



► Guidance Note 5.4: Management follow-up to recommendations from independent project evaluations

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This guidance note is part of Pillar 5 ► *Use and dissemination of evaluation findings*

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This guidance note presents the significance of management responses to evaluation recommendations and the procedures for completing them. Criteria for ensuring their quality are set forth within relevant workflows.

► 1. INTRODUCTION

All independent evaluations require management follow-up to the recommendations they present. The purpose of recommendation follow-up is to strengthen the use of evaluation findings, promote organizational learning and accountability. This, in turn, contributes to improved project design and delivery, thus also informing results-based management (RBM).

Active and routine follow-up of recommendations from independent evaluations is initiated by EVAL. ILO Responsible Officials whom are administratively responsible for the project are required to submit a management response to the evaluation's recommendations. EVAL collects management

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response data and reports to the Governing Body at its last session of the year on the status of recommendation follow-up in its [Annual Evaluation Report](#).

Workflow charts are provided depicting the processes and responsibilities of concerned officials (line managers, Regional Evaluation Officers, Departmental Evaluation Focal Points and Senior Evaluation Officers) for completing management responses (see Annexes 1-3).

► **2. ROLE OF RECOMMENDATIONS IN EVALUATION**

Recommendations play a critical role in contributing to the usefulness of an evaluation report. The United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) sets UN-wide evaluation norms and standards. An excerpt from the UNEG guidance on recommendation response is shown below.

“... Evaluation can make an essential contribution to managing for results, and to organization-wide learning for improving both programming and implementation. Yet, the value of evaluation depends on its use, which is in turn determined by a number of up-stream key factors, including (but not limited to):

- ☒ Relevance of the evaluation, in terms of timing, so as to make evaluation findings available when decisions are taken;
- ☒ Quality/credibility of the evaluation, which derives from independence, impartiality, and a properly defined and inclusive methodology;
- ☒ Acceptance of the evaluation recommendations, which partially depends on the above two points;
- ☒ Appropriateness of practices in the management response, dissemination and use of evaluation findings.”¹

1. Good Practice Guidelines for Follow up to Evaluations, UNEG, Geneva, 2010.

In summary, response to evaluation recommendations is crucial to utilization of findings and management buy-in to the evaluation process.

► **3. QUALITY OF RECOMMENDATIONS**

The importance of recommendation quality affects the whole process of management response and should therefore be thoroughly understood and regulated at the start of the evaluation process. There are several points in the evaluation process when the quality of recommendations can be reviewed and improved:

- **Terms of Reference (TORs):** Specific criteria for recommendations and report formatting are written into the TOR;
- **Presentation of draft evaluation report:** When the consultant presents the draft report to project management, they can provide critical input to ensure that the relevance and quality of the recommendations are evidence-based, that they adhere to the terms of reference (TOR) specifications and follow ILO criteria; and
- **Approval of final report:** When the evaluation manager submits the draft report to the regional evaluation officer (or the Senior Evaluation Officer in EVAL for centralized evaluations) adherence to good quality recommendation criteria can be given a final quality control.

ILO-specific criteria for recommendation content and quality are presented below. This is included in [Checklist 5: Preparing the Evaluation Report](#). This checklist should guide the evaluation manager to know what is expected in the final report. It should also be provided to the consultant so that they are aware of ILO requirements.

Additionally, this criteria is used in assessing evaluation quality when EVAL conducts its annual evaluation quality appraisals. In order to document management response to a high standard, it is important that each recommendation in the template adheres to the following criteria:

Criteria for recommendations

All recommendations should:

- **Follow logically** from conclusions, lessons learned and any emerging good practices.
- **Be numbered** and **concisely written** as stand-alone concepts, **without unexplained acronyms**, that can be responded to by line management individually.
- Specify **who is called upon to act**:
 - ILO Country Office
 - Project Management
 - ILO HQ Administration
 - ILO HQ Technical Unit
 - Tripartite Constituents
 - ILO Regional Office
- Specify **action needed** to remedy the situation
- Distinguish **level of priority** (high, medium or low priority)
- Specify the **time frame** for follow-up (short-term, medium-term, long-term or not applicable)
- Acknowledge whether the proposed recommendation represents **resource implications** (low, medium, high or not applicable)

► 4. WORKFLOW FOR QUALITY OF RECOMMENDATIONS AND RESPONSE

In 2018, EVAL launched a new web-based automated management response system (AMRS) to evaluation recommendations in an effort to improve resource-related efficiencies, in addition to enhance organizational learning and accountability through a wider and timelier use of evaluations. The system also allows EVAL to generate, compile data and keep track of management responses for independent evaluations in an efficient and transparent manner. The AMRS replaces the previous input that was required through a manual exercise (spreadsheet).

The workflow chart in Figure 1 presents the full array of processes leading to good quality recommendations and response. In brief, the management response key steps are:

Step One: Evaluation report is received by EVAL’s Senior Evaluation Officer (SEO) for approval and the recommendations considered for quality.

Step Two: Once the evaluation report is approved by the SEO, the management response follow-up to the evaluation’s recommendations is initiated by EVAL through the automated management response system (AMRS) within two weeks of the evaluations’ approval.

Up to two reminders are sent to the ILO Responsible Official to complete the management response (once after three weeks of non-response and the final reminder is sent after an additional three weeks pass with no response, with an escalation copy to the appropriate regional or departmental director).

Step Three: Line management works with relevant staff to complete the management response.

Step Four: The management response is received by the relevant Departmental Evaluation Focal Point (DEFP) or Regional Evaluation Officer (REO) for endorsement.

Step Five: Once the DEFP/REO is satisfied with the quality of the management response, s(he) will send it to the appropriate EVAL Senior Evaluation Office (SEO) for further quality control.

Step Six: If the SEO deems the management response to be unsatisfactory, (s)he will send it to the ILO Responsible Office for revision. Otherwise, the SEO will send it to the EVAL’s Knowledge Management Officer for final approval, record keeping and reporting.

Step Seven: The Annual Evaluation Report presents compilation data on the status of management response (see Section 6).

Step Eight: Occasionally, a second round of the workflow may be required for “partially completed” actions or when an action is “not yet taken”, as referenced in the management response.

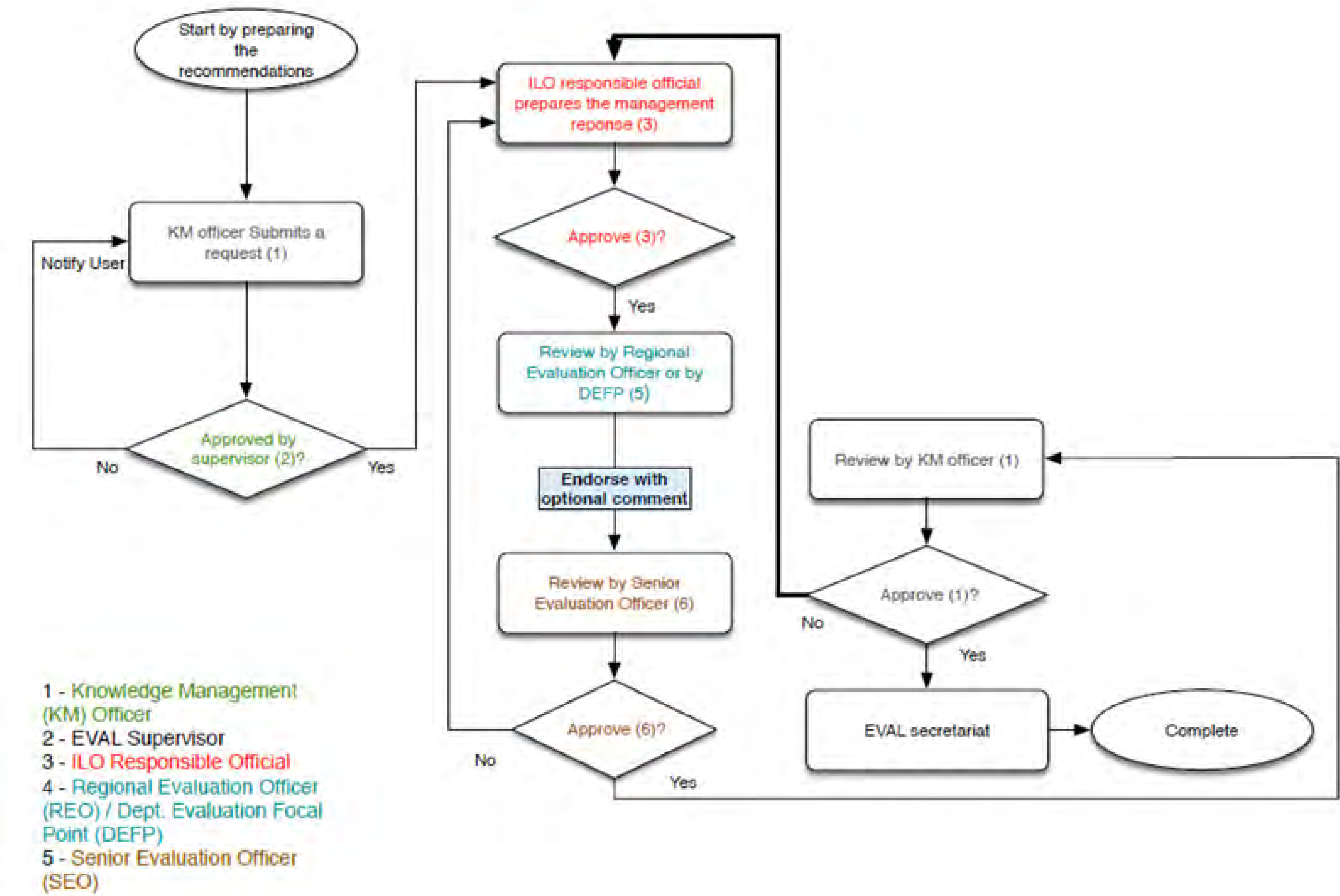
Work by line management that is responsible for addressing recommendations should start when the draft report is circulated and comments are provided to the evaluation consultant. This is a critical opportunity for project management to ensure that their comments are taken into account by the consultant and that ILO criteria are followed. Coherent and good quality recommendations will ensure a more meaningful exercise and will inevitably have a more effective contribution to organizational learning and improvement.

CLUSTER EVALUATIONS: RESPONSIBILITIES TO TAKE THE LEAD ON MANAGEMENT RESPONSE

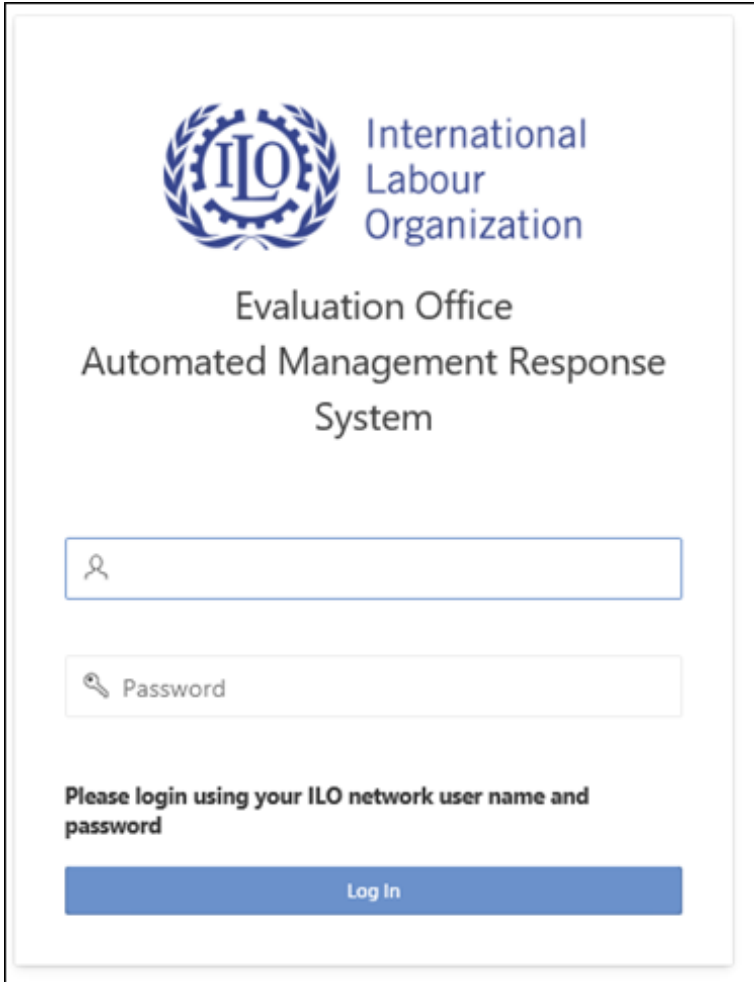
A [cluster evaluation](#) is an envelope of evaluations of projects combined into a single evaluation. To determine the responsible official for completing a management response for a cluster evaluation, a three tier approach is applied as follows:

1. If the project has a global outcome or flagship component the responsible official for that outcome or global component will take the lead in ensuring the management response is completed.
2. If all the activities of the clustered evaluation take place in one specific country the responsible official for that country will take the lead.
3. If none of the two previous criteria can be applied the responsible official of the largest project in the clustered evaluation will take the lead in ensuring the management response is completed by all concerned parties.
4. Acknowledge whether the proposed recommendation represents resource implications (low, medium, high or not applicable)

Figure 1. Workflow for ensuring quality management response to evaluation recommendations



► 5. LINE MANAGEMENT INPUT TO THE AUTOMATED MANAGEMENT RESPONSE SYSTEM



Only the ILO Responsible Official for the project (as referenced in the PARDEV approval minute), or staff appointed by the line manager, is responsible for completing the template via the web-based system.² The template describes the action plan (management response) for responding to the recommendations. It should be completed in three weeks to the date when the ILO Responsible Official received an email indicating that the management response is ready to be accessed in the automated management response system (AMRS).

Line management should respond to each recommendation individually, acknowledging if it is accepted or rejected. If rejected (“no action planned”), management must explain why this is the case in the COMMENTS column of the template. If accepted, management must provide an action plan that indicates a specific timeframe, and any possible resource implications.

2. The web-based system to management response was launched in Q1 2018.

Line management are responsible for the following inputs in the AMRS:

Management Response	Action Plan	Progress Made	Comments	Information source	Date of Line Mgt Response
(Completed, partially completed, action not yet taken, or no action planned)	(free text)	(free text)	(free text)	(free text)	(free text)

- **Management Response** (a pull-down menu) indicates whether action taken on the recommendation is “*completed*”, “*partially completed*”, “*action not yet taken*”, or “*no action planned*”. This is updated if/when a second round of reporting takes place.
NOTE: A response can be considered “Completed” when the action required of the line manager has started (not all action can be completed during the management response exercise process). Partially completed would mean that only part of the recommendation was addressed.
- **Action Plan** is a free text column that briefly summarizes the action to be taken: it outlines clear responsibilities and makes reference to a timeframe. When the action plan involves an ILO constituent (government, workers’ organization or employers’ organization), it is important to note this clearly in the “action plan” column.
- **Progress made** is a free text column that clearly describes the progress made in implementing the action plan. Any additional details on targeted entities or beneficiaries can be placed in the **Comments** column.
- The **Comments** column should contain any pertinent details to supplement the pull-down menu columns, when appropriate. This is especially important in cases when “**action not yet taken**” or “**no action planned**” is indicated; the comments column should explain the reason(s) why.
- **Link to the AMRS:** https://www.ilo.org/dyn/evalmr/en/f?p=50765:LOGIN_DESKTOP:16119861129801:::

EXAMPLE OF A MANAGEMENT RESPONSE IN THE AMRS – TO BE COMPLETED BY THE LINE MANAGER

Actions

Go

Ask for assistance

Back

	Recommendations	Management Response	Action plan	Progress	Comments	Information source	Recommend date
	Strengthen the quality control in the project design phase.						
	High priority should be given to contributing to the development of a social dialogue.						
	Efforts should be made to find a mechanism to ensure that workers' rights issues remain an integrated part of the factories' introduction (soft skills) training.						
	A stronger ownership should be established at national level. The focus on regional and factory level might have been appropriate in the short-term, but without strong national social partners, it will be difficult to ensure sustainability and up scaling at the national level will be difficult to realise.						
	Strong efforts should be made to involve the Textile Working Group of the Ministry of Industry in all the relevant aspects of the interventions.						
	Secure free, democratic and transparent elections of committee members in the factories.						
	Attention should be paid to the occupational health aspects of OHS, not only accidents.						
	The direct capacity building of local trade union leaders does not build up capacity at the federation level; this should be considered in future interventions.						
	Priority should be given to the skills and knowledge development of female managers at different levels in the factories, female labour inspectors and leaders in trade union and employers' associations.						

Once the line manager completes the management response to the evaluation recommendations, he/she will have to confirm if the evaluation report was sent to the donor (by PARDEV as required). The management response exercise via the AMRS cannot be completed unless confirmation is provided. This way, EVAL is able to ensure that evaluation reports are submitted to donor.

► 6. PUBLIC ACCESS TO MANAGEMENT RESPONSES

As part of EVAL's efforts to be as transparent as possible, [i-eval Discovery](#) displays all management responses to independent evaluation recommendations that have been completed since 2018 in the [Automated Management Response System \(AMRS\)](#). The management responses are therefore available to the public. This effort allows all ILO colleagues, constituents and donors to have full access to relevant evaluation documentation.

Management responses function as an accountability tool for managers to report action on recommendations. It is therefore imperative that management responses are completed with accuracy and thoughtful attention. In addition, EVAL synthesizes the results of management responses in its Annual Evaluation Report on a yearly basis for discussion and review by the Governing Body (see section 7, below). Further reading: Guidance Note 5.3 Using i-eval Discovery

► 7. REPORTING TO THE GOVERNING BODY ON MANAGEMENT RESPONSE

The results from both completed and non-completed management responses will be reported in EVAL's [Annual Evaluation Report \(AER\)](#). As per practice, complying and non-complying responsible departments and regions are identified. The AER is also submitted to, and discussed by, the Governing Body during its last session in the calendar year.

Some statistics that can be included in the AER (related to management response) are as follows:

- Total No. of recommendations/yr
- No. of management Responses by Regional Office/ Country Office / department per year
- No. and % on the status of recommendation follow-up (completed, partially completed, no action planned, action not yet taken, not applicable)
- Recommendations by level of priority, timeframe and resource implication
- Recommendations by theme and yearly trends
- No. of recommendations targeted to Constituents

ANNEX 1. INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE ILO LINE MANAGER – AUTOMATED MANAGEMENT RESPONSE SYSTEM



International
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Office

Management response to evaluation recommendations application

Instructions for the ILO Line Manager

Background information

Why did I get a notification? An independent project evaluation was recently approved by EVAL. As the ILO line manager responsible for the administration of this project, you are required to complete the management response to its evaluation recommendations.

Why is there an automated application to complete the management response to evaluation recommendations? The previous input required by all staff involved in the management response to evaluation recommendations was a manual exercise. The new, automated application is designed to improve resource-related efficiencies, in addition to organizational learning and accountability through a wider and timelier use of evaluations.

Why should I complete a management response to an evaluation’s recommendations? The purpose of a management response to evaluation recommendations is to strengthen the use of evaluation findings and to promote organizational learning and accountability from evaluation results. More specifically, it contributes to improved programme and project design and delivery; increases stakeholder and management buy-in to evaluation findings; facilitates in-depth dialogue about evaluation results; and ensures follow-up of recommendations through formal processes. The Evaluation Office (EVAL) reports on management response data to the Governing Body on a yearly basis through the Annual Evaluation Report. As a line manager, you play a central role in supporting this work.

What is an evaluation? Evaluation is an evidence-based assessment of programme or project outcomes, by determining their relevance, effectiveness, efficiency impact and sustainability. ILO’s evaluation policy, endorsed by the GB, has ensured that the process is done in a coherent and efficient manner. Evaluation informs ILO decision-making in order to optimize the allocation of resources and overall results-based management. All independent evaluations require management response to their recommendations.

[INSTRUCTIONS on completing the management response to evaluation recommendations for ILO line managers](#)

The management response to evaluation recommendations are completed in 3 simple steps. Please follow the instructions, as described from pages 2-4.

ANNEX 2. INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE ILO REGIONAL EVALUATION OFFICER (REO) / DEPARTMENT EVALUATION FOCAL POINT (DEFP) - AUTOMATED MANAGEMENT RESPONSE SYSTEM



International
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Office

Management response to evaluation recommendations application

Instructions for the ILO Regional Evaluation Officer (REO) / Departmental Evaluation Focal Point (DEFP)

Background information

Why did I get a notification? An independent project evaluation was recently completed. The ILO line manager for this project completed the management response to its evaluation recommendations and it is now your responsibility as the Regional Evaluation Officer (decentralized projects) / Departmental Evaluation Focal Point (centralized projects) to review and provide comments if necessary. Upon your review, you are responsible for sending the management response to the pre-selected Senior Evaluation Officer (SEO) with any comments you may have. The SEO is responsible for approving the management response. Follow the instructions below for completing the process for endorsing the management response to evaluation recommendations.

Why is there now an automated application to complete the management response to evaluation recommendations? The previous input required by all staff involved in the management response to evaluation recommendations was a manual exercise. The new, automated application is designed to improve resource-related efficiencies, in addition to organizational learning and accountability through a wider and timelier use of evaluations.

Why is it important that a management response to an evaluation’s recommendations is completed? The purpose of a management response to evaluation recommendations is to strengthen the use of evaluation findings and to promote organizational learning and accountability from evaluation results. More specifically, it contributes to improved programme and project design and delivery; increases stakeholder and management buy-in to evaluation findings; facilitates in-depth dialogue about evaluation results; and ensures follow-up of recommendations through formal processes. The Evaluation Office (EVAL) reports on management response data to the Governing Body on a yearly basis through the Annual Evaluation Report. As a REO/DEFP, you play a central role in supporting this work.

[INSTRUCTIONS for endorsing the management response to evaluation recommendations for Regional Evaluation Officers \(REOs\) / Departmental Evaluation Focal Points \(DEFPs\)](#)

ANNEX 3. INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE SENIOR EVALUATION OFFICER (SEO) - AUTOMATED MANAGEMENT RESPONSE SYSTEM



International
Labour
Office

Management response to evaluation recommendations application

Instructions for the ILO Senior Evaluation Officer

Background information

Why is there an automated application to complete the management response to evaluation recommendations? The previous input required by all staff involved in the management response to evaluation recommendations was a manual exercise. The new, automated application is designed to improve resource-related efficiencies, in addition to organizational learning and accountability through a wider and timelier use of evaluations.

Why did I get a notification? An independent project evaluation was recently completed. The ILO line manager responsible for the administration of this project completed the management response to its evaluation recommendations. The responsible Regional Evaluation Officer (REO) / Departmental Evaluation Focal Point (DEFT) reviewed the management response (with or without comments) and sent it to you, the Senior Evaluation Officer (SEO), for review and approval or if warranted rejection. Follow the instructions outlined below for approving the management response to evaluation recommendations.

Why should I complete a management response to an evaluation’s recommendations? The purpose of a management response to evaluation recommendations is to strengthen the use of evaluation findings and to promote organizational learning and accountability from evaluation results. More specifically, it contributes to improved programme and project design and delivery; increases stakeholder and management buy-in to evaluation findings; facilitates in-depth dialogue about evaluation results; and ensures follow-up of recommendations through formal processes. The Evaluation Office (EVAL) reports on management response data to the Governing Body on a yearly basis through the Annual Evaluation Report. As a line manager, you play a central role in supporting this work.

INSTRUCTIONS for approving the management response to evaluation recommendations for Senior Evaluation Officer

Your role as the SEO is to review and approve/reject the management response exercise that was completed by the ILO line manager responsible for the administration of the project. The process is completed in 4 simple steps. Please follow the instructions, as described below.