

AusGuideline

Completion and evaluation

5.2 Undertaking activity evaluations

Associated guidance on 'Completion and evaluation'

AusGuide Part 5 *Completion and evaluation*

AusGuideline 5.1 *Preparing completion reports*

October 2005



Australian Government
AusAID

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1 Introduction

Evaluation is a key aspect of aid management in terms of meeting accountability obligations, providing lessons which can be applied to future activities and overall improving the aid program. The goal of AusAID's evaluation effort is to improve AusAID's policy analysis and the design and implementation of AusAID activities by the identification and adoption of lessons learned from prior activities. Evaluation is covered under AusGuide Part 5 *Completion and Evaluation* and follows on from:

AusGuide Part 1 *Introduction and Program Management Overview*

AusGuide Part 2 *Program Strategies*

AusGuide Part 3 *Activity Design*

AusGuide Part 4 *Activity Implementation*.

As each evaluation has unique elements, the guidance provided here cannot cover the range of evaluations likely to be undertaken. The key elements of an evaluation are the issues to be addressed and the processes to be adopted (set out in the Terms of Reference TOR) and the report to be produced (set out in the evaluation report guidance). Whilst these issues are covered in this AusGuideline, the Program Evaluation Section of the Office of Review and Evaluation (ORE) can provide advice on how to approach an evaluation task.

2 Purpose and scope

These guidelines are intended to assist evaluators and task managers prepare evaluation reports. They relate to the evaluation of completed activities (ex-post evaluations) but can also be applied to those activities reaching completion.

Evaluations may be undertaken jointly with partner government, bilateral donor or international agency evaluation units. In some cases these agencies may require the approach to evaluation to be modified, and/or the structure of the evaluation report to be modified.

3 General issues

3.1 Single vs. cluster evaluations

In recent years, AusAID has focused on cluster evaluations, the evaluation of several activities (usually three or four) in one country or sector. These guidelines cover both single activity and cluster evaluations. However, the depth of analysis contained in cluster evaluations may be less than that involved in single activity evaluations. Single activity evaluations may allow more focus on key aspects of the activity and the lessons which can be drawn from it. Cluster evaluations allow the development of 'thematic' lessons based on a wider range of activities.

3.2 Scope and timing of evaluations

Evaluations assess the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability of activities. A major purpose of such evaluations is to enable AusAID, policy makers, activity designers, activity implementing agencies and other government departments to make the fullest use of the experience gained from prior activities when formulating, designing and implementing future activities. It is therefore important to identify positive impacts and lessons as well as ways in which activities may have been more effective or sustainable.

An ex-post evaluation should ideally be undertaken between one and about three years after activity completion. By this time, an assessment of outcomes and sustainability should be possible, while some people associated with the activity should still be contactable. A subsequent evaluation or re-evaluation may be undertaken once an activity's impact has become clearer. Such evaluations may be undertaken four to ten years after completion and are referred to as impact evaluations or re-evaluations respectively. Re-evaluations are useful in activities where the long-term effects remain unclear at the time of the evaluation and as a check on the accuracy of the evaluation for a small proportion of activities.

Evaluations may also be undertaken towards the end of the life of an activity, in which case there will be some adjustment of the scope, to assess intermediate outcomes rather than final outcomes if the latter have not yet materialised.

3.3 Judging an activity's success

Many issues need to be considered when judging an activity's success. The primary issue is the extent to which the activity achieved its component and purpose level objectives and the degree to which outcomes are likely to be sustained.

Issues such as the level of financial return, the impact on poverty reduction, the sustainability of benefits, and the implications for the government's budget may need to be described and assessed, along with distributional, social, cultural and environmental impacts.

For economic sector activities, the long-term effect of the activity on the national economy is a major basis for classifying overall performance and success. This effect may be quantified and expressed as the economic internal rate of return. In cases where detailed economic analysis has not been undertaken during design or at activity completion, it is not normally feasible for the evaluation team to undertake detailed economic analysis. However, it may be possible to undertake economic assessment of one or more key components and to make a general assessment of overall economic impact.

Many AusAID activities have focused on institutional strengthening. In these cases, quantitative objective assessment may be difficult to undertake unless baseline surveys were conducted, the basis for comparison established and clear performance indicators put in place. In this case, judgements will need to be made of the form and content of information to be used in assessing performance.

For social sector activities, reliance on cost-effectiveness and the other criteria of performance (efficiency and sustainability) may be required.

3.4 Terms of Reference

The scope and coverage of evaluation issues to be addressed are set out in the evaluation's Terms of Reference (TOR). Specific guidance on the format and contents of the TOR for an evaluation is set out in Annex A, whilst general guidance on preparing TOR is set out in AusGuideline 6.1 *Preparing terms of reference*.

The TOR should cover

- background and rationale for the evaluation
- the goal of the evaluation
- the objectives of the evaluation
- scope of the evaluation – including assessing the activity's relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability and identifying and documenting lessons learnt

- the evaluation method, including desk and field reviews to be undertaken, briefings and debriefings, reporting and peer review processes
- outputs to be produced by the evaluation team, such as method and work plan, Aide Memoire, draft evaluation reports and final evaluation report and debriefing, such as the conduct of an AusAID seminar.
- the duration and phasing from preparation of the TOR to the publication and distribution of the evaluation report.
- the specifications of the Evaluation Team, including expertise, responsibilities and conditions (such as independence from the design and implementation of the activity).
- costs involved.

3.5 Content and style

Evaluation reports should be clear and concise with carefully substantiated findings and conclusions. They should be well balanced and written in a neutral, non-judgemental tone. Annex B provides a format for an evaluation report. The key chapters address the issues of the activity's relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact sustainability and lessons learnt.

The length of these reports should not normally exceed 30 pages (excluding appendixes). The individual activity chapters of cluster evaluations may be around 10-13 pages in length depending on activity scale and complexity. The Executive Summary chapter of a cluster evaluation is often three to four pages in length.

Appendices should be kept to a minimum and assist in understanding the material in the main text rather than providing additional details. Annex B provides a list of typical appendixes for the evaluation report.

The reason for brevity is not to limit the quality of analysis, but rather to ensure that the reports are readable and able to be used for their intended purpose. A concise report which is read is of more value than a weighty tome which collects dust on the shelf.

3.6 Flexibility in using guidelines

Whilst a standard evaluation report format helps to simplify report writing and maximise readability, variations can be made to suit activities in different sectors. For example, evaluation of an environmental activity or an environmental cluster evaluation may have chapters on the assessment of environmental controls or impacts. Evaluation of capacity building activities would require a focus on institutional strengthening issues.

In some cases, the evaluation agency of the partner government is involved in planning and preparing the evaluation report. Variations in the report's content and layout may be required to meet its requirements. These changes should be agreed in advance with the Evaluation Section of ORE and the director of evaluation in the partner government agency responsible for evaluation.

A Evaluation Terms of Reference – Format Guidelines

1. Background and rationale for evaluation

- **History of Activity**

Briefly discuss:

- The context in which the Activity was requested and implemented.
 - The development needs & problems of the requesting government.
 - How the Activity fits into AusAID's Country Strategy, other relevant thematic and policy statements and PG development plans.

- **Description of Activity** (*No more than 1 page.*)

This should include:

- The goal and objectives of the Activity.
- The main components and their objectives.
- The implementation arrangements.
 - Stakeholders – the partner government agencies, the target beneficiaries
 - The duration of the Activity
 - The cost
 - Expected benefits

- **Rationale for evaluation.**

Discuss:

- Why this Activity was selected for an evaluation.

2. Goal of evaluation

The goal of evaluation is to improve AusAID's policy analysis and the design and implementation of AusAID activities by the identification and adoption of lessons learned from prior activities.

3. Objectives of the evaluation

These are usually expressed as:

The objectives of the evaluation are to assess the Activity's relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability, and to draw-out lessons learned.

In addition the evaluation will [*briefly discuss priority issues for the Evaluation Team's examination not captured in the general objectives. This could include directions to contribute to lessons learned about key development issues eg. capacity building, public sector reform, service delivery etc.*]

4. Scope of the evaluation

Scope includes geographic coverage as well as issues.

The evaluation will **cover** [*define the geographical area of the country or number of countries and regions that will be included in the evaluation. Insert a map of location, as appropriate*].

The evaluation will take due account of AusAID's Activity Quality Standards. (For details see AusGuideline 6.5 Activity Quality Standards). All definitions are from: DAC Working Party on Aid Evaluation (2002) Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Results Based Management.

The evaluation should **address:**

- a. RELEVANCE** - Definition: The extent to which the objectives of a development intervention are consistent with beneficiaries' requirements, country needs, global priorities and partners' and donors policies.
- Relevance of the Activity's objectives. Were they clear, realistic and measurable?
 - Adequacy of documented activity design to achieve objectives.
- b. EFFICIENCY** - Definition: A measure of how economically resources/inputs (funds, expertise, time etc.) are converted to results.
- Timeliness and appropriateness of preparation and implementation processes, including appraisal and Peer Review.
 - Standard of the contract and activity implementation by the contractor.
 - Strength of partner government support and the value of dialogue in country.
 - AusAID management, including risk management and use of external expertise.
 - Activity monitoring (eg baseline studies, M&E framework, TAG/PMG, MTR etc.) and communication.
- c. EFFECTIVENESS** - Definition: The extent to which the development intervention's objectives were achieved, or expected to be achieved, taking into account their relative importance.
- Progress in achieving objectives.
 - Standard of outputs.
 - Extent of benefit to the target population.
- d. IMPACT** - Definition: Positive and negative, primary and secondary long-term effects produced by a development intervention, directly or indirectly, intended or unintended.
- *Inter alia* impacts may be economic, institutional, technological, environmental, social-cultural, or gender related.
 - Measurement of extent of impacts. (*If possible, a cost-benefit analysis should be undertaken. This would recalculate the CBA done during activity design, and take into account the 'unintended' effects of the activity.*)
 - Effect on AusAID's development policies eg. promoting regional security.
- e. SUSTAINABILITY** - Definition: The continuation of benefits from a development intervention after major development assistance has been completed.
- Sustainability of benefits (Technological, social, environmental, gender).
 - Sustainability of improved institutional capacity.
 - Maintenance of future recurrent budget (Financial sustainability).
- f. LESSONS LEARNED** - Definition: Generalizations based on evaluation experiences with activities, programs, or policies that abstract from the specific circumstances to broader situations. Frequently lessons learned highlight strengths or weaknesses in preparation, design and implementation that affect performance, outcome and impact.

Where the evaluation is able to make **recommendations** (Definition: Proposals aimed at enhancing the effectiveness, quality or efficiency of a development intervention; at redesigning the objectives; and/or at the reallocation of resources. Recommendations should be linked to conclusions.) they should be treated as for lessons learned i.e. Grouped by function.

- Identify and document lessons learned, in relation to the activity, derived from the overall assessment. (Lessons should be grouped under functional headings according to their subject matter eg. policy, management, activity design, activity implementation, gender, country specific lessons etc. The target group for any lessons and/or recommendations should also be identified.)
- Identify **and document instances of good practice.**

g. **RATINGS** - *Evaluation reports should include re-ratings of the indicators included in the Activity Completion Report and/or Independent Completion Report, where these are available.*

h. **OTHER** - *Include here the Scope for the additional specific issues included in the objectives.*

5. Evaluation Method

In carrying out the evaluation, the Evaluation Team will undertake:

- **PHASE 1: Desk Review in Canberra** (*or other convenient place*) to examine key Activity and related documents including:
 - Baseline surveys,
 - Activity design and appraisal documents,
 - Mid-term reviews,
 - Annual plans,
 - M&E reports,
 - Completion reports,
 - Key review reports,
 - Quality Assurance Group Reports,
 - Other donor related work studies, and
 - Other relevant AusAID documents.

The Evaluation Team will be briefed on the activity by key informants in AusAID (if any) and may also establish a **Telephone-Link/Conference** to discuss the Activity with the former ATL, Activity Director, or other key informants in Australia or overseas.

It is the Evaluation Team's responsibility to develop appropriate methods for evaluation that ensure an objective, transparent and impartial assessment. The Evaluation Team will agree on the method for the Field component of the evaluation, respective roles and responsibilities, people to meet, additional documents required, and other details.

The evaluation methods should use participatory and consultative techniques, where practicable, and include collection and analysis of qualitative and quantitative data.

At the completion of this Phase, and prior to the Field Review, the Evaluation Team will be required to prepare and submit to the AusAID Task Manager an evaluation method and work plan. Itineraries will normally be developed in conjunction with Posts.

- **PHASE 2: Field Review** (*'a' and/or 'b' may be required*)
 - a. (*Capital city*) The Evaluation Team will travel in-country to collect relevant documents and discuss the Activity with key informants, as set out in the evaluation method. Discussions in the capital city will be held with:
 - relevant AusAID posted officers and PSU staff,
 - relevant staff of the counterpart government aid-coordinating body (*if applicable*),

- relevant staff in the headquarters of the counterpart agency/ies, and
- other stakeholders and/or beneficiaries which may include,
 - NGOs and community-based organisations,
 - other relevant government agencies eg. PSC, Finance, PM&C,
 - community and women's organisations,
 - relevant donors.

Data should be collected and analysed in accordance with the agreed evaluation method.

b. *(If the Activity site is away from the capital city)* The Evaluation Team will visit the Activity location to meet and discuss the Activity with, and collect other relevant information from, target beneficiaries and local counterpart government agencies, in accordance with the proposed evaluation method.

- **PHASE 3: De-Briefing Session**

At the completion of the Field Review, the Evaluation Team will hold a De-briefing Session to present an *Aide Memoire*, and seek feedback from partner agencies, as well as posted officers and PSU staff, on their preliminary findings. This may need to be done both at the activity site and in the Counterpart Agency/Aid Coordinating Authority headquarters.

The Evaluation Team will also debrief AusAID in Canberra on the findings through a seminar-workshop.

- **PHASE 4: Reporting & Peer Reviews**

A **Draft Report** on the findings of the evaluation should be prepared by the Evaluation Team within 3 weeks after the Field Review. This will be checked by the Task Manager and passed on to an internal Peer Review Group. The purpose of this Review is to identify factual errors and consistency in the interpretation of facts and information. It is also to ensure that the draft meets AusAID quality standards and is suitable for a wider audience.

The Evaluation Team should prepare a **Revised Draft Report**, within 2 weeks of receiving comments from the Peer Review Group. The Evaluation Team will incorporate changes and comments, as the Team sees fit. Where there is strong disagreement in views between the Evaluation Team and the internal Peer Review Group, these should be noted in an appendix of the Revised Draft Report.

The Task Manager will distribute the revised report and invite comment from (former) delivery organisations, partner government counterparts and/or other stakeholders, including Posted officers who were not included in the Peer Review Group.

The Evaluation Team will consider all comments in preparing the **Final Report**, which will be submitted within 7 days of receiving final comments from stakeholders. The report will be published at AusAID's discretion.

6. Outputs

The Evaluation Team will provide the following outputs:

- a. Method and work plan of no more than 6 pages, prior to the Field Review. This should include:
 - Summary of information collected to date, identifying information gaps;
 - Methods to be used to collect required information, and information sources;
 - List of key informants to be contacted in country, and questions to be asked of them;
 - Draft itinerary of the field visit;

- Annotated outline of the report format;
 - Roles and responsibilities for each Evaluation Team member, and
 - Cost Estimates of Field Review. [*Normally, this is the responsibility of the Activity Manager who will need to do this well in advance of the Evaluation Team coming together. In some types of contract, this will need to be prepared by the Team Leader.*]
- b. **Aide Memoire**, at the completion of the Field Review. The Aide Memoire will summarise the Evaluation Team’s draft findings and will be presented at a de-briefing seminar.
- c. **Draft evaluation report** – prepared in a format outlined in **Attachment A**.
- d. **AusAID Seminar**
- e. **Revised Draft Report** of no more than 25 pages, plus annexes and executive summary.
- f. **Final Report**, as for Draft Final Report.

7. Duration and Phasing

PHASE	ACTIVITY	DURATION	DATE
	• Finalisation of TOR	<i>No. of days</i>	<i>date</i>
	• Identification of potential members of the Evaluation Team	<i>No. of days</i>	<i>date</i>
	• Selection and Contracting Evaluation Team	<i>No. of days</i>	<i>date</i>
Phase 1	• Desk Review in AusAID Canberra	<i>No. of days</i>	<i>date</i>
Phase 2	• Mobilisation of Evaluation Team to field	<i>(X weeks after desk review)</i>	<i>date</i>
	• Field Review	<i>No. of days</i>	<i>date</i>
Phase 3	• De-Brief ‘in-country’	<i>No. of days</i>	<i>date</i>
	• De-Brief in AusAID Canberra	<i>No. of days</i>	<i>date</i>
Phase 4	• Draft Evaluation Report to AusAID	<i>No. of days</i>	<i>date</i>
	• Disseminate to Peer Review Group	<i>No. of days</i>	<i>date</i>
	• Peer Review Groups comments passed on to Evaluation Team	<i>No. of days</i>	<i>date</i>
	• Revised Draft Report	<i>No. of days</i>	<i>date</i>
	• Disseminate to counterpart agency/ies, post and delivery organisations for comment.	<i>No. of days</i>	<i>date</i>
	• Comments passed to Evaluation Team	<i>No. of days</i>	<i>date</i>
	• Final Report submitted to AusAID.	<i>No. of days</i>	<i>date</i>
• Final Report approved for publication, published and distributed	<i>No. of days</i>	<i>date</i>	

8. Specifications of the Evaluation Team

- a. The Evaluation Team should include the following expertise:

CORE EXPERTISE

- Activity Management

- Economics and Financial Analysis
- Gender and Development Analysis
- Poverty Analysis
- Capacity Building (Human Resource Development and Institutional Strengthening)
- Environmental Management (where appropriate)

TECHNICAL EXPERTISE/SKILLS

- Technical qualifications, knowledge, background and experience in [*Specify technical expertise & skills*]
- Experience in activity implementation, monitoring and evaluation, in their field of technical expertise, in developing countries.

INTER-PERSONAL SKILLS AND OTHER KNOWLEDGE

- Well-developed people and team skills
 - Effective cross-cultural communication and negotiation skills
 - Analytical and policy development skills
 - Understanding of development and government issues relevant to aid programs
 - Relevant language skills
- b. The **Team Leader** should be an expert in Aid Evaluation, preferably drawn from AusAID's Period Offer for Evaluation Work. She/He must possess the following:
- Team leadership skills and experience;
 - Experience in activity implementation and evaluation in developing countries;
 - Financial management skills and experience;
 - Demonstrated skills and experience in participatory consultative approaches, facilitation and negotiation;
 - Technical expertise relevant to the activity (*desirable but not always essential*);
 - Problem solving and analytical abilities; and
 - Advanced verbal and written communication skills - especially report writing.
- c. **Members** of the Evaluation Team should not have been engaged in the design and implementation of the Activity being evaluated. TAG and/or PMG members may be included.
- d. The Evaluation Team must obtain full approval and cooperation of relevant AusAID program areas (eg. the desk or the post, whichever is appropriate) and authorities of the partner government agency. [*Normally, the Activity Manager does this. But in certain types of contract, this will be the Team Leader's responsibility*].
- e. The Evaluation Team should include one or more 'local' experts/consultants, either nominated by the counterpart agency or identified separately. Local experts and consultants should have good working knowledge of the locality's institutions and communities, gender issues, language, traditional practices, appropriate technology, etc.
- f. Where the activity for assessment was developed as a whole of government activity, or is of particular interest to other Australian Government agencies, these agencies will be consulted on Evaluation Team composition, and may appoint a suitably qualified member to the Team.

9. Costs (*for internal distribution*)

B Evaluation Report format

Title Page *(should contain the title of the report, including activity name & country, date and report type and status (e.g. Draft [activity name] Evaluation Report))*

Table of Contents *(should contain chapter headings, figures, tables and Appendices as appropriate)*

Map of activity site *(If relevant and available)*

Glossary & Abbreviations

Executive Summary

(A self-contained paper, 2-4 pages in length providing the evaluation's background (purpose & methods), major conclusions (relating to achievements, development outcomes, relevance, etc.) recommendations and lessons learned).

CHAPTER 1 Background

- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Policy Setting
- 1.3 Formulation and Design
- 1.4 Objectives and Scope at Design
- 1.5 Implementation Arrangements
- 1.6 Completion
- 1.7 Financing
- 1.8 Evaluation Methods

CHAPTER 2 Relevance

- 2.1 Objectives
- 2.2 Activity design

CHAPTER 3 Efficiency

- 3.1 Timeliness and appropriateness
- 3.2 Contract and activity implementation
- 3.3 Partner government support
- 3.4 AusAID management
- 3.5 Activity monitoring

CHAPTER 4 Effectiveness

- 4.1 Achievement of objectives
- 4.2 Standard of outputs
- 4.3 Benefits to the target population

CHAPTER 5 Impact

- 5.1 Summary of Impacts
- 5.2 Measurement of Impacts *(Including cost-benefit or cost-effectiveness analysis)*
- 5.3 Effect on AusAID's policies

CHAPTER 6 Sustainability

- 6.1 Benefits to target population
- 6.2 Institutional capacity
- 6.3 Recurrent costs

CHAPTER 7 *(Other issues included in the evaluation objectives)***CHAPTER 8 Conclusions and Lessons Learned**

- 8.1 Overall Assessment *(Include ratings)*
- 8.2 Lessons Learned *(These should be grouped under functional headings.)*
- 8.3 Recommendations *(The target audience for recommendations [and lessons] should be identified. Lessons should be grouped under functional headings. – This section should include a brief Communication Strategy to ensure the effective dissemination of the evaluation findings)*
- 8.4 Incidences of good practice.

APPENDICES

[These should provide additional information necessary to substantiate major conclusions and recommendations in the main report. These will include, some or all of the following:]

- Appendix 1 Evaluation terms of reference
- Appendix 2 Evaluation team and itinerary
- Appendix 3 List of persons consulted
- Appendix 4 Chronology of key activity dates
- Appendix 5 Consolidated Change Frame showing changes from the Activity design documentation (with cross-referencing to the Logframe matrix etc.), the reason for the change and the budgetary/resource implications.
- Appendix 6 List of background materials or papers utilised.
- Appendix 7 Working papers (especially of cost/benefit analysis and survey documentation).
- Appendix 8 Activity logframe (this may be included as an appendix or in the main body of the report).
- Appendix 9 Record of divergent views of Evaluation Team, internal and external reviewers.
- Appendix 10 *[Others applicable]*
- Appendix 11 *[Others applicable]*