Process and Outcome Evaluation Quality Assurance (QA) Tool (TPG22-22)

Initiative details

Name and brief description:	
Evaluation type and purpose (e.g., process or outcome evaluation):	

Actual cost[1] (or current estimated total cost):		Initial estimated total cost (from ex-ante analysis):	
Initiative commencement date:		Initiative completion date (estimated if ongoing):	

Initiative status (e.g. ongoing[2] or complete[3])	

Assessment details

Date of assessment:	
Assessor's name (or team name) & agency:	
Peer reviewer:	
If an evaluation has been previously been assessed, key changes from last assessment:?	

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[1] Estimated total cost includes lifetime nominal cost, capital and recurrent.

[2] Ongoing: An initiative in which has ongoing funding will continue to be implemented until a certain date.

[3] Complete: An initiative in which has fully implemented and funding allocation has been complete.

Assessor Instructions

What is the purpose of this QA tool?

To provide preparers and reviewers with a consistent structure and standard to review and communicate advice on evaluations. It provides information on key issues to consider when reviewing evaluations based on the Evaluation Policy and Guidelines (TPG22-22).

This QA tool may be used to review a process evaluation or outcome evaluation. A process evaluation examines initiative implementation and delivery. It focuses on the inputs, activities, and outputs of an initiative. An outcome evaluation examines if, to what extent, and how an initiative is leading to intended outcomes. For economic evaluations, please use the Ex-post Cost-Benefit Analysis QA Tool.

Who are the intended users of the QA tool?

The tool is designed to support analysts from NSW Treasury, NSW Government agencies (particularly, central evaluation units) and external evaluators to constructively review if an evaluation aligns with NSW Treasury's evaluations guidelines and standards.

How does categorising work in the QA tools?

1. Provide overall recommendations for the process and outcome evaluation, categorising each recommendation as "Critical" or "Important".

    a. **Critical** recommendations: address issues that must be fixed for the evaluation to provide reliable information.
    b. **Important** recommendations: will improve the reliability of the evaluation in a meaningful way when implemented. Addressing important recommendations will improve the reliability of the information presented.
    c. Additional suggestions that don't meet the criteria for either Critical or Important can be listed under "Other comments" in Overall Recommendations and Findings.

2. Select Overall Finding based on overall recommendations. Overall Finding is one of:
    a. "All Recommendations Addressed": no Critical or Important recs require action.
    b. "No Critical Recommendations Outstanding": no Critical recs require action, but one or more Important recs do require action.
    c. "Critical Recommendations Outstanding": one or more Critical recs require action.

3. Step-by-step review of the evaluation provides more detail on the process behind the reviewer's conclusions.

We note that there are contractual limitations if not all recommendations can be met. They can instead be used for lessons learnt or its at the discretion of the evaluation manager to reconsider the scope of the evaluation.

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What to look for		Findings
Step 1: Define the evaluation purpose, scope, and timeframe		
Critical • Has the evaluation purpose, scope and timeframe been defined? • Have relevant affected stakeholders been engaged in defining the evaluation purpose, scope and timeframe? **Important** • Has any variation in objective and initiative scope from the ex-ante (business case) analysis and the evaluation plan (where available) been clearly explained? Additional resources include Evaluation Workbook VII. Example evaluation report template	*Critical issues:* • *XX* *Important Issues:* •	*Recommendations and lessons learnt:*

What to look for		Findings
Step 2: Evaluation Design and Framework		
Critical • Is the chosen evaluation design (process or outcome) appropriate for the evaluation purpose? • Have limitations of the evaluation design been discussed and addressed, where possible? • Is there a well-defined logic model that incorporates a theory of change, outlining the casual relationship between the initiative's objectives, inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes, and benefits? • Are key evaluation questions (KEQs) explicitly defined for the chosen design? For more information on logic models and theory of change, refer to Evaluation Workbook I. Foundations of evaluation	*Critical issues:* • *Important issues:* •	• *Recommendations and reasoning [categorise by critical or important]:*

What to look for		Findings
Step 3: Establish Counterfactual and Assess Options		

Critical questions
• ***[Outcome evaluation only]*** Has a counterfactual been established? For outcome evaluations:
    ○ Was an experimental or quasi experimental design appropriately applied to establish a control group?
    ○ If a non-experimental design was used, does it explain how the logical counterfactual was estimated?
 	
Outcome evaluations may refer to Technical note: Outcome evaluation design
 	
Important questions
• ***[Outcome evaluation only]*** What key options could have been implemented to achieve outcomes with greater efficiency or effectiveness?
• ***[Process evaluation only]*** Could there have been better methods of implementation or delivery that could have achieved the intended outputs with less inputs?
• Are there better options going forward, given latest developments, for similar projects in the future? These options may not have been available or possible for this initiative at the time.
• For interim evaluations, should the initiative continue with the preferred option or proceed with an alternative option?
	Critical issues:
	•
	
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	Important issues:
	•
	
	Recommendations and reasoning [categorise by critical or important]:	

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Step 4: Quality of Evidence		
Critical • Have potential sources of bias in each data source been identified and addressed? **Important** • Has triangulation of data sources been undertaken to improve robustness of evaluation findings? Additional resources include Technical note: Evidence in Evaluation	*Critical issues:* • Important issues *Recommendations and reasoning [categorise by critical or important]:*	

Step 5: Sampling Strategy		
Critical • Is the sampling strategy aligned with the chosen evaluation design? o For e.g., RCT should ensure participants had an equal chance of being included. In quasi experimental designs, was the selection of the comparison group controlled for key characteristics. • Does the sampling strategy consider potential sources of bias or limitations in different data sources from Step 3. *Quality of Evidence*? **Important** • Did the study have sufficient statistical power to draw reasonable conclusions? E.g., a power analysis may be conducted to determine the minimum sample size required to detect a meaningful effect	*Critical issues:* • *Important issues:* •	*Recommendations and reasoning [categorise by critical or important]:*

• How does the sampling strategy account for diversity within the targeted beneficiaries of the initiative? • Was potential attrition (i.e., drop outs) or non-response addressed in the sampling strategy to ensure the representativeness of the final sample? Additional resources include Technical note: Sampling Strategy		
Step 6: Data Collection		
Critical • Are data collection methods consistent with the evaluation plan, ensuring that information gathered directly addresses KEQs? **Important** • Were strategies for minimising data collection bias implemented? Bias reduction strategies, such as training for data collectors and pilot testing may be considered. • How is data integrity and confidentiality maintained during data collection and reporting?	*Critical issues:* • *Important issues:*	*Recommendations and reasoning [categorise by critical or important]:*
Step 7: Analysis and Interpretation		
Critical • Has distributional analysis been performed to assess whether the target cohort was reached, and the initiative is responding to community needs? Has it been determined to what extent the target audience was	*Critical issues:* • *Important issues:*	*Recommendations and reasoning [categorise by critical or important]:*

reached and whether the initiative is responding to community needs? • **[Outcome Evaluation only]** Has attribution analysis been conducted to establish causation in the observed data? If full attribution can not be established, have evaluators transparently reported the limitations and discounted results accordingly? **Important** • **[Outcome Evaluation only]** Is the interpretation of outcomes consistent with the defined evaluation questions?		
Step 8: Report results and key findings in executive summary format		
Critical Does a clear and concise executive summary include: • A comparison between ex-ante forecasts and ex-post results, with an explanation of any observed divergence? • A summary of the evaluation design and key findings • Factors that may have impacted the results? • Limitations in the evaluation and key assumptions made which may impact the results. • Insight into the relative effectiveness of alternative options to inform future decisions? • Summarise lessons learnt to formulate actionable recommendations?	*Critical issues:* • *Important issues:*	

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Overall Recommendations and Finding

Overall Finding	*Select one of:* All Recommendations Addressed / No Critical Recommendations Outstanding / Critical Recommendations Outstanding
Critical recs	*List critical recommendations here (addresses issues that must be fixed for the Evaluation to provide reliable information to decision-makers):* •
Important recs	*List important recommendations here (will improve the quality of the Evaluation in a meaningful way when implemented):* •
Other comments	*If needed, include additional comments here:* •

Final Action Steps for Evaluation Review	Responsible
Highest level within the organisation that the Evaluation recommendations have been noted/reviewed/endorses the evaluation review findings.	
The person in the organisation that will be responsible for implementing a response to the recommendations.	