



International Organization for Migration (IOM)

The UN Migration Agency

# **MANAGEMENT RESPONSE AND FOLLOW-UP ON IOM EVALUATION RECOMMENDATIONS**

**OFFICE OF THE INSPECTOR GENERAL**

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## Background

This Guidance is part of a common set of guidance notes issued by the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) that operationalizes the OIG 2018–2020 Strategy for the management of evaluation and monitoring functions and supports the implementation of the IOM Evaluation Policy (September 2018<sup>1</sup>). The OIG guidance notes are technical documents that set IOM standards and provide explanations on the processes and methodologies used for conducting monitoring and evaluation (M&E) work in IOM.

The present Guidance on Management Response and Follow-up on IOM Evaluation Recommendations is designed for IOM management, including the Office of the Director General, Departmental and Regional Directors (RDs), Chiefs of Missions (CoMs), Heads of Units and Programme or Project Managers (PMs), as well as M&E practitioners to ensure a common understanding of the process for the implementation and follow-up of evaluation recommendations and of what constitutes a management response. It describes the responsibilities and steps of the process and provides a framework that is applicable to all evaluations conducted at IOM in accordance with United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Norms and Standards.<sup>2</sup> The management response template is found in the Annex of this guidance and also in the IOM Project Handbook.<sup>3</sup>

The management response matrix should be annexed to its evaluation report and accessible to the primary evaluation stakeholders and the public at large through the IOM evaluation repository, in line with UNEG norms and standards and IOM's disclosure policy. In some circumstances, a management opinion on the overall quality of the evaluation process and content may be developed, especially when contentious issues remain unsettled after the finalization of the evaluation report. This optional document is referred here as the '*Management Opinion*' and further information is provided below.

## What is a management response

A management response is an integral part of the evaluation exercise, which guarantees that IOM's views and understanding of the evaluation are shared. It also strengthens utilization of the evaluation by ensuring that the evaluation has been reviewed and will be considered when planning future related interventions. **All IOM evaluations (internal and external) should include a management response for the implementation and follow-up of their recommendations.**

The management response constitutes the key tool for confirming the acceptance, partial or full rejection of a recommendation and for monitoring the implementation of agreed upon recommendations. As an accountability mechanism, the evaluation requires an explicit response and action to its recommendations by the staff responsible of the management of the project, policy and/or strategy evaluated. As a learning tool, the follow-up process is required for the purpose of integrating evaluation recommendations and lessons learned into IOM programming, policies and strategies.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.iom.int/sites/default/files/about-iom/evaluation/oig\\_evaluation\\_and\\_monitoring\\_strategy\\_2018-2020.pdf](https://www.iom.int/sites/default/files/about-iom/evaluation/oig_evaluation_and_monitoring_strategy_2018-2020.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> In particular: Norm 14 and Standard 1.4. See details at: <https://www.iom.int/sites/default/files/about-iom/evaluation/UNEG-Norms-Standards-for-Evaluation-2016.pdf> or from the UNEG Website <http://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/1914>

<sup>3</sup> Module 6 of the Project Handbook can be accessed here: <https://intranetportal/Pages/ControlNo.aspx?controlNo=IN/00250/Module6> the template is in Annex 6.9, p 478. There are small variations in the template of this guidance and some changes may still appear in the on-going revision of the IOM Project Handbook.

### Who completes the management response matrix

**Evaluator(s)** should prepare a draft matrix by inserting the recommendations as well as an indicative timeframe or deadline for implementation. The draft matrix is then shared with the Evaluation Manager, who should subsequently liaise with relevant IOM management and staff to complete the matrix. Preparation of the draft matrix needs to be agreed upon with the evaluator(s) at the start of the evaluation exercise to ensure that it is part of evaluator's deliverables; this would need to be specified in the evaluation Terms of Reference (ToR). If not specifically requested in the ToR, the Evaluation Manager should then complete the matrix.

**Evaluation Manager(s)** is (are) required, in coordination with relevant IOM management and entities, to formulate action(s) specifying how, and by whom, the recommendations will be implemented, and to confirm the implementation timeline. Clear explanations need to be included in the '*management response*' section about acceptance, with justifications and alternative options provided for partially accepted or rejected recommendations. Rejecting a recommendation should remain an exception at this stage as during the process of commenting on the draft evaluation report, such issues should be addressed and a consensus, even partial, be reached.

The proposed follow-up actions should be closely related to the recommendations, achievable in terms of timeframe, and realistic and clear on the responsibilities for implementing them. The follow-up actions constitute the baseline against which the implementation progress and corrective measures will be assessed and monitored.

Addressing recommendations that need to be answered by other offices, such as partnering Country Offices, Regional Offices or Headquarters, should be coordinated by the Evaluation Manager, agreeing with the other entities on who should contribute to or implement a recommendation and related follow-up actions, including for organizational learning purposes. Sharing relevant information at the appropriate levels is important so that results and lessons learned are widely disseminated and shared across multiple thematic areas and entities.

Answering recommendations directed at external partners or governments should ideally be coordinated with them. However, in some cases this may be complex and the Evaluation Manager should specify if the acceptance or rejection of a recommendation is from IOM's point of view only, with relevant explanations on why it was not coordinated. The Evaluation Manager is nonetheless responsible to draw their attention on such recommendations especially when joint implementation is required. The same challenges may apply to the monitoring of the implementation of recommendations.

**It is strongly encouraged that the matrix be completed in a collaborative manner to ensure proper ownership of the recommendations and agreed follow-up.** In cases of completed evaluations of programmes, projects, strategies or policies for which the Evaluation Manager may no longer be present, IOM management or new delegated staff are responsible for completing the matrix and following up on how the recommendations are implemented and can be integrated into similar programmes, strategies or policies.

## The content of the matrix

The management response matrix should be completed within a month of finalizing the evaluation report with the following logic in mind:

**Evaluation recommendations** are intended to guide management in the selection of key actions required to bring about the agreed upon changes and corrections to contribute to the expected results and outcomes.

**Responsible individual(s) or unit(s)** are the actors who are expected to implement assigned key actions.

**Priority level and timeframe** help to address recommendations in the order of importance. The timeframe provides information about the planned period during which the key actions are expected to be implemented, which is also indicative of the urgency of a recommendation and its applicability.

**Management response** indicates if management accepts, partially accepts or rejects a recommendation along with a related explanation, as detailed in the previous section.

**Key actions** are the planned actions to achieve the recommendations, as identified by the Evaluation Manager in coordination with relevant entities. There may be more than one priority action as well as actions of secondary importance to be listed.

**Monitoring of implementation** will help maximize the use of evaluations. The section should be completed during or at the end of the implementation of the actions identified, by the dates indicated in the timeframe. Further updates may be conducted on a more regular basis, if needed. The status of actions will be set to either not initiated, initiated, ongoing, completed or no longer applicable.

A sentence may be added at the top of the matrix to highlight the **overall opinion on the evaluation process** and as an introduction of the recommendation follow-up proposed in the management response.

## Integrated management response in PRIMA

For project and programme evaluations<sup>4</sup> that are included in PRIMA (IOM's Project Information and Management Application), there is a section "*Evaluation recommendation*" in the evaluation interface that relates to the management response matrix. The content of the matrix will need to be entered into PRIMA by the Evaluation Manager after it is coordinated and discussed with the relevant staff.<sup>5</sup> The Evaluation section in PRIMA remains active and hence Evaluation managers are able to enter amended matrices, including information on follow-up actions, lies with the Evaluation Manager. **This section will be updated in line with any changes made in PRIMA.**

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<sup>4</sup> These are all evaluations of projects and programmes included in PRIMA since its roll out in 2019.

<sup>5</sup> For further information on how PRIMA functions in terms of assignments of responsibility and related alerts, please refer to PRIMA guidelines.

## Submission of the management response matrix

In addition to the entities and stakeholders directly involved in the process and for follow-up actions as detailed in the guidance, including IOM management, all evaluations along with a completed management response matrix and an evaluation brief should be shared with the respective Regional M&E Officers<sup>6</sup>. The same evaluation deliverables should be submitted to the Office of the Inspector General for inclusion in the evaluation repository at IOM.

## A management opinion on the evaluation

As mentioned in the background section, management may provide a “*Management Opinion*” on the overall quality of the evaluation report and its analysis in case of persisting disagreement with the report and when consensus was not reached during the process of commenting on the draft report. The management opinion takes a narrative form not exceeding three pages and is disclosed together with the evaluation report.

The management opinion may include overall comments regarding the relevance of the evaluation methodology, data collected and findings, and highlight strong divergence of opinion with regards to the overall evaluation approach and analysis that could not be raised in the matrix. In case of specific disagreements with the evaluation findings and conclusions, management could provide a summary of the areas of disagreement. Disagreements on the recommendations can be covered by the management response matrix.

## Follow-up on the management response

**The department/unit/office responsible of the programme, policy or strategy being evaluated is overall in charge of the implementation of the recommendations, of regular review of progress and of coordination whenever needed for implementation.**

, The ultimate responsibility falls to the Chief of Mission in IOM Country Offices and to the Regional Director in the Regional Offices. For Headquarters it lies with the Department Director or a unit Head, as delegated by the Director. Such responsibility may be shared across several actors in the case of projects, policies or strategies managed jointly by several units, offices or departments.

It remains the responsibility of the management of the respective office/department/unit to assign someone, preferably M&E staff, to oversee this process and ensure involvement of the relevant stakeholders. In case of delays and problems in complying with the implementation of a recommendation, the person in charge of the follow-up should contact the entity to whom the action is assigned as per the matrix and ask for future steps, with a new deadline agreed upon, if necessary. Progress on the follow-up actions included in the revised matrix should be shared with relevant entities as well as with the Regional M&E Officers and OIG/Evaluation for their records.

When several evaluations are implemented in an office during a year, the follow-up of the implementation of the recommendations should not be assigned to a single staff of the office given the workload required for coordinating internally and externally and for organizing the follow-up.

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<sup>6</sup> Please see the guidance for the evaluation brief [here](#). These are expected for *all* evaluations and should be done by the evaluator.

Follow-up and reporting on progress should be carried out regularly. Though the frequency will vary based on specific timeframes agreed upon in the matrix, they should be done at least every six months until the closure of recommendations. It is important to consider that the relevant use of evaluations should not be delayed too much and it would make sense that the actions and review process are limited within 18 months following the submission of the evaluation, even if not all the recommendations are closed. In such cases, indications on the reasons of delays and non-closure, as well as expectations for implementation, should be indicated in the last update.

It would also be relevant to distinguish ex-ante and mid-term evaluations from final evaluations. In the former cases, the responsible entity has more leverage (i.e. time, staff and resources at the start of or available before the end of the project) to implement the actions, whereas in the case of a final evaluation, limited time and resources may affect the scope of the actions suggested in the matrix and the frequency of follow-up.

### Overall challenges

Certain challenges and limitations to the overall process can be encountered:

- It may happen for evaluations of projects which have been completed and/or for recommendations which have been directed to senior management or other stakeholders (such as other offices, governments or donors) that the follow-up cannot be monitored by the office or department in/for which the evaluation was conducted. In such cases, it should be mentioned in the *comments or action taken* section.
- The implementation of some recommendations may be ambitious or complex requiring coordinated efforts, and in some cases, deadlines and actions may not be easily identified. The review of the status of such recommendations may focus more on the learning dimension of the evaluation that could inform senior management on best practices identified during the exercise for future application. In such cases, there are no specific follow-up requirements, privileging the dialogue on the benefits of a given recommendation. Workshops for the various actors can also be organized, to discuss the status of the recommendations.
- Some all-encompassing recommendations may refrain the responsible staff to endorse them because they have the responsibility of the follow-up of the management response process and consider not having the time, staff and resources to undertake meaningful actions to address them. A management response should not become a project in itself with extensive coordination, implementation of activities, deadline management and follow-up monitoring.

**Annex – Management Response Matrix**

<p><b>Evaluation title/year:</b> <i>(Insert title of evaluation)</i></p>				
<p><b>Person or entity responsible for completing the management follow-up response matrix:</b>  <i>Insert the name and title of the person or entity responsible for completing the management follow up response matrix; for example, the Project Manager, the Chief of Mission, the Project Team, the Project Steering Committee and so on.</i></p>				
<p><b>Overall comment on evaluation process:</b> <i>Insert an overall opinion (affirmative or adverse) on the evaluation process as an introduction to the detailed recommendation follow-up proposed in the management response.</i></p>				
<p><b>Evaluation recommendation 1:</b>  <i>Cut and paste the first recommendation from the evaluation report. Note that once an evaluation report has been accepted and finalized, the recommendations cannot be revised.</i></p>				
<p><b>Recommendation to:</b>  <i>Specify for whom this specific recommendation is intended. Usually this will be one or more of the following: project management; senior management (including financial managers); project implementation and oversight bodies such as a project steering committee, donors or IOM Headquarters.</i></p>		<p><b>Priority level (1 to 3):</b>  <i>On a scale of 1–3, prioritize the importance of this recommendation. Be realistic. Some recommendations are very important (e.g. they affect the well-being of beneficiaries, they address critical risks to the project), while others are less important.</i></p>		
<p><b>Management response (Accept/Partially Accept/Reject)</b>  <i>Indicate if management accepts, partially accepts or rejects the recommendation. Provide an explanation if management only partially accepts or rejects. Bear in mind that, ideally, enough evidence will have been provided to an evaluator that by the time the recommendations are finalized, there is not too much disagreement on the recommendations. However, disagreements do occur, and it is acceptable to reject or only partially accept a recommendation. However, this decision should be adequately explained in this section.</i></p>				
Key action	Time frame or deadline	Responsible individual or unit(s)	Implementation monitoring	
			Comments or action taken	Status
<p><i>If the recommendation has been agreed upon or partially agreed upon, describe the action(s) to be taken to follow up on the recommendation. Use a new line for each specific action to be taken.</i></p>	<p><i>Specify the time frame or deadline for this action.</i></p>	<p><i>Specify who will be responsible for this action.</i></p>	<p><i>Do not complete this column when you are first preparing the matrix. Complete the column when following up and monitoring the implementation of the action. At this time, insert comments and/or description of the action taken.</i></p>	<p><i>Do not complete this column when you are first preparing the matrix. Complete the column when following up and monitoring the implementation of the action. Indicate the status of the activity (choose from: initiated; not initiated; completed; or no longer applicable).</i></p>