

THE PRESIDENCY
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

DEPARTMENT: PERFORMANCE MONITORING AND EVALUATION

DPME Evaluation Guideline No 2.2.4
Guideline for Inception Phase of Evaluations

Created 3 October 2012

Addressed to	Government departments who are undertaking evaluations (programme managers and M&E staff) and evaluators.
Purpose	The purpose of this Guideline is to give practical guidance on the inception phase of projects and how to develop and process inception reports.
Policy reference	This guideline should be read in conjunction with the National Evaluation Policy Framework approved by Cabinet on 23 November 2011 (available on the DPME website).
Contact person	Ian Goldman, Evaluation and Research Unit (ERU) E-mail: ian@po.gov.za Tel: 012 308 1918

1 Background

Inception reports are a core part of the commissioning process. These allow the possibility of using the learnings from initial consultations to update the approach and methodology for assignments, once direct interaction with stakeholders is possible, so that the contract can reflect the agreed scope of work and methodology. They are factored into all project plans. In the case of evaluations the inception report and updated proposal must be approved by evaluation Steering Committees. They will normally not revise the budget available, but can modify how the budget is allocated.

2 Objective of the inception phase

The proposal has of necessity been developed with partial information. The objective of the inception phase is to agree revisions to the proposal so as to ensure the requirements of the assignment can be addressed.

3 Timing

The inception phase starts immediately the service provider has been notified that the contract has been awarded to them, and an initial briefing organised. The phase should be short, often just a week, and provide for consultation with evaluation stakeholders to ensure a better understanding of their interests, the limitations as well as possibilities, and to get sufficient information to be able to update the proposal and scope of work. The phase closes with a short inception report and a revised proposal, which should be formally adopted by the evaluation Steering Committee. The revised proposal will then be annexed to the service level agreement/contract.

4 Activities involved in the inception phase

The minimum activity involved will be a briefing session with the main stakeholders (eg lead department and DPME) to discuss the proposal and revisions expected. This would be followed by a short report summarising the changes and a revised proposal.

In some cases more extensive consultation may be needed, eg a workshop with stakeholders to get a better understanding of the issues.

6 The inception report

The inception report does not need to be long and may be only 3-4 pages. It should indicate the process undertaken in the inception including people met, and introduce the revisions made in the proposal. A suggested structure is as follows:

Box 1: Potential structure of an inception report

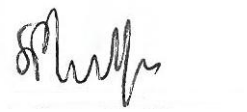
1 Process undertaken during the inception phase
2 Changes to the understanding of the intervention and the TORs
3 Changes in the approach, design and methodology for the evaluation
4 The approach taken for changes to the Activity-based evaluation plan (the revised plan will be in the revised proposal)
5 The approach taken for changes to the budget (the revised budget will be in the revised proposal)
6 Changes to the team (team members, roles and level of effort)
7 Clarifications on how capacity development elements will be addressed (building capacity of partner departments and PDI/young evaluators)
8 Changes proposed to the quality assurance plan (the revised plan will be in the revised proposal)

Attachments
Revised proposal

8 Acceptance/Non-acceptance of the inception report

The inception report will be formally adopted by the Steering Committee, after which the initial tranche of funding can be paid. Should there be no agreement between the service provider and commissioner/Steering Committee on the changes needed then the payment for the inception phase will be made, and the contract will then be terminated as per clause 2.4 of the SLA.

Signed



_____

Dr Sean Phillips
Director General
The Presidency: Performance Monitoring and Evaluation
Date: 3/10/2012