Evaluation Utilisation

Final Research Report

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List of Abbreviations

CLEAR AA	Centre for Learning, Evaluation and Results: Anglophone Africa
CREST	Centre for Research on Evaluation, Science and Technology
DPME	Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation
EQAT	Evaluation Quality Assessment Tool
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
KII	Key Informant Interviews
SAMEA	South African Monitoring and Evaluation Association
ToR	Terms of Reference

1 INTRODUCTION

Genesis Analytics ("Genesis") has received a research grant from a research partnership comprising of the South African Monitoring and Evaluation Association (SAMEA), the Centre for Learning, Evaluation and Results: Anglophone Africa (CLEAR AA) and the Centre for Research on Evaluation, Science and Technology (CREST). The purpose of the research partnership is to facilitate the implementation of research projects that will contribute to strengthening South Africa's evaluation system and improving the institutional relationships and partnerships that underlie it. The research grant provided to Genesis falls within the *evaluation utilisation* research topic which aims to provide insight into the extent to which evaluations actually lead to improvements in interventions and how.

This section of the paper, Section 1, outlines the research problem and the purpose of this paper. Section 2 details the research approach, while Section 3 outlines the approach taken in interpreting and analysing the research findings. Sections 4, 5, and 6 provide a synthesis of the research findings, and specifically look at how evaluation utilisation can be driven through participation (Section 4), the implications of the evaluation process on utilisation (Section 5), and on developing high utility evaluation products (Section 6). Finally, Section 7 presents the concluding remarks.

1.1 THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

There is a growing movement towards increasing the number and quality of evaluations in South Africa. The momentum has been particularly evident within the public sector. The uptake, however, may be different amongst different stakeholders and / or sectors. Presently, what can be understood from this momentum is unclear as there has been very little research on the drivers (or inhibitors) of evaluation utilisation in the country. It appears that there is a growing interest amongst stakeholders that commission evaluations to use them to inform change, whether policy-related or programmatic. Similarly, there appears to be a strong interest amongst evaluators to conduct evaluations that encourage utilisation.

In conducting research on evaluation utilisation in South Africa the research team seeks to address this gap in knowledge, and to not only learn from the global knowledge base, but to contribute to it. In doing so, the research assesses the barriers to utilisation as well as the factors that contribute to the use of evaluating findings to inform better interventions. This work includes an assessment of evaluation utilisation in the private sector, public sector, and in civil society in South Africa. This research paper has been informed by respondent interviews and a review of evaluation reports. It therefore, builds on the literature review by contextualising findings within the South African evaluation landscape.

1.2 THE PURPOSE OF THIS PAPER

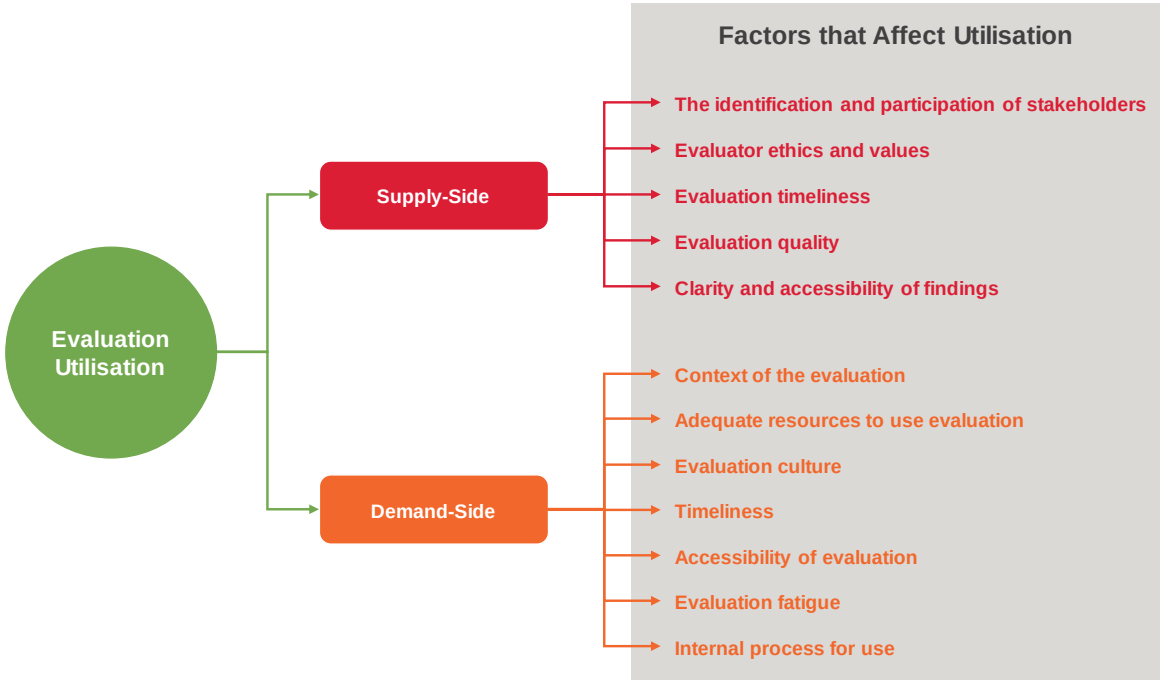
The purpose of this report is to discuss the factors that affect the use of evaluation in South Africa. This is part of a greater effort to use research to strengthen South Africa's evaluation system and improve the institutional relationships and partnerships that underlie it. The report is primarily geared towards informing the evaluation profession by specifically guiding evaluators on how they can drive evaluation use.

2 RESEARCH APPROACH

2.1 METHODOLOGY: THEORETICAL FOUNDATION FOR THE ANALYSIS FRAMEWORK

The literature review found that while the primary purpose of evaluation is to provide evidence for improved decision making, learning and accountability, there are a range of factors that affect stakeholders' ability to use evaluations. These factors are summarised in Figure 1 below which categorises the findings of the literature review into supply-side and demand-side factors that impact the use of evaluations. The supply-side factors relate to conducting evaluations, while the demand-side factors relate to commissioning evaluations and implementing their findings. These findings informed the development of the analysis framework which can be found in the appendix of this paper.

Figure 1: Factors that affect evaluation utilisation



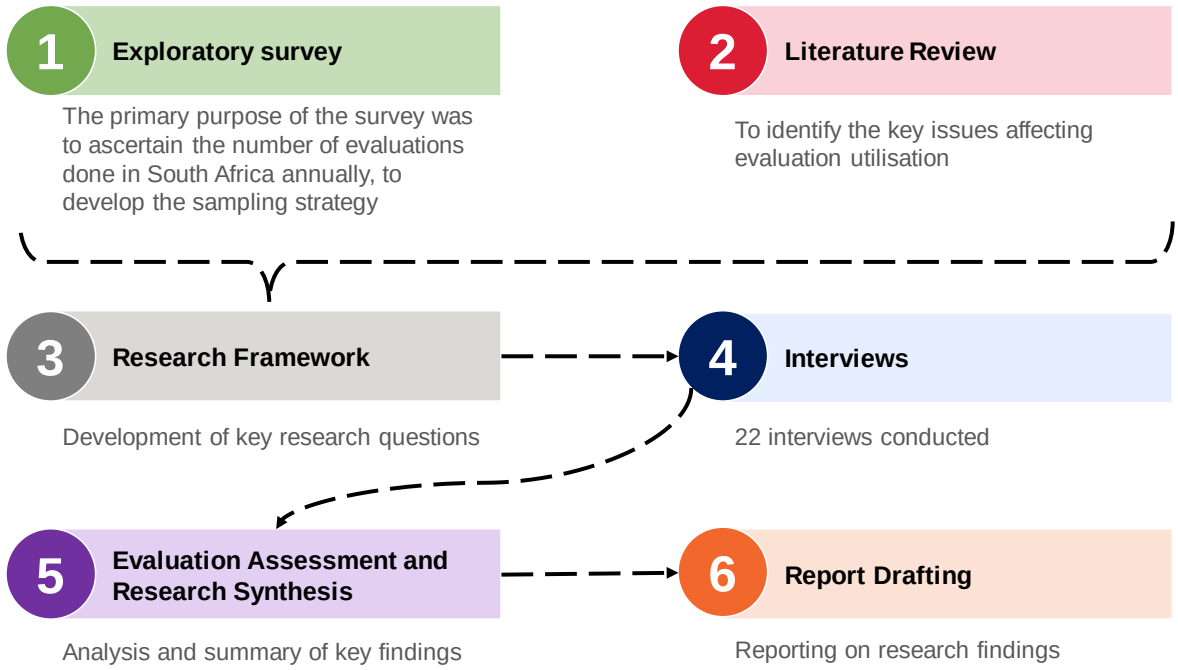
As outlined in the section above, an exploratory survey was conducted. The primary purpose of this survey was to estimate how many evaluations are conducted in South Africa. The purpose of knowing how many evaluations are conducted was to serve as a guide to the evaluation team when deciding how many evaluations should be reviewed. The survey was sent to 47 people representing 23[1] service providers. Of these, 21 were organisations and 2 were individuals. 14 survey responses were received.

[1] The list was based on SAMEA's active membership and consisted of: 1. Benita Williams Evaluation Consultants. 2. CJ Development Research Consulting. 3. CLEAR AA. 4. Creative Consulting and Development Works. 5. DNA Economics. 6. Evalnet. 7. Evaluaid. 8. Evaluation Research Agency. 9. Feedback Research and Analytics. 10. Genesis Analytics. 11. Inkwazi Consulting. 12. IQ Business. 13. Jet Education Services. 14. Kayamandi Development Services. 15. Khulisa Management Services. 16. Masazi Development Associates. 17. Organisation and Strategy Design, Development and Evaluation. 18. SAIDE. 20. Southern Hemisphere. 21. Stellenbosch University (CREST). 22. Independent practitioner. and 23. Independent practitioner.

2.2 RESEARCH PROCESS AND DATA COLLECTION

The methodology used can be divided into six phases. The exploratory survey (Phase 1) and the literature review (Phase 2) informed the development of the research framework (Phase 3) which in turn informed the development of the research tools used for the interviews (Phase 4) and the framework for the assessment of evaluation reports and research synthesis (Phase 5), These phases are summarised in Figure 2 below, and are outlined in more detail in the paragraphs that follow.

Figure 2: Research Process



Phase 1 – Exploratory Survey

During the first phase, an exploratory survey was administered to 47 relevant stakeholders – out of the 47 stakeholders invited to participate in the survey, 14 stakeholders responded to the survey. The purpose of the survey was primarily to ascertain the number of evaluations completed in South Africa annually, in order to determine the number of evaluation reports to be reviewed based on key utility criteria. In addition, the survey posed questions related to factors related to evaluation utilisation in South Africa. The purpose of this was to assess the extent to which the findings from the literature review applied to the South African context.

Phase 2 – Literature Review

During the second phase, the literature review was conducted to explore national and global perspectives on evaluation utilisation and relevant influencing factors. The literature review was presented as an interim and standalone deliverable within this grant.

Phase 3 – Research Framework

The third phase began with the development of the research framework and accompanying research tools, which were informed by the findings of the survey and the literature review. The research framework was designed to guide the research process and comprised of relevant questions to identify factors limiting and enhancing evaluation utilisation.

Phase 4 – Interviews

The fourth phase began with the identification of key stakeholders from the SAMEA members database and the DPME panel of service providers. These stakeholders represented evaluation commissioners (private sector, public sector and NGOs), evaluators and academia. Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) were conducted with the above-mentioned stakeholders.

Phase 5 – Evaluation Assessment and Research Synthesis

Following the interviews, responses were synthesised and interpreted using the research framework. In addition, 16 evaluation reports were reviewed. In reviewing the evaluations, Stufflebeam's (1999) *Programme Evaluations Meta-Evaluation Checklist* was used. Stufflebeam's (1999) set of criteria was selected by the evaluation team because this method most comprehensively focuses on utility criteria. More specifically, Stufflebeam (1999) looks at stakeholder identification, evaluator credibility, information scope and selection, values identification, report clarity, report timeliness and dissemination, and evaluation impact. Within each of these seven criteria, there are six "checkpoints". One point is allocated for each checkpoint. Each criterion is therefore scored out of a potential six points. An example of this is provided in Table 1 below.

Table 1: An Example of Scoring the Utility Criterion of Stakeholder Identification

1 – Stakeholder Identification				
□ Clearly identified the evaluation client				
□ Engaged leadership figures to identify other stakeholders				
□ Consulted stakeholders to identify their information needs				
□ Asked stakeholders to identify other stakeholders				
□ Arranged to involve stakeholders throughout the evaluation, consistent with the formal evaluation agreement				
□ Kept the evaluation open to serve newly identified stakeholders				
□ 6 (Excellent)	□ 5 (Very Good)	□ 4 (Good)	□ 2 – 3 (Fair)	□ 0 – 1 (Poor)

Phase 6 – Report Drafting

Subsequent to synthesis and analysis phase outlined above, the research team started drafting a research paper.

2.3 LIMITATIONS

During the research process, a few challenges emerged which posed limitations to the study:

- The number of survey responses were low. As a result, the team's potential to explore factors that influence the use of evaluation at a high level was limited. In addition, our ability to administer the survey was constrained by not having access to stakeholders' correct contact details – which also limited the extent to which the survey linked reached the intended potential participants.
- The team could only use publicly available evaluation reports as a number of commissioners of evaluations were unwilling to share their evaluation reports for this research. This limited the extent to which the team had access to a large pool of diversified evaluation reports to assess.

3 INTERPRETATION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

Once the research team had collected the data from the interviews, the findings were analysed through the lens of the analysis framework which looked at the demand-side and supply-side of evaluation utilisation, as shown in Figure 1 above. During the analysis and interpretation of the findings, three key themes emerged: namely; 1) driving utilisation through participation, 2) the implications of the evaluation process on utilisation; and, 3) driving utilisation through participation. The links between these findings and the analysis framework is shown in Table 2 below. The remainder of this paper is structured in line with these three findings.

Table 2: Linking the Research Findings to the Analysis Framework

Supply Side / Demand Side	Factors that Affect Utilisation	Link to Interpretation and Theming of Findings
Supply-Side	Identification and participation of stakeholders	Driving utilisation through participation
		Implications of the evaluation process on utilisation
	Evaluator ethics and values	Implications of the evaluation process on utilisation
	Evaluation timeliness	Implications of the evaluation process on utilisation
	Evaluation quality	High utility evaluation products
	Clarity and accessibility of findings	Implications of the evaluation process on utilisation
Demand-Side	Context of the evaluation	Driving utilisation through participation
		Implications of the evaluation process on utilisation
		High utility evaluation products
	Adequate resources to use evaluation	High utility evaluation products
	Evaluation culture	Driving utilisation through participation
	Timeliness	Implications of the evaluation process on utilisation
	Accessibility of evaluation	High utility evaluation products
	Evaluation fatigue	Driving utilisation through participation
	Internal process	Driving utilisation through participation

4 DRIVING UTILISATION THROUGH PARTICIPATION

This section of the paper presents key findings that relate to stakeholder participation in evaluations in South Africa. Specifically, it looks at participatory factors that hinder or enhance evaluation use as they relate to evaluators, evaluation commissioners and beneficiaries.

According to the literature, the participation of all relevant stakeholders in an evaluation is a key enabler for the utilisation of evaluations (BetterEvaluation, 2017). Primary evaluation stakeholders typically include, evaluators, commissioners, beneficiaries, implementers, and sector experts. These stakeholders can be involved at different stages of the evaluation process, for example; evaluation design, data collection, and communicating evaluations results (Forss, Claus, & Jerker, 2002).

The interview findings are largely in line with the literature, suggesting that maximising stakeholder participation is a contributing factor to evaluation utilisation. Specifically, the literature suggests that the use of evaluations relies on the evaluator engaging all relevant stakeholders including beneficiaries, commissioners, implementers, and strategic staff. However, contrary to the literature, interview findings suggest that there are low levels of beneficiary fatigue in the country which eliminates this factor as a major inhibiter to evaluation use in South Africa.

4.1 THE ROLE OF EVALUATORS

From the perspective of evaluators, there are three key findings related to enhancing evaluation utilisation. The first is that evaluators develop participation strategies. The second is that evaluators act as a critical friend, while the third is the professionalisation of evaluation practice in South Africa.

Evaluator participation strategies

There is a growing body of literature to support the use of participatory approaches to improve the legitimacy, quality and therefore, use of evaluations (Henry & Mark, 2003). The notion of stimulating stakeholder participation is contrary to the traditional expert approach where evaluators produce evidence independently and present it to decision makers to implement (Patton M. Q., 2012). The data gathered for this study corroborates the findings in the literature. Interviewed evaluators reported that it is important to identify and include the primary stakeholders early in the evaluation process. Furthermore, the evaluators expressed that the commissioner needs to be kept abreast of the evaluation at each phase, from approving data collection instruments to participating in findings validation workshops. Some evaluators indicated that this process works even better when the commissioners identify an individual that is able to serve as the primary contact point between themselves and the evaluator and who serves to champion the evaluation within the commissioning organisation. Their experience suggests that this approach reduces the likelihood of misaligned expectations at the end of an evaluation. Importantly, the evaluators expressed that inclusion also contributes to making it easier for the stakeholders to accept the findings and recommendations as they have been involved in the evaluation from the early stages. This is in line with the findings from the literature review which highlight that participatory and collaborative evaluation approaches enhance the use of evaluations by ensuring that the recommendations provided are relevant to the operating environment (Earl & Earl, 1996). This is contrary to the traditional expert approach where evaluators produced evidence independently and present it to decision makers to implement (Patton, 2012).

Evaluators as a critical friend

Evaluators play an essential role in how the evaluation findings are communicated and received by all stakeholders. A useful way to think about this role is by likening it to that of a 'critical friend', a description communicated by one of the evaluators interviewed. Private sector and foundation commissioners highlighted that although evaluators need to be objective and deliver accurate facts, the way that this is executed has an impact on whether the evaluation findings are used. Interviewed evaluators reported that if negative evaluation findings are delivered without sensitivity then often commissioners felt confronted and were less likely to use the evaluation.

However, if the evaluator prioritises establishing trust and rapport, and delivers the negative results in the way a critical friend would; the commissioner is more likely to implement the recommendations. This is particularly true of commissioners who have a strong affinity to their technical area or who have been involved in the design and planning of the project, programme or policy being evaluated. The critical friend approach ensures that the commissioner doesn't feel affronted because the evaluator presents a way forward that is inclusive and non-confrontational.

Professionalising evaluation

Several evaluators and academics reported that there is a need to professionalise the evaluation practice in South Africa. It is believed that professionalisation will encourage a change in the status quo such that those practising evaluation have the necessary knowledge base and skill set. A few

evaluators interviewed expressed that with more competent evaluators in the field, there will be lower levels of mistrust between commissioners and evaluators which would enhance evaluation use.

4.2 THE ROLE OF COMMISSIONERS

Concerning commissioners, there are two main findings related to enhancing utilisation. These are the identification and inclusion of relevant stakeholders in the evaluation as well as the prevalence of an organisational evaluation culture.

Steering committees

As discussed above, evaluation commissioners are key participants in the evaluation process. Commissioners often form steering committees that provide input into the evaluation regarding, amongst other things, the evaluation context, the beneficiary profile, the evaluation scope and the ethical and procedural protocol that should be followed. According to evaluators, this level of engagement is useful to them and provides direction and guidance on important issues pertaining to the evaluation. However, evaluators also reported that this involvement can be counter-productive. For example, steering committees can become too heavily involved in the evaluation methods even if the steering committee members are not well-versed in evaluation practice. In some instances, the steering committees are too large and tend to slow down the decision-making process as consensus cannot be easily reached in large groups, with diverse mandates and interests. Related to this, some evaluators shared that larger steering committees tend to comprise of individuals with differing incentives. As a result of different incentive drivers, and the positions held by the stakeholders, some stakeholders may have more power or voice. In these cases, political considerations tend to surpass evaluation evidence as a basis for decisions.

Furthermore, evaluators reported that public sector commissioners often have difficulty trusting and handing over an evaluation to the evaluator. The sense from evaluators is that public sector commissioners are constantly monitoring evaluators thereby making the relationship difficult to navigate. This is further discussed in Section 5.2 below. On the other hand, evaluators indicated that private sector commissioners are more trusting of evaluators. They are satisfied with reports being shorter and more concise, unlike public sector reports which tend to be lengthy. This seems to result in greater use of evaluation findings and recommendations.

Evaluation culture

According to the literature, an organisational culture of learning is important to the utilisation of evaluations and implementation of recommendations (Visser, 2014). Thus, in order to promote evaluation use, implementing organisations should have leadership that promotes a culture of learning, flexibility and adaptation. The interview responses from the commissioners and evaluators are aligned to this finding. It indicates that evaluations are more likely to be used in organisational environments that have a culture of evaluation, more especially where there is management buy-in. An additional view that emerged from the interviews with evaluators was the need for organisations to form a habit of not thinking about evaluations as an event or a milestone but rather to build a culture of smaller in scope, more frequent evaluations along the way. This will help to lay the foundation for a culture where evaluation is an integral part of operations.

The literature also highlights that for improved use, there is a need for relevant staff members to understand evaluation and the value it brings to the improvement of programmes (Visser, 2014) . This evaluation knowledge and appreciation needs to extend beyond management level. Evaluators reported that an organisation's evaluation culture tends to reside with one individual, typically at the

level of management. Both evaluators and commissioners acknowledged a deep evaluation culture only begins to emerge when people at all levels know what evaluations are and why they are important. Evaluators expressed that organisations often commission evaluations but they do not know the purpose of the evaluation. They simply undertake the evaluation since it is good practice to do so. This suggests that there is currently a lack of awareness on evaluation and its applicability. The interviews with evaluators further highlighted a gap in the existence of organisational processes to incorporate evaluation findings into planning and strategy. This speaks to an important point highlighted in the literature - the necessity of a knowledge management system that can facilitate ongoing organisation learning and contribute to ensuring that evaluation findings are preserved for ease of reference when making decisions (Visser, 2014). Knowledge management has the potential to improve the utilisation of evaluations by making knowledge easily accessible and encouraging collective learning, thereby contributing to improved actions or behaviours (Visser, 2014). Therefore, in order to enhance utilisation, implementers need to develop functional knowledge management mechanisms, including systematic dissemination mechanisms, formal and informal knowledge-sharing networks and systems These may include, amongst others, organisational repositories, internal training, evaluation synthesis, evidence maps, webinars, seminars and conferences (Sandison, 2006). .

4.3 THE ROLE OF BENEFICIARIES

In evaluation, the participation of beneficiaries can play an important role in enhancing development outcomes by ensuring that their views and recommendations are communicated to the relevant decision makers (Patton 2012). From the interviews with commissioners, beneficiaries in South Africa are primarily involved in the data collection phase. The interviews also suggest that evaluators are more likely to elicit truthful answers from the beneficiaries if the researchers conducting the fieldwork are relatable and operate within the societal framework of the beneficiary group.

Data collection

Beneficiaries are not the primary drivers of utilisation because they often do not have the power to use evaluation findings. However, beneficiaries do play a pivotal role in providing inputs that drive utilisation (Anderson 2012). According to interviews with evaluators and commissioners, in South Africa, beneficiaries are typically engaged by seeking their opinions as well as eliciting their experiences of the programme or policy. This feedback informs the evaluators and implementers of what the beneficiaries perceive to be the successes and drawbacks of the programme and how the programme can be improved. This enhances the use of evaluation as it enables implementers to design the programme in a way that is desired by direct beneficiaries of the programme or policy as presented by the findings of the evaluation. It is interesting to note that while the literature views beneficiary participation as vital throughout the evaluation and in the dissemination phase, this did not resonate strongly with commissioners. There is acknowledgement of the importance of beneficiary participation in evaluations but their involvement should be at key stages of the evaluation.

Suitable researchers

Private sector commissioners stressed the need to ensure that fieldwork teams are appropriate to the beneficiary target group. This means that researchers need to be able to accommodate the beneficiary group with respect to language, societal norms and an understanding of their socio-economic profile. According to the private sector commissioners this allows beneficiaries to contribute freely without feeling the need to respond in a certain way because of the profile of the researchers asking the questions. When beneficiaries are uncomfortable, they provide partial responses thereby

limiting the usability of the findings. As highlighted in Section 4.1 it is important that the researchers/evaluators seeking beneficiary feedback demonstrate good research skills that will ensure the beneficiaries understand the importance of sharing their experiences of the intervention that is being evaluated and therefore elicit honest responses that will inform programme design.

Beneficiary fatigue

Beneficiaries are expected or encouraged to commit to providing programme feedback by being fully involved in monitoring and evaluation activities such as interviews, surveys and focus group discussions (FGDs). This can lead to beneficiary fatigue. Reducing participation fatigue and beneficiary burden ensures that the beneficiaries are not only included in the evaluation because they have benefited from it, but because they are an important stakeholder. It is also important that beneficiaries are viewed as not only providers of information during data collection, but as key contributors to the evaluation. The importance of beneficiary participation and emphasising how valuable their feedback is, encourages honest responses. This in turn can improve utilisation as more honest feedback means that evaluation findings are more credible, which means higher quality evaluations that are more likely to be trusted and used by stakeholders (Anderson, 2012).

In this research, commissioners noted that there appears to be a low prevalence of evaluation fatigue. Commissioners try to avoid evaluation fatigue by having evaluation plans that clearly define beneficiary groups. However, some evaluators did highlight that the environmental sector and health sector are characterised by high beneficiary fatigue. In addition, beneficiary feedback is compulsory in some sectors but this is not clearly communicated to the beneficiaries, thereby resulting in a reluctance to provide feedback.

5 IMPLICATIONS OF THE EVALUATION PROCESS ON UTILISATION

The aim of evaluations is to assess the extent to which interventions are achieving their intended objectives. Certain processes and procedures are followed when conducting an evaluation. This section presents findings on how evaluation processes affect utilisation.

The key factors that are discussed under this section are the timing of an evaluation, the length of the evaluation process and the process of implementing recommendations.

5.1 TIMING OF AN EVALUATION

Since there are different types of evaluations, namely design, implementation and impact evaluations, it is imperative to take cognisance of the timing of the evaluation and ensure that evaluations are conducted at a relevant and appropriate time. Evaluations must be completed in time to accommodate the timely use of recommendations. This is particularly the case for design and implementation evaluations where the former informs the evaluation design and the latter, the intervention's process.

Public sector interviewees noted that the timely development of the evaluation's Terms of Reference (ToR) and the call for proposals by commissioners, particularly government departments, is one of the factors that could possibly enhance evaluation use. The respondents indicated that there are often delays on the part of government departments in responding to bids from service providers. As

a result, the evaluations often commence late and there is little time to implement the recommendations as a consequence.

Public sector respondents also stated that one of the hindrances to use is delayed access to recommendations – this is when the implementers receive an evaluation report of a programme at the end of implementation. According to the respondents, this limits the use of recommendations as some of the programmes may not be rolled out in future or may not be scaled up. This often happens when the evaluation timelines are pushed out due to delays in accessing information, delayed processes of ethics board approval and other internal political and organisational issues. Section 6.1 below speaks to different uses of evaluation, in this case, *instrumental use* can be directly influenced by the timing of the evaluation. This finding was supported by the literature, (Ledermann, 2012) states that, when evaluations are used instrumentally, the recommendations and findings generated, could inform decision making and lead to changes in the intervention

The literature review highlighted that timing is extremely important if the results of an evaluation are to be used to effect change. Evaluations should be timed in such a way that their findings and recommendations are available when decisions are being made or actions are being taken (International Development Research Centre, 2012). The right recommendations delivered at the wrong time will not be useful to project implementers. As such, the literature suggests that evaluations should be conducted at a point when changes can be made with relative ease or when results can be linked to decisions about resource allocation (Earl & Earl, 1996).

5.2 MISTRUST

Public sector commissioners indicated that mistrust of evaluators is one of the factors inhibiting use. According to the public-sector respondents, the evaluators are often perceived as auditors who are eager to highlight the shortcomings of an intervention without fully understanding what led to those results. Furthermore, there are instances where the public-sector commissioners do not trust that the evaluators fully understand the contextual issues related to implementation. For this reason, the public-sector commissioners feel that the evaluation does not always accurately capture the internal politics and dynamics that may have resulted in implementation challenges. Section 4.2 noted that an evaluator should be a critical friend in order to build trust between the commissioner and the evaluator. When the commissioner trusts the evaluator, the evaluation is likely to be used.

5.3 IMPLEMENTING RECOMMENDATIONS

The research found that in addition to there being an evaluation process, particularly in the case of government departments, there is also a process of selecting recommendations to be used. The interviewed commissioners indicated that, once evaluations are concluded, the implementers decide on the recommendations to be implemented. This process entails prioritising and selecting implementable recommendations. As reported by the commissioners, this process takes cognisance of the practicality of the recommendation as well as the resources and time available to implement those recommendations. This implies that the use is directly influenced by feasibility, resources and time.

This view is supported by the literature that states that evaluation utilisation is enhanced when recommendations are consistent with an organisation's operating context (Earl & Earl, 1996). Thus, for implementers, it is important that the recommendations are realistic and feasible on the ground and make sense in light of the organisational strategy and context. Implementers value evaluations

that are pragmatic and which include clear, practical alternatives, presented in an articulate and concise manner in order to facilitate understanding and use

As indicated by commissioners in the private sector, corporate boards decide which recommendations will be implemented. A board will prioritise the recommendations based on its alignment with business objectives while the public sector prioritises recommendations using different criteria. It is important to note that while the private sector selects their own beneficiaries, the government is mandated with delivering services to the general public. This implies that the process of selecting and implementing recommendations differ between the private and public sectors. The literature also indicated that there are various factors that affect the extent to which recommendations can be implemented. The literature specified that even when evaluations are of a high quality and present practical recommendations, political factors such as the will of senior managers and the organisational policies can limit the ability of senior management to implement recommendations (Uusikyla & Virtanen, 2000 and Picciotto, 2016). As mentioned above, an organisational culture of learning is important to the utilisation of evaluations and implementation of recommendations (Visser, 2014). Thus, in order to promote evaluation use, implementing organisations should have leadership that promotes a culture of learning, flexibility and adaptation.

6 HIGH UTILITY EVALUATION PRODUCTS

Although there is an acknowledgment that quality is not the only factor that influences the use of evaluations, it is nonetheless still an important factor. This section starts by revisiting the different types of evaluations followed by a discussion on the quality of evaluators and the role that the competence of evaluators can play in ensuring the use of evaluations. This section then goes on to discuss evaluation products and how they can be developed, presented and delivered in a way that supports use.

6.1 DIFFERENT TYPES OF EVALUATION USE

Evaluations are often judged based on the extent to which they have been used and the benefits they have realised for commissioners of evaluations, evaluators and the beneficiaries (Ledermann, 2012). In the literature review, we explained four main types of evaluation uses, namely, i) instrumental use, ii) conceptual use, iii) process use, and iv) symbolic use (Højlund, 2014). This classification is important because most of the literature on the use of evaluation focuses on usage once the evaluations are completed and reports submitted, yet utility can be derived throughout the evaluation process (Forss, Claus, & Jerker , 2002). The four types of evaluation use fall into two categories namely, findings use, which refers to the use of evaluation findings, and process use, which refers to using the lessons learned through participating in the evaluation process. Instrumental, conceptual and symbolic use fall within the ambit of findings use.

1. **Instrumental use** refers to a case where the recommendations and findings generated from an evaluation, could inform decision making and lead to changes in the intervention (Ledermann, 2012). Through instrumental use, a direct action, such as policy change should occur as a result of the evaluation (Henry & Mark, 2003).

2. **Conceptual use** is when an evaluation results in an improved understanding of the intervention and its context, or a change in the conception of the evaluand (policy, programme or project (Ledermann, 2012).

3. **Symbolic use** refers to a case where people or organisations use the mere existence of an evaluation, rather than any aspect of its results, to persuade or to convince others of a particular position (Johnson, et al., 2009, p. 378). Some authors note that symbolic use is when an evaluation is used to "persuade important stakeholders that the programme or organisation values accountability, while others say that symbolic use is when evaluations are used to justify an already an existing position (Fleischer & Christie, 2009).

4. **Process use** refers to the value derived by stakeholders from merely partaking in the planning and implementation of evaluations (Forss, 2002; Henry et al, 2003; Ledermann, 2012). The evaluation report may not necessarily be used but there may be other benefits of participating in the process, to the organisation or stakeholders.

6.2 THE ROLE OF EVALUATORS IN ENSURING HIGH UTILITY EVALUATION PRODUCTS

Interviews with both commissioners and evaluators highlighted that the key characteristics of good evaluators include the ability to apply innovative methods when conducting evaluations, effective engagement with stakeholders throughout the evaluation process, and the ability to present objective and well-written reports. Good evaluators also go beyond writing policy statements. They display an understanding of programme implementation challenges and articulate these in the findings and recommendations sections of the evaluation reports. The interviews conducted also found that there is a difference between research expertise and evaluation expertise, especially with respect to competencies. This finding is in line with that of the literature review in the discussion on evaluator competencies. According to the literature, the processes followed for conducting evaluations and the actual reports should withstand scrutiny in order for the evaluation to be used. This means that evaluators have to be technically competent and choose methodologies that are appropriate to the context and to the evaluation questions being asked. Additionally, evaluators must be capable of communicating evaluation findings in a manner that is accessible and understood by evaluation stakeholders (Forss, 2002; Henry et al, 2003; Ledermann, 2012). The competence of the evaluators is therefore likely to drive evaluation quality, which is an important determinant of whether evaluation findings and recommendations are trusted and used (Patton, 2012).

Findings from interviews with various stakeholders indicate that evaluator competencies affect evaluation quality, and evaluation quality can determine whether evaluation findings and recommendations are trusted and used. Evaluators therefore need a combination of evaluation competencies, effective communication skills and the ability to manage respondents in order to increase the potential for evaluation use.

Both evaluators and commissioners reported that a solid research background is essential for good evaluators but there are additional competencies that are required. Below is a list of additional competencies that evaluators need to possess, as reported by interview respondents:

- Communication skills (written reports, data visualisation and simple language)
- Understanding of the political context in which the interventions are taking place
- Ability to decipher policy implications of findings and recommendations
- Ability to craft usable recommendations, taking into account limitations for the implementers
- Ability to facilitate workshops and other forms of communication with a range of stakeholders to help them understand the evaluation process
- Ability to produce a range of communication products to suit the different stakeholders

- Ability to apply appropriate evaluation methods and use these to come up with logical findings that arise from the research process
- Formal academic training in evaluation. This point is explained in more detail in Section 4.1

It was discouraging to find that many of the public-sector interviewees felt that South Africa does not have enough capacity in the evaluation sector and that there are service providers who are unable to conduct good evaluations on time, using appropriate methodologies. A number of the respondents from government reported that they feel that South Africa has low evaluation capacity both on the supply and demand-side. This means that the evaluators that are perceived to be good are used often and are therefore over-extended. In addition, there are few good evaluation reports which leads to these reports often being recycled. There was also a view from evaluators and commissioners, that when high quality evaluations are produced, they are not always effectively communicated. The language is often too complicated, too academic and divorced from reality. Evaluators therefore have a responsibility to write reports that are simpler and clearer. In the literature review discussion on the different types of evaluation uses, process use was defined as the value derived by stakeholders from taking part in the planning and implementation of evaluations (Forss, 2002; Henry et al, 2003; Ledermann, 2012). The quality of this participation depends partly on the quality of the evaluator and their ability to frame the evaluation, facilitate a shared understanding amongst stakeholders and facilitate learning. This means that quality evaluators are essential for evaluation utilisation.

The literature reviewed also highlighted that in the field of evaluation, the value of an evaluation should be judged based on the extent to which it has been used and the benefits it has realised for commissioners of evaluations, evaluators and the beneficiaries (Ledermann, 2012). Evaluation use is particularly important for programme managers and implementers because they are responsible for ensuring programme improvement and the delivery of programme objectives for beneficiaries (Højlund, 2014). Evaluators therefore, play an important role in facilitating and supporting the different types of uses of evaluation. Table 3 below, outlines the different types of evaluation use and the role that evaluators can play in ensuring the effective use of evaluations.

Table 3[2]: Summary of types of evaluation uses and the role of evaluators

Main Feature	Role of evaluators in ensuring effective use
Instrumental Use	
• Evaluation findings inform, decision making and lead to changes in the intervention • Direct action[3] taken as a result of an evaluation	Evaluators need to develop valid findings based on robust evaluation methodology. The recommendations should be clear and practical enough that they can result in direct action.
Conceptual Use	
• The evaluation results in an improved understanding of an intervention • Something new is learned about of the intervention and its context	Evaluators can facilitate a learning process which helps stakeholders understand their interventions better.
Symbolic Use	
• Evaluations are done to justify an already existing position and to legitimise decisions that have already been taken	Evaluators should be skilled enough to pick up on cases where evaluations are done with legitimate motives for learning and when evaluations are done as a tick box activity. In such cases, evaluators can opt to not do the evaluation or do the evaluation and dedicate time to helping the organisation to understand the value of evaluations and how they can build a culture of

[2] Sources: Henry & Mark (2003), Ledermann (2012), Johnson, et al., (2009), Forss (2002); Henry et al, (2003) and Patton (2012)
[3] For example: policy changes, scale-up, discontinuation.

Main Feature	Role of evaluators in ensuring effective use
	evaluation. This is necessary because there are organisations that view evaluation as a policing tool rather than a learning exercise to improve programmes.
Process Use	
• The value derived through stakeholders participating in the planning and implementation of evaluations	Evaluators can help to build a culture of evaluation in organisations and ensure sustained impacts of process use. Once again, this can be done by explaining to organisations that evaluations are an important tool to improve performance and can provide practical ways to incorporate lessons from evaluation into everyday work.

6.3 FRAMING THE EVALUATION

Evaluation commissioners reported that evaluators need to develop, or enhance, the skill of clearly thinking through evaluation approaches and developing evaluation questions. This is possible through advanced research skills and can be enhanced by sector knowledge. Evaluators with sector knowledge, or who include a sector expert on their team, can ensure that the evaluation is structured in a useful way which would ultimately improve utilisation. According to the findings of the literature review evaluators must make use of internal and external peer review mechanisms to strengthen this element. This is considered good practice and relates to the accuracy and accountability standards which require evaluations to not only reveal technically adequate information but to do so in a way that is in accordance with standards of quality (Patton, 2012).

6.4 PRESENTING EVALUATION FINDINGS

According to the evaluators, there is a misconception that there is a direct link between evaluation quality and use. In reality, there are cases where high quality evaluations are not used. This view is consistent with the findings of the literature reviewed which states that even when evaluations are of a high quality and present practical recommendations, political factors such as the will of senior managers and the organisational policies can limit the ability of senior management to implement recommendations (Uusikyla & Virtanen, 2000 and Picciotto, 2016). In the discussion on types of evaluation use, it is clear that sometimes commissioners use evaluations to justify decisions and not as a tool to learn and improve accountability (Fleischer & Christie, 2009). Respondents viewed the key determinants of evaluation use as being accessibility of findings and communication. The commissioners that were interviewed stated that the are often overwhelmed with overly complicated reports that contain too much of technical jargon. An evaluator that was interviewed agreed that evaluators need to work on demystifying evaluations.

The literature review also highlighted that it is not uncommon for reports of good technical quality to be unused because of external factors such as the political environment or the interests of different groups (Picciotto, 2016). The possibility of quality evaluations not being used is higher when evaluations are done for symbolic use. This is because in symbolic use, the answer/action precedes the evaluation and the quality of the evaluation is not a precondition or determinant use. This is also true for process use where people benefit from the evaluation by merely taking part in the different processes. This implies that an evaluation can be useful regardless of the quality of the final report but it can also be useless regardless of how good the technical quality is.

6.5 EVALUATION OUTPUTS

Although there were some commissioners who thought that the evaluations that they have received are often presented in a clear and concise manner, many of them held the opposite view. There was a general consensus from both evaluators and commissioners that evaluators do not provide reports with clear findings. Public sector and foundation commissioners noted that some evaluations are too technical and presented in an inaccessible way. These commissioners also noted that evaluators write too generically and exclude important details such as the evaluation process and the implications of findings; and that this is partly because evaluators are not necessarily communicators and partly because it is sometimes difficult to simplify complex concepts, particularly in quantitative evaluations.

Some government respondents and evaluators also reported that evaluators sometimes deliberately hide behind the jargon in order to mask their incompetence. This is concerning because the literature highlighted that evaluation use can be enhanced through the use of simple language and reports that are tailored to different audiences. According to Uusikyla and Virtanen (2000), evaluators must ensure that the users of evaluations have a general understanding of the results. A public sector commissioner that was interviewed reported that this is achievable through the use of simple language and reports tailored to different audiences, for example policy briefs for policy makers and audio-visual presentations for beneficiaries. This speaks to the utility standard of evaluation which emphasises that evaluations should serve the information needs of its users (Patton, 2012).

6.6 APPROACHES TO ENSURE THAT EVALUATION FINDINGS ARE DELIVERED WITH CLARITY

According to the evaluators and commissioners interviewed, evaluators can improve the clarity of evaluation findings by changing the way that findings are packaged and moving towards more visually appealing ways to present data. This can be done by making a clear link between findings and recommendations and presenting these in user friendly reports. Literature shows that the way reports are written and presented can enhance or inhibit use by commissioners of evaluations. Reports that are too complicated and present technical jargon run the risk of not being used even if commissioners intend to use them. (Uusikyla & Virtanen, 2000). In addition, evaluations that do not present decision makers with meaningful information cannot be used, even if commissioners are willing (Fleischer & Christie, 2009)

Both evaluators and evaluation commissioners (in both the public and private sectors) that were interviewed reported that evaluations should also take into account the different stakeholders of the intervention and then develop appropriate communication materials for each of them. Face-to-face contact is also important when building consensus. This can take the form of workshops to develop recommendations and validate which findings are most relevant, and then selecting recommendations which are most feasible to implement. Evaluators can also use stories to explain the evaluation when engaging with the different stakeholders, particularly beneficiaries. Certain stakeholders respond better to data that is visualised and find this form of reporting more accessible.

There was an acknowledgement during the interviews that there are cases where it is not easy to simplify certain sections of the evaluation reports but evaluators still need to make an effort to make the findings and recommendations sections as simple and clear as possible. Sections such as the evaluation approach and methodology can remain technical if they cannot be simplified but the findings and recommendations need to be understood well by the end user who need to implement

proposed changes. The findings are important for instrumental and conceptual use. For conceptual use to occur and for the "enlightenment" to happen, findings need to present new knowledge that is accessible to a wider group of stakeholders. In instrumental use, the findings are important for justifying changes in the programmes or policies evaluated and so they have to reflect the true reality of what is happening with the intervention.

6.7 REVIEW OF EVALUATION OUTPUTS

As part of the research conducted, 15[4] evaluations were reviewed. As noted in Section 2, in reviewing the evaluations, the Stufflebeam (1999) utility checklist was used. This checklist focuses on i) stakeholder identification, ii) evaluator credibility, iii) information scope and selection, iv) values identification, v) report clarity, vi) report timeliness and dissemination, and vii) evaluation impact (Stufflebeam, 1999). In addition to using Stufflebeam's criteria, where available, evaluation report quality assessments were consulted.

6.7.1 Findings of review

Table 4 below shows the breakdown of evaluations that were reviewed. The evaluations reviewed covered six evaluation types, eight years (2008 – 2016), six commissioner types, and four service provider types.

Table 4: Breakdown of evaluations reviewed

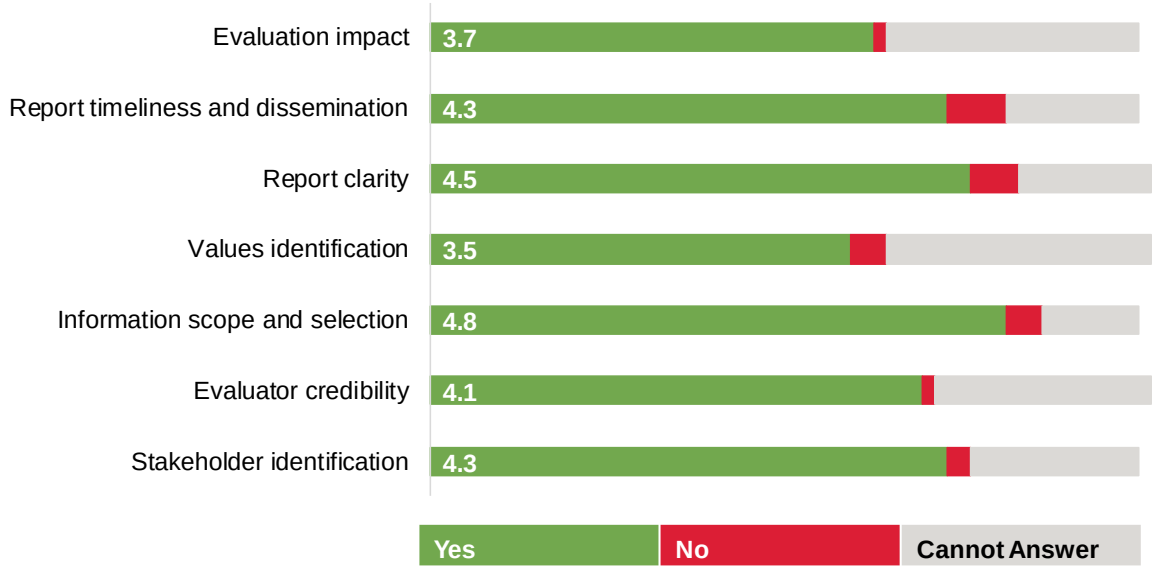
Category	Sub-Category	Number of Evaluations Reviewed (% of Total)
Evaluation type	Endline / final	4 (26.7%)
	Impact	3 (20%)
	Implementation	3 (20%)
	Evaluation Synthesis	2 (13.3%)
	Mid-term	2 (13.3%)
	Diagnostic	1 (6.7%)
	Total	**15**
Year completed	2014	5 (33.3%)
	2012	4 (26.7%)
	2015	3 (20%)
	2008	3 (20%)
	2013	1 (6.7%)
	2016	1 (6.7%)
	Total	**15**
Commissioner type	National government	6 (40%)
	Provincial government	5 (33.3%)
	Donor	1 (6.7%)
	Government agency	1 (6.7%)
	National government and multilateral organisation	1 (6.7%)

[4] In deciding on the number of evaluations to be reviewed, the research team surveyed 23 service providers. The purpose of the survey was to ascertain approximately how many evaluations are conducted in South African annually. It was agreed with SAMEA that 10% of the total number of evaluations would be sampled. 14 survey responses were received. The 14 respondents completed a total of 51 evaluations in 2016. However, when asked how many are completed annually, on average, over the past five years, this number increased to 91. For these 14 respondents then, an average of four evaluations were completed per respondent in 2016, and seven per respondent based on the average number of evaluations per year. In extrapolating an estimate of the total number of evaluations completed in South Africa annually, the average number of evaluations conducted per service provider annually (seven) was multiplied by the number of service providers that received the survey (23). The estimated total number of evaluations conducted in South Africa annually is therefore 161. Based on this, 16 evaluations were reviewed.

Category	Sub-Category	Number of Evaluations Reviewed (% of Total)
	Private sector	1 (6.7%)
	Total	**15**
Service provider type	Private company	6 (40%)
	Individual	4 (26.7%)
	Research institute	4 (26.7%)
	Multilateral institution	1 (6.7%)
	Total	**15**

Figure 3 below provides a summary of the scores assigned to each of Stufflebeam's (1999) six utility criteria, which as noted in Section 2 above, are scored out of a potential six points. Of the six criteria, information scope and clarity is rated the highest (4.8 out of 6), followed by report clarity (4.5), and report timeliness and dissemination and stakeholder identification (4.3). Values identification (3.5) and evaluation impact (3.7) score the lowest. The appendix presents the the full six criteria and their sub-questions; the findings relating to each sub-question, and provides a more detailed assessment of the evaluation reports performance against the criteria.

Figure 3: Evaluation report average utility scores (N=15)



6.7.2 Triangulation using DPME's quality assessment scores

Of the 15 evaluations reviewed, 13 of those had been quality assessed through the Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME) quality assessment process. The evaluations that are quality assessed through DPME receive a score between 1 and 5 where 1 is *very poor*, 2 *inadequate*, 3 *adequate*, 4 *good* and 5 *excellent*). The DPME quality assessment function is summarised in Box 1 below.

Box 1: DPME Quality Assessment Process

The DPME quality assessments are based on a quality assessment tool that was developed using DPME's evaluation standards. In January 2017, DPME reported that 157 quality assessments had been undertaken for evaluations conducted between 2003 and 2016. For this research, 13 quality assessments were reviewed. The quality assessment tool is divided into different phases and areas of evaluation. After analysing the overall

scores for the 13 evaluations that were reviewed, key focus areas were selected that relate specifically to evaluation utilisation. These are:

- **Appropriateness of evaluation design** speaks to whether the evaluation makes reference to the theory of change, whether the methodology is appropriate for the questions asked, and the sampling method
- **Accessibility of content** speaks to whether the report is user friendly and written in language that is accessible to the reader, as well as the use of visuals and data presentation
- **Robustness of findings** speaks to whether findings are supported by evidence which is sufficiently and appropriately analysed to support the argument as well as the extent to which different sources of data are integrated
- **Strength of evaluation conclusions** speaks to whether conclusions are derived from evidence and whether these conclusions address the original evaluation purpose and questions

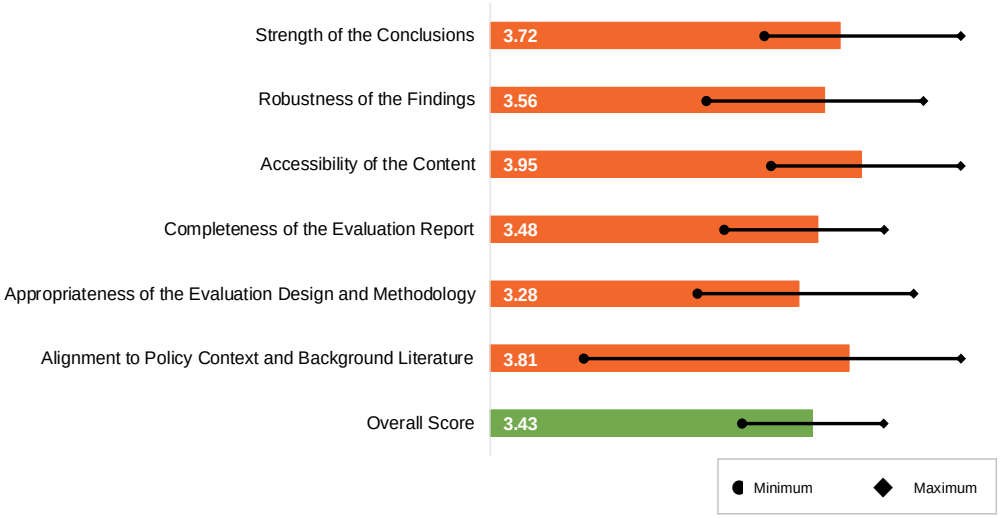
Using the afore-mentioned Likert scale, it was found that 11 out of the 13 evaluations reviewed scored above 3, meaning that over 80% of the evaluations were *adequate*. Two evaluations were rated *good* and one was rated *inadequate*. None of the evaluations were excellent and none were very poor.

Many respondents, across both commissioners and evaluators, reported that the evaluations produced in South Africa are adequate but fall short in terms of the accessibility of the writing and the way in which they are communicated. This implies that evaluations meet basic standards but more work needs to be done for evaluations to reach excellent status. The discussion on high utility evaluation products highlighted that quality evaluations are those that apply innovative evaluation methods, where reports have clear findings and practical recommendations and are written in a way that is accessible to the client.

In assessing the DPME quality assessment tools, *accessibility of content* is the highest-ranking criterion of the utilisation-related criteria – scoring an average of 3.95 out of 5. This, however, is contrary to findings from interviews where evaluation commissioners indicated that evaluators do not provide evaluations with clear findings. The respondents argued that the evaluation reports produced are often highly technical and make use of inaccessible language. This suggests that perhaps the need for simplifying evaluation reports is not as pronounced in the evaluation review as was reported in the interviews.

Appropriateness of evaluation design, *robustness of findings* and *strength of conclusions* each scored an average of 3.28, 3.56 and 3.72 respectively as can be seen in Figure 3 below. Despite these relatively high scores, the interview data suggests that areas of improvement remain for the *appropriateness of evaluation design* and *strength of conclusions*. With respect to *appropriateness of evaluation design*, respondents reported that evaluators need to develop good evaluation questions that will drive the discussion instead of pre-defining expected responses. Furthermore, more time needs to be allocated in the inception phase to ensuring that appropriate evaluation methods are used. Addressing these areas will significantly contribute to strengthening the appropriateness of the evaluation design.

Figure 4: Average of reviewed Evaluation Quality Assessment Tool scores



Providing strong conclusions is essential to producing quality evaluations. The DPME quality assessments reviewed reveal that evaluators are performing well in this regard. With this said, key informants suggested that clearer links need to be made between findings and the recommendations provided. In addition, providing recommendations that are appropriate to the operating context is a key area in which evaluators can also make improvements in order to ensure that their evaluations are utilised.

7 CONCLUSIONS

This report documents the key findings from a research project that focuses on understanding the factors that influence the use of evaluations in South Africa. This research is intended to assist in strengthening the evaluation profession in South Africa. The key findings from this research are summarised below:

- **Relevant stakeholder participation:** As detailed in Section 4 above, the participation of all relevant stakeholders in an evaluation is a key enabler for the utilisation of evaluations. Primary evaluation stakeholders typically include, evaluators, commissioners, beneficiaries, implementers, and sector experts. These stakeholders are involved at different stages of the evaluation process, for example; evaluation design, data collection, and communicating evaluations results.

  Specifically, evaluators should consider how they can become more inclusive in evaluations and present findings and recommendations in a supportive way, in the way that a critical friend would. It was clear from the responses that although evaluators need to be objective and deliver accurate facts, the way that this is executed has an impact on whether the evaluation findings are used. In addition, there is an identified need to professionalise the evaluation practice as a means of gaining credibility with commissioners.

  Usage is also greatly influenced by two factors which commissioners introduce. The first is in the establishment of steering committees which can sometimes detract an evaluation from its purposes, thereby compromising its usefulness. Steering committees should only be brought in at strategic points in the evaluation and should not be involved in the day-to-day

evaluation process. The commissioners' organisational attitude towards evaluation also has an impact and the evaluator should consider how they can positively cultivate this attitude.

At the beneficiary level, participation should again be maximised but only at strategic points e.g. in the data collection phase. That being said, the researchers should be sensitive to the beneficiary's context and beneficiary fatigue should be minimised, although this has not been identified as a problem in the South African context

- **Implications of the evaluation process:** As noted in Section 5.1 above, evaluations should be commissioned and conducted at the right time to ensure that recommendations can be effectively used in programme design. In the case of the public sector, there are often significant delays in the procurement of evaluators which severely compromises the timeliness of the evaluation. In addition, commissioners sometimes question whether evaluators fully understand the contextual environment of the programme which then questions the relevance and usefulness of the recommendations. Furthermore, recommendations should be drafted in cognisance of its practicality as well as the resources and time available to implement those recommendations. This finding came strongly from interviews; however, it was not emphasised by the literature.
- **High utility evaluation products:** Section 6 highlights that while rigour is prioritised in a good evaluation, the presentation of the evaluation outputs also influences the usefulness of the evaluation report. Commissioners are sceptical of evaluators that present technical jargon but prefer simplified reports that are visually appealing. In addition, the evaluators should make an effort to communicate the results of the evaluation and work with the commissioner to implement the recommendations, if possible.

Overall, this research provides some practical guidance on how evaluators, commissioners and beneficiaries can play a key role in enhancing the use of evaluation thereby strengthening evaluation practice in South Africa. Specifically, the role of each stakeholder needs to be enhanced as follows:

- **Evaluators** should seek to present objective and well-written reports that simply and clearly communicate the key messages to commissioners. Furthermore, evaluators should facilitate effective engagement with all key stakeholders, acting as a critical friend and applying innovative methods when conducting evaluations.
- **Commissioners** can enhance utilisation by actively taking part in the identification, prioritisation and inclusion of relevant stakeholders in the evaluation process as well creating an organisational learning culture that encourages use of evaluations.
- There is an acknowledgement that the participation of **beneficiaries** can improve the quality of evaluations but their participation should be facilitated by evaluators or commissioners. Beneficiaries can be involved in the design of evaluations, the formulation of recommendations and the communication of evaluation results.

Going forward, new research should interrogate the roles of these stakeholders to understand how their roles can be further enhanced to achieve high use of evaluations in South Africa.

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APPENDIX: EXPLORING THE SUBQUESTIONS

STUFFLEBEAM'S SIX CRITERIA FOR THE UTILITY OF AN EVALUATION

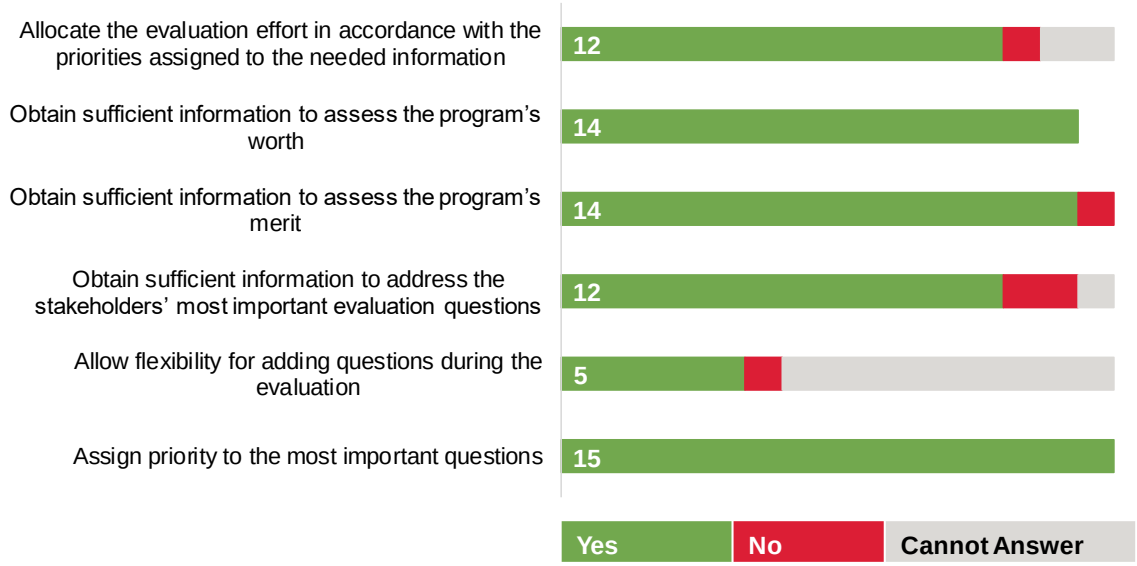
1 - Stakeholder Identification (PRODUCT AND PROCESS)				
☐ Clearly identify the evaluation client				
☐ Engage leadership figures to identify other stakeholders				
☐ Consult stakeholders to identify their information needs				
☐ Ask stakeholders to identify other stakeholders				
☐ Arrange to involve stakeholders throughout the evaluation, consistent with the formal evaluation agreement				
☐ Keep the evaluation open to serve newly identified stakeholders				
☐ 6 Excellent	☐ 5 Very Good	☐ 4 Good	☐ 2 – 3 Fair	☐ 0 – 1 Poor
2 – Evaluator Credibility (PROCESS)				
☐ Engage competent evaluators				
☐ Engage evaluators whom the stakeholders trust				
☐ Engage evaluators who can address stakeholders' concerns				
☐ Engage evaluators who are appropriately responsive to issues of gender, socioeconomic status, race, and language and cultural differences				
☐ Help stakeholders understand and assess the evaluation plan and process				
☐ Attend appropriately to stakeholders' criticisms and suggestions				
☐ 6 Excellent	☐ 5 Very Good	☐ 4 Good	☐ 2 – 3 Fair	☐ 0 – 1 Poor
3 – Information Scope and Selection (PRODUCT)				
☐ Assign priority to the most important questions				
☐ Allow flexibility for adding questions during the evaluation				
☐ Obtain sufficient information to address the stakeholders' most important evaluation questions				
☐ Obtain sufficient information to assess the program's merit				
☐ Obtain sufficient information to assess the program's worth				
☐ Allocate the evaluation effort in accordance with the priorities assigned to the needed information				
☐ 6 Excellent	☐ 5 Very Good	☐ 4 Good	☐ 2 – 3 Fair	☐ 0 – 1 Poor
4 – Values Identification (PRODUCT AND PROCESS)				
☐ Consider all relevant sources of values for interpreting evaluation findings, including societal needs, customer needs, pertinent laws, institutional mission, and program goals				
☐ Determine the appropriate party(s) to make the valuational interpretations				
☐ Provide a clear, defensible basis for value judgments				
☐ Distinguish appropriately among dimensions, weights, and cut scores on the involved values				
☐ Take into account the stakeholders' values				
☐ As appropriate, present alternative interpretations based on conflicting but credible value bases				
☐ 6 Excellent	☐ 5 Very Good	☐ 4 Good	☐ 2 – 3 Fair	☐ 0 – 1 Poor
5 – Report Clarity (PRODUCT)				
☐ Issue one or more reports as appropriate, such as an executive summary, main report, technical report, and oral presentation				
☐ As appropriate, address the special needs of the audiences, such as persons with limited English proficiency				
☐ Focus reports on contracted questions and convey the essential information in each report				
☐ Write and/or present the findings simply and directly				
☐ Employ effective media for informing the different audiences				
☐ Use examples to help audiences relate the findings to practical situations				

☐ 6 Excellent	☐ 5 Very Good	☐ 4 Good	☐ 2 – 3 Fair	☐ 0 – 1 Poor
6 – Report Timeliness and Dissemination (PRODUCT AND PROCESS)				
☐ In cooperation with the client, make special efforts to identify, reach, and inform all intended users				
☐ Make timely interim reports to intended users				
☐ Have timely exchanges with the pertinent audiences, e.g., the program's policy board, the program's staff, and the program's customers				
☐ Deliver the final report when it is needed				
☐ As appropriate, issue press releases to the public media				
☐ If allowed by the evaluation contract and as appropriate, make findings publicly available via such media as the Internet				
☐ 6 Excellent	☐ 5 Very Good	☐ 4 Good	☐ 2 – 3 Fair	☐ 0 – 1 Poor
7 – Evaluation Impact (PROCESS)				
☐ As appropriate and feasible, keep audiences informed throughout the evaluation				
☐ Forecast and serve potential uses of findings				
☐ Provide interim reports				
☐ Supplement written reports with ongoing oral communication				
☐ To the extent appropriate, conduct feedback sessions to go over and apply findings				
☐ Make arrangements to provide follow-up assistance in interpreting and applying the findings				
☐ 6 Excellent	☐ 5 Very Good	☐ 4 Good	☐ 2 – 3 Fair	☐ 0 – 1 Poor

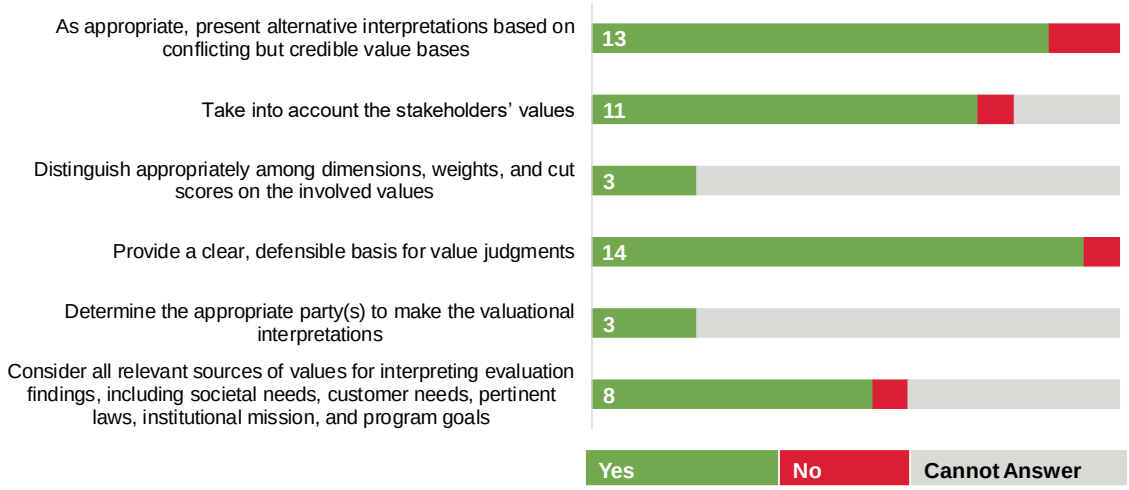
STAKEHOLDER IDENTIFICATION

EVALUATOR CREDIBILITY

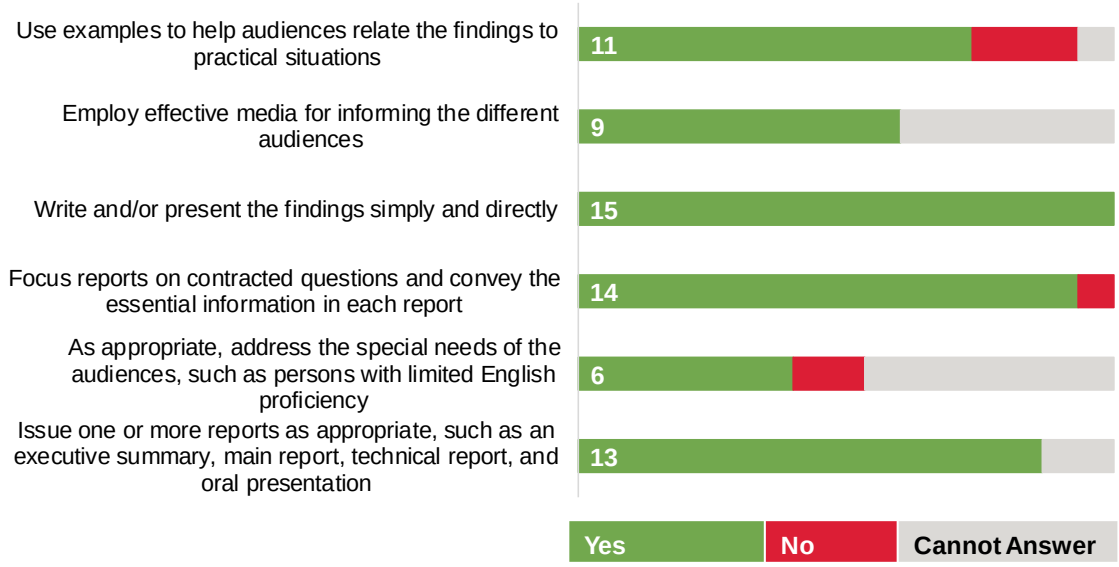
INFORMATION SCOPE AND SELECTION



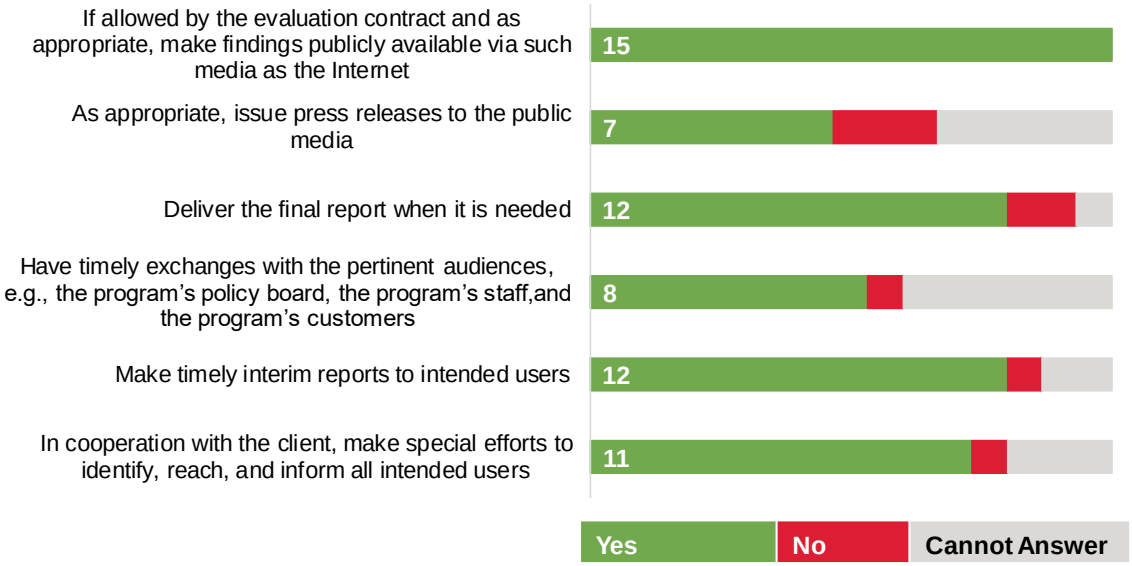
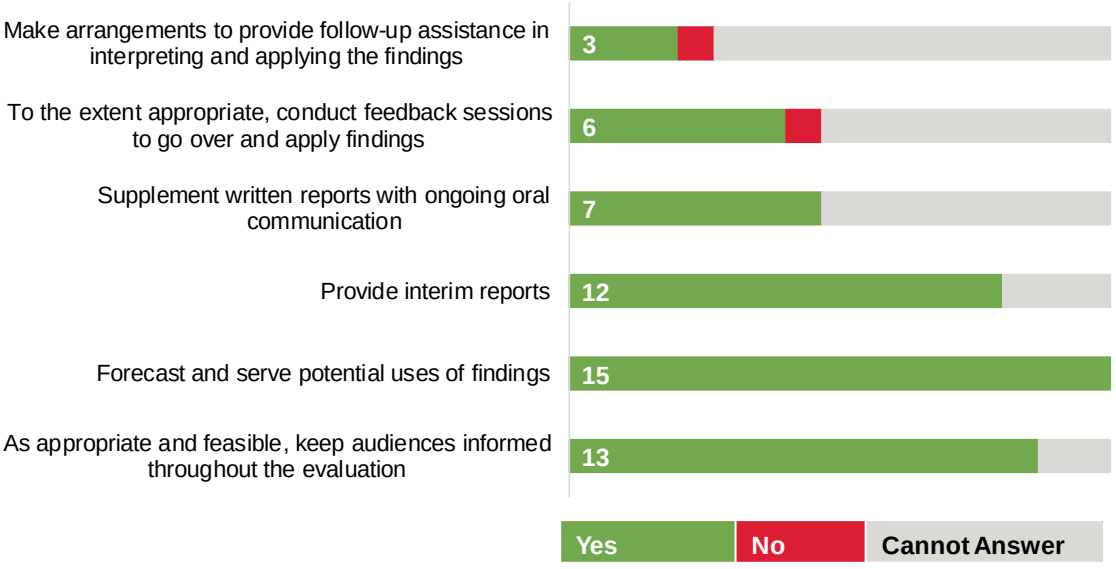
VALUES IDENTIFICATION



REPORT CLARITY



REPORT TIMELINESS AND DISSEMINATION



EVALUATION IMPACT