

3-Year System Business Plan (2019-2021) Companion Document

2019-2021 Program Performance Management Standards

Business Plan:
Action

3. Strengthen program performance management

Purpose:

This document summarizes the outcome of cross-System consultations on appropriate 2019-2021 CGIAR Program Performance Management Standards to implement Item 9 of the CGIAR System 12-point plan to strengthen program performance management across CGIAR.

Action
Requested:

The System Council is requested to consider and if thought appropriate, **agree:**

- a. **The proposed 2019-2021 CGIAR Program Performance Standards** set out in this Companion Paper, to inform the further development of the assessment levels/stages ('rubrics') that will apply to each of the standards, which rubrics are proposed to be submitted for approval to the System Management Board at its 12th meeting (13 December 2018); and
- b. Based on the recommendation of SIMEC, **that the evaluation senior specialist in the new CGIAR Advisory Services Shared Secretariat is the responsible officer for undertaking the periodic independent assessment of whether programs met the standards,** working across other advisory bodies as required to obtain expert data.

Prepared by:

CGIAR System Management Office based on cross-System consultations involving Centers, Science Leaders, the System Management Board, and discussions and recommendations of the Strategy Impact Monitoring and Evaluation Committee of the System Council ('SIMEC') at its 13th meeting on 23 October 2018.

Document category: Working document of the System Council

There is no restriction on the circulation of this document

A. Recommended Program Performance Management Standards for 2019

1. The main objectives of the proposed CGIAR Program Performance Management Standards are:

- a. To ***provide assurance to Funders and other stakeholders that program management standards are high, and that they can invest with confidence.*** This means ensuring for example that research design and partnerships are fully focused on delivering impact; that research is of high scientific quality; that research managers are taking tough decisions when necessary e.g. to stop funding some areas and reallocating funding to others; and that other aspects of management systems are in place to promote a variety of agreed system objectives.
- b. To ***improve program performance management across CGIAR wherever needed.*** *The effort required here - for programs to manage optimally to meet their programmatic objectives - should not be underestimated in a system where management of financial and human resources, projects, ethics and intellectual property are nearly all the responsibility of Centers rather than program managers.* The requirement to meet the standards should serve as a guarantee that program performance management is consistently good across CGIAR, and not just in the top-performing programs.
- c. To ***focus program efforts on a limited number of well-defined high-priority areas identified jointly by key stakeholders, in each program cycle, to complement (not replace) the more complex analysis carried out in program evaluations and appraisals.*** The standards shine a light on specific aspects of management (that can get 'lost' in an overall appraisal with many elements to consider) and provide a strong incentive for managers to fix any problems within the business cycle.

2. **The proposed 2019-2021 standards are set out in Table 1 (following). They will:**

- a. For each three-year cycle, focus on a few simple but powerful, high priority program management areas.
- b. Be set to provide immediate assurance to the System Management Board and System Council in cycle 1 (2019-2021) that the fundamentals of good research program management (such as accessible documentation) are in place, and as a first step towards meeting more challenging standards of excellence in later cycles (2022 and beyond).
- c. Set targets at a level which move the whole system forward: all programs within the CGIAR portfolio should be able to meet them within the three-year cycle, given appropriate commitment and investment.

- d. Change and/or evolve over successive 3-year cycles, to reflect agreed priorities, and “ratchet upwards” (e.g. target percentages will increase over cycles).
 - e. Be assessed once per three-year cycle via a ‘desk review’ of online documentation – by the end of year 2 to give programs time to invest (where needed) to meet standards before the next cycle if they do not pass the assessment first time. A draft timeline is in **Table 2** (following).
 - f. Programs that do not pass standards in the first assessment will be given specific feedback on improvements required, and they will self-report (by the end of the same business cycle) against measures taken to resolve any problems.
 - g. The entity that undertakes the assessment may vary over successive business plan cycles, should the standards change (point d. above). The recommended body for the 2019-2021 cycle is set out in part B below.
 - h. Contribute to the data that supports the CGIAR System operating according to a ‘combined assurance’ model in respect of System-wide opportunities and risks (refer companion document to Action 8 of the CGIAR System 3-year Business Plan).
 - i. The [ISPC Quality of Research For Development Framework](#), upon formal approval by the System Council in the first half of 2019, will be incorporated into the performance standards assessment process (refer appendix 1 with indicative mapping to the [CGIAR System Risk Management Framework](#)).
 - j. The entity that carries out ‘quality at entry’ will usually accept this self-report but will have the right to carry out its own checks if needed.
3. The metrics for the Program Performance Standards (refer to the final column in Table 1 that follows) have been developed according to the following principles:
- **Metrics should correspond to international audit/evaluation principles**, i.e. be relevant, complete, replicable, unbiased, and understandable.
 - **Metrics should be agreed by Program and Center management, as well as by System Management and Governance bodies:** If the standards are to lead to real improvements in Program Management, the associated metrics must be seen by Program Managers themselves as fair, aligned with Program and system goals, and (while challenging), manageable within the resources and time available. If this is not the case, metrics are likely to lead to gaming or goal displacement. At the same time, the metrics must be agreed by System Management and Governance to be sufficiently useful and challenging.

- **Metrics should be assessable through online review of documentation:** For cost, replicability, and transparency reasons, desk reviews are preferable to interviews and surveys of staff views.
- **Metrics should not create a straitjacket for Program management by enforcing a rigid homogeneity across the System:** Each Research Program is different, and the Management and Governance bodies of each program are responsible for the details of how to manage their Program. For example, in Standard 1 (example given in Annex 1) each Program may come up with a different set of detailed criteria against which to assess new projects.

B. Recommended body to undertake periodic independent assessment

4. **To facilitate effective implementation of the first cycle of CGIAR's agreed program performance standards**, it will also be essential for the System Council to agree on where responsibility lies in respect of two interrelated but distinct key roles:
 - a. **Periodically undertaking the detailed independent assessment(s) of whether Programs meet the standard(s).** This may be best contracted out to consultants as it is a short-term role carried out once every business cycle period and will require a mixture of skills that will vary for each assignment (depending on the specific metrics agreed during each 3-year business plan/program performance period).
 - b. **Managing the process of obtaining and collating the various assessments into a consolidated program performance report.** This is expected to require specific ongoing knowledge of the operations of the CGIAR System, and thus lends itself to being one of the CGIAR System entities – or possibly more than one entity, fitting into the Business Plan's vision for coordination of assurance providers.
5. The need to ensure the integrity and reliability of the independent assessment process suggests that the following **4 criteria guide** identity of the appropriate body/function to perform that role:
 - a. **Adequate organizational independence from program implementation** by the body(ies) assessing and compiling the assessment information;
 - b. **Behavioral independence and external credibility in terms of subject matter;** (lack of behavioral independence includes: risk of susceptibility to peer pressure or possibility of future contracts, groupthink)
 - c. **Specialist knowledge sufficient to manage complex data and come to final conclusion:** noting that the metric that forms the test of whether the standard has been met, and to what level, is likely to grow in complexity, and require

more specialized skills over time to make a robust, credible assessment on whether that level has been met for a specific standard.

- d. **No conflict with other defined responsibilities of the assessing and compiling body(ies)**, recognizing that each of the CGIAR System entities have terms of reference that set out the scope of their responsibilities, accountability lines and operational modalities.
6. At its 13th meeting, SIMEC members considered possible providers against these criteria.
 7. Taking note of the above-listed criteria, on the recommendation of SIMEC, it is proposed that the most appropriate body/team to manage the process is that part of the CGIAR Shared Secretariat that is responsible for commissioning independent external evaluations and reviews. During the SIMEC discussions, it was noted that other independent providers of assurance (such as the CGIAR System Internal Audit Function), may be appropriate to assess specific standards, but that the evaluation element of the Shared Secretariat would be the appropriate overall responsible body/function.
- C. Recommended approach to assessing each Standard – use of ‘Rubrics’
8. At its 13th meeting, SIMEC also considered and supported the overall principle of a ‘rubric’ approach¹ being used to assess various levels of achievement against the agreed 2019-2021 Program Performance Management Standards, based on a ‘Draft 0’ mock-up example using “Management Standard 1”.
 9. As for the SIMEC 13th meeting, the material in Table 3 (following) is provided for illustrative purposes only, and no decision is requested by the System Council.
 10. Taking into consideration the strategic inputs provided during SC7 discussions on the program performance section of the business plan, further elaboration of a ‘rubric’ for each of the six 2091-2021 CGIAR Program Performance Management Standards will be developed over the coming months. It is proposed that the final standard, based on further consultations with key stakeholders, would be put forward for approval by the System Management Board by not later than end-Q1 2019.

¹ A framework with evaluative criteria, quality definitions for those criteria at particular levels of achievement, and a scoring strategy. (Rubrics originally came from the education sector for use in marking, but are now widely used in monitoring and [evaluation](#).)

TABLE 1 LIST OF PROGRAM PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT STANDARDS PROPOSED FOR FIRST CYCLE, 2019-2021

Overarching aim	Management standard for all programs to meet in first cycle (2019-2021)	Proposed (<i>draft</i>) metric, assessed by appropriate independent body
Provide assurance to Funders and other stakeholders that all projects in program are appropriate and relevant (by Cycle 1)	1. Program has a transparent and logical process for selection, prioritization and inclusion of new projects and withdrawal of projects from program, based on the theory of change and factors such as comparative advantage, scientific merit, potential value for money.	Qualitative assessment (using agreed rubric) of quality of process and documentation.
CGIAR recognized as a global leader for the science of gender in agriculture, integration of high- quality gender research throughout the CGIAR research portfolio (by Cycle 2-3)	2. Correct reporting of gender within the research portfolio. (Note that the management standard is part of a wider set of agreed actions toward meeting CGIAR gender objectives.)	Agreed target for OECD gender markers (defined by gender group) appropriately applied.
Provide assurance to Funders and other stakeholders that CGIAR pooled budgets (W1/2) are effectively and efficiently managed (by Cycle 1)	3. Program has transparent systems for planning and managing budgets to reach program objectives, and clear and efficient division of responsibility between Programs and their implementing partners (including Centers).	a. Annual Plan of Work and Budget makes clear logical links between budgets and activities b. Budget holder responsibilities for key Program staff are clearly assigned and documented for W1/2 funding.
Provide assurance to Funders and other stakeholders that the program is managed effectively to further stated objectives and SRF targets. (Cycle 1)	4. Program progress and priorities are regularly reviewed, and logical and transparent decisions are taken about (re)prioritization of W1/2 funding, including activities to expand or cut back.	Qualitative assessment (using agreed rubric) of the quality of analysis and process.
Provide assurance to Funders and other stakeholders that CGIAR results reporting is high quality and credible and supported throughout by high-quality evidence. (Cycle 2-3)	5. Program reporting to CGIAR (annual reports, common reporting indicators, outcome-impact case studies) is of adequate quality and the evidence presented is properly archived, linked and accessible.	Qualitative assessment (using agreed rubric) of the quality of program reporting, supported by random sampling to look at specific aspects in more detail.
CGIAR programs and projects adequately transparent to international standards, such as IATI https://iatistandard.org/en/about/iati-standard/ (Cycle 2-3)	6. All key program and project documents accessible and findable to be viewed electronically by System Organization and system advisory bodies.	An agreed list of key documents is available in agreed CGIAR repositories, with working links.

TABLE 2 DRAFT TIMELINE FOR PERFORMANCE STANDARDS USE AND FUND ALLOCATION IN FIRST CYCLE

Actual dates	Cycle years	Action	Responsibility
Nov 18	Year 0	Standards for 2019-2021 approved by System Council. Responsibility for independent assessment agreed.	SMO, SMB, SC
Dec 18	Year 0	Preparation of Annual Plans of Work and Budget (POWB): Programs need to include any investment needed to meet standards in their POWB for Year 1. Most actions in cycle 1 will not require significant extra funds. However, to improve evidence of results there may be a need for additional investment in monitoring and impact assessment.	Programs
Sept-Oct 2019	Year 1 Q4	Programs need to include any investment needed in their POWB for Year 2, as above.	Programs
July-Aug 2020	Year 2 Q2	Independent assessment of performance standards for each program. In principle this will be a desk study based on assessment of data available online. (Availability of data online is a key issue which needs to be sorted out in first cycle.) Stable funding in cycle: no cuts	Independent
Sept -Nov 2020	Year 2 Q2	Discussion on performance standards and reports for current cycle. Performance standards proposed for following cycle, and agreed by program leaders, SMB and SC.	SMO, Program leaders, SMB, SC
Jan 2021	Year 3 Q1	Programs draft their revised proposals/implementation plans for the next 3- year cycle. This should include any investments needed to meet the agreed next cycle of standards. For programs that do not meet certain current standard(s), this should also include an annex with a written response to the independent assessment, with information on any improvements already made and a performance improvement plan to meet the relevant standard(s) before end of year.	Programs
March 2021	Year 3 Q1	Programs that failed standard(s) in previous cycle: annual report includes a section on improvements made in response.	Programs
May 2021	Year 3 Q2	Quality at Entry (QaE) assessment for new proposals/implementation plans. Passing the standards is a 'necessary but not sufficient' condition for future funding. Passing performance assessment or satisfactory self-report on improvement required as 'entry ticket'. If self-reporting is not convincing, limited checks could be carried out.	TBC
Nov 2021	Year 3 Q4	Approval process for new proposal/implementation plan	

TABLE 3 - 'DRAFT 0' INITIAL MOCK-UP OF POSSIBLE RUBRIC APPROACH TO ASSESSING THE 2019-2021 CGIAR PROGRAM PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

EXAMPLE ONLY – INTRODUCTORY POINTS

Title of standard:	<u>Business Cycle 2012-2021 Standard 1</u> : <i>Program has a transparent and logical process for selection, prioritization and inclusion of new projects and withdrawal of projects from the Program.</i>
Rationale for standard:	The addition of a new project to a Research Program is a key decision point, which influences effective (implicit) AR4D priorities and Program coherence ² .
Resources required for assessment:	Management documents and minutes of meetings of Program Management and Governance bodies and Center bodies; Project documentation. These should be clearly accessible and identifiable on line (internally in CGIAR) to pass the transparency requirement for this standard. (Also see Standard 6)
Expertise required for assessment:	General management /organizational development; General understanding of international agricultural research for development (or just agricultural development?); Access to statistician (for sampling)
Notes:	This standard is applicable to projects added in the Business Plan period only (not applied retrospectively).

² Nearly all past evaluations of CGIAR Research Programs have recommended “more rigorous and transparent priority setting mechanisms at the CRP level for allocating W1/W2 funding and tapping W3 and bilateral funds” and noted that “Program coherence depends largely on the extent to which Program management has an ability to influence Program design....the size and use of the Window 1/Window 2 envelope ... and the theory of change (ToC) ...being co-developed and shared amongst the partners within a Program”. (CGIAR-IEA Synthesis of CRP Evaluations and Background Paper, 2016)

Draft 0 – Rubric for ‘CGIAR Program Performance Standard 1’ (Note: illustrative purposes only)

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3: Proposed <u>pass level</u> for Business Cycle 1 (2019-2021)	Level 4: Potential pass level for Business Cycle 2 (2022-2024)
SUMMARY RUBRIC			
<p>No consistent process exists for adding or withdrawing projects.</p>	<p>A process exists for adding or withdrawing projects, but it fails to meet one or more criteria (coherence, Program involvement, transparency and consistency).</p>	<p>There is a logical, coherent, consultative and transparent process for adding and withdrawing projects, that includes a check on how new projects fit with the Program Theory of Change and agreed Program priorities.</p>	<p>There is a logical, coherent, consultative and transparent process for adding and withdrawing projects, that includes an assessment of key Quality of Research for Development (QoR4D) criteria</p>
SPECIFIC CRITERIA TO ASSESS FOR EACH LEVEL			
<p>One or more of the following applies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is no consistent process and/or criteria for adding/withdrawing projects to/from the Program. • There is a lack of documentation for projects explaining why they were included in the Program. • Some projects appear to have been added and withdrawn in an un- 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a structured and recorded process consistently used for making decisions for adding/ withdrawing projects to/from the Program. • Documentation for projects includes a short explanation of why it was included in the Program. • However, the process fails one or more of the following criteria (see level 3): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Logical and based on clearly defined criteria 	<p>The decision-making process is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Logical and coherent: based on a set of clearly defined criteria* that are applied to the decision to include/exclude each project. Criteria must include, at minimum, that projects must make a clear contribution to the Program theory of change and fit with expressed Program priorities. However, at Level 3 the criteria may be limited (cf. Level 4). b. Based on appropriate Program involvement: Program Management and Governance have been consulted on the criteria for inclusion/withdrawal of projects, and no major outstanding objections are registered. Program Management are directly involved in decisions on inclusion of ‘large’ or ‘important’ projects (as defined in their agreed criteria) and in <u>all</u> decisions to withdraw projects from 	<p>All of the following should apply:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The decision-making process passes Level 3. • There is recorded evidence that the criteria have been <u>thoroughly</u> considered in decision making. • Key documentation is publicly available • In addition, there is evidence from the records that the criteria include consideration of all the following areas (from QoR4D): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) <u>Relevance</u>: Each proposed new project* has been assessed for the relevance of the research objectives, processes and findings to the problem context and to society, associated with CGIAR’s comparative advantage to address the problems. ii) <u>Credibility</u>: Each proposed new project has been assessed for its design (sound and defensible data and analysis) and evidence of building on past

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3: Proposed <u>pass level</u> for Business Cycle 1 (2019-2021)	Level 4: Potential pass level for Business Cycle 2 (2022-2024)
<p>transparent and/or ad hoc manner.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decisions have been made without the appropriate involvement of Program management and Governance (see level 3). 	<p>b. Appropriate consultation</p> <p>c. Transparency</p> <p>d. Documentation as described in Level 3 available for every new project</p>	<p>the program, and no major outstanding objections are registered.</p> <p>c. Transparent: i) Decisions about both inclusion/withdrawal or projects and selection of criteria are on <u>record</u> and accessible to key System-level bodies. ii) Documentation for <u>every new</u> project includes a short clear explanation of why it was included in the Program and its contribution to the Program or sub-Program (e.g. FP) Theory of Change and priorities.</p> <p>*The criteria should reflect ‘proportionality’, i.e. less detailed analysis would be expected for small projects.</p>	<p>scientific/research knowledge and methodologies where relevant.</p> <p>iii) <u>Legitimacy</u>: Each proposed new project has been assessed to check that there has been adequate consideration of stakeholder interests, in particular national governments and partners. The need for ethical clearance has been screened and any planned action (e.g. IRB) recorded.</p> <p>iii) <u>Effectiveness</u>: Each proposed new project has been assessed to check the positioning of the project within the appropriate Program Theory of Change; to ensure that it is adequately linked to other projects and programs, and that aspects such as leadership, capacity development, M&E and support to the enabling environment are adequately resourced, to position the research for use.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Documentation for <u>every</u> new project should include the results of this assessment. <p>*The criteria and analysis should reflect ‘proportionality’, i.e. less detailed analysis would be expected for small projects.</p>