

STANDARDS FOR DEVAL EVALUATIONS

Introduction

The overall objective of the German Institute for Development Evaluation (DEval) is to increase the effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of development cooperation. On the way to achieving these goals, DEval conducts scientifically sound and policy-relevant evaluation work. In this process, high-quality evaluations are based on standards, their verifiability and comparability as well as a professional understanding of the work of evaluators. In the policy field of development cooperation, DEval operates at the nexus between politics, science and implementation practice.

DEval evaluation standards are embedded in existing standards and guidelines, above all the standards of the German Evaluation Society (DeGEval) from 2016 and the quality standards for development evaluation of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) from 2010, as well as the guidelines of the German Research Foundation (DFG) for safeguarding good scientific practice from 2013.

The special organisational placement of DEval as an independent evaluation institute in the policy field of development cooperation make the formulation and implementation of own standards worthwhile. Distinctive features include the central importance of the identification of policy-relevant evaluation items, the participation of stakeholders in the evaluation process, independence, integrity, the implementation of institutional learning processes as well as the replicability of evaluation results.

The standards for DEval evaluations are ambitious minimum standards that should apply in principle to all DEval evaluations. Specific areas of tension between individual principles are openly discussed and explained. DEval evaluation standards are

periodically tested and refined. As regards content, DEval evaluation standards are organised according to the criteria of utility (U); evaluability (E); fairness (F); independence and integrity (I); accuracy, scientific rigour and comprehensibility (A); as well as comparability (C).

Utility

U1 Politically relevant evaluation objects

The identification of relevant evaluation objects lays the foundation stone for utilisation-focussed evaluation.

U2 Target audience and stakeholders

The identification of the relevant target audience and stakeholders serves to promote the acceptance and utility of an evaluation. A thorough identification ensures that all relevant individuals and groups are adequately informed, consulted and involved from the beginning.

U3 Participation of target audience and stakeholders

A participatory evaluation process serves to take into consideration the interests and information needs of the target audience and stakeholders of the evaluation and promotes evaluation support by the target audience and participating groups and individuals.

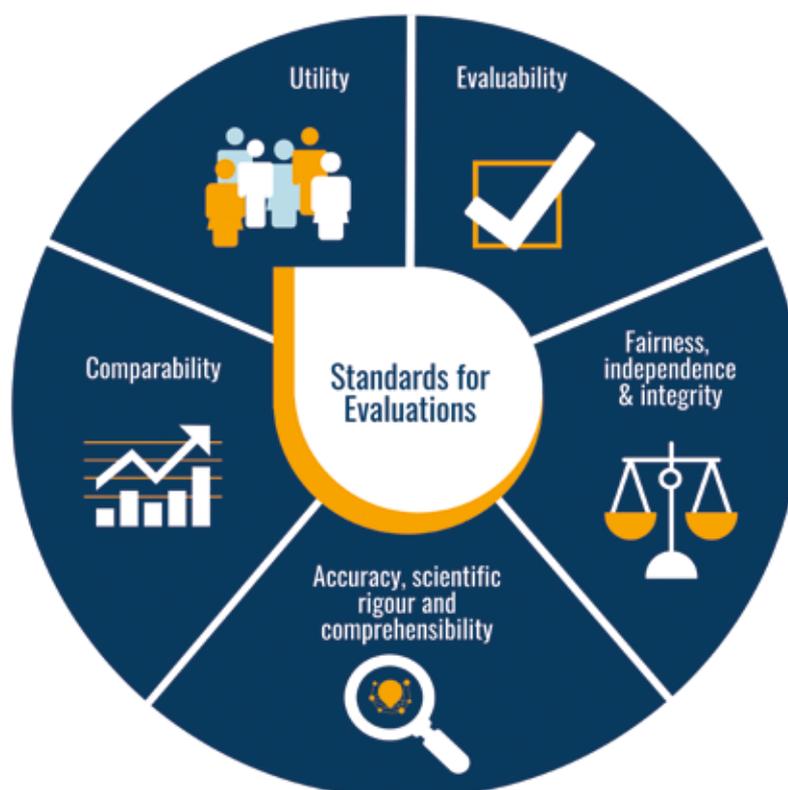
U4 Clarification of the evaluation objectives

The clarification of the objective serves the impact orientation of the evaluation and the expectation management with evaluation stakeholders.

U5 Evaluation scope

The evaluation scope takes into account the objective and desired impact of an evaluation, the interests of the target audience and stakeholders, as well as feasibility and efficiency.

Figure 1: DEval standards



Source: own figure.

U6 Usability and disclosure of results

In addition to the utility- and needs-oriented preparation and dissemination of evaluation findings, conclusions and recommendations, the data, too, is prepared and made available under consideration of applicable data protection and data security regulations.

U7 Timeliness

Evaluations should be started and completed in good time so that the results can be incorporated in strategic decision-making processes.

U8 Implementation planning and monitoring

An exact planning and monitoring of the implementation of evaluation recommendations promotes the long-term utility and needs orientation of evaluations.

Evaluability

E1 Feasibility of an evaluation

A careful ex-ante assessment of evaluability is of central importance for the efficient use of public funds.

E2 Appropriate procedures and methods

An evaluation can only be adequate on the whole if appropriate and purposeful scientific methods and procedures are determined for the conduct of the evaluation.

E3 Evaluation efficiency

The cost of an evaluation should be proportionate to its utility.

Fairness, independence and integrity

F1 Independence of the evaluation

In evaluation work, the principle of independence is a valuable attribute which applies unreservedly.

F2 Predictability and planning security

Evaluation planning and conduct requires formalised procedures and agreements between the evaluation stakeholders.

F3 Ethical approach

Evaluations are carried out in line with ethical standards, so that the rights of third parties are not violated, adverse effects are reduced to a minimum, resources are not wasted and misuse of scientific findings is prevented.

F4 Data protection and data economy

Data protection is a basis for every conscientious evaluation activity. In addition to the protected collection and storage of data this also includes adherence to the principles of data economy, the assigned purpose of primary and secondary data as well as data protection compliant disclosure of data.

F5 Evaluation transparency

The process and the results of an evaluation are laid out transparently and comprehensibly, and are openly disclosed. The disclosure is made in the process through the involvement of the stakeholders and ends with the transparent publication of the evaluation results and sources.

F6 Impartial and independent conduct and reporting

The evaluation takes into account differing stakeholder views on the subject matter and results of the evaluation.

F7 Disclosure of values

The perspectives and assumptions of the evaluators, on which the evaluation and interpretation of the results are based, are described in such a way that the bases for the evaluations becomes clearly evident and comprehensible.

Accuracy, scientific rigour and comprehensibility

A1 Credibility and competence of the evaluation team

The evaluators are methodically and technically competent, as well as personally credible.

A2 Adequate description of the evaluation object, the objectives and the questions

The evaluation object, the purpose of the evaluation and the evaluation questions are described and documented clearly, precisely and adequately.

A3 Context analysis

The context of the evaluation item is examined and analysed in sufficient detail, taking into account current scientific debates.

A4 Theory, evaluation design and methodology

The fundamental aspects of scientific rigour are that: evaluations are theory-based, have carefully selected evaluation designs and utilise scientific methods of data collection, data backup, data processing and data analysis.

A5 The use and generation of valid and reliable information and transparent citation of sources

The sources of information are critically examined, so that the quality of the gathered information and data as well as their validity can be ensured. The data collection, data backup, data processing of the evaluation is based on scientific standards in order to ensure the quality of the data.

A6 Quality assurance

The information collected, processed, analysed and presented in an evaluation is systematically assured for quality and checked for errors.

A7 Data analysis quality

The analysis of the sources of information of an evaluation, in particular qualitative and quantitative primary and secondary data, is carried out properly and systematically according to technical and scientific standards.

A8 Well-founded conclusions on the basis of scientifically sound methods

The conclusions drawn in an evaluation are explicitly justified and based on scientifically sound methods and reliable sources of information within the framework of the evaluation design.

A9 Completeness of reporting

The evaluation products contain complete and transparent reports; in addition, all relevant results are disclosed.

A10 Appropriate handling of stakeholder comments

Evaluations offer stakeholders the possibility of commenting the results of the evaluation.

A11 Data retention periods

Data, especially primary data collected in the context of an evaluation, must be kept over a defined time period in order to allow its continued use within the meaning of the intended purpose of use and permit subsequent analysis of the published results in case of doubt.

A12 Replicability

Compliance with the scientific criterion of replicability is a condition for the verifiability of the results and allows for the possibility of replicating the results of the evaluation or individual process steps.

Comparability

C1 Consideration of standardised criteria, questions and rating scales

Evaluations take into account standardised criteria, questions and rating scales to ensure comparability.

C2 Creating the conditions for meta-analyses

In order to enable meta-analyses, evaluations are documented in an appropriate form.

References

DeGEval (2016), *Standards for Evaluation*, DeGEval – Gesellschaft für Evaluation e. V. (German Evaluation Society), Mainz.

DFG (2013), *Safeguarding good scientific practice*, memorandum, Weinheim.

OECD (2010), *Quality Standards for Development Evaluation, DAC Guidelines and Reference Series*, OECD Publishing, Paris.

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The German Institute for Development Evaluation (DEval) is mandated by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) to independently analyse and assess German development interventions. Evaluation reports contribute to the transparency of development results and provide policy-makers with evidence and lessons learned, based on which they can shape and improve their development policies.