



Evaluation Function in the Government of Canada

DRAFT

Prepared by the Centre of Excellence for Evaluation
Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat

July 2004



Table of Contents

1.0	History of Evaluation in the Government of Canada	1
2.0	Overview of Results Based Practices in Support of Evaluation	3
	2.1 Management Accountability Framework (MAF)	3
	2.2 Parliamentary Reporting and Program Activity Architecture (PAAs).....	4
	2.3 Expenditure Review Process	5
3.0	The Evaluation Function Within the Government of Canada	7
	3.1 Overview of Evaluation Policy	7
	3.2 Structure of the Evaluation Function within the Government of Canada.....	8
	3.3 Evaluation Community within the Government of Canada.....	11
4.0	Evaluation Process	12
	4.1 Departmental Audit and Evaluation Committee	12
	4.2 Departmental Evaluation Plans.....	12
	4.3 Results-based Management and Accountability Frameworks (RMAFs).....	13
	4.4 Types of Evaluation.....	13
	4.5 Approaches to Undertaking Evaluations	14
5.0	Evaluation Standards and Criteria	16
6.0	Utilization of Evaluation Results	17
7.0	Conclusions and Future Challenges	18
	APPENDIX A: Results-based Accountability Framework (RMAF) Assessment Criteria	20
	APPENDIX B: Evaluation Standards in the Government of Canada	23
	APPENDIX C: Core Elements of an Evaluation Report and Assessment Criteria	25

1.0 History of Evaluation in the Government of Canada

Evaluation was first introduced into the federal government in the late 70s to help improve management practices and controls. The Treasury Board Policy Circular on “Evaluation of Programs by Departments and Agencies” (1977-47) recognized program evaluation as an integral part of managerial responsibilities. Evaluation Units were to be established and report directly to the Deputy Heads, and program evaluations were to be completed on a three to five year cycle. Deputy Heads were to use evaluation findings and recommendations to make more informed management decisions, demonstrate accountability and provide quality advice to ministers.

In 1977 the Auditor General Act was amended to allow the Auditor General to examine and report to Parliament on economy and efficiency of government activities. The Act allowed the Auditor General to report on “procedures to satisfactory procedures have not been established to measure and report the effectiveness of programs, where such procedures could appropriately and reasonably be implemented”, however this does not allow the Auditor General to measure the effectiveness of the programs themselves.

Progress in implementing the evaluation policy was rocky. The term “program” was not well defined. Ministers were largely outside the process often viewing evaluation and review activities as an internal bureaucratic process. In some Departments and Agencies, Evaluation Units languished as a result of no direction or little interest.

By mid-80s the Office of the Comptroller General (OCG) recognized the challenge for departments in completing evaluations every five years. As a result, much of the rigidity of the Evaluation Policy was abandoned.

By 1994, the landscape of evaluation had changed considerably with the introduction of the Review Policy – a hybrid function that combined internal audit with evaluation. The policy was intended to support the principles of managing for results by emphasizing line manager’s responsibilities for demonstrating and acting on performance information. Unfortunately, the Review Policy did not have the impact that was hoped for. A “Study Of The Evaluation Function” in 2000 re-examined the Review Policy in the emerging modern management environment. It found that to effectively support sound management practices internal audit and evaluations functions needed to be distinct and separate. It also recognized the increasing demand on evaluation to support management in the development of evaluation frameworks and performance measures.

In February 2001, the Treasury Board approved the “Evaluation Policy and Standards for the Government of Canada”. The new policy separates the evaluation and internal audit functions as well as extends the scope of evaluation to include programs, policies and initiatives. It links evaluation activities to results-based management activities and sets out standards to embed the discipline of evaluation into management practice.

Evaluation was always a mainstay of the Office of the Comptroller General (OCG). In 1978,

when the OCG was established, one of its first tasks was to complete the Improvement of Management and Accountabilities exercise (IMPAC). Teams of “assessors” examined departments’ management practices in detail offering useful suggestions and highlighting management and accountability issues that would have otherwise gone unnoticed. IMPAC Team reports were the basis of Action Programs negotiated with Deputy Ministers (DMs) and ultimately supported by them in their departments.

The importance of the evaluation function (to the OCG and departments) was re-introduced in 1983 when Harry Rogers, the Comptroller General, introduced an expanded role of department senior financial officers. Rogers recommended the position of Comptroller be established in departments and include responsibility for the planning process and the coordination of management information in addition to the traditional accounting and regularity functions. Rogers also suggested instituting a “challenge function” whereby the financial officers would subject a departmental proposal to a systematic independent and impartial review and analysis before external approval. Variations of this comptrollership proposal took root. Some departments established small operational planning and control offices separate from the finance function. Other departments established program evaluation offices in their policy branches while others created a combined departmental audit and evaluation unit reporting to the DM, Associate DM or an ADM - Corporate Management.

Today, the role and the importance of the Comptrollership and the departmental Comptrollers and, ultimately, evaluation activities have re-emerged. The OCG, along with departmental Comptrollers, will play a central role in scrutinizing expenditures and resource allocation based on demonstrated performance and evidence-based information (i.e., results from evaluation studies). This combined with the introduction of the Management Accountability Framework (MAF) results in a stronger more critical emphasis on program and policy relevance, cost-effectiveness, and management accountability. Discussions on each of these elements will depend on the results of sound, timely and strategic evaluation studies. As it was in the beginning, evaluation remains a mainstay in the Office of the Comptroller General which now part of the Treasury Board Secretariat (TBS).

The new government agenda further reinforces the importance of evaluation within government management practice. Evaluation assists departments in meeting requirements of expenditure planning, control and oversight, and can help assess policy proposals for the purposes of due diligence and value for money. One cannot speak about results without also speaking about evaluation.

The contribution of a strong evaluation function is clear.

- ▶ Important government management practices such as, stewardship, the Management Accountability Framework (MAF) and, more recently, the ongoing expenditure review exercise requires a rigorous evaluation function.

- ▶ Evaluation results provide the fact-based evidence that can support Executive

Committees and central agencies in priority setting and resource reallocation.

- ▶ Used strategically, sound evaluations can offer the insight and detailed information required to support improved management practice and achieve results.
- ▶ There is no other discipline in government that provides, in one place, an analytical and advisory capacity on both results and accountability.

2.0 Overview of Results Based Practices in Support of Evaluation

To understand the role of the evaluation function within Canada, it is important to recognize its role in relation to the government's overall approach to managing for results. To this end, three key activities are currently underway: the Management Accountability Framework (MAF); improved Parliamentary Reporting; and the newly introduced Expenditure Review Process.

2.1 Management Accountability Framework (MAF)

In June 2003, the Treasury Board Secretariat (TBS) released the Management Accountability Framework (MAF)¹. The MAF is intended to integrate TBS' management improvement initiatives into a coherent framework and to translate the public service management vision into a rational and robust set of management expectations.

As part of implementing the MAF, departments must examine, improve and report on the following areas: Governance and Strategic Direction; Public Service Values; Policy and Programs; People; Citizen-focused Service; Risk Management; Stewardship; Accountability, Results and Performance; and Learning, Innovation and Change Management.

The Framework provides a basis of engagement with departments and suggests ways for departments to move forward and to measure progress. For the first time, TBS will be able to work with departments and agencies within an explicit and coherent model for high organizational performance.

A key attribute of the Framework is its simplicity. It consists of 10 essential elements of sound management, followed by a series of indicators and associated measures. It recognizes that the role of public servants is to translate the direction provided by government into results for citizens. This forms the axis of the Framework. All government decisions must be framed by enduring public service values and the capacity to grow, learn, and innovate. Excellence starts by having management frameworks that are effective and performance information that is useful. The Management Accountability Framework is about strengthening accountability to: manage our organizations effectively; serve ministers and

¹ http://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/maf-crg/maf-crg_e.asp

government; and deliver on results to Canadians.

The Framework is a tool to promote a modern public service whereby:

- ▶ services are focused on citizens;
- ▶ public service values (e.g., democratic, professional, ethical, and people values) are clearly articulated and continually applied;
- ▶ effective support is provided to ministers and strategic direction is translated into results, through high organizational performance;
- ▶ decision making is transparent and accountable;
- ▶ employees are valued, and human and intellectual capacities are developed;
- ▶ spending is responsible, with sound stewardship of taxpayers' resources;
- ▶ risks are identified and corporately managed; and
- ▶ organizational performance is continually enhanced through innovation, transformation, and learning.

There are a number of implications for evaluation. First, the MAF supports a strong evaluation function by requiring deputy heads to put in place risk-based evaluation plans and a strong evaluation system to support stewardship and the achievement of performance and results. Conversely, evaluation supports the MAF by providing information to address the measurement of the 10 expectations. Finally, evaluation units within departments and agencies will be called upon to support department heads' ability to monitor the implementation and use of MAF.

2.2 Parliamentary Reporting and Program Activity Architecture (PAAs)

Results reporting to Parliament is undertaken at the beginning of the year through departmental and agency Reports on Plans and Priorities (which identifies targets for the upcoming year) and Departmental Performance Reports which reports on the attainment of results. Further to the Prime Minister's announcements on December 12, 2003, the Treasury Board Secretariat asked all departments, agencies, and appropriate crown corporations to complete a Program Activity Architecture (PAAs) for their organizations. The PAAs will serve as the basis for reports to Parliament and aim at strengthening results reporting. Once completed, Program Activity Architecture will contain:

1. Clearly defined and appropriate Strategic Outcome(s) that reflect the organization's mandate;
2. A fully costed program inventory at a sufficient level of detail to support executive and departmental decision-making that links the program activities to the Strategic

Outcome(s) that they support;

3. A performance measurement strategy with measures for each level of the department's Program Activity Architecture; and
4. A departmental governance structure or management framework that defines decision-making and accountability by outcome and by program activity.

As a first step in developing their PAAs, departments are asked to inventory their program activities to a sufficient level of detail to inform departmental, central agency and parliamentary decision-making. Departments are also asked to validate their strategic outcomes and to align their program activities with the strategic outcomes that they most contribute to.

As PAAs are phased in across the government, departments will be expected to use them as the basis for their budgets and performance reporting to Parliament. As well, departments should base their internal planning and reporting documents on the PAA. This will minimize reporting inconsistencies, and leave Deputy Heads better positioned to make a compelling case about the relevance of departmental programs to Canadians.

Once a PAA outline is produced that is agreeable to the department, the Minister in charge, and to TBS, departments will be asked to attribute their resources (financial and personnel) to the PAA elements and then to provide performance and governance information. This will enable financial and non-financial information to be linked on the basis of results and will form the basis of results-based budgeting.

In terms of the implications for evaluation, PAA utilizes evaluation methods. In essence, a PAA is a logic model for an entire department. The PAA treats a department as if it were one integrated program, all of whose sub-programs (business units, program areas) have logical links to its strategic and end outcomes. Evaluation is also an essential tool for assessing the integrity of a department's PAA, aiding in the development and alignment of results for each program activity, and assessing the achievement of strategic outcomes.

2.3 Expenditure Review Process

On December 12, 2003, the Government of Canada announced the creation of a newly formed cabinet committee called the Expenditure Review Committee (ERC)². This committee is responsible for reviewing all federal spending. It is chaired by the President of the Treasury Board and is composed of senior government ministers. Its mandate is to ensure that government spending remains under control, is accountable, is closely aligned with the priorities of Canadians, and that every tax dollar is invested with care to achieve results for Canadians.

The ERC will assess existing programs and government spending using the following seven 'tests' or criteria:

² http://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/spsm-rgsp/spsm-rgsp_e.asp

- ▶ **Public Interest** – Does the program area or activity continue to serve the public interest?
- ▶ **Role of Government** – Is there a legitimate and necessary role for government in this program area or activity?
- ▶ **Federalism** – Is the current role of the federal government appropriate, or is the program a candidate for realignment with the provinces?
- ▶ **Partnership** – What activities or programs should or could be transferred in whole or in part to the private/voluntary sector?
- ▶ **Value-for-Money** – Are Canadians getting value for their tax dollars?
- ▶ **Efficiency** – If the program or activity continues, how could its efficiency be improved?
- ▶ **Affordability** – Is the resultant package of programs and activities affordable? If not, what programs or activities would be abandoned?

In the context of expenditure review, the PAA provides a basis for describing the relevance – in principle and in fact – of an entire Department. Just as, at the level of an individual program, a logic model shows why program activities and outputs “make sense”, the PAA shows why the full portfolio of Departmental activities, outputs and outcomes makes sense. And similarly, just as each layer of a program’s logic model provides the basis for developing program performance indicators, each layer of the Department’s architecture in the PAA provides the basis for developing measures of the entire Department’s performance.

In addition, in light of the seven expenditure review ‘tests, the ERC’s assessment of individual programs will require the granularity provided by program evaluation. To this end, departments are being requested to ensure that evaluations address the seven questions. In addition, TBS is taking steps to summarize evaluation findings at a level accessible for ERC review.

3.0 The Evaluation Function Within the Government of Canada

This section presents an overview of the current approach to evaluation within the Government of Canada. It introduces Treasury Board's Policy on Evaluation, the structure of the evaluation function, and a description of the evaluation community.

3.1 Overview of Evaluation Policy

The current Evaluation Policy³ is effective as of April, 2001. The policy supports the generation of accurate, objective and evidenced-based information to help managers make sound, more effective decisions on their policies, programs and initiatives and through this provide results for Canadians.

It is government policy that departments and agencies embed evaluation into their management practices. The policy is based on three fundamental principles:

- ▶ first, that achieving and accurately reporting on results is a primary responsibility of public service managers;
- ▶ second, that rigorous and objective evaluation is an important tool in helping managers to manage for results; and
- ▶ third, that departments with the support of the Treasury Board Secretariat, are responsible to ensure that the rigour and discipline of evaluation are sufficiently deployed within their jurisdictions.

Managing for results is the prime responsibility of public service managers. Public service managers are expected to define anticipated results, continually focus attention towards results achievement, measure performance regularly and objectively, and learn and adjust to improve efficiency and effectiveness. Managers must be accountable for their performance to higher management, to ministers, to Parliament and to Canadians.

Evaluation - like internal audit, risk management capacity and other management tools - helps managers to operate effectively in this environment. Evaluation supports managers' efforts to track and report on actual performance and help decision-makers objectively assess program or policy results. This distinguishes evaluation from internal audit - a function that provides assurances on a department or agency's risk management strategy, management control framework and information, both financial and non-financial, used for decision-making and reporting.

Evaluation has two main purposes:

- ▶ to help managers design or improve the design of policies, programs and initiatives;

³ http://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/pubs_pol/dcgpubs/tbm_161/ep-pe_e.asp

and

- ▶ to provide, where appropriate, periodic assessments of policy or program effectiveness, of impacts both intended and unintended, and of alternative ways of achieving expected results.

Evaluation operates in a complex environment that involves partnerships with other federal organisations, with other levels of government, with the private sector or with not-for-profit entities. In addition, as the delivery of programs is devolved to other jurisdictions, the evaluation of underlying policies increases in importance. Evaluation contributes to improvements in policy, as well as program design and delivery.

In this milieu, departments are required to embed the discipline of evaluation into the lifecycle management of policies, programs and initiatives to:

- ▶ develop Results-based Management and Accountability Frameworks (RMAFs) for new or renewed policies, programs and initiatives;
- ▶ establish ongoing performance monitoring and performance measurement practices;
- ▶ support the development, implementation and ongoing monitoring of the departmental Program Activity Architecture (PAAs);
- ▶ provide information for reporting on the departmental Management Accountability Framework (MAF);
- ▶ assess the early implementation and administration of the policy, program or initiative, including those that are delivered through partnership arrangements (formative or mid-term evaluation); and
- ▶ provide information relevant to the Expenditure Review Committee (ERC) on questions such as relevance, results and cost-effectiveness.

3.2 Structure of the Evaluation Function within the Government of Canada

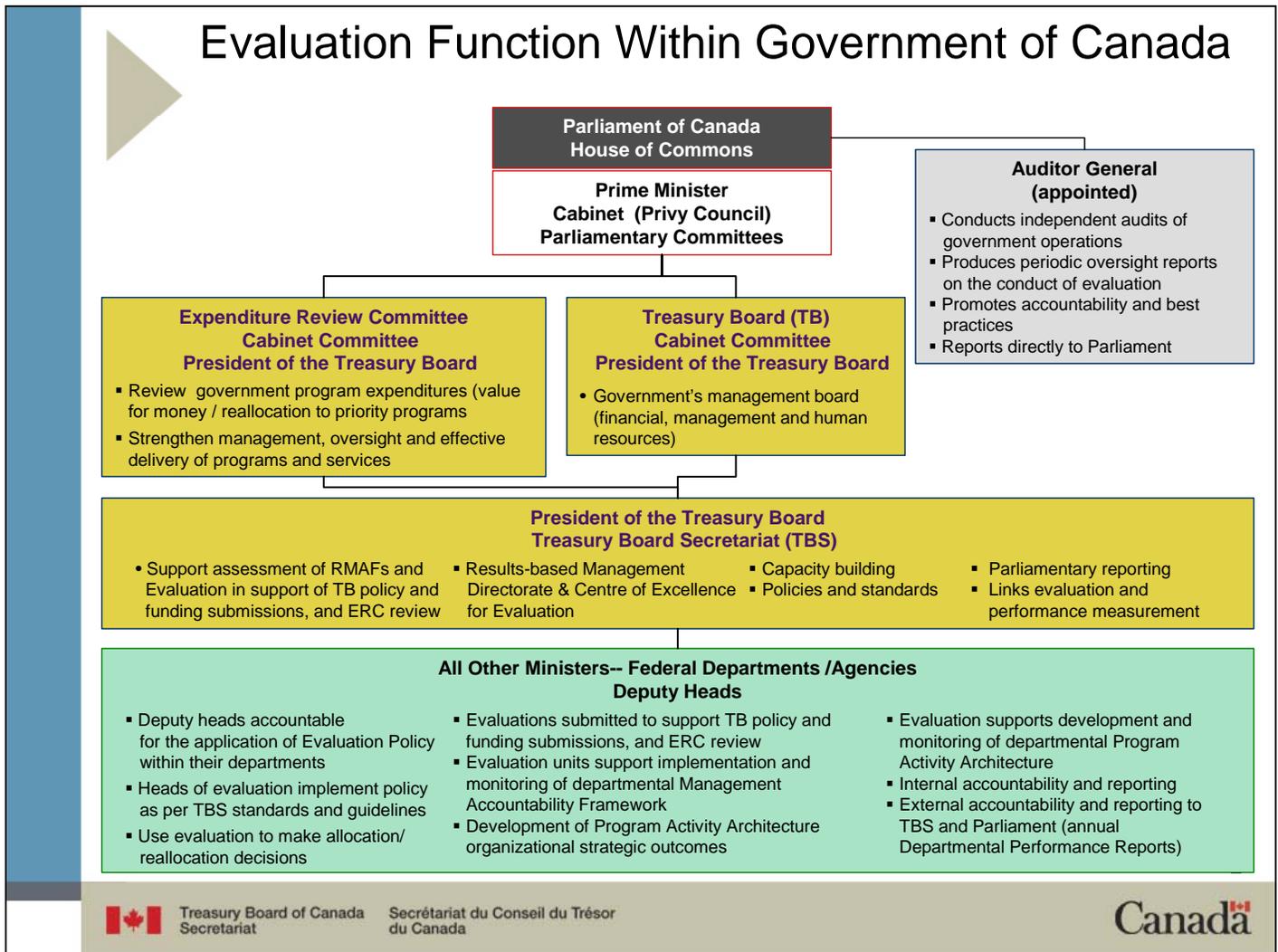
Chart 1 on the following page presents the structure of evaluation within the Government of Canada. This section describes the roles and responsibilities in the delivery of evaluation services involving four key participants: (1) the Treasury Board Secretariat (TBS); (2) deputy heads of departments and agencies; (3) departmental and agency heads of evaluation; and, (4) individual program managers.

Treasury Board Secretariat provides central direction for evaluation in the Government of Canada and, to that end, should:

- a. provide leadership, guidance and support to the practice of evaluation;

- b. support Treasury Board (TB) and Expenditure Review Committee (ERC) Ministers' use of evaluation results in decision-making;
- c. promote the quality of evaluation through establishing standards;
- d. strengthen the capacity of evaluation units and competencies of evaluators;
- e. monitor evaluation quality and capacity; and,
- f. facilitate the accessibility and utilization of evaluation findings.

Chart 1



Deputy heads of departments and agencies must establish an appropriate evaluation capacity, tailored to the needs and resources of the department, to evaluate policies, programs and

initiatives - including those of an inter-organisational nature. To that end they should:

- a. appoint a senior head of evaluation to conduct strategically focussed evaluation studies and work with managers to embed the discipline of evaluation into departmental management practices;
- b. establish an evaluation committee and designate a senior departmental executive to chair it; and
- c. ensure that, in addition to accountability practices internal to the department, the Treasury Board Secretariat is given access to evaluation plans and early warning of evaluation findings that indicate major concerns respecting the management or effectiveness of policies, programs and initiatives.

Departmental and agency heads of evaluation must provide leadership and direction to the practice of evaluation in the department and, to that end, should:

- a. ensure that strategically focussed evaluation plans - founded on assessments of risk, departmental priorities, and priorities of the government - appropriately cover the organisation's policies, programs and initiatives;
- b. work with managers to help them enhance the design, delivery and performance measurement of the organisation's policies, programs, and initiatives;
- c. conduct evaluation studies of policies, programs and initiatives in accordance with established plans;
- d. inform senior management and the appropriate departmental players (e.g. internal audit) without delay of any findings that indicate major concerns respecting the management or effectiveness of policies, programs, or initiatives;
- e. ensure that all evaluations are accompanied by a Management Action Plan and monitor the implementation of evaluation recommendations;
- f. make completed evaluation reports available to the Treasury Board and the public with minimal formality in both official languages; and,
- g. apply TBS evaluation standards.

Departmental managers must manage for results and to that end, should:

- a. draw on the organisation's evaluation capacity, where appropriate, and ensure that they have reliable, timely, objective and accessible information for decision-making and performance improvement; and
- b. incorporate approved evaluation findings and measures for improvement into priority setting, planning, reporting and decision-making processes.

3.3 Evaluation Community within the Government of Canada

The Evaluation Policy applies to all organisations considered to be departments within the meaning of section 2 of the Financial Administration Act. 87 departments and agencies fall within this definition. Of these, 42 departments report an evaluation function. The other 45 are typically small agencies with essentially no permanent, in house evaluation capacity. Each year, approximately 250 evaluations are produced on average. There are also approximately 200 RMAFs created. Other activities that evaluation units undertake include: performance measurement studies; reviews; training on results-based management; advisory services to programs in terms of performance measurement and evaluation strategies; advice on program design; and RMAF development. As of 2003-03, there were 286 personnel working in the field of evaluation within the government.

4.0 Evaluation Process

The process for undertaking evaluations occurs at two levels: the department or agency, and the individual program. This section provides an overview of the core requirements and steps for undertaking an evaluation within the Government of Canada.

4.1 Departmental Audit and Evaluation Committee

Evaluation work within departments is coordinated by a Departmental Audit and Evaluation Committee. This committee is chaired by the deputy head or equivalent, with the participation of assistant deputy ministers responsible for the delivery of programs. Representatives of the Office of the Auditor General (OAG), and the Treasury Board Secretariat (TBS) often participate as observers.

These committees are responsible for reviewing and approving departmental evaluation plans, and reviewing and approving audit and evaluation reports. A number of departments also use these committees to coordinate their performance reporting activities to ensure a coordinated approach to developing and implementing departmental performance measurement strategies. This includes coordinating evaluation work within the larger context of internal performance measurement activities, as well as parliamentary reporting. The committee also reviews management action plans developed in response to evaluations, including monitoring implementation.

4.2 Departmental Evaluation Plans

Departments should undertake an appropriate balance of evaluation work. To achieve this balance, departments are required to develop a strategically focussed Departmental Evaluation Plan, based on an assessment of risk, departmental priorities, and priorities of the government as a whole. Risks are determined as part of the organization's overall integrated risk management framework which seeks to identify, assess, and quantify risks using objective criteria such as health and safety, materiality, or linkages to departmental strategic outcomes⁴. Plans are typically forward looking, with a one to three year horizon and include cost estimates.

The plans are reviewed by TBS using the following criteria:

- ▶ evidence that risk, departmental and government priorities, materiality and the significance of programs, policies or initiatives have been considered in the development of plans and in the selection of evaluation projects;
- ▶ specific requirements for the evaluation of grants and contributions (eg: third party delivered programs) have been taken into account; and,

⁴ http://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/pubs_pol/dcgpubs/RiskManagement/rmf-cgr_e.asp

- ▶ resources required to undertake the engagements in the plans have been clearly identified and committed to the evaluation function.

4.3 Results-based Management and Accountability Frameworks (RMAFs)

A Results-based Management and Accountability Framework (RMAF) provides program managers with a concise statement or road map to plan, monitor, evaluate and report on the results of a program, policy or initiative. When implemented, it helps a program manager:

- ▶ Describe clear roles and responsibilities for the main partners involved in delivering the program, policy or initiative;
- ▶ Ensure clear and logical design that ties resources and activities to expected results;
- ▶ Make sound judgements on how best to improve program performance on an ongoing basis;
- ▶ Demonstrate accountability and benefits to Canadians; and,
- ▶ Ensure reliable and timely information is available to senior executives in the department, central agencies and other key stakeholders.

RMAFs are a requirement for funding submissions of grant and contribution programs and their use is encouraged as a good management practice for all programs. Appendix 1 of this report outlines the TBS assessment criteria.

4.4 Types of Evaluation

There are generally two types of evaluations conducted by departmental and agency evaluation units -- formative and summative evaluations.

Formative, or interim evaluations, examine the effectiveness of implementation for facilitating improvement. A formative evaluation is usually conducted in mid-cycle of the program, policy or initiative (normally within 2 years of start-up). Its intent is to provide information to improve the program, policy or initiative. Given that most programs or policies operate on a four-year cycle, undertaking both a formative and summative evaluation can be potentially onerous. For this reason, it is recommended that formative evaluations be used judiciously. A useful application of formative evaluation is where questions arise as to the delivery of the program. Formative evaluations can be used to address specific delivery issues such as the quality of performance information and reporting systems. Where “full” formative evaluations are undertaken, there is an expectation that outputs, early results, validation of program logic, and the likelihood of long-term results achievement are assessed.

Summative evaluations examine impacts in order to make a decision about overall effectiveness. Summative evaluations are typically undertaken at the end of a four-year life cycle of a program when intermediate and longer-term outcomes begin to be realized. They perform an accountability function, as well as being future oriented, providing recommendations on program design issues.

Summative evaluations focus on the degree to which desired outcomes have been achieved; and, the extent to which the policy, program or initiative has contributed to the achievement of outcomes. No matter which type of evaluation is undertaken, all evaluations should address the Expenditure Review Committee's seven questions.

4.5 Approaches to Undertaking Evaluations

Terms of Reference (ToR): A first step in undertaking an evaluation of an individual program, policy or initiative, is to engage senior management, program management, and key stakeholders, and beneficiaries in the development of a terms of reference. This short one to two page document outlines the background, need, and objectives of the evaluation, and outlines how the evaluation will be managed, including resources and timeframe.

Planning Report: A detailed plan for the conduct of the evaluation is then developed. If a Results-based Accountability Framework (RMAF)⁵ has not been already prepared, this plan outlines the program, including a logic model, and details the evaluation issues and sub-questions and the methods to be used to address them.

Data Collection Instrument Development and Collection: At this stage of the evaluation, data collection tools such as questionnaires, discussion guides, file review guides, focus group discussion guides, case study outlines, including appropriate sampling designs, are prepared and tested. Additional considerations include whether to use self-evaluation methods; external, standardized methods, or a combination of both. Data collection strategies are then prepared and carried out.

Other Considerations: An important management issue is whether the evaluation will be undertaken through the use of in-house resources, contracted resources, or both. Which approach to use often depends upon the level of independence required, the amount of internal resources available, and the timing of the evaluation.

Consultations: An additional consideration in the process for undertaking an evaluation is whether to use an advisory committee, steering committee, or a directed evaluation. As its title suggests, an advisory committee provides the evaluator with guidance; whereas a steering committee can make decisions on all key aspects of an evaluation. Directed evaluations do not use a formal consultation process and are useful when evaluation findings are required in a relatively short period of time. Which approach to use often depends upon program complexity and the extent of its decentralization. For example, an evaluation of an

5 http://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/eval/pubs/RMAF-CGRR/rmafcr_e.asp

Aboriginal led program, or a program involving provincial and federal participation, may use a steering committee given the inherent multiple jurisdictions involved in program delivery. Peer review groups may also be used, particularly for high-risk programs. These groups consist of evaluation specialists and subject matter specialists and provide advice on the quality of evaluation design and reporting.

Reporting: Interim findings are often reported during the early stages of data collection. Final evaluation reports are submitted to the Departmental Audit and Evaluation Committee (DAEC) for approval. A recommended practice is for DAEC to also review and approve the management response or action plan and monitor the implementation of the evaluation recommendations.

5.0 Evaluation Standards and Criteria

Appendix 2 presents the standards for evaluation within the Government of Canada. The table below presents a summary of these standards. In addition, Appendix 3 of this report presents the criteria used by TBS to assess individual evaluation reports.

Summary of the Government of Canada's Evaluation Standards	
Standard	Guidance
Evaluation Planning and Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Risk-based departmental evaluation plans ▪ Evaluation issues: rationale, objectives achievement; efficiency, and cost-effectiveness
Competency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Evaluators possess appropriate knowledge, skills and experience regarding: research design; collection and analysis of data; and development of valid, credible and unbiased conclusions and recommendations ▪ Strive to improve methodological and practice skills
Objectivity and Integrity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Perform evaluation work free from impairments that hinder objectivity ▪ Act with integrity in their relationships
Consultation and Advice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Incorporate sufficient and appropriate consultation ▪ Apply the advice and guidance of specialists and other knowledgeable persons where appropriate such as the use of peer review groups to review evaluation products
Measurement and Analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Timely, pertinent and credible findings and conclusions that managers and other stakeholders can use with confidence, based on practical, cost-effective and objective data collection and analysis
Reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Evaluation reports must present the findings, conclusions and recommendations in a clear and objective manner

6.0 Utilization of Evaluation Results

Evaluation reports are key inputs to departmental and agency reports to Parliament. Departments and agencies are required to support their program performance and results reporting through documented evaluations. To facilitate access by individual parliamentarians, departments and agencies are required to list all evaluations undertaken within their Departmental Performance Reports, and include a list of all planned evaluations in their Report on Plans and Priorities. All evaluation reports are to be accessible to the public through the internet in both official languages.

Two cabinet committees, Treasury Board (TB) and the Expenditure Review Committee (ERC), are also key users of evaluation findings. The Treasury Board Secretariat's review of Results-based Management Framework (RMAFs) is a key consideration by the Treasury Board for new funding proposals. In addition, evaluation findings are an important consideration for continued program support. The ability for evaluations to address questions pertaining to the expenditure review process being undertaken by the newly established Expenditure Review Committee will be another important contribution by evaluation.

Departmental and agency deputy heads are probably the most important users of evaluation. They use them to assess program relevance, performance, and results. For many deputies, evaluation is considered their 'eyes and ears' in terms of the organization's ability to deliver results for Canadians.

Individual program managers and key stakeholders, including beneficiaries, are also active participants and users of evaluation findings. Program managers use evaluation findings to adjust program delivery to ensure the biggest impact of program resources. Program stakeholders and beneficiaries use evaluations to influence program design and delivery, and ensure programs are oriented towards meeting their needs.

An important means used to assess the impacts of evaluation findings is Management Action Plans. Program managers are expected to produce a management action plan to address evaluation recommendations and conclusions. These include the management response to each recommendation, actions that will be undertaken, including timelines for completion and accountabilities. Departmental Audit and Evaluation Committees are expected to approve each management action plan and monitor their implementation.

7.0 Conclusions and Future Challenges

The goal of the Evaluation Policy is *to ensure that the government has timely, -strategically focused, objective, and evidence-based information on the performance of its policies, programs and initiatives to produce better results for Canadians*. This means that departments and agencies conduct evaluations on a timely and strategic basis, ensure a high quality evaluation product, and use evaluation results for decision-making and accountability purposes.

Realizing this goal demands a strong evaluation function. The 2001 Evaluation Policy provides the infrastructure to support this by outlining policy requirements to better position and utilize evaluation activities (e.g., establishing senior executive-led evaluation committees, preparing and following strategically focused and risk-based evaluation plans, and adhering to established standards). However, a strong evaluation function needs more than this. Demonstrated technical and managerial competence and an integration capability are essential to realizing the full value of evaluation activities.

In recognition of this, the budget announced by the Government of Canada on March 23rd, 2004 commits to further strengthening the activity and capacity of the evaluation function. To deliver upon this commitment, the Treasury Board Secretariat is currently re-thinking its approach to evaluation and considering a number of proposals.

Proposals currently under consideration include:

- ▶ **Strengthened Monitoring** of the health of the evaluation function across government, departmental evaluation plans, evaluation studies; and approving horizontal and high-risk Results-based Management and Accountability Frameworks (RMAFs).
- ▶ **Policy Analysis and Decision-Making Support** including conducting policy and research on evaluation methodologies and cutting edge practices, providing input to government-wide policies, and providing input to decision making (TB and ERC), including synthesizing evaluation findings so they are accessible to decision-makers.
- ▶ **Capacity Building and Advisory Services** through developing new evaluation tools and products, providing training and professional development opportunities through the development and delivery of a comprehensive Learning Strategy for Results and Evaluation, promoting certification and core competencies, monitoring evaluation core competencies at all levels, and providing centralized expert resources.
- ▶ **Direct Evaluation Services** including providing assistance on Horizontal Initiative RMAFs and evaluations, undertaking or supporting the evaluation of government-wide corporate issues, and undertaking meta-evaluations in areas such as economic and social programming.
- ▶ **Small Agency Common Evaluation Services** is an important proposal currently

under discussion. Given the lack of capacity within small agencies to maintain evaluation units and conduct evaluations, consideration is being given to a centralized approach to the delivery of evaluation services.

- ▶ **Management and Accountability Reporting** including integrating with and supporting corporate TBS information systems, providing an Annual Report on Evaluation Findings and its contribution to strengthening accountability to TB Ministers and Parliamentarians.

Through these efforts and the work of individual departments and agencies, the federal government can look to having departments and decision-makers have sufficient evaluation capacity to provide the necessary evidenced-based information to support improve management performance, demonstrate accountability, rationally reallocate resources, set priorities and ensure the judicious and effective use of tax payer dollars.

APPENDIX 1

Results-based Management Accountability Framework (RMAF) Assessment Criteria

The following is the RMAF Review template used by the Treasury Board Secretariat (TBS) to provide feedback on the completeness and quality of an RMAF. An RMAF consists of three core components:

- ▶ **Program Profile** — is a concise description of the policy, program or initiative including the context and need, stakeholders and beneficiaries, organizational and governance structures, and resource allocations.
- ▶ **Planned Results and Program Theory** — is a description and illustration (i.e., logic model) of how the activities of a policy, program or initiative are expected to lead to the required economic, social and or environmental change (i.e., the planned results) and the critical assumptions on which the program, policy or initiative is based.
- ▶ **Monitoring and Evaluation** — is a detailed roadmap for ongoing performance measurement and evaluation activities that will support effective program management and accountability.

1. Program Profile provides a concise description of the program, policy or initiative	
Section	Review Criteria
1.1 Context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clearly stated and demonstrated the need <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - For new programs or initiatives, evidence and policy that supports the program referenced - For programs or initiatives that are seeking renewal of authority, issue remains important and there is information on the progress that has been made to date • There is a legitimate and necessary role for government in this program area or activity • Research studies, needs assessments, detailed demographic studies, etc. to support analysis sited • This is the correct transfer mechanism for this program, policy or initiative
1.2 Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clearly stated objectives • Objectives link to the department's strategic outcomes as identified in its Program Activity Architecture
1.3 Key Stakeholders and Beneficiaries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All key stakeholders including specifying delivery partners and project beneficiaries listed • Targets in terms of reach to project beneficiaries identified
1.4 Organization and Governance Structures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organizational and governance structures and respective decision-making authority and main roles and responsibilities of all project stakeholders (including delivery partners) identified

1. Program Profile provides a concise description of the program, policy or initiative	
Section	Review Criteria
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Governance structure and mechanisms support effective decision-making and clearly demonstrate accountabilities
1.5 Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annual resources allocated to the department and each delivery partner is summarized Costs for monitoring and evaluation activities specified
2. Planned Results and Program Theory provides a logical description and illustration of how activities and outputs lead to results.	
Section	Review Criteria
2.1 Planned Results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Results at various stages are specified Results are attributable to the program, policy or initiative Factors that may influence the ability of a program, policy or initiative to achieve or demonstrate results are realistic Timeframes for the achievement of results specified and are realistic
2.2 Delivery Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Delivery strategy including activities of delivery partners is presented and coherent There is a rationale for using/selecting delivery partners
2.3 Program Theory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sound logic model exists Final results are linked to the department's strategic outcomes as specified in its Program Activity Architecture
3. The Monitoring and Evaluation Plan provide direction for ongoing monitoring and evaluation activities.	
Section	Review Criteria
3.1 Monitoring Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sound monitoring strategy exists Key performance issues and indicators specified Data sources, frequency of data collection and methods for analysis specified Data quality ensured Estimated costs for monitoring activities by year provided
3.2 Evaluation Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Appropriate and complete evaluation strategy proposed All known evaluation issues are specified and include success, relevance, cost-effectiveness, value-for-money, other issues identified in past evaluation studies and Expenditure Review Committee questions addressed An overall approach to evaluation including: data sources (including performance measurement reports), proposed methodologies, and responsibilities for data collection provided Estimated costs for evaluation activities provided

1. Program Profile provides a concise description of the program, policy or initiative	
Section	Review Criteria
3.3 Reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All monitoring and evaluation reports are sited, and when, how and who will use reports to support both management decision-making and demonstrate accountability Reports include DPR, RPP, annual performance report, compliance audit and a summative evaluation

APPENDIX 2

Evaluation Standards in the Government of Canada

Government of Canada's Evaluation Standards	
Standard	Guidance
<p>Evaluation Planning and Issues</p> <p>The department must apply the discipline of evaluation to assess the performance of its policies, programs and initiatives, both departmental and inter-organisational, taking into account its priority concerns as well as those of its partners and the government as a whole.</p>	<p>Evaluators should develop a strategically focussed plan that is based on assessments of risk, departmental priorities and reporting requirements, and priorities of the government as a whole.</p> <p>The full range of evaluation issues should be considered at the planning stage of an evaluation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • does the policy, program or initiative continue to be consistent with departmental and government-wide priorities and does it realistically address an actual need? (relevance); • is the policy, program or initiative effective in meeting its objectives, within budget and without unwanted outcomes? (success); and • are the most appropriate and efficient means being used to achieve objectives, relative to alternative design and delivery approaches? (cost-effectiveness). <p>Evaluators should address issues that are needed for accountability reporting, including those involving key performance expectations (a) identified and conveyed to the Treasury Board or (b) resulting from Cabinet decisions requesting evaluation information.</p>
<p>Competency</p> <p>The person or persons carrying out evaluations, or evaluation related work, must possess or collectively possess the knowledge and competence necessary to fulfill the requirements of the particular evaluation work.</p>	<p>Evaluators should possess or ensure the provision of content knowledge appropriate for the evaluation and continuously strive to improve their methodological and practice skills. Evaluators should possess the knowledge, skills and experience in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the application of sound research design able to answer the chosen questions; • the collection and analysis of reliable quantitative and qualitative data; and • the development of valid, credible and unbiased conclusions and recommendations.
<p>Objectivity and Integrity</p> <p>Individuals performing evaluation work must be free from impairments that hinder their objectivity and must act with integrity in their relationships with all stakeholders.</p>	<p>Evaluators should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • accurately represent their level of skills and knowledge; and • declare any matter that could compromise the objectivity of either evaluator or stakeholder before embarking on an evaluation project or at any point during the project. • evaluators should be accountable for their performance and their products and be responsible for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensuring that their work addresses the priority concerns and accountability requirements of departmental management and the government; • conferring with stakeholders on decisions such as confidentiality, privacy, communications and ownership of findings and reports; • ensuring sound fiscal decision-making so that expenditures are

Government of Canada's Evaluation Standards	
Standard	Guidance
	<p>accounted for and clients receive good value for their dollars; and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • completing evaluation work within a reasonable time as agreed to with the clients.
<p>Consultation and Advice</p> <p>Evaluation work must incorporate sufficient and appropriate consultation and, where appropriate, apply the advice and guidance of specialists and other knowledgeable persons.</p>	<p>Evaluators should consult major stakeholders in the conduct of their work.</p> <p>Where appropriate, peer review groups should be organised to review evaluation products to improve their quality and enhance the sharing of best practices.</p>
<p>Measurement and Analysis</p> <p>Evaluation work must produce timely, pertinent and credible findings and conclusions that managers and other stakeholders can use with confidence, based on practical, cost-effective and objective data collection and analysis.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluation products should be made available at the most appropriate time to aid management decision-making. • Evidence should be sufficient in relation to the decision-making context. Evaluation findings should be relevant to the issues addressed and follow from the evidence. • Evaluation products should be demonstrably useful to managers in improving performance and reporting on results achieved. • In planning and conducting the evaluation, the department should comply with government policies related to information collection, use, preservation and dissemination.
<p>Reporting</p> <p>Evaluation reports must present the findings, conclusions and recommendations in a clear and objective manner.</p>	<p>Evaluation reports should be written so that senior managers and external readers can readily focus on and understand the important issues being reported. They should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • be concise and clearly written; • include only information that is needed for a proper understanding of the findings, conclusions and recommendations; • present the conclusions and recommendations so that they flow logically from evaluation findings; • clearly expose the limits of the evaluation in terms of scope, methods and conclusions; and • satisfy, where applicable, Cabinet, Treasury Board submission or external reporting requirements. <p>Additionally, evaluation reports should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provide the reader with appropriate context by describing the objectives and timing of the work, the policy, program or initiative that was evaluated, how it fits into the overall operations of the organisation, and its importance; • provide an accurate assessment of the results that have been achieved by the policy, program or initiative; • contain clear and actionable recommendations, and timing for management action; and, • provide relevant analysis and explanation of the exposure to risks for any significant problems identified and in respect of key recommendations

APPENDIX 3

Core Elements of an Evaluation Report and Assessment Criteria

The table below – drawn from Health Canada’s April 2003 Evaluation Report Assessment Guide, identifies the elements that should be included in an evaluation study, as well as the specific criteria by which these elements should be assessed.

1. Executive Summary

Issues/Requirements	Criteria
1.1 Summary	<p>Briefly present the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• description of the policy, program or initiative evaluated;• why the evaluation was done;• who the client and intended audience of the evaluation are; and,• the main evaluation findings, conclusions, and recommendations. <p>(Suggestion: the Executive Summary should be about 3 pages.)</p>

2. Introduction and Context

Issues/Requirements	Criteria
2.1 Description	The policy, program or initiative evaluated is clearly described, including the logic of cause-and-effect links between inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes, and external factors contributing to success or failure, i.e. policy or program theory and assumptions.
	The description of program reach (intended beneficiaries) is clearly described.
	The program resources are clearly described so that the reader can understand how program monies are allocated and have been spent.

Issues/Requirements	Criteria
<p>2.2 Evaluation Context</p>	<p>The report provides the reader with appropriate context for the evaluation by clearly explaining or describing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • why the evaluation was conducted and why “now”; • how the results will be used; • the objectives and scope for the evaluation; • the client, audience and key stakeholders for the evaluation; • the timing of the evaluation work; and • the (clear, useful and answerable) evaluation issues/questions being addressed by the evaluation and falling within the areas of enquiry (relevance, implementation, effectiveness, cost-effectiveness and efficiency). <p>Depending on the nature, purpose and timeliness of a particular evaluation study, the following evaluation questions should be considered for inclusion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the program still relevant to the needs of Canadians? • Are the program’s resources being used in the most efficient and effective way to deliver appropriate results? • Is it necessary for the federal government to operate this program, or could it be transferred to other levels of government, or to the private or voluntary sector? • Is there scope for considering more effective program structures and service delivery arrangements? • Are departmental management practices appropriate and of sufficient quality?

3. Methodology/Design/Data

Issues/Requirements	Criteria
<p>3.1 Description of the Methodology/Design</p>	<p>The design of the evaluation is described to the extent that the study can be replicated; e.g. the relationship between the data collection and the analysis is described clearly.</p>