



Recommendation of the Council on Public Policy Evaluation

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Background Information

The Recommendation on Public Policy Evaluation was adopted by the OECD Council on 6 July 2022 on the proposal of the Public Governance Committee (PGC) and the Committee of Senior Budget Officials (SBO). The Recommendation aims to establish robust institutions and practices that promote the use of public policy evaluations.

The need for a systemic approach to public policy evaluation

Governments are increasingly confronted with complex policy challenges, declining levels of trust and resource constraints. As a result, governments are under increased pressure to show that their use of public resources and the decisions they make translate into desired outcomes, and to implement policies that actually improve the well-being of people.

Tackling these challenges requires decision-making informed by robust and credible evidence. By bringing an objective understanding of what works, why, for whom, and under what circumstances, public policy evaluation provides such crucial evidence to decision-makers and citizens. Yet, use of evaluation results often remains fundamentally difficult for governments.

Against this backdrop, the OECD, through the PGC and the SBO, has developed a systemic approach that not only looks at individual evaluative practices, but also at how those can come together to make sure that evaluation becomes part and parcel of the policy-cycle.

Process for developing the Recommendation

The Recommendation builds on the extensive work of the OECD on public policy evaluation over the past 20 years, as well as more recent analytical work, including the recently published [Improving Governance with Policy Evaluation](#) which draws on [data](#) from 42 countries including 35 Members, and [country studies](#).

Capitalising on this work, the Recommendation was developed through an iterative process by the PGC and the SBO, under the expertise of their Working Party on Performance and Results (WPPR). It benefited from comments, suggestions and views from relevant OECD bodies and their Secretariat, including the Regulatory Policy Committee and the Development Assistance Committee.

Scope of the Recommendation

The Recommendation is structured around three mutually reinforcing pillars that concurrently aim to improve the use of public policy evaluations:

- Institutionalise evaluation from a whole of government perspective, by conducting and using public policy evaluations systematically, and by fostering demand for evaluations inside and outside the executive.
- Promote the quality of evaluations, by planning and managing evaluations so that they are fit-for-purpose, as well as by establishing standards and mechanisms, and developing skills and capacities.
- Conduct evaluations that impact decision-making, by embedding them into decision-making processes, and by publicising and communicating their results.

Next steps

Both the Adherents and the OECD Secretariat are invited to disseminate the Recommendation. The Secretariat will disseminate the Recommendation among relevant stakeholders, in particular through the WPPR and the informal “Evaluation expert group” network of the PGC and SBO.

The WPPR will support Adherents and follow up on the Recommendation's implementation through specific studies and analysis, and the development of implementation tools such as a toolkit containing practical guidelines and relevant good practice examples based on quantitative and qualitative research. Further, the WPPR continue to provide a forum to promote the sharing of relevant experience and the dissemination of good practices.

A report on the implementation, dissemination and continued relevance of the Recommendation will reach Council in 2027.

For further information please consult: <https://www.oecd.org/gov/budgeting/monitoring-evaluation> and <https://www.oecd.org/gov/budgeting>.

Contact information: policyevaluation@oecd.org.

Implementation

The [Implementation Toolkit](#) for the Recommendation offers practical guidance for government officials and evaluators seeking to improve their evaluation capacities and systems, by enabling a deeper understanding of their strengths and weaknesses and learning from Adherents experiences and trends.

The toolkit supports the practical implementation of the principles contained in the Recommendation. Together, the Recommendation and the accompanying Toolkit seek to help governments build a culture of continuous learning and evidence-informed policymaking, potentially leading to more impactful policies and greater trust in government action.

THE COUNCIL,

HAVING REGARD to Article 5 b) of the Convention on the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development of 14 December 1960;

HAVING REGARD to the standards developed by the OECD in the area of budgetary governance, regulatory policy, aid effectiveness and development co-operation, as well as data governance;

RECOGNISING that public policy evaluations aim to promote understanding of why and how a policy is successful, or has the potential to succeed, or not, who benefits from it, and how to improve it (i.e. learning), as well as aim at enhancing accountability in the use and impact of public funds;

RECOGNISING that public policy evaluations can feed into important policy processes such as spending reviews, which serve to assess the effectiveness and efficiency of public expenditure and manage the overall level of expenditure; regulatory impact assessments, which serve to assess the various potential impacts of an intervention; ex post reviews of regulations, which serve to ensure that regulations are effective and efficient and to manage the stock of regulations; strategic planning, which serves to identify policy priorities; and public accountability mechanisms;

RECOGNISING public policy evaluation is also at the core of evidence informed policy-making to improve outcomes and well-being;

RECOGNISING that public policy evaluations can make use of and complement other tools that help to assess the results of policies, such as monitoring data and performance audits;

RECOGNISING that Adherents have different legal, policy and institutional frameworks on promoting the use of public policy evaluation through which they will implement this Recommendation;

CONSIDERING that, while public policy evaluation is primarily a responsibility of central government, it is a responsibility shared at all levels of government and by public institutions and that accordingly this Recommendation is relevant at all such levels and institutions, in accordance with their national and institutional frameworks.

On the proposal of the Public Governance Committee and Committee of Senior Budget Officials:

I. **AGREES** that, for the purposes of the present Recommendation, the following definitions are used:

- **'Public policy evaluation'** refers to the structured and evidence-based assessment of the design, implementation or results of a planned, ongoing or completed public intervention. It assesses the relevance, coherence, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and/or sustainability of a policy based on its objectives.
- **'Public intervention'** refers to different means through which governments structure their efforts to attain desired objectives. These can be policies, programmes, strategies, projects or plans.
- **'Knowledge broker'** refers to an individual or organisation that strengthens linkages between evidence users and suppliers, for instance by facilitating policy-makers' access to evaluation results.
- **'Internal evaluation'** refers to evaluations that are conducted by the institution in charge of the public policy that is being evaluated.
- **'External evaluation'** refers to evaluations that are conducted outside of the institution in charge of the public policy, that is, either by another government institution, or by an institution outside of the government.

II. RECOMMENDS that Members and non-Members having adhered to this Recommendation (hereafter the “Adherents”) **institutionalise public policy evaluation from a whole of government perspective**. To this effect, Adherents should:

1. Conduct and use evaluations across government ensuring that they are carried-out in a systematic manner and that their results are used in policy and budgetary decision-making. In particular, Adherents should:

- a) Designate evaluation champions to coordinate evaluations across institutions and advise on best practices to promote their quality and use.
- b) Define and assign institutional responsibilities for conducting policy evaluations.

2. Foster a culture of learning and accountability by promoting demand for, and ownership of, evaluations within and beyond the executive. In particular, Adherents should:

- a) Promote the role of both internal and external, national and international, knowledge brokers to strengthen the relationship between evidence from evaluations and its users, including citizens.
- b) Offer opportunities for the legislative body to review and discuss policy evaluations.

III. RECOMMENDS that Adherents **promote the quality of public policy evaluations**. To this end, Adherents should:

1. Actively plan, design and manage evaluations so that they are timely and proportionate to the intended objectives, taking into account the needs of the primary users and the types of intended uses, and ensuring that results can be trusted by stakeholders. In particular, Adherents should:

- a) Plan evaluations early by building provisions for evaluations into public interventions from the start, in order to improve their design, collect data on their implementation, and ensure that evaluation results are robust and available in a timely fashion.
- b) Design and implement evaluations that are proportionate and appropriate for the likely use, by adapting the aim, scope and analysis of the evaluation, its format and resources, to the needs of its primary users and the types of intended uses.
- c) Engage relevant stakeholders in the evaluation processes from the outset in order to create ownership for change and trust in evaluation results.

2. Establish quality standards and mechanisms for evaluations to generate robust and credible evaluation results that can be trusted and used with confidence. In particular, Adherents should:

- a) Develop guidelines to ensure that evaluation designs, data collection processes and analytical methods, adhere to methodological best practices.
- b) Adopt professional and ethical standards for evaluators to ensure that they meet high criteria for integrity and independence, as well as for knowledge of evaluative methods and culturally appropriate approaches, and that they safeguard the dignity, rights, safety and privacy of participants and other stakeholders when they conduct evaluations.
- c) Promote the functional autonomy of evaluations, by safeguarding the autonomy of external evaluations through oversight of the commissioning and evaluation processes, and by providing internal evaluations team with a high degree of autonomy in the use of available resources and in deciding what studies to conduct and how.
- d) Ensure that evaluations are able to withstand external scrutiny, such as through peer review, and that they can be assessed against pre-defined quality criteria.

3. Develop institutional skills and capacities to conduct, commission and use evaluations effectively and in a credible manner. In particular, Adherents should:

- a) Build public sector skills for evaluation by conducting regular training, recruiting and retaining employees with the adequate skills or collaborating with academia, the private sector and other jurisdictions to improve the availability of these skills.
- b) Ensure the availability of high quality, timely, accessible, disaggregated and re-usable results, performance and administrative data for policy evaluation.
- c) Provide institutions with appropriate resources to manage, carry-out and use policy evaluations.

IV. RECOMMENDS that Adherents **conduct public policy evaluations that impact decision-making**. To this effect, Adherents should:

1. Establish institutional mechanisms to embed evaluation in decision-making processes, both at the organisational level and across government. In particular, Adherents should:

- a) Provide high-level guidance, such as in a legal or policy framework or in a multi-annual evaluation agenda, on when to conduct policy evaluation and what type of evaluation is needed, in order to adapt the timing of evaluations to feed into decision-making processes, focus the analysis where it is most needed, co-ordinate efforts for cross-sectorial evaluations, and avoid overlaps.
- b) Incorporate the use of evaluation results into decision-making including through the policy-making and budgetary processes.
- c) Establish follow-up mechanisms for decision-makers to respond to the results of evaluations, by defining a course of action where relevant, and assigning responsibilities for implementing and tracking recommendations.

2. Provide easy access to evaluations and present the findings deliberately in order to improve the uptake of evaluation results. In particular, Adherents should:

- a) Make the result of evaluation findings and recommendations public by default.
- b) Tailor the way evaluation evidence is presented and communicated to its potential users, in terms of timing, communication channel, format and messaging, by developing a dissemination strategy.
- c) Make use of evidence synthesis methodologies to aggregate evaluation findings and assess them in a systematic manner.

V. INVITES the Secretary-General to disseminate this Recommendation.

VI. INVITES Adherents to disseminate this Recommendation at all levels of government.

VII. INVITES non-Adherents to take due account of and adhere to this Recommendation.

VIII. INSTRUCTS the Public Governance Committees and Committee of Senior Budget Officials, through the Working Party on Performance and Results, to:

- a) Serve as a forum for exchanging information on public policy evaluations, including experience with respect to the implementation of this Recommendation, fostering multi-stakeholder and interdisciplinary dialogue to promote the use of evaluations in decision-making;
- b) Develop an implementation toolkit to support Adherents' implementation of this Recommendation;
- c) Report to the Council on the implementation, dissemination and continued relevance of this Recommendation no later than five years following its adoption and at least every ten years thereafter.

About the OECD

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- **Substantive Outcome Documents** are adopted by the individual listed Adherents rather than by an OECD body, as the outcome of a ministerial, high-level or other meeting within the framework of the Organisation. They usually set general principles or long-term goals and have a solemn character.
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