



# Conceptual Framework: Evaluation in the FOPH

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## Introduction

Switzerland is one of the few countries in the world whose constitution requires the effectiveness of state action to be evaluated: Article 170 of the Federal Constitution calls on the Federal Assembly to evaluate the effectiveness of federal measures. This mandate directly concerns the Parliament, but also indirectly the Federal Council and Federal Administration. In 2004, the Federal Council adopted various measures to this end.<sup>1, 2</sup> Its aim was to enhance the orientation towards effectiveness within the Federal Administration, improve the transparency and quality of the corresponding evaluations, and place greater weight on efficiency.

The federal offices bear the main responsibility for evaluations of effectiveness and are required to integrate these into their governance structures. They develop strategies, organise evaluations of effectiveness, make the necessary resources available and guarantee the professional independence of the commissioned bodies. When revising pieces of legislation, they are required to establish the appropriate legal basis for data access. Additionally, they ensure the quality of evaluations and make their results public.

This document uses the term evaluation rather than evaluation of effectiveness as evaluation questions go beyond the aspect of effectiveness. This conceptual framework describes the use of the 'evaluation' instrument within the Federal Office of Public Health.

## 1. Embedding evaluation in the policy cycle and the New Management Model for the Federal Administration

There are many policy process theories. However, the basic policy cycle model is sufficient to illustrate how evaluation is embedded in the policy process in principle. The policy cycle identifies the following phases:

Phase	Brief description
Defining the problem	Decision to address a problem
Agenda setting	Problem features on the political agenda
Policy formulation	Decision-making process
Implementation	Decision is transformed into law and implemented
Evaluation	Determining whether and to what extent a law or its implementation / execution display certain shortcomings
Re-defining problem or termination	End of the cycle. If the evaluation identifies a need for changes, the topic features on the agenda again and the cycle is repeated. A political programme can also be terminated.

Source: FOPH, E&R Service; own representation based on Jann and Wegrich (2014).

Depending on the circumstances, time conditions and type of evaluation, an evaluation has a part to play in all phases. However, this document presents the normal case.

In line with the policy cycle, evaluations also have a role to play in administrative management. The New Management Model for the Federal Administration (NMM)<sup>3</sup>, which was introduced in 2017, is designed to strengthen targeted and results-driven administrative management across all levels of Switzerland's Federal Administration. The three core aspects of the model are that all federal government administrative units are now managed with a global

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<sup>1</sup> [Federal Council decree of 3 November 2004](#) (in German only)

<sup>2</sup> Final report of the Interdepartmental Working Group on Effects Review of 14 June 2004 (in [German](#), [French](#) and [Italian](#) only)

<sup>3</sup> Original terminology 'Neues Führungsmodell für die Bundesverwaltung (NFB)' (in [German](#), [French](#) and [Italian](#) only)

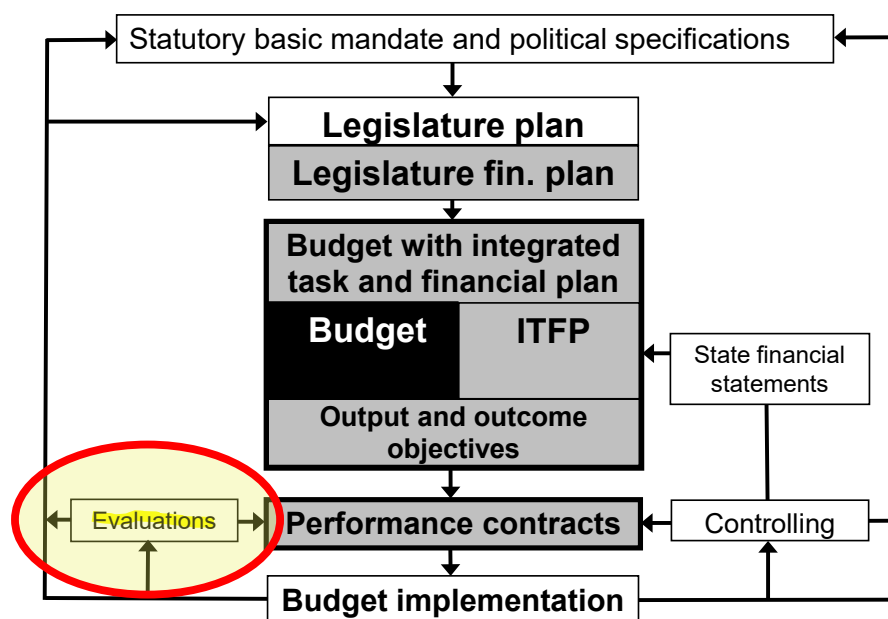
budget, that budget and financial planning have been merged as well as supplemented with performance indicators. This is designed to make budgeting and planning more strongly geared towards goals and results, and to make the administration more transparent and efficient.

A simple impact model serves as a guide regarding assignments of tasks to administrative bodies (basic mandates to service groups):

Concept →	Implementation →	Performance →	Effects on target groups →	Effects on society
Policy objectives	Service provision	Output	Outcome <sup>4</sup>	Impact

An evaluation can be applied to all areas of the impact model. Evaluations play a particularly important role in measuring the outcome and impact of state activities as they provide both information on performance and effects, as well as information on a possible need for action in a certain context.

**Figure 1: Overview of the NMM instruments**



Source: Dispatch on the development of targeted and results-driven administration – New Management Model for the Federal Administration (NMM) (German, French and Italian only); translated from German by the Federal Finance Administration (FFA).

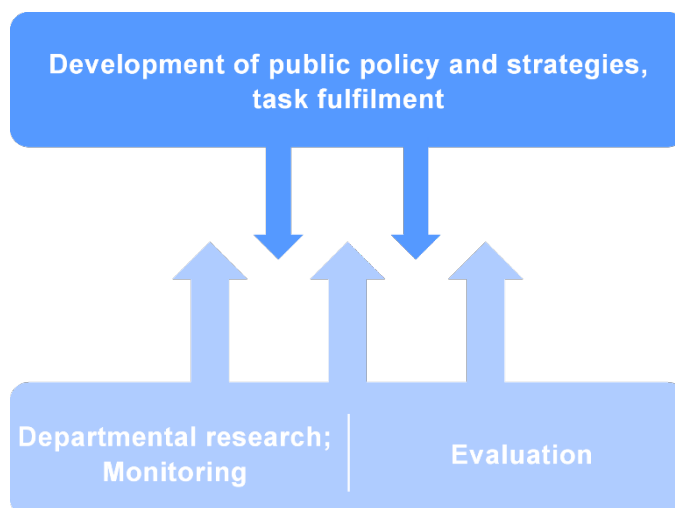
## 2. Evaluation as an instrument for acquiring knowledge

One of the goals of the Federal Office of Public Health (FOPH) is to facilitate evidence-informed policy making and to give the health system an evidence-based orientation. This requires knowledge. The operational field Evaluation and Research helps procure needs-oriented practical knowledge and guidance that is based on the use of scientific methods.<sup>5</sup> Three instruments are used for this purpose: [monitoring](#), [research](#) and [evaluation](#).

<sup>4</sup> The FOPH uses the terms 'outcome' and 'impact' in the usual international order.

<sup>5</sup> The criterion 'use of scientific methods' forms a demarcation to consultancy.

**Figure 2: Evidence-informed and evidence-based policy making and implementation**



Source: FOPH, Evaluation and Research Service.

Unlike evaluation, the instruments of monitoring and research are steered in a decentralised manner by the fields of activity. The use of evaluations, however, is steered by senior management and the corresponding responsibilities are centralised within the Evaluation and Research Service. This form of organisation has proven effective.

### 3. Evaluation and Research Service

The Evaluation and Research Service contributes to the acquisition of strategy-relevant knowledge for the Federal Office of Public Health and its fields of activity. The nature of this information is determined by the needs of the senior management and of the different FOPH units, and of national health policy as sustained by the cantons.

By means of evaluation, the Service procures evidence for the purpose of strategy development, improving effectiveness and accountability to political actors and the public. The Service coordinates departmental research at the FOPH, draws up the Health Research Concept and provides advice and support on quality assurance in departmental research. It coordinates Switzerland's participation in the international health policy surveys run by the Commonwealth Fund Foundation and is responsible for the use of [ARAMIS](#) (the federal government's research database) within the FOPH and reporting in the field of departmental research and evaluation. The most important addressees of reporting are the FOPH senior management, the General Secretariat of the Federal Department of Home Affairs, the Federal Chancellery, the State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation, and the Federal Statistical Office.

### 4. Terminology and key notions in brief

In general, evaluation refers to a research-based service to systematically and transparently assess an object, such as a strategy, law, programme, project, measure, etc.

Evaluation is to be understood as a process and a product.

The FOPH commissions external evaluations. Two main types of evaluations are used: summative and formative evaluations.

#### 4.1. Summative evaluation

A summative evaluation is an evaluation, which is performed with the intention to draw a balance in order to provide proof of performance and / or effectiveness of the object of evaluation to third parties.

#### 4.2. Formative evaluation

A formative evaluation is an evaluation, which is performed with the intention to trigger learning processes, to thereby lead to an improvement of the object of evaluation.

While combinations of formative and summative evaluations are frequently encountered, they pose problems because the two objectives of the evaluations are possibly competing with one another. A clear determination of the main function of an evaluation is therefore imperative. Within the FOPH, formative evaluations are explicitly designated as such in the title of a study, while summative evaluations are usually just called evaluations.

Formative and summative evaluations can be illustrated by the following example: “When the cook tastes the soup, that’s formative; when the guests taste the soup, that’s summative.”<sup>6</sup>

For more details and in-depth information on the use of terms in connection with evaluations and evaluation management, please see the [Evaluation Glossary of the FOPH](#).<sup>7</sup>

#### 4.3. Evaluation questions

Evaluations answer questions. The core questions of an evaluation usually focus on:

- relevance (significance of needs, or of a specific requirement or problem situation)
- expedience (fitness of purpose of a measure for solving a problem)
- effectiveness / efficacy
- economy (ratio between the resources invested and the achieved results)
- coherence (consistency / freedom from contradictions – e.g. between measures within a health policy strategy)
- contextual influences

... of governmental and non-governmental action.

When an evaluation question is open, e.g. “How well has a strategy been implemented?”, the above points can be used as assessment criteria for the object of evaluation.

Evaluations must contain evaluative questions, i.e. questions that ask for an assessment. Other types of questions are, for example, descriptive questions and normative questions. The first ask for a description with the aim of exploring the object being studied, while the second address how it should be, in particular what should be done and which values and objectives should be pursued.

#### 4.4. Recommendations from evaluations

Recommendations are based on the conclusions drawn from interpretation of the evaluation results. They must be plausible (comprehensible / conclusive), realistic and practically relevant, and they must be aimed at specific addressees.

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<sup>6</sup> Quote from Bob Stake, quoted in Scriven (1991), p. 169

<sup>7</sup> Widmer and Brunold (2017)

Evaluations do not necessarily have to include recommendations. In some cases, setting out need for action is enough.

The FOPH usually requires recommendations addressing the following levels:

- Political level
- Strategic level
- Operational level

In particular, evaluations should highlight whether the possible causes of a problem are seen in an enforcement or implementation deficit (→ implementation failure), or in the legal framework (→ policy failure).

## **5. Guiding principles regarding the use of evaluations**

The FOPH takes an utilisation-orientated and participatory evaluation approach. The guiding principles governing the use of evaluations are:

- evaluations are to be incorporated in the planning and implementation of health policy measures at an early stage;
- stakeholders are to be included in the evaluation projects;
- evaluations are to be geared to practical use;
- the focus is to be on externally commissioned evaluations in order to receive readily comprehensible, impartial judgements;
- strict compliance is to be ensured with the rules governing public procurement;
- effect-oriented thinking and action are to be promoted through evaluation projects;
- the transparency of the evaluation results is to be ensured.

## **6. Evaluation management**

Management of evaluation projects in the FOPH is centrally located in the Evaluation and Research Service (E&R). This service is in charge of the process management for evaluation projects and of the quality assurance of the evaluation products and provides a basis for decision-making.

### **6.1. Objectives of evaluation management**

The objectives of evaluation management within the FOPH are guided by the quality standards of the Swiss Evaluation Society SEVAL. They are the following:

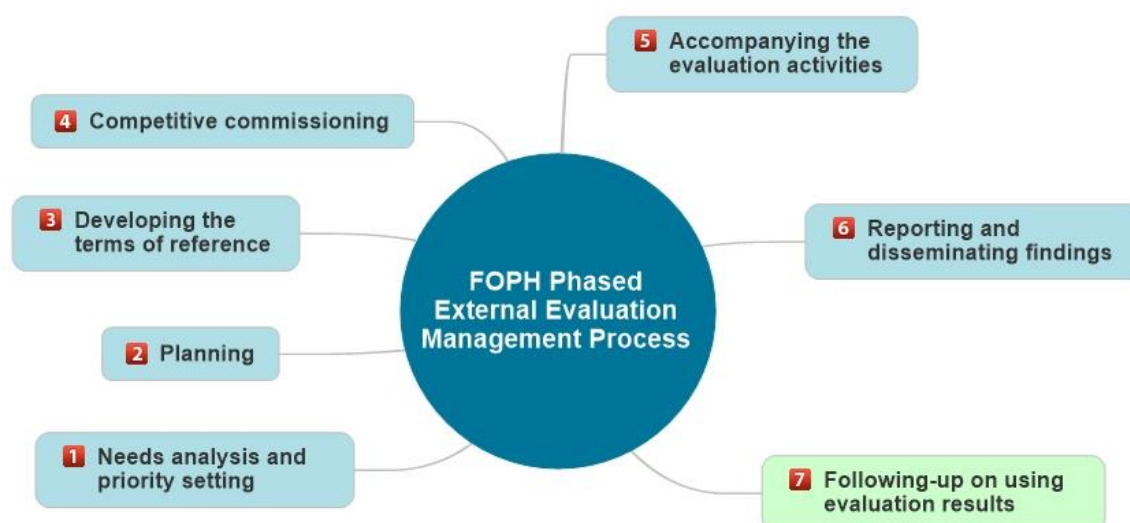
Ensure that....

- evaluations respond to the information needs of the intended evaluation users;
- selecting and contracting of evaluators strictly comply with public procurement regulations;
- evaluations are well designed, realistic, and are conducted in a diplomatic and cost-conscious manner;
- evaluations are legally and ethically planned and conducted, with due respect to the welfare of all stakeholders;
- the scientific quality is unquestionable and its content is correct;
- evaluations produce timely, valid and useful information;
- evaluation findings are communicated and lead to decisions about what needs to be done.

## 6.2. Main phases of an evaluation project and their objectives

The FOPH evaluation management process is divided into seven main phases.

**Figure 3: The seven phases of evaluation management in the FOPH**



Source: FOPH, Evaluation and Research Service.

Each phase has objectives. These objectives are set out below.

Evaluation management phase	Objectives
① Needs analysis and priority setting	Requests from the FOPH fields of activity for evaluations are collated annually, in line with the Office's integrated task and resource planning process. The senior management decides on the basis of defined <a href="#">criteria</a> <sup>8</sup> which evaluations should be commissioned and approves the E&R Service's 'capacity and resource plan'.
② Planning	(→ project start) Expectations about the evaluation are clarified with internal partners. The basic parameters of the evaluation are agreed. Evaluability / feasibility is verified. A project organisation is established.
③ Developing the terms of reference	The evaluation mandate as confirmed with internal and external partners and approved by commissioners, is available as the 'terms of reference'.
④ Competitive commissioning	The evaluation team offering the best proposal is awarded the evaluation mandate.
⑤ Accompanying / Supporting the evaluation activities	The evaluation team benefits from E&R's support as a "facilitator" throughout. The quality of scientific methods' applied is assured.

<sup>8</sup> The criteria used to determine external evaluation needs are recorded and described in a [checklist](#): political relevance, relevance to resources, information needs and legal basis.

Evaluation management phase	Objectives
⑥ Reporting and disseminating findings	The quality of evaluation products is assured. The value of evaluation results is enhanced through a series of discussions with internal and external partners to decide on how they can best be used. The evaluation results are published together with a management response. (→ Project end)
⑦ Following-up on using evaluation results	Evaluation results and their utilisation are reported in the E&R Service's 'Multi-annual Report on Evaluation'.

[Work aids](#) are available on the FOPH website for every phase.

### 6.3. Project organisation: roles and responsibilities of actors

Evaluation projects within the FOPH are managed. The central actors are the commissioner, the evaluation manager, stakeholders and the evaluation team. The organisation of an evaluation project is set out below.

Main tasks, competences and responsibilities	
Who	What
FOPH senior management (commissioner)	<b>General responsibility for an evaluation project</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Formally commissioning the evaluation to be conducted in line with FOPH evaluation planning</li> <li>Assuring resources<sup>9</sup></li> <li>Acknowledging evaluation results</li> </ul>
Responsible FOPH directorate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The head of the directorate concerned or the division responsible for the object being evaluated takes the position of chair on the evaluation steering committee.</li> </ul>
Evaluation steering committee	<b>General supervision and steering of an evaluation project from a holistic perspective</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Approving the terms of reference (evaluation mandate), and where relevant, together with the advisory group</li> <li>Selecting the evaluation team</li> <li>Approving evaluation products (wherever such competence has not been delegated to the evaluation project manager)</li> <li>Discussing evaluation results together with the advisory group, and validating selected findings</li> <li>Deciding on a strategy for dissemination and utilisation of evaluation results</li> <li>Authoring a management response to the results (where relevant together with the advisory group)</li> </ul>
Evaluation advisory group	<b>Providing advice and support to an evaluation project</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Providing expertise / specialist input</li> <li>Providing advice and support (especially with regard to data sources and availability)</li> <li>Discussing and using evaluation results</li> </ul>

<sup>9</sup> The Evaluation and Research Service has a budget at its disposal for evaluations.



Main tasks, competences and responsibilities	
Who	What
Evaluation project manager (member of staff from the E&R Service)	<b>Planning, coordinating, managing the process and accompanying the evaluation according to the FOPH's evaluation management objectives</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Managing stakeholders and communication</li> <li>Developing the evaluation's terms of reference (evaluation mandate)</li> <li>Applying the adjudication procedure, including the preselection of proposals submitted in response to the "invitation to tender"</li> <li>Being responsible for meeting the objectives of the evaluation request, and for the project's results (time, costs, quality of methods and evaluation products)</li> <li>Supporting efforts for enhancing the dissemination and utilisation of evaluation results</li> </ul>
Evaluation team	<b>Conducting the evaluation</b> Fulfilling evaluation mandate, taking into consideration the quality standards of the Swiss Evaluation Society SEVAL

N.B.: Particular attention should be paid to whether a representative of the Legal Affairs Division (the legal perspective) should be included in the project organisation.

## 7. References and links

### 7.1. References

- Jann, W. and Wegrich, K. (2014): *Phasenmodelle und Politikprozesse: Der Policy-Cycle*. In: Schubert, K. and Bandelow, N. C. (eds.): *Lehrbuch der Politikfeldanalyse*, 3. Auflage. München: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 97–132.
- Sager, F., Ingold, K. and Balthasar, A. (2017): *Policy-Analyse in der Schweiz. Besonderheiten, Theorien, Beispiele*. Zürich: NZZ Libro.
- Sager, F., Widmer, T. and Balthasar, A. (eds.) (2017): *Evaluation im politischen System der Schweiz. Entwicklung, Bedeutung und Wechselwirkungen*. Zürich: NZZ Libro.
- Scriven, M. (1991): *Evaluation Thesaurus*. 4th ed. Newbury Park: Sage.

### 7.2. Links to websites and documents

- FOPH website [Legislation regarding evaluation & research](#)
- FOPH website 'Evaluation in the FOPH' [www.bag.admin.ch/evaluation-foph](http://www.bag.admin.ch/evaluation-foph)
- FOPH website '[Evaluation management in the FOPH](#)'
- FOPH website 'Work aids for evaluation management' [www.bag.admin.ch/work-aids-evaluation](http://www.bag.admin.ch/work-aids-evaluation)
- FOPH website '[Evaluation reports](#)'
- FOPH website 'Monitoring in the FOPH' [www.bag.admin.ch/monitoring-en](http://www.bag.admin.ch/monitoring-en)
- FOPH website 'Research in the FOPH' [www.bag.admin.ch/research](http://www.bag.admin.ch/research)
- Federal Office of Justice, website 'Evaluation of effectiveness' ([German](#), [French](#) and [Italian](#) only)
- ARAMIS, Administration Research Actions Management Information System (federal government's research database): [www.aramis.admin.ch](http://www.aramis.admin.ch)
- Swiss Evaluation Society [SEVAL](#)
- 'Die Erarbeitung von Wirkungsmodellen und Indikatoren' (Brunold et al. 2016; [German](#) and [French](#) only)
- [Evaluation Glossary of the FOPH](#) (Widmer and Brunold 2017)
- Dispatch on the development of targeted and results-driven administration – New Management Model for the Federal Administration (NMM) ([German](#), [French](#) and [Italian](#) only)