

Evaluation standards

The following are the programme evaluation standards developed by the American Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation (AJCSEE) which have increasingly been promoted through professional evaluation associations, including the American and African evaluation associations. The African Evaluation Association has further adapted the original AJCSEE standards. Regardless of the version adopted, these standards can be used both as a guide for managing the evaluation process and to assess an existing evaluation. The standards highlight the considerations that must be weighed in formulating an evaluation design.

- **Utility:** seek to ensure that an evaluation will serve the information needs of intended users.
- **Feasibility:** seek to ensure that an evaluation will be realistic, prudent, diplomatic, and frugal.
- **Propriety:** seek to ensure that an evaluation will be conducted legally, ethically, and with due regard for the welfare of those involved in the evaluation, as well as those affected by its results.
- **Accuracy:** seek to ensure that an evaluation will reveal and convey technically adequate information about the features that determine the worth or merit of the programme being evaluated.

Utility

A. Stakeholder Identification

Persons involved in or affected by the evaluation should be identified so their needs can be addressed.

B. Evaluator Credibility

Persons conducting the evaluation should be both trustworthy and competent to perform the evaluation so its findings achieve maximum credibility and acceptance.

C. Information Scope and Selection

Information collected should be broadly selected to address pertinent questions about the programme and be responsive to the needs and interests of clients and other specified stakeholders.

D. Values Identification

The perspectives, procedures, and rationale used to interpret the findings should be carefully described so the bases for value judgements are clear.

E. Report Clarity

Evaluation reports should clearly describe the programme being evaluated, including its context, purposes, procedures, and findings so that essential information is provided and easily understood.

F. Report Timeliness and Dissemination

Significant interim findings and evaluation reports should be disseminated to intended users so they can be used in a timely fashion.

G. Evaluation Impact

Evaluations should be planned, conducted, and reported in ways that encourage follow-through by stakeholders to increase the likelihood that the evaluation will be used.

Feasibility

A. Practical Procedures

The evaluation procedures should be practical to keep disruption to a minimum while needed information is obtained.

B. Political Viability

The evaluation should be planned and conducted with anticipation of the different positions of various interest groups so their co-operation may be obtained, and possible attempts by any of these groups to curtail evaluation operations or to bias or misapply the results can be averted or counteracted.

C. Cost Effectiveness

The evaluation should be efficient and produce information of sufficient value so the resources expended can be justified.

Propriety

A. Service Orientation

Evaluations should be designed to help organisations address and effectively serve the needs of the full range of participants.

B. Formal Agreement

The obligations of the formal parties to an evaluation (what is to be done, how, by whom, when) should be agreed to in writing to ensure that they adhere to all conditions of the agreement or that they formally renegotiate it.

C. Rights of Human Subjects

Evaluations should be designed and conducted to respect and protect the rights and welfare of human subjects.

D. Human Interactions

Evaluators should respect human dignity and worth in their interactions with other persons associated with an evaluation so participants are not threatened or harmed.

E. Complete and Fair Assessment

The evaluation should be complete and fair in its examination and recording of strengths and weaknesses of the programme being evaluated so that strengths can be built upon and problem areas addressed.

F. Disclosure of Findings

The formal parties to an evaluation should ensure that the full set of evaluation findings along with pertinent limitations are made accessible to the persons affected by the evaluation, and any others with expressed legal rights to receive the results.

G. Conflict of Interest

Conflict of interest should be dealt with openly and honestly so it does not compromise the evaluation processes and results.

H. Fiscal Responsibility

The evaluator's allocation and expenditure of resources should reflect sound accountability procedures, and otherwise be prudent and ethically responsible to ensure they are accounted for and appropriate.

Accuracy

A. Programme Documentation

The programme being evaluated should be described and documented clearly and accurately.

B. Context Analysis

The context of the programme should be examined in enough detail so its likely influences can be identified.

C. Described Purposes and Procedures

The purposes and procedures of the evaluation should be monitored and described in enough detail so they can be identified and assessed.

D. Defensible Information Sources

The sources of information used in a programme evaluation should be described in enough detail so their adequacy can be assessed.

E. Valid Information

The information-gathering procedures should be chosen or developed and implemented to ensure that the interpretation is valid for the intended use.

F. Reliable Information

The information-gathering procedures should be chosen or developed and implemented to ensure that the information is sufficiently reliable for the intended use.

G. Systematic Information

The information collected, processed, and reported in an evaluation should be systematically reviewed, and any errors found should be corrected.

H. Analysis of Quantitative Information

Quantitative information should be appropriately and systematically analysed so evaluation questions are effectively answered.

I. Analysis of Qualitative Information

Qualitative information should be appropriately and systematically analysed so evaluation questions are effectively answered.

J. Justified Conclusions

The conclusions reached in an evaluation should be explicitly justified so stakeholders can assess them.

K. Impartial Reporting

Reporting procedures should guard against distortion caused by personal feelings and biases of any party to the evaluation so that evaluation reports fairly reflect the evaluation findings.

L. Meta-evaluation

The evaluation itself should be formatively and summatively evaluated against these and other pertinent standards so that its conduct is appropriately guided, and, on completion, stakeholders can closely examine its strengths and weaknesses.