

MIDTERM EVALUATIONS

THIS GUIDANCE COVERS INDEPENDENT MIDTERMS, INCLUDING A SHORT BRIEF ON THE ROLE OF INTERNAL, SELF-EVALUATIONS AND ANNUAL REVIEWS

Midterm evaluations (MTEs) aim to assess the continued relevance of an intervention and the progress made towards achieving its planned objectives. They provide an opportunity to make modifications to ensure the achievement of these objectives within the lifetime of the project. In addition MTEs provide an opportunity to ascertain the intervention is still coherent with the ILO's strategic objectives; is relevant and useful to the key stakeholders and is being conducted in an efficient manner according to ILO standards and the agreed project document.

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MIDTERM EVALUATIONS – TIMING

It is recommended that midterm evaluations should be completed for all projects, even if on a relatively small and internal basis. Interim evaluations can be independent or take the form of internal evaluations or annual reviews. This depends on the project budget and duration as detailed in the Box 1. The respective roles and responsibilities depend on the type of evaluation that is conducted.

Independent evaluations are *managed* by independent ILO officials and overseen by evaluation officers. They are *carried out* by external evaluators who have no previous links to the project. Other independent ILO officials may participate as team members in the evaluation. The Evaluation Unit has oversight responsibility for all **independent midterm evaluations**. Regional and sector-level evaluation officers have responsibility for hands-on supervision.

Internal evaluations are managed by ILO staff members, including project management, technical specialists and backstoppers, and usually conducted either by independent consultants or by independent ILO officials who have not been involved in the design, management or

backstopping of the project. These also include **self-evaluations**, which are managed and conducted solely by ILO staff members who are entrusted with the design and delivery of an intervention, including project management, technical specialists and backstoppers. When ILO policy guidelines require two evaluations, one internal and one independent, many projects opt for the midterm as the internal evaluation.

Annual Reviews are the responsibility of ILO managers and CTAs, while PROGRAM and PARDEV oversee the processes at an organizational level and report performance to the Governing Body. These yearly assessments of the performance of an intervention focus on outputs and outcomes of projects, programmes, strategies or policies. They are a form of internal evaluation during which the stakeholders reflect upon how well the intervention is progressing towards achieving its objectives, taking into account available monitoring and evaluation data. Reviews with this type of focus may also be organized to look at specific issues. Annual reviews are often based on a compilation of quarterly or semi-annual progress reports, which contain a summary of specified indicators to provide stakeholders with indications of progress towards objectives and use of funds.

DEFINING THE BUDGET

Allocating resources at this stage can facilitate the production of evaluation information **while there is still time to make changes** in the project design and implementation processes. Thus, in some cases, it may be sensible to put aside a large allocation for the midterm evaluation, and a smaller allocation for the final evaluation: an investment in MTE can give better value for money.

ILO policy is that funds should be reserved for setting up a monitoring and evaluation system including self-evaluations and internal evaluations. A minimum of **5 per cent** of the **total project budget** should be assigned to ILO budget line 16 for the purpose of monitoring and evaluation, part of which needs to be used for the MTE.

SCHEDULES SHOULD BE FLEXIBLE

Mid-term evaluations should take place approximately halfway through the implementation of projects, programmes, strategies or policies. They are most useful when a number of planned activities have been delivered, and a considerable percentage of funds have been spent. Depending on funding agreements, midterm evaluations may be required before the half-way point of a project to get a second installment of funds.

Box 1. ILO policy for project evaluation requirements***ILO policy for project evaluation requirements******Budget-based requirements for project evaluations:***

- All projects over US\$1 million must undergo at least one independent evaluation.
- Multi-phase projects with combined budgets over US\$1 million must undergo at least one independent evaluation.
- Projects with budgets below US\$1 million do not require independent evaluations.
- Projects with budgets between US\$500,000 and US\$1 million must undergo an internal evaluation, and a self-evaluation should be completed for projects with budgets below US\$500,000.
- Projects with budgets over US\$5 million must undergo an initial monitoring and evaluation appraisal*, an evaluability review within one year of start-up is recommended; and both the midterm and final evaluations must be independent.

Schedule for project-level evaluation based on project duration:

- For projects with duration of less than 18 months a final evaluation (internal or independent depending on budget size) is required.
- Projects with duration of more than 18 months but below 30 months require an annual review and a final evaluation.
- For projects over 30 months, annual reviews, a midterm evaluation and a final evaluation, are required.

A single evaluation may be conducted to cover several projects, which are clustered by theme or geographic focus, provided that the evaluation: 1) applies a scope, purpose, and methodologies comparable to what would be used for an individual evaluation; 2) has donor consent; and 3) is approved by EVAL or regional evaluation officers for projects with a budget over US\$1 million.

*see Guidance Note: Monitoring and evaluation plan appraisal tool:

http://www.ilo.org/eval/Evaluationguidance/WCMS_166578/lang--en/index.htm

MONITORING AND EVALUATION (M&E) SYSTEM

The M&E system that an organization puts in place largely determines the processes that it can carry out. The M&E system has two principal components: the organizational design and the organizational culture. When conducting training on evaluation capacity development, ILO Evaluation Officers often use computers as a metaphor. The organizational design of an evaluation system is like the computer hardware and the organizational culture is like the operating system. Unless these two elements are in place and functioning well, no evaluation work can be accomplished.

When setting up an M&E system, project management must address questions including:

- Where in the project organizational chart will M&E be located?
- Who will be responsible for M&E?
- Will the responsible staff actually carry out M&E activities, or will they provide oversight, and if the latter, to how many subordinates?
- What will be monitored and evaluated?
- What indicators and methods will be used?
- How will project stakeholders be involved?
- Have adequate resources been set aside to cover the costs of carrying out M&E activities?
- What is the schedule of M&E activities?
- How will the project encourage a culture of evaluation?

It is important to think of these elements at the start of project or programme design.

IDENTIFYING PROGRESS

Identifying progress towards a project's long-term goals is part of the objective of a midterm evaluation. ILO project evaluations focus on the criteria of relevance, validity, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability. However, the focus of evaluations can evolve over time, depending on the timing in the project cycle and the timing of the evaluation.

During the design stage, prospective stakeholders are identified to determine which of their needs the project should address. Mid-term evaluations are conducted to determine if the project design addresses the needs that were identified and to assess how well the project is being implemented to meet these needs. During this stage, the criteria of validity and efficiency take precedence. Final evaluations are conducted after completion of the project to determine the results and the prospects of sustaining them over time.

It is good practice to develop two or three specific evaluation questions for each of these criteria. The questions can be formulated based on 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, and should address validity of project design as well progress towards project objectives/goals. Below are some examples of questions adapted from the ILO's Technical Cooperation Manual.

LINKING WITH THE DWCP AND UNDAF FRAMEWORKS

There is a hierarchy among international development interventions that requires lower-level interventions to contribute to higher-level interventions. It would be important contextual information for the midterm evaluation to explain how the project contributes to the DWCP, and how the DWCP contributes to the UNDAF. The UNDAF should contribute to other international and national development frameworks. If these elements are not aligned, there may be a problem in the design of the intervention.

FOLLOW-UP ON RECOMMENDATIONS

For independent midterm evaluations it is occasionally timely and appropriate to initiate a management response exercise for the recommendations. This is particularly the case for large projects of longer duration. For internal evaluations, annual reviews and self-evaluation, project management is directly involved in the drafting of the recommendations and therefore will not require a formal exercise. For more information about the management follow-up of evaluation recommendations for independent evaluations, please refer to [Guidance Note 15. Management Follow-up for Independent Project Evaluations](#).

CRITERIA AND QUESTIONS

Criteria and Questions for Independent Mid-Term Evaluations

Validity of design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the project design (i.e. priorities, outcomes, outputs and activities) address the stakeholder needs that were identified? • Does the design need to be modified in the second half of the project? • How appropriate and useful are the indicators described in the project document in assessing the project's progress? Are the targeted indicator values realistic and can they be tracked? If necessary, how should they be modified to be more useful? Are indicators gender-sensitive? Are the means of verification for the indicators appropriate? • What, if any, alternative strategies would have been more effective in achieving its objectives?
Efficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the project making sufficient progress towards its planned objectives? Will the project be likely to achieve its planned objectives upon completion? What are the main constraints, problems and areas in need of further attention? • How have stakeholders been involved in project implementation? How effective has the project been in establishing national ownership? Is the project management and implementation participatory and is this participation contributing towards achievement of the project objectives? Has the project been appropriately responsive to the needs of the

	<p>national constituents and changing partner priorities?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has the project been appropriately responsive to political, legal, economic, institutional etc. changes in the project environment?
Efficiency of resource use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have resources (funds, human resources, time, expertise etc.) been allocated strategically to achieve outcomes? • Have resources been used efficiently? Have activities supporting the strategy been cost-effective? In general, do the results achieved justify the costs? Could the same results be attained with fewer resources? • Have project funds and activities been delivered in a timely manner?
Effectiveness of management arrangements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are management capacities adequate? • Does project management facilitate good results and efficient delivery? Is there a clear understanding of roles and responsibilities by all parties involved? • Does the project receive adequate political, technical and administrative support from the ILO and its national implementing partners? • How effective is communication between the project team, the ILO and the national implementing partners? • How effectively does the project management monitor project performance and results?