MANAGEMENT FOLLOW-UP TO RECOMMENDATIONS

This guidance note presents the procedures for management response to recommendations of independent project evaluations. Criteria for quality of recommendations and management response are set forth with relevant workflows.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of recommendation follow-up is to strengthen the use of evaluation findings, promote organizational learning and accountability, thus contributing to improved programme and project design and delivery. Active and routine follow-up of recommendations from independent evaluations is initiated by EVAL and carried out by management. EVAL collects management response data and reports to the Governing Body each November on project recommendation follow-up in its Annual Evaluation Report. Workflow charts are provided depicting the process and responsibilities of concerned officials.

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 evaluation norms and standards for all United Nations agencies. An excerpt from the UNEG guidance on recommendation response is shown below.

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

> "… 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. "**

In summary, response to evaluation recommendations is crucial to utilization of findings and management buy-in to the evlauation 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 beginning 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 contract (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:

Recommendations Criteria - All recommendations should:

- Follow logically from conclusions, lessons learned and any emerging good practices.
- Be numbered and concisely written as stand-alone concepts that can be responded to by line management individually. There should be no unexplained acronyms or jargon.
- Specify who is called upon to act:

ILO Country Office	ILO HQ Technical Unit
Project Management	Tripartite Constituents
ILO HQ Administration	ILO Regional Office

- Briefly specify action needed to remedy the situation.
- Distinguish priority or importance (high, medium or low priority).
- Specify the timeframe for follow-up, if relevant.
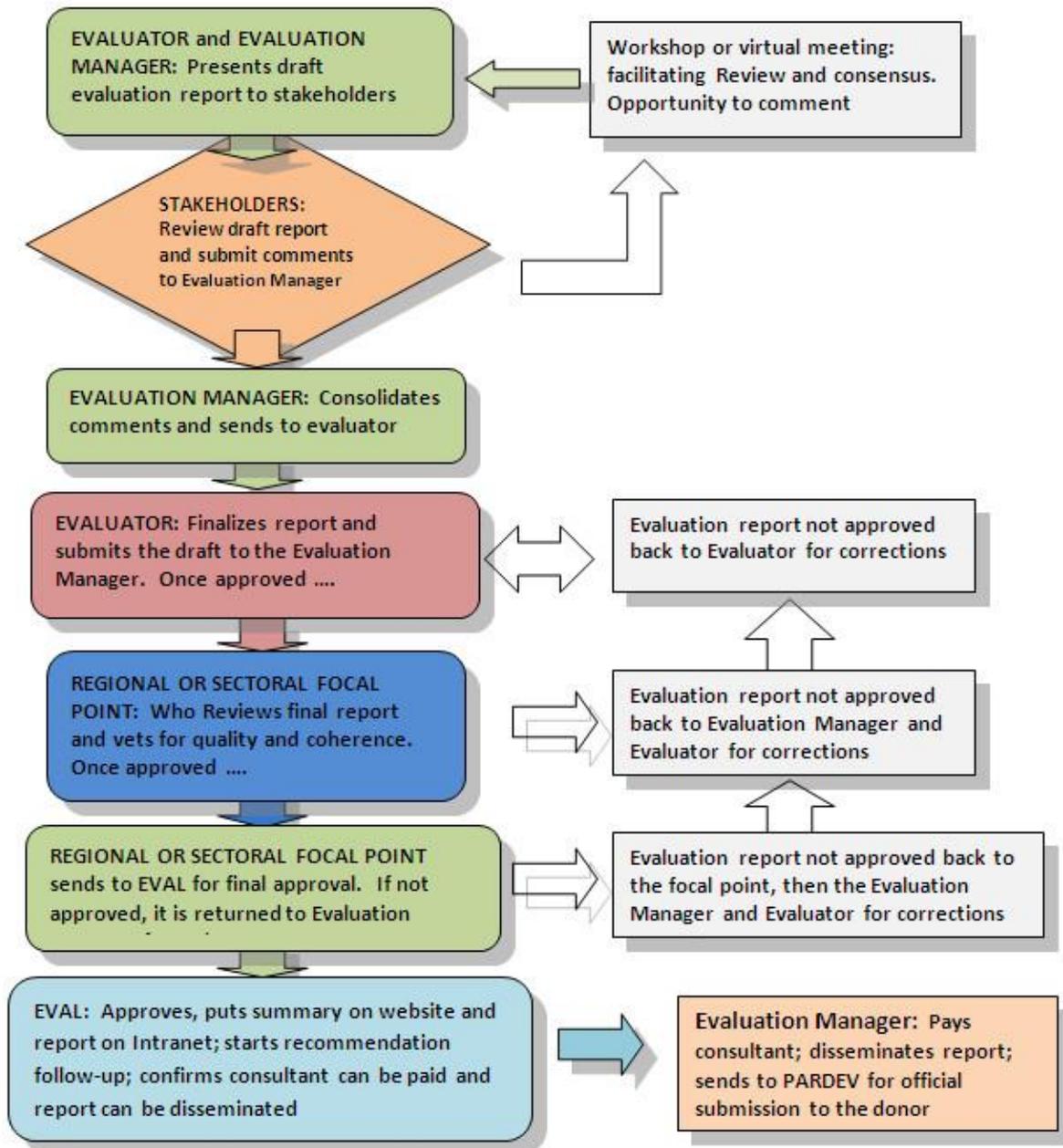- Acknowledge whether the proposed recommendation represents resource implications.

4. WORKFLOW FOR QUALITY OF RECOMMENDATIONS AND RESPONSE

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 received and recommendations considered for quality.

> *STEP TWO:* Management response exercise initiated by EVAL with Minute and Excel file within two weeks of receipt. *[Reminders sent out every 3 months – copying regional or departmental directors]*

> *STEP THREE:* Line Management works with relevant staff to fill in the Excel template.

> *STEP FOUR:* Response received by EVAL and quality controlled. *[Occasionally a second round may be required for partially completed action]*

> *STEP FIVE:* Annual Evaluation Report presents compilation data on response.

Work by line management on addressing recommendations should actually start when the draft report is circulated and comments are provided to the 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 inevitably have a more effective contribution to organizational learning and improvement.

Figure 1. Workflow for quality recommendations in evaluations

EVALUATOR and EVALUATION MANAGER: Presents draft evaluation report to stakeholders

Workshop or virtual meeting: facilitating Review and consensus. Opportunity to comment

STAKEHOLDERS: Review draft report and submit comments to Evaluation Manager

EVALUATION MANAGER: Consolidates comments and sends to evaluator

EVALUATOR: Finalizes report and submits the draft to the Evaluation Manager. Once approved ….

Evaluation report not approved back to Evaluator for corrections

REGIONAL OR SECTORAL FOCAL POINT: Who Reviews final report and vets for quality and coherence. Once approved ….

Evaluation report not approved back to Evaluation Manager and Evaluator for corrections

REGIONAL OR SECTORAL FOCAL POINT sends to EVAL for final approval. If not approved, it is returned to Evaluation

Evaluation report not approved back to the focal point, then the Evaluation Manager and Evaluator for corrections

EVAL: Approves, puts summary on website and report on Intranet; starts recommendation follow-up; confirms consultant can be paid and report can be disseminated

Evaluation Manager: Pays consultant; disseminates report; sends to PARDEV for official submission to the donor

5. LINE MANAGEMENT INPUT TO THE EXCEL TEMPLATE

Only the line manager responsible for the project, or staff appointed by the line manager, is responsible for filling in the template columns, which describes an action plan (management response) for responding to the recommendations. The Excel template should be sent back to EVAL within two months, and must be updated as required, e.g. when most of the initial response contains partially completed action.

Line management should respond to each recommendation individually, acknowledging if it is accepted or rejected. If rejected, management must explain why in the COMMENTS column of the template. If accepted, management must provide an action plan with a specific timeframe, and any possible resource implications.

Line management are responsible for the following columns in the Excel sheet:

Management Response	Action Taken	Addressed to	Progress Made	Comments	Resource Implications	Date of Line Mgt Response
(Completed, partially completed, outstanding, or no action planned)	(free text)	(pull down list)	(free text)	(free text)	(yes or no)	

- *Management Response* (a pull-down menu) indicates whether action taken on the recommendation is *completed, partially completed, outstanding,* 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 to be Taken* is a free text column briefly summarizing "action/action to be taken" with clear responsibilities, as well references to a timeframe. When action taken involves an ILO constituent (government, workers' organization or employers' organization) it is important to note this clearly in the *"action to be taken"* column.

- *Addressed To* column (a pull-down menu) indicates the primary entity responsible for implementing the recommendation. Any additional details on targeted entities or beneficiaries can be placed in the **Comments** column.

- *Comments* column should contain any pertinent details supplementing pull-down menu columns when appropriate. Especially in the case where "**no action is taken"** the comments column should explain the reason why.

- *Resource Implications Should simply indicate whether or not the recommendation requires resources (yes or no and any brief details why)*

6. REPORTING TO THE GOVERNING BODY ON MANAGEMENT RESPONSE

As part of the Annual Evaluation Report, EVAL must analyse a compilation of responses received during the reporting period and report on this to the Governing Body. Those projects that do not receive appropriate management response are indicated in this annual report.

Tracking recommendations targeted at constituents

Additionally, EVAL reports on how ILO constituents are targeted by and benefit from recommendations and management response. In responding to the recommendations, line management is requested to clearly indicate when a government, workers' or employers' organization is involved and to what extent action was taken on their behalf.