

System Council Advisory Bodies' Consolidated 2026 Workplan and 2026-2027 Budget Summary

Purpose

This document sets out the consolidated 2026 workplan and 2026-2027 budget summary for the Independent Science for Development Council (ISDC), Standing Panel on Impact Assessment (SPIA), Independent Advisory and Evaluation Service (IAES), including its Evaluation Function, referred to collectively in System Framework as “advisory bodies.”

- CGIAR’s System Framework sets out among System Council functions to “establish System Council advisory bodies (including the ISDC, SPIA and the IAES) to deliver on its oversight and assurance mandate and approve their budgets and workplans which will be part of the overall workplan and budgeting process,” (6.2.g)
- The advisory bodies are operating under the consolidated 2025-2027 plan System Council approved in December 2024 (Decision Reference SC/M21/DP5). The consolidated 2026 workplan document elaborates plans for 2026 – and adjusts to current context.
- The plan for 2026 and 2027 has been updated to reflect adaptive management, respond to funding constraints, consider emergent findings of the SIMEC review of advisory bodies, and the SIMEC and AOC review of the draft plan and budget (July-September 2025). As a result, the advisory bodies present an adjusted workplan and a budget that reflects savings in the remainder of the three-year workplan of 28% compared to the original plan per SC/M21/DP5

Action Requested

The System Council is requested to approve the consolidated 2025-2027 workplan and budget of ISDC, SPIA and IAES pursuant to Article 6.2 g of the CGIAR System Framework.

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Independent
Advisory and
Evaluation
Service

CGIAR's Independent Advisory and Evaluation Service (IAES) provides operational support to the Independent Science for Development Council (ISDC) and the Standing Panel on Impact Assessment (SPIA), and implements CGIAR's multi-year, independent evaluation plan as approved by the System Council (SC). This document consolidates the planning for three streams of work, ISDC, SPIA and IAES-Evaluation Function (EF), and describes the underpinning IAES operational support provided across the three workstreams.

IAES and the external bodies it supports, ISDC and SPIA (referred to collectively in the System Framework as “advisory bodies”), are currently operating under the consolidated 2025–2027 workplan and budget (WPB), approved in December 2024 (Decision Reference SC/M21/DP5). The consolidated 2026 workplan document further elaborates plans for 2026, the second year of the prevailing multiyear workplan, providing updated details on advisory bodies' activities.

The budget for 2026 and 2027 has been updated to reflect adaptive management, respond to the ongoing funding constraints, consider emergent findings of the Strategic Impact, Monitoring and Evaluation Committee (SIMEC) review of advisory bodies (per draft November 2025), and the SIMEC and Assurance Oversight Committee (AOC) review of the draft plan and budget (July–September 2025). As a result, the advisory bodies present an adjusted workplan and a budget that reflects savings in the remainder of the three-year workplan of 28% compared to the original plan per SC/M21/DP5.¹

This narrative is organized by the three workstreams that relate to the three distinct mandates (ISDC, SPIA, IAES-EF), with all three underpinned by the IAES operational support.

¹ Twenty-three percent in 2026 rising to 32 percent in 2027 –compared to the base budget plan per SC/M21/DP5.

Independent Science for Development Council (ISDC)

In response to fast, ongoing, and dynamic geopolitical shifts, increasing funding volatility, technological changes, and rapidly evolving societal demands, ISDC will implement a phased approach to deliver key activities during the rest of the business cycle.² ISDC maintains a placeholder in 2026 for **Objective 1: Conducting independent reviews of the CGIAR Portfolio**, with activities increasing in 2027. Given the importance of relevant and timely advice, ISDC works towards **Objective 2: Enabling independent and accessible scientific advice** and **Objective 3: Science engagement and advisory projects**. Activities to generate and deliver such advice are bolstered by **Objective 4: Building consensus and advising System Council**. To make advice more accessible and increase uptake, all ISDC outputs will include translational materials (e.g., video/audio content, briefs, and infographics).

The 2026 workplan foresees limited independent review activities (**Objective 1**). However, noting that the original plan for ISDC reviews during the current CGIAR Strategy did not align with the eventual requested and implemented reviews (in 2024–25), ISDC stands prepared to adaptively manage any emerging System Council review requests in 2026. ISDC will consider resource implications in partnership with SIMEC and, in 2026, the budget allows for a light review of Portfolio documents. With the assumption that the midline review of the 2025–2030 Portfolio will entail ISDC review, additional resources are allotted in the 2027 plan.

Activities leading to key 2026 outputs (see Figure 1), will be developed as part of objectives towards enabling and project delivery (**Objectives 2 and 3**). Activities are elaborated overleaf.

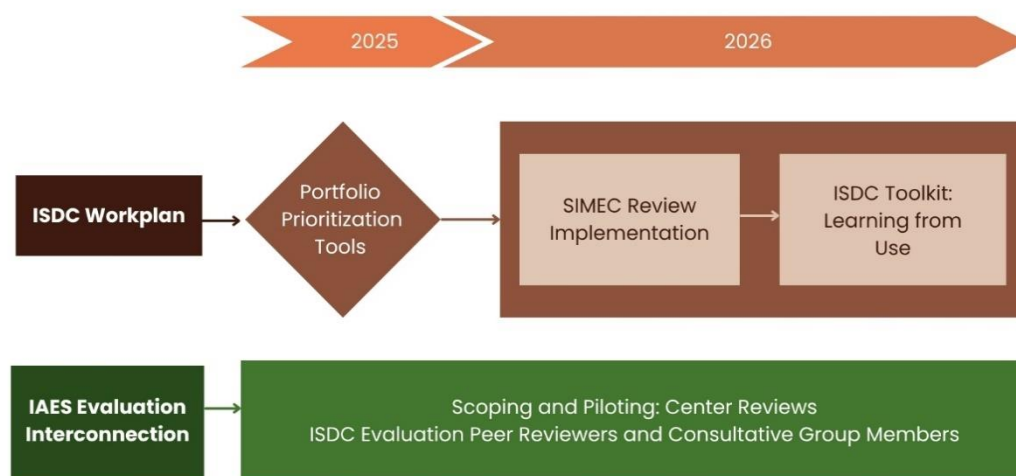


Figure 1 ISDC key outputs starting in 2026

SIMEC Review Implementation (Objective 2): Based on ongoing discussions in the context of SIMEC advisory body review and exploratory conversations about how to better track uptake, ISDC will expand formal feedback mechanisms with System Council, Integrated Partnership Board (IPB), and CGIAR Management (via the Chief Scientist's Office). As elaborated in the next paragraph, this includes exploring and piloting new mechanisms for tracking use of ISDC advice and deepened learning about the past application across CGIAR of ISDC tools and resources (e.g., Quality of Research for Development framework [QoR4D] and Comparative

² For 2026 and 2027, ISDC achieved savings in costs of travel and meeting space, decrease in external subject matter expert consultancies, and no allocated days for the Vice Chair. ISDC will engage more with Center external reviews and virtual activities.

Advantage Analysis Technical Note). Communication and interaction with IPB (and its relevant committees), CGIAR management, and centers will broaden. By expanding such interaction, shared understanding of respective roles will increase, supporting coordinated processes. ISDC will assess the effectiveness of these approaches and make necessary modifications. Within IAES, the ISDC secretariat will sharpen the interconnectivity of ISDC's outputs into broader advisory bodies' advice and evidence.

ISDC Toolkit: Learning from Use (Objective 3): Across CGIAR stakeholders, ISDC will conduct an assessment to identify evolving scientific advisory and capacity needs (in line with ISDC's Terms of Reference). These stakeholders include, but are not limited to, governance bodies, Global Science and Leadership Teams, and researchers. This assessment is envisaged to repeat every three to five years to monitor shifts in priorities and ensure ISDC's work remains relevant and cost-effective. Using both qualitative and quantitative methods (interviews, focus groups, survey, etc.), ISDC members and secretariat will carry out the assessment. The findings will inform adjustments to ISDC's advisory focus, including: (i) assessing how the QoR4D framework is being applied and where refinements or additional guidance are needed; (ii) identifying barriers to the practical use of comparative advantage analyses; and (iii) exploring futures-oriented activity gaps that could complement the Foresight Community of Practice and add value to System Council decisions on CGIAR's Research and Innovation Portfolio. These insights will guide ISDC's 2027 and beyond planning and strengthen its role in aligning independent advice with the evolving needs of CGIAR.

Center External Reviews (Objective 3): ISDC will play a pivotal role in the proposed resumption of external reviews of CGIAR centers. The ISDC Chair, one additional member, and secretariat staff will be involved in each review, working closely with other professional staff within IAES. ISDC members will otherwise support external evaluation activities by serving as peer reviewers and will also contribute to evaluation engagement *ad hoc* consultative groups, entrenching coherence and connectivity across IAES/Evaluation function and ISDC.³

At a time when ISDC will have four new members and a new Chair, two face-to-face meetings are deemed essential in 2026 (**Objective 4**). These will be at CGIAR centers, focused on the *SIMEC Review Implementation* (semester 1) and provide an opportunity for *ISDC Toolkit: Learning from Use* data collection (semester 2). The timing will be engineered to align with center activities (e.g., Center Science Weeks) for ISDC learning and engagement. As part of **Objective 4**, ISDC will continue to be represented at key CGIAR governance meetings; to reduce travel costs, the ISDC chair alone will travel to meetings, with others participating virtually where warranted. In both 2026 and 2027, Council members will absorb relevant duties of ISDC Vice Chair position, so there will be no specific Vice Chair role.

³ ISDC participation is reflected in the budget through member honorarium estimated days.

Standing Panel on Impact Assessment (SPIA)

*To assess the benefits accrued to investments made by CGIAR, reliable estimates of its reach and impact are essential. This rationale underpins SPIA's portfolio of country studies which record ex-post evidence of reach of CGIAR innovations (**Objective 1: Institutionalizing and scaling country-level data on CGIAR reach**). To estimate the individual and community level impacts of CGIAR's innovations and understand the scaling pathways, SPIA leads independent and rigorous causal impact assessments (**Objective 2: Expanding and deepening evidence of causal impacts of CGIAR research**). Drawing on insights from the country studies and causal impact studies, SPIA aims to ensure that the evidence generated continuously informs decision-making and learning within the CGIAR (**Objective 3: Strengthening the use of rigorous impact evidence**).*

Going into 2026, the country studies (under **Objective 1**) will be implemented as follows: nationally representative panel surveys will continue in the four high-priority CGIAR countries where SPIA's country studies have been ongoing: Ethiopia, Uganda, Vietnam, and Bangladesh (**Phase 1 countries**), as well as in the three new high-priority countries: Nigeria, India (a cluster of states), and Colombia (**Phase 2 countries**). Outputs from phase 1 and phase 2 countries will start becoming available by the end of 2027. Furthermore, preliminary stocktaking of CGIAR's reach will continue in 12 countries (Egypt, Ghana, Mali, Senegal, Cote d'Ivoire, Kenya, Malawi, Philippines, South India, Nepal, Morocco, Peru), with the potential for some of these to scale up to full data collection, contingent on sufficient demand and support from funders (**Phase 3 countries**). Deliverables from Phase 3 stocktake countries will be made available in 2027.

Based on the insights emerging from the country studies portfolio, five causal impact studies have been commissioned under **Objective 2**. Of these, three are pilot studies. The selected themes for these causal impact studies include seed systems (in India and Vietnam), climate change adaptation (in Colombia), biofortification (in Uganda) and pest and disease management (in Vietnam).⁴ To maintain continuity in the causal impact studies portfolio, new high-impact studies directly arising from the country-level work could be considered for future funding, but subject to reallocations within the existing budget.

Finally, under **Objective 3**, SPIA will work with CGIAR stakeholders to ensure that rigorous evidence from the country studies and causal impact studies informs decision-making and learning at the CGIAR system level. The goal is to move from showcasing only success stories to advancing learning from all rigorous outcomes, including when studies reveal that positive impacts were not observed. This will be achieved through strategic 'translation' and dissemination of evidence products in novel, engaging formats for internal and external stakeholders, launching the SPIA 'evidence-finder' tool to make SPIA evidence more accessible, tracking how SPIA's evidence is used by stakeholders through relevant metrics, and contributing to CG-wide processes including the MELIAF. Additionally, emerging from the country studies portfolio, research on the 'policy influence' of the CGIAR will be undertaken as a part of Objective 3 to demonstrate CGIAR's impacts beyond reach and causal estimates.

⁴ To further strengthen causal evidence on other priority themes, SPIA had originally intended to support up to six additional causal impact studies. However, funding for these 6 studies has been called off due to budgetary constraints

IAES Evaluation Function (EF)

*Credible independent process and performance evaluations of CGIAR's portfolio implementation, and external reviews of CGIAR centers, are essential to support CGIAR governance bodies and leadership at all levels of the integrated partnership in their tasks of steering, learning and accountability. In 2026, EF will proceed with the implementation of **Objective 1: Implementing external evaluative activities (process and performance evaluations)** to meet system needs. Considering changes to governance, accountability lines and certain processes, **Objective 2: Operationalizing the CGIAR-wide Evaluation Framework and Policy and issuing evaluation guidance** will focus on a round of essential updates to be assessed and proposed to System Council and IPB. **Objective 3: Engaging with CGIAR system stakeholders about process and performance evaluation** will feature interactions with the Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) Community of Practice, and the cross-CGIAR actions on MELIAF (MEL, Impact Assessment, Foresight). **Objective 4: Knowledge management (KM) and translation of evaluative knowledge** will continue to place robust attention to use of evaluative evidence among CGIAR stakeholders.*

Evaluative engagements (**Objective 1**) will build on 2025 scoping, and focus on conduct of Center External Reviews (CERs) and a country evaluation that pairs with country outcomes studies.⁵ The 2026 plan will also proceed with closure of evaluative activities, namely, Gender, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan/Culture & Engagement review and Portfolio Evaluability Assessments (EA), with closure actions aligned to the Management Engagement and Response guidance and CGIAR management response (MR) process.

Following the 2025 scoping, pilot center identification, and tools development, IAES will pilot the CER in 2026. The CER proposes to revive the historical external program and management review approach, in service to center boards, IPB, and to meet System Council assurance needs. Following the pilot and incorporation of learning, in the second semester of 2026, one additional CER will be implemented.⁶ The CER is a joint activity with ISDC that is managed at the scoping and pilot stage across the two workstreams by the IAES director. Furthermore, under **Objective 1**, EF will complete one country evaluation, aligned with the MELIA-F grant country accelerator and the pilot approach devised during country evaluation scoping in 2025. The rigor and technical soundness of evaluative activities will continue being supported through the evaluation reference group (TORs), peer reviews by subject matter experts (SMEs) from the IAES roster and ISDC, and engagement with *ad hoc*, multistakeholder consultative groups.

For **Objective 2**, recommendations will be vetted with SIMEC and IPB and issued to System Council to revise the 2022 Framework and Policy, to contextualize these documents to the integrated partnership and confederated structure of CGIAR and thereby reflect the up-to-date (2026) governance and accountability lines and align to the ambition of the MELIA-F grant. The revised Framework and Policy will align with the structure that underpins the 2025–2030 Research Portfolio, reflect lessons from the 2025 EAs (TORs), expand upon the linkages to CGIAR's emergent system-wide and multi-faceted construct for MELIA-F framework, hub, communities, and taxonomy, as well as reference the current technical reporting arrangements.

⁵ Country outcome study is implemented by Center MELIA-F staff under the auspices of a CGIAR MELIA-F project funded by Gates Foundation; Kenya is the target per the grant.

⁶ Center reviews were not included in the EF multiyear "base" budget in outyears. However, continuation of one to two Center Reviews in 2026 (per SIMEC demand) would be facilitated by use of funds originally budgeted for Accelerator EAs, already conducted in 2025, plus carry forward of unused funds earmarked for Center Review scoping and pilot. Outyear implementation assumes accelerator EAs were completed in 2025, Center review carry forward is anticipated, SIMEC and SC continues to voice demand for Center reviews, and Center boards, as commissioners, voice a demand to reinstate the practice of regular external reviews.

Efforts and actions supporting **Objective 3** will channel attention to MELIA-F framework (particularly the independent evaluation part of that framework), namely, collaborating with Portfolio Performance Unit (PPU), Project Coordination Unit (PCU), program/accelerator and center MELIA focal points and other colleagues, and strategic engagements with the Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Community of Practice (MEL COP). IAES-EF will continue identifying and executing joint assurance engagement opportunities with the System Organization Internal Audit function based on EA and learning from studies in ways of working. IAES director and EF lead will participate in the MELIA-F alignment activities supported through a grant to the System Organization from the Gates Foundation. Implementation of MR System review recommendations will frame engagements with the CGIAR stakeholders. Operationalizing core EF pillars will continue through raising awareness and enhancing capacity with the existing and forthcoming⁷ guidelines ([here](#)) and methods notes ([here](#)), both in CGIAR MEL COP and IAES-contracted evaluation teams.

Finally, under **Objective 4**, KM and communication products to increase accessibility and uptake of evaluative evidence will include graphics and videos, visualizations, facilitation, translation, and copy editing of evaluation and review reports, strategic knowledge management products, and Evaluation Policy-related documents. Strategic engagements with CGIAR partners and the evaluation industry will include virtual and in-person conferences, participation in the steering of the EvalForEarth COP, and the Global Evaluation Initiative, and support for the annual CGIAR MEL COP event (due to KM intent, the activity placed under **Objective 4**).

IAES Operations Workplan

In 2026, IAES will continue to provide **operational support for System Council advisory bodies'** three core workstreams: namely, through the efforts of the staff of ISDC Secretariat, the SPIA Use of Evidence and Program Management Unit, and the Evaluation Function. In addition to directly allocated staff effort, approximately a third of IAES staff effort (in FTEs)—including the director—serve in cross-functional roles, enabling integrated delivery and efficient resource use supporting the three distinct mandate areas.

As a group, IAES's focus will continue to ensure that advice and evaluative evidence are accessible, relevant, and timely for System Council, IPB, centers and integrated management offices, and other CGIAR stakeholders. IAES standard operating procedures, rosters and business tools guide its operations. These materials are continuously maintained and improved to align with business needs and operating context, as well as the broader policies and procedures of the IAES hosts, namely System Organization and the Alliance of Bioversity International and CIAT. IAES efforts align around Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), inter alia, Use of evidence and advice, Communication and engagement metrics, Stewardship (90% execution of the agreed budgets), Satisfaction level from main user groups, as well as internal learning, development, and staff management KPIs. IAES actively uses and updates a risk register pertinent to the advisory bodies.

The 2026 operational support priorities include:

- Following completion of SIMEC's 2025 review of System Council advisory bodies and SIMEC's agreement with System Council on recommendations (SC23, 10-11 December 2025), in early 2026 IAES will **develop an action plan to respond to, and address, review recommendations** agreed with System Council.

⁷ To be revised/completed in 2025: Management Engagement and Response: Process & Performance Evaluations in CGIAR, Integrating Gender Equality Youth and Social Inclusion (GEYSI) & Gender Diversity and Inclusion (GDI) into CGIAR Evaluations; Methods notes on evaluating Scaling and Comparative Advantage.

- Consultation and coordination with the management and governance structures put in place in 2024 and 2025, namely, the Executive Managing Director (EMD), the Chief Scientist, and their teams, and the Integrated Partnership Board (and its four committees) will continue to mature. The IAES director, frequently alongside independent body chairs, will ensure at least quarterly interactions at IPB's meetings and with EMD. Furthermore, IAES will increase **direct engagement with center leadership—not only through the Global and Scientific Leadership Teams, but also via CERs.**
- Director-level participation and **representation in both the CGIAR MELIA-F and Combined Assurance efforts** with incoming or ad interim Assurance executives assists alignment with these relevant, cross-CG assurance, accountability, and learning efforts.
- Special attention will be given to **deepening the use of IAES's strengthened financial analytical and monitoring systems capabilities**, to support dynamic financial management in a rapidly changing context.
- Following a global CGIAR rebranding effort in 2025, and in compliance with the System Organization host, in 2026 IAES will **implement changes to all its communication templates, channels, and core materials aligned to CGIAR rebranding.**
- In close coordination with workstream-dedicated staff, IAES will deploy more targeted communications, making **use of IAES audience segmentation** completed in 2025 **while leveraging its common communication platforms**, to increase accessibility, relevance and timeliness for specific user groups.⁸
- The Subject Matter and Evaluation Expert Roster will be regularly used by ISDC and IAES-EF, and a new **open call for experts may be announced to refresh the roster in late 2026**, following needs assessment.

A consultative approach in planning and implementation, and strategic engagement across a swathe of CGIAR stakeholders, will continue to be a cornerstone of IAES's work. Further to its TORs, **SIMEC will continue to serve as a core channel for vetting advisory body consolidated plans, outputs, and strategic directions**, bolstered by the regular participation of the IAES director at System Council meetings.

⁸ Both communication priorities will benefit from the 2025 insourcing of cross-cutting, professional communications support at a 50% level of effort.

CGIAR Advisory Bodies' Consolidated Budget for 2026–2027 (in USD 000)

Workstream	2026	2027	Total 2026–2027	% savings compared to base budget
ISDC	543	600	1,144	25%
SPIA *	6,402	5,919	12,321	27%
Evaluation	665	848	1,513	37%
IAES Operations	1,681	1,728	3,408	25%
Total	9,291	9,095	18,386	28%
Base budget (adjusted SC/M21/DP5) **	12,065	13,298	25,362	
% savings compared to base budget	23%	32%	28%	

* SPIA 2026 figures reflect a carryover from 2025 of \$1.75m for country study subcontracts.

** 2026–2027 planning figures were adjusted in the course of 2025 to reflect operational needs more accurately; the overall budget for the two years is aligned with the approved SC/M21/DP5 (25.4 million).



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