Australian Government

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

Design and Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Standards

September 2023

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ACRONYMS

DFAT	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
EOPO	End-of-Program-Outcome
FIMR	Final Investment Monitoring Report
FTE	Full Time Equivalent
GEDSI	Gender Equality and Disability Social Inclusion
ICN	Investment Concept Note
IDD	Investment Design Document
IDPG	International Development Programming Guide
IDS	Investment Design Summary
IMR	Investment Monitoring Report
IO	Intermediate Outcome
MEL	Monitoring, evaluation and learning
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OECD DAC	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development - Development Assistance Committee
SAT	Strategic Advisory Group
SES	Senior Executive Services
TAG	Technical Advisory Group
ToR	Terms of Reference
VfM	Value for Money

ABOUT THE DESIGN AND MONITORING, EVALUATION & LEARNING STANDARDS

Why Do We Need Standards?

Key messages

High quality monitoring, review, evaluation, and learning (MEL) ensures investments have a credible basis and can be used to make timely and important strategic and tactical programming decisions. It supports accountability, learning and, when implemented well, improves program effectiveness and efficiency. The Standards provide clarity to DFAT staff and implementing partners over what a quality Design and MEL product and process is.

DFAT's Design and Monitoring, Evaluation & Learning Standards (the Standards) are designed to support the whole program cycle in DFAT - from concept through to design and implementation including monitoring, review, and evaluation:

Note: *In line with DFAT guidance and terminology, this document uses the word 'program' and 'investment' interchangeably to refer to a commitment of resources, and scope of work to achieve defined outcomes. The term 'portfolio' defines a suite of programs/investments i.e., such as in countries, regional and/or global programs, or in a particular thematic area.*

DFAT operates development programs in over 30 Posts in complex environments, from conflict affected areas, large populous states to small island states. Development programs can be bilateral, regional, or global i.e., supporting regional and multilateral architecture, the workings of nation states, supporting service delivery, governance, and enabling growth with the private sector and civil society organisations. Development programs translate policy intent into program outcomes. MEL is an essential part of any program as it helps to frame the narrative of what we intend to achieve and provides evidence of the development results gained. MEL provides data on progress towards outcomes, while also considering the complex environments and sectors we work in. MEL provides data that tests the hypotheses within theories of change and helps to guide policy dialogue on key reform issues.

The quality of monitoring and evaluation products has important implications for the basis on which programming decisions are made. These Standards provide DFAT staff and implementing partners with clarity on DFAT expectations. DFAT staff should use the standards when requesting implementing partners to provide MEL products and implementing partners should use the standards to guide the content and quality of their products. DFAT is also using these standards to assess the quality of products submitted during the design process.

The Standards do not prescribe the use of particular monitoring or evaluation theories or methods. Practitioners should identify methods and approaches appropriate for the sector and nature of the program. However, the Standards do reflect a departmental preference for timely, robust data to be made available to managers to help inform program decisions. Additionally, all Design and MEL products and processes should be as simple, fit for purpose and cost-effective as possible whilst meeting these Standards.

We are committed to revising and improving these Standards. Please provide any feedback to designmail@dfat.gov.au

How were these standards developed?

These Standards were initially released as guidance in 2012, following peer review. They were developed and evolved over time by the Evaluation Capacity Building Programs operating in the Asia-Pacific Region between 2009 and 2015. DFAT would like to extend its thanks for the excellent work led by Sue Dawson to develop the original set of standards which have largely stood the test of time and benefited those working within and for the Australian international development program for many years.

The Standards were later refreshed by a "brains trust" of experienced DFAT staff members (from both Canberra and posts, including locally engaged staff) and external MEL specialists, and re-released in 2022. The scope of the Standards has increased from the concept and design phase to cover the whole program cycle. The refresh reflects learning about MEL within the development program, the changed context of an integrated Department, and an operating context which requires lean MEL to consistently support strategy testing and evidence-based adaptation.

How Should the Standards be Applied?

These Standards should be integrated across the investment management cycle in DFAT concept notes, designs, implementation, review, and evaluation, and should also be embedded in DFAT contracts and contribution instruments. Where standards are embedded in DFAT contracts, they become contractual quality criteria. The Standards attempt to provide guidance on where flexibility is appropriate and how to handle flexibility, without compromising on rigour.

They should be used in conjunction with the following DFAT Guidelines:

- International Development Programming Guide – specifically Chapter 3: Development program management and performance reporting; Chapter 4: Program Design; and Chapter 6 Program management, evaluation, and quality reporting.

- DFAT Aid Evaluation Policy (2020).

Where DFAT's templates are available they guide application of the standards in practice and are mandatory to use for DFAT-led Official Development Assistance (ODA) programming. For Partner-led designs the Standards will assist in ensuring quality of products.

TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

MEL Framework, MEL Plan and MEL System

MEL (Monitoring, Evaluation & Learning) DFAT uses the term MEL to encompass all forms of MEL approaches. The approach and system chosen will depend on what is appropriate for the specific investment. All development programs are based on a program logic, and there is a need to revisit and adapt the program logic continuously, to respond to changes in the context and new knowledge. There are also programs that are purposefully designed to be adaptive for example using Problem Driven Iterative Adaptation (PDIA) or Thinking and Working Politically (TWP) and those approaches need specific methods to MEL. This is also the case for pilot programs or programs that are highly innovative where you might need to learn fast and change direction.

MEL Approach and Framework (required at design)- The design document must provide sufficient detail in the MEL Approach and Framework to prepare an MEL Plan within 6 months of program mobilisation. This includes describing the approach to track, verify and improve program performance. Key review points are identified, and any independent verification, such as TAGs/SATs and linkages to strategic oversight bodies are described. Human and financial resources required to monitor and evaluate the program over its lifetime are explicit. All designs must include the minimum sufficient MEL Framework annex outlining key evaluation and monitoring questions, a small set of key performance indicators, data sources, frequency of data collection, baselines (if available), and define how the data collected will be used.

MEL Plan (required within 6 months of mobilisation) – Building on, and updating, the MEL Approach and Framework in the design document, the MEL Plan describes the System (data collection, analysis, sense-making processes) that will be put in place to track, assess, and improve program performance over its lifetime. This includes reference to the role and function of the management team, the governance bodies in relation to MEL and the role of external evaluation/reviews and any advisory groups or third-party verification of data. The Plan specifies all data to be collected, includes data collection tools, and details how the data and analysis produced will inform program learning, adaptation, management decisions, and accountability requirements. *MEL Standard 5 (5.1 to 5.22) outlines what should be included in an MEL Plan.*

MEL System (fully operational with complete baseline, within 12 months of mobilisation) - The System is the operationalisation of the data and human processes described within the MEL Plan to track, verify, and inform program progress. At the end of 12 months, it is important that baselines are complete, using official data sets where possible, and the MEL System is producing data to test the program logic including key delivery strategies. Data produced helps to account for and improve program performance. *MEL Standard 5 (5.23 to 5.34) outlines considerations for a fully operational MEL System.*

Independent Evaluations and Reviews

There are three standards (Standards 8, 9 and 10) that relate to independent evaluations and reviews. The line between evaluation and review can be blurry within DFAT but evaluations generally have a broader scope, investigate multiple elements of the OECD-DAC criteria, have longer timeframes and additional resources than a review. Reviews generally have a shorter timeframe, are narrower in scope and primarily rely on existing evidence, with some limited additional investigative work. Reviews can be mid-term, annual or as required by management and may be conducted by technical or strategic advisory groups or internal or contracted advisers. Reviews inform specific management or resourcing decisions. Both reviews and evaluations can be used to inform program extension options.

Evaluations conducted under the DFAT Aid Evaluation Policy (2020) must be published along with a management response. Evaluations and reviews both require Terms of Reference (Standard 8), a Plan (Standard 9) and a Report (Standard 10). Importantly, the evidence base for recommendations in both evaluations and reviews must be transparent.

To be considered independent, those conducting evaluations and reviews should not have been involved in implementing or managing the program for at least the previous 5 years.

Target Groups for Gender Equality, Disability and Social Inclusion (GEDSI)

Throughout the Standards, the term "socially disadvantage groups" is used to refer to any group that is considered to require tailored interventions or special attention to:

- allow their voices to be heard in the design, implementation, review, and evaluation of the program.
- purposefully reach them and provide the opportunity to participate as equally in the program as other groups.
- allow them to enjoy program benefits equally with others in that community or population.
- ensure the program addresses any needs they may have that may not be shared by the wider population or may not have been considered in society or by decision-makers.

This could include diverse men, women, boys, and girls; people with disabilities; the poor and the near poor; ethnic or religious minorities; indigenous communities; the elderly; the sick or infirm; those with low levels of education; people that identify as LGBTQIA+, as well as cross-sections of these groups (e.g., women with disabilities).

STANDARD 1: Investment Concept Notes (ICN)

An Investment Concept Note (ICN) is written by DFAT and makes the business case for using funds to achieve certain policy objectives and to convert those into feasible investment outcomes for implementation.

Template available here

Nr.	Element
1.1	DFAT senior managers lead the Concept Stage.
1.2	The effort invested in the Concept (i.e., research and analysis, consultations with stakeholders, field work) is proportional to the risk and value of the investment.
1.3	Development context, including the problem intended to be solved is based on sound analysis. The evidence base for the ICN is robust and sourced.
1.4	Assessment of partner government priorities and resourcing
1.5	Strategic intent and rationale, key policy settings are clear to make the business case to the delegate(s). Outline Australia's national interests in country or region. Ensure policy objectives are clear and consider relevant government policies and strategies including specific development policy and performance framework.
1.6	Synthesise main lessons from past experiences of DFAT and other donors
1.7	Define what success would look like and include proposed End-of-Program-Outcomes (EOPO). These are described in broad but achievable terms.
1.8	Implementation and arrangements for delivery approaches specify at least three options, including Value for Money (VfM) considerations, as well as what is not being considered. (Outlining development approaches is optional.) Note: If a commercial tender is a possibility, it is recommended to raise this with Development Procurement and Agreements Branch (*aid.contracts@dfat.gov.au*), so they can provide early signals of the upcoming pipeline to the market.
1.9	Describe level of ambition in relation to GEDSI, climate change and localisation as appropriate
1.10	ODA eligibility assessed and justified ODA Eligibility Risk Assessment Tool
1.11	Risks identified with initial risk ratings, determining the approval pathway. All relevant safeguards are considered. Risk Factors Screening Tool and Risk Register
1.12	Outline the design pathway and quality assurance steps, skill sets required and key timeframes. [(IDPG 4.2) Main steps in a design process](IDPG 4.2 Main steps in a design process)

Detailed Description of Standard for Investment Concept Notes

1.1   *DFAT senior managers lead the Concept Stage.*

Senior managers (this includes SES staff responsible for the area and the delegate signing off on the budget) should lead the Concept stage to ensure strategic alignment with country regional and global strategies, both as a part of a coherent portfolio of investments and as a standalone investment. Early engagement with SES responsible for the area will help shape the investment.

It also provides a key opportunity for senior managers to oversee the process of working with partner governments, as well as regional and/or global organisations, to convert policy priorities into operational programming to meet shared objectives and invest in positive change to deliver policy and program outcomes.

Investing adequate time and effort by senior managers at the Concept stage is critical to prevent costly delays later.

The quality of a design is compromised by poor planning and rushed timeframes. Developing a sound concept is the starting point of a design.

1.2   *The effort invested in the Concept (i.e., research and analysis, consultations with stakeholders, field work) is proportional to the risk and value of the investment.*

The degree of analytical effort involved in preparation of the Investment Concept should be proportional to the financial value and risk rating – and consequently - the approval pathway of an intended investment. If an investment is High Value or High Risk (regardless of value), more effort is required at the Investment Concept stage to ensure the document provides the delegate and the Development Program Committee with adequate information to make a decision to proceed to design.

Sound analysis of the investment context is also a critical foundation for a quality design. It is the basis upon which Terms of Reference are developed for design teams including advice on stakeholders to be consulted, information and analytical gaps to be filled and issues likely to impact upon the investment.

1.3   *Development context, including the problem intended to be solved is based on sound analysis. The evidence base for the Concept is robust and sourced.*

This relates to relevance – why are we doing this and what evidence is this based on?

Gather information on the development problem or policy issue, country or regional context, previous evidence-based policy reform, strategic and political economy analysis, drivers of change, lessons learned, stakeholder analysis, and cross-cutting issues.

Information sources include national governments, think-tanks, national, regional, and international sources, other donors, International Finance Institutes (IFIs), research, DFAT's own program reporting (including lessons from Final Investment Monitoring Reporting) and previous evaluations,

Assess who the investment will benefit and why these beneficiaries have been selected (i.e., how the investment is relevant to the needs of these beneficiaries)

Include analysis of any major impediments impacting investment choices.

1.4   *Assessment of partner government priorities and resourcing*

Assess partner governments priorities by looking at government policies and relevant sector plans. Also calculate partner government available resources and financing gaps. Articulate the specific contribution of the investment to the Partner Government's priority development needs. Concept Notes provide opportunities to have early discussions both with internal stakeholders within DFAT and with partner governments to generate consensus on draft outcomes before design processes

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commence, and to bring that together with the priorities of both governments and other stakeholders

There is also the opportunity for early engagement with other donors to harmonise and leverage funds or loans. Oversight of initial internal and external consultations, the proposed design pathway, modalities, delivery, and procurement approaches are critical elements of quality assurance at this stage. Timeframes leading up to key meetings or for announcements will be a critical factor, but care should be taken to ensure a quality product that considers VfM, for approval by the delegate(s).

1.5 *Strategic intent and rationale, key policy settings are clear to make the business case to the delegate(s). Outline Australia's national interests in country or region. Ensure policy objectives are clear and consider relevant government policies and strategies including specific development policy and performance framework.*

Outline Australia's national interest in the country or region and provide rationale for why this development issue is the most appropriate for Australian support in consideration of the relevant Australian government policies and strategies in the area, including current development policy and performance framework. relevant regional and other strategies. Briefly outline how it meets national interest and influence, impact on economic growth and poverty, Australia's "value add" and comparative advantage as well as leverage and performance.

Show how the investment targets priority need not addressed by other deliver partners, and/or how Australia is seeking to harmonise its assistance with donor partners.

If working with another delivery partner (e.g., UN, WB or other bilateral donor) discuss what Australia expects to achieve through the partnership and how these fits with the partner governments' proprieties.

The national and/or regional sector policy objectives should be clear in order to convert them into program outcomes see further 1.7.

1.6 *Synthesise main lessons from past experiences of DFAT and other donors*

Demonstrate how the investment has been influenced by past experience and evaluations, including lessons learned by other development partners and those contained in evaluations reports and international literature and describe.

1.7 *Define what success would look like and include proposed End-of-Program-Outcomes (EOPO). These are described in broad but achievable terms.*

Outcomes are the way we describe what the investment will achieve. Outcome statements can be broad at the Concept stage but should still meet Standard 3 (Program Logic). They should be short, in plain English, free of jargon and describe a future end-state, not the process of getting there. The standard expects that outcomes clearly and succinctly describe who or what is expected to change, and the type of change expected (knowledge; action/behaviour; condition). GEDSI and climate change outcomes should be integrated into the outcomes at this early stage and be further elaborated and integrated in the program logic through the design process. Describe what success looks like and who will benefit. NB: The draft EOPOs at concept stage are initial and can be amended and refined at design stage.

1.8 *Implementation and arrangements for delivery approaches specify at least three options, including Value for Money (VfM) considerations, as well as what is not being considered. Outlining development approaches is optional.*

The Concept canvasses the alternative delivery options for a proposed investment and discusses the advantages and disadvantages of each of the options, including discussion of Australia's experience with the alternative delivery options in this country/sector, and a basic VfM comparative analysis. The decision to recommend a specific delivery approach is based on an evidence-based assessment

that this option has the greatest potential to maximise the likelihood of achieving outcomes while effectively managing risk and is VfM. Where options have been explicitly ruled out, the reasons for doing so are clearly explained. If decisions on delivery options are being canvassed at this stage, please get in touch with Development Procurement and Agreements Branch (DVB) through aid.contracts@dfat.gov.au to discuss. It is also important to ensure compliance with the Commonwealth Procurement Rules (CPRs) and the PGPA Act (check DVB). The options for DFAT delivery models should also be specified with resources specified against each of the options and a simple VfM assessment of each (noting later market testing processes).

More complex investments may require a combination of various delivery approaches and mixed modalities and partners. The Concept may indicate that specific decisions about options, or combinations of options, will be made through the design process.

The Concept note may also outline various options for development approaches and how this will be canvassed during the design process. Examples include demand versus supply side interventions, leadership and governance reform, rules of the game, central versus line agency reform, community development, women's economic empowerment as well as adaptive management techniques i.e., Thinking and Working Politically (TWP), Problem Driven Iterative Adaptation (PDIA) etc. This is optional rather than mandatory.

Outline indicative budget, MEL and DFAT administration costs (if known) and DFAT staff resources or FTE.

1.9 Describe level of ambition in relation to GEDSI, climate change and localisation as appropriate

The Concept should consider how to ensure GEDSI (Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Strategy) and climate change has been considered and will be incorporated in the Design phase. Level of Localisation should also be a consideration. DFAT's approach is to consider opportunities for localisation as a cross cutting issue where appropriate through the program cycle (concept, design, procurement and agreement stages, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation) as well as through risk management. Should an investment be deemed appropriate for localisation, the methods listed in the two-pager Localisation intent can be used to support local leadership and facilitate locally led development interventions, throughout the program cycle.

1.10   ODA eligibility assessed and justified. *ODA eligibility assessed and justified*

The investment must align with international Official Development Assistance (ODA) eligibility definitions established by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC). Administered ODA budget is appropriated to DFAT to spend on ODA eligible activities only. While confirmation the investment is ODA eligible was done at Written Approval to Commence stage, at Concept stage this is re-assessed. The Preliminary ODA Checklist will confirm if the investment is ODA eligible or requires further assessment to establish ODA eligibility. If the investment is ODA eligible, Investment Managers should use the ODA Eligibility Risk Assessment Tool to determine if a formal ODA assessment needs to be completed.

Where an investment is assessed as not ODA eligible or includes non-ODA components (i.e., partially ODA eligible), alternate sources of funding (Administered non-ODA or DFAT Departmental Budget) will need to be found for the non-ODA components.

1.11   *Risks identified with initial risk ratings, determining the approval pathway. All relevant safeguards are considered.*

The Risk Factors Screening Tool and Risk Register were completed at the Written Approval to Commence stage and in AidWorks at Investment establishment. At Concept this is updated and revised with new information available. The level of risk also informs the mandatory design requirements. Identify and screen for mandatory policy considerations (including potential environmental and social safeguard risks and impacts, counter-terrorism resourcing, and fraud), and for other risk factors that are common across investments.

The risk assessment at Concept stage outlines the likelihood and consequences of risks related to the operating environment, disaster risk, achievement of development results, partner capacity and relations, fraud/fiduciary risks, compliance, reputation, environment, and social and environmental safeguards. Ratings for each category are based on untreated risks (i.e., no mitigation strategies are required at this stage). However, the ICN should outline how key risks will be analysed and mitigated through the design process.

An investment is considered high risk if *any* risk is rated very high or if *three or more* risk categories are rated high.

Note: for detailed support in using the Risk Factors Screening Tool and Risk Register, please view Development Risk intranet page (if you are a DFAT officer) or contact the Development Risk, Implementation and Evaluation Branch (RAB) at *developmentriskmanagement@dfat.gov.au*

1.12   *Outline the design pathway and quality assurance steps, skill sets required and key timeframes.*

The design pathway flows from the risk assessment (High or Low) and value for the investment. For high risk (any value) and/or high value investments (AUD100 million and above) the concept note is endorsed by the Development Program Committee (DPC) before seeking formal approval from the delegate to proceed to design. (IDPG 4.2) Main steps in a design process

For low-risk and/or low value, the delegate may approve the ICN to proceed to design.

The key skillsets and expertise of the design team correspond to the needs of the design as outlined in the concept. These can include expertise in design or MEL or specific technical knowledge in areas such as economics, health, education, agriculture, political economy analysis, GEDSI etc.

DFAT staff roles and responsibilities during the design process should be clarified.

The timeframes are outlined to move the concept to design, procurement, mobilisation/implementation, and any public announcements as necessary.

The quality assurance steps should be outlined including informal quality assurance, independent appraisal (internal and external), peer review, DPC consideration.

STANDARD 2:Investment Design - Terms of Reference

Moving from concept to design is a project management task as well as an analytical one. Planning and good management is essential to achieve a feasible design of high quality.

Template can be found here.

Background and Orientation

Nr.	Element
2.1	Brief orientation of DFAT's requirements for an investment and the context in which the investment is being designed.
2.2	Objectives and scope of the assignment is clear
2.3	Clearly identify DFAT's priorities and DFAT engagement is specified.

Team composition and design governance

Nr.	Element
2.4	Clear specification of the mix of specific technical skills, and attributes required in design team including setting out clearly the role of the Team Leader and local team members.
2.5	The role of DFAT staff and any reference group (if being used) is clear

Scheduling

Nr.	Element
2.6	A verbal briefing for the team of the key issues and priorities is planned
2.7	A Design Plan is required. The depth of the planning reflects the complexity, value, and risk rating of the design
2.8	The Scope specifies analysis to be conducted; stakeholders to be consulted; and design standards to be met.
2.9	The Budget and timeline are aligned with the scope and feasible.

Reporting and Deliverables

Nr.	Element
2.10	Any deliverables in addition to the design and design document, including any mandatory annexes such as Statement of Requirement, GEDSI analysis etc and optional annexes and other communication products are identified
2.11	The process for commenting is efficient including any quality assurance processes

Detailed Description of Standards for Investment Design Terms of Reference (ToR)

Background and orientation

2.1 Brief orientation of DFAT's requirements for an investment and the context in which the investment is being designed.

It is critical that the Terms of Reference accurately reflect DFAT's expectations and provide appropriate guidance to the design team. The ToR should be a standalone document and follows the approval of the Concept. Background information provides the history and rationale for the investment. It places the investment in the context of the country/regional and sector to which it relates. This includes Country/regional and relevant sectoral background; other related investments; history and other details of the investment; relevant information from the Concept Note for example recommendations and preliminary End-of-Program-Outcomes (EOPOs). Any issues that need further investigation are included.

2.2 Objectives and scope of the assignment is clear

Objectives of the design assignment are clearly and specifically articulated. Building on the Concept a detailed description of the tasks required of the team are stated. The following could be considered but choices will depend on the depth of information in the concept and how the review process might have suggested additions needed to be included at design stage:

A deeper problem/needs analysis for the development problem/issue to be addressed by the investment.

Consideration of how Australia's development policy intentions will be supported, including specific requirements.

- Full description of the rationale for the investment.
- Confirmation of the partners that need to be involved to address the development problem/issue, and partner government and other stakeholder willingness to commit resources to the investment.
- A thorough technical analysis ensuring feasibility in relation to political environment.
- Governance arrangements, including roles and responsibilities of all partners.
- Examination of feasibility and viability of delivery options available and explanation why the proposed arrangements represent VfM (e.g. linkages between performance and funding).
- Confirmation and refinement of achievable and sustainable EOPOs as initially drafted in the concept note. Development of a logic and assumptions with 5 minimum levels of logic (i.e., goal, objective, EOPOs), Intermediate Outcomes, Outputs (see Standard 3).
- Analysis and integration of cross-cutting issues such as gender, anti-corruption, disability inclusiveness, localisation, indigenous peoples, climate, private sector engagement and innovation.
- Full risk assessment using the [DFAT risk tool and template](#), and development of a risk management strategy, including safeguards, PSEAH, displacement and resettlement risks and environmental protection requirements in accordance with Australian and local law, Ensure the correct risk register template is used with risk events, existing controls, enhanced treatments and DFAT business owners.
- Fiduciary risk assessments of the partner government sector or agencies if DFAT funds will flow through the systems under the investment (this is critical when the design involves using partner government systems. Contact *Partner.Systems@dfat.gov.au*.
- Development of a minimum sufficient monitoring, evaluation and learning framework in line with Standard 4 (4.20 to 4.23), outlining the main evaluation approaches/techniques to be used to ensure outcomes for the investment, including for identified social and

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environmental impacts, safeguard plans and ensuring it contains gender and disability sensitive indicators.

- Development of a budget annex with budget against the EOPOs, key modalities, and MEL and GEDSI functions so it can be tendered and implemented.
- Development of the Policy Dialogue matrix with entry points for policy reform.
- Development of the draft Statement of Requirements (SoR) for a future tender process (*if relevant*) and suggested clauses for inclusion in the investment-specific Memorandum-of-Understanding (MOU) with the partner government or similar agreement with a partner delivery agency (i.e., a clause for a multilateral agency agreement). These instruments do not cover all arrangements and the design team should consider what is needed to ensure the agreement is appropriate
- Be clear about page numbers and the number of mandatory and optional annexes. Mandatory annexes include policy dialogue, budget, risk, minimum sufficient MEF. Optional annexes include SoRs, GEDSI analysis, Political Economic Analysis (PEA) or stakeholder analysis, Detailed situational analysis, previous review findings, Assessment of National Systems or Fiduciary risk assessments.

2.3 Clearly identify DFAT's priorities and DFAT engagement is specified.

Accurately reflect DFAT's expectations and Standards, as well as the expectations of key stakeholders including partner government priorities. A key driver of a good quality design is clarity regarding both the overarching policy intent and DFAT's priorities being met during the design process.

Provision made for regular, informal discussions between the design Team Leader and DFAT Investment Design Manager, relevant posted officers, during preparation of the Design Plan, in-country mission, prior to presentation of formal exit briefing or aide memoire and during preparation of draft and final design documents, and relevant quality assurance steps. DFAT will provide feedback into schedule priorities and whether it will accompany the team on key meetings and field visits.

Team composition and design governance

2.4 Clear specification of the mix of specific technical skills, and attribute required in design team including the role of the Team Leader and local team members are clear.

The Team Leader role is critical to the success of a design team. The Team Leader has demonstrated skills, attributes, and experience in providing intellectual leadership to a design team, managing the team members and their inputs, and delivering a good quality design product which meets DFAT standards. Consideration must be given to the use of local consultants with the requisite skill sets. This is even more important if parts of the design are conducted remotely. Where the use of local consultants is not appropriate/applicable this should be explained.

Where appropriate, draft design ToRs can be shared with Team Leader to 'ground-truth' feasibility of proposed approach.

Across the design team required demonstrated skills are usually needed in:

- *preparation of designs to DFAT standards*
- *sectoral or technical policy as appropriate for the area the investment is covering, including economics, public financial management*
- *country or regional context, local knowledge*
- *GEDSI gender equality, disability, and social inclusion*
- *facilitation and preparation of program logics (see Standard 3)*
- *high-level MEL practitioner skills*
- *ability to work productively as part of a multi-skilled and cross-cultural team*

- *excellent writing skills to translate complex concepts to be understood in the design document.*

For programs involving working in partner systems, or using general or sector budget support, both economics and PFM skills are recommended for inclusion in the design team.

For all team members evidence of skills and experience can be requested if needed for selecting an appropriate team. Design teams can be sought through procurement processes or using Commonwealth panels such as DFAT's own [Design Review and Monitoring & Evaluation Panel](#) (Panel ID PNL1626).

2.5 The role of DFAT staff and any reference group (if being used) is clear

The DFAT design manager should be clearly identified, with sufficient time available in their forward workplan to oversee and manage the design, If DFAT staff are expected to be part of the team, their role and purpose of their inclusion is explicit.

If a reference group (or other governance or oversight body) is in place for the design the composition of the group (positions of representatives) and their role in the design should be briefly described in the ToR. Expectations about when, and on what issues the design team will engage with this group should be clear.

Scheduling

2.6 A verbal briefing for the team of the key issues and priorities is planned

A verbal briefing is planned to discuss the background, issues, and priorities for the design with the design team leader (and other design team members as applicable) before the design plan is developed. Sufficient time is allocated to allow DFAT and the design team to work together to clarify scope, priority issues, and general approach to the design process. It might require more than one discussion.

2.7 A Design Plan is required. The depth of the planning reflects the complexity, value, and risk rating of the design

The depth of planning required for the design reflects the complexity, value, and risk rating. If this is a complex and either new or very strategic area, then more time is allocated. Ensure the partner government/key regional architecture is consulted for design processes to be genuinely negotiated with key potential partners.

2.8 The Scope specifies analysis to be conducted; stakeholders to be consulted; and design standards to be met.

The ToR provide clear direction to the design team on the three areas critical to quality design. This includes:

- *analysis to be conducted* (pre-commissioned or as part of the design) to address gaps in knowledge or to inform the development response; DFAT recognises political economy analysis, gender and social inclusion analysis, assessment of national systems and fiduciary risks, and analysis of partner monitoring and evaluation capacity as critical inputs for a quality design
- *stakeholders to be consulted*; ToR should include preliminary list of stakeholders to be consulted and require design team to include, in Design Plan which also describes which stakeholders will be consulted, for what purpose and how this will influence the design
- *design standards to be met* (see D5 below)

2.9 The Budget and timeline are aligned with the scope and feasible

Adequate time and resources (personnel and financial) are allocated to produce a quality design, including allowing sufficient time for comprehensive briefings, meaningful consultation with

stakeholders, field work at potentially national and subnational levels (if relevant), and document preparation. For complex designs, more than one field mission may be organised (or the team leader may conduct a second mission) for follow up consultations or local peer review, to encourage ownership and alignment with key stakeholders.

Up to 6 months may be necessary for a complex high risk or high value design, (with time necessary for AGB consideration). Contact *designmail@dfat.gov.au* for advice on required input days for external consultant/s to assist in preparation of both DFAT led and partner led designs (the latter if a consultant is required to provide a facilitative or technical role to support the partner with a design proposal)

Reporting and deliverables

2.10 Any deliverables in addition to the design and design document, including any mandatory annexes such as Statement of Requirement, GEDSI analysis etc and optional annexes and other communication products are identified

The ToR require a Design Plan to be prepared. The design plan should be based on a collaborative approach. I should include, but not limited to, how the design will be conducted, what analysis it is based on, or additional analysis required, identified stakeholders from partner governments, organisations, and institutions as well as beneficiaries. The Design plan should be discussed and then approved by DFAT prior to commencement of the in-country mission (or consultations happening remotely). The design also has a stakeholder consultation plan.

Requirements for an Aide Memoire, exit briefings (upon completion of in-country mission), draft and final design documents clearly specified. Common milestones include i) a pre-mission design plan; ii) an aide memoire; iii) a draft design; iv) additional drafts based on quality assurance steps; v) participation in local or DFAT led peer reviews if relevant; and, vi) final design for approval. The TOR specifies that the design uses the appropriate design template in chapter 4 of the Aid Programming Guide i.e. Investment Design Document (IDD) or Investment Design Summary (IDS) templates for DFAT led and partner led designs respectively.

Design Annexes must be clearly identified (including budget, risk register, policy dialogue matrix, minimum sufficient MEL framework, and GEDSI and climate change analysis). For investments that will be implemented by a managing contractor, a Statement of Requirement (SOR) and pricing schedule should be specified as an Annex.

2.11 The process for commenting is efficient including any quality assurance processes

The process of commenting on the draft design is described and is efficient. Only relevant individuals are invited to comment and areas they should focus their attention on can be specified. Consideration be given to invite GEDSI, climate change and thematic areas. Note those that are invited to comment on final design should be aware of ToR and Design Plan to ensure their comments are within the scope and expectations. The ToR explains that DFAT will either provide comments in a consolidated form to the team, or whether the team will attend the peer review and obtain feedback firsthand and will then be responsible for updating documents to respond to feedback.

STANDARD 3: Program Logic/Theory of Change

The terms Program Logic and Theory of Change are used interchangeably in DFAT designs, although they may mean other things for other practitioners.

Nr.	Element
3.1	The program logic is built on a good understanding of how change can occur in the relevant context. Stakeholders with strong local perspectives and technical expertise are involved.
3.2	The problem to be addressed or opportunity to influence change is clearly defined
3.3	End-of-Program Outcomes (EOPOs)represent a meaningful contribution to the public in the operating context, are feasible given the budget, timeframe, and proposed change pathways
3.4	The major strategies/ pathways for influencing change are clearly defined, and sufficiently stepped out using an "if-then" logic
3.5	All levels of the logic use short, plain language statements defining who is expected to deliver or benefit, and what the expected activity, deliverable or change is
3.6	Expected benefits for socially disadvantaged groups have been embedded into the logic
3.7	The necessary and sufficient conditions for success (key assumptions) are clearly identified. These are critical risks to delivery and must be monitored
3.8	The program logic is developed to include five logic levels at design stage (goal, objective, EOPO, intermediate outcome, output). The program logic is then developed to seven logic levels in implementation (activities, inputs are included) (see Standard 4)
3.9	DFAT terminology is appropriately applied to different logic levels
3.10	The logic diagram and narrative are documented and simple enough for a non-technical audience to understand
3.11	There is a regular process to test and update the program logic, involving key partners. Any changes to intermediate outcomes and outputs are based on analytics and evidence and it is documented. EOPOs can only be changed through a formal process with justifications and needs to be approved by the DFAT budget delegate.

Detailed Description of Standards for Program Logic/Theory of Change

3.1 The program logic is built on a good understanding of how change can occur in the relevant context. Stakeholders with strong local perspectives and technical expertise are involved.

A program logic is always context specific. The process of developing the logic (through facilitated workshop/s with key stakeholders involved) is critical to achieve a quality product. Developing, testing, and refining the logic, builds shared ownership and understanding of the investment, including what it intends to achieve throughout its lifetime, and how it will get there.

The program logic is built, and should be updated regularly, based on a sound understanding of context including:

- Current policy context and the drivers of change (key influencers and influences) in this policy context.

- Lessons from previous or current government, donor, private sector or NGO investments in this sector and operating context. That may include lessons from previous phases of this investment.

- Knowledge of how the opportunity or problem being addressed by this investment has been overcome in this (or similar) contexts in the past and what factors led to success or failure.

- Local conditions can be understood by:

  o Conducting research: relevant documents and literature should be reviewed. Additional analysis such as political economy analysis, PESTLE[1] analysis, stakeholder mapping, gender and/or inclusion analysis can help inform a good program logic.

  o Bringing together design or implementing team members in a facilitated workshop or series of workshops with key stakeholders, including those with deep country/regional and sectoral knowledge. This group co-develops, and later can help to refine and update, the program logic.

3.2 *The problem to be addressed or opportunity to influence change is clearly defined*

There is a clear and compelling reason for why DFAT is spending public sector funds on this investment. The problem/s to be addressed or the opportunity/ies to be leveraged are explicit. Tools such as a force field analysis, SWOT analysis or a problem tree analysis can help to clarify the problem or opportunities the investment intends to address.

3.3 End-of-Program Outcomes (EOPOs) represent a meaningful contribution to the public in the operating context, are feasible given the budget, timeframe, and proposed change pathways

The EOPOs represent a meaningful benefit or value to intended beneficiaries. The outcomes are defined as an end-state (not as a way of getting there) and are clear about who and what is expected to change by the end of the investment. The type of change could be change in knowledge, behaviour, or condition. *E.g., Boys and girls in primary school in East Bogor improve their literacy and numeracy by 2025.*

EOPOs address (at least aspects of) the defined problem or opportunities. DFAT expects a logic to have no more than 2-3 EOPOs.

A single change pathway is unlikely to deliver the desired change but, taken together, all the change pathways combine to deliver the EOPOs.

3.4 The major strategies/ pathways for influencing change are clearly defined, and sufficiently stepped out using an "if-then" logic

For investments where the problem/opportunity and effective solutions are well understood, the logic should spell out how it will deploy its resources (inputs) to influence (through activities and outputs) short and medium-term changes (intermediate outcomes). The majority of DFAT investments are expected to be able to define a clear intended program logic.

The "if-then" dependencies both within and between the change pathways must be indicated by arrows (assumptions) in the logic diagram. Short and medium-term changes (intermediate outcomes) are clearly defined in the logic. A logic that stops at activities or outputs is not sufficient.

Depending on the complexity of the investment and the operating context, the logic is highly likely to change and evolve throughout the life of the investment (particularly at output, activities, and input level). Whilst change pathways may be depicted as linear for communications purposes, they rarely are in practice.

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[1] An analysis of the Political, Economic, Sociocultural, Technological, Legal, Environmental (and sometimes also Ethical) factors which affect the sector/investment.
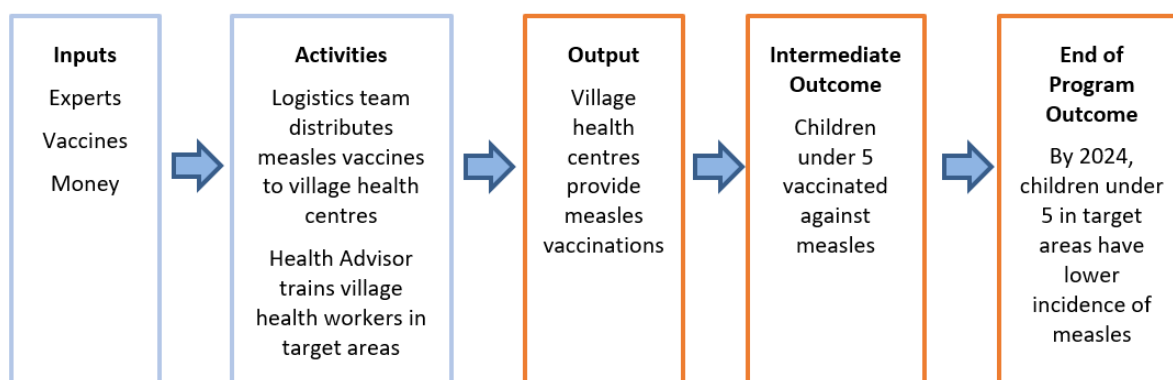
For highly flexible and adaptive investments such as facilities where the opportunities are harder to define, and solutions are being tested iteratively the proposed change pathways may be indicative but at a minimum the program logic must have:

- both a goal and an objective
- clearly defined EOPOs
- initial intermediate outcomes and indicative outputs based on initial hypotheses that are tested and updated during implementation
- clear principles or mechanisms for delivery. For example, using problem-based analysis, leveraging government efforts, developing district level models, acceptance of some activity failure
- decision criteria for determining what can and can't be funded. For example, proposals must deliver on defined intermediate outcomes
- high quality real-time monitoring of context and performance to enable evidenced informed decisions
- transparent processes for reviewing evidence to identify the most effective and efficient ways to achieve the EOPOs.

As problems/opportunities and preferred solutions (change pathways) become clearer, the program logic should be refined and change pathways updated, based on evidence.

*3.5 All levels of the logic use short, plain language statements defining **who** is expected to deliver or benefit, and **what** the expected activity, deliverable or change is*

All statements in the logic are clear about **who** will deliver or benefit from the change and **what** the expected activity/deliverable/change is. For example:

Inputs	**Activities**	**Output**	**Intermediate Outcome**	**End of Program Outcome**
Experts Vaccines Money	Logistics team distributes measles vaccines to village health centres Health Advisor trains village health workers in target areas	Village health centres provide measles vaccinations	Children under 5 vaccinated against measles	By 2024, children under 5 in target areas have lower incidence of measles

Statements are in plain language, generally less than 20 words and are phrased as end-states. Vague terms such as "improve capacity" are avoided (or precisely defined in an accompanying narrative). Statements should rather define the desired knowledge or behaviour changes that result from improved capacity. *E.g., Finance Ministry staff produce budgets in line with Socio-Economic Development Plan priorities* rather than *Finance Ministry staff capacity is improved.* The former statement is easier to test, track and measure and clarifies expectations for all stakeholders.

3.6 Expected benefits for socially disadvantaged groups have been embedded into the logic

The logic is informed by a gender and social inclusion situation analysis, or through experts with knowledge of gender and inclusion in this context. Where there are intended benefits for socially disadvantaged groups (women, girls, people with disabilities, ethnic minority groups, religious minority groups) the logic explicitly identifies these groups in outcome statements.

For example, if the gender analysis indicates that female teachers are less likely to be promoted into leadership positions, it is useful in the logic to either:

- Create an explicit end of program outcome, and/or intermediate outcome and change pathway for women's leadership in educational institutions; or

- Explicitly refer to male and female teachers (rather than just teachers) throughout all parts of the logic that relate to improving education leadership.

3.7 The necessary and sufficient conditions for success (key assumptions) are clearly identified. These are critical risks to delivery and must be monitored

As a program logic represents a desired future state, it is based on a set of assumptions about how change will happen and how this investment will influence that change. These assumptions are based on evidence and a good understanding of the context. Every arrow within the logic represents many assumptions. Generally, the higher up the logic, the greater the assumptions and the implementing teams have less ability to control or influence them. Assumptions are a positive way of framing the risks to effective investment delivery. The critical assumptions should be translated into risks in the risk register.

At a minimum the program logic should identify the critical/key assumptions. These assumptions indicate the necessary and sufficient conditions for investment success and must be monitored and tested regularly.

3.8 The program logic is developed to include five logic levels at design stage (goal, objective, EOPO, intermediate outcome, output). The program logic is then developed to seven logic levels in implementation (activities, inputs are included)

There should be a clear link between this investment and the priorities of Australia and our partner country. The goal statement in the logic is generally linked to partner government national or regional development plans for bilateral and regional programs. For global programs, the goal statement can be informed by broader norms, public goods, the protection of rights, and relevant international treaties and obligations.

The objective statement should link to Australia's development cooperation priorities in the country/region or a policy objective of Australia.

Goals and objectives demonstrate policy intent and are above the "line of accountability". EOPOs and intermediate outcomes are below the "line of accountability", and the investment is responsible for measuring achievement at these levels. Goal and objectives are measured at a higher level (not through the investment's MEL Systems) to ensure the investment remain relevant for the context.

3.9 DFAT terminology is appropriately applied to different logic levels

Table 1 provides definitions of each level of a program logic. It is important that this terminology is applied consistently and correctly to all DFAT program logics.

Importantly:

- DFAT program logics have a "line of accountability" between the EOPOs and DFAT's regional/country/sector objectives. DFAT and delivery partners are accountable, in Investment Monitoring Reports and to partners, for delivery of the EOPOs, and all elements below. Above that line, the investment, and many others contribute to the broader development objectives and goals.

- Intermediate outcomes can be further broken down into short and medium-term outcomes, or immediate and intermediate outcomes.

- Outputs can be developed indicatively at design stage and updated in early implementation. Activities and Inputs are often left for implementation and included in the first annual plan.

- Mid-term reviews generally test progress towards intermediate outcomes as well as adequate progress to achieve the EOPO.

Policy Intent

Goal	Goals are generally partner government priorities stated in national development plans, sector plans, or international treaties, and obligations.
Objective	These are Australia's development cooperation objectives, found in DFAT's policy, including Country/Regional Plans, which contribute to the achievement of partner government priorities.

DFAT accountable for delivery (Line of Accountability)

End-of-Program-Outcome	The desired development change among counterparts, change agents or beneficiaries that can be achieved within allocated resources and the timeframe of the investment. The EOPOs are anticipated to occur as a result of the combined inputs, activities, outputs and intermediate outcomes.
Intermediate Outcome	The short and medium-term effects of an investment's outputs. Short term effects include, for example, changes in counterpart or beneficiary knowledge, attitudes, and skills, while medium term effects often reflect changes in behaviour, practice, and decisions. The achievement of a single intermediate outcome is a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for the achievement of the EOPO.
Outputs	The physical products, goods and services delivered by an investment implementing team. Outputs are delivered to influence the performance or behaviour of counterparts or change agents.
Activity	Actions taken or work performed through which inputs are mobilised to produce specific outputs (and outcomes). A single investment may include multiple activities.
Inputs	The financial, human, material and intellectual resources used during the implementation.

3.10 The logic diagram and narrative are documented and simple enough for a non-technical audience to understand

There must be a diagram of the program logic which can be represented either vertically or horizontally. As change pathways can be inter-related, or even cyclical, a program logic is rarely linear.

However, the diagram must:

- Be understandable by a non-technical audience
- Clearly depict the change pathways and relationships between these pathways (with arrows included)
- Use the DFAT terminology to reflect the different levels in the program logic.[2]

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[2] Partner-led designs might use terminology differently and, in those cases, it is important to ensure the logic in the diagram and narrative.

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For a program logic developed during a design process, the narrative can be written into different aspects of the design document. At a minimum a short narrative of up to two pages should describe the Program Logic which should include the following dot points:[3]

- The drivers for creating this investment (the problem/opportunity to be addressed)
- The size of the investment and location
- Each change pathway in turn (using an "if-then" approach) and the rationale for selection
- At a minimum five levels of the program logic (goal, objective, EOPOs, intermediate outcomes and outputs)
- Principles or ways of working and cross-cutting issues
- Key assumptions (these can be tested using 'if .... and, insert assumptions, ...then') .

Highly stylised or simplified logics (which summarise change pathways) may be useful for communications purposes, but more detail is often needed to build a useful MEL System.

3.11. There is a regular process to test and update the program logic, involving key partners. Any changes to intermediate outcomes and outputs are based on analytics and evidence and it is documented. EOPOs can only be changed through a formal process with justifications and needs to be approved by the DFAT budget delegate.

There is a regular process, involving those with deep knowledge of the investment and the operating context, to refine and update the program logic. This includes:

- analysing changes in the operating context, including the development problem, political economy, technical issues
- testing the investment strategies, and hypotheses, based on reflections, data, and evidence (qualitative and quantitative)
- testing the key assumptions
- updating the program logic, particularly at intermediate outcome, output and activity level.

Any changes should be justified and agreed in writing with DFAT, documented in Annual Plans and Progress Reports (see *Standard* 6), and DFAT should upload documentation with justification (evidence) and agreed changes to AidWorks and/or to EDRMS.

Program logics should be reviewed at least annually but this may be more frequent for investments where the change pathways are less clear (i.e., facilities or highly adaptive and iterative investments). Pathways for achieving EOPOs can change as Investment Managers and implementing partners learn more about what works in the often-evolving operating context.

DFAT makes a business case to spend taxpayer's money against EOPOs, and these EOPOs are signed off by the relevant DFAT budget delegate. EOPOs should only be changed through a formal process with justifications, supported by evidence, and needs to be approved by the DFAT budget delegate. Mid-term reviews and re-designs provide opportunities to assess the EOPOs.

The review and update process should be defined in the investment MEL System (See S*tandard 5).*

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[3] See further Standard 4

STANDARD 4: Investment Design

Investment designs convert policy objectives into program outcomes and use project architecture to show how implementation will occur and what success looks like. Use the sections applicable for your investment. There are some additions for Partner-led designs (4.24 to 4.26).

[Template for DFAT-led Design](#)

[Template for Investment Design Summary (IDS) used for Partner-led Design](#)

Investment Design Plan

Nr.	Element
4.1	Terms of Reference, refer Standard 2, reflect the requirements for the design team leader/ MEL practitioner including demonstrated skills in Program Logic/Theory of Change.
4.2	The Design Plan is based on a collaborative approach.
4.3	Design plan allows for sufficient opportunity to gather relevant information to inform the design including allowing sufficient opportunity to meaningfully engage local partners in the process.

Investment Design Document

Nr.	Element
4.4	Senior staff, SES responsible for the area and the budget delegate, are engaged in strategic oversight, risk, and contestability role.
4.5	Draws upon in-house specialist knowledge and experience, including program enabling areas.
4.6	The design identifies the development context and situational analysis. It identifies and applies the results of analysis and lessons from DFAT's own experience, previous policy reform and implementation efforts, at national, regional, and global levels.
4.7	The design outlines the strategic intent and rationale for the investment including reference to DFAT's policy objectives including thematic and cross cutting policy priorities.
4.8	There is a robust program logic / theory of change, that uses DFAT definitions of goals, objectives, outcomes, outputs (Cross-reference Standard 3).
4.9	The long-term goal of the investment is aligned with, and contributes to, partner's formal plans.
4.10	The objective of the investment contributes to DFAT's strategic objectives as outlined in relevant country, regional and global strategies.
4.11	End-of-Program-Outcomes (EOPOS) are clear, realistic, and measurable, using who, what by when language (including knowledge, action, condition).
4.12	The design is a flexible framework which allows adaptation to context, with activities and inputs left for later implementation planning.
4.13	The choice of delivery approaches, modalities, development approaches, partnerships and implementation arrangements are appropriate to achieve EOPOS and represent Value for Money (VfM).
4.14	Governance and management arrangements, including DFAT resourcing are clearly specified. Choice of delivery approaches partnerships and implementation arrangements are appropriate to achieve EOPO.

Nr.	Element
4.15	The policy problems, reform opportunities, entry points, role of DFAT, partners and key stakeholders in policy dialogue and advocacy are clearly defined.
4.16	The design incorporates mechanisms to promote sustainability, institutionalisation and leveraging of other sources of finance and resourcing.
4.17	The design is based upon a collaborative approach between DFAT, relevant Partner Government or organisational representatives, other relevant stakeholders, and the design team. The design outlines and enhances the mutual accountability.
4.18	The design document is contractable into contributions and/or contracting arrangements and considers innovative methods including performance payments.
4.19	The design describes important assumptions, risks, which are likely to influence the achievement of outcomes, and provides risk and safeguard mitigation strategies. Risk Factor Screening Tool & Risk Register

MEL minimum at design (to develop MEL Plan at implementation)

Nr.	Element
4.20	The End-of-Program-Outcomes (EOPOs) and Intermediate Outcomes (IO) are expressed in terms of key performance indicators pitched at the right level.
4.21	The design specifies that DFAT Design and MEL standards must be met.
4.22	Adequate provisions have been made for the design and oversight of MEL Systems for the life of the investment, including an adequately qualified MEL practitioner. As a guide 4-7% of the implementation budget.
4.23	Approaches to MEL, the MEL Framework (in the template) as well as important key evaluation questions, key monitoring questions, independent assessment processes emerging during the design are highlighted

Investment Design Summary (IDS) for Partner-led Designs

Nr.	Element
4.24	Emphasis is given to an evidence-based justification for the choice of partner including references to previous assessments of the performance of this partner. Efforts are explained as to how DFAT has influenced the partner-led design.
4.25	Areas where DFAT standards have not been met are identified.
4.26	Outline how performance, quality and risk will be managed during implementation. Including any misalignment between partner MEL approaches and DFAT MEL standards and how these will be addressed.
4.27	Identify any gaps in meeting DFAT's cross-cutting policies, specifically GEDSI and climate, safeguards, and due diligence. Outline DFAT's strategy to ensure these gaps are addressed during implementation.

Detailed Description of Standard for Investment Designs

Investment Design Plan

4.1 Terms of Reference, refer Standard 2, reflect the requirements for the design team leader/ MEL practitioner including demonstrated skills in Program Logic/Theory of Change

The Team Leader role is critical to the success of a design team. The Team Leader has demonstrated skills, attributes, and experience in providing intellectual leadership to a design team, managing the team members and their inputs, and delivering a good quality design product which meets DFAT standards.

The design team needs to include demonstrated skills in facilitating development of the Program Logic see Standard 3.

Where appropriate, draft design ToRs can be shared with Team Leader to 'ground-truth' the feasibility of the proposed approach.

4.2 The Design Plan is based on a collaborative approach

The ToR informs the Design Plan which is developed by the Design team leader in collaboration with DFAT and stakeholders identified as important by DFAT.

4.3 Design plan allows for sufficient opportunity to gather relevant information to inform the design including allowing sufficient opportunity to meaningfully engage local partners in the process.

There is sufficient time allocated to gather information. Sufficient time is given to the recruitment of respondents who represent socially disadvantaged groups, time required to travel to the appropriate locations, and setting the tone for interactions that enable respondents to provide their views with confidence and in comfort.

Allow sufficient opportunity to engage with local partners (government, private sector, local organisations, beneficiaries as appropriate). Consider if more time is needed due to translation requirements.

If the design must be wholly or partly done remotely it is likely to require more time to schedule meetings due to for example time differences. The design team might also require more assistance to organise meetings.

Investment design document

4.4 Senior staff, SES responsible for the area and the budget delegate, are engaged in strategic oversight, risk, and contestability role.

Senior staff will have been engaged at the Investment Concept stage in guiding the broad direction or strategic intent? of the investment. At the commencement of design, senior staff may be called upon to formally advise the design team of the narrative for the design including strategy and policy settings, opportunities and constraints that underpin the design.

The role of senior staff is to oversee strategic direction, to ensure quality and contestability, and to provide assurance to the approving delegate of a quality design product with adequate resourcing and risk management strategies in place. Feedback and updates are provided regularly by the Investment Manager, and the design team, to senior staff and other relevant stakeholders, during the design process.

4.5 Investment Manager draws on in-house specialist knowledge and experience, including program enabling areas.

Investment Managers are to use core program management and public service skills, navigate business processes and manage a range of internal and external stakeholders. Ensure a clear and feasible planning process; develop appropriate ToR for design teams; apply DFAT standards, manage

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procurement and contracting processes, ensure internal and external consultation processes, enable and plan quality assurance and contestability processes to build ownership of the design across the Department and with key partners.

For designs over $50 million it is good practice to form an internal DFAT reference group early, at either concept or design stage, including relevant sector and thematic specialists, economists, GEDSI staff and program enabling areas (design, MEL, contracts, risk, fraud, child protection). Coaching and mentoring support is also available by contacting *designmail@dfat.gov.au*. If a design is likely to opt for a commercial procurement, it is also important to flag this with industry early by contacting *aid.contracts@dfat.gov.au* to ensure a tailored approach to market.

4.6 The design identifies the development context and situational analysis. It identifies and applies the results of analysis and lessons from DFAT's own experience, previous policy reform and implementation efforts, at national, regional, and global levels.

The design document explains the development problem/issue being addressed, the political economy and evidence base. The design includes the results of any pre-commissioned data or analysis, as well as the learnings from local and international experience identified via high quality analysis, reviews and evaluations, assessments, studies, results from previous policy reform and implementation efforts or geographically limited piloting, scaling efforts.

Evidence from relevant DFAT programs and performance monitoring should be reflected. The design document includes an explanation of the way in which this analysis and lessons have been taken into account in formulating the design.

4.7 The design outlines the strategic intent and rationale for the investment including reference to DFAT's policy objectives including thematic and cross-cutting policy priorities.

The design document presents a compelling, believable justification for Australia's investment in the context**.** The justification must demonstrate how Australia's proposed investment:

- Addresses impact on economic growth and poverty, Australia's 'value add' and leverage,
- Australia's national interest and influence and contributes to, Australia's development and strategic priorities within a specific country/sector.
- Identifies crosscutting policy priorities such as GEDSI and climate change, as well as other specific priorities in different regions and sectors.

4.8 There is a robust program logic / theory of change, that uses DFAT definitions of goals, objectives, outcomes, outputs. (Cross-reference PL Standard)

The major strategies/ pathways for influencing change are clearly defined. Intermediate outcomes are described for key interventions.

For investments where the problem/opportunity and effective solutions are well understood, the logic should spell out how resources (inputs) will be deployed to influence (through activities and outputs) short and medium-term changes (intermediate outcomes). The majority of DFAT programs are expected to be able to define a clear intended logic.

The *change pathways described in a logic are most often not linear*. Depending on the complexity of the investment and the operating context, the logic is highly likely to change and evolve throughout the life of the investment.

DFAT terminology and definitions are used throughout the design document refer Standard 3

4.9 The long-term goal of the investment is aligned with, and contributes to, partner's formal plans.

The goal statement must be linked to, or draw from the most relevant partner government, national, regional or global development plans. The goal statement is the long-term development goal this investment is intended to contribute to. Articulate the specific contribution of the investment to the Partner Government's priority development needs. This is articulated at a policy level and is above

the line for DFAT programming accountability. The DFAT funded investment may be one of many investments (funded by partner governments, private sector, other donors, NGOs etc) that are contributing to this goal.

4.10 The objective of the investment contributes to DFAT's strategic objectives as outlined in relevant country, regional and global strategies.

The objective must be linked to DFAT's own country/regional/strategy objectives as set out in relevant Foreign Policy strategies (*Australia's International Development Policy* and the related performance framework, whole of government security partnerships or treaties, specific country related strategies). Similarly, the Investment MEL indicators may contribute to and cross-link to performance benchmarks in the overarching Performance Assessment Framework (PAF) for the country, regional or global strategy. Like the goal, the objective is 'above the line' for the investments accountability as the investment will contribute to the objective, but not be expected to be measurable within the investment's timeframes. The objective level can be compared to the OECD DAC evaluation criteria of relevance.

4.11 End-of-Program-Outcomes are clear, realistic, and measurable, using who, what by when language (incl. knowledge, action, condition).

DFAT is accountable to the Australian public and partner governments for delivering on the stated EOPOs. The outcomes describe the desired development change that can be achieved with the resources applied and the timeframe of the investment.

End-of-program-outcomes must:

- Be defined as an 'end state' when the outcome has been achieved (not describing activities or ways of getting to the end state)
- identify who or what is expected to change
- identify the type of change expected to occur knowledge (awareness of new ideas, techniques, or strategies), action (behaviour change based upon new information/ideas), or condition (organisational or societal conditions changes due to the stakeholder's actions)
- the time by which the change is expected to occur. (NB: Take care to define the EOPOs in relation to the length of the program, within defined phases. Programs are commonly within a 4-8 year timeframe).

The link between the situation or problem analysis and the interventions and outcomes proposed should be clear.

EOPOs should be written in plain English and ideally less than 20 words. For example: *'Boys and girls in primary school in East Bogor improve their literacy and numeracy by 2025'.* Good practice is to not have more than three EOPOs for coherence and manageability.

4.12 The design is a flexible framework which allows adaptation to context, with activities and inputs left for later implementation planning.

The design document clearly defines the program logic down to output level. It is optional to describe flagship activities and key inputs - these can be left for later annual work planning processes or multiyear planning in the implementation phase.

The design should outline areas where flexibility is necessary to meet the fluid program context, if outputs are fully defined or if some outputs will be developed iteratively over the course of the investment, and any elements involving unprogrammed funding. The EOPOs are core to the business case and can only be amended through a formal process with justifications, supported by evidence, and needs to be approved by the DFAT budget delegate. Any approved changes need to be documented. Mid-term reviews and re-designs provide opportunities to assess the EOPOs.

If the investment proposes using a Facility as a modality, a case can be made to also add additional intermediate outcome and output pathways over time to the Facility, but this must be evidence

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based and based on robust MEL processes. If any elements of the design involve unprogrammed funding, criteria and guidelines should be annexed, and decision-making processes built into the governance arrangements.

The design document explains the mechanisms which will be relied upon to increase flexibility in response to defined challenges. These may include:

- defining intermediate and EOPOs, and inserting indicative outputs that are known
- strong investment in MEL to facilitate production of regular, high quality performance information to underpin management decisions to enter or exit from activities
- un-programmed funds to facilitate increasing or decreasing investment according to performance across different components of the program.

Implementation planning can be left for the early implementation phase. If, however, DFAT or the partner requests levels of detail this is an optional annex. The document can include a schedule, which builds upon the program logic, to identify:

(i)   the earliest time that an activity can begin

(ii)   how long an activity will last and

(iii)   the sequencing of activities.

To prepare a useful schedule, it is necessary to identify the activities that occur only once and those that repeat in annual or special cycles. If appropriate, the implementation plan may also show when key milestones will be reached. The Gantt chart is an effective visual tool.

4.13 The choice of delivery approaches, modalities, development approaches, partnerships and implementation arrangements are appropriate to achieve EOPOs and represent Value for Money (VfM).

The design document identifies the criteria which have been used to review the suitability of different modalities. DFAT requires all potential investment options to be reviewed in terms of the potential of each option to:

- achieve the investment outcomes

- ensure VfM for Australia and

- provide maximum opportunity to manage risk.

In addition to these foundational criteria, however, each development context will require both developmental approaches, delivery approaches and modality mix crafted to deal with specific circumstances. For example, the development context may require a high degree of flexibility, adaptability, and responsiveness; a capacity development focus may be required given the limitation of partner government systems or the emphasis may need to be on approaches which facilitate effective and sustainable engagement between key stakeholders, coalition building and advocacy or women's economic empowerment. The specific requirements of the developmental approach should be stated.

The delivery approach and modality mix should also be outlined. A full list of options is found in Chapter 4 of the IDPG. Examples include programs, projects, facilities, sector wide approaches and humanitarian programs. Modalities and forms of aid include twinning, technical assistance, general or sector budget support, multilateral partnerships, contributions versus innovative financing and loans, scholarships and training.

Delivery options should be reviewed in light of VfM and cost comparison as well as the specific requirements of the context as a basis for recommending a specific delivery approach, modality and form of aid.

4.14 Governance and management arrangements, including DFAT resourcing are clearly specified. Choice of delivery approaches partnerships and implementation arrangements are appropriate to achieve EOPOs.

The design document explains, both in narrative and graphic forms, the oversight, decision making and accountability mechanisms for the investment, setting out the relationship between DFAT, the partner government, contractors, other partners, and donors (if relevant). Further detail on governance arrangements may be included as an annex.

The document explains, both in narrative and graphic forms, the way in which implementation will be managed, including clear lines of accountability and reporting. The document defines the relevant skillsets of personnel expected to contribute to the achievement of outcomes. Position descriptions are not required and can be determined via procurement processes. DFAT A-based and locally engaged positions (FTE) should be defined in the design, along with any advisory or specialist resources co-located at the Post or in program management roles

4.15 The policy problems, reform opportunities, entry points, role of DFAT, partners and key stakeholders in policy engagement are clearly defined.

A [Policy Dialogue Matrix](#) and [explanatory note](#) should be completed and attached to the design document as an annex. The Policy Dialogue Matrix recognises that DFAT officers, specialists, partners and stakeholders in various positions, and at various levels, may contribute to the policy advocacy via the various roles, committees, groups in which they serve, including offices and networks to which they have entrée.

The Policy Dialogue Matrix **must be completed through intensive consultation with DFAT staff at Desk and Post** and reflect a consensus position on the key entry points and priorities for policy reform and advocacy.

Where appropriate this matrix should also describe processes for agreeing to policy reform roadmaps and strategic policy and budget dialogue at the sector level, in partnership or in coalition with other donors, the partner government and other key stakeholders. Policy reform may also be linked to budget support, payment by results, output-based development and other similar incentives.

4.16 The design incorporates mechanisms to promote sustainability, institutionalisation, localisation and leveraging of other sources of finance and resourcing.

The design document defines what sustainability means within the context of the specific investment. This is best done by references to the intended outcomes of the investment.

The design process includes analysis of the issues which may affect the extent to which outcomes achieved and partnerships developed will be sustained after the investment ends. A Sustainability Analysis Tool is a useful tool for conducting this analysis. Significant issues that would hamper sustainability identified via this process should be included in the Program Logic (as assumptions) and in the Risk Management Plan.

The narrative should articulate the overall strategy to address significant sustainability issues raised. A Sustainability Strategy Matrix is a useful tool for documenting key issues / risks to sustainability identified during the design process and the strategy for addressing these issues during implementation. During implementation, a sustainability plan can be written into the contribution/contracts as a milestone to be produced by the lead partner.

Sustainability strategies should consider policy and budget reform, legislative and regulatory change, institutionalisation and resourcing, government partnerships, and building the MEL capacity of lead partners. Dependencies on ODA funding should be avoided, and ODA should be catalytic and used to leverage other forms of finance, domestic resources, remittances, loans, or other sources of non-ODA.

Localisation intent (Localisation intent) should be articulated in the design, including progressive localisation over the life of the investment. A localisation plan can be added as a milestone in the contribution/contract (Statement of Requirement (SOR)) for implementation for the lead partner.

4.17 The design is based upon a collaborative approach between DFAT, relevant Partner Government or organisational representatives, other relevant stakeholders, and the design team. The design outlines and enhances the mutual accountability.

As indicated in the Design Plan the design process should be based on a collaborative approach between DFAT and all relevant stakeholders. Different stakeholders' roles, including senior staff, should be specified. It is important to ensure partner country government representatives as well as other relevant organisations and, in some cases, beneficiaries are involved to ensure ownership and mutual accountability. This will also ensure politically acceptable and technically feasible approach to the design.

4.18 The design document is contractable into contributions and/or contracting arrangements and considers innovative methods including performance payments.

The design document should be easily contractable into contributions and/or contracting arrangements. A draft Statement of Requirements (SoR) is attached to the design as an annex and adequately captures the strategic intent of the design. The SoR is initially drafted by the design team before being finalised by DFAT's Development Procurement and Agreements Branch (DVB). Early consultation with DVB is recommended.

Good practice in contracting and contribution arrangements is to consider innovative methods such as incentives, performance payments, output-based aid, payment by results, as well as inclusive methods for verifying results.

Contribution and contract options include contributions (MDBs, multilaterals, NGOs), direct funding arrangements (partner governments), ROUs/strategic partnership arrangements (WOG), commercial contracts.

The design outlines the proposed procurement arrangements for timely and efficient procurement-this should be determined in partnership with DVB. Considerations include market capacity, sub-contracting, procurement and spending controls, financial reporting requirements and standards, and internal and external audit requirements.

Where use of partner government procurement systems is proposed, the design document describes in detail the procurement that the investment will undertake, how this will be done, by whom, under what rules and how it will be monitored, including any role for technical assistance. For assistance when proposing to use partner government system contact partner.systems@dfat.gov.au.

4.19 The design describes important assumptions and risks which are likely to influence the achievement of outcomes and provides mitigation strategies for risks and safeguards.

Good practice in design aims to maximise the likelihood of achieving outcomes while effectively managing risk. Rather than identifying every possible risk, the Risk Register follows Australian government instructions (and ISO risk standards) to identify risks to the achievement of outcomes and apply risk treatment options to ensure that these risks can be avoided, reduced, removed or modified and/or retained.

The Risk Register at design is developed by:

- engaging stakeholders in risk identification and assessment
- using evidence/best available information
- systematically addressing the risk categories outlined by DFAT (i.e. including political, fiduciary, reputational, implementation, national disaster risks).

- explicitly identifying assumptions in the program logic and converting these assumptions into risks to be monitored.
- the correct template should be utilised which includes risk events, existing controls, enhanced treatments and DFAT risk owners

DFAT's Risk Factors Screening Tool and Risk Register is updated (it will have been initially completed at planning and concept stages) and attached to the design document as an annex. The narrative discussion in the design document identifies the most significant risks (including assumptions identified in the program logic) and suggested risk treatments. The arrangements for regular review of risks are outlined (quarterly review is recommended). This is also included in the Implementation Plan (optional annex). The narrative outlines the arrangements for involving DFAT, partners and stakeholders in the regular review of risks and risk treatments.

MEL minimum at design (to develop MEL Plan at Implementation)

4.20 The End-of-Program-Outcomes (EOPOs) and Intermediate Outcomes (IO) are expressed in terms of key performance indicators pitched at the right level

Refer Standard 3 on Program Logic/Theory of Change. It is vital that the Program Logic including assumptions is developed to be realistic and feasible within the timeframe and resources available as well as the complexity of the investment. The Program Logic and specifically the EOPO are the cornerstones of the MEL Plan and System.

4.21 The design specifies that DFAT Design and MEL standards must be met

The design should refer to the MEL standards to be met (See MEL Standard 5). It should be specified in the design and Statement of Requirement that an MEL Plan will be quality assured against the standards at 6 months from start of implementation. In some cases, this might be earlier, for example if it is not the first phase of an investment, or a bit later if it is a very new and complex area (this is negotiated at contract stage).

4.22 Adequate provisions have been made for the design and oversight of MEL Systems for the life of the investment, including an adequately qualified MEL practitioner. As a guide 4-7% of the implementation budget.

The MEL System needs to be appropriately resourced, as a guide MEL should be 4-7% of the implementation budget. However, where the context is more uncertain, the approach being applied is highly innovative or iterative, a higher budget may be more realistic.

The budget annex should be prepared with resourcing by End of Program outcome, by modality with itemised costs for MEL and GEDSI.

The resource and cost schedule includes other costs beyond the person days of the MEL Practitioner. These may include person days of other people, personnel associated costs, MEL materials, software, and hardware required, costs of independent research or reviews (other than DFAT commissioned evaluations), any respondent costs, and other resources such as transport

Appropriate MEL expertise and skills need also be accounted for. Proposed approaches need to be considered and if specific methods are preferred, for example if surveys are an anticipated MEL tool, then the MEL experts must be skilled in designing and analysing surveys.

4.23 Approaches to MEL, the MEL Framework (in the template) as well as important evaluation questions emerging during the design are highlighted

The reader should be able to quickly see the design features of the MEL System proposed in the design including:

- purpose of the System,
- primary users of information,

- the scope of what will (and will not) be addressed,

- contestability approaches (reviews, evaluations, independent advisory support, use of standards),

- reflection and learning processes,

- reporting and communication approaches,

- a summary of methods (not detailed),

- resources and consultation undertaken to develop the Plan.

The MEF Annex (or PAF for Facilities) produced at design must be updated with the details on how to track each indicator.

Evaluation questions should not just be the standard OECD DAC relevant questions on relevance effectiveness efficiency sustainability GEDSI etc. It could also include questions around the Program Logic/Theory of Change to test is assumptions hold true in the specific context or other important opportunities for learning.

Refer to Standard 5

Investment Design Summary (IDS) for Partner-led designs

4.24 Emphasis is given to an evidence-based justification for the choice of partner including references to previous assessments of the performance of this partner. Efforts are explained as to how DFAT has influenced the partner-led design.

How will this investment and this choice of partner maximise Australia's influence and leverage policy reform and greater financing? Include explanation how DFAT has influenced the Partner-led design.

Outline other investment options that were considered and why this option was selected, taking into account DFAT VfM principles.

Provide rationale for partner selection including how the principles of the Commonwealth Procurement Rules (CPRs) will be achieved through the planned approach.

4.25 Areas where DFAT standards have not been met are identified.

If DFAT standards have not been met these are identified and justified.

4.26 Outline how performance, quality and risk will be managed during implementation. Including any misalignment between partner MEL approaches and DFAT MEL standards and how these will be addressed

The Investment Design Summary must outline how DFAT will manage performance quality and risk during implementation. Any misalignment between partner MEL approaches and DFAT MEL standards (See Standard 5) need to be analysed and implications dealt with. There should be an explicit strategy how DFAT will deal with this during implementation.

4.27 Identify any gaps in meeting DFAT's cross-cutting policies, specifically GEDSI and climate change. Outline DFAT's strategy to ensure these gaps are addressed during implementation.

Any gaps in the partner-led proposal/design in meeting DFAT's cross-cutting policies needs to be explicit. The Investment Design Summary should outline DFAT's strategy to ensure any gaps are adequately addressed during implementation.

STANDARD 5: Monitoring, Evaluation & Learning (MEL) Plan and System

The MEL Plan is to be quality assured and submitted within 6 months of mobilisation. The MEL System is the operationalisation of Plan including Baseline data, and ready within 12 months.

	MEL Plan (quality assured against standard at 6 months from start of implementation (5.1 – 5.22)
Nr.	**Element**
5.1	There is a summary of End-of-Program-Outcomes (EOPOs), size, duration, and key MEL System design features
5.2	The MEL System is aligned to a plausible program logic articulating how the EOPOs will be achieved and key risks to delivery (assumptions)
5.3	The process and frequency for updating the program logic is clear. Changes to EOPOs require a formal process of gathering evidence and justification and those being signed off by DFAT budget delegate.
5.4	EOPOs and intermediate outcomes and outputs are clearly articulated and assessed through a small set of meaningful key performance indicators
5.5	Baselines are constructed, where available. If a baseline is not available, there is a viable approach to finalise the baseline by the end of the first year. Baseline should be followed-up midway and at the end of the investment.
5.6	The System purpose, user information needs and intended uses of performance information are clear.
5.7	The Plan is focused around key evaluation questions and indicators, linked to specific uses of information (including DFAT's development performance reporting Tier 2 indicators). The MEF annex in the design (or the Guidance Note: Performance Assessment Frameworks for Facilities) is updated and attached to the Plan.
5.8	Reach/coverage, quality and exposure of participants to key deliverables (outputs) are monitored
5.9	The changes (in knowledge, attitudes, behaviours) that result from key deliverables are tracked (outcomes)
5.10	Barriers to inclusion are assessed, and data is disaggregated by sex, disability status and other relevant aspects of social inclusion.
5.11	Relevant aspects of context and key risks to delivery (assumptions) are monitored
5.12	Data is collected and analysed to inform Value for Money (VfM) judgements
5.13	Methods proposed are fully described including sampling, data collection, storage, analysis and processing. The management information system (MIS) for storage, analysis and data presentation is explicit. Link: DFAT Ethical Research and Evaluation Guidance Note
5.14	The fora for debate, analysis and interpreting program progress are clear and involve stakeholders and partners as appropriate
5.15	Review and evaluation points are clear, as are ongoing independent contestability mechanisms such as technical advisory groups (TAGs), strategic advisory teams (SATs), or externally audited standards.
5.16	Partner systems and official data sets are preferentially used and supported with mutual accountability built in

5.17	Oversight of the MEL System resides with program leadership which drives the use of MEL data for leadership decision making (learning, advocacy and accountability)
5.18	Information products from the MEL System are described and aligned to user information needs
5.19	A schedule of activities outlines when key MEL activities will be carried out and when information will be available
5.20	Responsibilities for implementing the Plan are allocated to specific positions (not organisations), with the time, skills, resources, and mandate to deliver the Plan
5.21	The Plan is adequately resourced and costed (guideline 4-7% of budget) and the process and frequency for updating the MEL Plan are clear
5.22	All Facilities (including new phases of existing ones) prepare a Performance Assessment Framework within six month of implementation using guidance. Link: Guidance Note: Performance Assessment Frameworks for Facilities

MEL System (the operationalization of the Plan, 12 months from start of implementation) (5.23 – 5.34)

Nr.	Element
5.23	The baseline provides an accurate and credible record of conditions at the commencement of the program, in all EOPO areas, including key intermediate outcomes
5.24	The program logic and MEL Plan are up to date, plausible, and understood by key stakeholders and delivery partners
5.25	Those responsible for collecting, analysing, interpreting, and communicating data understand their role and have the skills, time and mandate to fulfil their role
5.26	The data and evidence collected is robust and addresses the performance questions and indicators
5.27	To the extent feasible, the System is drawing on and supporting improvement of partner or official data sets
5.28	Data is stored in a management information system, which is accessible to, and satisfies user information needs
5.29	Data (program and independent) is analysed and synthesised into clear findings that are responsive to the current operating context.
5.30	Findings are simply and succinctly communicated to key users in a timely way
5.31	Leadership and program governance facilitate the use of evidence in program decision making and adaptation
5.32	Findings are used by program managers and delivery partners to drive learning, improve program performance and for accountability
5.33	DFAT can draw on timely and good quality MEL reporting to support its own program quality reporting, communications, policy dialogue, briefing and accountability requirements
5.34	The System represents a valuable and judicious use of time and resources

Detailed Description of Standard for MEL Plan and MEL System

The MEL Plan must be a stand-alone document that makes sense in its entirety. The Plan can be understood by readers who have not been closely involved with the design or delivery of the program. The MEL Plan will be assessed against these standards. The System is the Plan operationalised and used. An investment might be at different stages reaching these standards depending on context, complexity and where it is in terms of phases.

MEL Plan

5.1 There is a summary of EOPOs, value, duration, and key MEL System design features.

At the beginning of the MEL Plan there is a clear description of the investment (the thing being monitored and evaluated). Important information includes an overview of what the investment is trying to achieve, how the investment will achieve this (key approaches and delivery mechanisms), value, start and end dates, and any other useful information.

The reader should be able to quickly see the design features of the MEL System proposed in the Plan including:

- purpose of the System,
- primary users of information,
- the scope of what will (and will not) be addressed,
- contestability approaches (reviews, evaluations, independent advisory support, use of standards),
- reflection and learning processes,
- reporting and communication approaches,
- a summary of methods (not detailed),
- resources and consultation undertaken to develop the Plan.

5.2 The MEL Plan is aligned to a plausible program logic[4] articulating how the EOPOs will be achieved and risks to delivery (assumptions).

The investment has a clear and plausible program logic which describes how the program intends to make a significant, demonstrable contribution to change in the local context with the resources and time available. The logic is understood and agreed by key stakeholders. Principles for implementing the program, and key program assumptions (risks to delivery) are clearly identified. The MEL Plan tests key aspects of the program logic (outputs/deliverables, outcomes, and risks). This builds on the Program Logic developed at Design stage See Standard 3.

Note: A program logic is required for Facilities with explicit development outcomes but for purely enabling or support facilities, the logics are generally based on responsive inputs and service delivery standards. Guidance for developing a Performance Assessment Framework for Facilities is available Guidance Note: Performance Assessment Frameworks for Facilities.

5.3 The process and frequency for updating the program logic is clear. Changes to EOPOs require evidence and justification and to be signed off by DFAT budget delegate.

The Plan should be explicit about the triggers, process, and frequency for updating the program logic. For programs operating in very uncertain contexts or using exploratory or innovative programing, key

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[4] The Program Logic (both the diagram and supporting narrative) illustrates the link between what the investment is doing (activities and outputs) and the results we hope to see (intermediate and end-of-program) outcomes. The narrative articulates the evidence behind the model (including evidence of how change occurs in this context and sector), underlying assumptions and causal pathways for influencing change.

assumptions, program strategies (theories of action) and intended outcomes (anticipated changes) are likely to need more frequent testing.

Reviewing and updating an investment's program logic or theory of change and making changes to intermediate outcomes, outputs and activities is accepted practise. Changes should be justified with analysed data we are getting from the MEL systems and documented in annual plans and reports.

Any proposed changes to End of Program Outcomes (EOPOs) must go through a formal process and should only be changed when there is clear justification and robust evidence for doing so. EOPOs are originally approved as part of design process by relevant delegates and should not be changed lightly. For investments that are delivered by a managing contractor a significant change to the scope of an investment can also potentially trigger a retender, if it could reasonably be determine that:

    a.   other potential suppliers may have responded differently to the amended scope in the original tendering process which may have produced a different value for money outcome; or

    b.   the changes to the scope of an investment may compromise the original procurement's value for money assessment.

Any changes to EOPOs must go through a formal process, which includes:

- Providing independent evidence (such as a mid-term review), analysed data from MEL system to support changes, or justification based on a significant change in the context (for example natural disaster) that the EOPOs need to be revised.
- Appropriate engagement with stakeholders in the change process, it should be robust and collaborative.
- Revised EOPOs meet the requirements outlined in Standard 3 of these Standards.
- Revised EOPOs are quality assured by the Development Effectiveness and Enabling Division (*designmail@dfat.gov.au*)
- Revised EOPOs are approved by relevant SES in Canberra or Post (link to approval minute). The approval minute should outline the justification and rationale for the change, the process for change (who was involved, quality assurance undertaken), detail the changes to EOPOs and how they will be documented.
- The EOPOs should be updated in AidWorks and program documentation, including the MEL Framework, and fed back to relevant stakeholders as soon as practicable (note agreement variations may also be required).

5.4 EOPOs and intermediate outcomes are clearly articulated and assessed through a small set of meaningful indicators.

Key stakeholders have a clear and shared understanding of what success looks like at the end of the investment. EOPOs are written in plain English and clearly describe who or what is expected to change, the type of change expected (knowledge, behaviour, condition) by the end of the investment. The EOPOs are pitched at the right level for the funding, time, and approaches outlined in the design document. There is evidence underpinning this judgement.

The MEL Plan must be able to track progress toward delivery of these EOPOs. A small number of indicators which meet quality standards (valid, reliable, sensitive, simple, and affordable) support the judgement about whether these EOPOs and key intermediate outcomes have been achieved. They should be linked to partner government/regional/global official indicator sets as much as is feasible. Indicators are generally required down to output level and should link to the program logic. Regular assessments of the context and the success of program strategies help delivery partners to make judgements about the feasibility of delivering the EOPOs.

5.5 Baselines are constructed, where available. If a baseline is not available, there is a viable approach to finalise the baseline by the end of the first year. Baseline should be followed-up midway and at the end of the investment. (see MEL System below).

A baseline is not a broad needs assessment, but tightly focussed on the intended outcomes of the program. A rationale and justification are provided where baseline data has not been included in the MEL Plan. It is a DFAT requirement that baseline data for the program must be available by the end of the first year of implementation, to avoid measurement challenges down the track. Where a full set of baseline data is not available in the MEL Plan, methods and timelines are defined for completing the baseline within one year of mobilisation see point 5.24 below. The MEL Plan should also include how Baseline is followed-up at midway and the end of the investment (same methods should be used at all stages).

5.6 The System purpose, user information needs and intended uses of performance information are clear.

Purpose: Whilst most MEL Systems have multiple purposes (decision making, learning, advocacy, and accountability), the design of the investment will influence the focus of the MEL System. For example, the primary purpose of the MEL System in a highly flexible and adaptive program in a very complex context, might be to provide constant feedback on opportunities to pursue change in the context, and regular evaluative information on whether piloted approaches are working to help decide whether the program should scale responses. In this context, you would expect greater focus on learning and perhaps a greater proportion of program budget dedicated to MEL. Alternately a program that has a strong people to people or public diplomacy focus, would prioritise methods that can readily be used in communications and diplomacy.

Uses: Table 2 below outlines different uses of performance information and the types of information that can be generated by the MEL System.

Table 2: Purpose and types of performance information

Operational Decision Making	Learning	Communication & Advocacy	Accountability
Timely information on: -- progress against plan and program outcomes (including quality, reach, and inclusion) -- efficiency and effectiveness of program approaches -- changes (opportunities/risks) in operating context	What's working/not working, under what conditions, and why Changes in context (opportunities/ challenges) that can affect program outcomes. Advancements in the sector/ thematic area/ technology that could be applied to increase the reach and impact of this program (i.e., horizon scanning)	Human interest stories Social media content Case studies Video content Research/sector learning notes. Synthesised and concise information to feed into Ministerial briefings and cables	Taxpayer funds spent Policy/safeguards met Risks managed Progress against outcomes Demonstrating Value for Money of program strategies Sharing results from DFAT funding with implementing partners, partner governments and beneficiaries.

Users of the MEL System are identified, including primary users (those who will regularly use and rely on information from the MEL System), secondary users (who may occasionally use information from the System), and tertiary users (who can be affected by the monitoring and may need to be communicated to).

The Plan explains the performance information different users need and how they intend to use this performance information (what decisions will be made and in which forums). It also outlines what format this information could usefully be in and identifies any support users may require interpreting the information accurately. Only information with a specific use should be included in the Plan.

5.7 The Plan is focused around key evaluation questions and indicators, linked to specific uses of information (including DFAT's development performance reporting). The MEF annex in the design is updated and attached to the Plan, or the Guidance Note: Performance Assessment Frameworks for Facilities.

A small number of key evaluation questions are posed that align with the specific information needs of primary users and the purpose of the framework. Questions should not be phrased as generic program evaluation questions or indicators phrased as questions, rather they are targeted exploratory questions to get at a particular of concern to stakeholders. The questions should allow information users to make appropriate decisions about the program. Questions are likely to address issues like progress toward EOPOs (including gender equality, disability, and any social inclusion outcomes); quality of implementation; causal mechanisms that link interventions with intended outcomes; and positive or negative unintended outcomes.

In forming the key questions, it is useful to be mindful of DFAT quality criteria of Effectiveness, Efficiency, Gender Equality, Risk Management, Relevance, Sustainability and MEL and as well as DFAT policy priorities (disability inclusion, safeguards, climate change and disasters, private sector). International evaluation criteria such as the OECD-DAC evaluation criteria for development evaluation can also be considered. If some questions have more weight than others, this should be explicit. The level of evidence and evaluative effort required to answer each question should be commensurate with the importance of the question.

Both monitoring and evaluative methods are identified to answer each of the key questions. For regular monitoring, the Plan should have a limited number of quantitative and qualitative indicators (a mix is best) to track progress of critical outputs, intermediate outcomes and EOPOs as articulated in the Program Logic. Interim and end-of-program targets may be set where there is a baseline and

evidence that the targets would be realistic with the proposed interventions. The approach to estimating targets is made transparent.

Evaluative methods are used to provide a more in-depth understanding of why a program is working or not, and to what extent progress can be attributed to the program, providing essential information for program improvement.

Red flags are raised when:

- the program logic and program outcomes are very weak

- outcomes are not clearly expressed as who, what by when

- there are limited levels to the logic (i.e., either only at outcomes level, or detailed activities and outputs) and/or large leaps in logic between different levels

- the Plan has an excessive number of indicators, unlikely to be of use to decision makers. The rule of thumb is the minimum sufficient to answer the key performance questions

- the Plan only has indicators (tracking what the program is achieving) with limited evaluative questioning to explain why the program approaches are working

- indicators are only linked to the lower levels of logic (outputs, activities, inputs) rather than the higher levels of the logic (EOPOs, intermediate outcomes)

- there is no link to DFAT's development performance framework

- there is no GEDSI disaggregated data, no gender analysis/baseline or clarity on how gender outcomes will be tracked

- the proposed system appears to be focused only on reporting, not decision making and learning

The MEF Annex (or PAF for Facilities) produced at design must be updated with the details on how to track each indicator.

5.8 Reach/coverage, quality, and exposure of participants to key deliverables (outputs) are monitored

Key deliverables (outputs) are defined as those accounting for large effort and/or expenditure and/or those that are likely to have a major influence on the program meeting its expected outcomes. Adequacy of participation in key program deliverables (outputs) by different target groups (by gender, ethnicity, disability inclusion etc) is assessable. The quantity of participants[5] accessing key deliverables and quality of those key deliverables (from participant perspective) must be monitored.

5.9 The changes (in knowledge, attitudes, behaviours) that result from key deliverables are tracked (outcomes).

The key short and medium-term consequences (changes in knowledge, attitudes, and behaviours) of key program deliverables are tracked through indicators and/or evaluative methods. These are identified in the program logic. The MEL System provides credible evidence of the contribution of the program deliverables (outputs) to intended and unintended changes.

5.10 Barriers to inclusion are assessed, and data is disaggregated by sex, disability status and other relevant aspects of social inclusion.

For the most socially disadvantaged groups (consider gender, disability, age, ethnicity, income, religion, LGBTIQ status and other relevant aspects of social inclusion) the Plan must make provision for understanding barriers to inclusion (such as situation analyses if these don't already exist), tracking inclusion in key program deliverables (outputs) and the benefits to different groups from program

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[5] disaggregated by relevant sub-groups (*see 1.10*) and comparing actuals with baselines and targets

deliverables (intermediate outcomes). Where possible, representatives of socially disadvantaged groups should be included in the development of the MEL Plan. Performance assessment notes provide further guidance on how to integrate disability and gender equality and women's economic empowerment into MEL approaches.

5.11 Relevant aspects of the context and key risks to delivery (assumptions) are monitored

Indicators or performance questions about the context are monitored or evaluated where they have potential to have a negative effect on the achievement of outcomes. Information may be gathered on:

- key risks to delivery, which should be identified as critical assumptions in the program logic. These key risks can be at activity/output level and outcome levels of the logic

- changes (progress and risks) in the broader national sector or sub-sector of the program

- factors that affect the needs and priorities of key decision makers and/or intended beneficiaries (including socially disadvantaged groups)

- factors that might influence the quality, reach and coverage of program deliverables to targeted beneficiaries (including socially disadvantaged groups)

Only issues highly relevant to the effective and efficient delivery of the EOPOs are monitored and choices must represent good Value for Money.

5.12 Data is collected and analysed to inform Value for Money (VfM) judgements

Proposed data collection and analysis approaches have considered ways to track and embed VfM principles into the monitoring system. Consultation with key stakeholders should help define what the VfM principles *practically* means for this investment, to help determine context specific performance standards (rubrics may be helpful in making judgements). Then indicators and methods can be built into the MEL System to track performance.   Some examples include benchmarking costs and benefits/beneficiary with similar programs in the same context, ensuring spend can be tracked in relation to key deliverables and outcomes (not input based budgeting), tracking the cost and benefits of program systems improvements or tracking the costs and benefits of innovative or experimental aspects of the program.

For facilities there are mandatory indicators to track efficiency – Link: [Guidance Note: Performance Assessment Frameworks for Facilities](#) These VfM indicators can be used by other programs that are not facilities on an optional basis.

5.13. Methods proposed are fully described including sampling, data collection, storage, analysis, and processing. The management information system (MIS) for storage, analysis and data presentation is explicit.

Proposed methods are fully described, and a mix of methods is expected. The degree of rigour is sufficient to robustly answer the key performance questions and duty of care is taken to ensure that any data presented makes reference to the evidence base. The evaluation of any pilot activities intended for significant scale-up must be highly rigorous. Major studies and tools are fully designed, or if not possible, the Plan provides the resources to develop these and has delivery dates and allocation of delivery responsibility to a suitably qualified individual. Where tools have been annexed, these adequately address the performance questions and indicators. Any limitations to the methods are identified, describing how limits affect the usability of findings.

Consideration is given to the design of data collection methods that are responsive to the needs, rights, and security of respondents, with special consideration given to the needs of any socially disadvantaged groups. This includes the identification and recruitment of program participants as respondents, the time of day and location of data collection activities, and the techniques employed during data collection activities. Consideration has been given to the representation of special socially disadvantaged groups as data collectors, and their preparation to work effectively with these respondents. There has been appropriate consideration of ethical issues (such as involvement of

children, duty of care to participants involved in data collection and the people they are collecting the information from).

The Plan specifies the management information system (MIS) used to store, analyse, and present data. It is clear how the MIS facilitates user-friendly access to program performance information for key stakeholders.

5.14. The fora for debate, analysis and interpreting program progress are clear and involve stakeholders and partners as appropriate.

The Plan clearly articulates how key stakeholders (such as local delivery partners, beneficiaries, and funders) will be engaged in analysing and/or interpreting program progress. Most MEL Systems support learning and management decision making, not simply reporting. Program learning and use of evidence in management decision making occurs through meaningful exposure to evidence of progress, and inclusion in interpretation of what this means for the program. The Plan must be clear about the human processes or fora that enable this exposure and learning. This might include regular reflect and refocus workshops, communities of practice, and/or defining how different governance bodies will engage with, interpret, and use evidence.

5.15. Review and evaluation points are clear, as are ongoing independent contestability mechanisms such as technical advisory groups (TAGs), strategic advisory teams (SATs), or use of externally audited standards.

The Plan allows for independent views on program performance. This may be evaluations or reviews at specific points, such as mid-term, prior to a "stop-go" point in the contract or at the end of the program. The purpose, timing, budget, and indicative evaluation questions for the review/evaluation should be explicit in the Plan. Detailed review/evaluation Terms of Reference can be drafted down the track (see Standard 7).

The Plan may have technical advisory groups (TAGs) or strategic advisory teams (SATs) which provide DFAT with periodic advice on aspects of program performance throughout the life of the program. The Plan may have independent assessment processes or joint missions to assess disbursement linked indicators. Where these are not in the design but envisaged as part of the operational MEL System, terms of reference for this body and resources should be explicit in the Plan, and complementary assessment processes can be outlined.

If the program is using specific industry standards[6] the Plan should be clear how performance will be audited/verified against these standards.

5.16 Partner systems and official data sets are preferentially used and supported with mutual accountability built in

Partner systems are preferentially used where appropriate information is available and of acceptable quality. If alternate systems are proposed, then a suitable rationale is provided. Joint assessments are planned. Mechanisms for engaging local partners for mutual accountability are explained. If this is not considered appropriate, a clear rationale is provided.

Where national or multi-lateral partner MEL Systems are proposed to provide information, then comment on the likely quality and availability is made. Where gaps are apparent, the Plan articulates how they will be addressed or managed.

Note: If capacity building in MEL is proposed for local partners, this should be built into the program design with corresponding activities and outcomes. It should not be an add-on to the MEL Plan.

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[6] One example is the Donor Committee for Enterprise Development (DCED) standards

5.17. Oversight of the MEL System resides with program leadership which drives the use of MEL data for leadership decision making (learning, advocacy, and accountability).

The Plan specifies the status of the MEL specialist in the program management team and the way in which the program leadership will work with the MEL specialist to ensure the System remains useful and relevant to key stakeholders. It is clear how the value (benefits and proportionate burden) of the MEL System to program leadership and key stakeholders will be regularly assessed.

5.18. Information products from the MEL System are described and aligned to user information needs.

Information that is generated by the MEL System is expected to be used by primary users (and perhaps a wider audience). There is a clear strategy described that explains: a) how primary users will contribute to the evolution of key performance questions to meet their needs; b) how primary users will be regularly engaged to ensure information products remain "fit-for-purpose"; c) what approaches will be employed to ensure that the right evidence/analysis reaches the right people, in the right form, to inform program decision making, accountability and learning. Consideration is given to providing feedback to representatives of any relevant socially disadvantaged groups.

5.19. Responsibilities for implementing the Plan are allocated to specific positions (not organisations) with the time, skills, resources, and mandate to deliver the Plan.

For all tasks required to implement the MEL System, the responsible individuals are identified. This is not naming organisations, but individuals by position title. For larger studies there will be multiple responsible individuals for design, data collection, analysis, interpretation and reporting. All major sub-tasks should be allocated. Special reference is made to those individuals that will be responsible for the integration of the MEL of gender equality and social inclusion aspects of the program into the MEL System. Individuals (including national partners) recruited to carry out the MEL tasks have the time, resources, skills, and mandate to do so.

5.20. A schedule of MEL activities is presented

A full schedule is provided that indicates when all key MEL activities are to be carried out. Reporting is not described as a frequency (e.g. monthly, annually) rather by date (e.g. the 25th of each month; or 25thJune annually). The schedule makes it explicit when information will be available to primary users and is compatible with national and/or DFAT reporting cycles. This can take the form of an Implementation Management Plan (IMP) and can be loaded into AidWorks.

5.21. The MEL Plan is adequately resourced and costed (guideline 4-7% of budget) and the process and frequency for updating the MEL Plan are clear.

The resource and cost schedule includes other costs beyond the person days of the MEL Practitioner. These may include person days of other people, personnel associated costs, MEL materials, software, and hardware required, costs of independent research or reviews (other than DFAT commissioned evaluations), any respondent costs, and other resources such as transport. As a guide MEL should be 4-7% of the implementation budget. However, where the context is more uncertain, the approach being applied is highly innovative or iterative, a higher budget may be more realistic.

The process, including consultation, and triggers for updating the Plan are clear.

5.22 – All Facilities (including new phases of existing ones) prepare a Performance Assessment Framework within six months of implementation.

All facilities use the [Performance Assessment Framework guidance](#) and [template](#) to develop a PAF within six months from start of implementation. Multisectoral facilities (or facilities with activities contributing to the performance of the facility) will need to develop specific MEL for these that cascade up to the Facilities PAF. The Facilities PAF template includes a score card approach, with mandatory efficiency and operations indicators.

MEL System

5.23 The baseline provides an accurate and credible record of conditions at the commencement of the program, in all EOPO areas, including key intermediate outcomes.

The baseline is focused on the intended outcomes of the program. It includes both quantitative and qualitative information of the current state in relation to those outcomes and comes from credible sources and analysis.

A baseline does not have to entail a major quantitative study. Where appropriate it can be a robust analysis of the "current state" in each of the intended EOPO areas. For some program types this may be more qualitative and descriptive. For example, a governance program might describe the policy and institutional situation, decision making processes (who has and who doesn't have access), drivers and influencers of change, blockers, and opportunities to influence policy. Indicators or key performance questions for EOPOs identified in MEL Plans, must be baselined (quantitatively and/or qualitatively). Quantitative information enables the program to track change over time and qualitative information helps to describe the nature of the current state and, later, the observed changes. Often a baseline with a mix of quantitative and qualitative data is best.

Where a new phase of a program is being implemented, it is important to baseline the starting point of the new phase, to be able to demonstrate progress with the new funding envelope. Where possible, the baseline for the new phase can draw on methods and approaches used during the previous phase if sufficiently robust. Where the baseline can be linked to official data sets and longitudinal data from partner governments/partners, this should be the first starting point. Tracking change over the longer term (multiple phases) helps to demonstrate the longer-term outcomes of sustained development efforts.

5.24 The program logic and MEL Plan is up to date, plausible, and understood by key stakeholders and delivery partners.

The program logic meets *Standard 3*. Delivery partners and key stakeholders have an accurate and shared understanding of the EOPO, key delivery strategies and program risks. The logic has been updated at activity and output levels in line with the processes outlined in the MEL Plan.

5.25 Those responsible for collecting, analysing, interpreting, and communicating data understand their role and have the skills, time and mandate to fulfil their role

Those with responsibilities to operationalise the MEL System as outlined in the MEL Plan have the time, skills, and mandate to fulfil these roles. Where necessary, training or skills development is provided to enable staff to deliver their roles.

5.26 The data and evidence collected is robust and addresses the performance questions and indicators.

Evidence sources are explicit for findings in MEL products such as reports, research/evaluations, analytical or policy papers, case studies etc. There are processes in place to test data collection tools before rolling them out and to quality assure data before it is processed. For example, internal checks to ensure appropriate sampling strategies were used and data cleansing conducted. Where possible, data is triangulated (using more than one method to collect data on the same topic), or independently verified (e.g., comparing data to accepted industry standards or benchmarks, or having external quality assurance of the evidence produced). Independent advisory groups are set up, as indicated in the design, to provide independent verification of evidence.

The MEL System collects the necessary information to answer the key evaluation questions and demonstrate progress against indicators described in the MEL Plan.

5.27 To the extent feasible, the System is drawing on and supporting improvement of partner or official data sets

Where partner official data sets exist, the program should integrate these into investment monitoring. Where there are quality concerns or gaps, data may need to be supplemented by additional program-generated data, which can be usefully shared with partners.

5.28 Data is stored in a management information system, which is accessible to, and satisfies user information needs

The MIS is kept up to date by the program team. Users report that the information they need is accessible, informative, and easy to use and interpret.

5.29 Data (program and independent) is analysed and synthesised into clear findings that are responsive to the current operating context

Qualitative and quantitative data from both program and independent sources is synthesised. The analysis and interpretation of this data takes into account changes in the operating context, including any factors that may impact on the achievement of intended outcomes and key risks. Data interpretation processes (such as review and reflection sessions, senior management meetings, thematic advisory groups) and analysis tools, such as rubrics, are described in the MEL Plan and are operating as planned. The timing of the analysis is scheduled so it can feed into decision-making processes. The analyses generate meaningful and useful findings that reflect progress and future options, within the updated/current context of the program.

5.30 Findings are simply and succinctly communicated to key users in a timely way

MEL products (databases/dashboards, progress reports, think pieces, analytical papers, management team briefings/performance notes, reviews/evaluations, case studies, surveys etc) present data clearly and draw user attention to key findings. Where appropriate, they make use of explanatory infographics. Target audiences find the information accessible, informative, and timely.

5.31 Leadership and program governance facilitate the use of evidence in program decision making and adaptation

Program governance and management structures demand and receive credible evidence of performance. Contractual and financial processes are flexible enough to enable implementing partners to adapt aspects of the program in response to findings. Governance, management, financial or contractual processes do not unnecessarily delay program managers from acting on findings in a timely way. Program leadership supports and champions the effective use of good quality evidence to make program decisions.

Output based aid and performance payments can be used when partners reach certain milestones based on development results and make significant progress towards outcomes.

5.32 Findings are used by program managers and delivery partners to drive learning, improve program performance and for accountability

There is evidence that MEL System information is being used for strategic and operational decision making, testing the effectiveness and efficiency of program strategies, providing new learning/insights about the program and opportunities/risks in the context, informing policy dialogue and communicating results.

5.33 DFAT can draw on timely and good quality MEL reporting to support its own program quality reporting, communications, policy dialogue, briefing and accountability requirements

The MEL System provides timely and sufficient information for DFAT to meet its corporate reporting requirements, addressing criteria in the annual Investment Monitoring Reports, any input required into Country/Regional Annual Progress Reports, DFAT Performance Framework Reporting, and DFAT Annual Report. Further information can be found in the Aid Investment Quality Reporting Good Practice Note.

The implementing partner produces good quality program progress reports (see *Standard 6.)* that support DFAT to meet its accountability requirements.

5.34 The System represents a valuable and judicious use of time and resources

The burden on the implementation team and partners to collect, analyse and interpret performance information is commensurate with the benefit this information provides to the team and partners. The implementing team has sufficient information to actively manage the program to achieve results and manage risks, without capturing information that has little value. The System does not use a disproportionate amount of program budget[7] or resources (implementing team, partners, or funders).

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[7] A broad figure for guidance is 4-7% of total investment budget for more predictable programs and up to 10% for highly flexible and adaptive programs.

STANDARD 6: Program Progress Reports

Progress reports provide an evidence-based analysis of program progress over the last 6 or 12 months (depending on the contract) against each End-of-Program-Outcome (EOPO) and the approved annual plan. Progress reports help DFAT managers to complete annual Investment Monitoring Reports (IMR) and to discuss and share results with partners and within DFAT.

Completion reports cover the life of the program, support DFAT to write the Final Investment Monitoring Report (FIMR), and generally have a stronger focus on sustainability, including reporting progress on the handover plan.

Report content

Nr.	Element
6.1	A succinct executive summary describes progress against EOPOs and intermediate outcomes, factors influencing the achievement of outcomes, management implications and recommendations
6.2	Relevant changes in the operating context (including political economy) of the program are described
6.3	There is a reflection on the continuing relevance of the program, including testing key assumptions
6.4	An evidence-based assessment of the adequacy of progress toward sustained EOPOs and supporting intermediate outcomes is provided
6.5	The exposure of participants to key outputs in this reporting period is described and the effectiveness and efficiency of key deliverables is assessed
6.6	Benefits to special socially disadvantaged groups are clearly described. Efforts to address DFAT policy priorities such as Gender Equality and Social Inclusion are explicit
6.7	Progress against the annual plan and budget is assessed. Efforts to use resources efficiently and economically are clearly described, demonstrating Value for Money (VfM)
6.8	An assessment of the likely adequacy of planned inputs to meet the expected EOPOs and key intermediate outcomes is provided. This assessment considers risks (including sustainability risks)
6.9	Key governance, management, and implementation systems (including risk management systems) are described, and their performance assessed
6.10	The report includes lessons learned from implementation that potentially have important implications more broadly
6.11	Previous and/or proposed management actions or recommendations are summarized

Considerations throughout the report

Nr.	Element
6.12	The report provides balanced reporting of positive and negative issues, achievements, and challenges
6.13	Strong evidence is provided for claims of achievement or barriers to achievement
6.14	Reports are written in plain language and use a range of presentation formats that effectively and efficiently communicate important information

Detailed Description of Standard for Program Progress Reports

Report content

6.1 A succinct executive summary describes progress against End-of-Program-Outcomes (EOPOs), factors influencing the achievement of outcomes, management implications and recommendations

The executive summary is short (2-3 pages) and provides a summary of the main points in the report. The primary audience is funding partners so this report should support DFAT to meet its Investment Monitoring Reporting (IMR) Requirements. The executive summary should include:

- A brief overview of why this program exists (the problem/opportunity the program is designed to address), the EOPOs (what the program intends to achieve), the year of operation (where the program is in the program cycle).

- Key changes in the operating context (external and internal to the program) in this reporting cycle (including political economy, new or emerging data and evidence) and how/if these affect the ongoing relevance of the EOPOs and the key program strategies (outputs/outcomes/change pathways) as outlined in the Program Logic and design.

- Progress toward achievement of sustained EOPOs, clearly communicating whether this is adequate (as expected) at this point in time (with reference to the design, baseline and targets), and the basis of quantitative or qualitative evidence.

- Key achievements (quality, reach and coverage of key deliverables/outputs) in this reporting period, whether this is adequate (with reference to targets/workplan). Include evidence of whether these achievements/strategies were an efficient use of program and partner time, and to what extent they progressed the EOPOs.

- Benefits arising from GEDSI aspects of the program, and challenges faced in this area.

- Progress with cross-cutting issues such as climate change, localisation, innovation, and private sector engagement as relevant

- Key challenges in this reporting period, identifying sources of challenges and efforts to remedy or adapt to these challenges, where possible or feasible.

- A statement about progress against the annual plan and budget.

- Management implications of progress described in this reporting period (what needs to change, what needs more or less attention)

- Clear recommendations for the following reporting period.

6.2 Relevant changes in the operating context (including political economy) of the program are described

The relevant aspects of the context are described. Information is provided on:

- Evidence of progress of the broader sector or sub-sector in relation to the investment's area of work as well as locating this investment within that sector.

- Changes in the operating context (e.g., climate and disasters, political, economic, and social changes) that impact on the needs and priorities of the key program actors, especially women and any other relevant socially disadvantaged groups.

- Changes in donor or partner key personnel, funding or policy priorities which have affected the program.

A summary of the impact of the identified changes on the program is provided. More detail may be provided when describing the reasons for achievements or challenges.

6.3 There is a reflection on the continuing relevance of the investment, including testing key assumptions.

Given changes in the context, there is a reflection on the extent to which the problem(s)/ opportunity(ies) the investment is addressing is improving, worsening or continues the same. The report also considers the continuing relevance of the EOPOs and the program logic (and the assumptions it rests upon) in relation to the needs of the target population, including any relevant socially disadvantaged groups. Any proposed changes are identified and justified.

6.4 An evidence-based assessment of the adequacy of progress toward sustained EOPOs and supporting intermediate outcomes is provided.

This is the single most important element of the report. The EOPOs and intermediate outcomes from the original design document are listed. Any revisions are explained, together with a justification for these changes and description of how this has been reflected in formal agreements (contracts and partner agreements). NB: EOPOs cannot be changed without a formal sign off by the DFAT appropriate budget delegate.

A firm evidence- based judgement is provided on the adequacy of progress toward *each* EOPO and key supporting intermediate outcomes. The judgement references any end-of-program- and intermediate outcome targets, for this reporting period (as described in the MEL System) and demonstrates (where data is available) progress from the baseline assessment.

The judgement of adequacy of progress is made in relation to where the program is in its lifecycle. For example, in year one the targets outlined in the design and inception plan may have been foundational activities to establish key program strategies/policies, mobilise staff members and establish delivery partnerships. Delivery is as expected at this point in time, so progress is considered "adequate". However, as the program matures, there is greater expectation of robust evidence of progress toward the EOPOs. This means in later years, there should be demonstrable progress toward intermediate outcomes (short or medium term) and a clear explanation of how this is progressing EOPOs.

Reports reference baselines and progress against interim targets (outlined in the MEL System and Annual Plan) that help to guide assessment of progress toward the end-of-program-outcomes (and targets). Where targets are not set the basis for making the judgement on adequacy of progress must be explicit and explained with reference to appropriate criteria, standards and evidence. All programs should have a baseline by the end of year one, if not available it should be explained and justified why not.

Where progress has been particularly good, or particularly poor, a full exploration of the supportive and inhibiting factors that account for this situation is provided.

Where problems or challenges have been identified, there is a full analysis of the implications of the situation on the likely achievement of EOPOs. It is clear from the report the extent to which DFAT and other stakeholders will need to track the relevant issues, including whether there is a need to reassess the suitability of the EOPOs.

If previous management responses have been completed, then their success or failure is described. Any options for future management responses are fully elaborated. This includes the identification of what concrete actions stakeholders are required to take. The cost implications of these responses are discussed.

6.5 The exposure of participants to key outputs in this reporting period is described and the effectiveness and efficiency of key deliverables is assessed.

Only the key outputs are described. Key outputs are defined as those outputs that are important for the achievement of expected intermediate and EOPOs, or those accounting for a reasonable proportion of the budget or effort. Long lists of minor outputs are not required.

Key outputs are described in terms of how many beneficiaries have been reached and from which target groups. Data should be disaggregated based on categories most relevant to the program such as sex (required for all funded DFAT programs), age, disability, socioeconomic group, geographic location (urban/rural) etc.

Analysis should include:

- evidence of the quality of the outputs

- insight into whether the number of beneficiaries reached in this reporting period is on target and sufficient (or likely to be sufficient) to achieve the desired changes

- whether the right/most influential beneficiaries or change agents have been targeted for these outputs, to achieve the desired changes

- evidence of whether, and how, these outputs have influenced or changed beneficiary knowledge, attitudes, or behaviour in any way (positive or negative, intended, or unintended)

- reflection on whether the targeting and delivery of these outputs represents an efficient and effective use of resources and effort, given the contribution to the EOPOs.

- how policy dialogue has been used in the reporting period to support further planned outcomes.

6.6 Benefits to socially disadvantaged groups are clearly described. Efforts to address DFAT policy priorities such as GEDSI are explicit.

The report provides an outline of the GEDSI context of the investment, and any new insights gained in this reporting period. Key strategies and targets for GEDSI are described. Key deliverables in the last reporting period that influence GEDSI outcomes are summarised. Both quantitative and qualitative descriptions of these deliverables are provided. There is evidence of whether, and how, these deliverables have provided benefits to women and girls, men, and boys, including those with a disability.

Even where an investment has no OECD DAC gender policy marker, it must still be able to provide sex-disaggregated data and demonstrate how gender equality gaps have been addressed, and risks mitigated.

The report describes efforts made by the program over the last reporting period to:

- Identify and involve people from socially disadvantaged groups. Benefits from activities to socially disadvantaged groups are described

- Identify, manage, reduce, and mitigate risks related to climate change and natural disasters

- Promote private sector growth or engage the private sector in achieving development outcomes

- Implement and operationalise stated program principles[8] e.g. piloting of approaches in selected districts.

6.7 Progress against the annual plan and budget is assessed. Efforts to use resources efficiently and economically are clearly described, demonstrating Value for Money (VfM)

Progress implementing the annual plan on time is described. A firm judgement is made on the adequacy of this progress. Where there are significant delays, the factors leading to this have been identified, and the implications for completing the program on time are outlined. Management

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responses are proposed. Where extensions are requested, these are adequately justified, and other alternatives have been considered.

The amount of budget expended against the Planned budget is presented. The proportion of variation is clear and the reasons for variations are provided.

The report describes efforts being made to ensure that resources are being used effectively, economically and without waste. This includes any efforts to routinely assess VfM of key program strategies. The data and evidence for making these assessments should be outlined in the program Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning System (see *Standard 5)*.

The budgetary implications of changed or delayed activities, under or overspends, and any proposed actions that arise from management responses are clearly set out. The forward budget is presented and provides sufficient flexibility to accommodate unexpected or emergent programming (if the contract enables this), within the authorised program budget envelope.

6.8 An assessment of the likely adequacy of planned inputs to meet the expected EOPOs and key intermediate outcomes is provided. This assessment considers risks (including sustainability risks)

A firm judgement on the adequacy of the Planned inputs to meet the expected EOPOs is made. The assessment makes clear the assumptions on which this judgement has been made and the implications for implementation.

Risks to achieving key outputs, intermediate outcomes, and EOPOs are explicit and have been considered in making the judgement about whether the EOPOs and intermediate outcomes can still be achieved. This extends to assessing the impacts of climate change and disaster risks, and sustainability risks. Efforts put in place to ensure that benefits endure after funding ends should be documented. Risk identification, controls, treatments, and ratings should be reviewed and updated quarterly (or as frequently as specified in the risk register) and captured in progress reporting.

Where there are anticipated shortfalls, the report provides a well-supported argument for any proposals for additional inputs.

6.9 Key governance, management, and implementation systems (including risk management systems) are described, and their performance assessed

The performance of key systems is described, where there are issues to consider. This includes a full exploration of the supportive and inhibiting factors that account for the situation described. Key systems include:

a.   Governance systems. This includes steering committees and/or technical working groups, program decision-making structures (such as leadership teams and strategic planning groups). The report identifies areas where the governance arrangements and decision-making structures have had a positive or negative impact on the achievement of EOPOs. Reasons for this are elaborated and proposed options to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of these structures are considered.

b.   Risk management systems. The narrative provides a summary of key risks and the efforts made to actively manage these risks. Particular attention is given to discussion of risks to the achievement of EOPOs. The report explains how partners and key stakeholders have been involved during the reporting period in the on-going assessment of risks and the development of risk management strategies. Risks that could occur in the near future are also identified, not just what has already occurred. An updated risk matrix is attached to the report.

c.   Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (including knowledge management) systems: Refer to Standard 5

d.   Financial management systems

e.   Staffing or human resource systems

f.   Other relevant management systems are included.

Particularly where problems or challenges have been identified, there is a full analysis of the implications the situations may have on the successful management of the program. It is clear from the report the extent to which DFAT, and other stakeholders will need to track the relevant issues.

6.10 The report includes lessons learned from implementation that potentially have important implications more broadly

The report includes lessons learned or insights that have been generated from the monitoring and evaluation activities that may have important implications for the investment, local partner development strategies, DFAT country, regional or sector strategies, or DFAT corporately. Lessons providing insights into whether and how investment outcomes can be sustained post-DFAT funding should also be included. Minor, well established, or generic development lessons are not included.

6.11 Previous and/or proposed management actions or recommendations are summarized

The report provides a summary of the important recommendations or management actions proposed. Any recommendations or management actions from previous progress reports are discussed in terms of their implementation and effectiveness.

Considerations throughout the Report

6.12 The report provides balanced reporting of positive and negative issues, achievements, and challenges

The report provides a balance between evidence-based reporting of achievement and challenges and issues. Evidence of limited achievements would be supported by a reasonable discussion of challenges. The report reflects the challenging nature of human, social and economic development.

6.13 Strong evidence is provided for claims of achievement or barriers to achievement

For claims of achievement or the explanation of barriers to achievement, credible supportive evidence is provided. Strong evidence includes the use of multiple sources of evidence to triangulate claims or independently verified monitoring data. The basis by which the claim is made is articulated.

There is not an overemphasis on using anecdotal evidence and single examples to demonstrate results. Examples can be used to illustrate a point, but the evidence for making the point must be stronger than single cases, anecdotes, or personal opinions. The report should provide findings informed by multiple sources/methods (triangulated) and ideally draw on quality assured monitoring data, and evidence from independent sources such as technical advisory reports, reviews, evaluations, and independent research. The different evidence sources described in the MEL Plan are drawn on for reporting purposes.

6.14 Reports are written in plain language and use a range of presentation formats that effectively and efficiently communicate important information

The report is written in plain language which is translatable from English into local languages. Data or findings are presented in a way that facilitates easy understanding by primary users and general readers. A range of presentation formats have been used including infographics and images, and the report is not presented as text only.

STANDARD 7: DFAT Program Manager Monitoring

Monitoring conducted by DFAT Investment Managers includes site visits, workshops, and events, and/or attendance at key meetings with stakeholders and delivery partners.

Planning for monitoring (site visits, meetings, workshops, events)

Nr	Element
7.1	The purpose of monitoring and the intended use of the information gathered is clear
7.2	Questions are defined, relate to the purpose of the monitoring, and are suitable for the time/skills available. Partner government checklists or other donor questions should be used/incorporated for joint visits
7.3	Appropriate ways of collecting and analyzing the information are described

Additional planning for site visits

Nr	Element
7.4	A proposed schedule of expected activities and persons to meet is prepared, allowing sufficient time to address the visit questions
7.5	Roles and responsibilities for each team member are clearly described (including joint missions)
7.6	Key points are recorded after each activity

Documenting monitoring

Nr	Element
7.7	The purpose and description of the monitoring event is provided
7.8	A brief summary of findings is provided for each monitoring question, documenting the evidence base behind these findings
7.9	Implications of the findings for the investment and management actions are clear
7.10	Lessons or insights of interest to the investment, sector or DFAT are identified
7.11	Feedback to respondents, participants, delivery partners is provided where appropriate

Detailed Description of Standard for Program Manager Monitoring

Planning for monitoring

7.1 The purpose of monitoring and the intended use of the information to be gathered is clear.

Monitoring can serve multiple purposes:

- To fill in gaps in knowledge about the program or operating context that are important for routine DFAT reporting, general management, building relationships, and helping to make informed decisions about the program.

- It can also test the assertions and evidence in written reports, and test assumptions in the Program Logic at local level with stakeholders.

The purpose of monitoring can be broad and address multiple information needs. Being clear, at the outset, how the Investment Manager intends to use the information gathered through routine monitoring will help to focus the monitoring questions.

DFAT can conduct program monitoring on its own, or in collaboration with partner governments or other donors. Joint monitoring with partners is encouraged to promote harmonisation. Even in joint monitoring, DFAT Investment Managers should be clear about why they want to participate in monitoring and what information/insights would be most useful to them. Investment Managers may need to advocate with partners to have their information needs met or arrange some supplementary data gathering if this is unlikely to be possible.

7.2 Questions are defined, relate to the purpose of the monitoring, and are suitable for the time and skills available

Key strategic questions that need to be answered through the monitoring opportunity are defined and consistent with the purpose and intended use. Consideration has been given to the key informants or interviewees likely to provide valuable insights into the questions. In forming questions, and deciding who to interview, Investment Managers should consider:

- any follow up required to management responses from previous DFAT monitoring (e.g. Investment Monitoring Reports)

- issues raised (concerns and opportunities) about the program from delivery partners (either in formal reports or informally), co-financiers, partner governments, delivery partners, beneficiaries, DFAT staff

- verifying important claims made in program progress reports or by delivery partners

- opportunities to better understand the operating context

- whether GEDSI issues will be treated separately or as integral to other questions of the visit

- how development policy priorities including climate change and disaster resilience are being addressed.

- existing monitoring checklists, which may be program specific or sector specific such as checklists for health clinics or schools

Developing an in-depth understanding of a few focused issues will be more advantageous than trying to cover a wide range of issues poorly. The scope of the questions is quite focused on information needs of DFAT and others involved in the monitoring. The questions do not require complex methods to collect and process the information. Questions are simple questions that a generalist using good common sense has a reasonable expectation of answering.

Joint partner government and or joint donor monitoring visits are encouraged where practicable and reduce transaction costs on partners.

7.3 Appropriate ways of collecting and analysing the information are explicit.

Consideration is given to the best way of collecting information to answer the questions posed. For example, it may be more effective to observe training, or review a training agenda to discover the quality of training, than ask the participants if it was good quality. However, interviewing participants or their supervisors is more effective if you want to learn about the application of training.

It is clear who will be interviewed, what will be observed, what documents will be reviewed and where informal interactions are expected. These are not lengthy descriptions but provide sufficient guidance to ensure that the visit delivers the expected information without major gaps. Where possible multiple sources are used to verify the information collected. For example, different stakeholder groups are asked similar questions. Consideration is given about how to reach and engage representatives of different socially disadvantaged groups in a way that is sensitive to their needs, rights, and security.

Additional planning for site visits

7.4 A proposed schedule of expected activities and persons to meet is prepared, allowing sufficient time to address the visit questions.

A schedule of activities is developed that allows sufficient time to answer the questions to a reasonable degree of depth and takes into account times suitable for interviewees for interviews/visits. For example, not visiting farmers during prime harvesting times. A list of people to meet is prepared.

If considering remote monitoring be aware that it might require additional time and resourcing. Third party monitoring can be used in fragile and conflict environment or if travel is restricted.

Link: Remote Monitoring Guidance

7.5 Roles and responsibilities of visit team members are described (including for joint missions)

The roles and responsibilities of the different team members are clear, prior to the mission. For example, if a DFAT staff member is expected to act as a translator, then they cannot also collect information, take notes and be able to process information after the meeting.

If several DFAT staff travel together it is clear who is the nominated visit leader, and they will prepare and prepare and write the report.

7.6 Key points are recorded after each visit activity

The DFAT staff member responsible for the interview(s) or other information collection activity ensures that there are dot points recorded against the key questions after each interview. These recorded notes provide the basis for any report. Dot points address a) the visit questions in terms of *actual content* provided by respondents or observed; and b) the *impressions* of the DFAT staff member. Ensure to record notes in a manner sensitive to respondent comfort and sense of security.

Documenting monitoring

7.7 The purpose and description of the monitoring event is provided

There is a summary of: the purpose; the monitoring event (site visit, meeting, workshop) ; monitoring questions; date/s; team members (DFAT and/or joint monitoring); the cost (person days and expenditure); any important issues that led to the monitoring.

7.8 A brief summary of findings is provided for each monitoring question, documenting the evidence base behind these findings.

A summary, as brief as possible is provided for each question. The answers should describe the current situation and the factors that have led to this situation. The evidence base for this assessment is explicit. Any differential outcomes or engagement in the investment for subgroups are noted. Direct

quotes can be useful to illustrate a point or capture a divergence of views. Photographic evidence can also be useful. (Remember consent must be sought if a photograph is going to be used in public diplomacy or promotions).

Link: Remote Monitoring Guidance

7.9 Implications of the findings for the program and management actions are clear

The implications of the findings for program success (delivering on end-of-program outcomes) are documented. Management actions are clear and identify who, will do what, by when. Resource implications are highlighted where relevant. All management actions are expected to be followed up.

7.10 Lessons or insights of interest to the investment, sector, or DFAT are identified.

The report includes lessons learned with potentially important implications for the investment; local partner development strategies; the DFAT Program, or DFAT corporately. Minor, well established, or generic development lessons are not included.

7.11 Feedback to respondents or participants is provided where appropriate.

Where appropriate, written, or verbal feedback to participants in the monitoring event is provided. This could be provided to implementation teams, local partners, or beneficiaries from socially disadvantaged groups.

STANDARD 8: Independent Evaluation - Terms of Reference

In these MEL Standard the term "evaluation" includes mid-term reviews as per DFAT's Development Evaluation Policy. The following points reflect elements of a strong Terms of Reference (TOR):

Background and orientation

Nr.	Element
8.1	A brief orientation to the investment or program including any important background information is provided
8.2	The purpose of the evaluation and the intended primary users of the findings are described
8.3	Key decisions (management, operational and/or policy) the evaluation is intended to inform are identified
8.4	The key issues that lead to the evaluation questions are described in neutral language

Key evaluation questions and scope

Nr.	Element
8.5	A small number of clear key evaluation questions are generated with primary information users
8.6	The key questions are consistent with the overall purpose and information needs for any decisions the evaluation findings will inform
8.7	The key evaluation questions are prioritised, so that the most important issues received adequate attention.
8.8	The scope of the questions is suitable for the time and resources available. Where data does not exist to answer the questions, time and resources allow for primary data collection
8.9	The proposed Team Leader has the opportunity to provide professional advice on the scope of the questions and the resources applied during contract negotiations

Team composition and evaluation governance

Nr.	Element
8.10	Skill sets of the evaluation team reflect priority questions, and the role of the Team Leader and local team members is clear
8.11	The role of DFAT staff and any evaluation reference group (if being used) is clear

Evaluation Scheduling

Nr.	Element
8.12	A verbal briefing for the team of the key issues and priority information is including in planning
8.13	An Evaluation Plan is required (refer to Standard 9).
8.14	Scheduling allows sufficient time and resources for the DFAT Evaluation Manager and the team to complete essential tasks

Nr.	Element
8.15	Any deliverables in addition to the Evaluation Plan and Report, such as communication products, are identified
8.16	The process for commenting on deliverables is efficient and allows independence of the team's final Report
8.17	The TOR confirm the Report is to be published on the DFAT website, as per the Development Evaluation Policy

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Detailed Description of Standard for Independent Evaluation TORs

Background and orientation

8.1 A brief orientation to the investment or program including any important background information is provided

The Terms of Reference (TOR) must be a stand-alone document, as they provide the basis for discussing the evaluation with proposed consultants. Background information includes program value; time frame; End-of-Program-Outcomes (EOPOs); gender equality and social inclusion outcomes; a summary of the key program approaches (such as training, technical advisers, secondments, provision of infrastructure, equipment, and modalities, budget support or pooled funding, or policy dialogue). The context in which the program is situated should be described, including relevance to DFAT's development assistance portfolio and partner government development plans. The delivery mechanism should be described (for example, partner government or regional organisation, contracted, multi-lateral development partner, or NGO) and it is clear if the investment is a facility. Any important events in the program history, useful to contextualise the evaluation, should be summarised (for example, major budget cuts/increases, changes in development policy, changes in counterparts or delivery partners, changes to EOPOs). Any information which can help the reader to quickly understand the scope/reach of the program should be provided.

8.2 The purpose of the evaluation and the intended primary users of the findings are described

The TOR should clearly identify the overall purpose (for example accountability, program improvement, knowledge generation). This allows the evaluator to reflect these priorities in the Evaluation Plan. The TOR should identify the *primary* users of the information so that the evaluator can collect relevant information, contribute to deepening an understanding of the findings during the mission, and prepare an appropriate report.

Primary users are identified by their title not just by organisation. For example, "DFAT" is made up of senior executives, desk officers, senior managers, and program managers. "The Contractor" is made up of head office personnel, implementation managers and advisers. Partner Government is also made up by different levels of people. Partner organisations have executives and other personnel. In some cases, other stakeholders might be primary users. Secondary users can also be mentioned in the TOR.

8.3 Key decisions (management, operational and/or policy) the evaluation is intended to inform are identified

Any important management decisions that the primary users are expected to make using the evaluation findings should be identified and described. Management decisions are more specific than the evaluation purpose and involve decisions such as whether or not to extend the program, whether or not to involve a new partner, whether partner systems are ready for use, or whether to consider a new modality for a future program.

8.4 The key issues that lead to the evaluation questions are described in neutral language

Any important issues that have informed the call for, or design, of the TOR should be identified and described in neutral language that does not infer an expectation of findings. They should be described in sufficient detail to enable the evaluator to develop the Evaluation Plan (see Standard 8).

Key evaluation questions and scope

8.5 A small number of clear key evaluation questions are generated with primary information users

Ideally, there should be no more than five key evaluation questions. More specific sub-questions can complement the key questions if useful, though it is important that the sub-questions are responding to

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the key questions and not adding additional information requirements or tasks for the evaluators/reviewers. Often the evaluator will help develop and refine sub-questions in the Evaluation Plan. In general, a large number of key evaluation questions or sub-questions limits depth of analysis and rigour for each question.

Key evaluation questions should be not broad or vague or open to a wide range of interpretations. Questions should be worded clearly so the evaluator understands their intent, and therefore the most useful information to collect to answer them.

Questions are best generated together with primary information users. Ideally, participation includes representatives from senior management, program level staff, and national partners and implementation partners where relevant. Senior managers are best placed to provide strategic direction to the evaluation and should support Evaluation Managers at crucial stages, such as forming the key questions and finalising the TOR.

8.6 The key evaluation questions are consistent with the overall purpose of the evaluation and information needs for any decisions the evaluation findings will inform

Each key evaluation question must be clearly related to the evaluation purpose and any key management decisions. There should be an adequate range of questions to meet the information needs. There should not be any questions unrelated to the stated purpose.

Although the OECD DAC criteria (relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, sustainability) and related DFAT quality criteria (for example, relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, gender equality and social inclusion, monitoring and evaluation and sustainability) are important considerations for an evaluation, not all criteria may be prioritised for every evaluation. Generic quality questions in the TOR will result in a broad scope. It is better to ask specific questions about the program being evaluated.

Most DFAT evaluations at the investment level will have an effectiveness question, focused on the extent to which the program has delivered stated EOPOs. The TOR make it clear to what extent gender equality and social inclusion issues should be investigated as stand-alone topics or as integral components of other questions of effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and so on.

Any key evaluation questions in an investment-level MEL System or similar may inform the evaluation focus. These may or may not have been included depending on how old the investment is.

There is a single list of questions in one place in the TOR.

If the evaluation is focused on a sector, theme, or portfolio level there might be a Performance Assessment Framework to draw on.

8.7 The key evaluation questions are prioritised, so that the most important issues receive adequate attention

The TOR clearly shows what the priority questions are. This allows the evaluator to make judgments about how to focus the Evaluation Plan, including the methodological effort and rigour required for each question, and what is most important to answer in the Report. Some questions may be then made "desirable if there is sufficient time". Priorities must be consistent with the purpose of the evaluation. Ideally, only priority questions should be posed, but in some cases where stakeholders have generated numerous questions which they want to keep in the TOR, prioritising these can be a way of showing the evaluator the critical questions.

8.8 The scope of the questions is suitable for the time and resources available. Where data does not exist to answer the questions, time and resources allow for primary data collection

The TOR are clear about whether data collection in country is expected, and be explicit that DFAT encourages the involvement of local evaluators. Typically, a 12-day in-country mission (or remote data collection period) can only address four or five broad questions. Remote evaluations usually require additional time for data collection. During the development of the Evaluation Plan, the key evaluation questions should be broken down into a larger number of sub-questions or information

requirements. Most 60-minute interviews with a respondent cover no more than four or five key topics; less if translation is required. In addition to collecting the information, it also needs to be processed, interpreted, and reported on. The questions posed in the TOR need to reflect this reality.

8.9 The proposed Team Leader has the opportunity to provide professional advice on the scope of the questions and the resources applied during contract negotiations

Whilst the DFAT Evaluation Manager may have diligently engaged primary users in the development of the TOR, an experienced Team Leader will be able to provide guidance on whether the questions can be answered with appropriate rigour, given the resources and time available. Evaluation Managers are encouraged to discuss and negotiate the questions and scope with the proposed Team Leader during contract negotiations, with a focus on ensuring the evaluation provides the information DFAT needs for decision making. Advice on draft TOR can be provided by the Development Evaluation and Assurance Section (*developmentevaluation@dfat.gov.au*), Performance and Quality focal points within geographic and thematic areas, or post MEL Advisers.

Team Composition and Evaluation Governance

8.10 Skill sets of the evaluation team reflect priority questions, and the role of the Team Leader and local team members is clear

For complex evaluations, unless a compelling reason is provided, the Team Leader should be an evaluation expert, not necessarily a technical expert in the relevant sector or thematic area. The Team Leader is responsible for producing the Evaluation Plan and ensuring the team delivers on the Plan, including delivery of a good quality final Report. The Team Leader draws on the resources within the team to support them to complete the evaluation.

The TOR should be explicit about the technical skills and capabilities required in the evaluation team. DFAT can then select specialists with those skills, or the market can then present a team with the requisite skillset. Defining required skillsets is preferred over defining positions, for example a health advisor may also be an experienced evaluator. Consideration must be given to the use of local consultants[9] with the requisite skill sets in teams, particularly where the evaluation will be conducted remotely. Where the use of local consultants is not appropriate/applicable this should be made clear. All team members should have at least awareness level knowledge of gender equality and social inclusion in relation to the program's focus area(s), even if the evaluation does not specifically focus on questions around gender equality.

8.11 The role of DFAT staff and any evaluation reference group (if being used) is clear

The DFAT Evaluation Manager should be clearly identified, with sufficient time available in their forward workplan to oversee and manage the evaluation. Where DFAT staff are part of the team, their role and the purpose of their inclusion should be explicit (for example to draw on their technical expertise, for example infrastructure adviser, or as a professional development opportunity). DFAT staff members directly involved in advising on or managing the program should not participate in an evaluation team, to ensure findings are objective and avoid conflicts of interest.

If a reference group (or other governance or oversight body) is in place for the evaluation, the composition of the group (positions of representatives) and their role in the evaluation (for example, advisory, or simply for keeping their organisation up to date with evaluation progress and emergent findings) should be briefly described in the TOR. Expectations about when, and on what issues the evaluation team will engage with this group should be clear.

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[9] Nationals of the evaluation country

Evaluation Scheduling

The following processes are highly recommended for inclusion in the Evaluation TOR:

8.12 A verbal briefing of the key issues and priority information is included in planning

A phone or face-to-face briefing should be included in planning to discuss the background, issues and priorities for the evaluation with the evaluation team, or at least the Team Leader, before the Evaluation Plan is developed. This may involve the Evaluation Manager, responsible SES and thematic specialists (where relevant). Sufficient time should be allocated to allow DFAT and the evaluator to work together to clarify the scope, priority questions and issues, and general approach to methods. This may require more than one discussion and may require additional time if the evaluation is being conducted remotely.

8.13 An Evaluation Plan is required (refer to Standard 8).

The depth of planning, and time required to develop the Evaluation Plan, should be proportionate to the scope and complexity of reflects the importance of the evaluation questions and management decisions to be made. Typically for a DFAT-commissioned evaluation, three days is required to develop an Evaluation Plan, which includes fully elaborated methods.

See Standard 8: Evaluation Plan for more details.

8.14 Scheduling in the TOR allows sufficient time and resources for the DFAT Evaluation Manager and the evaluation team to complete essential tasks

Tasks that require elapsed time and resources include:

DFAT Evaluation Manager	Evaluation Team
b. Review and accept the Evaluation Plan c. Assist in schedule data collection activities e. consideration and feedback on initial findings h. Collate comments on the draft Report	a. Initial document review to inform the Evaluation Plan d. Conduct data collection including stakeholder interviews e. Feedback to relevant information users (key stakeholders, beneficiaries, other donors, partner government) to share and gain insight into initial findings and recommendations f. Process and interpret data collected g. Prepare the draft Report i. Brief DFAT on findings, respond to comments and complete final Report and any other communications or learning products as agreed

a. Initial document review. For an average evaluation, three to four days should be allowed for document review. Program documents and relevant policy and strategy documents (gender equality, disability, and social inclusion) should be reviewed. The Evaluation Manager should provide the evaluator with relevant information from the program MEL System and other sources as required.

b. Review and accept the Evaluation Plan. As the Evaluation Plan replaces the TOR as the basis for the evaluation and to assess the performance of the team, it is important DFAT is confident the methods and approaches described in the Plan will answer the questions and any identified limitations are acceptable. DFAT Evaluation Managers should ensure there is sufficient time for DFAT (and key users) to review and agree on the Evaluation Plan. Any concerns or sensitivities over the proposed approach and method should be agreed prior to the team commencing data collection and be documented in the final Evaluation Plan.

c. Schedule data collection activities. The DFAT Evaluation Manager should make introductions for the evaluation team and provide support with scheduling data collection activities such as interviews, site visits and validation or other workshops. Sufficient elapsed time should be allowed for these two tasks prior to the team commencing data collection activities. A remote evaluation team may need more support to contact and engage with stakeholders or to work with the implementing partner to source data. The more standard two to three week in-country mission for data collection is often insufficient for a remote evaluation.

d. Data collection including stakeholder interviews. The proposed data collection and interview schedule in the TOR should not be too detailed. A full schedule is developed after the Evaluation Plan identifies the key people/groups to be interviewed (for example implementing partners, partner government, beneficiaries etc) and the best way to answer the questions. Enough days should be allocated to ensure adequate interviews/focus group discussions and analysis of program monitoring data. Sufficient time should be allowed for the team to work together to process findings and identify further information requirements as the data collection period unfolds. Generally, more time is required for complex and remote evaluations.

e. Feedback to relevant information users (key stakeholders, beneficiaries, other donors, partner government) to share and gain insight into initial findings and recommendations

Adequate time and resources should be allocated for the team to present, discuss, and explore initial findings with key stakeholders following intensive field discussions, for example through workshops, presentation/s, or through an aide memoire and exit meeting. Feedback supports more credible findings by enabling the team to test their evidence, initial findings, and preliminary recommendations with key users. As the uses of information may be different for the different primary users, a suitable range of feedback options should be offered. Consideration is given to whether feedback to representatives of different socially disadvantaged groups is necessary. There can be separate sessions for different stakeholders if there are sensitivities.

f. Process and interpret data collected. The evaluation team requires adequate time to process information from interviews, document reviews and appraisals, observations, or other methods to provide a credible evidence base to support findings. Typically, three days would be required for processing of data collected during a 12 day in-country mission that relied strongly on interviews. More complicated evaluations would require more time, simpler ones less time. This is in addition to time allocated to actual report writing. Flexibility should be balanced with VfM, and final time frames should be negotiated with the evaluator.

g. Prepare the draft Report. The number of days allocated to completing the Report reflects: a) the scope of the questions; b) the complexity of the issues; c) the number of people contributing to writing the Report; d) the team reviewing and discussing the final draft. It is recommended to allow the team sufficient time to rest after any in-country mission and to reflect on the findings from data collection activities. For example, ten days allocated to report writing could require a three-week elapsed period to deliver.

h. Collate comments on the draft Report. See 7.16.

i. Respond to comments and complete final Report. The time allocated to the team to respond to comments should reflect a) the likely range of comments generated; and b) the possibility that comments require significant structural change in the final Report.

j. Prepare management response, manage approvals process, and publish the evaluation together with the management response within three months of completion of the Report. See 7.17

Reporting and deliverables

8.15. Any deliverables in addition to the Report, such as communication products, are identified

Most evaluations will produce an Evaluation Plan, a draft and final Evaluation Report as key deliverables. They may also produce an Aide Memoire or conduct an initial findings workshop at the end of a field mission. Where DFAT and other key users of the evaluation are interested in additional information products, such as summary or learning papers targeted to particular information users or focused on specific aspects of the evaluation, or dissemination workshops or seminars, these should be explicit in the TOR.

8.16. The process for commenting on deliverables is efficient and allows independence of the team's final Report

An efficient process for commenting on the draft Report should be described in the TOR (for example only relevant individuals are invited to comment, and the areas where they should focus their attention are specified). Consideration is given to inviting gender advisors and any relevant thematic group members to comment. Note that those invited to comment on the final Report should also have been invited to comment on the Evaluation Plan to ensure their final comments are within the scope and expectations for the evaluation. The TOR explains that DFAT will either provide comments in a consolidated form to the team, otherwise the TOR should allow additional time to respond to a large number of comments from all stakeholders.

<u>Note</u>: *Where DFAT personnel consolidate comments, there must be transparency of decisions on what comments to include or remove. It may be necessary to provide comments from different stakeholders (national partner, representatives of any socially disadvantaged groups, implementation team and DFAT) separately if there are conflicting views.*

8.17. The TOR confirm the Report is to be published on the DFAT website, as per the Development Evaluation Policy

The requirement for the Evaluation Report to be published on the DFAT website should be noted at initial stages and planning put in place to ensure this requirement is met, as per the DFAT Evaluation Policy and Transparency Requirements. DFAT should discuss with evaluators how to frame any sensitivities and DFAT requirements for documents to meet accessibility guidelines. DFAT's management response is published online with the final Report.

STANDARD 9: Independent Evaluation Plans

The following points reflect elements of a strong Evaluation Plan.

Nr	Element
9.1	The Plan is based on a collaborative approach
9.2	The program to be evaluated is described and the purpose and primary intended users of the evaluation are clearly identified
9.3	A summary is provided to orient the reader to the overall evaluation design and methodology
9.4	Limitations or constraints on the evaluation are described (for example time frame, resources, available data, political sensitivities)
9.5	The key evaluation questions are supplemented by detailed descriptions and/or sub-questions
9.6	It is clear which questions are considered to be of higher priority and are expected to provide the most important information
9.7	There is sufficient flexibility to be able to address important unexpected issues as they emerge
9.8	The methods to collect quantitative and qualitative data, including stakeholders to be interviewed are described for each question (or related questions)
9.9	The proposed data collection methods are appropriate for the questions posed
9.10	Triangulation of data collection methods is proposed to strengthen the confidence in the findings
9.11	The sampling strategy is clear and appropriate for the evaluation questions posed
9.12	The Plan describes how data will be processed and analysed
9.13	The Plan identifies ethical issues and how they will be addressed
9.14	The process for making judgments is clear, including the strength of evidence for making these judgements
9.15	Approaches to enhance the use of findings are outlined (if requested in the terms of reference)
9.16	The Plan provides an indicative schedule which DFAT uses to create the final schedule
9.17	Roles and responsibilities of team members, DFAT and any reference group are clear
9.18	The Plan describes how the evaluation will be quality assured
9.19	The Plan for publication of the final Report is documented

Detailed Description of Standard for Independent Evaluation Plans

9.1 The Plan is based on a collaborative approach

The evaluator should consult DFAT, and the stakeholders identified as important by DFAT, to develop the Plan. Consultation may be in person, by phone or by email. Stakeholders, (this could include partner governments, beneficiaries and implementing partners), should have the opportunity to comment on the Evaluation Plan before the evaluation commences.

Note: This helps ensure that additional information will not be requested after the data collection phase is complete.

9.2 The program is described, and the purpose and primary intended users of the evaluation are clearly identified

The Plan provides a very brief summary of the program being evaluated, including the EOPOs, program timeframe, budget, location and the problem(s) or opportunity(ies) the program was designed to address. Any known major changes in the program (such as changes to major program strategies/changes in the program logic) or changes in the operating context, relevant to the evaluation are described.

The purpose of the evaluation is normally taken from the TOR. The Plan re-states this so that it is a stand-alone document. An evaluation cannot usually meet the needs of all interested stakeholders, so individuals (by title) in named organisations should be identified as the *primary users of the findings*. These are the people who will be using the information to make judgments and decisions.

9.3 A summary is provided to orient the reader to the overall evaluation design and methodology

This is an introductory orientation of the overall design of the evaluation. It is short, about one paragraph in length. For example, it could highlight whether the evaluation is predominantly exploratory or descriptive, or whether a cause-and-effect design is proposed, or whether or not any case studies would feature in the overall design. It would highlight the major methods for data collection and analysis. The Plan does not go straight into detailed descriptions of methods without this general orientation.

9.4 Limitations or constraints for the evaluation are described (for example time frame, resources, available data, political sensitivities)

The time available for the evaluation or review has implications for the scope. A wider scope will generally require more time and resources. The evaluator highlights any important limitations in terms of time available, resources applied, or the expertise of the evaluation team to deliver a credible, defensible evaluation product. Consideration is also given to any potential limitations in addressing gender equality issues and/or reaching representatives of socially disadvantaged groups. Political sensitivities are highlighted where appropriate. The implications of these limitations are discussed.

Note: A long list of limitations is not considered a substitute for a poorly negotiated TOR. The evaluator should, and address any limitations, including any not raised in the TOR, to the extent possible, prior to preparation of the Evaluation Plan.

9.5 The key evaluation questions are supplemented by detailed descriptions and/or sub-questions

Whilst the TOR define the Key evaluation questions, the evaluator needs to carefully consider how these (often) broad questions will be addressed. There needs to be mutual understanding between DFAT and the evaluator on which aspects of the question need to be most thoroughly investigated. Following consultation with key users, the evaluator will often supplement the key questions with a summary of the more detailed information requirements and/or sub-questions.

This breakdown of information requirements or questions allows the DFAT Evaluation Manager to assess whether the original scope was realistic. Where relevant, the evaluator also confirms how gender equality and social inclusion issues will be investigated as a stand-alone area of enquiry or as integral component of other questions of effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and so on.

9.6 It is clear which questions are considered to be of higher priority and are expected to provide the most important information

Ideally, only up to 5 broad questions will be addressed, which, in turn, may be broken down into a larger number of sub-questions. The sub-questions should directly relate to the key questions and are not an opportunity to expand the research scope. Some of the questions will be more important than others. The Evaluation Plan should reflect where the emphasis will be placed and make it clear how DFAT's information needs will be met. The evaluation team will not usually be able to answer all the questions listed for all respondents and so will need to make decisions during interviews about what will be dropped and what is essential. The DFAT Evaluation Manager needs to be confident that the evaluator will, at a minimum, deliver information on the priority questions.

9.7. There is sufficient flexibility to be able to address important unexpected issues as they emerge

This flexibility may be built into the questioning technique employed during an interview. It may be built into the schedule as a whole to allow new issues to emerge and be addressed through additional data collection if they are important. The Plan should consider approaches to allow emergent issues to be addressed where they cannot be adequately addressed within the schedule.

9.8 The methods to collect quantitative and qualitative data, including stakeholders to be interviewed are described for each question (or related questions)

The Evaluation Plan shows how each of the questions will be answered by describing the methods that will be used to collect the information. For most DFAT evaluations this is likely to include in-depth interviews, focus group discussions/interviews, document reviews and in some cases observations of activities. Large workshops are not usually a suitable method to gather substantive, reliable and valid information – however, they may have other important political purposes. For several questions there may be a number of data collection methods proposed to strengthen confidence in the findings.

Consideration should be given to the design of data collection methods that are responsive to the needs, rights, and security of respondents, with special consideration given to the needs of any socially disadvantaged groups. This includes the identification and recruitment of program participants as respondents, the time of day and location of data collection activities, and the techniques employed during data collection.

The design of major evaluative/review activities/studies are annexed and include tools such as interview guides, surveys, or questionnaires. In some cases, the evaluator will need to develop these later, or adjust them as the evaluation proceeds. Where team members are working in different locations, tools should be available ahead of time so that data is collected systematically. If flexibility on this is required, then a compelling rationale is provided. Summary statements of methods that are not linked with specific evaluation questions are not considered adequate.

9.9 The proposed data collection methods are appropriate for the questions posed

The DFAT Evaluation Manager and evaluator should ensure data collection methods described will generate the information required to answer the key evaluation questions. For example, a focus group discussion would be unlikely to answer a sensitive question; a review of a program strategy document (such as a gender equality strategy) would be unlikely to tell you if the program's actual gender equality activities were of a high quality, as this would need to be supported by information from other sources.

9.10 Triangulation of data collection methods is proposed to strengthen the confidence in the findings

Triangulation is the use of a range of methods and/or sources of information to come to a finding. Using multiple sources of information to answer the same question strengthens the evidence base underpinning the findings. This should include official data sources and available longitudinal data, including from partner governments. Given the short time frame for most DFAT evaluations, it is difficult to employ a wide range of methods. To deal with this, the evaluation should plan to discuss similar questions across a range of different respondents within and across different organisations or target beneficiary groups (particularly socially disadvantaged groups) or use a number of methods to examine the same issue. It is not sufficient to state that triangulation will be used if this is not demonstrated in the Plan.

9.11 Sampling strategy is clear and appropriate for the evaluation questions posed

Most evaluations will require some sort of sampling strategy across individuals and socially disadvantaged groups, sites, or time periods. The Evaluation Plan should outline and justify appropriate sampling strategies. For short evaluations that rely on analytical rather than statistical inference, purposeful sampling will be appropriate and could include maximum variation (positive and negative deviants), a critical or leading case, or a typical case. Efforts should be made to avoid relying on a convenience sample which is likely to be unrepresentative of the population of interest. Where statistical inference will be used to generalise from the sample, random sampling strategies are appropriate – especially stratified random sampling which reduces the sample size required.

9.12 The Plan describes how data will be processed and analysed

The Plan should describe how the data will be processed, including outlining measures to check and correct any errors in data, ensure security of storage and prepare for analysis. The Plan should also describe how the data will be analysed to answer the key evaluation questions. This may not require advanced analytical methods, but it should be clear to users of the information exactly how this will be done, including engagement with senior and local stakeholders to ensure that the analysis is correct and that findings have value in the local context. Consideration should be given to the analysis of data disaggregated by sex and relevant socially disadvantaged groups.

9.13 The Plan identifies ethical issues and how they will be addressed

The Plan should state that the evaluation will follow DFAT's Ethical Research and Evaluation Guidance. The Plan should also reflect the four principles in the guidance: respect for human beings, beneficence, research merit and integrity, and justice. Key issues that must be considered include:

1.   Respect for human beings: informed, voluntary, current, and specific consent; cultural competence; privacy and confidentiality

2.   Beneficence: benefits to participants; management of risks; protection from harm

3.   Research merit and integrity: design and methodology; participatory approaches; maintaining integrity

4.   Justice: consideration for socially disadvantaged groups; equitable and inclusive involvement; dissemination of research

9.14 The process for making judgments is clear, including the strength of evidence for making these judgements.

The Plan should be clear about how judgements will be made based on the evidence gathered and agreed criteria or standards. The evaluator may draw on international or sector standards to contextualise their judgements or, for example, present rubrics that define poor, adequate, or strong performance in relation to the key performance questions.

The Plan should outline the expected evidence base to answer each question based on described methods and approaches. This enable the final Evaluation Report to be explicit about the strength of evidence for key findings and answers to the evaluation questions.

9.15 Approaches to enhance the use of findings are outlined (if requested in the terms of reference)

DFAT, the evaluator, and reference group (if used) can help to enhance the use of evaluation findings. The Evaluation Plan should be explicit about the approaches used by all three parties to facilitate use. This might include the Evaluation Manager briefing senior DFAT managers to socialise and test early findings, the evaluation team might also conduct an initial findings workshop for key users in country to share and test preliminary findings or prepare a learning paper or summary report for key users. Reference group members might conduct briefing sessions for interested staff in their organisations.

9.16 The Plan provides an indicative schedule which DFAT uses to create the final schedule

The Evaluation Plan should identify key respondents, preferred data collection styles (1:1 interview, focus group discussions, etc.) and indicative visit locations (provinces or sites to be visited). The detailed schedule will be developed by DFAT after the Evaluation Plan is submitted and reflects guidance from the evaluator. Consider the time for each interview with the associated evaluation questions. Most 60-minute interviews with a respondent cover no more than four or five key topics; less if translation is required. As part of reviewing the methodology the DFAT Evaluation Manager and evaluator should negotiate the proposed list of respondents before creating a final schedule. The Evaluation Plan should allow sufficient time for DFAT to schedule meetings prior to data collection commencing. Be aware that conducting evaluations remotely often requires additional time.

9.17 Roles and responsibilities of team members, DFAT and any reference group are clear

It is very important that each team member knows before the evaluation begins what they will be expected to do. The Evaluation Plan shows what responsibilities each team member has so they can ensure that adequate data is collected, processed, and interpreted and they can meet a high standard of writing during the reporting stage. It is often useful to show which questions each team member carries responsibility for reporting against.

DFAT's roles should be clear in the Evaluation Plan including providing relevant documentation, scheduling meetings, making introductions, coordinating, and managing the reference group (if any), involvement in the evaluation team[10], providing and collating comments on the draft Plan and draft and final Reports. The DFAT Evaluation Manager also must coordinate the development of the management response and publication of the evaluation.

If there is a reference group, the Plan should briefly describe the composition of the group (positions not organisations), its role and function in the evaluation and the key points at which the team or DFAT will engage with the committee. A reference group should have a clear Terms of Reference.

DFAT oversight and any reference group should not interfere with the independence of the evaluation team findings but improve the quality of the evaluation and the use of findings.

9.18 The Plan describes how the evaluation will be quality assured

The Plan should describe how the Evaluation Plan and Report will be quality assured. This includes any quality assurance put in place by the evaluation team (such as managing contractor review), and quality assurance put in place by DFAT. This might include reference group review, review by DFAT's Development Evaluation and Assurance Section (particularly for high risk, high value evaluations) or by a Performance and Quality focal point member.

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[10] DFAT staff members directly involved in advising on or managing the program should not participate in an evaluation team to avoid conflicts of interest and ensure findings are objective.

We are committed to revising and improving these Standards. Please provide any feedback to *designmail@dfat.gov.au*

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9.19 The Plan for publication of the final Report is documented

The Plan for publication of the final Evaluation Report that meets accessibility requirements should be documented as part of the Evaluation Plan to meet the requirements of the DFAT Development Evaluation Policy and Transparency Requirements. The Plan should be clear about how sensitive information will be communicated in the final Report.

STANDARD 10: Independent Evaluation Reports

The following points reflect elements of a strong Evaluation Report.

Executive summary and introductions

Nr.	Element
10.1	The executive summary provides all the necessary information to enable primary users to make good quality decisions
10.2	The introduction provides a brief summary of the investment or program
10.3	A brief summary of the methods employed is included
10.4	Key limitations of the methods are described, and any relevant guidance provided to enable appropriate interpretation of the findings

Findings and analysis

Nr.	Element
10.5	The Report addresses all key evaluation questions
10.6	The overall position of the author is clear, and their professional judgments are unambiguous
10.7	There is a clear line of sight from the key evaluation questions to the evidence presented, the findings, conclusions, and recommendations
10.8	The Report identifies the strength of evidence that supports the conclusions and judgments made
10.9	The relative importance of the issues communicated is clear to the reader
10.10	There is a good balance between operational and strategic issues
10.11	Alternative points of view are presented and considered where appropriate
10.12	Complicated and complex issues are adequately explored and not oversimplified
10.13	The role of context and emergent risks to program performance are analysed
10.14	It is possible to trace the factors, over time, that have led to the current situation
10.15	Robust evidence and neutral language are used to communicate findings, not emotive arguments
10.16	The implications of key findings are fully explored

Recommendations and lessons

Nr.	Element
10.17	There is a limited number of feasible recommendations
10.18	Individual positions have been allocated responsibility for responding to recommendations
10.19	Where there are significant cost implications of recommendations, these have been estimated
10.20	The circumstances under which any important lessons are transferable are described

Nr.	Element
10.21	Management responses outline whether DFAT agrees with the recommendations, and how and when recommendations will be implemented
10.22	The final Evaluation Report and management response are published within the timeframes outlined in the DFAT Development Evaluation Policy

Detailed Description of Standard for Independent Evaluation Reports

Executive summary and introductions

10.1 The executive summary provides all the necessary information to enable primary users to make good quality decisions

The executive summary should distil all the necessary information to enable primary users, especially senior management, to make good quality decisions without reading the entire document. It should summarise the key findings, provide sufficient analysis and arguments, and ensure there is a "clear line of sight" between the questions, data collected, analysis conducted, findings, conclusions, and recommendations. Important information about gender equality and social inclusion should be included to allow the reader to appreciate achievements and challenges. Resource implications of recommendations should be summarised. The length of the executive summary is proportionate to the length of the Report (e.g., two to three pages for short uncomplicated reports, and up to five or six pages for more lengthy reports with complex issues).

10.2 The introduction provides a brief summary of the investment or program

The background provides adequate information to enable individuals not fully familiar with the investment or program to interpret the Report. It summarises: the total value of the program; the number of years of the program; the stage of program implementation; the delivery mechanism; key expected outcomes of the program; and the key issues identified in the TOR.

10.3 A brief summary of the methods employed is provided

The Evaluation Plan provides a fully elaborated methodology (which is annexed) so the Report should provide just a summary of significant features. Sufficient information should be presented in the Report to enable the reader to quickly understand the evidentiary basis of the evaluation. The evidentiary base must be convincing and in proportion to the resources invested in the evaluation. The summary should also include important aspects of the approach to ensuring findings are used.

10.4 Key limitations of the methods are described, and any relevant guidance provided to enable appropriate interpretation of the findings

Key limitations should be summarised in the Report to enable the reader to make appropriate decisions. Where necessary the author should provide specific guidance of where the reader ought to be cautious about the findings.

Findings and Analyses

10.5 The Report clearly addresses all key evaluation questions

Note: The key evaluation questions are outlined in the Evaluation Plan, which should be used to assess whether the evaluation has delivered on expectations. In the absence of an Evaluation Plan, the Terms of Reference should be used.

It should be relatively easy to identify where each of the key evaluation questions is addressed. The Report does not need to be a mechanical presentation of these questions, but it should be relatively easy to navigate the Report and find relevant information that answers specific key evaluation questions. Where there are gaps, these should be explained. DFAT's information requirements, as set out in the Terms of Reference and Evaluation Plan, must be met.

10.6 The overall position of the author is clear, and their professional judgments are unambiguous

The task of the evaluator is to make their position clear (and as early as possible in the Report) unless the TOR have required the evaluator to report on findings with neutrality. The Report should not simply state findings and expect DFAT to interpret them and draw its own conclusions. The Report should present the author's interpretation of the evidence unambiguously. Key questions to consider include: does the evidence indicate that the program has made adequate progress or not? What factors have accounted for the limited achievements? To what extent were these factors within or outside the control of the implementers?

10.7 There is a clear line of sight from the key evaluation questions to the evidence presented, the findings, conclusions, and recommendations

It should be possible to trace issues through the text from evidence, to analysis, findings, conclusions, and recommendations. All findings and recommendations should be supported by evidence and analytical work in the text. There should be no important inferred recommendations buried in the text that have not been drawn into the conclusion or recommendations at the end.

The "chain of evidence" must be clear. All questions should have data that has been collected, analysis conducted, findings presented, interpretation carried out and reported. If questions in the methodology have not been addressed, then an explanation should be given.

10.8 The Report identifies the strength of evidence that supports the conclusions and judgments made

The evidence base for key findings and related conclusions must be clearly communicated. This includes reporting the strength of evidence and for example the degree to which views are shared across respondents, and representatives of relevant socially disadvantaged groups. Strong evidence includes quality-assured monitoring data, implementing agency reports validated by monitoring trips, and independent research conducted in the sector. Where evaluator opinions are based on weak evidence only (for example non-validated assertions, personal opinions and anecdotes), this is made transparent, and any judgements or findings are proposed as suggestive only.

10.9 The relative importance of the issues communicated is clear to the reader

The Report must clearly identify the priority issues. Minor issues should not be given the same depth of treatment as more important issues. The breadth of description, depth of analysis and attention in the recommendations can indicate the degree of priority. The author may simply state the relative importance of issues.

10.10 There is a good balance between operational and strategic issues

The Report should address the full range of issues identified in the Terms of Reference and Evaluation Plan and other critical issues that have emerged, including technical, managerial, or operational issues. The strategic direction or any higher order issues of the program should be given adequate space, and minor technical issues are treated in a more limited fashion.

10.11 Alternative points of view are presented and considered where appropriate

Alternative views must be presented, especially for important, controversial, or disappointing findings. They must not be immediately dismissed, but seriously considered. Key stakeholder views such as those of the partner governments and national partners must be given sufficient attention, and balanced by the implementation team, DFAT or other important stakeholder views.

10.12 Complicated and complex issues are adequately explored and not oversimplified

The Report must adequately acknowledge complicated issues, such as multiple contributing factors, or emergent challenges and opportunities. The Report should not present simple solutions to these types of situations. The findings must be presented fairly so that specific stakeholders are not held fully accountable for problems when multiple factors are involved.

10.13 The role of context and emergent risks to program performance are analysed

The Report must identify relevant aspects of the context within which activities are implemented. These might include geographic, ecological, cultural, gender equality, political, economic, or social context. Sufficient information should be presented to allow the reader to understand the relationship between the program and its context. The Report should address a) how the context may have affected the achievement of outcomes (both supportive and inhibiting); and b) the extent to which the program may have had any effect on the context. Important emergent risks should be identified.

10.14 It is possible to trace the factors, over time, that have led to the current situation

It is not sufficient to simply describe a situation. An analysis of the likely factors that have led to the situation is necessary. It is useful to trace these factors over time to explain the chronology of events and how these factors have influenced, positively or negatively, program progress. Factors might include changes to DFAT policy, resourcing, counterpart operating context, political context, natural disasters, or emergencies etc). It is important to identify both factors that have supported progress or achievement and factors that slow or inhibit achievements. These factors should be generated from a range of data sources. On complex issues, a range of influences should be considered rather than simply offering a single cause.

10.15 Robust evidence and neutral language are used to communicate findings, not emotive arguments

The best method to convince readers is the presentation of evidence and analysis as a credible basis for findings. Using international literature to build the credibility of the Report can be effective. The Report should handle political issues with sensitivity. A good Report considers the expected positions of important stakeholders – if findings are unexpected then this is communicated and explained in the text.

10.16 The implications of key findings are fully explored

DFAT program managers, senior management and other stakeholders may need some direction on the implications of the findings if this is not immediately apparent. Implications for achieving program objectives, and for meeting time frames, expenditure projections, or sustainability are often important considerations.

Recommendations and lessons

10.17 There is a limited number of feasible recommendations

Recommendations logically flow from key findings and take into consideration the intended use of the evaluation. There should be a relatively small number of well thought through recommendations. Recommendations must be feasible from a resourcing and cost perspective relevant, and achievable. Evaluation teams make every effort to ensure that the recommendations have the greatest likelihood of being an effective response to a performance shortfall or opportunity.

10.18 Individual positions have been allocated responsibility for responding to recommendations

Where appropriate, job titles, rather than organisations, should be allocated responsibility for actions against all recommendations. If it is not appropriate or possible to identify the position, then the relevant work group is identified. If some recommendations are for partner government, or DFAT sectoral or corporate learning then these should be identified separately. Recommendations must be allocated to a position or organisation that has the remit to respond.

10.19 Where there are significant cost implications of recommendations, these have been estimated

If recommendations imply human, financial, or material costs, these must be estimated. For important technical assistance positions proposed, the key content for the TOR is annexed.

10.20 The circumstances under which any important lessons are transferable are described

Where important lessons are to be learned, the Report should provide sufficient information to inform the reader about the circumstances under which these lessons can be transferred. This could be at the sector level, the Country Program Level, for the Department as a whole, or for the development sector more broadly. Lessons should be specific to the program, not general development, or program management lessons.

Management response and publication

10.21 Management responses outline whether DFAT agrees with the recommendations, and how and when recommendations will be implemented

The management response is DFAT's response to the evaluation recommendations. The response can be used to address differences between the evaluation recommendations and DFAT's position on particular issues. A management response is still required where an investment is not continuing to ensure transparency, and to ensure it is clear how the evaluation findings will be used. A management response indicates if DFAT agrees, partially agrees, or disagrees with each recommendation and provides an explanation of the reason for their response. If a recommendation is agreed to, the management response provides an action plan describing *who* will take *what* actions forward within *which timeframe*.

10.22 The final Evaluation Report and the management response are published within the timeframes outlined in the [DFAT Development Evaluation Policy](#)

 The DFAT Development Evaluation Policy and Transparency Requirements require the final Evaluation Report to be published together with the management response within three months of completion. All documents must meet [accessibility requirements](#) in order to be published.