The Development and Evaluation Programme was developed by the Commonwealth Secretariat’s Governance and Institutional Development Division (GIDD) in 2007 to fill the void in this area within the regional public services. The programme is designed to train 100 senior public servants across the Caribbean region in foundation and advanced development evaluation skills over a period of five years, since many governments and institutions lack the capacity to design and manage results-based monitoring and evaluation (RBM&E) systems. Not having this system in place has stood in the way of governments receiving donor funding for projects, since outputs and outcomes cannot be effectively demonstrated.

Participants are trained for one week in the first year and return the second year for a one-week advanced training programme, which includes the following: Building a Results-Based Monitoring and Evaluation (RBM&E) System; Performance Budgeting; Managing for Results; and a problem-solving clinic. Participants who took part in the advanced programme formed a regional professional association – the Caribbean Development Evaluation Association – and became members of the International Development Evaluation Association (IDEAS).

For sustainability of the programme, GIDD has established an online Community of Practice (COP), which is actively utilised by all participants and encourages the use of graduates from the programme as co-facilitators on in-country training programmes; for example, in Trinidad and Tobago and in Jamaica.

Currently in Grenada, the World Bank is establishing a Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Unit in the prime minister’s office, and the unit’s head and staff will all be graduates from the programme.

What participants say about the programme

Danny Simons, Landscape Architect, Government Ministry of Works & Engineering, Bermuda

What is ‘Results-Based Monitoring & Evaluation’ (RBM&E), and what does it have to do with improving workplace performance within government? In a word, everything. Even highly talented and fully financed teams are crippled without a clear and agreed definition of success or failure. In attending the 2008–09 Caribbean International Programme on Development Evaluation Training (IPDET), I learned that RBM&E is a critical business discipline for managing risk, optimising value for money, and defining success or failure in clearly understood terms. As a quality management tool, RBM&E can be used to determine or strengthen the value of any intended intervention (development), and its concepts can be used to improve projects, programmes, policies or organisational change initiatives.

One particularly useful and strategic tool in the RBM&E concept is the results-based logic framework, developed by IPDET course facilitator, Dr Ray Rist. This framework presents, in a single diagram, the key components, relationships, assumptions and risks of a given initiative, making it easy to quickly understand, communicate and test its underlying logic, particularly its proposed theory of change. I can see how this improved presentation can contribute to greater public confidence in an initiative, as well as better stakeholder buy-in and funding support, to name a few of the direct benefits.

I further appreciated the general promotion of core characteristics, strategies and best practices for producing higher levels of performance within the public service. In the first instance, I applied a heightened focus of service delivery towards my own workplace performance and effectiveness, as measured against written objectives and ‘passion’ indices. In promoting awareness and usage of RBM&E, I prepared course summaries, a briefing presentation and concept applications, all of which were intended to show my immediate department, ministry and other interested government entities how the lessons learned can be specifically used to improve existing government initiatives.

Vivian Gordon, Architect, Ministry of Works, Montserrat

The concept of monitoring and evaluation was introduced to me during my Project Management studies. When I heard that the Commonwealth Secretariat was launching a programme to develop monitoring and evaluation skills in the Caribbean, I saw it as an opportunity to be part of a forum in which to share my experiences, and to learn from those who have had experience in delivering development projects regionally and internationally.

By participating in the programme, my approach, and the approach I try to bring to the delivery of my work as an architect in the Ministry of Works, is more holistic. In the broader view, I have been able to reinforce the concept of establishing a monitoring and evaluation section within the Development Unit of the Government of Montserrat. Within my immediate remit, I am working on implementing results-based forms of M&E. My biggest challenge is staffing, as M&E programmes are labour intensive. However, there are activities that can be tagged on to existing staff responsibilities, and I am using those opportunities to get the process going.

In general, being able to discuss issues of failure and success with colleagues who are familiar with the challenges faced when implementing development projects within the Caribbean context has provided me with the means to better plan for future projects.
I hope the Commonwealth Secretariat will continue to support this very worthy cause.

Ms Lisa Goonai, Strategic Analyst in the M&E Unit of the Strategic Services Division, Ministry of Public Administration, Trinidad and Tobago

Since my M&E training in Grenada 2008, I have become involved in one significant project that requires the use of M&E expertise. This project is concerned with the Ministry’s Strategic and Implementation Plans, which effectively set out the work of the Ministry for the next five years.

The Ministry’s Implementation Plans are built on a results-based management approach. The Ministry needs to collect data to provide evidence for stated achievements, and also to be able to objectively track progress.

The format that the Ministry is using for the Implementation Plans includes setting measurements and baselines, as well as identifying outputs and outcomes for each objective.

I was also involved in a Process Re-engineering Project for one of the Ministry’s divisions, but only to a small extent. My involvement came about because the team needed to develop Key Performance Indicators (KPI) for their project activities. Here, again, I assisted in forming measurements and baselines.

During my experience, I have encountered the following challenges in my M&E functions:

1. **Lack of technical expertise in critical areas**: In light of all the efforts to promote M&E in the region, the expertise still may not exist where it is needed. While working on the Process Re-engineering Team, it became very clear that the project owners and sponsors were not familiar with basic M&E terms and definitions. This made my task increasingly difficult, since these things had to be taught before we could move ahead with our agenda.

2. **The application of technical skills**: The training offered in Grenada in 2008 gave me a great advantage when dealing with results-based projects. However, it was difficult for me to apply the knowledge in specific situations.

3. **Slow progress**: In January 2008, Cabinet approved the establishment of M&E units in government ministries and departments. More than a year later, no significant progress had been made with respect to institutionalising these units in the respective ministries and departments. This slow momentum poses a great challenge, since the legitimate units for M&E are still absent. However, the Public Services Academy (a division within my ministry) has offered the first of what is to be many M&E training sessions, and two of my colleagues have already attended. It is also worth mentioning that the learning curve is not as steep as we would like it to be.

4. **Information**: In many cases, the focus is on delivery of the project. Therefore, the information needed for evaluation is often not collected or is unavailable. In the absence of such information, the evaluation is not carried out.