

EVALUATION STANDARDS FOR LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

The importance of evaluation standards

The governments of many countries have a desire to structure their work in a more effective and efficient way. In addition, civil society is increasingly pressuring governments to make the results of their work public and transparent, and non-governmental actors are also increasingly interested in the effects of their own work and wish to deploy their resources as efficiently as possible. Evaluations are a key tool in preparing informative data for use in work oriented towards effects, accountability and transparency, and are then used to improve management decisions.

However, the increasing importance of evaluation has also given rise to a need to agree on the role which an evaluation should play and the requirements which it should meet. Evaluation standards are hugely useful in this area: they set out quality requirements for evaluations and provide guidelines, both for evaluators in their planning and implementation activities and for commissioning partners in supervising evaluations. Furthermore, they are able to serve as an orientation framework for training and development as well as a vital frame of reference for meta-evaluations. Last but not least, evaluation standards promote dialogue and reflection on evaluation practices and evaluation culture.

National and regional evaluation networks and many multilateral organizations have their own evaluation standards – one such example is the recently revised standards of the German Evaluation Society (DeGEval). In a development cooperation context, the ‘Quality Standards for Development Evaluation’ applied by

the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development’s Development Assistance Committee (OECD-DAC) are of particular relevance.

Particular requirements of evaluation standards for Latin America and the Caribbean

The increasing importance of evaluations in Latin America has again boosted demand for a reference framework covering evaluation quality. The Latin American and Caribbean Network of Monitoring, Evaluation and Systematization (ReLAC) thus established a Working Group to examine this topic in 2014. Supported by DEval’s Evaluation Capacity Development Project (FOCEVAL)¹, evaluation standards were developed for Latin America and the Caribbean on the basis of an extensive consultation process.

These standards include a core shared with the evaluation standards of other evaluation networks and organizations, as for example the requirement for evaluations to be useful and for the efficient use of resources. In addition, they cover dimensions relevant to a Latin American context. Above all, the standards are designed to take the cultural and ethnical specificities of the region into account. For example, they include a requirement that the evaluation process should respect the cultural identity and dignity of all communities involved in the evaluation and their values. They also highlight the need for appropriate participation by vulnerable groups in particular. One particularity of developing Evaluation Standards for Latin America and the Caribbean was the participatory approach², resulting in a common understanding of evaluation quality requirements.

¹ DEval is carrying out the Evaluation Capacity Development Project (FOCEVAL, www.foceval.org) – financed by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development – in selected Latin American countries as part of its mission to promote evaluation capacity development in partner countries.

² A preliminary set of standards was presented and discussed at an evaluation standards session during the ReLAC Conference in March 2015. The ReLAC Working Group also organized a survey about evaluation standards. The feedback gathered at the conference, was incorporated by the Working Party and presented to a wide audience for discussion, both online and at other events.

Distributing and further developing the standards

The greatest challenge is now to disseminate the standards so that they will be used: they are designed to be applied in professional evaluation practice and (further) training. ReLAC with DEval's support is therefore distributing them in a variety of forms, primarily targeting national evaluation networks, educational and training institutes, and stakeholders who commission evaluations in a governmental or civil society context.

In consultation with the various groups to which these Evaluation Standards are addressed, the standards should be continuously further developed in order to give adequate consideration to conceptual and methodological advances in the field of evaluation as well as new societal challenges. Supporting and assisting this process has been hugely important for DEval as part of its ECD ground work.

Evaluation standards for Latin America and the Caribbean

The Evaluation Standards for Latin America and the Caribbean (2016) were developed by the Latin American and Caribbean Network of Monitoring, Evaluation and Systematization (ReLAC) with the support of DEval in a comprehensive participatory process. The aim of these standards is to help promote an evaluation culture, to implement and use high-quality evaluations, and to professionalize evaluation in the region through the use of a common reference framework. The standards are vgrouped in five dimensions: 1) rigorous evaluation, 2) adequate evaluability, 3) ethical and legal principles, 4) adequate cultural understanding, 5) relevance and utility.

The Evaluation Standards for Latin America and the Caribbean are available in English, Spanish and Portuguese:
www.deval.org/de/projekt-foceval.html

Reference

Rodríguez Bilella, P. D., S. Martinic Valencia, L. Soberón Alvarez, S. D. Klier, A. L. Guzmán Hernández and E. Tapella (2016), *Evaluation Standards for Latin America and the Caribbean*, 1st ed. – Ciudad Autónoma de Buenos Aires.

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