



► Guidance Note 2.1: Independent midterm & final evaluations

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This guidance note is part of Pillar 2 ► *Types of evaluation*

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► 1. INTRODUCTION

The regulations that currently govern the evaluations of United Nations activities were promulgated on 19 April 2000 in the Secretary General's bulletin.¹ Autonomous organizations, which are part of the UN system, are governed by their own regulations and policies. The ILO revised its 2005 evaluation policy in November 2017 and adopted a new results-based [evaluation strategy 2018-21](#) in March 2018.

The guidance note gives an overview of aspects of [ILO's evaluation policy](#) that apply to independent evaluations. It clarifies roles and responsibilities and sets out the procedures for managing project evaluations. It further describes how the independent evaluation of project achievements can be used to improve decision-making, organizational learning, accountability and impact.

1.1 DEFINITION OF INDEPENDENT EVALUATION

The [ILO policy guidelines for evaluation](#) define independent evaluation as a process that is managed by and carried out by entities and persons free of the control of those responsible of the design and implementation of the development intervention.

1. ST/SGB/2000 – Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation.

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Independent evaluations are required for medium-size projects (US\$1 million and above) and of a long duration. For larger projects of over US\$5 million, two independent evaluations are required—one mid-term and the other final. The option of clustered evaluations has become more prominent in the ILO and needs to be reviewed with EVAL when panning for an evaluation (see [Guidance Note 3.3](#)).

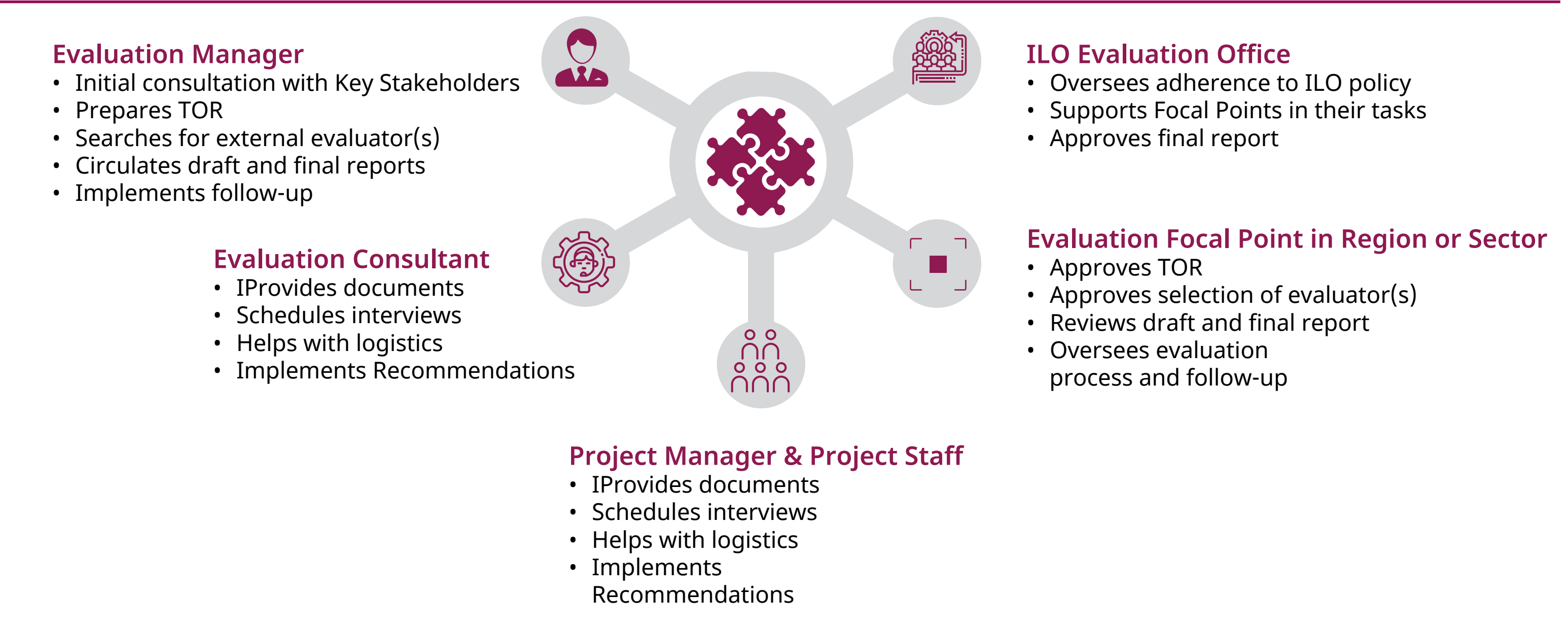
► 2. PURPOSE OF INDEPENDENT EVALUATIONS

According to the ILO policy guidelines for evaluation, evaluations in the organization are conducted for three reasons: accountability, improvement and learning. The Evaluation Office (EVAL) believes that, when the purpose of an evaluation is accountability, independent evaluation is the logical choice for type of evaluation. This is because evaluations that are conducted through a process that ensures independence (full oversight by EVAL, use of certified evaluation manager, use of external consultant) are perceived as having greater independence and objectivity and therefore are more credible.

Credibility is important because the results of the independent evaluations that are conducted every year form the basis of the corporate evaluations and strategic reviews that are submitted to the ILO’s Governing Body in order to inform their decision-making. In addition, these reports form the basis for an annual effectiveness review of ILO’s performance that EVAL conducts (see recent [meta-analyses of decent work results and effectiveness of ILO operations](#)) and other statistics describing various aspects of EVAL’s performance against its evaluation strategy as reported in EVAL’s Annual Evaluation Report.

2. Evaluators are independent by virtue of their lack of prior association with the project that is the object of the evaluation.

Table 3. Overview of roles and responsibilities for independent project evaluations



2.1 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

A clear division of roles and responsibilities for Independent evaluations is an important element in ensuring that the ILO’s *Guiding Principles* for evaluation are observed. Important roles include those of: Evaluation Manager, Departmental Evaluation Focal Point/Regional Evaluation Officer, Project Manager, ILO Responsible Official, Independent Evaluator², and EVAL. The responsibilities of this “hybrid decentralized system” that correspond to each of these roles but in which EVAL remains accountable for the credibility and quality of the final product are outlined in the table below.

Further guidance:

- [Guidance note 4.1: The Evaluation Manager: Role and Function](#)
- [Guidance note 4.2: Using the consultant roster and the self-induction programme for evaluation consultant](#)

2.2 DESIGNING AN INDEPENDENT EVALUATION

An evaluation design consists of the evaluation criteria and questions, the approach to be used for answering those questions, a plan for collecting the information needed to formulate an answer, a plan for analysing the information that is collected and a description of the deliverables. The evaluation should comply with [international norms and standards](#).

2.3 CRITERIA AND QUESTIONS

ILO project evaluations usually focus on the relevance of the project to beneficiary needs, the validity of the project design, the project’s efficiency and effectiveness, the impact of the results and the potential for sustainability. For each criterion, above, the evaluation manager should formulate two or three specific questions.

The main source of these questions is the initial consultation with the tripartite constituents, partners and stakeholders. These are the questions about the project that the clients want the evaluation to answer. Because this type of evaluation emphasizes improvement and organizational learning, the evaluation questions used to guide the study should reflect this purpose.

In addition to the above, independent evaluations should address cross-cutting policy drivers – international labour standards, social dialogue, gender equality and non-discrimination, and a just transition to environmental sustainability.

3. See [Checklist 4.1: Validating methodologies](#)

Further guidance:

- [Guidance note 3.1: Integrating gender in monitoring and evaluation of projects](#)
- [Guidance note 3.2: Integrating social dialogue and ILS in monitoring and evaluation of projects](#)

2.4 APPROACH

Part of the value of conducting independent evaluations is that they expose constituents and ILO staff to the concepts and practice of Results-based Management (RBM) in country programmes. RBM, as the name implies, is a management technique, not an approach to evaluation.

The approach to evaluation that corresponds most closely to RBM is the goal-based approach. The goal-based approach to evaluation is defined as any type of evaluation based on and the goals and objectives of the programme or project.

However, because of the special nature of independent evaluations it might be necessary to create an eclectic blend of approaches. This could be done by incorporating aspects of the participatory approach, the case study approach, etc.

2.5 DATA COLLECTION

In order to address the questions formulated above, the following methods are recommended: document analysis, interviews, direct observation during field visits and surveys, to name a few. The evaluation consultant should refer to EVAL’s checklist on validating methodologies.³

Document Analysis

An important activity that should be carried out in preparation for an independent evaluation is the assembling of documents. The important documents may include the list found below. These documents will serve as the basis of the desk review/ document analysis. The information should also be circulated in advance to the key stakeholders and partners who will be invited to attend the stakeholder workshop (see below). The information will serve as the basis of discussion during the workshop.

- National development frameworks
- United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework
- Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers
- Decent Work Country Programme Documents
- Strategic Programme Framework and Programme & Budget
- Baseline reports and information
- Monitoring reports
- Progress reports and status reports
- Project evaluation reports
- Other studies and research undertaken
- Technical and financial report of partner agencies
- National workshop proceedings or summaries
- Theory of change
- Results-based framework

Further guidance:

- [Guidance note 4.3: Data collection methods](#)
- [Guidance note 4.5: Stakeholder engagement](#)

Interviews

The independent evaluator will also need to conduct interviews with key informants. An interview is a conversation with a purpose. Interviewing is necessary to find out about behavior that occurred when the researcher was not present, opinions, feelings, knowledge, sensory perceptions, and/or background information.⁴

Direct Observation

In direct observation, the evaluator him- or herself is the data gathering instrument and should use all five senses. The types of things that the evaluator should observe include the participants, the setting, activities and interactions, frequency and duration, and subtle factors. At the conclusion of the study, the evaluator must ease him- or herself out of the community.

Surveys

A web-based survey can complement other forms of data collection. It can precede interviews to help the evaluator to know what questions to ask. Alternatively, it can take place afterward as a way of following-up on areas of interest that came to light during the interviews.

2.6 DATA ANALYSIS AND TRIANGULATION

Qualitative data analysis should be used to analyze the data collected using the methods described above. This type of analysis involves conducting content analysis of the data, looking for patterns, categories, taxonomies, and/or themes. In order to ensure validity and reliability, the findings that emerge should be triangulated. Triangulation involves the confirmation

4. [Patton. How to use qualitative methods in evaluation.](#) Sage Publications, 1987.
5. [Checklist 4.2: Preparing the Evaluation Report.](#)

of findings using multiple sources of data and methods of data collection. Stakeholders’ workshops are another technique used by evaluators to demonstrate validity. During the workshop, the evaluator offers tentative conclusions for the stakeholders to confirm or to refute.

2.7 DELIVERABLES

Another key task, for which several roles share joint responsibility, is evaluation reporting. The subsection below provides a description of the types of reports that are required from the evaluator to complete the evaluation report. This is followed by the procedure for circulating and approving reports.

Inception Report

The value of an inception report is that it ensures a common understanding of the ToR by the involved parties. The elements of an inception report include: 1) administrative information; 2) background and context; 3) purpose, scope and clients; 4) criteria and questions; 5) methodology; 6) deliverables; 7) work plan; and (8) management arrangements.

Of the various elements, the work plan is probably the most important. The work plan indicates the phases of the evaluation, the timing, key deliverables and milestones. A work process flow chart can be an effective way of communicating this information.

Further guidance:

[Guidance note 4.4: Inception report](#)

[Checklist 4.8: Writing the inception report](#)

Draft and final reports

The independent evaluator should communicate the main findings and recommendations through a written report. Certain standard elements should be addressed in every evaluation report. The table below presents a sample structure and table of contents of a evaluation report and identifies the standard elements that should be addressed in each evaluation. The report should not usually exceed 50 pages.

Table 2. Structure of a evaluation report ⁵	
A.	Cover page includes key programme and evaluation data
B.	Executive Summary
C.	Description of the programme
D.	Purpose, scope and clients of evaluation
E.	Methodology
F.	Clearly identified findings for each criterion
G.	Conclusions
H.	Recommendations
I.	Lessons learned and good practices
J.	Annexes

The procedures for circulating and approving written reports call for the independent evaluator to prepare a draft report according to TORs and submit it to the evaluation manager. The evaluation manager, in turn, circulates the draft report for comments to tripartite constituents, partners and stakeholders.

The evaluation manager compiles the comments received from the tripartite constituents, partners and stakeholders and forwards them to the independent evaluator. The independent evaluator incorporates them and submits the final report to the evaluation manager.

After the evaluation manager approves the report he/she sends it to the Regional Evaluation Officer (REO) / Departmental Evaluation Focal Point (DEFP), depending if the intervention being evaluated is centralized or decentralized. After the REO or DEFP approves the report, he/she forwards it to EVAL for final quality control and approval if conditions of quality and independence have been met.

2.8 RESOURCES

The principal resources that are necessary for conducting an independent evaluation are funds, people, information, and time⁶.

- Funds a minimum two per cent of total project resources should be reserved for evaluations plus a recommended three per cent (all together 5%) of total project resources should be reserved for monitoring, review and reporting;
- People — to build the evaluation capacity of ILO staff, the Evaluation Office has launched the Evaluation Manager Certification Programme (EMCP). A roster of trainees is available upon request;
- Information — this includes all of the internal and external documents that are necessary for answering the evaluation questions;
- Time — Experience has shown that it takes at least three months to plan, execute and follow-up with the independent evaluation exercise.

2.9 USE AND DISSEMINATION

Once EVAL approves the report it is made publicly available in  [i-eval Discovery](#). Once the evaluation has been completed, the evaluator should present findings to project staff, the relevant technical department, key stakeholder groups and other relevant ILO officials. The presentation should focus on the evaluation findings evaluation, lessons learned and emerging good practices. Once all of this is accomplished, project management is expected to take action on the recommendations via the automated management response system. The management response is an important public document that allows ILO management to show how it has addressed the evaluation recommendations as part of good results based management practices.

Further guidance:

-  [Guidance note: 5.1 Enhancing the use and dissemination of evaluation](#)
-  [Guidance note 5.4: Management follow-up to recommendations from independent evaluations](#)

CONCLUSION

Independent evaluations in the ILO are an important component of the typology of reports that are submitted. Indeed, independent reports transcend other types of reports. For example, mid-term and final reports can be independent. Decent Work Country Programme and P&B Outcome evaluations, the ILO's high-level evaluations, can be independent. Thematic evaluations can be independent. Given the broad scope of independent evaluations, the reader would be well advised to become well acquainted with the concepts and principles contained in this guidance note.

6. UNHCR. (2005). Organizing Participatory self-evaluations at UNHCR: Guidelines