



DAC EVALUATION CRITERIA

RELEVANCE

Parliamentarians, are you interested in becoming more effective representatives for citizens?

Are you interested in maximising the country's development by raising the relevant questions in parliamentary debates on behalf of your constituents?

Read this series of short brochures on the OECD DAC Criteria

Introduction

Parliament through promoting accountability, transparency and protecting rights is the cornerstone of democracy. Parliamentarians as policymakers are important stakeholders in a country's development process. Parliamentarians can enhance this process by asking the right questions in Parliamentary debates, using evaluative evidence when deciding national priorities and approving allocation of resources through the national budget and by working within the framework of sustainable development.

Having a sound understanding of development interventions helps in formulating the right questions to ask during parliamentary debates, and ultimately ensures maximum benefits for citizens. The *OECD/DAC evaluation criteria* can help parliamentarians to formulate the right questions. This series of brochures will explain each of the six OECD/DAC evaluation criteria.

OECD/DAC evaluation criteria

The six evaluation criteria are *Relevance, Coherence, Effectiveness, Efficiency, Impact and Sustainability*. Although these criteria have been developed for use with evaluations, they can also be used to formulate strong questions about any development intervention, program, or policy in a country. The OECD/DAC criteria are therefore important for evidence-based decision-making and policy development.

The first criteria of *relevance* is explained in the section that follows.

Relevance

OECD/DAC defines relevance as the extent to which the intervention is doing the *right things*.

The extent to which the intervention objectives and design respond to beneficiaries', global, country, and partner/institution needs, policies, and priorities, and continue to do so if circumstances change (Includes economic, environmental, equity, social, political economy, and capacity conditions in which the intervention takes place).

Key terms

Respond means that the objectives and design of the intervention are sensitive to the economic, environmental, equity, social, political economy, and capacity conditions in which it takes place.

Beneficiaries are defined as the individuals, groups, or organizations, whether targeted or not, that benefit directly or indirectly from the development intervention. Other terms, such as rights holders or affected people, may also be used.

Partner/institution includes government (national, regional, local), civil society organizations, private entities and international bodies involved in funding, implementing and/or overseeing the intervention.

Relevance assessment involves looking at differences and trade-offs between different priorities or needs. It requires analyzing any changes in the context to assess the extent to which the intervention can be (or has been) adapted to remain relevant.

How parliamentarians can use the relevance criteria

Many public interventions are discussed within parliament. Ensuring that such interventions remain *relevant* to the needs of citizens is an important parliamentary responsibility. Effective parliamentarians can represent the true interests of their constituents by asking important questions about the *relevance* of interventions.

Ideally, parliament should ensure the *relevance* of public interventions *before* they are implemented. In reality however, many policies and programmes are ongoing with no clear start or end. Questions about ongoing *relevance* are therefore helpful during implementation to continuously improve the extent to which interventions and policies meet the needs of citizens. There are a number of key areas that can be addressed under *relevance*:



Whether the intervention is truly based on the needs of citizens



Whether the right beneficiaries have been identified and included



Whether the right stakeholders have been identified and consulted



Whether the intervention addresses priorities identified by relevant government agencies and partners.



Whether the intervention or policy can be modified to remain relevant if or when the context changes

Possible questions parliamentarians can ask to ensure relevance

The following are examples of questions that parliamentarians might ask about the *relevance* of a public intervention, program, or policy. It's important however to be creative when asking questions and to take into account the country context, the nature of the intervention or policy, and the needs of the debate and policy decision-making process.

- A:** Has the intervention/ program/ policy been designed considering the real needs of potential beneficiaries?
- B:** What evidence has been used to determine the focus of the program?
- C:** Were beneficiaries consulted when designing the intervention program or the policy?
- D:** Is the beneficiary group amongst citizens prioritized for government support?
- E:** How aligned is the intervention/program/policy to national priorities and plans?
- F:** How aligned is the intervention/program/policy to the SDGs?
- G:** How well has the intervention adapted to changes in the socio/economic/environmental context?
- H:** Is the intervention/program/policy likely to remain relevant to the needs of beneficiaries throughout its lifetime?

Resources to learn more about relevance

OECD evaluation criteria, retrieved from

<https://tinyurl.com/2p9835a6>



OECD (2022) Understanding the six criteria: Definitions, elements for analysis and key challenges. retrieved from

<https://tinyurl.com/bddefx8>



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