

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
FOOD SAFETY AND INSPECTION SERVICE
WASHINGTON, DC

FSIS DIRECTIVE

1045.1

10/5/17

AGENCY PROGRAM EVALUATIONS

I. PURPOSE

This directive outlines the procedures that FSIS program areas are to follow to request that the Evaluation Working Group (EWG) review proposals to conduct program evaluation activities that involve more than one program area, or that will require resources beyond those that are already available in an individual program area. This directive also defines and delineates the roles and responsibilities of the EWG co-chairs, EWG voting members, and the Enterprise Steering Board (ESB).

KEY POINTS

- *Program areas may request program evaluation services through the EWG*
- *Evaluations that cross program area boundaries require review by the EWG (this does not include data analyses routinely conducted by the program areas or standing workgroups)*
- *The EWG reports to the ESB, which approves evaluations through the governance process*
- *All program areas are to be represented on the EWG*

II. BACKGROUND

A. FSIS implements many activities to meet its public health mission, as outlined in its strategic and annual plans and required functions. Evaluations are important to assess whether these activities are operating or are being implemented effectively and efficiently. When evaluations involve more than one program area or require resources beyond what is available to that program area, a review and approval process will ensure that the use of Agency resources and evaluation results are optimized.

B. An evaluation is the systematic collection of information about the characteristics and outcomes of activities, policies, or processes. The EWG uses this information collection to make informed judgments; recommend improvements to increase efficiency and effectiveness; or inform decisions about future program development or performance concerning evaluations.

C. Evaluations are to be practical, independent, feasible, and reflect FSIS priorities (such as those stated in the FSIS strategic and annual plans), and use time and resources appropriately. Typically, mixed methods such as quantitative data analyses and surveys, cost benefit analyses, randomized control trials, interviews and focus groups are used in FSIS program evaluations. Evaluations will be conducted in an ethical manner, and produce accurate findings, conclusions, and recommendations that aim to modify or improve activities and operational performance.

D. Evidence-based evaluations directly support FSIS enterprise governance and Agency decision-making by providing information about how activities, policies, processes, or changes are or are not achieving desired results, and about how activities, policies, and processes may be optimized to achieve desired results.

III. RESPONSIBILITIES

- A. The EWG is to consist of staff from across the Agency with evaluation or particular subject matter expertise relevant to program assessment, monitoring, and evaluation.
- B. Program areas are to designate one director-level or senior level voting representative to the EWG. The EWG may have additional non-voting members from program areas. The EWG is to be co-chaired by the Office of the Chief Financial Officer (OCFO) representative, and the representative of one other program area. The non-OCFO co-chair is to rotate among the program areas on an annual basis. Program area staff participate in or lead evaluations in coordination with OCFO.
- C. The primary roles and responsibilities of the EWG voting representatives are to:
1. Provide input on the Agency's evaluation agenda;
 2. Make majority-vote recommendations on new evaluation requests, including the perceived value from proposed evaluations, as well as on the scope, methods, and timeframes of proposed evaluations; and
 3. Collaborate on planning and conducting evaluations with other FSIS program areas that are performing evaluations.
- D. The primary roles and responsibilities of the EWG Co-Chairs are to:
1. Convene EWG meetings and record proceedings;
 2. Consult with the requesting program area on evaluation requests and determine when requests are ready for EWG review;
 3. Provide advice or support to the requesting program area to ensure the selection of appropriate methodologies to execute the program evaluation, consulting with other program areas as appropriate; and
 4. Monitor the completion of the approved program evaluation recommendations and provide status information on behalf of other offices to the EWG and ESB.
- E. The ESB is responsible for approving an Agency-wide evaluation agenda, proposals for evaluations that affect more than one program area, and facilitating assignment of staff to support completion of approved evaluations, when necessary. The ESB will review evaluation proposals as part of the Enterprise Governance (EG) process as outlined in [FSIS Directive 1040.1](#), *The FSIS Enterprise Governance Decision Making Process*.

IV. EVALUATION REQUESTS

The requesting program area point-of-contact is to complete [FSIS Form 1360-16B, FSIS Enterprise Governance Board Project or Evaluation Review Request Form](#) to request a program evaluation.

V. CONDUCTING EVALUATIONS

- A. The lead analyst from the program area is to provide a general evaluation plan for further approval through the FSIS EG process to the Co-Chairs.

B. Assistant Administrators are to assign sufficient staff within their program area to the evaluation team as necessary or appropriate to conduct the evaluation.

C. The lead analyst from the program area periodically briefs the EWG and ESB on evaluation progress.

D. Evaluations are to be performed in accordance with Generally Accepted Government Accounting Standards, as appropriate and practicable.

E. A minimum of one EWG representative and one EWG member outside of the lead analyst's program area who was not involved in the evaluation are to peer review evaluation products that are approved through the EG process.

VI. COMMUNICATING EVALUATION RESULTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The lead analyst is to brief affected program areas, the EWG, and the ESB on the results from evaluations. The lead analyst will make evaluation briefs and reports available electronically via email to the EWG and ESB, and will also post the briefs on the EWG SharePoint site. The ESB will decide on whether any additional briefings are necessary and on how results should be disseminated.

VII. ACCEPTING, IMPLEMENTING, AND MONITORING EVALUATION RECOMMENDATIONS

The EG process will be used to finalize and accept recommendations from the evaluations, assess the prioritization and timing of implementing recommendations, and determine the timeframe for providing status updates about implementing recommendations to the EWG and ESB.

VIII. EVALUATION INVENTORY

A. As part of the EWG's role to integrate, coordinate, and communicate major evaluation activities internally and externally, as well as in response to Departmental and Office of Management and Budget requirements, program areas are to notify the EWG via email of the commencement and the completion of major evaluations conducted with their internal resources that are not required by regulation, including those that did not go through the EWG process. The commencement notification is to include:

1. The title;
2. A very brief description of the evaluation subject, and
3. Its timeframe, and key methods used.

B. The completion notification is to include any recommendations provided as a result of the evaluation.

C. The title and completion date of these evaluations will be included in annual reporting to the Department as required under the Federal Manager's Financial Integrity Act (FMFIA) Annual Assurance Statement.

IX. QUESTIONS

Refer questions regarding this directive to the OCFO/EWG Co-Chair at ewg@fsis.usda.gov.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Rebecca J. Wagner".

Assistant Administrator
Office of Policy and Program Development