



## **Strengthening Governance Through Evidence:**

### **The Revised National Evaluation Policy Framework of the Philippines**

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#### **Introduction**

In November 2024, the Philippine government marked a milestone in evidence-based governance with the approval of the Revised National Evaluation Policy Framework (NEPF). Spearheaded by the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA), now transformed into the Department of Economy, Planning, and Development – DEPDev) and the Department of Budget and Management (DBM), and supported by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the framework institutionalizes evaluation as a core function of public sector management. It aims to embed a culture of learning, accountability, and transparency across government agencies, ensuring that policies and programs are not only well-intentioned but also effective and impactful.

The framework is not only a technical reform but a governance reform, as emphasized in the recently held EEAP Webinar presentations by Monitoring and Evaluation Staff of DEPDev, Fiscal Planning and Reforms Bureau of DBM, and the Congressional Policy and Budget Research Department (CPBRD) of the House of Representatives in the Philippines last 14 January 2026.

This article explores the evolution, principles, structure, and implications of the NEPF, highlighting its role in transforming governance and development planning in the Philippines.

#### **Policy Updates**

Last April 2025, a Joint Memorandum Circular No. 2025-02 was issued by DEPDev (formerly NEDA) and DBM which was from the previously approved November 2024 revised framework. The supporting partners are UNDP, Development Partners, Civil Society. The rationale behind this is that despite numerous reforms in planning and budgeting such as the Medium-Term Expenditure Framework and Program Expenditure Classification, there remained no explicit mandate for systematic evaluation of government programs. The revised NEPF addresses this gap by:

- Promoting results-oriented governance
- Ensuring accountability for public spending
- Facilitating learning and adaptive management
- Aligning with international standards on evaluation (e.g., OECD-DAC criteria)

As stated above, this article will also outline the key features, and implementation strategy of the Revised National Evaluation Policy Framework (NEPF), institutionalized through Joint Memorandum Circular No. 2025-02. It aims to guide national government agencies, state universities and colleges (SUCs), government-owned and -controlled corporations (GOCCs), and other instrumentalities in integrating evaluation into governance systems.

Likewise, the DEPDev–DBM JMC No. 2025-02 further strengthened interagency coordination, establishing the NEPF Steering Committee, Technical Committee, and Secretariat. The framework is now aligned with Republic Act No. 12145 (Economy, Planning, and Development Act), which mandates DEPDev to lead planning, monitoring, and evaluation nationwide.

## Historical Context and Evolution

### *Policy Foundations*

The NEPF builds on the original 2015 framework (JMC 2015-01) but addresses gaps in capacity, fragmented practices, and weak institutional arrangements. It is aligned with:

- **Executive Order No. 376, s. 1989** – Establishing the Regional Project Monitoring and Evaluation System
- **Republic Act No. 8182 (ODA Act of 1996)** – Promoting effective use of development assistance
- **Philippine Development Plan (PDP) 2023–2028** – Emphasizing inclusive and evidence-based development

The original NEPF was introduced in 2015 through Joint Memorandum Circular No. 2015-01. It was a pioneering step toward integrating evaluation into the Philippine public sector. However, implementation challenges—including limited capacity, fragmented evaluation practices, and unclear institutional arrangements—prompted a comprehensive review.

The revised NEPF, approved in November 2024, responds to these gaps. It builds on lessons from the maiden version and aligns with the Philippine Development Plan (PDP) 2023–2028, which emphasizes inclusive, resilient, and evidence-informed development.

Likewise, the key features of the Revised NEPF are that it made evaluation as a governance function and now a mandatory component of planning, budgeting, and implementation. Agencies must develop evaluation plans for major programs and projects.

The Congress also emphasized during the last EEAP webinar that evaluation must move beyond executive compliance to become a whole-of-society system, engaging civil society, academia, media, and citizens.

## Objectives of the Revised NEPF

The revised framework seeks to:

- **Institutionalize evaluation** as a standard practice in government planning, budgeting, and implementation.
- **Promote transparency and accountability** by assessing the effectiveness of public programs and projects.
- **Support evidence-based decision-making** to improve policy outcomes and resource allocation.
- **Foster a learning culture** within government institutions, encouraging adaptive management and continuous improvement.

## Core Principles

The NEPF is anchored on five guiding principles:

1. **Utility** – Evaluations must be relevant and useful to decision-makers and stakeholders.
2. **Credibility** – Evaluation processes must be rigorous, impartial, and methodologically sound.
3. **Transparency** – Findings and methodologies should be publicly accessible and open to scrutiny.
4. **Participation** – Stakeholders, including civil society and beneficiaries, should be meaningfully engaged.
5. **Ethical Practice** – Evaluations must respect human rights, cultural sensitivities, and data privacy.

The expanded guidance includes OECD-DAC criteria, impartiality, methodological rigor, and management response mechanisms.

## Institutional Arrangements

One of the most transformative aspects of the Revised National Evaluation Policy Framework (NEPF) is its emphasis on institutional clarity. The JMC outlines specific roles for key actors to ensure evaluation is embedded across the governance cycle:

- **DEPDev** (formerly NEDA): Serves as the central authority for planning, monitoring, and evaluation. Provides technical guidance and formulates the National Evaluation Agenda (NEA) to set priorities.

- **DBM:** Integrates evaluation into the budget cycle, ensuring that performance evidence informs resource allocation.
- **Line Agencies:** Required to establish dedicated evaluation units, develop agency evaluation agendas, conduct evaluations, and use findings to improve planning and implementation.
- **Congress:** Strengthens legislative oversight by using evaluation evidence in policy review and lawmaking.
- **Inter-agency Committees:** Facilitate coordination across sectors, particularly for cross-cutting programs that involve multiple agencies.
- **Civil Society & Academia:** Contribute analytical rigor, independent perspectives, and participatory evaluation approaches to enhance credibility and inclusiveness.

This arrangement ensures that evaluation is not just a technical exercise but a **shared responsibility across government, legislature, and society**, reinforcing accountability and learning at every level.

### Evaluation Planning Requirements & Budgeting

Under the NEPF, every government program must be accompanied by an evaluation plan. This includes:

- Theory of Change and Results Framework
- Evaluation Questions and Indicators
- Methodology and Data Sources
- Timeline and Budget
- Use and Dissemination Strategy

Agencies are required to submit project proposals for evaluation funding during the annual budget cycle. This ensures that evaluation is not an afterthought but a planned and resourced activity. Specifically, DBM will ensure that evaluation activities are adequately resourced and linked to performance-based budgeting.

### Types of Evaluation

The framework recognizes multiple forms of evaluation, each serving distinct purposes:

Type of Evaluation	Purpose
<i>Formative</i>	Improve program design before implementation

Type of Evaluation	Purpose
<b>Process</b>	Assess implementation fidelity and efficiency
<b>Outcome</b>	Measure short- and medium-term results
<b>Impact</b>	Determine long-term effects and causal relationships
<b>Meta-evaluation</b>	Assess the quality and utility of evaluations themselves

Agencies are encouraged to select the appropriate type based on the program’s maturity, complexity, and strategic importance. DEPDev prioritizes impact evaluations for national programs, while agencies focus on process evaluations for management improvement.

### Capacity Building & Partnerships

Recognizing the technical demands of evaluation, the NEPF includes a robust capacity-building strategy:

- **Training Programs** for government staff on evaluation methods, data analysis, and report writing
- **Communities of Practice** to foster peer learning and innovation
- **Partnerships with Academia and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs)** to leverage external expertise and promote participatory evaluation
- **Technical Assistance** from NEDA and development partners for complex evaluations

UNDP and other international organizations continue to play a key role in providing support and sharing global best practices. Some of the accomplishments include: piloted M&E Competency Framework in 9 national government agencies; over 210 staff trained in DEPDev, Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM), and State Universities and Colleges (SUCs); conduct of Annual national and regional M&E forums institutionalized; and partnerships with CSOs, academia, and development partners mobilized resources and expertise (Monitoring and Evaluation Staff, DEPDev, 2025).

### The National Evaluation Portal

A cornerstone of the revised framework is the development of the **National Evaluation Portal**, an interactive platform to be launched in early 2026, the portal will:

- Host and publishes evaluation reports, guidelines, and tools

- Track evaluation plans and implementation status
- Facilitate peer review and stakeholder feedback
- Serve as a repository for lessons learned and good practices

This digital infrastructure enhances transparency, accessibility, and institutional memory.

### Integration and Alignment with the Philippine Development Plan (PDP)

The NEPF is closely aligned with the PDP 2023–2028, which emphasizes whole-of-government and whole-of-society collaboration. Evaluation is positioned as a key mechanism for:

- Monitoring progress toward PDP targets
- Identifying implementation bottlenecks
- Informing midterm adjustments and policy recalibration
- Ensuring that development outcomes are inclusive and sustainable

Each chapter of the PDP has designated lead agencies responsible for implementing and evaluating strategies, with NEDA providing oversight.

### Challenges & Opportunities

While the revised NEPF is a major leap forward, its success depends on addressing several challenges and considering present opportunities:

Challenges		Mitigation	Opportunities	
<b>Capacity Gaps</b>	Many agencies lack trained evaluators and data systems.	Training and technical support	<b>Policy Coherence</b>	Evaluation can harmonize fragmented initiatives
<b>Cultural Resistance</b>	Evaluation may be perceived as punitive rather than developmental	Promoting evaluation as a learning tool	<b>Adaptive Governance</b>	Real-time learning enables responsive policymaking.
<b>Data Quality and Availability</b>	Inconsistent data hampers rigorous analysis.	Strengthening data systems	<b>Public Trust</b>	Transparent evaluations enhance citizen confidence in government.
<b>Coordination Complexity</b>	Multi-agency programs require strong collaboration mechanisms.	Inter-agency mechanisms and shared platforms	<b>Regional Leadership</b>	The Philippines can serve as a model for evaluation in Southeast Asia.

The execution risks include weak demand for evaluation use, limited integration with monitoring systems, and institutional fragility without legislation. The passage of RA 12145 addresses these risks by giving DEPDev a stronger mandate.

## Next Steps

The next steps are: (1) ensuring **Agency Compliance**: all agencies must align their evaluation plans with the NEPF by Q4 2025; (2) **Capacity Development**: DEPDev and DBM will roll out training modules and toolkits; (3) **Portal Launch**: The National Evaluation Portal will go live by early 2026; and (4) **Monitoring and Review**: Annual progress reports will be submitted to the Cabinet and made public.

## Conclusion

The Revised National Evaluation Policy Framework of the Philippines represents a bold commitment to transforming governance through evidence. By institutionalizing evaluation, the government not only improves its capacity to deliver results but also strengthens democratic accountability and public trust.

As the framework rolls out, continued investment in capacity, partnerships, and systems will be essential. More importantly, fostering a culture that values learning and reflection will ensure that evaluation becomes not just a technical exercise, but a cornerstone of good governance.

As emphasized by DEPDev, DBM, and Congress in the recently held EEAP Webinar, success requires not only technical systems but a whole-of-society approach—where government, legislature, civil society, academia, private sector, and citizens all share responsibility for evidence-based governance.