

The International Atomic Energy Agency

OIOS Evaluation Policy

PURPOSE AND SCOPE

1. This policy describes the role of independent evaluations performed by the Agency's Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS). It describes how OIOS conducts evaluations and the roles and responsibilities of the different parties involved. Programme managers are encouraged to conduct their own assessments, in collaboration with their staff, as part of their ongoing programme management responsibilities. This policy does not cover self-assessments conducted by programme managers, although many parts of the policy could serve as reference for such assessments.

DEFINITION OF EVALUATION

2. Evaluation is a systematic and objective assessment of the extent to which a programme has achieved or is achieving its stated objective and, therefore, having the desired impact in addressing the needs and priorities of Member States. It can focus on one or more of the following issues: relevance; effectiveness; efficiency; impact and sustainability.

3. The results of evaluations must be used as an input to programme planning and implementation as part of the results-based management process. Evaluation findings also serve as an input to the Medium Term Strategy and the preparation of the biennial Programme and Budget document.

4. An evaluation is an integral part of the learning and improvement culture. It enhances accountability and transparency and facilitates the communication and understanding of needs and performance expectations on the part of the Secretariat, Member States, intended beneficiaries and other stakeholders. A consultative and participatory approach is considered to be the most effective approach.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

5. Agency evaluations are guided by the following principles: systematic and evidence-based assessments; competence and integrity demonstrated by evaluators; respect for the dignity and self-esteem of stakeholders; and consideration for the diversity of interests and values that may be related to the evaluation.

6. Evaluations must take into account local, social and cultural beliefs and customs and Agency evaluators must be sensitive to issues of discrimination and gender inequality.

7. The Agency is a member of the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) and, with the exception of a more limited distribution of evaluation results, abides by the UNEG Norms and Standards for Evaluation in the UN System¹.

8. Agency evaluations are conducted in accordance with the following four standards:

- Utility, which ensures that an evaluation will serve the information needs of intended users;
- Feasibility, which ensures that an evaluation will be realistic, prudent and cost-efficient;
- Propriety, which ensures that an evaluation will be conducted legally, ethically and with due regard for the welfare of those involved and/or affected by the evaluation; and
- Accuracy and quality, which ensure that an evaluation will produce sound information on features that determine the merit and value of the programme, with documented objective evidence.

TYPES OF EVALUATIONS

9. Agency evaluations fall into two categories: 1) independent evaluations conducted or coordinated by OIOS; and 2) self-assessments carried out by staff involved in the design or implementation of the programme.

¹ Approved by the UNEG on 29 April 2005.

Although self-assessments do not replace OIOS evaluations, the results of self-assessments will be used as references by OIOS when planning and carrying-out independent evaluations.

10. Evaluations may be carried out during programme implementation to identify areas for improvement (formative evaluation) or at the end of the programme to determine the extent to which intended outcomes were produced (summative evaluation). They may be conducted at different levels of analysis, including at the: thematic; regional; country; policy; Major Programme; Programme; Subprogramme; and project levels. Management functions and support activities also come within the scope of an evaluation.

11. During an evaluation, the methods to be applied must be appropriate for obtaining the required information. Qualitative, quantitative or mixed data and methods may be used. All relevant information available, including material from programme monitoring/programme assessment and performance measurement systems, advisory bodies and the external auditor should be utilized.

12. Evaluations may be conducted by one or several evaluators (i.e. a team or panel of experts). The selection of external evaluators should be based on technical expertise, experience in the thematic field under the evaluation and a high level professional qualifications. A balanced geographical and gender distribution of external evaluators must be considered.

USE OF EVALUATIONS

13. Evaluations are conducted for specific intended users in order to maximize the extent to which evaluation results are actually used. The degree of utilization can be measured, inter alia, by the number of lessons learned and best practices identified, the number of recommendations accepted and acted upon, as well as any direct changes brought about by the evaluation.

EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

14. OIOS will develop an Evaluation Strategy in line with the strategic priorities of the Agency. The Evaluation Strategy will identify the areas to be evaluated, objectives to be achieved and provide details of the approach to be taken.

15. All Agency programmes, functions and activities are subject to evaluations. The selection and prioritization of areas for an evaluation will be systematic and strategic, based, inter alia, upon the following criteria: size of the allocated budget and disbursement; the period of time since the previous evaluation; risk assessment; interest from Member States; evaluation requests; and its feasibility.

16. OIOS evaluations are independent of line management, as determined by the OIOS Charter². The external experts of the evaluation team bear the sole responsibility for their views and professional opinions. In cases where OIOS has a coordinating role in an evaluation, the results may not always reflect the opinion of OIOS. Any significant disagreement between independent external evaluators, OIOS and the Agency's management is to be noted in the evaluation reports.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

17. The Technical Assistance and Cooperation Committee and the Programme and Budget Committee have the role of recommending to the Board of Governors that it take note of evaluations of technical cooperation activities and programme evaluation reports.

18. The Director General:

- Approves the Evaluation Policy;
- Safeguards the integrity and independence of the programme evaluation function of OIOS;
- Approves the formal management response to OIOS evaluations; and
- Ensures that senior management responds to and uses the evaluations in their operational,

² A.M.III/1

strategic, policy and oversight roles.

19. The Deputy Directors General:

- Request OIOS to conduct evaluations in their Department;
- Ensure the active participation of staff in the evaluation process;
- Prepare the formal management response to evaluations conducted in their Department for the Director General's approval;
- Ensure the preparation of action plans related to the evaluation recommendations; and
- Ensure the implementation of accepted evaluation recommendations.

20. The Director of OIOS:

- Ensures that procedures are established and applied in accordance with the Evaluation Policy, and that these procedures are regularly updated;
- Ensures the appropriate and effective deployment of the required resources for the evaluation function.
- Prepares the work plan for TC and regular programme evaluation activities;
- Approves the terms of reference and selection of experts for evaluations, after consultation with the relevant Departments;
- Ensures a consultative and participatory approach to evaluations, including a thorough assessment of all comments made by programme managers during an evaluation;
- Ensures the quality of evaluation reports;
- Includes the Director General's formal management response in the evaluation reports; and
- Organizes the follow-up of the implementation of previous evaluation recommendations.

21. The relevant staff, particularly the programme manager concerned:

- Participate in the evaluation process by providing inputs to the terms of reference, data collection instruments and identification of potential external experts;
- Provide background material and relevant data for the evaluation, including relevant programme monitoring, programme assessment and performance measurement related information;
- Provide preliminary comments on draft evaluation reports and confirm the accuracy of factual data; and
- Prepare the action plan and indicate the status of implementation of the accepted recommendations.