STAKEHOLDERS CONSULTATION WORKSHOP for the
MALAYSIAN FRAMEWORK ON EVALUATION POLICY AND STANDARDS (MyFEPS)
– Evaluation for Sustainability

Organized by : Malaysian Evaluation Society (MES)
Date/Time : 25th MAY 2016 / 12.00noon – 5.00pm
Venue : Armada Hotel, Petaling Jaya Selangor.

Speakers

Ms Shanti Periasamy (MES President) – Welcoming & Closing Remarks

Mr Lim Kheng Joo (Past President & Advisor to MES) – Preliminary Draft Malaysian Framework On Evaluation Policy And Standards (MyFEPS)

Mr Koshy Thomas (Under Secretary, Corporate Strategy & Communication, Ministry of Finance, Malaysia) – Synthesis & Way Forward

Moderator

Dr Arunaselam Rasappan (Senior Advisor, CeDRE International) – Open discussion

Report written by

Mr Rayza Raymond
Ms Nirmala A
ABSTRACT

This session focused on four key aspects of the Malaysian Framework on Evaluation Policy and Standards which was prepared by the MES; namely; (a) what this framework is, (b) the need, (c) its target users, and (d) its contents; against the backdrop of global advancement in evaluation for sustainability. The purpose of this workshop was to get comments and feedback from key stakeholders of various government, non-governmental and private organizations on how this framework touches the numerous aspects of evaluation and also how this draft framework can be further enhanced and developed.

1. OPENING

Ms Shanti Periasamy (MES President) – Opening Remarks

Ms Shanti began her presentation by giving the participants an introduction of the Malaysian Evaluation Society. She touched on four aspects namely;

- Background, Mission, Vision
- Strategic Focus Areas
- Guiding Principles
- Strategy of Multi-sectoral Approach

She also gave an overview of the MES network and partners around the world and touched on the role MES in relation to these partners.

Ms Shanti then went on to set the context for the Malaysian Framework on Evaluation Policy and Standards (MyFEPS). She briefed the participants on the resolution adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 19 December 2014 where Member States agreed that evaluation is an important component of development processes, and recognize evaluation as a country level tool that can help strengthen and support development results. She also gave a history of Project SG2015-10: Developing ASEAN Regional Framework on Evaluation Standards (ARFES) which set the contexts for MyFEPS.

2. PRESENTATION

Mr Lim Kheng Joo (Past President & Advisor to MES) – Presentation of Preliminary Draft Malaysian Framework on Evaluation Policy and Standards (MyFEPS)

Mr Lim began by explaining to the participants what MyFEPS is. After explaining the definition of evaluation and the purpose of it, he further described how MyFEPS is a policy framework to guide the purposive conduct of evaluations by public, private and civil society organisations in Malaysia in support of good governance, accountability, performance, learning, and evidence-based decision making towards national sustainable development. He further explained on the need and target users of MyFEPS.

Mr Lim further went on to describe the Contents of MyFEPS which was generally adopted from ASEAN Regional Framework on Evaluation Standards (ARFES) with one new additional component; which is,
Operationalising MyFEPS with (a) Management and Coordination of Evaluation; and (b) Implementation of Evaluation as its two stages. Mr Lim gave an overview of the draft MyFEPS with its key components as follows;

- 3 Key Considerations
  - Evaluation Policy and Regulatory Framework
  - Professionalism in Evaluation
  - Ethics in Evaluation

- 3 Core Evaluation Elements - Principles & Standards
  - Evaluation Management
  - Evaluation Conduct
  - Evaluation Utilisation

- 1 Strategic Decision - Operationalising MyFEPS
  - Management and Coordination of Evaluation
  - Implementation of Evaluation

3. DISCUSSION

Dr Arunaselam Rasappan (Senior Advisor, CeDRE International) – Moderator

Dr Aru briefed the participants on the context and the format of the discussion which was held in groups. They were to give comments and feedback based on the aspects of (a) Structure, (b) Layout, and (c) Contents. The participants broke up into pre-assigned groups for discussion.

Comments by discussants

First Group (group 2) – Mainly comprising members of the Public Sector

Specific comments:

- Ref : CORE ELEMENT 1 (E1-P1-S4) – pg 12
  - Last line to include the word “sustainable”; ........realistic, achievable and sustainable.
  - Definition of sustainability to be included in the preambles.

- Ref : CORE ELEMENT 1 (E1-P2-S1) – pg 13
  - Second part of the standard, starting from the second sentence; to be a separate standard instead of being together in the same standard. They suggested that this part to be split as a separate standard. Mainly because it talks about awareness.

- Ref : CORE ELEMENT 1 (E1-P3-S2) – pg 13
  - This standard to be elaborated further and be more specific in the context of transparency.
• Ref : CORE ELEMENT 2 (E2-P2-S2) – pg 16
  o They do not understand what/who “commissioner” refers to.
  
  Note: Dr Aru explained that “commissioner” refers to the person who commissions the evaluation; or the requester of the evaluation.
  
  He further said that this can be looked into further to see how this word can be changed.

• Ref : CORE ELEMENT 2 (E2-P3) – pg 16
  o The word “hard data” to be further clarified.
  
  Note: To earmark the word “hard” and to re-look at this.

• Ref : CORE ELEMENT 3 – pg 18
  o To add a new Standard 3 to be titled as Beneficiary Focus.
  
  They commented that Evaluation should be focused to achieving whatever problem that requires the evaluation in the first place.

• Dr Aru asked participants opinion on CORE ELEMENT 2, Principle 3 (E2-P3); whether the aspects in this Principle should be mandatory. The group generally agreed to modify the prescriptive language used in this principle to be more flexible. A participant suggested to add words such as “where applicable”; or “where possible” in this principle.

Second Group (group 3) – Mainly comprising members of the Academia and International Agencies

General comments:

• Is evaluation a generally desirable process or the framework to act as a compelling force to make evaluation a practice? What is the objective for the creation of this document?
• State clearly whether the evaluation is for an institution; or the evaluation is for a programme because the requirements and the thinking for either can be very different.

Specific comments:

• Ref : CORE ELEMENT 2 (E2-P3-S1) – pg 16
  o They have serious reservations about the usage of both objectives and unbiased; that an evaluation can be free from bias. What is the idea of objectivity?
  o Would be better if the phrasing can be revised to better reflect the idea that the organizations stated principles or guiding objectives which should be stated clearly both at the evaluation TOR and also at the evaluation report.
  o It helps to guide the consumer of the evaluation in understanding both the purpose of the evaluation and also the results of the evaluation.
  o There is no unbiased evaluation; every evaluation is guided by a set of principles; and that principle is not shared by everyone.
  o They suggest to state your guiding objectives and principles. “This is what we are looking at and this is what we want”.
  o Dr Aru mentioned the principle in every evaluation is that it should be grounded and evidence based. One participant from the group disagreed and is in the opinion that evidence can be defined and analysed differently.
  o Dr Aru then asked other participants for their reaction to this important point which he elaborated further by giving some examples.
    - Mr Lim mentioned that we have to look into the ethics and professionalism of evaluation.
One participant suggested to indicate the possible biases in the preamble of the report. And further mentioned that even neutrality is a bias. So it is better to disclose the way the evaluator came to a certain conclusion.

*Dr Aru further said that this can be stated in the TOR and all these comments will be taken into account.*

- Mr Lim added that a slant in analysis will exist but the evaluator will need to stick to principles which another participant added that even a principle can be a biased one.
- *Dr Aru further gave an example where the commissioner of the evaluation is directly involved with the evaluation; or a stakeholder which then raises the question on how the evaluation may be affected.*
  - *Dr Aru concluded this point by saying that the statements will be looked into and to be made very clear.*

**Third Group (group 1) – Mainly comprising members of the NGOs and International Agencies**

General comments and weaknesses of the document:

- Contents of the documents seems to be study based without explanation on the practices and policies.
- Sustainability on initiative of framework should have highlighted the parameters of sustainability.
- Differentiation of output and outcome chain when put in the draft document
- Landscape and the context of Malaysia should be included in the document.
- Principles on Results Based Management (RBM) is not in the document. They suggest that there should be a link to RBM. They feel that a system should support the evaluation.
- Sustainable results and key stakeholders should be anchored with the 11th Malaysia Plan because all key stakeholders are working towards these national development goals including the private sector.
- Although utilization focus section is there, there seems to be an absence of a follow up mechanism. Who follows up on the recommendations of the evaluations? Who takes those key decisions to make amendments into the programme or area? They suggest possibly an oversight mechanism for different organizations and anchoring it within the system would possibly be one way to go about this.
- They suggest to add links to other resources available and best practises in different sectors (private/public sector) so people who are interested can access and engage and gain further understanding and/or a partnership.
- They suggested that the preamble to this document should clearly explain about the types of evaluation; the importance of evaluation etc. This important to be explained in the preamble before getting into the principles and standards.
General comments from the floor:

After concluding the comments and feedback from the specific group, Dr Aru opened the discussion to any further comments from the floor.

• Specific comment
  o Typo on page 5 – first sentence at the top of the page (above diagram); ...... components forms the structure of the..... (Missing word/description)......as depicted in Fig. 1 below.

• Dr Aru asked the floor is everyone pleased with the schema (Fig. 1) on Page 5.
  o Some participants gave some feedback on the diagram.
  o One participant in particular suggested that the diagram need to be explained. Some notes can be added to the diagram for this.
  o Further discussions was held about the key considerations and the core elements.
    ▪ Mr Lim and Dr Aru further explained the diagram.
    ▪ Mr Lim explained about the dynamism depicted by the arrows in the diagram.
    ▪ After further discussions, the conclusion was that the diagram should be explained.
  o Dr Aru suggested that the caption “Adapted from ASEAN framework” should be added to the diagram.
  o In conclusion, everyone is agreeable to adopt this diagram as with the title changed to MyFEPS and the reference to the ASEAN framework added.

• On a different matter, another participant suggested that it should be made clear why there is evaluation in the first place; where the purpose is for “Improving Results” and possibly adopt it in the preamble of the policy.
• All participants were generally happy with the document.

4. SUMMARY

Mr Mr Koshy Thomas (Under Secretary, Corporate Strategy & Communication, Ministry of Finance, Malaysia) – Synthesis & Way Forward

Mr Koshy reinforced what was said by some of the participants, which was that MyFEPS need to be looked at from a broader context. He explained how performance management whether in a private of public sector need to be looked at from (a) Formulation, (b) Execution, and (c) Review and clarified further on this. He hopes that MyFEPS can be a basic guide for all sectors, which can be further enhanced by the individual sector.

He emphasised the clear message that is needed to be passed on the demand side; i.e. the employers especially the perception of evaluation at the very top management level. He also highlighted that Malaysia is on the threshold of becoming a developed nation, and how are we to achieve that if evaluation is not done in any sector. He concluded by stressing that the work that that needs to be done to get this off the ground needed to be fast tracked.
Ms Shanti Periasamy (MES President) – Closing Remarks

In closing, Ms Shanti briefed the participants on the next steps moving forward with MyFEPS. MES will be creating a platform through e-consultation on the MES website. She also mentioned the intentions of MES to play a role in advocacy and capacity building and encouraged engagement with the participants and also any other organizations that may be interested. She thanked all the participants for attending and was appreciative of all the value that was added in developing MyFEPS.

5. CLOSING

As the workshop came to an end, the lively debate at the end of the session and follow-up talks after the session between participants, the panellists and MES members encouraged further participation and understanding of the need to move MyFEPS forward.