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**Internal Oversight Service  
Evaluation Section**

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# **Guidance Note on the Evaluation of UNESCO's Extrabudgetary Activities**

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## Basic definitions<sup>1</sup>

Evaluation: The systematic and objective assessment of an on-going or completed project, programme or policy, its design, implementation and results. The aim is to determine the relevance and fulfilment of objectives, development efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability. An evaluation should provide information that is credible and useful, enabling the incorporation of lessons learned into the decision-making process of both recipients and donors. Evaluation also refers to the process of determining the worth or significance of an activity, policy or programme.

### 1. Additional guidance and definitions on evaluation of UNESCO extrabudgetary activities

#### 1.1. Modalities for evaluation

There are three different modalities for evaluation:

1. Self-evaluation: An evaluation conducted by those who are entrusted with the design and delivery of the project (the project officer or Sector/Category I Institute/Field Office), and presented in a final narrative report.
2. Self-evaluation with validation by external expert: An evaluation conducted by the project officer (or Sector/Category I Institute/Field Office), resulting in a final narrative report with validation by an external expert.
3. External evaluation: an evaluation conducted by independent entities<sup>2</sup> and/or individuals outside the donor and UNESCO elected through a competitive process resulting in an external evaluation report.

The self-evaluation (and when applicable the external evaluation as well) will generate the necessary data for the last submission into SISTER (six-monthly reporting), so there is no duplication of efforts. In terms of depth and scope of assessment the (self-) evaluation exercise is more elaborate than the periodic monitoring and reporting. As a result, it is important that appropriate resources (human and financial) are reserved for undertaking (self-)evaluation.

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<sup>1</sup> See OECD-DAC (2010).

<sup>2</sup> Including IOS.

## 1.2. How to select the right modality for evaluation for a given project, programme or partnership

### *The volume of the project*

Self-evaluation	Projects under USD 500 000 Partnership with no financial implication
Self-evaluation with validation by an external expert	Projects with a budget between USD 500 000 and USD 1 500 000
External evaluation <sup>3</sup>	Projects over USD 1 500 000

### *Other considerations*

The budget thresholds provide the default guidance on what type of evaluation requirement applies. However, other criteria may determine evaluation requirements or exemption from (self-/external) evaluation for specific projects:

- Type of extrabudgetary activity
- Innovative nature of the extrabudgetary activity
- Decision on a portfolio approach (pooling all evaluation funds for a set of similar projects)
- Specific donor requirements

In case of doubt about the required evaluation modality, Sectors/Cat I Institutes/Field Offices should consult with IOS.

## 2. Financial implications of extrabudgetary evaluations

The planning of evaluations should be undertaken at the project design phase. The chosen evaluation modality should be described in the project document. The cost implications linked to staff time, or the recruitment of an external evaluator, should be included in the project budget. The table below gives an overview of the indicative cost implications.

In addition, for external evaluations the advice of IOS should be taken before developing the budget, because the cost of an external evaluation will be determined extensively by the complexity of the project, and other variables such as the geographic scope of the project. The scope of an evaluation may similarly be determined by the budget ceiling established by the donor for this cost component.

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<sup>3</sup> The cost-effectiveness of external evaluations can be significantly enhanced if a self-evaluation exercise is carried out prior to the external evaluation.

In addition to project-specific evaluation provisions, Sectors/Category I Institutes/Field Offices are encouraged to pool (some of) the funds for evaluation, which can then be used to evaluate a cluster of extrabudgetary activities, for example in situations where a donor funds multiple projects under a broader framework agreement, or strategic partnership. Such evaluations will look at the added value and impact of a partnership, or framework agreement per se, over and above the individual projects implemented in the context of the partnership.

The following two principles are recommended:

- An overall provision of 1% of the total budget earmarked for external evaluation. These funds can then be used for external validation of self-evaluations and/or external evaluations of individual projects and/or external evaluations of clusters of projects. IOS may step in to manage/conduct these evaluations if deemed necessary.
- On top of that, evaluation provisions in budgets of individual projects (under the framework agreement) should be mandatory and reflect cost recovery of staff time for self-evaluation (presented in a final narrative report).

**Summary table of cost implications**

Self-evaluation	Cost recovery of UNESCO staff time
Self-evaluation by an external expert	USD 10 000 – 20 000
External evaluation	USD 25 000 – 50 000
Framework agreement/strategic partnership	1% of total resources (in addition to costing of evaluation within individual projects)

Programmes or normative work financed through special accounts should also be subject to evaluation. Given the vast differences in the size, scope and resources of such arrangements, the advice of IOS should be taken on a case by case basis.

### 3. Roles and responsibilities for extrabudgetary evaluations

#### Sectors/Field Offices/Category I Institutes:

- Ensuring that provisions for evaluation are included in project documents and budgets at the design phase
- Monitoring of projects
- Conducting self-evaluation exercises
- (when applicable) Commissioning external evaluations
- As in the case of final narrative reports (from self-evaluations), external evaluation reports need to be submitted to: [exbudgevaluations@unesco.org](mailto:exbudgevaluations@unesco.org)

#### BSP/CFS:

- Providing guidance and backstopping on:
  - evaluation provisions in donor agreement/project document
  - referral to IOS of questions relating to evaluation modality and/or exemption
- Submitting self-evaluation/external evaluation reports to donor

#### IOS:

- Providing guidance and backstopping on:
  - Costing of evaluations
  - Evaluation modality and/or exemption
  - ToR development and selection of external evaluators
  - Evaluation methods, process and planning
  - Quality assurance of reports
- Maintaining a database on evaluation reports
- Developing guidelines on evaluation
- Conducting specific project or portfolio evaluations when deemed necessary
- Conducting aggregate analyses on evaluation reports

It should be noted that both BSP/CFS and IOS are essentially performing advisory tasks in the extrabudgetary evaluation system. The principal responsibility for planning, ensuring funding for, and implementing evaluations of extrabudgetary projects lies with the Sector/Category I Institute/Field Office.