

The U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief

PEPFAR Evaluation Standards of Practice

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PEPFAR EVALUATION STANDARDS OF PRACTICE

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: Definitions of Terms

ACRONYMS

APR	Annual Program Results
COI	Conflict of Interest
COP	Country Operational Plan
GAO	Government Accountability Office
HQ	Headquarters
IOM	Institute of Medicine
IRB	Institutional Review Board
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MER	Monitoring, Evaluation, and Reporting
OGAC	Office of the U.S. Global AIDS Coordinator
OU	Operating Unit
PEPFAR	President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief
ROP	Regional Operational Plan
SAPR	Semi-Annual Program Results
USG	United States Government

INTRODUCTION

Since the start of the President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), evaluation has been an important and integral component of program improvement, although not sufficiently prevalent or rigorous as highlighted by the Government Accountability Office (GAO)¹ and the Institute of Medicine (IOM)². As PEPFAR moves into its third phase, the need remains for high quality evaluations that are driven by host country needs and engagement, and whose results are communicated to relevant stakeholders and made publicly available.^{3,4}

As part of the broader PEPFAR Monitoring, Evaluation, and Reporting (MER) initiative to improve and strengthen the collection and use of data, the purpose of this document is to articulate evaluation standards that should improve the quality of evaluations and their contribution to decision-making. Simultaneously, this document responds to recommendations by the GAO and the IOM, and stipulations within congressional reauthorization to expand the utility of evaluation processes and data across PEPFAR programming for greater accountability and transparency. Anticipated consumers of this document include the considerable community of stakeholders, particularly evaluators working in PEPFAR-supported programs. These stakeholders also include host country partners who want to maximize the utility of evaluation results to improve programming and those who want to assume greater leadership and responsibility for more widespread evaluation implementation. Simultaneously, these standards will support agency evaluation policies and strategies, improve coordination and collaboration between the Office of the Global AIDS Coordinator (OGAC) and Implementing Agencies, guide subsequent use of results, and establish basic requirements for reporting evaluation status to headquarters (HQ).

In this document, **PEPFAR defines evaluation as the systematic collection and analysis of information about the characteristics, outcomes, and impact of programs and projects.** Please see Box 1 for further detail—including definitions and key characteristics—regarding the spectrum of evaluations pertinent to this document. Further definitions are provided in Appendix 1. Evaluations provide the basis for judgments to improve implementation and effectiveness and to inform decisions about current and future programming. An evaluation should generate information that is credible and useful, so that lessons learned can be incorporated into decision-making processes.

¹ Government Accountability Office (GAO), President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief: Agencies Can Enhance Evaluation Quality, Planning, and Dissemination, GAO-12-673, May 31, 2012.

² Institute of Medicine (IOM), 2013. Evaluation of PEPFAR, The National Academies Press: Washington, DC.

³ GAO, 2012, *op. cit.*

⁴ IOM, *op. cit.*

As an extension to the basic objective of an evaluation to determine if a program works, UNAIDS describes three primary reasons for conducting evaluations⁵:

- 1) Program improvement, using evaluation results as feedback to program implementers to make the program function more effectively and efficiently.
- 2) Program accountability and transparency, so stakeholders and funders alike are aware of the progress of the program.
- 3) Program scale-up, disseminating results to help stakeholders and partners better understand what the program has accomplished and to replicate similar approaches in future.

Box 1. Key Concepts and Terminology

EVALUATION: “Evaluation is the systematic collection and analysis of information about the characteristics and outcomes of programs and projects as a basis for judgments, to improve effectiveness, and/or inform decisions about current and future programming. Evaluation is distinct from assessment, which may be designed to examine country or sector context to inform project design, or an informal review of projects.”⁶

PROCESS EVALUATION: “A type of evaluation that focuses on program or intervention implementation, including, but not limited to access to services, whether services reach the intended population, how services are delivered, client satisfaction and perceptions about needs and services, management practices. In addition, a process evaluation might provide an understanding of cultural, socio-political, legal, and economic context that affect implementation of the program or intervention.”⁷ Example of question asked: Are activities delivered as intended, and are the right participants being reached?

OUTCOME EVALUATION: Is “a type of evaluation that determines if and by how much, intervention activities or services achieved their intended outcomes.”⁸ It focuses on “outputs and outcomes (including unintended effects) to judge program effectiveness, but may also assess program process to understand how outcomes are produced.”⁹ It is possible to use statistical techniques in some instances when control or comparison groups are not available (e.g., for the evaluation of a national program).¹⁰ Example of question asked: To what extent are desired changes occurring due to the program, and who is benefiting?

IMPACT EVALUATIONS (IEs) measure the change in an outcome that is attributable to a defined intervention by comparing actual impact to what would have happened in the absence of the intervention (*the counterfactual scenario*). IEs are based on models of cause and effect and require a rigorously defined counterfactual to control for factors other than the intervention that might account for the observed change. There are a range of accepted approaches to applying a counterfactual analysis, though IEs in which comparisons are made between beneficiaries

⁵ UNAIDS, 2010, Basic Terminology and Frameworks for Monitoring and Evaluation http://www.unaids.org/en/media/unaids/contentassets/documents/document/2010/7_1-Basic-Terminology-and-Frameworks-MEF.pdf

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 66.

⁸ UNAIDS, 2010, Basic Terminology, *op. cit.*, p. 65.

⁹ Government Accountability Office (GAO), Performance Measurement and Evaluation: Definitions and Relationships, May 2011.

¹⁰ UNAIDS, 2010, Basic Terminology, *op. cit.*, p. 65.

that are randomly assigned to either an intervention or a control group provide the strongest evidence of a relationship between the intervention under study and the outcome measured to demonstrate impact.¹¹

ECONOMIC EVALUATION:¹² Use of applied analytical techniques to identify, measure, value and compare the costs and outcomes of alternative interventions. Economic evaluation is a systematic and transparent framework for assessing efficiency focusing on the economic costs and outcomes of alternative programs or interventions. This framework is based on a comparative analysis of both the costs (resources consumed) and outcomes (health, clinical, economic) of programs or interventions. Main types of economic evaluation are cost-minimization analysis (CMA), cost-effectiveness analysis (CEA), cost-benefit analysis (CBA) and cost-utility analysis (CUA). Example of question asked: What is the cost-effectiveness of this intervention in improving patient outcomes as compared to other treatment models?

In order to provide some consistency for evaluation implementation across PEPFAR, this document describes standards of evaluation practice that are promoted through international and professional evaluation associations^{13,14} and to a large extent are already integrated into PEPFAR implementing agency policies and strategy documents^{15,16,17}. These standards of practice represent an interagency consensus of standards deemed most relevant to conducting quality evaluations within PEPFAR.

These standards of practice apply to **all** PEPFAR-supported evaluation efforts, and they should not be interpreted to supersede more specific requirements associated with agency or centrally managed evaluation studies (Implementation Science, Impact Evaluations, etc.). Operating Unit (OU) representatives who identify a potential conflict between different guidance recommendations should contact the appropriate agency Point of Contact (e.g., country team lead, contract officer, project officer) who will assist to resolve any of these issues.

While this PEPFAR Evaluation Standards of Practice document identifies generally accepted practices of implementing high-quality evaluations, some alignment will be required to accommodate specific agency policies and associated practical procedures.

➤ *As a companion to this document, operational guidance is currently in development to assist with interpreting and applying these standards. This operational guidance will offer more specific information pertaining to the application of agency policies, how the standards of practice might vary according to the type of evaluation planned, and how the standards will be used as criteria for adherence reviews required by legislation. In the meantime, since the*

¹¹ PEPFAR 2014 Country Operational Guidance and 2012 supplemental guidance on Implementation Science/Impact Evaluation.

¹² Drummond 2005.

¹³ American Evaluation Association (AEA), An Evaluation Roadmap for a More Effective Government, September 2010.

<http://www.eval.org/EPTF/aea10.roadmap.101910.pdf>

¹⁴ African Evaluation Association, African Evaluation Guidelines - Standards and Norms, <http://www.afrea.org>

¹⁵ USAID, USAID Evaluation Policy, Learning from Experience. <http://transition.usaid.gov/evaluation/USAIDEvaluationPolicy.pdf>

¹⁶ CDC, CDC Evaluation Framework. <http://www.cdc.gov/eval/framework/index.htm>

¹⁷ Department of State, DOS Program Evaluation Policy. 2012, <http://www.state.gov/s/d/rm/rls/evaluation/2012/184556.htm>

underlying principles of these standards of practice are consistent with international standards of quality evaluation, use of these standards should proceed directly.

STRENGTHENING EVALUATION CAPACITY

A key objective of evaluation practice for PEPFAR, although not listed as a specific standard of practice, is to strengthen in-country capacity at all levels of program implementation. Capacity strengthening is critical to ensure that country counterparts have the capability to ask the key evaluation questions, design rigorous evaluations to answer those questions, implement these studies, and use evaluation findings in evidence-based decision making. For evaluation capacity to be sustained, in-country individuals and institutions should be provided with technical support, resources, and opportunities to learn and use what they learned to strengthen or improve their work. Sustainable evaluation practice also requires the development of systems, processes, policies, and plans that help embed evaluation work into the way the institutions accomplish their missions. Evaluation capacity building activities should be articulated in both the national and the associated PEPFAR strategic plans. Further information pertaining to evaluation capacity building strategies with country partners can be obtained through the PEPFAR Monitoring & Evaluation Technical Working Group.

PEPFAR EVALUATION STANDARDS OF PRACTICE

In the broader context of evaluation within PEPFAR, OGAC expects all PEPFAR agencies and implementers to commit themselves to evaluation practices based on the standards of practice below. Though many of these practices are already incorporated into agency policies and frameworks, recent reports have determined that they are not consistently implemented.¹⁸ By sharing a set of common standards of practice, PEPFAR wants to ensure greater consistency and quality among evaluations with the intent that stakeholders will have the confidence to utilize the results of the evaluations for program enhancement.

Below we have introduced the standards of practice in the order they are likely to be applied when conducting an evaluation. For example, evaluation usually starts by engaging stakeholders, but not all stakeholders may be familiar with complex methods necessary for some evaluation designs. Such a situation requires the evaluation team to build stakeholder capacity to consider evaluation methods and effectively contribute to decisions. For other evaluation designs, such knowledge transfer may not be needed.

PEPFAR EVALUATION STANDARDS OF PRACTICE

1. **ENGAGE STAKEHOLDERS**
2. **CLEARLY STATE EVALUATION QUESTIONS, PURPOSE, AND OBJECTIVES**
3. **USE APPROPRIATE EVALUATION DESIGN, METHODS, AND ANALYTICAL TECHNIQUES**
4. **ADDRESS ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS AND ASSURANCES**
5. **IDENTIFY RESOURCES AND ARTICULATE BUDGET**
6. **CONSTRUCT DATA COLLECTION AND MANAGEMENT PLANS**
7. **ENSURE APPROPRIATE EVALUATOR QUALIFICATIONS AND EVALUATION INDEPENDENCE**
8. **MONITOR THE PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION OF AN EVALUATION**
9. **PRODUCE QUALITY EVALUATION REPORTS**
10. **DISSEMINATE RESULTS**
11. **USE FINDINGS FOR PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT**

The PEPFAR Evaluation Standards of Practice are described below.

1. **ENGAGE STAKEHOLDERS**

Engage stakeholders from the beginning and throughout the evaluation to ensure the success of the evaluation and implementation of the recommendations.

¹⁸ GAO, 2012, *op. cit.*

Evaluation results are only relevant if they respond to the needs of a diverse range of stakeholders. Stakeholders are any persons, organizations, or institutions that have an investment in what will result from an evaluation and what will be done with the results.

There are three critical groups of stakeholders who must be considered in planning an evaluation. These include:

- 1) those persons involved in program operations (e.g., sponsors, collaborators, partners, funding officials, administrators, managers, and staff);
- 2) those persons served or affected by the program (e.g., clients, family members, community organizations, academic institutions, elected officials, advocacy groups, professional associations, and staff of related or competing organizations); and
- 3) those persons who make decisions regarding the program (e.g., country leadership, policy makers, program managers, sponsors etc.)¹⁹.

Stakeholders should be identified and engaged in the planning stages of evaluation, including prioritizing what to evaluate, budgeting and funding decisions, identification of the evaluation questions, and dissemination and use of findings and recommendations.²⁰ For evaluations of PEPFAR-funded programs, it is essential to involve governmental and non-governmental stakeholders from the country in which the evaluation is conducted.

The scope and level of stakeholder involvement will vary for each program evaluation. For example, some stakeholders, such as evaluators in the community, can be directly involved in designing and conducting the evaluation. Other stakeholders, such as policy makers, may be involved in the initial framing of evaluation questions, and they should be kept informed of the progress of the evaluation and of the evaluation results. Configuring a communication strategy at the start of program planning is particularly relevant for evaluation efforts to ensure ongoing stakeholder engagement and support, particularly if an evaluation crosses organizational units with overlapping or complementary missions.

2. CLEARLY STATE EVALUATION QUESTIONS, PURPOSE, AND OBJECTIVES

Make explicit the evaluation questions, purpose, and objectives. Evaluation planning should be part of program planning from the start and throughout program implementation.

¹⁹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Framework for program evaluation in public health. MMWR 1999;48 (No. RR-11)

²⁰ Measure Evaluation, 2011. Tools for Data Demand and Use in the Health Sector: Stakeholder Engagement Tool (<http://www.cpc.unc.edu/measure/publications/ms-11-46-e>).

The first stage of planning an evaluation is the general purpose of the evaluation, the specific objectives, and the specific questions. Even though methods and analyses may be complex, the purpose and objectives must be understood from the beginning, and the evaluation questions should be simple and clear. The next step should be to synthesize the best available evidence regarding the intervention(s); i.e. what is already known about how well it works. Focus should then shift to:

- 1) what will be evaluated, (specifically defining the intervention or aspects of an intervention)
- 2) who wants the information,
- 3) what do they want to know (various outputs or outcomes), and
- 4) how the results will be²¹ linked to specific future decisions or programs

Clarifying the intent and answers to these questions from the beginning will facilitate the subsequent decisions. One should anticipate that the planning stage of an evaluation will require several iterations and extensive review, after which other steps in evaluation implementation will move quickly.

3. USE APPROPRIATE EVALUATION DESIGN, METHODS, AND ANALYTICAL TECHNIQUES

Knowing the program maturity, the questions to be addressed, and the resources available are requisite to determine the appropriate evaluation design, methods and analytical techniques.

The evaluation design and methods should be feasible, context sensitive, culturally relevant, and as rigorous as possible. When selecting the design and methods, consider the program's maturity, the evaluation questions to be addressed, purpose and timeline for needing the results, the intended audience, and the available financial and other resources. As noted below in Standard of Practice 5, the design-resource sequence is critical, since a pre-determined budget may not support an evaluation design sufficient to address important questions.

In conjunction with evaluation design and methods, an analysis plan should be predetermined and described in an evaluation protocol. Because evaluations generally address multiple questions, a range of analytic methods are often needed. For example, in many instances a mixed-methods approach that combines quantitative and qualitative methods and analyses is ideal. One needs to use the most rigorous methods appropriate to the evaluation questions. Carefully thinking through data needs and analytic techniques in

²¹ USAID, Automated Directives System 203.3.1.4 11_02_2012

advance will enhance the quality, credibility, and usefulness of an evaluation by increasing the strength and specificity of the findings and recommendations.

4. ADDRESS ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS AND ASSURANCES

Address human rights protections when planning and implementing the evaluation.

Evaluations must be conducted in a manner that is respectful to and protects human rights, privacy, and confidentiality, and maintains the dignity of participants and other stakeholders.²² U.S. government (USG) agencies follow regulatory standards regarding human protections,²³ and these standards are based on principles and guidelines established in the international community.²⁴ These principles require that evaluators behave legally, ethically, and have regard for the physical and psychological welfare of those involved and those affected by an evaluation, including vulnerable populations. All personnel involved in planning and implementing an evaluation should be knowledgeable regarding agency policies, rules and regulations in this regard, and complete ethical certifications when indicated.

Evaluation procedures should ensure that participants, who contribute information to a study, especially if they may incur risks, do so willingly and with full knowledge of any potential risks. Participants should be informed that their eligibility to receive services is not contingent upon their participation in the evaluation (i.e., clients retain the right to refuse to participate in an evaluation). These protections are generally addressed in an informed consent agreement administered before participants respond to data collection inquiries. Such protections also should be described in the evaluation protocol governing the conduct of the evaluation. Special protections are especially important when conducting evaluations involving children, prisoners, pregnant women, and other vulnerable groups.

Depending on the objectives, questions, and methods of the evaluation, evaluation scope of work/protocols may have to go through an Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the in-country national level, at a USG implementing agency, and when relevant, at the level of the implementing partner or the associated external institutional entity.

5. IDENTIFY RESOURCES AND ARTICULATE BUDGET

Identify the evaluation budget at the start of program planning.

²² AEA, 2010, *op.cit.*

²³ Department of Health and Human Services (45 CFR 46), United States Agency for International Development (22 CFR 225).

²⁴ The WMA Declaration of Helsinki - Ethical Principles for Medical Research Involving Human Subjects (<http://www.wma.net/en/30publications/10policies/b3/>) and the Council for International Organizations of Medical Sciences (CIOMS) International Ethical Guidelines for Biomedical Research Involving Human Subjects (http://www.cioms.ch/publications/layout_guide2002.pdf) are the documents used by agencies to articulate their rules and regulations regarding Human Subjects.

Successful execution of evaluations requires not only a commitment among program implementers to incorporate evaluation into their efforts, but also sufficient resources to ensure the implementation of the appropriate type and design of evaluation. This commitment requires considerable forethought, since resource decisions are often made in the context of tension between program and evaluation priorities. As planning occurs both priorities need to be balanced, and if more rigorous or complex evaluations are required, adequate resources need to be made available.

A recommended range of resource commitments for monitoring and evaluation are available in the literature and guidance materials, but it is important to note that these ranges typically apply to **monitoring** activities only²⁵. Funding for formal **evaluation** efforts, particularly outcome, impact, or economic evaluations, likely will require additional allocations above these ranges. Evaluation planning early in the program planning process should provide a reasonable estimate of these funding requirements, and appropriate steps need to be taken to ensure resources are available to fulfill the requirements of the evaluation design.

6. CONSTRUCT DATA COLLECTION AND MANAGEMENT PLANS

Create data collection and management plans prior to implementing the evaluation to ensure that data are valid, reliable, and accessible.

Since the intent of data collection is to gather information that stakeholders perceive as trustworthy and relevant, evaluation scope of work/protocols should include a data collection and management procedure that is in line with agency policies and specifies the following: who will administer the data collection instruments; when these will be administered; how data will be gathered and checked in a systematic, comparable, precise, and unbiased way so that data are accurate, complete, and valid; how the data will be archived, transported, secured, confidentiality ensured, and disposed of (if applicable); how data-use agreements will be developed with partners and others; which institutions and individuals will have access to the data in its various forms; how long the data will be saved; how interview tapes or audio files will be managed and stored; whether or not they will be translated, transcribed; and how observations will be captured and stored²⁶. The plan might include an agreement signed by evaluation team members that acknowledges their responsibilities in this area.

²⁵ In PEPFAR COP Guidance, the recommended range applies to the M&E of program implementation, and the same range applies to the larger country COP budget to support system strengthening work for SI. In the context of program implementation, agencies will make the determination of how to apply evaluation requirements and funding. For example, evaluations may be conducted at project sites, for a program, or for an entire implementing mechanism.

²⁶ Yarbrough, D. B., Shulha, L. M., Hopson, R. K., and Caruthers, F. A. (2011). *The Program Evaluation Standards: A Guide for Evaluators and Evaluation Users* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

7. ENSURE APPROPRIATE EVALUATOR QUALIFICATIONS AND EVALUATION INDEPENDENCE

Ensure that an evaluator has appropriate experience and capabilities. Manage any conflicts of interest of the evaluators (or team) and mitigate any untoward pressures that could be applied to the evaluator or evaluation team that would influence its independence.

It is important that the evaluation team members:

- are qualified to conduct the evaluation through knowledge and experience;
- disclose any potential conflict of interest with the evaluation;
- are protected from any undue pressure or influence that would affect the independence of the evaluation or objectivity of the evaluator(s).

Only evaluation teams (whether internal or external) that possess the education, capabilities, skills and experience appropriate to undertake the tasks proposed in the evaluation should conduct evaluations. Professional evaluators typically have advanced training in social science or public health, and depending on the nature of the program and the evaluation questions, the evaluation team might also require members with specialized subject area expertise (e.g., epidemiology, clinical skills, economics, statistics, qualitative analysis). The résumés of the evaluation team members should be examined both for the appropriate education and previous experience(s) to perform the specific evaluation at hand.

It is vital to manage any conflicts of interest of the evaluator and the evaluation team to ensure credibility and mitigate bias. In advance, everyone on the evaluation team must disclose any personal, financial, or other relationships they have that might pose a conflict of interest (or the appearance of a conflict) in their role as evaluators. This is frequently accomplished by having the evaluation team sign a conflict of interest (COI) statement prior to conducting the evaluation. The COI statements should be kept with all other evaluation data and shown to stakeholders as appropriate. The COI statements should be in line with the implementing agency conflict of interest policy (if there is one).

Managing the independence of the evaluation includes informing and educating all those participating in the evaluation (including those collecting data, funding, reviewing, or approving the evaluation) that the planning, implementation and results of the evaluation should not be manipulated in any way to suggest undue influence. Suggested strategies to improve evaluator independence include, but are not limited to, having evaluation units that are separate from program units; using external evaluations and evaluators; or establishing formal conflict-of-interest procedures and declarations for internal evaluators. In some instances, if certain procedures or activities are likely to produce misleading information or conclusions, the evaluation team has the responsibility to communicate their concerns to relevant stakeholders and colleagues and identify proper ways to proceed (e.g., discussions at a higher level, a dissenting cover letter or appendix, refusal to sign the final report,

documenting concern and make a disclaimer, or submitting a Statement of Difference letter²⁷).²⁸ ²⁹

8. MONITOR THE PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION OF AN EVALUATION

Continuous, planned monitoring of the evaluation is important to the successful completion of the evaluation.

Monitoring how an evaluation is planned and implemented is essential for ensuring quality evaluations, controlling redundancy, time and costs, and identifying and solving unexpected problems as they arise.

This monitoring activity should start with the evaluation lead and relevant stakeholders tracking final development and completion of the evaluation protocol. Once the evaluation has begun, it is important to document progress in accordance with the evaluation design, and especially any contextual changes, deviations from the evaluation plan, or quality on a regular basis, and keep stakeholders informed of the evaluation progress.

Data limitations or new information about the program may arise as the evaluation is being conducted and this may have implications regarding the adequacy of the original plan or the feasibility of answering the evaluation questions. If adjustments are absolutely necessary, the evaluation team should document these changes, along with the rationale, and submit modifications for approval depending on relevant IRB and USG agency requirements. Any modifications should be reflected in midterm and final reports.

Monitoring and documenting the progress of an evaluation and communicating with stakeholders is often the responsibility of the evaluation lead(s). The evaluation team simultaneously has the responsibility for safeguarding its quality, adhering to the protocol, and applying the evaluation standards during all the stages.

9. PRODUCE QUALITY EVALUATION REPORTS

The final evaluation report should contain certain elements to ensure the quality and transparency of the evaluation.

The evaluation report should represent a thoughtful, well-researched, and well organized effort to describe the process and findings of the evaluation of a PEPFAR program. The content of an evaluation report should allow the reader to fully understand the context/background, the rationale for conducting the evaluation, the evaluation questions

²⁷ USAID-specific procedure

²⁸ World Bank, Independence and Impartiality in Conducting Evaluations, Chap 3 in XXXX. World Bank, Washington, D.C. http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EXTGLOREGPARPROG/Resources/grpp_sourcebook_chap3.pdf

²⁹ American Evaluation Association (AEA), Guiding Principles for Evaluators, <http://www.eval.org/p/cm/ld/fid=51>

to be answered, and the methods and analyses that were used. The report should assess the findings of the project/program, supported by strong quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods evidence. Any limitations to the evaluation findings, such as spillover, lost to follow up or missing data should be fully described. Finally, for the findings to be useful, supported recommendations should be made explicit and be actionable, realistic, and specific.

Developing and using standard templates for stakeholder or agency review and feedback on evaluation reports can ensure standardized reports and improve their quality. Formal publication of evaluation results might constitute the evaluation report, and in these cases the agency responsible for supporting these studies will define specific reporting requirements. In these latter instances, agencies also will have to provide the additional relevant information regarding standards of practice not found in the published studies. When given evaluation results are not publishable (e.g., due to negative or less than compelling results, or to study quality issues), an alternative final report format will be determined by the responsible agency.

10. DISSEMINATE RESULTS

Evaluation results should be disseminated to all stakeholders, the public and funders.

Evaluation results and recommendations should be presented clearly and simply so that stakeholders and other parties can easily understand the evaluation process, results and recommendations³⁰. Like other elements of evaluation, dissemination should be discussed and planned in advance with stakeholders and must follow agency evaluation dissemination instructions. These steps will ensure that the information needs of relevant audiences will be met, which requires consideration of the timing, style, tone, message source, vehicle and format of information products (e.g., publications, briefings, newsletter).

Evaluation results can be shared via evaluation reports, publications, oral presentations, agency websites, annual reports, and briefings. All completed PEPFAR evaluations must be placed into the implementing agency database within 90 days after approvals of all relevant authorities. In some instances formal publication comprises the final evaluation report. The publication date will constitute this date of approval by the agency, and the responsible agency will ensure that the publication will be made available through posting in the database or linking to the publication site. As congressionally mandated in the *PEPFAR Stewardship and Oversight Act*,³¹ all completed evaluation reports must be published on a publically available internet website. These agency databases will constitute the core of this dissemination approach, and additional access will be provided through linkages from a central PEPFAR site.

³⁰ GAO, 2012, Designing Evaluations, Revision, GAO-12-208G. Washington, D.C. January 2012.

³¹ PEPFAR Stewardship and Oversight Act of 2013 (S. 1545).

11. USE FINDINGS FOR PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT

Evaluation findings and recommendations should be utilized for decision making and program improvement.

Evaluation is a worthwhile endeavor only if the results are used. Well-planned evaluations provide evidence to inform real-world decision making and contribute to learning agendas that have national, regional, or global importance. Evaluation results can be used to demonstrate the effectiveness of a program, plan new procurements, make mid-stream adjustments to improve programs, and demonstrate accountability. The evaluation objective(s) as well as the intended audience identified in the planning phase of the evaluation should guide use of the evaluation results. These various agendas for use of evaluation findings also should be stipulated in the evaluation plan.

Evaluation findings can be more useful if:

- 1) the evaluation question was linked to a specific future programmatic decision
- 2) intended users are engaged early, their information needs are identified, and recommendations are made according to the user needs;
- 3) intended users review evaluation reporting and dissemination plans;
- 4) intended users are reminded of the planned use of the evaluation findings;
- 5) evaluation findings and recommendations are translated into usable information products targeted to specific intended users;
- 6) intended users and stakeholders are supported in applying the findings and recommendations;
- 7) intended users are supported in making strategic choices about where to focus follow-up efforts;
- 8) implementation of the recommendations is monitored; and
- 9) intended users and other stakeholders see evaluation as an ongoing process rather than a one-time event or moment-in-time report³².

³² Patton, M.Q., 2008. *Utilization-focused evaluation*, 4th edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

SECTION II

OGAC, IMPLEMENTING AGENCIES, OPERATING UNITS AND IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS

The USG PEPFAR Implementing Agencies have existing evaluation guidance, policies and frameworks^{33,34} which are generally inclusive of the standards of practice described. This section illustrates ways in which the PEPFAR Evaluation Standards of Practice can be monitored and used by OGAC, Implementing Agencies, OUs, and Implementing Partners to ensure that high quality evaluations are conducted and the results disseminated and utilized. For evaluation to become integrated into PEPFAR programs, OGAC, Implementing Agencies, and OUs have specific responsibilities, as well as extensive shared interests. Among all of these partners, work needs to be coordinated to preclude unnecessary duplication and communication channels will have to be established among the various Points of Contact in the field and at HQ to support this coordination and improve the quality of evaluation implementation.

An additional rationale for strengthening evaluations is contained in language in the recently passed *PEPFAR Stewardship and Oversight Act*³⁵ describing new reporting requirements associated with PEPFAR evaluations. Congress has stipulated that PEPFAR must report on an annual basis those evaluations completed during the reporting period, if these reports have been published on a publically available website, and if any of these evaluations did not adhere to these standards of practice (see additional information in Section III).

- *Uniform procedures for reviewing evaluations for compliance to these standards of practice will be developed in accordance with agency processes. The specifics of these processes will be included in the forthcoming operational guidance.*

OGAC

- Coordinate interagency process to support implementation of evaluation standards of practice and use of high quality evaluations in PEPFAR-supported programs
- Support Implementing Agency efforts to increase compliance with the PEPFAR Evaluation Standards of Practice
- Review OU evaluation plans to ensure alignment with partner-country needs and priorities
- Consolidate and review OU reporting of planned evaluations and associated annual updates

³³ USAID, Evaluation Policy, *op. cit.*

³⁴ CDC, Evaluation Framework, *op. cit.*

³⁵ PEPFAR Stewardship and Oversight Act of 2013 (S. 1545).

- Coordinate interagency efforts to provide technical assistance to OUs to strengthen partner-country evaluation capacity and to respond to specific implementation concerns
- Coordinate interagency strategies to most effectively disseminate lessons learned, best practices, and evaluation results with all relevant stakeholders and the general public
- Coordinate formal review processes in accordance with legislative requirements
- Provide links on PEPFAR.GOV to publically available agency websites that publish completed PEPFAR evaluations

IMPLEMENTING AGENCY HEADQUARTERS

- Support efforts to increase compliance with the PEPFAR Evaluation Standards of Practice
- Review OU evaluation plans to ensure alignment with partner-country needs and priorities
- Review OU reporting of planned evaluations and associated annual updates
- Participate in interagency efforts to provide technical assistance to OUs to strengthen partner-country capacity and to respond to specific implementation concerns
- Implement strategies to most effectively disseminate lessons learned, best practices, and evaluation results with all relevant stakeholders and the general public
- Participate in interagency efforts to support use of all relevant evaluation results for decision-making and program improvement within OUs
- Publish completed PEPFAR evaluations on publically available internet website

OPERATING UNIT

- Support efforts to increase compliance with the PEPFAR Evaluation Standards of Practice
- Develop OU evaluation plans to ensure alignment with partner-country needs and priorities; monitor progress in achievement of national goals and objectives
- Report to appropriate Implementing Agencies and OGAC regarding partner-country evaluation needs and priorities
- Report to appropriate Implementing Agency and OGAC an inventory of planned evaluations, and associated annual updates
- Coordinate in-country interagency efforts to strengthen partner-country capacity and to respond to specific implementation concerns
- Support national strategies to most effectively disseminate lessons learned, best practices, and evaluation results with all relevant stakeholders and the general public (as appropriate)
- Participate in national counterparts' and interagency efforts to support use of relevant evaluation results for decision-making and program improvement within partner-country and OU strategies

IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS

- Ensure evaluations are conducted in compliance with the PEPFAR Evaluation Standards of Practice
- Use evaluation findings to inform programmatic changes with OU and Implementing Agency planners
- Translate findings into information for policy- and decision-makers
- Support national strategies to most effectively disseminate lessons learned, best practices, and evaluation results with all relevant stakeholders and the general public (as appropriate)

SECTION III

PLANNING AND REPORTING

Evaluation planning is important to ensure that evaluation resources are allocated appropriately³⁶. Much of this work will take place in-country, jointly with national partners, PEPFAR, and other stakeholders. The yield of this effort will include, at a minimum, an overarching national agenda for evaluation -- or some basis on which to develop such a national agenda, -- a PEPFAR OU evaluation agenda aligned with the national, as well as a PEPFAR evaluation inventory maintained and updated on an annual basis. Starting in the FY 2014 Country Operational Plan/Regional Operational Plan (COP/ROP) cycle, at Semi-Annual Performance Results (SAPR) time, OUs will submit information relevant to the joint evaluation agenda and to the actual studies in-progress, planned, and completed. The primary utility of this information is multifold:

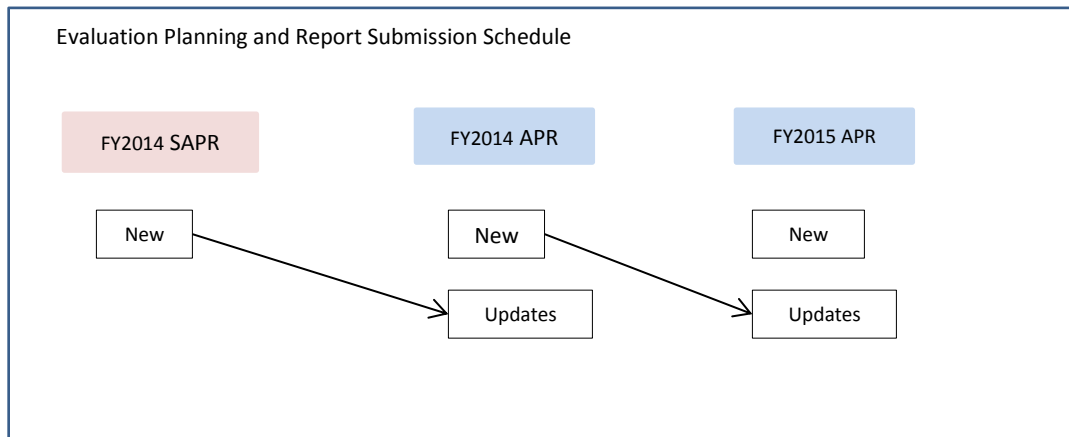
- To enable PEPFAR to track and report on evaluations being conducted
- To monitor the implementation of and adherence to the PEPFAR evaluation standards
- To reduce duplication of evaluation resources and efforts
- To share best practices
- To improve dissemination and use of evaluation findings and recommendations

To assist in this process, a worksheet template is being provided for submission as a supplemental document in the FY 2014 SAPR. This worksheet includes two sections: Evaluation Strategy, and Evaluation Planning and Reporting. Monitoring of the evaluation worksheet will be conducted at the OU level.

- ***The evaluation worksheet will be submitted for the first time as a component of the FY 2014 SAPR reporting (Figure 2). Subsequent submissions of the worksheet will occur annually in the APR to reflect updates to the status of previously identified evaluations and to provide initial information for new evaluations. This worksheet data submission template will be replaced by a FACTS Info module within the year.***

³⁶ GAO, 2012, PEPFAR Evaluation, *op. cit.*

Figure 2. Schedule of evaluation planning and reporting submissions.



EVALUATION STRATEGY

The strategy section of this submission will place OU evaluation planning into context and describe the evaluation strategy. This strategy should reflect the national agenda context, which might include the national evaluation strategy, a process and supportive infrastructure for identifying evaluation gaps, a prioritized list of evaluation studies, an operational plan and budget for evaluation implementation, and a strategy for dissemination and use of findings.³⁷ PEPFAR reporting in the OU template includes:

- A description of the process of engaging with the Ministry of Health/National AIDS Commission on the development and implementation of the national evaluation strategy and on evaluation capacity building efforts.
- A description of how the proposed PEPFAR evaluations are aligned with the National M&E or HIV plans by listing the areas and questions OUs are helping to address with the proposed evaluations (these can be found in the national HIV/AIDS plan or national HIV/AIDS M&E plan or in other related policies, reports, documents, etc.).
- Identification of the person with overall responsibility for monitoring the status of evaluation within the OU (if this role/task does not exist, the PEPFAR Coordinator or the OU PEPFAR lead should identify someone to fill this role).

In some instances national partners may not yet have developed such an evaluation strategy. Please describe these circumstances and provide some estimates (however preliminary) of when a national evaluation strategy may be ready for dissemination.

³⁷ UNAIDS, 2010, A National Evaluation Agenda for HIV.

EVALUATION PLANNING AND REPORTING

The second part of the evaluation plan worksheet encompasses all evaluations currently ongoing, those completed in the past 12 months, and those planned for the next fiscal year. This requirement applies to all process, outcome, and impact evaluations. In addition, for those OUs conducting Public Health Evaluations, Implementation Science and any other centrally orchestrated evaluation, please refer to the definitions provided in Appendix A and classify projects in the appropriate type of evaluation (if applicable). The following information elements for each evaluation are required:

- Operating Unit(s)
- USG Agency (funding and/or implementing)
- USG Agency Evaluation Project Officer/Lead (agency specific)
- Technical Area
- Implementing Partner of technical activity (Mechanism partner)
- Principal Investigator(s) / Implementing Partner conducting evaluation (if applicable)
- Independence of evaluator
- Competence of evaluator
- Title of Evaluation
- Type of Evaluation
- Stage of Evaluation
- Total Funding Expected
- Anticipated Timeline (Start/End Dates)

➤ *This annual submission of evaluation information does not pre-empt any of the other reporting requirements associated with agency or centrally managed evaluation studies.*

EVALUATION WORKSHEET UPDATE

Subsequent submissions of the worksheet information will occur at the time of the APR. These submissions will include the full list of information for all new evaluations and updated information for evaluations already identified in previous submissions. The update information will include only two elements:

Update

- Stage of Evaluation
- Timeline (start/end)

COMPLETED EVALUATIONS

Agency and interagency headquarter processes will implement a review of all completed evaluation to meet the requirements of the new PEPFAR legislation. At the conclusion of these processes, the two components of “Report Completion” section of the worksheet will be filled in.

- Adherence to the Standards of Practice
 - Publication of Evaluation Report on Publically Accessible Website
- *More specific instructions for completing the worksheets will be provided in the forthcoming guidance documents.*

APPENDIX A. DEFINITION OF TERMS³⁸

ACTIVITY: “An activity is a component of a project that contributes to a project purpose. It refers to an award (such as a contract, grant or cooperative agreement), or a component of a project such as training or technical assistance.”³⁹

EVALUATION: “Evaluation is the systematic collection and analysis of information about the characteristics and outcomes of programs and projects as a basis for judgments, to improve effectiveness, and/or inform decisions about current and future programming. Evaluation is distinct from assessment, which may be designed to examine country or sector context to inform project design, or an informal review of projects.”⁴⁰

IMPACT: “The long-term, cumulative effect of programs/interventions over time on what they ultimately aim to change, such as a change in HIV infection, AIDS-related morbidity and mortality. Note: Impacts at a population-level are rarely attributable to a single program/ intervention, but a specific program/intervention may, together with other programs/interventions, contribute to impacts on a population.”⁴¹

MONITORING: “Monitoring provides an indication of progress against goals and indicators of performance, reveals whether desired results are occurring, and confirms whether implementation is on track. In general the results measured are the direct and near term consequences of program activities.”⁴²

OUTCOME: “Short-term or medium-term effect of an intervention’s outputs, such as a change in knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, behaviors.”⁴³

OUTPUTS: “The results of program/intervention activities; the direct products or deliverables of program/intervention activities, such as the number of HIV counseling sessions completed, the number of people served, the number of condoms distributed.”⁴⁴

PROGRAM: “An overarching national or sub-national response to a disease. A program generally includes a set of interventions marshaled to attain specific global, regional, country, or subnational objectives; involves multiple activities that may cut across sectors, themes and/or geographic areas.”⁴⁵

³⁸ Agencies (as well as global partners) use generally comparable definitions for these terms, but some variation does exist and may have implications for specific work performed.

³⁹ Department of State, Evaluation Policy, *op. cit.*

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ UNAIDS, 2010, Basic Terminology and Frameworks for Monitoring and Evaluation, *op. cit.*, p. 62.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ UNAIDS, 2010, Basic Terminology, *op. cit.*, p. 65.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 65.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 66.

PROJECT: “An intervention designed to achieve specific objectives within specified resources and implementation schedules, often within the framework of a broader program.”⁴⁶

RESEARCH: “A systematic, intensive study intended to increase knowledge or understanding of the subject studied, a systematic study specifically directed toward applying new knowledge to meet a recognized need, or a systematic application of knowledge to the production of useful materials, devices, and systems or methods, including design, development, and improvement of prototypes and new processes to meet specific requirements.”⁴⁷

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 67.

⁴⁷ NIH Glossary of Terms. <http://grants.nih.gov/grants/glossary.htm#>