



NATIONAL EVALUATION POLICY

WITHIN A NATIONAL M&E POLICY FRAMEWORK



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Introduction

This document presents the National Evaluation Policy (NEP) for Nigeria (Chapter 1). Its content incorporates the results of the discussions and recommendations produced over the course of an intensive one day workshop and staff meetings held in Abuja in September 2017, under the chairmanship of Dr. Lawal Zakari, Director of the National Monitoring & Evaluation Department, Ministry of Budget & National Planning (MBNP). The workshops and meetings included the active participation of senior staff from the MBNP and from UNICEF Nigeria.

This document also includes a brief discussion of the distinction between monitoring and evaluation (Chapter 2), as well as a summary presentation of the National M&E Policy Framework for Nigeria (Chapter 3).

The National Evaluation Policy is intended to form part of Nigeria's National Monitoring and Evaluation Policy Framework. A **policy framework** is a set of complementary yet distinct policies that are related to a common overall public policy goal. At present, it is envisaged that the National M&E Policy Framework for Nigeria will be constituted by a monitoring policy and by an evaluation policy. The framework allows for the addition and updating of policies as government sees fit.

A **policy** is intended generally to make explicit the government's position on a matter it considers of importance to the public interest and to citizens, to explain why and to provide guidance on policy implementation. When a policy is part of a policy framework, it strives for coherence with other policies, actual or intended, that form part, or may form part, of the framework. This NEP was developed with due consideration for the development of a National Monitoring Policy that would form part of the National M&E Policy Framework.

Although the level of detail of a policy varies typically according to its level, e.g. law, executive order or administrative instruction, a policy and its content are different, distinct and at a higher level of generality than operational **procedures**. A policy's primary purpose is to provide guidance while operational procedures such as manuals, guides and specific instructions, are designed to prescribe practices with a view to their consistency, harmonisation and quality.

Finally, a **system**, such as a government monitoring and evaluation system, encompasses the full set of relevant and applicable policies, procedures, practices and resources.

1. National Evaluation Policy

1.1 Title

National Evaluation Policy (NEP)

1.2 Level

Executive policy¹

For the federal government:

- This may take the form of a Presidential directive.

At state level:

- The policy would be referred to the *State Executive Council*.

1.3 Scope

The policy applies to the whole of government, federal and state levels, including external financing partners²

1.4 Rationale for evaluation

Evaluation provides a framework for:

- Making a positive difference in people's lives,
- Assessing the value of public investments,
- Generating and communicating knowledge to improve government performance,
- Improving accountability of government,
- Supporting parliamentary oversight,
- Facilitating citizen engagement with government,
- Strengthening social justice, equity and gender equality.

Evaluation can provide benefits such as:

- Reducing waste of public funds,
- Improving the quality of public spending,
- Providing an independent assessment of public policies, programmes and projects,
- Providing a source of reliable and meaningful information for the citizen to assess government performance.

¹ It is recommended that, initially, the policy be at the executive level, with the possibility that it may later be enshrined in legislation, e.g. after a positive evaluation of the policy, implementation and its results. This would require that it be tabled in the National Assembly.

² Adopting the principle of Country led evaluation process, aligning with ODA policy.

1.5 Legal basis

The National Evaluation Policy should be consistent with relevant and applicable sections of the Nigeria Vision 20: 2020 document. It should also be consistent with the remit of MBNP as well as other related laws and policies such as the Fiscal Responsibility Act, Public Procurement Act 2007, Freedom of Information Act, Project Continuity Bill (Draft), Annual state of the Nation Address and other matters act, 2009, ODA policy, Open government partnership agreement.

1.6 Purpose of the NEP

The purpose of the National Evaluation Policy is to:

- Define what is evaluation in the government of Nigeria.
- Distinguish and differentiate evaluation from other measurement and assessment activities.
- Establish evaluation as a core function in the government of Nigeria.
- Define the core principles for evaluation in the government of Nigeria.
- Define the institutional arrangements for evaluation in the government of Nigeria (including the responsible entity).
- Define the functional arrangements for evaluation in the government of Nigeria (including its organisation).

1.7 What is evaluation

Evaluation is a periodic and systematic process of assessment, consistent with principles of scientific inquiry, of public policies, strategies, programmes, projects, functions and organisations, to determine their value for Nigerians.

Value may be assessed in terms of relevance, outcomes, impact, sustainability, gender responsiveness, equity, or other aspects of government performance that are important to improving the lives of Nigerians.

Evaluation is based on:

- evaluation theory & practice,
- sound methodology,
- reliable data,
- valid findings,
- meaningful assessments,
- useful recommendations.

Evaluation is different and distinct from:

- **Inspection/investigation** that verifies information and detects wrong doing (for the purpose of control and compliance).

- **Performance audit** which, in its direct form assesses the extent to which value-for-money³ is achieved; in its attest form provides assurance on the reliability, validity and meaningfulness of performance information produced by departments (for the purpose of accountability).
- **Financial audit** which is an independent, objective assessment of an organization's financial reports and financial reporting processes. The primary purpose of financial audits is to give regulators, investors, directors, and managers reasonable assurance that financial statements are reliable, accurate and complete.
- **Monitoring** which is on-going measurement and assessment of performance, i.e. intended results (for the purpose of results oriented management).
- **Performance reporting** where departments and public organisations receiving public funds report annually on their performance and reports are externally audited (for the purpose of accountability and transparency).
- **Research** which involves testing hypotheses/ propositions through observation of reality for learning (for the purpose of knowledge creation and sometimes to inform policy).
- **Review** which is a formal assessment or examination with the possibility or intention of instituting change if necessary.
- **Rapid assessment** which is an intensive, team-based qualitative inquiry using triangulation, iterative data analysis, and additional data collection to quickly develop a preliminary understanding of a situation.

1.8 Fundamental Principles

Public interest	Evaluation is conducted to improve people's lives, i.e. in the public interest
Value added	Evaluation provides measurable value for citizens
Knowledge	Evaluation provides knowledge for learning
Inclusion and participation	Evaluation is inclusive and participative
Utilisation	Evaluation is conducted with a focus on utilisation
Independence	Evaluation is independent from management
Impartiality	Evaluation does not have a stake in its results
Objectivity	Evaluation is based on objective data
Transparency	Evaluations are public and accessible
Standards	Evaluation adheres to professional standards
Ethics	Evaluation is conducted ethically
Quality	Evaluation is assessed for quality
Methodology	Evaluation methodology is sound, explicit and valid

³ Economy, efficiency and effectiveness

Communication	Evaluation results are communicated publicly, in a timely and understandable fashion
Value-for-money	Evaluation is carried out respecting economy, efficiency and effectiveness

1.9 Standards⁴

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

1.10 Ethics^{5 6}

Evaluation abides by relevant professional and ethical guidelines and codes of conduct for individual evaluators. Evaluation is undertaken with integrity and honesty. Commissioners, evaluation managers and evaluators respect human rights and differences in culture, customs, religious beliefs and practices of all stakeholders. Evaluators are mindful of gender roles, ethnicity, ability, age, sexual orientation, language and other differences when designing and carrying out the evaluation.

Competence

- Evaluators are to be competent in their provision of service.
- Evaluators should apply systematic methods of inquiry appropriate to the evaluation.
- Evaluators should possess or provide content knowledge appropriate for the evaluation.
- Evaluators should continuously strive to improve their methodological and practice skills.

⁴ The programme evaluation standards developed by the American Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation (AJCSEE) – Detail of the standards can be accessed here:

https://www.unicef.org/evaluation/files/Evaluation_standards.pdf

The standards and cultural competence can be accessed here:

<https://www.cdc.gov/eval/standards/StandardsAndCulturalCompetenceTable.pdf.pdf>

⁵ From OECD-DAC quality standards for development evaluation -

<http://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/qualitystandards.pdf>

⁶ From the Canadian Evaluation Society - <http://www.evaluationontario.ca/membership/standards-guidelines/>

Integrity

- Evaluators are to act with integrity in their relationships with all stakeholders.
- Evaluators should accurately represent their level of skills and knowledge.
- Evaluators should declare any conflict of interest to clients before embarking on an evaluation project and at any point where such conflict occurs. This includes conflict of interest on the part of either evaluator or stakeholder.
- Evaluators should be sensitive to the cultural and social environment of all stakeholders and conduct themselves in a manner appropriate to this environment.
- Evaluators should confer with the client on contractual decisions such as: confidentiality; privacy; communication; and, ownership of findings and reports.

Accountability

- Evaluators are to be accountable for their performance and their product.
- Evaluators should be responsible for the provision of information to clients to facilitate their decision-making concerning the selection of appropriate evaluation strategies and methodologies. Such information should include the limitations of selected methodology.
- Evaluators should be responsible for the clear, accurate, and fair, written and/or oral presentation of study findings and limitations, and recommendations.
- Evaluators should be responsible in their fiscal decision-making so that expenditures are accounted for and clients receive good value for their dollars.
- Evaluators should be responsible for the completion of the evaluation within a reasonable time as agreed to with the clients. Such agreements should acknowledge unprecedented delays resulting from factors beyond the evaluator's control.

1.11 Institutional Arrangements

- 1) A designated Minister is responsible for evaluation in the federal government of Nigeria.

A designated Commissioner at the State level.

- 2) The designated Minister may constitute a high level National Evaluation Advisory Council to provide advice to the Minister responsible for evaluation on the government's evaluation **policy**, its assessment, its implementation and make recommendations. The Council may be constituted of representatives of citizens, Parliament, Judiciary, State governments, external financing partners, other national governments with well-functioning evaluation functions and recognised evaluation experts. The National Evaluation Advisory Council is supported in its work by ministerial staff.
- 3) The National M&E Department of MBNP has responsibility for the evaluation function in the federal government.

There should be an equivalent at State level.

- 4) The evaluation function is centralised, and all evaluations are carried out by the National M&E Department of MBNP with the participation of the MDAs responsible for the project/programme being evaluated.
- 5) Important government policies, programmes, projects, etc. are evaluated systematically and periodically.
- 6) The National M&E Department of MBNP recommends and justifies to the Minister responsible for evaluation on an annual basis, a rolling 3-year evaluation plan, with rationale, purpose, expected value-added, approach, methodology outline, budget and timeline. The rolling 3-year plan is developed in close consultation with the MDAs involved, including external financing partners where appropriate.
- 7) The Minister responsible for evaluation may refer to the National Evaluation Advisory Council, for advice, on an annual basis, the rolling 3-year evaluation plan submitted by the National M&E Department of MBNP.
- 8) The Minister responsible for evaluation submits annually for discussion and approval to the Federal Executive Council the rolling 3-year evaluation plan with recommendations from the National Evaluation Advisory Council as the case may be.

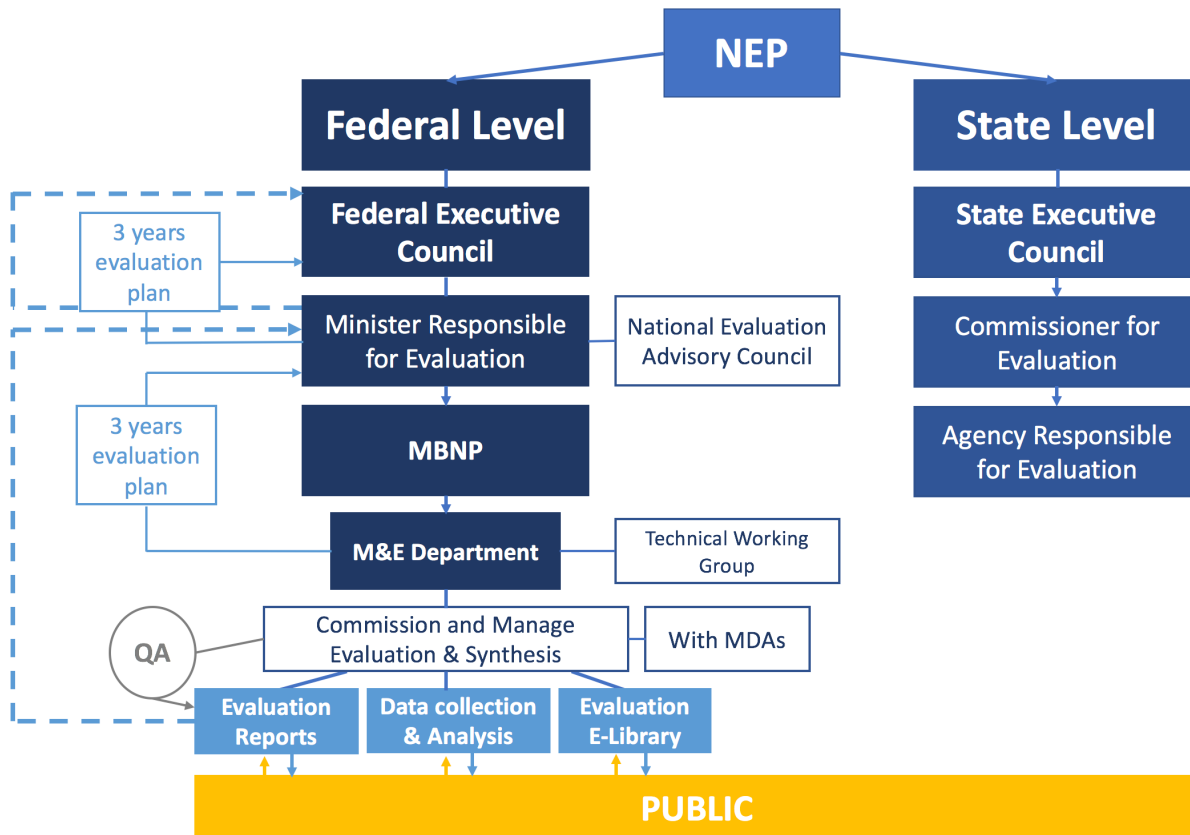
This process should be replicated at state level to the State Executive Council.

- 9) Funding for evaluation comes from a budgetary appropriation and may also include external financing.
- 10) The sustainability of the evaluation function in government is supported by adequate capacity for the implementation of the National Evaluation Policy.
- 11) All evaluations of government initiatives conducted by external financing partners are submitted to the National M&E Department of MBNP, for coordination, participation, assurance of consistency with the National Evaluation Policy, compliance with evaluation standards, quality assurance, inclusion in the government evaluation plan and in the public e-library of evaluations in Nigeria which is managed by the National M&E Department of MBNP.

The equivalent could be replicated at State level.

- 12) All evaluation reports are made public in a manner that is accessible to citizens.
- 13) A publicly accessible e-library of all evaluations conducted in Nigeria is managed by the National M&E Department of MBNP.

- 14) The evaluation function of the government of Nigeria is peer reviewed ⁷ on an appropriate periodic basis; in this perspective, a report is produced and presented to the Minister responsible for evaluation. The report is made public.
- 15) The National M&E Department of MBNP engages with the public, monitoring and evaluation practitioners, national associations of evaluation practitioners, academia and partners nationally, regionally and globally, on technical evaluation issues and questions on behalf of government.



1.12 Functional arrangements

- 1) The practice of evaluation in the government of Nigeria consists of commissioning and managing externally contracted evaluations with participation of the National M&E Department of MBNP, and doing evaluation synthesis.
- 2) Evaluation and management of evaluation, are carried out by qualified evaluators or evaluation managers.

⁷ For example see: UNEG Framework for Professional Peer Reviews of the Evaluation Function of UN organizations

file:///Users/idavies/Downloads/REF_2011_1_UNEG_Framework_for_Professional%20Peer_Reviews_of_the_Evaluation_Function_of_UN_organizations.pdf

- 3) The National M&E Department of MBNP is responsible for setting the competencies for evaluators and evaluation managers ^{8 9}.
- 4) The positions of evaluator and of evaluation manager are formally classified at the professional level in the government's job classification system and remunerated as such.
- 5) An Evaluation Technical Working Group, or equivalent, consisting of government evaluators and external evaluation experts, provides technical advice to the National M&E Department of MBNP. Because of the rapidly evolving state of theory and practice of the evaluation discipline, the Evaluation Technical Working Group is expected to be up to date on developments in the field of evaluation, globally and in the region.

The Evaluation Technical Working Group advises the Director of the National M&E Department of MBNP on developments in the evaluation discipline, with a focus on evaluation in government, relevant to key aspects of evaluation such as: methodology, quality assurance, evaluation capacity, professional development for evaluation.

- 6) All evaluation in the government of Nigeria must meet accepted standards of quality and incorporate explicit and systematic quality control in its conduct.
- 7) The National M&E Department of MBNP develops and manages a quality assurance system for evaluation in the government of Nigeria. The quality assurance system is based on the standards for evaluation in the government of Nigeria. All evaluation is quality assured by the National M&E Department of MBNP.
- 8) The quality assurance system may establish and draw on a pool of external professionally accredited evaluators with recognised expertise in evaluation quality assurance, to assess the quality of each evaluation in the government of Nigeria.
- 9) The National M&E Department of MBNP produces periodically a digest of evaluations in the government of Nigeria together with a summary assessment of quality based on quality assurance of evaluations.
- 10) The National M&E Department of MBNP has a management approach based on an explicit, written and well communicated strategy, within government and in summary form to the public. It integrates into its management annual strategic planning including priorities and resource allocations over a 3-year period, corresponding to the 3-year rolling evaluation plan for the government of Nigeria.

⁸ For example see: UNEG evaluation competency framework (2016) -

file:///Users/idavies/Downloads/Evaluation_Compentency_Framework_web_final.pdf

⁹ For example see: European Evaluation Society evaluation capabilities framework -

<http://www.europeanevaluation.org/sites/default/files/twgs/EES%20EVALUATION%20CAPABILITIES%20FRAMEWORK.pdf>

- 11) Prior to the commencement of each yearly budget cycle, the Director of the National M&E Department of MBNP presents to the Minister responsible for evaluation, the up-to-date evaluation strategy, strategic plan, priorities and operational plan for the coming year.
- 12) The National M&E Department of MBNP incorporates in its management a performance monitoring, assessment and reporting practice. It produces and publishes an annual performance report consistent with the monitoring policy of the government of Nigeria.
- 13) The National M&E Department of MBNP coordinates on a systematic and regular basis with the Statistics office, the unit responsible for the monitoring policy in government, the audit, inspection and control functions in government, to avoid duplication of mandates, of activities as well as to prevent waste of public resources. Minutes of meetings, agreements reached and recommendations are provided to responsible Ministers.

1.13 Evaluation of the NEP

The National Evaluation Policy for Nigeria is evaluated every five years.

2. Distinction between Monitoring & Evaluation

➤ **Monitoring is a technical process that is part of the management function**

Monitoring is about measuring and assessing, on a regular and systematic basis, the performance of projects and programmes.

In a **results-focussed organisation**, **performance** of projects and programmes can be characterised by:

- the achievement of intended results, i.e. **effectiveness** = positive outcomes for the beneficiaries of projects and programmes;
- minimising waste and producing outputs of good quality and quantity, i.e. **efficiency**;
- paying fair market price for inputs (such as purchases of human and material resources for projects and programmes), i.e. **economy**.

In a “**results-based management**” approach, measuring, assessing and reporting on performance is an integral part of management responsibility and accountability.

Monitoring, i.e. performance measurement and assessment of projects and programmes, is based typically on:

- identification and selection of key desired characteristics of performance;
- identification and selection of valid indicators for these (to allow for collection of data where the characteristic does not allow for direct observation);
- collection of data;
- measurement of collected data against intended objectives (usually annual), and/or baselines, and/or comparable projects and programmes (benchmarks);
- assessment of performance.

To manage well the resources at its disposal, management needs to know, based on reliable, valid, timely and meaningful data, how well the project or programme is performing. This information supports management decisions to improve performance, i.e. changes to activities and outputs of projects and programmes with a view to achieving positive outcomes for beneficiaries.

As such, monitoring is part of the management function and, **in a results oriented environment, management also has the obligation to report on the performance of projects and programmes** to those who fund, or allocate or authorize funding.

Sound management requires development and use of good performance measurement, assessment and reporting frameworks, as well as regular and systematic performance reporting by management, e.g. over a budget cycle, based on sound data.

➤ **Evaluation is a discipline¹⁰, and in organisations is a function independent and distinct from management**

Evaluation is about assessing the value, e.g. merit, worth or significance, of a project, programme, policy, strategy, organisation, network, theme, etc. Its primary purpose in government is to contribute to the public good, i.e. to make a positive difference in people's lives.

Evaluation is a relatively recent discipline, with a large and rapidly growing body of theory and practice globally, in a wide variety of public and private settings. It is professionalising progressively, with formal professional accreditations and recognitions both existing and in progress.

Evaluation is also a well-established academic discipline with accredited universities worldwide, offering post-graduate degrees at Master and PhD levels. National, regional, local and global evaluation associations, networks and platforms are numerous, extensive and, in some cases, highly specialised.

Job classifications, based on competencies that are specific to evaluation, exist in several major public and private organisations, and are being expanded progressively.

In short, evaluation is a discipline while, in contrast, monitoring is a management technique.

A functional and value creating evaluation function is recognised increasingly as a required attribute of well-performing government administrations and organisations.

The ability of an evaluation function to provide independent assessments of the value of government undertakings, based on sound evidence, to inform decisions, generate knowledge and provide accountability, distinguishes it from other core organisational functions.

The fact that the evaluation function is independent and distinct from management functions means that it is also independent and distinct from management's monitoring processes and procedures (which include not only performance assessment but also inspection, management control, internal audit, financial control, risk management, review, staff appraisal, etc.)

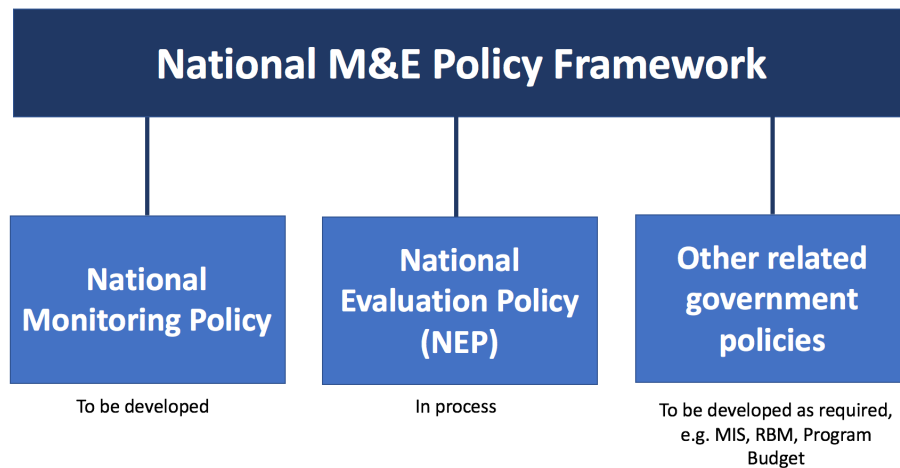
From these facts, as well as for reasons of policy coherence, organisational cogency, functional alignment as well as principles of sound public governance and management, it follows logically that evaluation requires its own specific policy, distinct from other government policies.

Monitoring, on the other hand, should be part of a policy or set of policies on management, such as a "results-based management" policy for example.

¹⁰ "Evaluation is a very young discipline – although it is a very old practice"¹⁰ - Michael Scriven

3. National M&E Policy Framework

Although **the primary focus of this document is on the development of evaluation in the government of Nigeria, through, among other things, the development of a National Evaluation Policy**, the Honourable Minister of State for Budget and National Planning, as well as the Director of the National M&E Department of MBNP, have requested consideration of a national M&E Policy Framework, rather than just a National Evaluation Policy (NEP).



In view of this guidance, and consistent with the discussion in the preceding section, this document recommends that distinct policies apply to evaluation and to monitoring.

It further recommends, with respect to monitoring and consistent with the work accomplished to date, that a project be developed, funded and undertaken, to strengthen and make effective the monitoring function in the government of Nigeria.

Principles for monitoring

Consistent with a performance approach to management, e.g. results-based or results-oriented management, performance monitoring and reporting is an integral part of the management function. Indeed, one of the fundamental ideas behind the types of public administration government reforms that have been implemented globally since the eighties and that are grouped under the heading of New Public Management (NPM), is that of management responsibility, autonomy and accountability.

In practical terms this means that the manager who is entrusted with public funds, i.e. a budget, has:

- the responsibility of managing to achieve intended and agreed results, i.e. outcomes;
- the autonomy and authority to deliver those outputs that best achieve outcomes;

- the obligation to account for the responsibility conferred in terms of achievement of outcomes and the performance of the programme or project under her or his responsibility.

In this context, sound management requires that the responsible manager have authority commensurate with responsibility, to be able to make changes to activities, outputs and in resource allocation to them, with a view to better achieving agreed and intended positive outcomes.

In turn, this requires that, preceding each budget cycle, there be a clear, explicit, written and signed off agreement between the manager and the responsible Minister, or representative, on budget and intended outcomes.

Results-based or results-oriented management, consists, among other things, in adjusting activities using data on the performance of the programme or project, i.e. monitoring. Simply put, a manager cannot manage without collecting and assessing monitoring data, i.e. monitoring is a management function.

At the end of the budget cycle, e.g. annual, the manager has the obligation to account formally for the performance of the programme or project under his or her responsibility. A brief performance report should make clear what the programme set out to achieve in terms of outcomes, what it achieved and did not achieve, why, how were activities managed, based on what data, what was learned, what should be done differently and how much will it cost.

Departments and public organisations should issue a performance report annually, and it should be externally audited for reliability. An overall performance report for government should be published annually, based on performance reports of departments and public organisations. The performance report should be externally audited, e.g. by the Office of the Auditor General of the Federation, submitted to Parliament and made publicly accessible. Audited performance reports should be included in the government's budget proposal to Parliament.

Because of the timing of performance reporting relative to budgetary decision-making, i.e. a performance report on the year N informs discussions for the year N+2, it is best to align performance monitoring, assessment and reporting activities on the rolling 3-year Medium Term Expenditure Framework cycle.

Role of a central monitoring function

Although monitoring is a management function that rests with each MDA and public organisation, there is a case to be made for a central function with support, coordination and oversight responsibilities. The primary role of a central function is to see to the overall coherence, consistency and effectiveness of monitoring and reporting across government, and to quality assure performance reports.

Some key tasks of a central monitoring function are:

- Provide for a government wide policy on performance monitoring and reporting.

- Support management in developing and implementing sound, useful and meaningful performance monitoring, assessment and reporting practices.
- Receive and quality assure the performance reports of departments and public organisations.
- Provide an overall assessment, or evaluation, of government performance monitoring, assessment and reporting on a periodic 3-year basis.
- Coordinate professional development relative to performance monitoring, assessment and reporting.
- Act as key interlocutor with external parties on questions of performance monitoring, assessment and reporting, including other national governments.