



Independent
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Evaluation
Service

Management Engagement and Response: Process & Performance Evaluations in CGIAR

Guidelines

November 2025



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Response: Process &
Performance Evaluations in
CGIAR**
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Title	Management Engagement and Response: Process and Performance Evaluations in CGIAR. Guidelines
Purpose	<p>To enhance management engagement in process and performance evaluations, and to guide management in providing a formal response to evaluations to inform evidence-based decision-making in CGIAR, through strengthened use and uptake of evaluative learning.</p> <p>Notably, the document is primarily written through the lens of IAES-led evaluations; where IAES is not the commissioner-appointed evaluation unit (e.g., for a largely independent or decentralized evaluation). Alternative approaches to management engagement and response may apply—particularly in cases where the commissioner is also the management entity.</p>
Audience	<p>CGIAR executive leadership, science and Accelerator leaders and intervention managers who commission decentralized evaluations and/or engage in independent evaluations; and, specifically, Monitoring, Evaluation, Learning and Impact Assessment (MELIA) professionals and managers responding to formal recommendations. Guidelines may be helpful for stakeholders who are interested in the application of evidence-informed learning.</p>
Framework and Policy Reference	<p>These Guidelines operationalize CGIAR Evaluation Framework and CGIAR Evaluation Policy (2022); they can be read in conjunction with a compendium of CGIAR evaluation guidelines and Method Notes. A dedicated resource for Management Engagement and Response (MER) at CGIAR is available here.</p>
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Acronyms and Abbreviations

AR4D	Agricultural Research for Development	OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
EA	Evaluability Assessment	OECD/DAC	OECD's Development Assistance Committee
GLT	Global Leadership Team	PPU	Portfolio Performance Unit
IAES	Independent Advisory and Evaluation Service	PRMF	Performance and Results Management Framework
IPB	Integrated Partnership Board	PRMS	Performance and Results Management System
ISDC	Independent Science for Development Council	QA	Quality Assurance
MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation & Learning	QoR4D	Quality of Research for Development
MELIA	Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning and Impact Assessment	QoS	Quality of Science
MR	Management Response	SC R4D	System Council Research for Development
MER	Management Engagement and Response	SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
MYEP	Multi-Year Evaluation Plan	SIMEC	Strategic Impact, Monitoring and Evaluation Committee
		ToR	Terms of Reference

Glossary of Key Terms

Term	Definition	Source
Accelerator	Accelerators will undertake strategic research in their topical areas and, through working with all other Programs, bolster CGIAR’s ability to reach and support targeted end-users while furthering collaboration, coherence, and integration across the entire Portfolio.	CGIAR Technical Reporting Monitoring, Evaluation, Learning, Impact Assessment (MELIA) Glossary v4.1 –September 2025 ¹²
CGIAR Results Framework	The program logic explains how the development objective is to be achieved, including causal relationships and underlying assumptions. Related terms: results chain, logical framework.	Performance and Results Management Framework (PRMF) Glossary ³
Evaluation	The systematic and objective assessment of an on-going or completed intervention (project, program, or policy), its design, implementation, and results. In the CGIAR, evaluation refers to an external, completely (commissioned by the Independent Evaluation Function) or largely (Initiative) independent and systematic study of an in-depth nature that uses evaluation criteria in line with Evaluation Policy. In addition to research, it also applies to central CGIAR institutions, support programs and themes, and the whole system.	MELIA Glossary, 2021 ⁴
Evaluated	The subject or object being evaluated—in other words, what the evaluation is about, the intervention in scope.	
Impact Area	CGIAR Impact Areas are: (1) Nutrition, Health and Food Security; (2) Poverty Reduction, Livelihoods and Jobs; (3) Gender Equality, Youth and Inclusion; (4) Climate Adaptation and Mitigation; and (5) Environmental Health and Biodiversity. CGIAR is targeting multiple benefits across five Impact Areas to contribute to collective global targets for the transformation of food, land, and water systems across local, regional, and global levels.	CGIAR Technical Reporting MELIA Glossary v4.1–September 2025
Knowledge products	Knowledge products are intellectual assets generated from research and development activities such as articles, briefs, reports, extension and training content, databases, software, and multimedia elements that contribute to behavioral changes in particular actors.	
Management Response	Management response (MR) is a formal mechanism to help ensure that evaluations are used to contribute to organizational effectiveness, learning,	CGIAR 2022 Evaluation Policy ⁵

¹ This version of the MELIA Glossary builds on the [MELIA Glossary v3](#) used for 2024 TRA, which incorporated approved changes to the CGIAR Results Framework. It serves as an interim solution to ensure consistent taxonomy across guidance documents, tools, and platforms for Technical Reporting, until the CGIAR taxonomy, being co-developed by centers and the System Organization under the Monitoring, Evaluation, Learning, Impact Assessment & Foresight (MELIA-F) Project, is finalized (expected mid-2026).

² [CGIAR Technical Reporting MELIA Glossary v4.1. \(2025\)](#).

³ [MELIA/PRMF Glossary \(2021\)](#).

⁴ [MELIA/PRMF Glossary \(2021\)](#).

⁵ [CGIAR Evaluation Policy \(2022\)](#).

Term	Definition	Source
	and accountability. MR facilitates formal and strategic engagement on evaluation findings and recommendations for appropriate follow-up actions through a systematic and a formal process.	
Monitoring	A process of continuous or periodic collection and analysis of data to compare how well a project, program, or policy is being implemented against expected progress and results, to track performance against plans and targets, to identify reasons for under or over achievement, and to take necessary actions to improve performance.	MELIA Glossary, 2021 ⁶
PRMF	The <u>PRMF</u> describes the processes, systems and measures for managing CGIAR's performance and results to support delivery of the <u>CGIAR 2030 Research and Innovation Strategy</u> .	
Performance & Results Management System (PRMS)	The PRMS underpins the PRMF, encompassing planning, monitoring, and reporting. It provides robust information to support informed decision-making, enabling real-time data collection and the day-to-day management of the Portfolio and Science Programs/Accelerators.	CGIAR Technical Reporting MELIA Glossary v4.1 - September 2025
Portfolio	CGIAR Portfolio is the research programs and/or platforms carried out by centers and the CGIAR System Partners in support of the CGIAR Strategy and Results Framework and which are supported by (1) the CGIAR Trust Fund; and/or (2) bilateral sources contractually aligned to such programs and/or platforms.	
Program	CGIAR Programs are vehicle for delivery of research and innovation from 2025-30. Programs serve as entry points to describe CGIAR's offer on a key topic, elevating CGIAR's visibility in global agendas and facilitating the continuation and formation of inclusive alliances and partnerships.	CGIAR Technical Reporting MELIA Glossary v4.1 - September 2025
Sustainable Development Goal (SDG)	<u>Seventeen (17) internationally accepted</u> , publicly broadcasted objectives related to achieving sustainable development adopted in 2015-30.	CGIAR Technical Reporting MELIA Glossary v4.1 - September 2025

⁶ [MELIA/PRMF Glossary \(2021\)](#).

1. Introduction

Evaluation is a key component for learning, strategic orientations, and evidence-based decision-making towards improving development effectiveness.⁷ The [Paris Declaration](#) (2005) and [Busan Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation](#) (2011) concentrated the efforts of institutions on internalizing principles of development effectiveness, and the importance of ownership and mutual accountability. Regular evaluations help multilateral organizations to remain accountable to stakeholders and build trust and legitimacy by demonstrating responsible use of resources through transparent evaluation processes.⁸ Multilateral Performance Network ([MOPAN](#)) methodology requires organizations to have a clear accountability system to ensure responses to, and use of, evaluation recommendations. The [United Nations Evaluation Group \(UNEG\)](#), in its [Norms and Standards](#), requires organizations to have in place appropriate mechanisms to ensure management responds to evaluation recommendations, and that these mechanisms outline concrete actions to be undertaken in the Management Response (MR) and in the follow-up to recommendation implementation.⁹

Underscored by the [2030 Research and Innovation Strategy](#), CGIAR has fostered learning through its strategic and structural iterations. [CGIAR's Evaluation Framework](#) and [Policy \(2022\)](#)¹⁰ outline how process and performance evaluations contribute to learning to achieve CGIAR's mission.

Box 1. About the Management Response

The MR outlines specific, time-bound commitments, cost implications and identifies the units responsible for implementing each recommendation. Beyond accountability, the MR also serves as a learning tool, enabling CGIAR to anticipate and address future challenges and risks more effectively. MR is issued by the **evaluand—the subject of the evaluation** (e.g., actors of a Program, Accelerator, organizational unit)—in response to recommendations in an evaluation report. **In CGIAR's context:**

- **Evaluation Framework:** The standards and principles highlight the critical role of the MR in the uptake of evaluation recommendations, for organizational learning, promoting accountability, and informing decision-making.¹
- **Evaluation Policy:** A MR is required for every evaluation where CGIAR had a partial or full decision-making power in the evaluation process, or CGIAR fully or partially financed the evaluation. Accordingly, a MR is mandatory for all such evaluations within the CGIAR system.

1.1. Purpose and Objectives

These Guidelines intend to improve the use and uptake of evaluations across CGIAR, and to strengthen accountability and adaptive management underscored by a culture of learning, by:

- Clarifying roles and responsibilities of managers, commissioners, and evaluators.
- Providing a pathway for preparing effective and impactful Management Response
- Enhancing the quality, utility, and impact of evaluations and MRs.

⁷ [Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development \(OECD\) Evaluation Systems in Development Co-operation \(2016\)](#).

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) [Norms and Standards for Evaluation \(2016\)](#).

¹⁰ CGIAR Evaluation Policy is subject to periodic revision. As appropriate, CGIAR's IAES may propose amendments for approval by the System Council and CGIAR Board.

- Promoting cost- and time-effective evaluation practices.
 - Enabling managers to apply recommendations for informed decisions and strategic direction.
- Ultimately, these Guidelines support a continuous learning culture, enabling CGIAR managers to use evaluative recommendations for informed decision-making and strategic direction.

A dedicated [hub](#) hosts this and other related resources, including from CGIAR collaborators:



1.2. Audience and Users for the Guidelines

Primary audiences are CGIAR and center executive leadership, science leaders and Program/Accelerator/project managers who engage in evaluations as responsible parties on behalf of evaluands, and commissioners.¹¹ Additionally, leads of evaluation teams should familiarize themselves with the guidelines at the onset of evaluations. For CGIAR stakeholders, familiarity with [CGIAR's Evaluation Framework](#) and [Policy \(2022\)](#) is essential for effectively understanding and applying these guidelines. This document also may be useful to stakeholders interested in the application of evidence-informed learning within and beyond CGIAR.

1.3. Defining Management Engagement and Response

Evaluations of CGIAR interventions are guided by the [CGIAR Evaluation Framework and Evaluation Policy](#), which are grounded in two complementary approaches: the [Quality of Research for Development \(QoR4D\)](#), which focuses on ensuring research excellence in delivering development outcomes; and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development's Development Assistance Committee ([OECD/DAC evaluation guidance \(2019\)](#)),¹² which provides a development-oriented framework for assessing relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability.¹³

Management engagement and a properly developed MR to evaluation recommendations aim to directly enhance the use of evaluative evidence and reinforce accountability across CGIAR. MER Guidelines distinguish between engagement and response, recognizing their differences as essential components of the evaluation process and use of evaluation results (see Box 2).

Progress on implementing recommendations is reported twice a year in the [MR Actions Response Tracker](#) and annually through CGIAR's Technical Reporting Arrangement (consult [TRA 2025-30](#)).

¹¹ These include evaluative exercises commissioned by CGIAR management, Board, Center Board. Examples: the 2025 Review of the Seed Quality Management (SQM) Communities of Practice and Quality Management System (QMS) by Genebank Accelerator; [2023 High-Level Advisory Panel \(HLAP\) Review](#); [2021 PIM Partnership Evaluation](#).

¹² OECD [Better Criteria for Better Evaluation: Revised Evaluation Criteria Definitions and Principles for Use](#) [OECD/DAC Network on Development Evaluation](#) (2019).

¹³ Evaluation policies of comparator organizations funded through multilateral mechanisms—such as Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)—and funders such as the United Kingdom, also use the OECD/DAC criteria as a foundational reference point.

Box 2. The difference between management engagement and Management Response

Management engagement refers to active participation of the evaluand (e.g., program/project manager) in the design, implementation, utilization, and learning aspects of evaluations. Ownership and strong buy-in from management enhance contextualizing evaluation, and the quality and effectiveness of an evaluation. For example, contribution to evaluation design, facilitating access to stakeholders and documentation, availability for inception and validation activities, involvement in consultative processes, and participation in reporting to governance bodies.

These activities are coordinated in collaboration with a designated Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) professional of the evaluand, the evaluation manager, the IAES Evaluation Function (for independent evaluations), the evaluation team, and intended users of the evaluation.

While the nature and timing of engagement will vary across evaluation phases, management commitment remains essential throughout the evaluation process (see Figure 1): proposing learning questions, providing timely feedback, supporting the evaluation process, responding to recommendations, and ensuring follow-through on agreed actions.

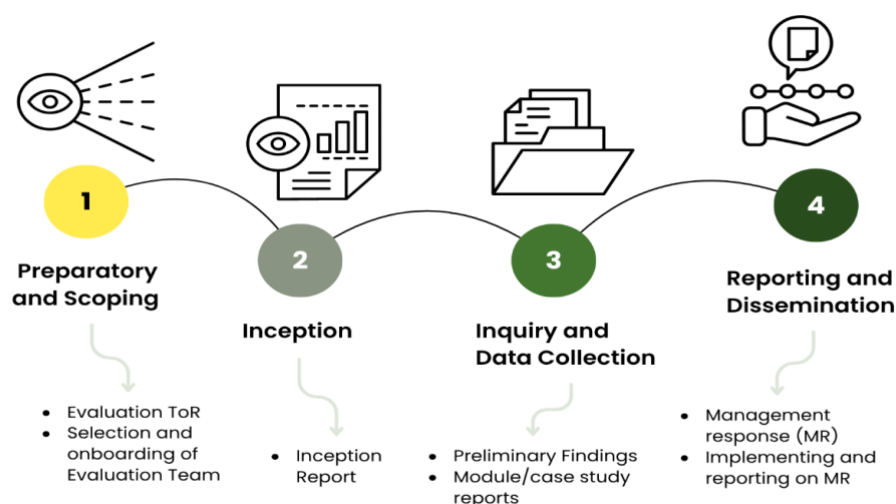
Management Response is a formal, documented response to the recommendations produced by the evaluation—a concrete output from the management of the evaluand, with specific, time-bound commitments to implement each recommendation. The evaluation commissioner is a key MR audience.

The implementation of *accepted* and *partially accepted* recommendations bolsters *adaptive management*.

2. Key Engagement Considerations

The pathway to an impactful MR begins early in the evaluation process, setting for management engagement through all evaluation phases. The MR impact continues beyond its' development process. Following a concept note, the evaluation Terms of Reference (ToR) outlines specific evaluation phases; in instances when they are developed, Inception Notes or Inception Reports add further granularity to each phase (e.g., the [Genebank Platform](#) evaluation), see Figure 1.¹⁴

Figure 1. Typical evaluation phases and related outputs



¹⁴ See [Inception Report Guidelines](#) and [blog](#) on the CGIAR approach.

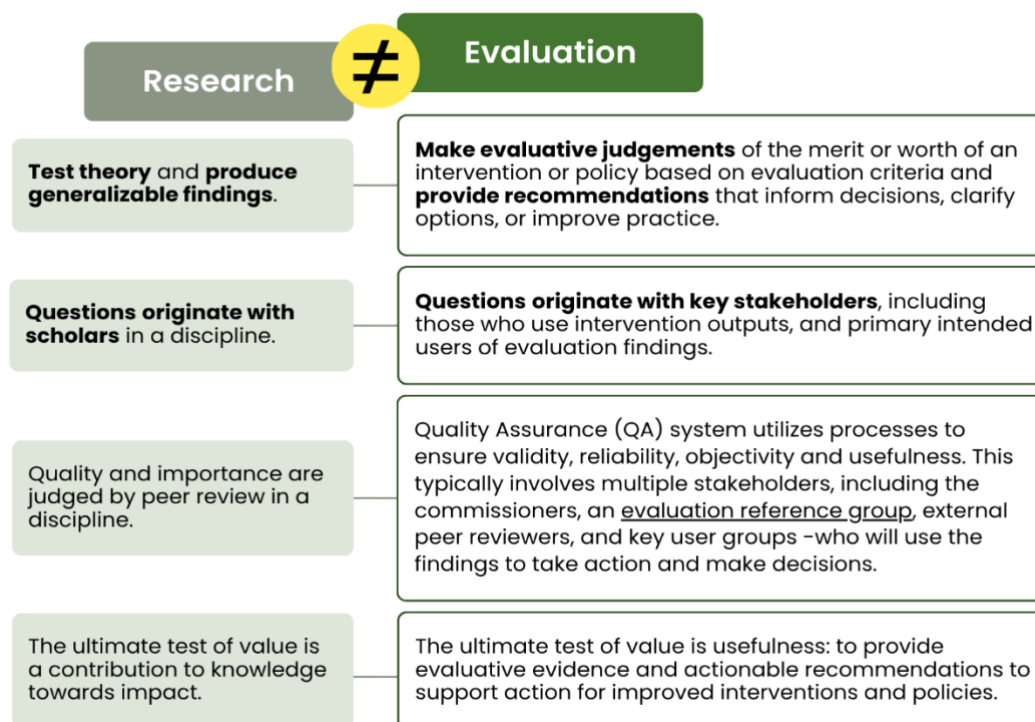
2.1. Key Differences Between Scientific Research and Evaluation

Evaluations overlap with scientific research, being inquiry-driven, methodologically rigorous, and theory-based, with many of the same methods. However, they differ significantly in purpose, audience, and approach.

Evaluation is a systematic, criteria-based process used to assess the design, implementation, and outcomes of an intervention (e.g., Program, project, Accelerator, corporate strategy), to support learning, accountability, and evidence-informed decision-making. In the Research for Development (R4D) context within CGIAR, it is important to not conflate evaluation with scientific research.

Scientific research typically seeks to generate new knowledge and contribute to broader academic or theoretical understanding. Evaluation, by contrast, is focused on making evidence-informed judgments based on predefined evaluation criteria,¹⁵ to provide actionable recommendations for improving policies, programs, and other types of interventions. See Figure 2 for key distinctions¹⁶ and consider difference between science and evaluative advising by ISDC and evaluation function [Independent Insight in Sync: ISDC and Evaluation Advising CGIAR's Portfolio](#).

Figure 2. Key difference between research and evaluation in the CGIAR context



Within the CGIAR context, the scope of evaluations includes interventions of R&D programming and its components (i.e. [Science Groups](#)), and their delivery at the corporate level (i.e. [GDI review](#)). The CGIAR Guidelines on Evaluating Quality of Science ([link](#)) provide framing, criteria, dimensions, and methods for assessing the quality and relevance of R4D efforts with a process and performance

¹⁵ As in the case of process and performance evaluations as per CGIAR's Evaluation Policy.

¹⁶ For a concise explanation of the difference between evaluation and research consult Question 1: "What is the difference between evaluation and research?", on the [FAQ page for Evaluation and Evaluability Assessments](#) (EAs).

evaluation. Evaluators must take a nuanced, context-sensitive approach that acknowledges scientific contributions while also focusing on how interventions support development outcomes and strategic objectives such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Consult a dedicated [OoS for SDG portal](#) of IAES.







2.2. Scope of Management Engagement in Process and Performance Evaluations

In CGIAR, evaluations cover a wide range of evaluation objects: Science Programs, Accelerators, platforms, or corporate, thematic, geographic and strategic undertakings, as well as potential center-specific external reviews.¹⁷ Regardless of the object, CGIAR **management engagement** is essential to ensuring inclusion, and resulting in meaningful, relevant, and actionable recommendations, and uptake of results for adaptive management and accountability. The **level, timing, and intensity** of engagement will vary depending on the object and scope of the evaluative activity. Two primary pathways for management engagement broadly align with the types of **process and performance evaluations** covered under the CGIAR-wide [Evaluation Policy](#):

- **External, fully independent evaluative exercises**, commissioned by the **System Council (SC)** and conducted through the **Evaluation Function of IAES**.
- **Largely independent or decentralized evaluations**, commissioned by a **program or center**, and conducted through their **internal management and governance structures**.

These two evaluation modalities involve parallel but substantively different engagement processes (see Table 1), by several key elements.

Table 1. Key elements for management engagement by type of evaluation in CGIAR

	Element	Independent evaluations	Largely independent/ decentralized evaluations ¹⁸
	Object	Portfolio: Programs, Accelerators. Corporate, thematic, center*	Portfolio: Programs, Accelerators. Corporate at a center, thematic, projects, activities
	Commissioner	System Council, Center Board	CGIAR Bard/management, Center Board or bilateral/Window 3 funder
	Evaluation manager	From IAES	Discretion of evaluand
	Management Response	Required	Recommended
	Governance, Multi-Year Evaluation Plan	In the MYEP approved by CGIAR System Council	Optional in MYEP-if Quality Assurance (QA) is provided by IAES
	Timeframe for MR development	Six to eight weeks ²⁰	Discretion of commissioner

*co-steering would include IAES Evaluation Function and Independent Science Development Council (ISDC).

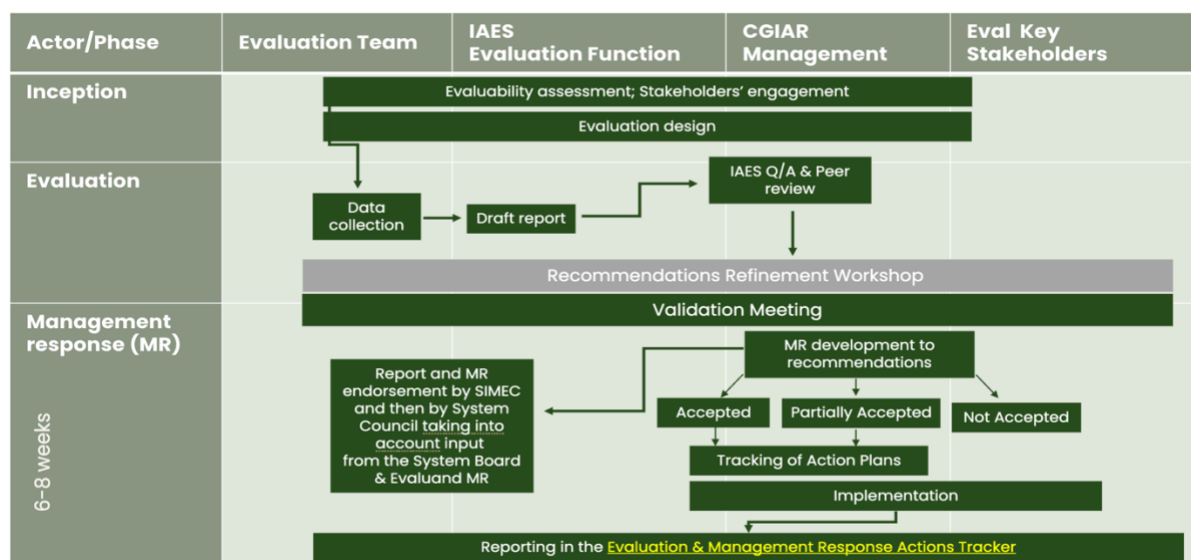
Despite the differences, management engagement is a core, cross-cutting element of a generic yet adaptable process, applicable across the evaluation spectrum. Management engagement is

¹⁷ See examples of [2024 Evaluations of Science Groups, four Platforms](#), a [2023 Performance Results Management System \(PRMS\) Review](#).

essential to enable learning, accountability, and adaptive management in design and implementation.

For **external, fully independent evaluations**, Figure 3 below illustrates the MR process from the evaluation phases by respective roles, to be elaborated upon further in the document.

Figure 3. Pathway to Management Response mapped by evaluation phases and roles in CGIAR for independent evaluations



3. Roles and Responsibilities in the CGIAR Evaluation Process

Clear and early definition of roles and responsibilities is critical to the quality, credibility, and utility of evaluations. When core evaluation users—particularly intervention managers and CGIAR leadership—understand their roles and are actively engaged from the start, evaluative learning and recommendations are more likely to be accepted, properly implemented and monitored.

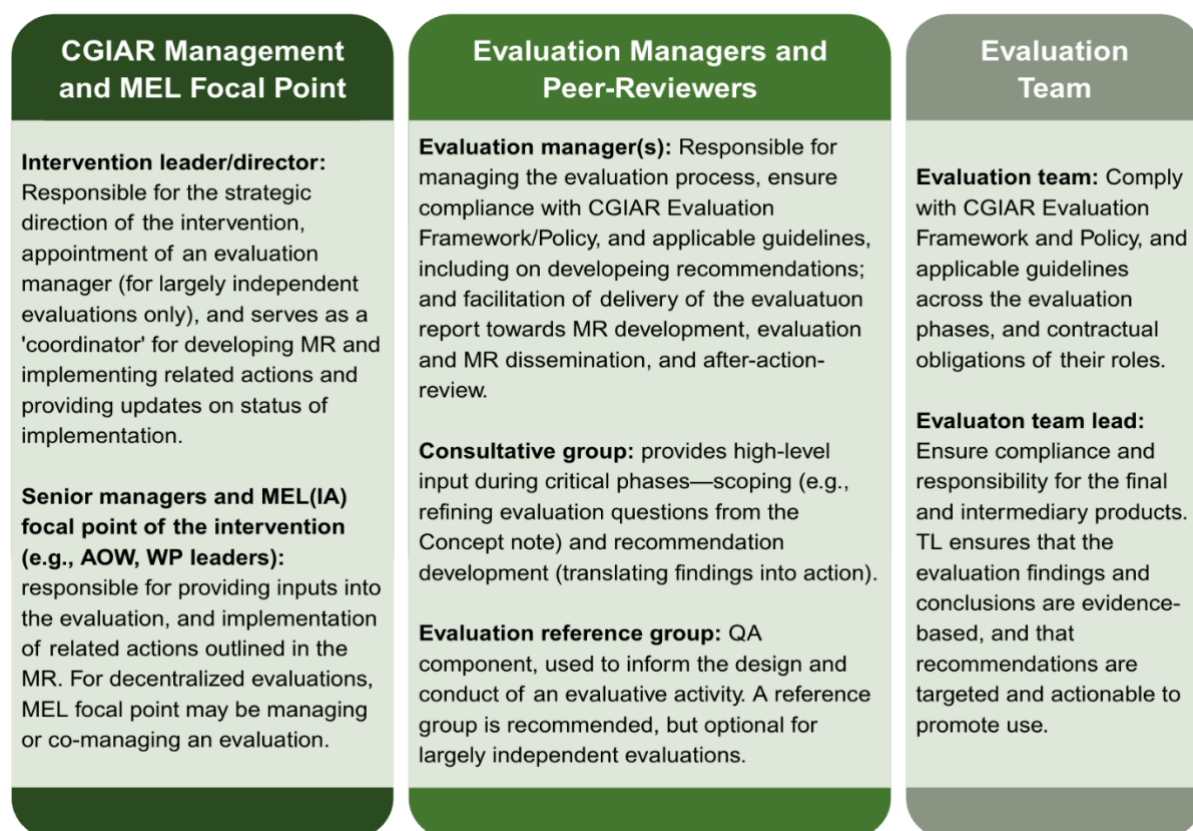
In CGIAR, the **evaluand** is clearly defined in the evaluation ToR to steer meaningful engagement and enhance the utility and uptake of evaluation results. ToRs¹⁸ also identify the **primary users and key stakeholders** of the evaluation (e.g., funders, project managers, evaluation managers, next stage users of CGIAR’s outputs). Everyone’s roles and responsibilities are communicated as part of onboarding or socialization processes—especially the evaluand teams, e.g., intervention leader and senior managers of the intervention, Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) focal point, evaluation managers and peer-reviewers (including Evaluation Reference Group to IAES),¹⁹ any Consultative Group specific to the evaluation activity,²⁰ and the evaluation team.

Evaluation team members must be familiar with the **evaluation governance structure**, including the roles of the intervention’s management and evaluation manager(s), see Figure 4.

¹⁸ See example of ToRs for evaluations of [the Science Groups](#) and the [Genebank Platform Evaluation](#).

¹⁹ [CGIAR Evaluation Reference Group](#).

²⁰ Consult [the 2025 ToRs of the Evaluation Reference Group to IAES](#).

Figure 4. Key roles and responsibilities in the CGIAR evaluation process


3.1. Striking a Balance: Engagement versus Independence

An effective evaluation depends on both meaningful engagement from management and the preservation of independence and objectivity of the evaluation process (See Box 3). Striking the right balance between these two principles is essential for credibility, learning, and the uptake of results. Early and continuous engagement of intervention management helps promote **trust, shared understanding**, and **greater evaluation utility**.

Box 33. What is the appropriate level of management engagement in evaluation?

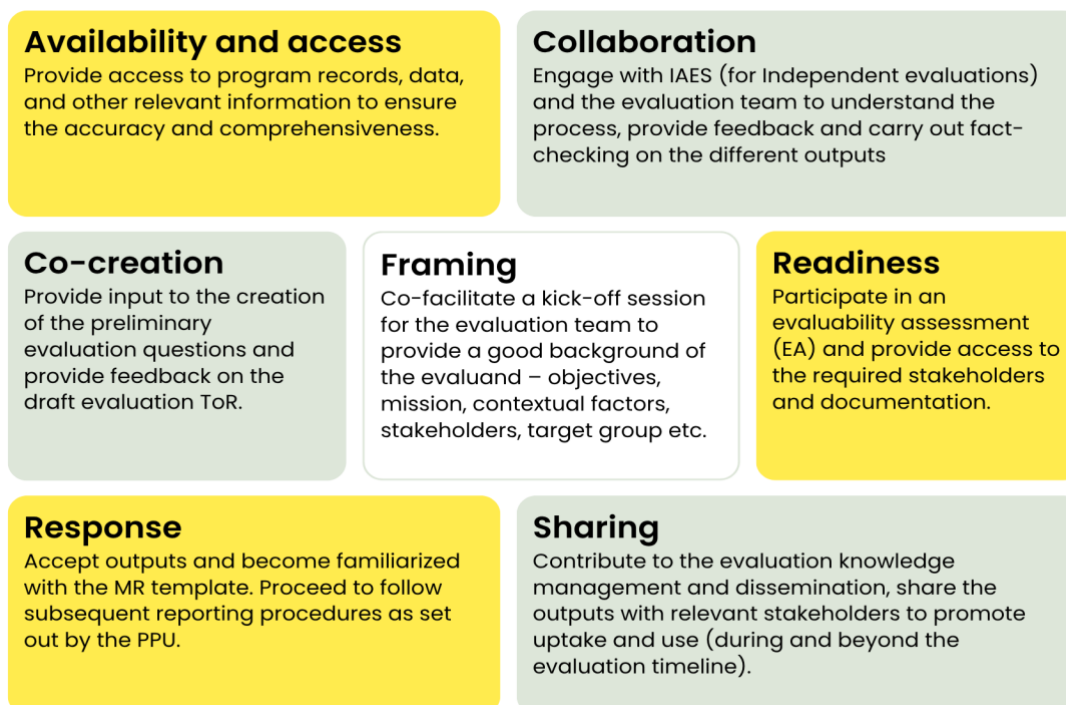
The level of management engagement must be balanced against the goal of producing an objective evaluation. The importance of evaluative independence and lack of bias is captured in CGIAR evaluative principles and standards: *“Evaluations instill confidence among all users that the evaluation is as objective as possible with the highest ethical standards and codes of conduct, impartial with a system in place against conflict of interests, and unafraid to raise constructive feedback on critical issues, being unbiased operationally and analytically.”*

Finding the correct balance between responsible management engagement and respecting the standard of independence is not always obvious. If in doubt, managers should contact IAES for additional guidance.

Management engagement must respect the principle of **evaluative independence**. Any disagreement between management and evaluators on substantive issues must be documented in writing. However, final evaluative conclusions and recommendations should be based on **the independent, evidence-based evaluative judgment** of the evaluation team.

The Evaluation Function of IAES and/or the evaluation team invite the evaluand to participate in a range of activities– see Figure 5 below. Further, Annex 1 details how independent and decentralized evaluations differ in terms of roles, responsibilities, and the intensity of management engagement.

Figure 5. Roles of the evaluand team in IAES evaluation activities



3.2. Roles

3.2.1. CGIAR Management and the Evaluand

Management of CGIAR²¹ shares with IAES (or other executing offices) leadership and **responsibility in shaping the evaluation design, supporting its conduct, and using the evaluation results**. Their role is grounded in Evaluation Framework principles²² of **utility and use**, with the responsibility to:

- Contribute to the implementation of evaluative activity in all phases (Figure 1 and Annex 1).
- Allocate sufficient resources to support proactive engagement with findings and recommendations.
- Prepare and submit Management Response in a provide template.
- Ensure the timely follow-up and implementation of agreed actions.

Annex 1 summarizes management engagement tasks by evaluation type and phase.

²¹ This includes portfolio leaders and senior managers– see Figure 4 above.

²² The Evaluation Framework assumes that responsibilities pertaining to evaluation are carried out by CGIAR governance, management, and operational units and independent assurance, as detailed in current governance [frameworks](#), [charters](#), and similar documents. It similarly assumes the implementation of established ToRs for relevant, responsible governance bodies and committees, independent advisory and evaluation services, and units within the operational [structure](#) that pertain to MEL across CGIAR.

3.2.2. Integrated Partnership Board and Evaluation Governance

The Integration Framework Agreement (2023)²³ among Center Boards and CGIAR leadership, established the foundations for CGIAR partnership. The **Integrated Partnership Board (IPB)**, accountable to the CGIAR System Council (SC), is the governing body of both the CGIAR System Organization and the Integrated Partnership.²⁴ The IPB has a strategic oversight role in CGIAR's evaluative processes (Section 6 of the CGIAR Evaluation Policy and Framework). In fulfilling these responsibilities under the Charter of the CGIAR System Organization, the IPB draws on insights from across the CGIAR monitoring and evaluation landscape, including external evaluations. In collaboration with the SC and via the Strategic Impact, Monitoring and Evaluation Committee (SIMEC), the IPB monitors system effectiveness, upholds CGIAR's standards of excellence, and ensures compliance with policies and guidelines. The IPB reviews independent evaluation reports and MRs, with commentary to the SC. The Executive Managing Director of CGIAR reports to the IPB.

3.2.3. Evaluation Manager in IAES

The IAES plays a central role in managing independent evaluative exercises commissioned by the CGIAR SC, with the primary objective of delivering **timely, relevant, and accessible evaluative evidence and independent advice** to the SC and CGIAR Integrated Partnership. Centralized evaluation management by IAES ensures **consistency, quality, and independence**, in line with CGIAR's Evaluation Framework and Policy. As stated in its operating principles, IAES also seeks to promote **greater ownership and coordination** of evaluative advice across the CGIAR System.

3.3. Responsibilities of IAES in Independent Evaluations

The IAES leads the planning and implementation of **independent evaluations** commissioned by the SC and included in CGIAR's Multi-Year Evaluation Plan (MYEP).²⁵ Operating under its 2019 IAES ToR, the IAES Evaluation Function is responsible for:

- Planning, initiating, and managing the evaluation process, the latter to include guiding external evaluation teams aligned with the evaluation timeline.
- Drafting the ToR, with evaluation criteria and questions to guide the evaluative inquiry.²⁶
- Recruiting and contracting qualified evaluation team²⁷ through a vetted pool of experts²⁸ jointly screened with the Independent Science for Development Council (ISDC), ensuring adherence to the IAES Conflict of Interest Policy.²⁹
- Guiding, supporting and facilitating external evaluation teams.
- Overseeing QA processes and outputs to safeguard the utility and credibility of evaluations.

IAES assigns each independent evaluation a dedicated **evaluation manager**—a staff member from its Evaluation Function—who collaborates closely with the designated staff from the evaluand and MEL professionals.

²³ CGIAR Integration Framework Agreement (2022), amended in 2023 with inclusion of ICRISAT ([link](#)).

²⁴ Integrated Partnership Board.

²⁵ At the time of developing these Guidelines: (2024) IAES 2025-27 Workplan and Budget.

²⁶ Consult TOR guidance and examples: the evaluations of the Science Groups, evaluative reviews of the CGIAR Research Program (CRP); and ToRs in Annex 5 of the CGIAR GENDER Platform Evaluation Inception Report.

²⁷ Declaration of interest, based on the conflict of interest form, is core to a standard evaluation report by IAES.

²⁸ Original SME roster call in 2021; the following round was at the end of 2022 for vetting and inclusion in 2023.

²⁹ Evaluation, ethics and conflict of interest are discussed in detail in the Evaluation Policy (section 8.5).

The IAES evaluation manager is responsible for:

- Selecting, contracting, and convening the evaluation team of qualified and experienced evaluators and subject matter experts from the IAES pre-selected expert roster.
- Ensuring transparent and open communication with the management of the evaluand and other core stakeholders.
- Monitoring and supervising the evaluation team against the evaluation ToR and their individual contractual obligations.
- Working with the evaluand team for access to the key stakeholders during data collection.
- Coordinating QA processes and validation steps.
- Guiding and supporting documentation and outputs.
- Developing a knowledge management approach and products.

After evaluation completion, evaluation manager is also advised to stay abreast of the status of implementation and monitoring of, and management reporting on the evaluations, although their formal tracking falls outside the IAES mandate (see [Step Seven: Follow-up and tracking the MR](#)).

3.3.1. Quality Assurance in Independent Evaluations

For independent evaluative exercises, IAES applies a multi-layered QA system to ensure quality and credibility, which includes:

- Internal peer-to-peer review within the IAES/EF, and an external thematic peer review.
- Second-level QA review by IAES leadership.
- External peer review through the Consultative Group/Evaluation Reference Group.

The IAES Director retains final accountability for the evaluative exercise, making the ultimate decision to release the final report. All final reports undergo proofreading, copyediting, and formatting in accordance with the [IAES Style Guide](#) prior to publication on the [Portal](#).

3.3.2. IAES Role in Largely Independent Evaluations

For largely independent (decentralized) evaluations—commissioned and managed by the centers or Programs^{30 31}—the Evaluation Function/IAES may act in a **QA** or **advisory capacity**, to include:

- Providing timely, expert advice on the design and management of the evaluation process.
- Offering clarification on the application of the CGIAR Evaluation Policy and Framework.
- Ensuring alignment with CGIAR-wide standards, as needed by the commissioning body.

Example include evaluative exercises commissioned by CGIAR management, Board, Center Board: [2022 Assessment of CGIAR contributions to the 2022 aspirational System Level Outcome targets](#); [2023 High-Level Advisory Panel \(HLAP\) Review](#); [2021 PIM Partnership Evaluation](#) and others.

³⁰ [PIM Partnership Evaluation](#) (2021).

³¹ In the case of Center Board-commissioned reviews, IAES may take a more active role to support fully independent and external exercises, subject to 2025 scoping and trial.

3.4. Responsibilities of the Evaluation Team

The evaluation team is responsible for conducting the evaluation in full alignment with the ToR and the CGIAR Evaluation Framework and Policy. Key responsibilities of the evaluation team include:

- Adhering to the ToR; any deviation from the ToR must be clearly documented in the Inception Report and communicated in writing to the evaluation manager. Such changes must be formally approved by the evaluation manager before being adopted.³²
- Following CGIAR evaluation standards and principles per the Evaluation framework/Policy, and applicable [guidelines](#) and [methods](#).
- Designing and executing the evaluation methods.
- Engaging stakeholders throughout evaluation process.
- Analyzing data and formulating evidence-based conclusions.
- Facilitating recommendation refinement workshops with key stakeholders.
- Drafting and finalizing the evaluation report with validated recommendations.

Throughout the process, the team must collaborate closely with IAES, the commissioning body, and the evaluand team—particularly during scoping, inception, and reporting phases.

Box 4. Essential elements of ToRs for evaluation

A **ToR** document defines the scope, purpose, and parameters of an evaluation to ensure that all stakeholders share a common understanding of the intent of the evaluation and how it will be carried out. It outlines the methods to be used, the standards or criteria for assessment, the resources and timeline allocated, and the reporting requirements. While the exact content may vary depending on the evaluation type and context, a typical ToR includes the following elements:

- Evaluation typology and rationale for commissioned evaluative exercise.
- Purpose, objectives and intended evaluation use, with relevant background information.
- Methodological approach and considerations for how the evaluation will be conducted.
- Roles and responsibilities of involved stakeholders.
- Expected deliverables and timelines; and knowledge management considerations.
- Application details (if ToRs are used for recruitment of external evaluators).

For example, see the ToR from the [Genebank Platform Evaluation \(2022\)](#), and [generic TOR guidance](#).

³² The ToR sets expectations for the evaluation but it should not be viewed as immutable. During context analysis or stakeholder consultations in the inception phase, new information may emerge to justify adjustments to the evaluation questions, methodology, timeline, or deliverables. In such cases, a guiding document would need to clearly document changes, after approvals through appropriate channels, i.e. the [2023 Advisory Study on PRMS](#).

4. Management Engagement Across Evaluation Phases

Evaluations are process-driven, typically structured into distinct phases, from scoping and inception to data collection, reporting, and follow-up. Each phase presents specific opportunities for engagement by the evaluand's management. Meaningful and timely engagement across these phases is essential to ensure the evaluation is contextually relevant, methodologically sound, and ultimately useful. The narrative below outlines key engagement points, while Annex 2 summarizes MEL-related tasks by evaluation type and phase.

Box 5. 5Ad hoc consultative groups

In 2025, IAES piloted ad hoc Consultative Groups as a structured way for **CGIAR management (Global Leadership Team [GLT] representative) and Board (IPB representative)** to interact with other CGIAR governance and assurance stakeholders, including **SIMEC, ISDC, and Internal Audit**. For each independent evaluative exercise per the MYEP, the IAES Director aims to convene an ad hoc Consultative Group. Comprising five to eight participants, including key management, governance representatives, and technical resources, these temporary groups aim to enhance relevance, uptake, and make use of evaluations through multistakeholder engagement. The mechanism provides high-level input during critical phases—scoping (e.g., refining evaluation questions from the Concept Note) and recommendation development (translating findings into action). At these points, members contribute to ensure that external evaluations align with CGIAR's governance and management needs and inform actionable, evidence-based decision-making.

IAES emphasizes the importance of **center engagement** through systematic invitations of GLT representatives in ad hoc Consultative Groups for each evaluation, throughout its design and implementation.

Notably, the following sections align to standard processes in an evaluation in the MYEP of IAES. In the case where the SC is not the commissioner, adjustments and alternative approaches to management engagement may apply, i.e. appointed evaluation unit (e.g., for largely independent or decentralized evaluations), particularly in cases where the commissioner is also the CGIAR management entity or a CGIAR or Center Board.

4.1. Preparatory and Scoping—Phase 1

The preparatory and scoping phase sets the foundation for a credible, rigorous and useful evaluation through the published ToRs (see Box 4), outlining the purpose, scope, evaluation criteria, and expected deliverables. ToRs may be preceded by the internal Concept Note. Management engagement at this stage is crucial to ensure that the evaluation is contextually grounded and well-informed. Key responsibilities for the evaluand's management include:

- Participating in initial briefings with IAES to understand the rationale for the evaluation,; scoped along these MER Guidelines.
- Nominating a designated MEL professional or other relevant staff to serve as the main liaison with the designated IAES evaluation manager throughout the evaluation process.
- Assembling and sharing relevant documentation towards the evaluation repository.
- Providing secure access to document storage (e.g., SharePoint) for the evaluation team.
- Reviewing and contributing to the formulation of evaluation questions.

- Participating in the Evaluability Assessment (EA), if applicable.
- Reviewing the Concept Note and/or draft ToR for clarity and relevance.

In this phase, the evaluation team is pre-identified and selected, potentially as early as with the Concept Note development.

4.2. Inception—Phase 2

The inception phase translates the ToRs into a detailed, actionable plan through the development of the **Inception Report**.³³ This phase brings together the evaluand’s management and external evaluation team, with the IAES evaluation manager, to refine the approach and align expectations. The inception phase is foundational to the success of an evaluation. It provides the structure, grounding and clarity needed to guide all subsequent phases. At its core is the development of the Inception report, that ensures a shared understanding of how the evaluation will be conducted, fostering alignment among the implementing body–evaluand team, the evaluation team, and key stakeholders.

The Inception Report sets the groundwork for the final evaluation report—both are key outputs of the evaluation process (see Box 6) essential for producing relevant, actionable recommendations for the MR. Serving as both a **roadmap** and **guiding document**, the Inception Report outlines the planned approach, ensuring transparency, methodological rigor, and operational feasibility. **Key components** of the report include:³⁴

- **Refinement of evaluation questions and sub-questions**, and elaboration of the evaluation methodology organized in an evaluation design matrix. The matrix should be reviewed and validated by the evaluand team.
- **Stakeholder analysis**, identifying relevant actors and their roles in the evaluation process.
- **Prioritization of strategic issues** for further inquiry, especially considering changes since the scoping phase; with potential areas for in-depth inquiry (case studies), sampling.
- **Circulation of the draft Inception Report** to the evaluand team for comments and factual accuracy checks.

Preparation of the evaluand team to support the implementation of the data collection phase comes after becoming familiar with the Inception Report. The evaluation methods and work plan must be **adaptive and flexible**, allowing for the adaptive management and incorporation of emerging issues during the evaluation. However, this adaptability is bounded by the **budget parameters** from the planning and scoping phase and must remain aligned with the intended scope of a process or performance evaluation (see Section 3).

Ultimately, the final Inception Report serves as the mutually agreed detailed plan for the evaluation team’s work and deliverables, guiding both implementation and accountability.³⁵

³³ The Inception Note is a smaller scale product, considered within the limited time and/or concurrent activities under an umbrella activities, for example evaluations of Science Groups, or EAs of several programs.

³⁴ See also blog on [IAES’s approach to evaluation Inception Reports](#).

³⁵ [Example from Big Data evaluation](#) and [Evaluation Inception Reports—the CAS Approach \(blog\)](#).

Box 66. Essential elements of the Inception Report

The Inception Report builds on the ToR for the evaluation, outlining the team’s proposed approach to the main phase of the evaluation. The report clarifies the scope and focus of the evaluation, outlines the methodological approach and tools for gathering evidence, provides a detailed evaluation matrix, establishes the analytical frameworks, and provides a detailed work plan in line with the CGIAR Guidelines on Evaluation Inception Report.

4.3. Inquiry, Data Collection and Analysis—Phase 3

This phase involves the execution of the evaluation as defined in the Inception Report following TORs. The evaluation team collects, triangulates, and analyzes data from a range of sources.

The evaluand’s management is expected to support this phase by:

- Facilitating access to key stakeholders, documents, and sites.
- Participating as **key informants** in interviews or surveys.
- Assisting with scheduling and logistics, particularly if field visits are required.
- Providing clarification or context to support accurate data interpretation.

While the evaluation team leads data analysis, effective engagement from the evaluand team ensures access to credible, representative and comprehensive evidence.

4.4. Reporting and Dissemination—Phase 4

During this phase, the evaluation team is responsible for developing the **evaluation report with recommendations** (Box 8), under the overall leadership of the evaluation team leader. The evaluand leadership plays a key role in validating the evaluative findings, which are the basis for the conclusions and recommendations.

The evaluation team holds primary responsibility for formulating recommendations, building on previous phases and engagement with key stakeholders throughout the evaluation. Based on triangulated findings and conclusions, preliminary recommendations should be tested during the final phase of data collection with key stakeholders through sharing a draft report and meetings. Co-developing and validation with the evaluand leadership is essential to **ensure that these recommendations are evidence-based, relevant, clear, and actionable**. A Recommendation Refinement Workshop (see Box 7) further enriches and grounds recommendations. Afterwards, the evaluation team finalizes the draft report. To enhance focus and usability, the number of recommendations should not exceed ten, excluding sub-recommendations.

Box 77. Recommendation refinement workshop

As part of the reporting phase, a Recommendation Refinement Workshop is convened to strengthen the clarity, ownership, and feasibility of evaluation recommendations. This structured dialogue between the evaluation team and key stakeholders helps ensure that recommendations are realistic, actionable, and aligned with CGIAR’s operational context.

Illustrative Measures and Actions: Each recommendation may be accompanied by illustrative measures or actions—nonbinding suggestions that offer potential pathways for operationalizing the recommendation. While not prescriptive, these measures support clarity during the MR development process by identifying indicative actions, tools, or entry points. They serve as a basis for discussion during the Refinement Workshop and may inform the language or direction of MR actions; however, they are not themselves subject to a formal MR, while their content may be integrated into the actionable commitments (‘actions’) by the evaluand.

Identification of Responsible Parties: The evaluation team and IAES may propose responsible parties for each recommendation. These are presented for discussion during the Workshop and refined in consultation with management to ensure alignment with accountability structures and implementation capacity.

Alignment with United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Good Practice: In line with UNEG’s Checklist on the Improved Quality of Evaluation Recommendations (UNEG, 2020), the refinement process ensures that recommendations are clearly derived from findings and conclusions and are tailored to the intended users’ roles and decision-making authority. The workshop helps test the utility, relevance, and feasibility of implementing each recommendation through direct stakeholder input.

Fostering Shared Understanding and Uptake: The Workshop creates space for dialogue among evaluand and the evaluand team to clarify and adjust language for greater resonance and promote shared ownership. This step is critical for enhancing the likelihood of recommendation uptake and related expectations via a robust and informed MR.

Participation of the leadership team above the evaluand leader (the GLT in CGIAR) is also recommended during the refinement of recommendations (including under the Consultative Group and per the Process Note for MR development), to ensure that those who are held accountable for a program or relevant corporate structures are active users of evaluative evidence.

Box 8.8 Essential elements of the evaluation report

The evaluation report (draft/final) is the primary output aligned to [CGIAR’s Guidelines on the Final Evaluation Report](#) and [IAES’s Style Guide](#); it follows a standardized structure and [template](#) from IAES. In line with the evaluation matrix, the finalized evaluation report describes evidence-based findings and conclusions and makes impactful recommendations aligned with seven CGIAR evaluation criteria.

4.5. Management Response Process–Phase 5

Box9 9. Portfolio Performance Unit’s mandate to coordinate the development of MRs

In CGIAR, the Portfolio Performance Unit (PPU) is responsible for coordinating the MR development process and tracking of, and reporting on, MR implementation for evaluations. The PPU’s Process Note [Developing, Tracking and Reporting on MR to Evaluations](#) (v1, April 2024) covers:

- MR development coordination
- MR implementation tracking; and progress reporting of the recommendations.

This section on the fifth phase of the evaluation process covers the **development of the MR** coordinated by the **PPU** (see Box 9), as outlined in its [Process Note](#) (2024). MR development in CGIAR follows a **seven-step process** to support an effective and impactful MR.

4.5.1 Step 1: Determine Scope and Parameters of the MR

The foundation of an efficient and effective MR development process builds on ‘engagement’ phases. It serves as the connector between co-development, refinement and validation of the recommendations into the sharing of the final evaluation report with CGIAR governance bodies.

Box 10. Management Response

A MR is a written response, mandatory for **formal recommendations** resulting from CGIAR evaluations. It serves as an institutional mechanism for promoting **learning, accountability, and follow-up**, and reflects management’s decisions on whether to accept, partially accept, or reject each recommendation. The MR must also specify the **actions that will be taken to implement accepted or partially accepted recommendations**, including timelines and responsible parties.

For SC-commissioned, IAES-led independent evaluations, once SIMEC endorses the Pre-Final Evaluation Report in a process facilitated between IAES and the SIMEC Secretariat, the evaluand lead specifies and communicates the designated MR coordinator to PPU. At this point, PPU is formally notified and begins coordinating the necessary steps for MR development. This early trigger ensures alignment of timelines and stakeholder readiness to respond.

4.5.2 Step 2: Establish Preparation Steps and Submission Timeframe for the MR

Following initiation, a planning process is undertaken to define the scope of the MR and clarify responsibilities. Continuing engagement throughout the evaluation, the evaluation manager works with the evaluand's leadership to advise on appropriate responsible units as may deem necessary. They are tasked with reviewing the recommendations and leading the drafting of the MR.

Preparing an MR may be a lengthy process, particularly when the implementation of actions requires the participation of several partners and stakeholders, or when actions imply a strategic course correction or significant financial expenditure. The MR must be prepared in alignment with the process and timeline contained in the PPU Process Note, which is **within two months** of endorsement of the evaluation report by SIMEC, to prepare for presentation to the IPB and SC. While procedures may differ between **independent** and **largely independent evaluations**,³⁶ both follow the same core steps for drafting, validating, and endorsing the MR. In the case of largely independent evaluations, the MR process mirrors that of independent evaluations; however, the **key distinction lies in who holds the authority to approve and endorse the MR** during Step 5.

4.5.3 Step 3: Review the Evaluation Report and Make Response Decision

Upon approval of the final draft of the evaluation report with a copy (email) to PPU,³⁷ management of the evaluand convenes to discuss how to respond to the recommendations in the evaluation report. In this step, the focus is on the process of making a response decision before documenting the agreed actions in the MR template (Step 4). IAES recommends a consensus-building review process as per the example from the [Excellence in Breeding \(EiB\) Platform Evaluation](#) (see Box 11).

Box 11. Excellence in breeding platform evaluation–Management Response

The [MR to recommendations of the EiB Platform Evaluation](#) was prepared through a three-week structured participatory exercise with relevant leadership and staff across CGIAR's divisions and centers, under the overall leadership of the Global Director for Genetic Innovation. To produce an impactful MR, the Global Science Director and team applied the following principles:

- A spirit of openness, engagement, self-reflection, and mutual respect in recognition of CGIAR's role as a learning organization.
- Participatory engagement with the IAES and the evaluation teams to enhance learning.
- A constructive attitude towards shortcomings and a focus on the recommendations that emerge from these shortcomings—a collective, CGIAR-wide MR in recognition that forthcoming actions and changes go beyond specific Initiatives or teams.

³⁶ For either evaluation type, in discharging its responsibilities under the Charter of the CGIAR System Organization, the System Board relies and draws on all sources of monitoring and evaluation across the CGIAR System (see Articles 6.c and 6.cc–6.hh in the [CGIAR System Framework](#), 2021). The System Board is responsible for providing strategic oversight and direction to CGIAR management concerning the effective and efficient implementation of CGIAR's Strategy and Results Framework and the results achieved through CGIAR's operations.

³⁷ By SIMEC, in the case of IAES, approved for submission to SC.

- Agility, avoiding heavy-handedness and ensuring timely delivery (in less than one month).
- A commitment to ensuring follow-up on the implementation of agreed action plans.

4.5.4 Step 4: Plan the MR using the CGIAR MR Evaluation Template and Tracker

The MR template aligns to the MR tracker fields,³⁸ where management documents a response to each formal recommendation, indicating whether it is **'fully accepted'**, **'partially accepted'**, or **'not accepted'** (see Table 2). In support of these Guidelines, *MR Template Guidance Note* aims to support management in filling in the template, it aims to steer results of the independent evaluations for effective, consistent, and strategic engagement with management (see [MER hub](#)).

For example, if an Evaluation Reference Group was created for largely decentralized evaluations, its members can also engage in MR development, as well as any other key stakeholders, as applicable. Each response must be accompanied by a clear rationale and a set of time-bound implementation actions, including the responsible unit for each. The standard expectation is that implementation of accepted recommendations must start within 12 months of evaluation completion.

Table 2. Management Response options and implications

MR option ³⁹	What does this mean?	What does this imply?
Fully accepted	Management wholly accepts the recommendation.	All parts of a recommendation must be acted upon within the timeframe stipulated in the MR.
Partially accepted	Management agrees with the recommendation in principle or accepts some components but does not agree to the full recommendation.	MR must state what parts of the recommendation are accepted and not accepted. An explanation must be provided to explain the decision. Agreed-upon actions must be implemented within the MR timeframe.
Not accepted	Management completely disagrees with the recommendation.	Management does not intend to implement the recommendation. The MR must include rationale with explanation of the decision.

For fully independent evaluations, regarding 'accepted' or 'partially accepted' recommendations, management commits in a PPU's [Process Note \(v1. 2024\)](#) to a course of action to be monitored over time to ensure their implementation. PPU is tasked with monitoring in the [MR Actions Tracker](#), and reporting on MR implementation status twice annually—the mid-year update is targeted for management, while the end of year update is conducted through CGIAR's Technical Reporting Arrangement—consult [Technical Reporting Arrangement 2025-30](#).

While the standard implementation period for accepted recommendations is 24 months, this is adaptable (both longer and shorter-term) to suit the nature of the recommendation and MR. Actions taken in response to recommendations are likely to have longer-term implications.

4.5.5 Step 5: MR Approval and Endorsement

After completing the draft MR, a formal **review and endorsement process** begins—a bridge between evaluation results and institutional decision-making (PPU's [Process Note](#)). The MR review typically includes input from relevant governance bodies to confirm strategic coherence and budget implications. For **independent evaluations**, the **SC** formally endorses the evaluation report and the

³⁸ See the [MR to the Resilient Agrifood Systems Science Group](#) Evaluation for the MR template in use.

³⁹ [Deferred](#) In extenuating circumstances, i.e., pending an appointment of an executive such as a Chief Scientist.

MR, with a preference to do so together with the final evaluation report. The **Executive Managing Director** and **IPB must** approve the MR before it proceeds to the SC. The IP Board (or in exceptional cases, the SC or via **SIMEC**) may request revision/clarification to the MR before endorsement.

For **largely independent evaluations**, the MR is approved through the **internal governance structure** of the commissioning body (e.g., a Program, Accelerator, Center Board), following its own procedures for review and sign-off.

Annex 3 covers timelines associated with the MR development and endorsement.⁴⁰

4.5.6 Step 6: Publish and Disseminate the MR

After endorsement, the MR must be published with the evaluation report in a timely manner. The evaluation manager is responsible to share on CGIAR's knowledge-sharing platforms, including the IAES website and [CGSpace](#). All evaluation-specific materials are disseminated to relevant stakeholders in targeted knowledge management (KM) efforts.

The MR is then uploaded by PPU into CGIAR's [Evaluation & MR Action Tracker](#) for transparency, coherence, and steering at system level.

For **largely independent evaluations**, this MR upload is optional; it may be coordinated with the **PPU**, the **Project Coordination Unit (PCU)** or **other unit** who is a key stakeholder in this step, helping to ensure internal communication and follow-through on assigned actions.

Regardless of who commissions an evaluation, the [CGIAR Evaluation Policy](#) requires "full and timely electronic publication" of all MRs.

4.5.7 Step 7: Follow-up on MR Implementation

This final MR process step is to follow-up and track the MR, which is essential for institutional accountability and transparency. It is also important for systematically generating lessons that inform and enhance evidence-based decision-making across the CGIAR system.

Step 7.1 PPU and CGIAR Management

While distinct units are responsible for implementing agreed actions within MR, the [MR Tracker](#) facilitates embedding evaluation recommendations within CGIAR's adaptive management cycle, to support structured reflection, evidence-based decision-making, and strategic realignment, while promoting transparency and learning without punitive accountability mechanisms.

Implementation of the MR is monitored by the **PPU**, through **bi-annual reviews**, (January and June per the [Process Note](#)) through documented evidence. MR action progress is reported in CGIAR **Technical Reporting** and other annual performance reporting processes. Any delays, deviations, or changes to the action implementation plan must be clearly documented and accompanied by a rationale. Each recommendation is considered 'complete' only when all planned actions are formally deemed no longer applicable.

⁴⁰ Under review of PPU, to align to the Process Note.

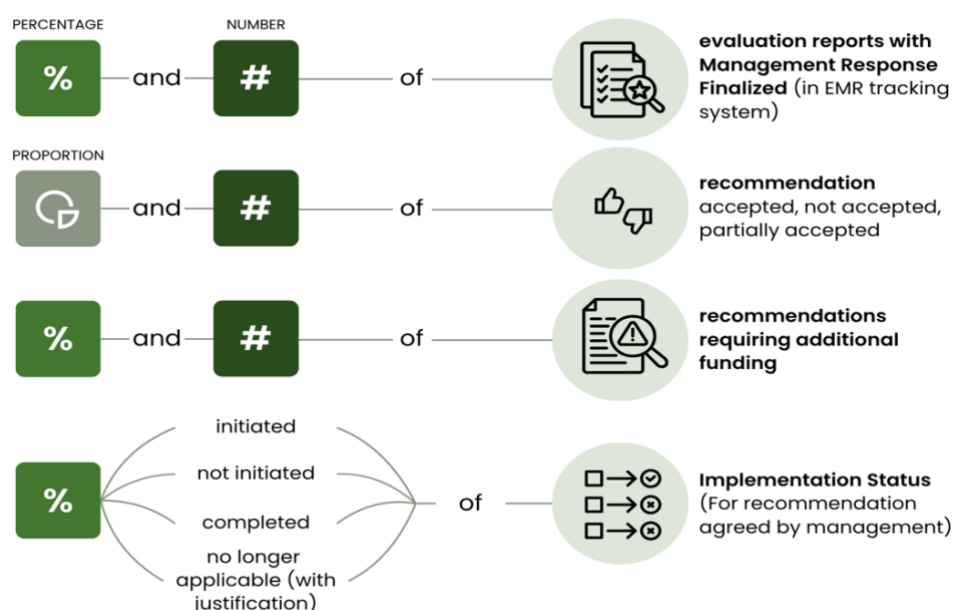
Figure 6. Metrics for tracking MR in CGIAR


Table 3 outlines common potential risks during the implementation of MRs, along with suggested mitigation measures to support timely, effective, and accountable follow-through on evaluation recommendations for adaptive management. The majority of risks can be mitigated through clear definitions of roles and responsibilities from the outset, and proper commitment and planning.

Table 3. Risks to implementing Management Response

Typical risks	Mitigation measure (relative to each risk identified)
1 No/insufficient funding for implementation of an agreed action	An MR template includes a field with planned budget/cost implications for implementing a recommendation. If an action plan is no longer feasible due to insufficient funding or contextual changes, the committed action must be efficiently reformulated to reflect ground realities or considered no longer applicable. Management must provide clear justification in either case.
2 Longer timeframes for implementation than anticipated	Management reports the ground realities and implementation bottlenecks in a timely fashion using the PPU's MR Tracker and advises stakeholders of the delay.
3 The program ended, and management structures are not clear	Clear articulation of the forward governance plan, with appropriate accountabilities, including how recommendations can be taken forward to inform future programs' design and integration into the wider system. 'Deferred' was used in the case of Science Group evaluations, pending appointment of the Chief Scientist.
4 Lack of stakeholder cooperation	Socializing the evaluation with stakeholders is essential during the scoping phase. Stakeholders may lack understanding or buy-in as to why an evaluation is being conducted and consequently refuse to cooperate. To avoid this, management engagement and communication about the purpose of the evaluation is critical, as well co-development of the objectives that meet their needs.
5 Narrowly focused evaluation findings	CGIAR interventions occur in complex contexts. This needs to be acknowledged in the evaluation ToR and integrated into all aspects of the process. Evaluators should be encouraged throughout the process to consider how unintended consequences may influence attaining desired positive results. Evaluations that

Typical risks	Mitigation measure (relative to each risk identified)
6 Review of draft evaluation report delays dissemination of findings	fixate on intended results and overlook unintended consequences can lead to misguided recommendations. After submitting the draft evaluation report, its review may delay the dissemination of findings and associated learning activities. There may be no easy way to lessen the impact of a delayed evaluation report except to emphasize the importance of the QA process.
7 Evaluand anxiety and stakeholder apathy	Stakeholders may be apprehensive to the idea of being judged and consequently regard the evaluation as a form of micro-management. Again, management engagement and effective communication with stakeholders is essential to ensure buy-in. Understanding why the evaluation is required and how it will be used often helps to mitigate stakeholder apathy.

Step 7.2 Evaluation Function under IAES

Complementing PPU's reporting, the **IAES Evaluation Function** aligns to the principles of mutual accountability and transparency under the Evaluation Policy, and provides an **update to SC via SIMEC** on the implementation status of evaluation recommendations, through several modalities:

- Synthetic learning studies reiterating recommendations across several evaluations (i.e., [MELIA](#)).
- Referencing the MR Tracker in various publications (report on QoS under Science Group Evaluations-[synthesis](#) and [brief](#)).
- Providing an independent assessment of the status of implementing recommendations in the evaluative engagements: [Summary of Learning on MELIA](#), and towards the Partnership study ([report](#), [brief](#)) aligned to the TORs for [Summaries of Learning on CGIAR's WoWs](#).
- Incorporating past relevant MR actions into design of related evaluation ToRs, to see learning and change over time.
- Potential fixed annual agenda item by IAES for the SC to review the status of MRs to evaluations⁴¹ and to report annually on uptake of recommendations to support evidence-based planning and decision-making.

IAES work featuring recommendations and related learning will be supplied in the [public domain](#) and on [CGSpace](#).

⁴¹ Per recommendation 3 under the 2024 [MR System Review](#). Full implementation of the new responsibility requires a formal amendment to the IAES ToR to reflect the expanded mandate.

Annex 1. Indicative Management Engagement Tasks for Evaluation Phases by Evaluation Type

This annex outlines indicative tasks and responsibilities for evaluation management across different types of evaluations, providing guidance on where and how management is expected to engage throughout the evaluation process.

Evaluation phase	Completely independent evaluations	Largely independent/decentralized evaluations
Scoping/ pre-planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contribute to an evaluation activity in accordance with CGIAR Evaluation Framework and Policy. • Provide evaluation and learning questions to IAES as an input to the selection of evaluation questions. • Designate a Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) professional (or any other relevant staff, if there is no MEL professional within the team structure) to function as a co-evaluation manager who works in collaboration with an IAES evaluation manager. • Review and comment on the evaluation Terms of Reference (ToR). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reach out to the IAES/Evaluation Function if support and advice is needed to design and plan an evaluation. • Designate an evaluation manager. • Develop evaluation ToRs (e.g., purpose, scope, evaluation criteria and questions), to align to Evaluation Policy/Framework. • Develop evaluation budget. • Develop an Inception report or an evaluation design (e.g., a detailed plan used by the evaluation manager to complement the evaluation ToR with information about evaluation governance, roles and responsibilities, knowledge management, and intended evaluation use). • Recruit evaluator(s) (e.g., develop evaluator ToR, interview selection process, contract finalization). • Pre-identify core stakeholders if an Evaluability Assessment (EA) has not been conducted.
Inception	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Endorse the evaluation activity assign resources in accordance with CGIAR guidelines (i.e., through a Consultative Group with management involvement). • Provide necessary supporting documentation and evidence to the evaluation manager. • Review the evaluation design matrix and comment on the methods/and data sources. • Co-facilitate engagement meetings with stakeholders. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Endorse the EA and assign resources, if required, in accordance with CGIAR guidelines (if applicable). • Provide necessary supporting documentation and evidence to evaluation manager. • Review and approve evaluation design matrix and methodology. • Review stakeholder mapping. • Facilitate evaluator engagement meetings with stakeholders.

Evaluation phase	Completely independent evaluations	Largely independent/decentralized evaluations
Inquiry/data collection & analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide/compile feedback on the evaluation Inception Report to provide to evaluation managers. • Provide feedback on data collection tools to evaluation manager. • Socialize the evaluation exercise, e.g., build awareness among stakeholders of the evaluation purpose, how it will be used, and introduce the evaluator(s). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide feedback on data collection tools. • Review and approve the evaluation Inception Report. • Socialize the evaluation exercise, e.g., build awareness among stakeholders of the evaluation purpose, how it will be used, and introduce the evaluator(s).
Reporting/ dissemination & use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitate access to interviewees/key informants identified based on the stakeholder analysis and sampling strategy by the evaluation team. • Serve as key informants for interviews and respond to data collection efforts. • Provide documentation to the evaluation team to fill in evidence gaps. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitate access to interviewees/key informants identified in the stakeholder analysis and sampling strategy by the evaluation team • Serve as key informants for interviews and respond to data collection efforts. • Provide documentation to the evaluation team to fill in evidence gaps. Provide real-time reporting of evaluative learning and lessons for immediate course correction.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participate in the co-development and validation of preliminary findings, conclusions, and recommendations, and provide written feedback with factual corrections and supporting documentation. • Cultivate readiness for review of the draft evaluation report and any sub-studies and ensure they are shared with IAES within the stipulated time. • Review intermediary deliverables, e.g., survey results or sub-studies and ensure they are shared with IAES within the stipulated time. • Lead development of the Management Response (MR). • For IAES evaluations, ensure that the MR is sent to IAES within the stipulated time and engage with IAES on a presentation to Strategic Impact, Monitoring and Evaluation Committee (SIMEC) and/or other funders. • Help identify opportunities for joint dissemination of evaluation products. • Use evaluations in programming aligned to the time-bound implementation of agreed actions in the MR and partake in the follow-up process. • Respond to After Action Review (AAR) after full completion of evaluation cycle. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participate in the validation of preliminary findings, conclusions, and recommendations, and provide written feedback with factual corrections and supporting documentation • Cultivate readiness for review of draft evaluation report and any sub-studies. • Review intermediary deliverables, i.e., survey results or sub-studies. • Lead development of the MR. • Contribute to the presentation of results along the approach to knowledge management and dissemination. • Present evaluation results to stakeholders. • Co-identify opportunities for joint dissemination of evaluation products. • Promote the use of evaluations in programming and ensure the time-bound implementation of agreed upon actions in the MR and partake in the follow-up process.

Annex 2. Sample Responsibilities of MEL Focal Point During Evaluation Phases

Engagement of MEL professionals throughout the evaluation facilitates effective planning, coordination, and use of evaluations. A tailored example is available for MEL engagement during Evaluability Assessments (EAs), including in the Terms of Reference ([ToR](#)) for [Regional Integrated Initiatives](#).

Evaluation phase	MEL focal point key tasks
Scoping/pre-planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assemble relevant and reliable extant program documentation and data for the evaluation against the requested detailed list of required documentation. This will constitute the evaluation repository. Provide access to a designated, secure SharePoint folder for evaluation document upload, or upload to designated SP folder of IAES. Review key evaluation questions.
Inception	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide the supporting documentation and reliable data. Complete the spreadsheet based on the condensed core parameters of the CGIAR Guidelines on conducting an EA (2022) and provide supporting documentation where necessary.⁴² Review the evaluation design matrix to comment on the methods/and data sources (e.g., an Inception Report from evaluation of Big Data Platform). Co-facilitate engagement(s)/meetings, with evaluation team members. Review the evaluation Inception Report, based on the ToR. Review questionnaire for online survey, or other data collection tools. Contribute to the review of the stakeholder analysis.
Inquiry/data collection & analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support/facilitate access to interviewees/key informants to answer questions from the evaluation team. Serve as a key informant about the MEL system for an interview and respond to online survey.
reporting/ dissemination & use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participate in the validation of preliminary findings, conclusions, and recommendations. Coordinate comments from the evaluand team on the draft evaluation report and any sub-studies and ensure they are sent to IAES within the stipulated time. Contribute to the development of the Management Response (MR), e.g., from 2024 Systems Transformation Science Group Evaluation. Manage or contribute to the monitoring and reporting to the Portfolio Performance Unit (PPU) and other stakeholders on implementation of MR.

⁴² In line with the CGIAR EA Guidelines, this follows if the EA was conducted as an integrated part of the inception phase.

Annex 3. Roles and Timelines for Developing and Endorsing Management Response. ⁴³

No.	Management Engagement and Response (MER) Process	Action	Milestone/ timeline	Responsible
A	MER Guidelines are introduced to evaluand.	During induction, the MER Guidelines are introduced with the MR Template ⁴⁴ (e.g., see MR to MR Review).	As part of formal induction of the evaluand.	IAES/Evaluation Function
B	MR template is shared with evaluand focal point.	The MR Template is shared during validation meeting and during discussion of recommendations.	As part of validation meeting of evaluation results with evaluand	IAES/Evaluation Function
C	Pre-final discussion version of the evaluation report is approved and transmitted for endorsement.	Pre-final evaluation report shared with Strategic Impact, Monitoring and Evaluation Committee (SIMEC) and the evaluand, copy to the Portfolio Performance Unit (PPU.)	ten-day review by SIMEC.	Evaluation team & IAES/Evaluation Function
D	Input to MR coordinated, drafted and cleared	Evaluand with PPU seek input for MR to the recommendations, in the MR Template.	From three to six weeks, depending on the scope of recommendations	Evaluand in coordination with PPU
D1	Evaluand Lead & Executive Managing Director (EMD) review and clear MR.	Draft MR reviewed and cleared by relevant evaluand lead & EMD.	Two weeks	Evaluand in coordination with PPU

⁴³ The table draws on the [CGIAR internal Process Note](#), developed by the Portfolio Performance Unit (PPU) to help ensure that recommendations from independent evaluations are systematically tracked, addressed, and implemented. The Process Note explains that the PPU tracks and reports on MR implementation in January and June of each year, and that the annual CGIAR Internal Practice Change (Type 3) Report includes a section on the progress of implementation of MR actions. It further notes that, in Q4 of 2022, the PPU established a MR Actions Tracking Tool ("[MR Tracker](#)") to track the status of implementing MRs related to IAES' independent process and performance evaluations.

⁴⁴ To be updated, to align with structure of the digital tool piloted by PPU in July 2025.

No.	Management Engagement and Response (MER) Process	Action	Milestone/ timeline	Responsible
D2	MR with embargoed evaluation report transmitted to the System Board.	MR is shared with System Board (SB).	-	PPU via Board and Council Secretariat
E	SIMEC-endorsed embargoed final evaluation report & MR transmitted to System Council (SC).	MR is shared with SC.	Ten days before SC meeting or virtual drop-in event.	IAES/Evaluation Function via Board and SC Secretariat
	Publication of the final evaluation report & MRs		Within one week of SC approval.	IAES/EF
	Entry of MR into the PPU Tracking Tool .	Update the tracking tool with entries in the MR for follow-up.	Within one week of report; and MR publication by IAES.	PPU
F	Monitoring MR implementation	PPU sends a formal request to evaluand and those implicated in MR implementation; PPU updates Tracking Tool .	Every six months and bi-annual assessment.	SC and System Board, via PPU

Annex 4. Resources and Further Reading

- [Evaluation Flash Cards: Embedding Evaluative Thinking in Organizational Culture](#) (2017)
- [Evaluation Management Response: Guidance for UNICEF Staff](#) (2018)
- [International Labour Organization \(ILO\) Guidance Note: Management Follow-Up to Recommendations](#) (2016)
- [International Organization for Migration \(IOM\) Management Response and Follow-Up on IOM Evaluation Recommendations](#) (2019)
- [Management Response Systems to Evaluations: Benchmarking Review](#) (2024)
- [UNAIDS Guidance for Management Response to Evaluations](#) (2019)
- [United Nations Evaluation Group \(UNEG\) Guidance on Preparing Management Responses to UNDAF Evaluations](#) (2012)



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