

Japanese Ombudsman System

総務省 行政評価局

Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications
Administrative Evaluation Bureau



総務省

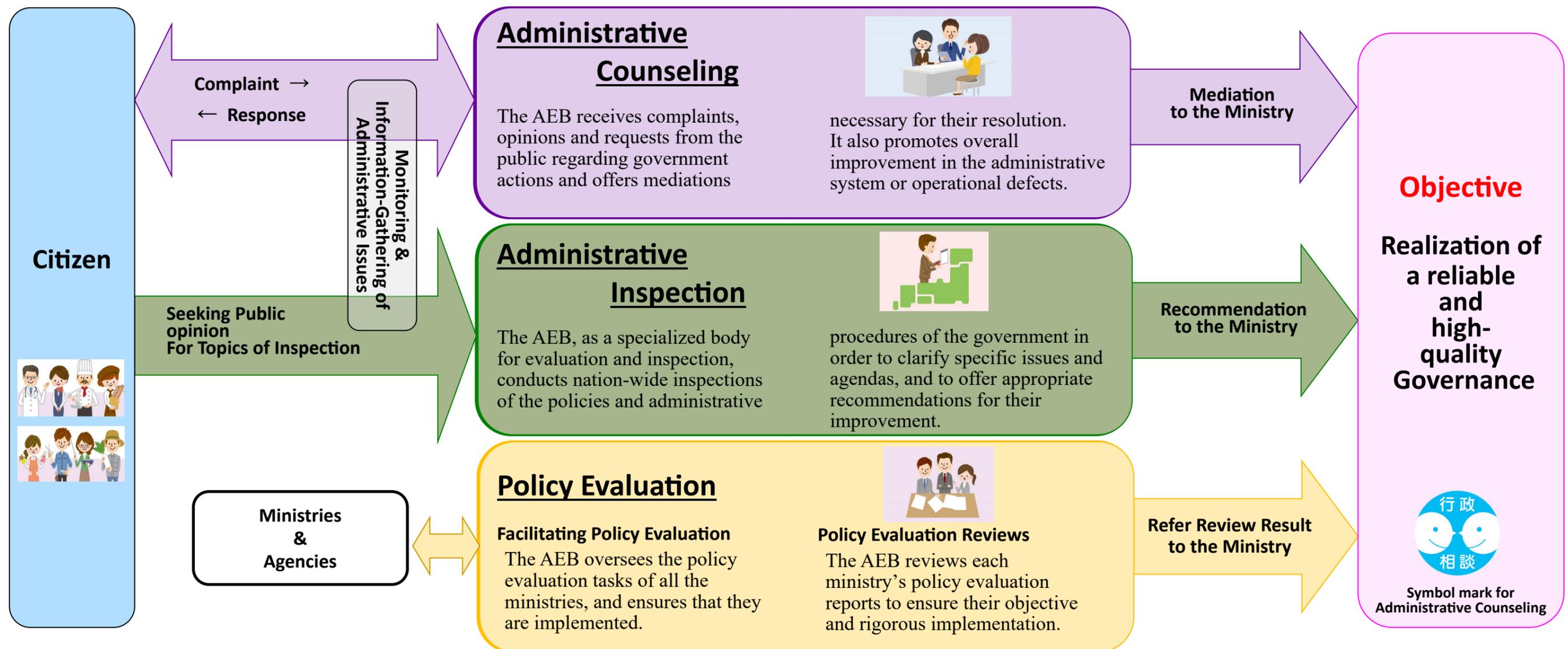
Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications

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The Administrative Evaluation Bureau (AEB) of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications (MIC) reviews the activity of the central government of Japan and enables realization of a reliable and high-quality governance, in its capacity as a different position from other ministries and agencies through its three functions: (1) Administrative Counseling, (2) Administrative Inspection and (3) Policy Evaluation.

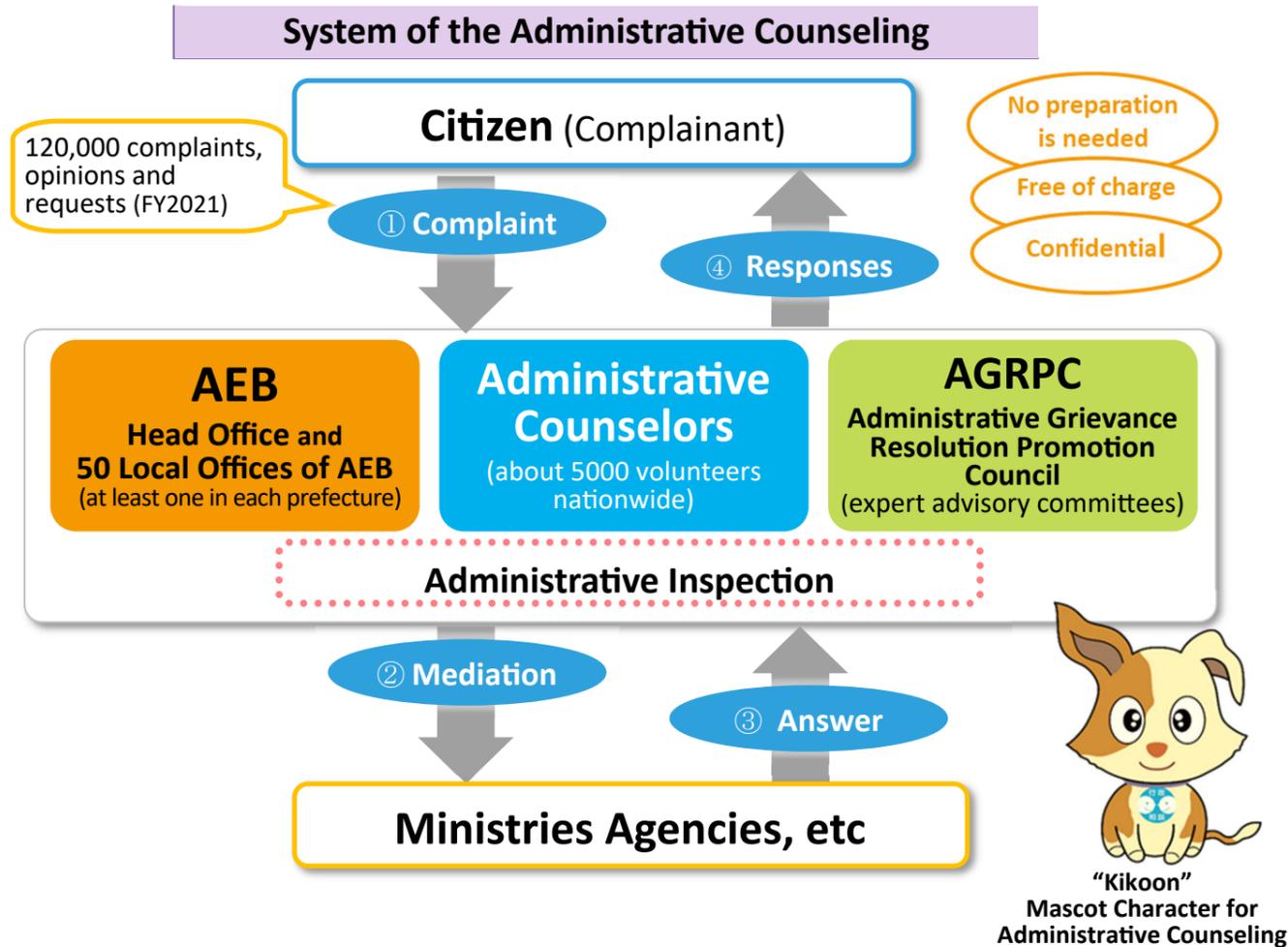
1. Outline of the Administrative Evaluation Bureau



2. Administrative Counseling

Overview of Administrative Counseling Service

Administrative Counseling Service receives complaints, opinions and requests from citizens regarding the central government administration. It gives mediations between complainants and the relevant government offices, facilitating resolution of the complaints, and to realize improvements of public administration.



AEB's 50 Local Administrative Counseling Offices "Kikumimi"

The AEB's local offices are located in all prefectures (see back cover) and receives people's complaints via personal visits, telephones, letters and e-mail. They offer various opportunities for local citizens to submit complaints including "General Administrative Counseling Center", "One-day Administrative Counseling Center", "Special Administrative Counseling Center" and so on.

Administrative Complaint Hotline! 0570-090110

* We receive your complaint via telephone only in Japanese



The Administrative Counselors was marked the system's 60th anniversary in 2021.

Administrative Counselors

About 5,000 counselors nationwide
 ~ Bridging between the citizens and public administration ~

Administrative Counselors are **unpaid private volunteers** who are commissioned by the Minister of MIC. About 5,000 counselors nationwide (**at least one in every municipality**) receive people's complaints concerning activities of central governments and give advices to the people and/or requests to the relevant government offices.



Administrative Counselors **hold counseling sessions at near from the people** including municipal offices, community centers, or even in private residences. They give lectures at schools to advertise Administrative Counseling and actually receive complaints. When there have a natural disasters, counselors help people providing various information about government support measures and so on.

Administrative Counselors can **submit their suggestions** regarding improvement of administrative systems and operations **to the Minister of MIC**. They take a proactive approach to identify the complaints in the community, through meetings with the representatives of various groups, including the local authority, women's association, and the commerce and industry association, etc.



Administrative Grievance Resolution Promotion Council (AGRPC)

The AGRPC is the **Minister's advisory body**, composed of 7 knowledgeable experts from various fields including academic and media.

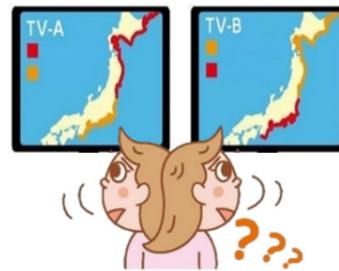
Complaints i) that cannot be resolved without revisions of the existing legislations and operation ii) involving complex administrative issues requiring multi-ministerial coordination are referred to the AGRPC.



Cases resolved via Administrative Counseling

Improvement of Tsunami Warning Map colors

Complaint Tsunami warning indicated the expected height of the tsunami differ from each TV station and it is very confusing every time I change the channels.



Improvement The AEB recommended to the Japan Meteorological Agency (JMA) to request TV stations adopt a unified standard for color-code used to avoid confusion of TV viewers and delay of their evacuation.

Consequently, TV stations deliberated and made a new color guideline as 'purple' for major warnings, 'red' for warnings and 'yellow' for advisories, taking into a barrier free specialists' suggestion. All TV stations and JMA now follow those color guidelines, not only for tsunami warning but also for warnings of serious disasters such as heavy rains and typhoons.

TV Channel	Tsunami warning		advisory
	Over 5m	3m	1m
1	Red	Red	Yellow
2	Purple	Red	Yellow
3	Red	Red	Yellow
4	Red	Purple	Yellow
5	Red	Red	Yellow
6	Red	Purple	Yellow

(Before) → (After)

	Estimated maximum tsunami height	
	Quantitative expression	For huge earthquakes
Major Tsunami Warning	Over 10 m	Huge
	10 m < height ≤ 10m	
	5m < height ≤ 10m	
Tsunami Warning	5 m	High
	3m < height ≤ 5m	
Tsunami Advisory	1 m	(N/A)
	(20cm ≤ height ≤ 1m)	

Submission of Document for Child Rearing Allowance

Complaint Those who are eligible for child rearing allowance are required to attend a yearly interview at a city office every August, where they are asked to provide a "Statement of Current Situation". Since the amount of income I earned this year exceeds the allowable threshold, I will not be eligible for the child rearing allowance and so would not expect to have to go for the interview.

However, because there is a possibility that my earnings next year will be below the threshold thereby making me again eligible for the allowance, I was told by the city office that I will have to bring in the statement form and have an interview this year after all.

This means I have to take a one-day off from work for an interview that will be about 5 minutes even though I am not eligible for this year's allowance.

As this allowance aims to support single-parent households like myself, I think the city office should not put too much burden on us mothers who are ineligible for the allowance and should accept our statements of current situation by post without an interview.

Resolution The AEB found that some cities accept such statements by mail without necessitating an interview, and therefore, in line with opinion of the AGRPC(see P4), it requested the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare (MHLW) to review the procedures relating to child rearing allowance for ineligible parents.

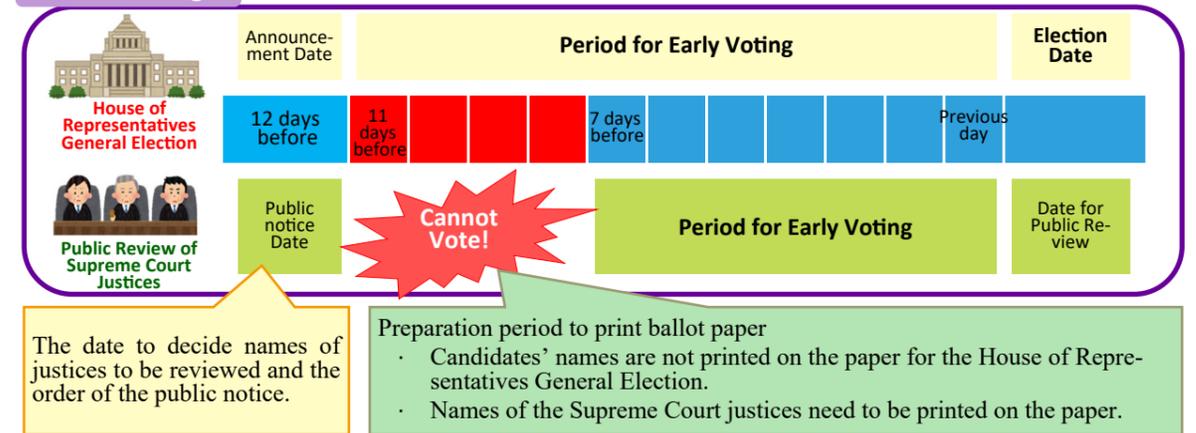
Subsequently, the MHLW issued notifications to all municipalities clarifying cases where an interview is unnecessary so that any parents who are ineligible for the child rearing allowance no longer have to attend an interview and can send their statements of current situation by post instead.



Unification of the Early Voting Date for House of Representative General Election and Public Review of Supreme Court Justices

Complaint I went to cast my vote in the House of Representatives general election during the early-voting period, and also tried to vote in the public review of the Supreme Court justices at the same time, but found this was not possible due to difference in length of period between both systems. It would be a burden to go to the polls again.

AEB's Findings



Improvement The AEB, in line with opinions of the AGRPC (see P4), recommended to the Election Department of the MIC to unify the voting date. Consequently, relevant laws were amended and the both early voting periods were unified.

Removal of Rarely Used Pedestrian Bridge

Complaint The Pedestrian Bridge in front of abolished elementary school was used to provide the student safe cross way to the school but is now rarely used and even is narrowing the side walk.



Improvement An administrative counselor checked its situation and referred to the concerned authority to improve. The Pedestrian Bridge were removed and pedestrian signals and zebra zone were established.



Cases resolved via Administrative Counseling

● Foreign students' common names on Certificates of Residence

Complaint I am a foreign graduate student, and since coming to Japan I no longer use my original name as shown on my passport, but instead use my Japanese-style name in my day-to-day life.

As I would like to live in Japan on a permanent basis after graduation, I have applied to have my commonly-used name written on my Certificate of Residence, which is generally permitted if an application is made with the necessary documentation.

In connection with the documentation I need for my application, the city office has requested me to submit a Certificate of Enrollment showing my common name, however my certificate currently shows my passport name. My college has said that they can only update my Certificate of Enrollment to show my common name if I first provide them with a Certificate of Residence showing that name.

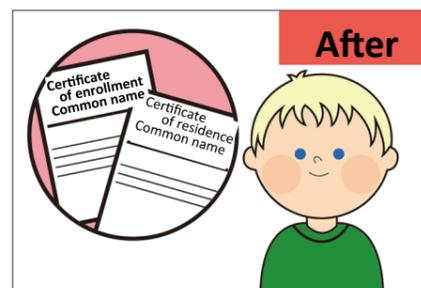
This is a “Catch-22” situation, as each of these two organizations is requesting a document that must be issued beforehand by the other organization. How can I get the documents I need in these circumstances?



Resolution The AEB consulted with the Ministry in charge of the application procedures for Certificates of Residence and confirmed that the common name can be registered on a Certificate of Residence by submitting an application to the municipality office together with objective documentation demonstrating that the applicant is using this name in his/her daily life. It also confirmed that each municipality can make decisions at its own discretion as to whether or not an applicant's objective documentation is acceptable.

In light of the complainant's situation, the AEB requested the city to consider if there would be any room to accept documentation other than Certificates of Enrollment when handling applications for Certificates of Residence. At the same time, the complainant again requested his college to issue a Certificate of Enrollment showing his common name.

Eventually, the college issued the Certificate of Enrollment showing the complainant's common name, and he was finally able to register his common name on his Certificate of Residence.



Received cases in the COVID-19 Pandemic

● Ventilation in buses

Request Most of transportation ventilate frequently as provision against the COVID-19, but the bus I always use does not open any windows although I requested many times. Many elderly people use the route, so please improve the situation.



Improvement The AEB requested the department of transportation in charge to improve this situation, and the department worked the bus company to ventilate appropriately and announce to passengers well. The drivers' manner were also improved.



● Expansion of support for struggling international students

Inquiry I am a lecture at a college and many international students fired their part-time jobs due to the influence of the COVID-19 pandemic, so are now suffered lack of money. They needed any support available.

The AEB's response The AEB determined that the situation was urgent and serious, and promptly gather information about available supports. Then informed the college about the 'emergency small loan fund' at the Social Welfare Council (SWC).

Expansion of support Subsequently, there were more than 30 application for the said small loan funds from the students. These requests to the AEB made it clear that many students were in need.

The SWC decided to distribute 5,000 face masks in that college. In addition, the city office's own benefits fund were paid to those who requested loans. The Prefectural International Exchange Association persuaded the NPO Food Bank to do Free Food Distribution in the college.

The AEB then arranged with the college to hold an Administrative Counseling Session with the international students to explain about the AEB's service and to take note of their complaints and/or respond to questions related to their life in Japan.



3. AEB Administrative Inspection

As a specialized body for inspection within the government standing in a different position from other ministries and agencies, the AEB conducts practical inspections on policy implementation efforts of each ministry and agency to find and analyze factual issues and problems, and to offer appropriate recommendations for their improvement. Furthermore, the AEB follows up to ensure improvements have been made as a result of its recommendations.

< Example ① > (Recommendation published on Jan 21, 2022)

Inspection of Child Care Measures — To further enhance prenatal and postnatal support

Background

It is said that about 10% of mothers develop postpartum depression after giving birth. However, according to surveys by university researchers this number has more than doubled in recent years due to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In response to this situation, it has been necessary to develop measures that provide necessary help to expectant and nursing mothers who need various types of support from pregnancy to after childbirth.

Result of Inspection

AEB found that many municipalities, who are responsible for postnatal care, had difficulties in ensuring contractors due to the uneven distribution of hospitals and midwives.

The Minister of MIC made a recommendation to the Minister for Health, Labor and Welfare (MHLW) to examine the current situation and propose efficient support measures by prefectures including wide-area measures encompassing many municipalities.

< Example ② > (Recommendation published on Feb 25, 2022)

Inspection of Disaster Waste Management — To promote "advance preparations" for disaster waste disposal

Background

In order to dispose of waste caused by disasters smoothly and speedily, it is extremely important to make "advance preparations". However, because of a lack of such preparations, there have been cases of delays in recovery and reconstruction due to belated designation of the sites needed for temporarily accumulating disaster waste.

Result of Inspection

Following the AEB's inspection, it became clear that these "advance preparations" were not sufficient in many municipalities. Therefore, the Minister of MIC requested the Minister for the Environment to support municipalities in more accurately estimating the amount of disaster waste that would need to be disposed of and selecting candidate sites for holding the waste temporary, while taking into account not only earthquake disasters but also flood damage.



Administrative Inspection triggered by an administrative counseling case

Recommendation for appropriate and smoother procedure at municipal offices

Complaint

When registering my marriage to my Filipino fiancée at my local municipal office, I was asked to provide an original passport as proof of her nationality. My fiancée is in the Philippines and it is difficult for her to come to Japan due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The city office should have accepted a photocopy of her passport instead of insisting on the original passport itself.

Administrative Inspection and findings

The AEB conducted a nationwide inspection and found that many municipalities also required the submission of the original passport rather than a photocopy.



Recommendation and improvement

The Minister of MIC requested the Minister of Justice to inform municipalities that when providing proof of nationality, a passport photocopy should be accepted.

After the Ministry of Justice announced this to the municipalities, the procedures were improved accordingly.

AEB Administrative Inspection Topics

The topics of the AEB's Administrative Inspections are decided upon after collecting, organizing, and analyzing information relating to the implementation status of the various government measures by each ministry and agency as well as the problems local communities are facing, and after taking into account the deliberations by the Policy Evaluation Council and public opinions solicited from ordinary citizens, and the topics so determined are then announced by the Minister of MIC.

<Example of Topics>

- ◇ Volcanic disaster prevention measures
- ◇ Acceptance of highly-skilled foreign professionals
- ◇ Promotion of active participation by women
- ◇ Revitalization of fisheries and fishing villages
- ◇ Promotion of cause of death investigations
- ◇ Promotion of countermeasures against alien species
- ◇ Construction surplus soil measures
- ◇ Independence support measures for the needy and so on...



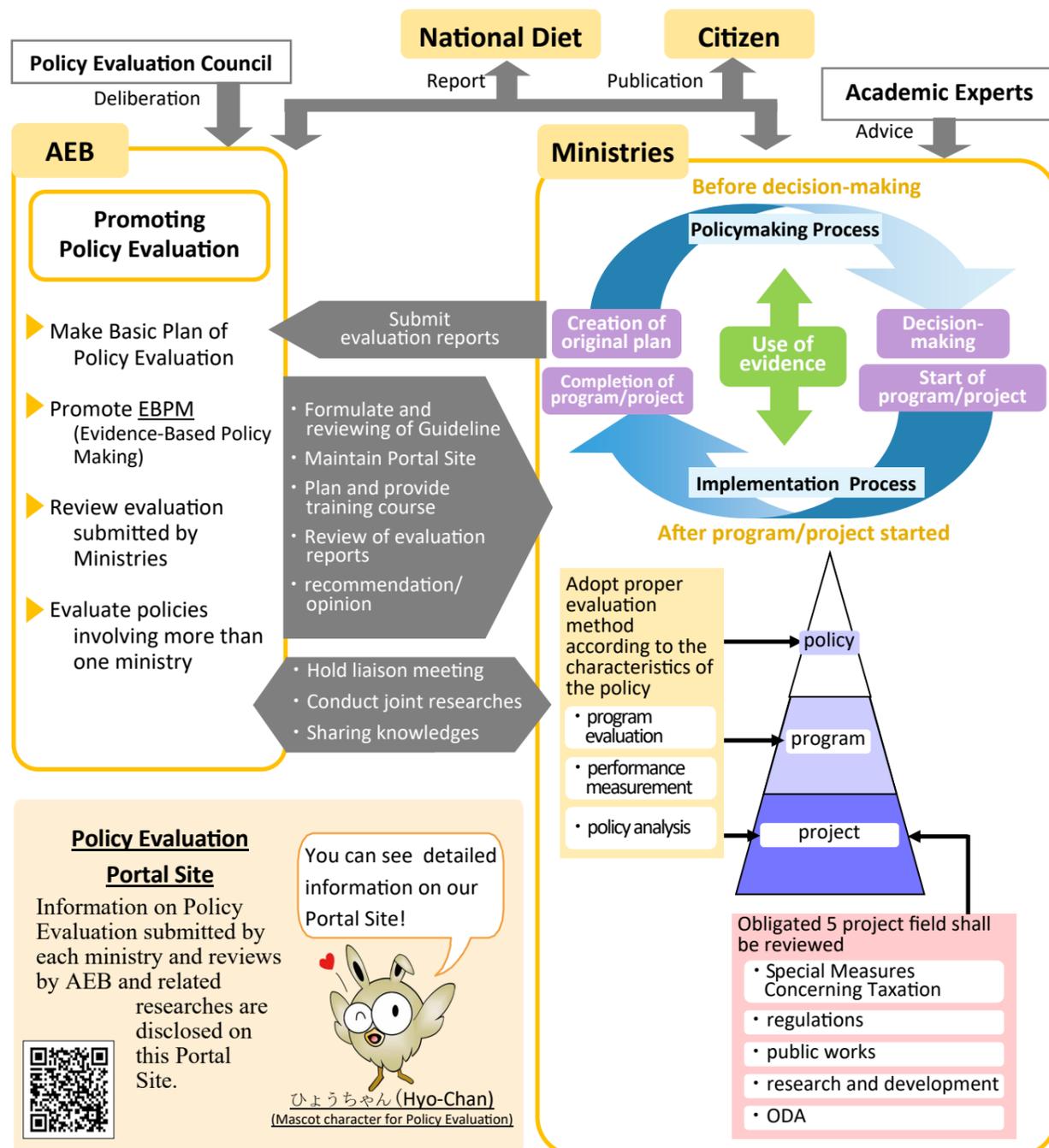
4. Policy Evaluation

○ Overview of Policy Evaluation

The purpose of Policy Evaluations is to have each ministry assess and analyze the effects of its own policies and to check whether those policies are making contributions to people's lives. Such evaluations are then incorporated into reviews of policies and/or planning and drafting of new policies.

Objectives

- Promote effective and efficient administration.
- Meet the government's commitment to be accountable to the public for its activities.



○ AEB Role in Promoting of EBPM

In the capacity as facilitator and assessor of Policy Evaluation, the AEB undertakes the following activities to support the adoption of EBPM and to improve the quality of each ministry's Policy Evaluation where EBPM is utilized:

- ① Conducts empirical joint studies looking at methods for monitoring and analyzing the effects of policies
- ② Plans and provides trainings of staff in charge of policy evaluation in each ministry

○ AEB Review of Ministry Policy Evaluation

In order to ensure objectivity and appropriateness, the AEB focuses on three key topics during its review of each ministry's policy evaluation reports: special measures concerning taxation, regulations and public-work projects. If any inadequacies are found, the AEB brings them to the attention of the relevant ministries and request that improvements are made.

Ministry Policy Evaluations: Special Measures Concerning Taxation

For the purpose of realizing specific policy objectives, Special Measures Concerning Taxation are adopted to induce economic activity by reducing the tax burden on businesses. Each ministry, when reviewing the tax system each year, conducts evaluations to ensure new measures are introduced where needed and existing measures are reviewed carefully by clarifying their current status and effects.

Ministry Policy Evaluations: Regulations

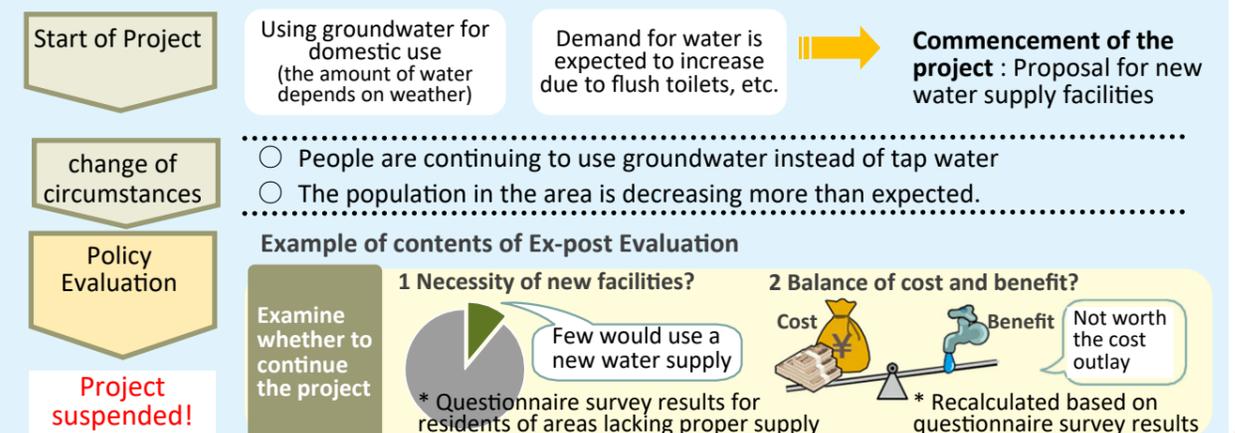
Regulations limit the rights of citizens or impose obligations in order to achieve certain objectives including securing the lives and property of citizens and protecting the environment. Each ministry conducts preliminary assessment when establishing, revising or abolishing regulations, in order to ensure those regulations are the best means for solving problems by analyzing their effects and costs in advance. Each ministry also conducts ex-post evaluations to verify the actual effects after a certain period of time.

Ministry Policy Evaluations: Public Work Projects

Public Work Projects that have a significant influence on people's lives, on society and the economy — such as maintenance of public facilities including dams and roads — often entail expenditure of large amount of money. Each ministry conducts preliminary evaluations and ex-post evaluations in order to make accurate decisions based on a review of the implementation of the projects and an assessment of their necessity and efficiency.

Example of Ministry Policy Evaluation

Project: Establishment of new water supply facilities in certain region

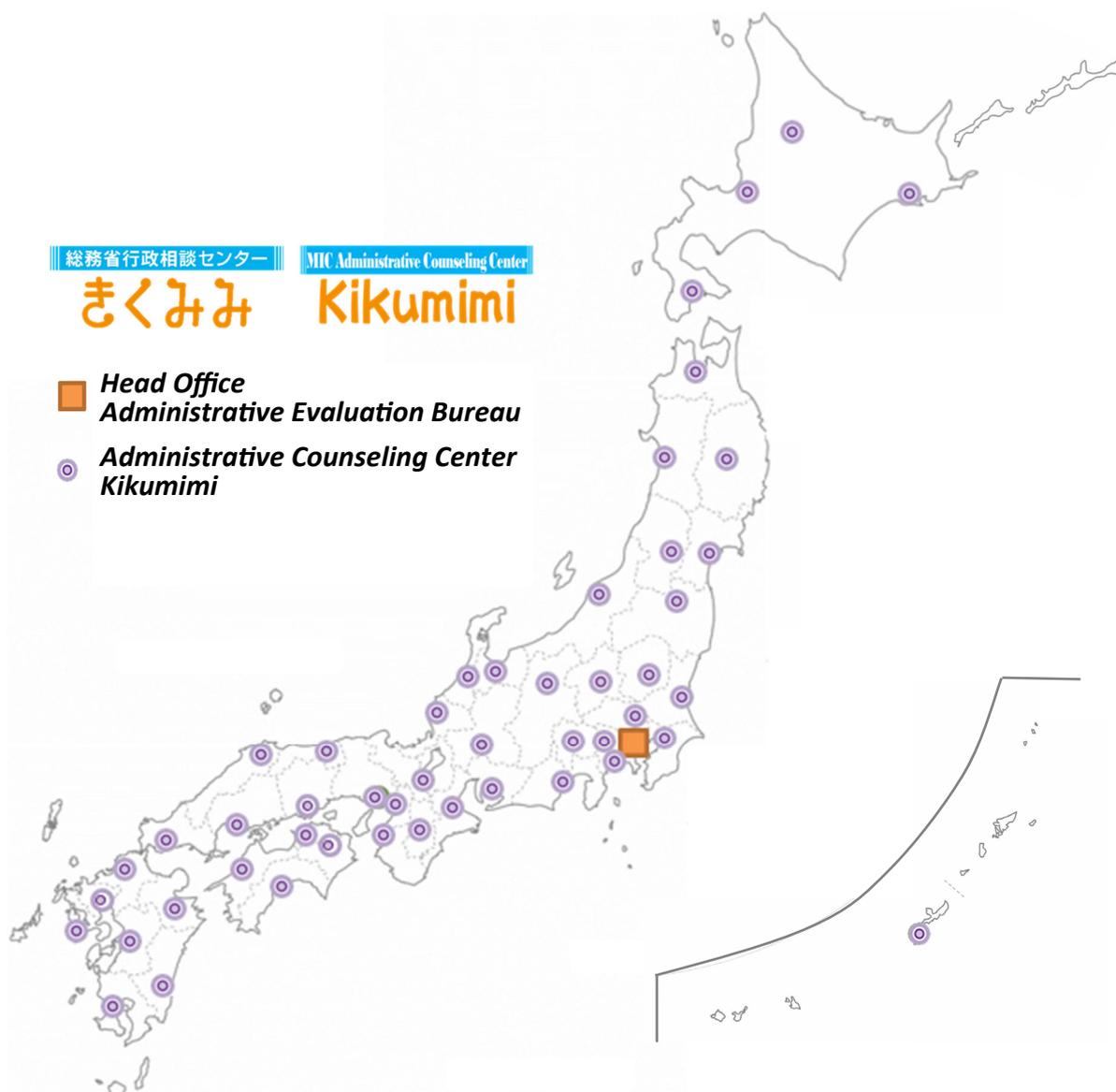


AEB Local Office “Kikumimi”

The official nickname for the MIC administrative counseling centers is “**Kiku-Mimi (Listening Ears)**”. The Japanese term “Kiku” means “Listening”, and also implies something in the process of taking effect or hitting its targets, with both meanings conveying the effectiveness of the administrative counseling service.



“Kikoon”
Mascot Character for
Administrative Counseling



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