

Guidelines for Responsible Ethical Evaluation

The Israeli Association for Program Evaluation, IAPE, is a non-profit professional organization, composed of academics, practitioners and users of program and project evaluation in a variety of fields - psychology, education, social services, health, business, and others. In 2009, at the end of the first decade of our activities, IAPE decided to compile and adopt guidelines for ethical evaluation – **Guidelines for Worthy Evaluation.**

The Evaluation Guidelines presented in this document propose central principles that members of IAPE strive to apply to their work and the work of the evaluation community in general. The association hopes to promote the practice of ethical evaluation through the adoption of the guidelines in practice. Furthermore, by generating the guidelines, IAPE has demonstrated its place as the leading professional organization in the field of evaluation in Israel.

The Evaluation Guidelines are designed for use in evaluation in all disciplines. They combine knowledge and experience from a variety of evaluation approaches and reflect equitable and effective evaluation practice.

The Evaluation Guidelines consider the obligations of the evaluator in relation to three aspects of evaluation: the evaluation itself, the commissioners of the evaluation and the stakeholders in the process of the evaluation. Frequently these obligations overlap.

We believe that adoption of the Evaluation Guidelines will facilitate dialog among those involved in the process of the evaluation, thus promoting good evaluation practice and use.

We express our appreciation to the UKES, AEA and AES for permission to share their ideas in the generation of these guidelines.

1. The Evaluation

- a. Training: Training provides the professional foundation for evaluators and those practicing evaluation. Therefore they should:**
 - i. Have the appropriate training; be knowledgeable and capable of conducting evaluation.
 - ii. Keep updated concerning evaluation skills and practice.
 - iii. Be familiar with the subject matter of the evaluand.
 - iv. Ensure that those who work for them have the relevant training.
- b. Systematic inquiry: Evaluators conduct systematic inquiry based on data collection. Therefore they should:**
 - i. Adhere to the highest standards appropriate to the methods they employ.
 - ii. Examine the weaknesses and strengths of evaluation questions and approaches with commissioners of the evaluation.
 - iii. Employ evaluation strategies and skills that are appropriate for the target population.
 - iv. Relate to and cite relevant sources and bibliographies, wherever possible.
 - v. Explain evaluation approaches and methodologies accurately and in detail, so that they can be examined, interpreted and checked if necessary.
- c. Responsibility: Evaluators must consider social diversity and a variety of public interests and values. Therefore they should:**
 - i. Clarify all the limitations of evaluation at the outset, and refuse to conduct evaluations that are beyond the scope of their capabilities.
 - ii. Consider relevant stakeholder perspectives and interests.
 - iii. Take into consideration the public interest and the public good, and respond to unexpected interpretation and possible side effects of the project and the process of evaluation.
- d. Fairness: Evaluators must ensure fairness and honesty of the entire process of the evaluation. Therefore they should:**
 - i. Report to relevant representatives before accepting positions or contacts that might conflict with the evaluation.
 - ii. Be sensitive to the social and cultural environment of the stakeholders (commissioners and participants in the evaluation) and behave accordingly.
 - iii. Be explicit concerning the interests and values linked to the evaluation – to the evaluators themselves, the commissioners of the evaluation and the relevant stakeholders.
 - iv. Be aware of the importance of transparency – to present the processes, data and findings accurately.
 - v. Be aware of the limits of evaluation.
 - vi. Act in order to prevent misuse or abuse of the evaluation.

2. Commissioners

a. **Fairness: Evaluators must ensure fairness and honesty of the entire process of the evaluation. Therefore they should:**

- i. Negotiate sincerely with evaluation commissioners and relevant stakeholders concerning the cost, use and methodological limitations of the process of the evaluation.
- ii. Weigh the possibility of not conducting the evaluation when an issue arises that might influence trustworthiness.
- iii. Explain and stress the importance of keeping to the agreed time frame.
- iv. Be realistic about the possible outputs given unexpected developments and the limitations of budget and time.
- v. Explain the importance of routine reporting of program changes and the reasons for such changes to the commissioners.
- vi. Be explicit concerning the interests and values linked to the evaluation – to the evaluators themselves, to the commissioners of the evaluation and to the relevant stakeholders.
- vii. Act fairly and according to advance agreement concerning public, academic or professional publication of the data and findings of the evaluation.

b. **Responsibility: Evaluators are responsible for their evaluation activities and products. Therefore they should:**

- i. Explain the limitations of the methodologies that they employ.
- ii. Provide trustworthy information according to the agreed schedule whenever possible.
- iii. Present the findings, the limitations and the recommendations clearly, accurately and fairly.
- iv. Agree with the commissioners of the evaluation in advance regarding ownership of the data and findings of the evaluation.

3. Participants

Evaluators have obligations towards the participants in the process of evaluation. Therefore they should:

- i. Conduct the evaluation process with due respect to the participants.
- ii. Act in full accord with the principle of informed consent.
- iii. Be explicit concerning the interests and values linked to the evaluation – to the evaluators themselves, to the commissioners of the evaluation and to the relevant stakeholders.
- iv. Respect the rules of confidentiality as agreed with the participants.
- v. Promote responsible use of the information in the evaluation.
- vi. Update the participants concerning the evaluation findings wherever possible.