

Public Evaluation System Costa Rica

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National Evaluation System (SINE)

- Created in 1995 and reformed in 2010.
- Full counterpart of the National Planning System (created in 1974).
- It includes over 100 public institutions and is coordinated by MIDEPLAN.

Legal basis of the SINE

- The Political Constitution of Costa Rica provides that:
 - “The public administration is subject to a procedure of evaluation of results and rendering of accounts, and that public officials are personally responsible for the fulfillment of their duties.” (article 11).

Functions of the SINE

- Systematic and ongoing evaluation of compliance with and results of the actions set in the National Development Plan (NDP), in order to assess their implementation and their contribution to the country's social and economic development.
 - Monitoring institutional goals, every six months.
 - Annual performance assessment of results for sectoral goals, review of the causes and context of gaps.
 - Impact evaluation at the end of the term.

Functions of the SINE

- Strengthening evaluation in the public sector in Costa Rica.
 - Design M&E tools.
 - Set and disseminate M&E guidelines, methodologies and procedures.
 - Define M&E parameters for the NDP and strategic projects and programs.
 - Manage the system and process of data registration.
 - Maintain a dynamic exchange of advice and guidance with member institutions.

Functions of the SINE

- Reporting on NDP monitoring and evaluation.
 - Information to implementing agencies and decision-makers (sectoral ministries and Cabinet).
 - Accountability to political audit bodies (Comptroller General's Office and Legislative Assembly) and citizens.
- Fostering transparency in public administration and effective accountability.

Use of the NDP evaluation

- Verify compliance with institutional program and justify budget execution, with potential penalties for noncompliance.
- Based on the evaluation of the NDP, reports are created for internal circulation among implementing bodies, sectoral ministries and the Cabinet.

Use of the NDP evaluation

- Additionally, reports on the results are generated for audit bodies (Comptroller General's Office and Legislative Assembly) and discussion forums within these bodies.
- These reports are for dissemination to the general public.
 - Reports available to the public on the Internet.
 - Publication of the final audit report.

Use of the NDP evaluation

- Mechanisms to link citizen participation and evaluation.
 - Letters of Commitment to Citizens, where authorities assume the responsibility of achieving the goals.
 - Implementation of service audit systems in the public sector.
 - Ongoing award program for best practices in the public sector.

Limitations and challenges of the SINE

- Operation and short-term-oriented, no sectoral linkages.
- MIDELPLAN's data collection and registration process is complex and cumbersome.
- Evaluation focused on monitoring and reporting, but inadequate level of verification and feedback, and lack of opportunity to reorient efforts and policies.

Limitations and challenges of the SINE

- Relatively limited planning and evaluation system.
- Limited HR capacity and lack of positioning of the role of evaluation.
- Limited linkage between planning and evaluation (design of goals and indicators).
- Little effect on decision-making authorities (lack of binding mechanisms and non-compliance penalty system).

Opportunities and strengths of the SINE

- High legitimacy of the system and links with the budget audit system.
- Positive reception of produced inputs by political audit bodies and citizens.
- Strengthened institutional apparatus, with stable human resources.
- Expansion of the scope of evaluation including strategic programs and policies.

Opportunities and strengths of the SINE

- Adaptation of M&E methodological frameworks towards results-based management.
- Redefinition of stakeholders roles, strengthening the role of authorities (*rectorías*) and evaluation offices.
- Technological developments that facilitate monitoring and reporting.
- Strengthened accountability and citizen participation mechanisms.

Final remarks

- The NDP design and the evaluation and accountability methodology present historical weaknesses.
- This limits the potential impact on national development and democracy building in a systematic and assertive manner, in order to ensure proper linkage between planning and evaluation, within the framework of results-based management and good governance.

Final remarks

- The main challenges observed call for a change of paradigm in public administration towards one that is results-oriented and linked to a mature evaluation culture, one that reaches all institutions and has the potential to influence the national dynamics, overcoming its formal and informative nature to take a greater role in decision-making.

Final remarks

- Transparency and accountability in themselves are NOT enough.
- The information to be disseminated has to be important, relevant and timely; it is necessary to have mechanisms to ensure that results will be used to inform the management cycle of institutions and the public sector as a whole.
- The exercise necessarily involves a link between technical and political counterparts and a commitment to efficiency and good governance.

Thank you