access to data etc	1 week	
Data collection		
Document review re policy background, programme	3 weeks	
Theory of change workshop	2 weeks	
Literature review if needed	4 weeks	
Plan for interviews/data collection	1 week	
Interviews/data collection	4/5 weeks	
Analysis	4 weeks	
Workshop emerging findings/recommendations	3 weeks	
Writing draft report 	2 weeks	
Reporting		
Submit draft report	1 week	
Comments back	4 weeks	
Finalise report (approval by email)	2 weeks	
Evaluation steering committee meetings (including attending workshops)	1 week	

Deciding when to use rapid evaluations

Why should you consider making it rapid (the whole process):

- Where contexts change (e.g. COVID-19) and ongoing feedback of findings ensures relevance and usefulness of the findings;
- Supporting learning and improvement as innovations/pilots are tested out in real world settings;
- Providing timely information about potential for scale up/roll out across the wider system;
- For practical considerations e.g. funders may not be able to commit resources for longer assessments.

Implementation model – internal, facilitated, outsourced

Advantages and disadvantages of REs

Advantages of rapid evaluation

Can be more timely, especially for emerging priorities which could not be planned for

Easier to undertake rapid evaluations with internal people as the time commitment is less

If conducted internally no supply chain process which speeds up the process, or limited if 'facilitated' option chosen.

Lower cost as they are quicker, but also if they use internal people

Possibly more flexibility to use innovative methods, as less constrained by generalisability

Advantages and disadvantages

Disadvantages

Less time on the process with stakeholders which can reduce ownership, as well as reduce feedback to improve quality

Less time on data collection, reducing robustness and ability to draw inferences on wider application – so generally less suitable for more than small or electronic surveys

If undertaken internally:

- Needs internal people to allocate dedicated time
- Needs sufficient evaluation/research capacity internally
- If undertaken internally can be less objective, or more easily dismissed by senior management
- Quality can also be compromised if internal capacity (for analysis, report-writing, etc.) is weak.

Can feel rushed, and stakeholders feel they have not been consulted

Can be less time for learning, as methods and tools have to be applied quickly and correctly. Little time to learn new approaches.

Can be reduction in quality, as fewer quality control measures, analysis may have to be happening during data collection etc.

Situations favouring more robust (longer) evaluations

Situation favours	Examples?
<p>Where you need to be very sure that the picture is correct:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where the programme or policy is very large and you need a very clear picture of benefits and how it is working; • Where the implications of the policy/ programme is critical and will affect peoples lives and communities at large; • Where much is at stake, or there is a lot of contention about the programme or policy so it is key that the result can't be challenged. 	<p>Macro economic policy of W Cape and country PSP/CASP/Foster Care NSNP, School Feeding Curriculum, Teacher Training Very complex, interdependencies, multiple stakeholders – eg Justice System Value systems – eg CSG, VAWC, drug abuse</p>
<p>Where you can anticipate and plan for the decision points by scheduling the evaluation well in time</p>	<p>Mid-term and endterm evaluations of programmes and policies, eg EPWP</p>

Situations favouring more rapid evaluations

Situation favours	Example?
Where realtime feedback is needed	COVID-19, disasters
Where you have to get the results in 2-3 months	COVID-19 Disasters, Confed Cup for World Cup
Where the primary purpose is formative to feed-in to ongoing policy and planning processes	Pressure to scale-up Social Relief of Distress Grant
For organizational learning and problem solving	Food parcels scheme (realtime monitoring) People working from home
Where the evaluation budget is very limited	DOTP
Where focusing on narrower topics and/or specific geographical areas	

Ensuring robustness and speed

- How can we ensure robustness of the results?
 - Representivity to be able to make inferences from results (external validity)
 - Triangulation:
 - Comparing different sources/questions to ensure that getting consistent results
 - Integrating evidence from sources
 - Contradictory information – check on data sources (dig deeper)
- Make sure got key stakeholders eg for interviews
- Make sure have a 360 degree picture
- Use of expert panels

Purpose

- The purpose of rapid evaluations is similar to that of any evaluation - what is it that we want to understand about the intervention? However it usually has a stronger formative side (for learning), and also is likely to more specific in focus.

Typical questions	Type	Rapid evaluation purpose
What is the current situation and root cause of the problem?	Diagnostic	Works as a purpose if there is enough existing data (eg evaluations) to draw from. If not focus on specific province
Is the logic of the intervention design robust and likely to work?	Design	Works. An evaluation focusing specifically on design can be quite rapid.
Is the intervention being implemented as specified (and in some cases are the outcomes being achieved), and why?	Implementation	Works. However the number of data points will be more limited. Many rapid evaluations are likely to be around whether implementation is working or not and why.
How have beneficiaries' lives changed as a result of the intervention?	Impact	Not easy. Could do a theory-based evaluation for a small geographic area as an exploratory study.
What are the costs in relation to the benefits? Is the programme providing value for money?	Economic	Can be done. Need to to access good data on benefits/ effectiveness. Can do estimate of effectiveness from specific geographical areas but generalisability limited.
What is the evidence from all evaluations related to the topic in question?	Evaluation synthesis	Works. Synthesis is good method for rapid evaluations as can then use existing evaluations and focus interviews etc on how to strengthen.

Evaluation questions

- Typically *rapid evaluations* have a more limited set of evaluation questions in comparison to bigger evaluations.
- These questions are linked to the purpose of the evaluation, and emphasise establishing what the *results* or *performance* of policy/programme/strategy delivery has been, or to make urgent improvements because there is already evidence that there are/may be obvious problems.
- These can then inform key strategic decisions needed relatively soon.

Scope

- Usually smaller and more limited in comparison with full-scale evaluations.
- As with DPME's Guideline on TORs consider:
 - the time period;
 - intervention components to be covered (may be limited to most critical);
 - geographic and institutional coverage of the evaluation (again may be limited);
 - sector and thematic areas (again may be limited); and
 - clarify what is outside the scope of this particular evaluation and should not be considered.
- Groups work on the scope for their evaluation (till break at 10.30)
- Report back at 10.40

The course

Objectives of the course

By the end of the training participants understand the difference between rapid and normal evaluations, and have prepared the focus of their rapid evaluations, the approach and methodology. They should be ready to finalise the research instruments and then to start organising the research activities.

- Note not just focusing on the immediate task but in preparation for possible future evaluations
- Key topics include:
 - Some theoretical background on rapid evaluation, and where it differs from more rigorous evaluations
 - Developing an appropriate purpose, evaluation questions, scope for a rapid evaluation
 - Developing the evaluation report structure
 - Developing a methodology matrix for the tools needed to answer the questions
 - Developing the detailed activity schedule to implement the evaluation
 - Started developing the set of instruments that will be needed (we can't finish this in 3 days)

Additional requests

- how to do a document review
- Structure of report

Some organisational points

- Mute microphones except during discussions
- Raise questions in chat
- Keep video on during discussions (helps to keep it interactive)
- Take the breaks – difficult to concentrate otherwise
- Groups have been set up and invitations sent in parallel so you can dip in and out of these groups. A DOTP person is the host to check everyone has joined, and that you break on time. Make sure someone is capturing and sharing on screen
- Although plenary contact is am – we have booked till 15.00 for you to do group work on Tuesday and Wednesday which you feed back the next day
- Please take notes of improvements – I am learning how to run training virtually and any suggestions very welcome – and I will ask for these at the end

Participants (in theory)

- Mix of M&E staff plus departmental staff who will actually do the evaluation (hence it is important to know the topic).
- It assumes they have a reasonable knowledge of evaluations and research tools (like interviewing, using secondary data).
- The juniors should have a degree and some familiarity with research methods

Preparation

- Participants have *read the guideline*
- The *topic* for the evaluation is identified and agreed (if you can avoid an impact question, much more difficult for a rapid evaluation);
- Identified who the *users* of the evaluation will be (could be clients of the intervention, actors involved in the intervention, ‘owners’ of the programme who can block its operation, or others interested in the intervention) and how they will use the evaluation. Decide which of these need to be part of the training process as they should participate in the evaluation, or which might need to be part of a steering committee to oversee the evaluation (which might only meet twice for a rapid evaluation)
- Ensure that the *people who will participate* in the evaluation are agreed prior, so they have approval to participate in the training;
- Identified the *constraints* for each evaluation that will be planned in terms of:
 - Time (when does at least draft report have to be ready with findings and recommendations)
 - Numbers and research/evaluation expertise of internal staff who can work on
 - Budget (so what external resources can be allocated)

Preparation (2)

- Decided on the *implementation model* – internal/facilitated/outsourced. This has implications for whether a supply chain process will be needed, and if so what type;
- If part of the team is external, *recruit*. If a facilitated model is used, some system of having a panel of individuals who can facilitate evaluations may be appropriate. If outsourcing, for speed again a panel may be needed;
- For internal team get permission from their supervisors for them to dedicate time to this assignment. Realistically this may be at 50% of time for seniors, but during the data collection weeks it would need to be 100% for juniors or doing this model internally is not realistic.
- *Identifying data available* that cover the key performance indicators, assembling this or ensuring access from relevant departments, as well as key documents, so that this does not delay the evaluation;
- Consider whether an *evaluation steering committee* and Technical Working Group is needed and composition and role (discussed further in 6.1);

Course structure

Session	Day 1 Understanding rapid evaluation	Day 2 Developing the design	Day 3 Developing the research plan
8.30	Introduction to the course and participants Introduction to rapid evaluation	Recap Feedback on focus of the evaluations and discussion Developing scope	Recap Defining the methods Defining the deliverables Introduction to scheduling
	9.50-10.00 Break	10.30-10.40 Break	10.45 Break
12.30	Deciding when to use rapid evaluations Deciding how to implement rapid evaluations 11.20-11.30 Break	Share on scope Developing the research design Methods Introduction to the research matrix as way to develop research instruments Sample	Groups work on activities, schedule and milestones Developing the action plan Document review Checkout Closing
	Ensuring robustness and speed Introducing the focus of the evaluation Checkout		
	12.30-13.00 Lunch	12.30-13.00 Lunch	13.00 Lunch
13.00-15.00	Refining the focus of the evaluation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purpose • Evaluation questions • Users and stakeholders 	Developing the research matrix and methods	

Conclusions on course

- On Teams – had parallel invitation for previously allocated breakout groups so people could switch from plenary to groups
- Only 10 people, but could see all of them which was nice
- The morning mostly plenary and pm group work worked – they had to report back the following day
- Having breaks about every hour worked, plus some group work in am too – kept people active and involved
- Managed to do most but not all of the content for face to face
- Gives us a powerful tool for providing remote support, bringing in different voices as location doesn't matter – but needs good internet connection
- So we can move to much more blended model, some face to face where build relationship, ongoing support from local partner and remote support