

Social, economic and demographic statistics

which are in the public domain and which could exert an influence on policy development or monitoring. These can also be evaluated against SASQAF and the NSS.

For statistics to be certified as “official”, SASQAF requires that three criteria need to be met prior to assessment of the data itself:

- The producing agency should be a member of the NSS.
- The statistics should meet user needs beyond those specific and internal to the producing agency.
- The statistics produced should be part of a sustainable series, not a once off collection.

On meeting the initial criteria, assessment of the data begins”. Assessment is conducted by a Data Quality Assessment team established by the Statistician-General. This team evaluates the statistics under review against (1) the pre-requisites and (2) the eight dimensions of quality.

The former would include factors such as the legal and institutional environment, privacy and confidentiality etc.

The latter includes: relevance, accuracy, timeliness, accessibility, interpretability etc. On the basis of these criteria, the statistic is classified as:

- quality statistics,
- acceptable statistics,
- questionable statistics or
- poor statistics.

Quality statistics are eligible for designation as “official statistics” subject to periodic reviews by the Statistician General in consultation of the head of the producing agency.

Through setting common standards (eg concepts, definitions, classifications, methodologies and sampling frames), SASQAF aims to promote quality maintenance within a decentralised system of statistics production. This would include extending the use of standardized definitions developed for internal use by Statistics South Africa to other M&E stakeholders.

Statistics SA is the lead agency in this area and will work with each government institution that gathers information that has broader public value.

Evaluations

The focus of this component is on the standards, processes, and techniques of planning and conducting evaluations and communicating the results of evaluations of government programmes and policies.

The Presidency will be developing an Evaluation Framework and other guidelines and support material to facilitate the overall implementation of evaluation systems across the three spheres of government. Further details are provided in the implementation plan which accompanies this *Policy Framework*.

Evaluations

The aims of the Evaluations Framework are to:

- encourage government institutions to evaluate their programmes on a regular basis
- provide guidance on the general approach to be adopted when conducting evaluations
- provide for the publication of the results of evaluations.

The responsible institution is the Presidency. Other crucial role-players include DPSA and the Office of the Public Service Commission. DPLG is an important stakeholder at local level.

The primary emphasis will initially be on monitoring. Once institutional capacity has been built, the orientation will gradually place more emphasis on evaluation.

PART THREE: MONITORING AND EVALUATION INSTITUTIONAL LEVEL

3.1 Linking M&E systems with other management systems

Overview

The public service has been in the throws of constant reform since 1994. One of the major complaints of sub-national spheres of government is that there are new reforms every year emanating from different national departments. These reforms are often not integrated with previous reforms which were led by other departments. It is important that the three components of the GWM&E be understood to be integrated with other reforms such as the MTEF, and In-Year-Management, Human Resource Planning, Annual Reporting and Monitoring such as the Public Management Watch Programme (at national and provincial level) and IDPs and institutional performance management systems (at municipal level).

M&E strategies

As a component of its strategic plan, annual performance plan or IDP, every Government institution must formally adopt an M&E strategy.

M&E strategies must describe the approach the institution is to follow to create and operate M&E systems that produce credible, accurate information on an ongoing basis that gets used to improve service delivery and governance. M&E systems should be integrated with existing management and decision-making systems. M&E strategies will outline how M&E findings will inform strategic and operational planning, budget formulation and execution as well as in-year and annual reporting.

While each institutional strategy must focus on monitoring and evaluating its own performance and impact, it should also adopt a sectoral perspective and develop the capacity to report on progress and challenges at that level.

The M&E strategy should include an inventory of the institution's current M&E systems, describing their current status and how they are to be improved as well as mentioning any plans for new M&E systems.

An important component of the M&E strategy would be a capacity building plan detailing how the institution will put in place the human capacity to fulfill its M&E functions, and how it will liaise with other stakeholders (such as SAMDI) in effecting this capacity building plan. It is important that an institution's M&E strategy encompasses the organization's approach to implementing the *Programme*

M&E strategies

Performance Information Framework in preparation for audits of non-financial information, as well as to implementing SASQAF standards (where relevant). For instance, a subset of performance information covered under the *Programme Performance Information Framework* may be identified by the institution as candidates for certification as “official statistics” in terms of SASQAF

M&E structures, information systems and processes

The optimal organization structure for M&E will differ from organization to organization. Some organizations may prefer a centralized, specialized M&E unit. Others may opt to decentralize M&E functions to components within the organization.

Whatever the structure of the M&E function, it is important that it has sufficient visibility within the organization. Sufficient authority to officials with M&E system management responsibilities can ensure that M&E findings inform policy and programmatic decision-making and resource allocation.

When considering the acquisition of an electronic system to support M&E, it is crucial to consider compliance with this *GWM&E Policy Framework* and its supporting frameworks. The system’s specifications should support the roll-out of the institutions M&E strategy and should be integrated with the institutions existing systems and be able to exchange information and data with systems external to the institution. The relationship of the M&E system to other electronic systems should ideally be documented in the institution’s IT systems master plan. Options for software and hardware (network configuration) need also to be considered. Adequate training for the custodians of the system and end-users is essential.

Integration of M&E and other management systems

Effective M&E systems are built on good planning and budgeting systems and provide valuable feedback to those systems. How M&E processes relate to planning, budgeting, programme implementation, project management, financial management and reporting processes should be clearly defined. M&E roles and responsibilities should be embedded in job descriptions and performance agreements to link individual performance to the institutional M&E system. The institutional framework for reward and recognition should take M&E achievements into account. Appropriate recruitment may be required to attract scarce M&E skills. Training for M&E should be part of the institution’s skills development strategy. An effective retention strategy is also crucial to maximize staff continuity and preservation of institutional memory.

Besides the formal elements of an M&E system, equally important is the informal “culture” of the organization. Is the managerial culture defensive, blaming and dismissive of M&R findings? Or are M&E findings regarded as an opportunity to explore problems openly and engage in critical but constructive introspection? Much of this depends on the tone set by the political heads and senior officials of institutions. Without a management culture, which demands performance, M&E

systems could degenerate into superficial “tick the checklist” exercises which comply with the letter of *GWM&E Policy Framework* but undermine its spirit

3.2 The Practice of M&E

Building demand by meeting needs

As noted above, M&E entails gathering and using information and knowledge in order to improve accountability and enhance service delivery. This cannot be successfully achieved unless an explicit, sustained effort is made to find out what information is needed to improve government performance in terms of accountability and service delivery. Finding this out requires personal consultations with the key role players involved. Such consultations must be undertaken regularly and the findings reflected in institutional M&E strategies. Details regarding these consultations, such as interview dates and findings should be attached in an Appendix to the M&E strategy.

A central repository

Each institution’s M&E strategy should identify a central point at which M&E outputs should be lodged and stored for ease of access and to ensure they are known about and to encourage their utilization. The core of a central M&E repository should be a reliable and easily accessible catalogue of studies and their findings and recommendations that is available to any interested party. The institution should make these easily available via the internet.

Follow up

The catalogue of M&E studies, findings and recommendations referred to above should be used periodically to check what follow ups have been done and whether M&E recommendations are being implemented. A report on this matter should be provided by the institution’s Accounting Officer to its Executing Authority and oversight bodies at least every three years.

Knowledge sharing

Institutions need to find ways of sharing the knowledge and wisdom generated through their M&E processes. One way of doing so is the use of M&E Forums which are being successfully used in some provinces, although there are other mechanisms available, such as learning circles and others. The choice of mechanism should be noted in the M&E Strategy and its connection to institutional Knowledge Management or Learning Strategies should be clearly spelled out.

3.3 Defining institutional roles and responsibilities

Responsibilities	WHO	WHAT
	Legislators and councilors	As representatives elected by South Africa's voters, Government and all its structures are accountable to legislatures and municipal councils. Legislators and councilors must exercise consistent and informed oversight of the bodies accountable to them, using insight gained from M&E systems.
	Executive authorities	Should use M&E findings in the political oversight of institutional performance and for ensuring that desired outcomes and impacts are achieved. Also provide the bodies to whom they are accountable with detailed regular reports on the institutions under their control.
	Accounting officers and accounting authorities	Accountable for the frequency and quality of M&E information and the integrity of the systems responsible for its production and utilization. They need to ensure that prompt managerial action is taken in relation to M&E findings.
	Programme managers, other line managers and officials	Establishing and maintaining M&E systems, especially collecting, capturing, verifying and using data and information.
	Designated M&E units	Ensuring the implementation of M&E strategies by providing expertise and supports as well acting as a service hub for related initiatives.

3.4 Building capacity

Capacity requirements

The capacity needed to implement M&E strategies is required in two places:

- Line managers need the generic M&E skills required by the Framework for Managing *Programme Performance Information*
- Specialist M&E skills are likely to be needed for other aspects of the M&E Strategy, to coordinate and to ensure quality.

Initiatives to build the first set of skills should be integrated into the institution's overall skills development strategy.

Providing the second set of specialist M&E skills in many instances requires a specialist M&E Unit but this is a decision for each institution. Arrangements for the provision of specialist M&E skills should be explicitly referred to in the institution's Strategic Plan.

The purpose of M&E capacity building

Capacity building initiatives should ensure that:

- The users of M&E data have to understand how to integrate M&E functions within their areas of responsibility and how to respond to M&E findings.
- M&E managers in the public sector are able to set up an M&E system, manage that system, and produce the results required for M&E from it.

An M&E user should be able to assess information collected through the M&E process, and use this information as a tool for taking managerial action and to improve future interventions through the planning process.

An M&E manager should be able to link various related components of M&E work together (for example, the inputs, processes, activities, outputs, outcomes, and impacts that constitute projects, programmes, and services), so that they form an integrated whole or system. The M&E manager should also be able to manage such a system and enable M&E practitioners to produce data from it for decision-making.

An M&E practitioner within government should be able to apply an evidence-based approach to gather and analyse data on the government activities. Data gathering should be based on scientific methods, using a range of instruments such as indicators and other reliable measurements. Such data should give a clear indication of how well government is doing regarding particular interventions, as well as its overall services, projects and programmes.

Capacity building interventions

Each institution will have to consider a range of interventions to build capacity in the short, medium and long term. These include:

- Recruitment of appropriate specialist skills. These include not only generic M&E skills, but also individuals with appropriate sector expertise.
- Training of existing staff: These include both line management and M&E specialists. Training modalities can include external formal qualifications from higher education institutions as well as in-house customized courses.
- On-the-job training and mentoring.
- Structured skills transfer from academics, consultants and other external providers.
- Creation of internal M&E forums and participation in external learning networks.

A capacity building plan may have to first consider how an institution will design an M&E strategy (especially if M&E is a relatively new function), and then consider the skills required to implement it. The latter part of the capacity building plan will compare existing capacities with what is required to implement the M&E strategy (based on the assignment of roles and responsibilities, which skills should certain groups of employees have?). Once the gap has been identified, various capacity building options can be identified and costed. The timing of the rollout of capacity building interventions may be tempered by budget or labour market skills constraints. These risks should be noted and carefully managed.

M&E skills sets

M&E is by its very nature multi-disciplinary. To ensure that M&E adheres to the principle of methodological soundness, data and information management skills are important. To ensure that M&E is participative, inclusive and development oriented also makes communication and people skills essential. Crucial competences include data collection skills, statistical analysis, economic impact and econometric analysis, understanding of sector policies and implementation modalities, facilitation skills for participative M&E, data quality assurance, impact of poverty, gender and other dynamics etc.

PART FOUR: IMPLEMENTING THE GWM&E SYSTEM

4.1 Institutional arrangements

Institutional arrangements

A GWM&E Working Group has been appointed under the leadership of the Presidency. The team was originally structured as three workstreams:

- Principles and practices
- Information and reporting
- Evaluations

The Working Group has contributed to the development of this *Policy Framework* and identification of stakeholder roles and responsibilities. The foundational work required in the initial phase has been completed, and the next phase will be the constitution of an M&E Coordinating Forum. This will allow for the closer cooperation and alignment of M&E functions. The M&E Coordinating Forum is formulating a detailed implementation plan and will consult on its contents before moving ahead with implementation. Progress against the detailed plan will be monitored on an annual basis.

4.2 Legal mandate

Legal mandate underpinning GWM&E roles and responsibilities

The Presidency

Section 85 of the Constitution requires that the President, together with other Cabinet Members, should, inter alia, exercise executive authority through the development and implementation of national policy and the coordination of the functions of state departments and administrations. The Constitution requires that all three spheres of government work together and participate in development programmes to redress poverty, under-development, marginalisation of people and communities. The Presidency plays a crucial role in the coordination, monitoring, evaluation and communication of government policies and programmes, and accelerating integrated service delivery. The Presidency also aims to evaluate the implementation of government strategy, including its impact as measured against desired outcomes.

National Treasury

The National Treasury's mandate is informed by sections 215 and 216 of the Constitution, and other legislation such as the Public Finance Management Act (PFMA) of 1999 and the Municipal Finance Management Act (MFMA) of 2003. The Treasury's engagement with the GWM&E Framework revolves around ensuring that information on inputs, activities, outputs and outcomes underpins

Legal mandate
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planning, budgeting, implementation management and accountability reporting to promote economy, efficiency, effectiveness and equity, as well as transparency and expenditure control.

Statistics SA

The mandate of Statistics SA is informed, inter alia, by the Statistics Act (No. 6 of 1999), the 2002 January Cabinet Legkotla and the State of the Nation Addresses 2004 and 2005. Section 14.6 (a), (b) and (c) of the Statistics Act makes provision for the Statistician-General to advise an organ of state on the application of quality criteria and standards. Section 14.7 (a) and (b) confers upon the Statistician-General power to designate statistics produced by other organs of state as official statistics. Section 14.8 clauses (a) and (b) authorises the Statistician-General to comment on the quality of national statistics produced by another organ of state; and to publish such other department's statistics

Department of Public Service Administration (DPSA)

DPSA's mandate is framed by the Public Service Act. This department is responsible for public service transformation to increase public service effectiveness and improve governance. It acts as the custodian of public management frameworks, performance and knowledge management and service delivery improvement. It co-chairs the Governance and Administration Cluster and the GWM&E Working Group.

Department of Provincial and Local Government

DPLG derives its mandate from the Constitution, Chapters 3 and 7 as well as other legislation such as the Municipal Structures Act of 1998 and the Municipal Systems Act of 2000. Its core function is to develop national policies and legislation with regards to provinces and local government, to monitor their implementation and to support them in fulfilling their constitutional and legal mandate

South African Management Development Institute (SAMDI)

SAMDI's mandate is informed by the Public Service Act, 1994, Chapter II Section 4 (2).

The institute:

- (a) shall provide such training or cause such training to be provided or conduct such examinations or tests or cause such examinations or tests to be conducted as the Head: South African Management and Development Institute may with the approval of the Minister decide or as may be prescribed as a qualification for the appointment, promotion or transfer of persons in or to the public service;
- (b) may issue diplomas or certificates or cause diplomas or certificates to be issued to persons who have passed such examinations. SAMDI will play an important capacity building role in rolling out the *GWM&E Policy Framework*.

Office of the Public Service Commission (OPSC)

Legal mandate underpinning GWM&E roles and responsibilities

The OPSC derives its mandate from sections 195 and 196 of the Constitution, 1996. It has been tasked with investigating, monitoring, and evaluating the organisation and administration of the public service. This mandate also entails the evaluation of achievements, or lack thereof of Government programmes. The PSC also has an obligation to promote measures that would ensure effective and efficient performance within the Public Service and to promote values and principles of public administration as set out in the Constitution, throughout the Public Service.(e.g. professional ethics, efficient, economic and effective use of resources , impartial, fair and equitable service provision, transparency and accountability etc).

Auditor-General

The annual reports of government departments need to include, inter alia, audited financial statements and statements of programme performance. Section 20(1)(c) of the Public Audit Act (25 of 2004) requires that the Auditor General express an opinion or conclusion on “reported information of the auditee against pre-determined objectives”. Similar provisions exist in terms of the Municipal Systems Act of 2000 and the Municipal Finance Management Act of 2003 at local level.

Provincial Offices of the Premier

Section 125 (1) vests the executive authority of a province in the Premier, who – together with the provincial executive council, exercises this authority through the development and implementation of provincial policy, the implementation of national policies in concurrent function areas, and the coordination of the functions of the provincial departments. The Premier as the political head of the Provincial Government is also responsible for the implementation of Chapter 3 of the Constitution on cooperative government. The Premier’s Offices play a critical leadership role in the development and implementation of Provincial Growth and Development Plans.

4.3 Guiding principles for implementation

Guiding principles for implementation

The following eight principles will guide the key stakeholders in crafting detailed implementation plans in their areas of responsibility:

1. *The implementation plan should be clearly linked with prior public sector reform initiatives.* This will allow the M&E improvements envisaged by this Policy Framework to build upon, complement and consolidate previous reform efforts.

Guiding principles for implementation

2. *As far as possible, the GWM&E framework should incorporate and consolidate existing M&E initiatives in the three spheres, aligning them to the overall aims of government.* Many national departments have taken the lead in fostering a culture of monitoring and intervention in sub-national spheres. The implementation of the GWM&E framework therefore does not start with a clean slate, but should recognise and build upon these initiatives. The implementation plan should thus be evolutionary.
3. *Roles and responsibilities of each stakeholder should be clearly defined and related to their mandate.* M&E resources are extremely limited across the South African public service. It is very important that the scarce resources available are harnessed for optimal impact, avoiding both unnecessary duplication as well as omissions of key interventions. Effective coordination of efforts is of paramount importance.
4. *The implementation plan should adopt a differentiated approach across spheres and sectors.* Although all spheres of government have a common interest and objective in contributing whole-of-government performance, it must be borne in mind that the operating context of each sphere is very different. In order to be feasible, any implementation plan has to be sensitive to these nuances.
5. *The administrative burden of compliance across government should be minimised.* Implementation milestones must be linked to existing capacity and the ability to build capacity over the medium term. Overlapping responsibilities (for example in respect of concurrent functions) tend to result in multiple reporting lines. Provincial government departments and especially municipalities incur substantial compliance costs in reporting essentially the same information in many different formats to different stakeholders. To this end the streamlining of reporting lines and sharing of information is vital, although each data source should have a clearly designated owner. While the *GWM&E Policy Framework* sketches the ultimate destination at which all public sector departments will converge, it must always be borne in mind that capacity varies markedly across spheres and geographic jurisdictions. While capacity should not dictate the normative long term ideal for government, it must be factored into implementation plans and risk managed accordingly.
6. *Where M&E systems are supported by IT solutions, the emphasis will be on systems integration and ease of data interchange.* The *GWM&E Policy Framework* seeks to embed performance a management system within public sector organisations which articulates with other internal management systems. The term system, in this context refers to the policies, strategies, structures, processes, information flows and accountability relationships which underpin the practice of M&E across government. This may or may not be supported by IT software and other tools.

Guiding principles for implementation

If this is the case, the emphasis is on systems integration and inter-operability.

7. *Monitoring and the development and enforcement of statistical standards are important pre-conditions for effective evaluation.* The sequence of implementation will focus firstly on creating a culture of monitoring service delivery and then feeding back into managerial action. Simultaneously the definition of statistical standards will be concluded with interventions to enable departmental data to be converted into official data. Improvements in the quality of data and information and the creation of knowledge will then lay the foundations for more effective evaluation practices.
8. *Regular review of the implementation plan against milestones* Implementing the *GWM&E Policy Framework* will no doubt be a learning process. Doubtlessly implementation challenges, unforeseeable at this time, will arise. There needs to be mechanisms to respond to these challenges, engage with relevant stakeholders and modify the implementation plan if required.

Appendix 1: Key concepts in M&E

Policies, strategies, programmes and projects

Policies are statements of **what** government seeks to achieve through its work and why. Strategies are sequentially structured descriptions of **how** these policies will be enacted. Programmes (outside of the budgeting context) are high-level, big-picture **plans** showing how strategies will be implemented. Projects are specific conceptually-linked sets of **activities** intended to achieve particular results that will lead to the achievement of programme goals.

Result-based management

This approach to management is based on four pillars:

- definition of strategic goals which provide a focus for action;
- specification of expected results which contribute to the achievement of these goals; and the alignment of programmes, processes and resources in support of these expected results;
- on-going monitoring and assessment of performance, integrating lessons learnt into future planning; and
- improved accountability for results (whether programmes made a difference in the lives of ordinary South Africans)

Evidence based decision making

Evidence-based decision making is the systematic application of the best available evidence to the evaluation of options and to decision making in management and policy settings. Evidence can come from any of the three data terrains outlined in the GWM&E system: programme performance information, evaluation and census data/statistics – as well as from research studies and local community information.

Data, information and knowledge

Data are any fact or figure. Information consists of data presented in a context so that it can be applied or used. Information becomes knowledge when connections and links to other information items are analysed to facilitate critical thinking and reasoning. M&E exercises are more useful when they provide information, not raw data, and when they support the development of knowledge.

Baselines

A description of the status quo, usually statistically stated, that provides a point of comparison for future performance.

Performance indicators

A performance indicator is a pre-determined signal that a specific point in a process has been reached or result achieved. The nature of the signal will depend on what is being tracked and needs to be very carefully chosen. In management terms, an indicator is a variable that is used to assess the achievement of results in relation to the stated goals/objectives.