

# BETTER CRITERIA FOR BETTER EVALUATION

## REVISED AND UPDATED EVALUATION CRITERIA

**T**he OECD DAC Network on Development Evaluation (EvalNet) has defined six evaluation criteria – relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability – and two principles for their use. These criteria are intended to guide evaluations. They were refined in 2019 to improve the quality and usefulness of evaluation and strengthen the contribution of evaluation to sustainable development.

### WHAT ARE THE EVALUATION CRITERIA?

The purpose of the evaluation criteria is linked to the purpose of evaluation. Namely, to enable the determination of the merit, worth or significance of an intervention (the policy, project, programme, strategy, institution or other activity being evaluated). The criteria are used to identify evaluation questions, with each criterion providing a different perspective on the intervention, its implementation, and its results.

The criteria play a normative role. Together they describe the desired attributes of interventions: all interventions should be relevant to the context, coherent with other interventions, achieve their objectives, deliver results in an efficient way, and have positive impacts that last.

The OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) first developed the criteria in 1991 for evaluating international development co-operation. They have since become a cornerstone of evaluation practice and are widely used, beyond the DAC.

“ The evaluation purpose and context should guide how the criteria are used.



## PRINCIPLES FOR USE

There are **two main principles** that guide the use of the criteria:

- 1** The criteria should be applied thoughtfully to support high quality, useful evaluation. They should be contextualized – understood in the context of the individual evaluation, the intervention being evaluated, and the stakeholders involved.
- 2** Use of the criteria depends on the purpose of the evaluation. The criteria should not be applied mechanistically. Instead, they should be covered according to the needs of the relevant stakeholders and the context of the evaluation.

It is also important that the criteria be understood within a broader context, and read in conjunction with other principles and guidance on how to conduct evaluations in ways that will be useful and of high quality, including the Quality Standards for Development Evaluation.



## UPDATING THE CRITERIA

In 2018-2019, EvalNet revisited its widely used evaluation criteria, agreeing to a new set of principles for use and adapted definitions for relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability – and for one new criterion, coherence. The adaptation involved a far-reaching global consultation, and built on learning gathered over more than 25 years of applying the criteria. The update also reflected new policy priorities including the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Climate Agreement.

The adapted definitions are clearer and will support more rigorous, nuanced analysis, including of equity issues and synergies, in line with current policy priorities. This adaptation also addresses confusion, by adding an introduction on the intended purpose of the criteria and guiding principles for use. A new guidance, coming in 2020, will support use of the criteria, providing tips and examples of evaluation questions with emphasis on relevance to beneficiaries' priorities and needs.

“ Each criteria is a lens, giving a different perspective on the intervention – both the implementation process & the results... together, they provide a more complete picture.



## NEW CRITERION!

### ***Coherence: How well does the intervention fit?***

The compatibility of the intervention with other interventions in a country, sector or institution. The extent to which other interventions (particularly policies) support or undermine the intervention, and vice versa.

For more information on each of the definitions, the complete document and a section of frequently asked questions please go to [oe.cd/criteria](https://oe.cd/criteria)

Photo Credit: ©2019 European Union - Supported by EU funding, Norwegian Refugee Council ensures access to school in Heart, Afghanistan, for children from different regions of the country who had to escape conflict or drought.

## IN BRIEF: WHAT'S NEW?

Some of the key improvements to the criteria include:

- **New emphasis on intended use**, with introductory text, principles, and a forthcoming guidance.
- **Relevance:** The addition of a time-dimension to encourage re-examination of relevance if the context changes. A greater emphasis on relevance to beneficiaries' priorities and needs.
- **The addition of Coherence** to capture perspectives that were not covered previously, including partnerships and linkages, and to understand interventions within broader systems.
- **Effectiveness:** the addition of results, and differential results, encouraging analysis of equity issues.
- **Efficiency:** Addition of operational efficiency and timeliness, and clarification that efficiency can be applied throughout the results chain
- **Impact:** Focus on higher-level changes, in terms of significance, transformative potential, scope, or time scale.
- **Sustainability:** Focus on continuation of benefits, not on external funding, and highlighting the multidimensional nature of sustainability.

## GLOBAL CONSULTATION PROCESS

The adaptation process started with a far-reaching consultation, conducted end 2017 to 2019. It included a public survey, interviews, discussion at international meetings, and a review of literature. A summary of findings from the consultation is available at [oe.cd/criteria](https://oe.cd/criteria).



**The OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) Network on Development Evaluation** is an international forum of evaluation managers and specialists from development co-operation ministries and agencies in OECD DAC member countries and multilateral development institutions. It has had an instrumental role in developing key international norms and standards for development evaluation, and supports collaboration and communication of evaluation findings. Find out more at [oe.cd/evaluation](https://oe.cd/evaluation)