



Strengthening Evaluation Alliance (SEA): a concept note

In 2015 a study was undertaken that explored professionalising evaluation in South Africa. Its findings were clear and indicated that such a step would be premature and that the country's evaluation system first needs to be strengthened overall. As part of the conclusion to the study, a "Roadmap to Strengthening Evaluation" was developed in partnership with the Department of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation. SAMEA has also incorporated "Strengthening Evaluation" as one its two substantive programme areas. Part of its work in that area has seen it facilitate four research projects into the state of evaluation in SA, an initiative undertaken in partnership with CREST and CLEAR, with funding provided by CLEAR.

These efforts have made it apparent that strengthening evaluation in SA cannot be achieved by any one institution but needs to be an authentically collaborative exercise undertaken over a long period of time, at least a decade. Arising from this understanding an agreement has been reached on the need to convene an alliance of partners that will work on strengthening evaluation in SA, with SAMEA playing the lead, supported by a diverse range of long-term partners.

This Concept Note proposes the formal creation of the Strengthening Evaluation Alliance (SEA) and gives an overview of its purpose, role players and approach.

The proposed alliance will seek to contribute to developing a mature, evidence-led, inclusive country evaluation system in which:

1. There is an ongoing national conversation regarding evaluation and its potential contribution to the development of SA
2. The national evaluation association is effective
3. There is a supply of evaluators specialising in different disciplines and approaches

4. Evaluations are of an acceptable standard and are credible
5. Findings are used

Potential role players:

None of the parties listed here have yet agreed to participate but it is hoped that the following institutional partners will be agree to be founding partners to the Alliance:

- SAMEA, as the national VOPE
- DPME as a Government representative
- Academic institutions
- CLEAR AA
- CSI partners

An invitation will be sent out to all key stakeholders across sectors

Strategic approach

The Alliance is not intended to ever be an institution and will always focus on facilitating collaboration by its members, through whom the results will be achieved. It is envisaged that the Alliance will require limited funding and its activities will be coordinated at first by SAMEA, as part of its system strengthening portfolio.

EvalPartners, the global movement to strengthen national evaluation capacities, developed the Global Evaluation Agenda 2016-2020. This agenda builds on the support from UN General Assembly resolution A/RES/69/237 and the 92+ events that were organized around the globe in celebration of EvalYear 2015. While this is ambitious for a three year period, it provides a useful framework for the proposed work of the alliance

The EvalPartners framework proposes “four essential dimensions” for strengthening M&E:

- Strengthening the Enabling Environment for Evaluation;
- Strengthening institutional capacities;
- Strengthening of individual capacities for evaluation and
- Strengthening inter linkages.

<http://www.evalpartners.org/global-evaluation-agenda>

These 4 dimensions cannot be seen as independent but rather a part of a whole, connected and cohesive endeavor

Dimensions	Current situation	Potential strategies (period 3 years)	Outcomes
Strengthening institutional capacities	<p>Training and capacity building needs better coordination and supply needs to be better matched to demand.</p> <p>Strengthen existing university offerings</p>	<p>The Alliance will explore developing a taxonomy of types of training, mapping existing provision and commissioning the development of new curricula where needed. It will also play an information provision role so prospective users of training services can be advised as to the training possibilities. Facilitate roundtables, dialogues with all key stakeholders</p>	<p>All SAMEA members and key stakeholders will have access to information on current training opportunities (formal and informal)</p> <p>Partnerships between institutions will improve quality of offerings</p>
Strengthening of individual capacities for evaluation	<p>Review findings from CLEAR AA survey and database</p>	<p>Scholarships Conference workshops Continuing professional development</p> <p>This area of work will also focus on implementing a coherent internship programme for new young, black evaluators as well as facilitating mentorship opportunities.</p>	<p>Strengthened capacity of evaluation professionals</p>
Strengthening and enabling environment	<p>The basic architecture of evaluation practice in SA needs completion: standards, ethics and competencies all need to be formally adopted and promoted and ways of embedding these as part of formal and non-formal capacity development interventions will be found. While getting a system for accreditation will be a very long term endeavour and will not be a initial area of focus, discussions on this issue, as part of the global exploration of professionalization will be undertaken</p>	<p>International engagement with other VOPES Completion of standards, ethical guidelines and competencies for SA evaluators CoEngagement with DPME and other key stakeholders</p>	<p>Strengthened M&E system</p>
Strengthening inter linkages	<p>M&E stakeholders are working in isolation</p>	<p>Alliance will working with influential institutions, including Parliament and provincial legislatures, DPME, National</p>	<p>Develop partnerships at National level (shared discourse, collaborations)</p>

		<p>Treasury, the Auditor General, national and to secure funds and implement a relevant, transformational programme.</p> <p>Leading NGOs and industry bodies to support the development of the institutional landscape for evaluation and to promote it as a practice. An important part of this work will also be building SAMEA as the national VOPE and increasing its capacity</p>	<p>Develop hub for evaluation resources in the public domain, increase in formal and informal networks for shared practice and development</p>
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