

## Assessment Criteria for CGIAR's 6 agreed Program Performance Standards for 2019-2021

### Purpose:

This document sets out proposed assessment criteria for the 6 program performance standards that the CGIAR System has adopted for the CGIAR Portfolio for 2019-2021. This paper proposes various levels of assessment for the 6 agreed standards, and a timetable that will see the standards progressively implemented during this first 3-year CGIAR Business Plan cycle.

### Action requested:

The System Management Board is requested to:

- **Approve** the assessment criteria for five of the six standards as set out in this document (Standards 1-2 and 4-6); and
- **Note** the additional complexity involved in Standard 3; and **endorse** the creation of a working group on Standard 3 that will put forward revised metrics for approval by the Board at their 13<sup>th</sup> meeting (2-4 April 2019).

Document status: This is a working document of the System Management Board and may be shared throughout the System.

Prepared by: The CGIAR System Management Office

## Part A - Background



1. **As an essential part of CGIAR’s 12-point program performance framework endorsed at its 7<sup>th</sup> meeting over 15-16 November 2018 (‘SC7’), the System Council has approved the use of six (6) Program Performance Standards (‘Standards’) for Business Plan Cycle 1 (2019-2021).**
2. **The agreed Standards are set out in Table 1** (following), having been developed during 2018 based on widespread consultation during key CGIAR System stakeholders, and endorsed by CGIAR’s Research Leaders (September 2018), the System Management Board (10<sup>th</sup> meeting, 25-26 September 2018), and supported by the System Council’s Strategic Impact, Monitoring and Evaluation Committee (13<sup>th</sup> meeting, 23 October 2018) in advance of SC7 deliberations.
3. **The three main objectives of the Standards**, as described in more detail in the SC7 meeting paper<sup>1</sup> **are to:**
  - To ***provide assurance*** to CGIAR System Funders and other stakeholders that program management standards are high, and that they can invest with confidence;
  - To ***improve program performance management*** across CGIAR wherever needed; and
  - To ***focus Program efforts*** on a limited number of well-defined high-priority areas identified jointly by key stakeholders, in each business cycle, to complement (not replace) the more complex analysis carried out in program evaluations and appraisals.
4. Following SC7, written inputs were sought from Funders, CGIAR Research Leaders and the System Management Board itself which shaped the development of this document as presented.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.cgiar.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/SC7-H\\_Program-Performance-Management-Standards.pdf](https://www.cgiar.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/SC7-H_Program-Performance-Management-Standards.pdf)

## Assessment Criteria for Program Performance Standards 2019-2021

**TABLE 1: LIST OF AGREED PROGRAM PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT STANDARDS FOR FIRST CYCLE, 2019-2021 (FROM SC7 PAPER)**

 STANDARDS FOR WHICH APPROVAL OF ASSESSMENT CRITERIA REQUESTED AT SMB12	 STANDARD WHERE CRITERIA TO BE DEVELOPED BY APRIL 2019	
Overarching aim	<b>Standard for all programs to meet in first cycle (2019-2021)</b>	<i>Proposed (draft) metric</i> , 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.	Qualitative assessment (using various agreed assessment levels i.e. 'a 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.)	CGIAR cross-cutting gender markers fully and accurately 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. (by 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. CGIAR program reporting (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 <a href="https://iatistandard.org/en/about/iati-standard/">https://iatistandard.org/en/about/iati-standard/</a> (Cycle 2-3)	6. All key program and project documents accessible and findable to be viewed electronically by System Organization and System advisory entities.	An agreed list of key documents is available in agreed locations, with working links.

## Part B – Definitions used in this paper

4. As terms are not always used consistently across CGIAR and our partners, in this paper, the following definitions are adopted:
- Pooled Program funding - Any pooled funds allocated to the 'Program' being assessed to support programmatic objectives. This currently refers to funding from Windows 1 and 2 of the CGIAR Trust Fund.
  - Program - Used to allow for future application of the standards to any initiatives or groups of projects that are managed as a Program. Currently, in CGIAR's terminology, 'Programs' means CGIAR Research Programs and Platforms. It is recognized that not all the individual standards can apply to 'Platforms', and the specific standards to be assessed will be agreed in advance with individual Platforms.
  - Program Management and Governance – The exact configuration will vary by Program. Management will normally include the Program Management team and representatives of the main Program Partners (including those outside CGIAR). Governance structures may be, for example, a combination of the Board of the Lead Center plus an Independent Steering Committee or Independent Advisory Committee. The specific management and governance structures used by each Program are defined and made available to assessors in Standard 6.
  - Project - An intervention designed to achieve specific objectives within a specified amount of funding and implementation period. A project is usually funded from a single source (either a bilateral grant or pooled funding) and has its own documentation<sup>2</sup>.
  - Rubric – A tool used to rank a set of assessment criteria (often qualitative) into different grades or levels of achievement. The objective is that both the assessor and the body/Program whose work is being assessed will be clear about the criteria that are being used and the level that is expected. Each rubric contains four levels which correspond to the following general concepts:
    - i. Level 1: Ad hoc or non-existent (possibly with some inconsistent formalization)
    - ii. Level 2: Formalized but inconsistent
    - iii. Level 3: Formalized and consistent
    - iv. Level 4: Excellent practice
  - Specified System Entity - One of a small number of specified entities of the CGIAR system with responsibility for advice or oversight. These include the CGIAR System Management Office, the CGIAR Internal Audit Function and the Advisory Services Shared Secretariat.

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<sup>2</sup> This is a standard international definition and sticks close to that of the CGIAR-MELCOP glossary but note it does not match the MARLO system definition of a 'project'.

## Part C – Approach to assessment of the 6 agreed Standards (2019-21)

### *Metrics to form the basis of assessing the 6 Standards*

5. **Each of the 6 Standards** was presented at SC7 with a **proposed metric** for its assessment (refer 3<sup>rd</sup> column, table 1 above). Those metrics were proposed according to four criteria set out at paragraph 3 of the [SC7 meeting paper](#). A fifth important criterion is that:
  - **Metrics are specified in sufficient detail to avoid the need for assessors to make individual judgments of quality and increase replicability.**
6. The **metrics will be piloted in late 2019 (date to be agreed)**, using available 2019 data, with no repercussions for Programs. This will give a chance for both Programs and assessors to fully understand the metrics, the pass level and the process of assessment, to tweak any aspects of the metrics that do not work well in practice, and to give the Programs a chance **to prepare for the official assessment in the second half of 2020**, which will be based on 2019-2020 data<sup>3</sup>. Since the pilot is a learning exercise for both sides, and some data used will have been prepared before the existence of the standards, the pilot results will be restricted to the assessors and the individual Programs assessed, and in no circumstances will be used for assessment or comparison of Programs.
7. The pilot will be arranged in the second half of 2019, at a mutually convenient time for Programs and assessors. Since this is a desk exercise, the main effort required from Programs will be to get existing documents online and available for assessors to read.

### *Assessment mechanism for the Metrics*

8. As agreed at SC7, **the evaluation senior specialist in the new CGIAR Advisory Services Shared Secretariat will be 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<sup>4</sup>.
9. Referring to the definition of rubrics in part B above, **the proposed pass level for this first set of Standards is Level 3 for four of the six Standards that have ‘rubrics’ as their basis of assessment**. This reflects the considerable additional investment and time that is required to reach Level 4 – in particular, in management information systems, evaluation and impact assessment. *Level 4 is only defined in broad outline in the current tables, and it will be specified in 2020-2021 as part of the proposal for the next cycle of standards and metrics for 2022-2024.*

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<sup>3</sup> See ‘Scope’ section for each of the specific Standards for more details

<sup>4</sup> Refer SC/M7/DP6, item ii of the System Council Chair’s Summary of SC7: <https://www.cgiar.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/SC7-Chairs-Summary.pdf> .

Part D – Introducing the 6 Standards and their assessment level(s)

10. The index below sets out the 6 agreed Standards, with the page referenced for the proposed metric and assessment rubric/methodology:

STANDARD 1: ADDING AND WITHDRAWING PROJECTS FROM A PROGRAM	8
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11. Table 2 (below), sets out a timetable for rolling out the Standards (slightly amended from the SC7 paper). It includes a pilot of the standards in 2019, before formal assessment is undertaken in the second half of 2020.

**TABLE 2: PROPOSED TIMELINE FOR PERFORMANCE STANDARDS USE AND FUND ALLOCATION IN FIRST CYCLE (UPDATED POST SC7)**

Dates	Years	Action	Responsibility
Nov 18	Year 0	Standards for 2019-2021 confirmed by System Council based on the recommendation of the SMB (and prior endorsement of the programs). Responsibility for independent assessment of standards agreed.	SC
Dec 18	Year 0	Metrics for the 6 program performance standards approved by the System Management Board considering inputs of System Council (including SIMEC), Centers and programs as collated by the SMO.	SMB
Dec 18 – 15 Jan 19	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 additional financial investment by the programs.	Programs
Apr-Jun 2019	Year 1 Q2	Timetable and process for pilot of metrics for the 6 standards to be agreed between Program Leaders, SMO and Advisory Services Shared Secretariat	Program leaders, SMO, Advisory Services Shared Secretariat
Sept-Oct 2019	Year 1 Q3-Q4	Programs need to include any investment needed in their POWB for Year 2, as above, with a view to 2020 POWB's being approved earlier (i.e. Q4 of 2019, for 2020 implementation).	Programs
Oct-Nov 2019	Year 1 Q4	Metrics piloted, details improved, and final wording agreed.	Senior evaluation specialist, Shared Secretariat and SMO, with Program leaders

Assessment Criteria for Program Performance Standards 2019-2021

Dates	Years	Action	Responsibility
July-Aug 2020	Year 2 Q3	Independent assessment of performance standards for each program. Stable funding within 2019-2021 cycle.	Senior evaluation specialist, Shared Secretariat
Oct-Nov 2020 (processes from proposal to approval)	Year 2 Q4	Discussion on performance standards and reports for current cycle. Performance standards proposed for following cycle, endorsed by program leaders, recommended by SMB and approved by SC.	SMB, Program leaders, SC
Jan 2021	Year 3 Q1	<p>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.</p> <p>For CRPs that will continue on to a next cycle, the involved Centers 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.</p> <p>For new CRPs (in the next cycle), an annex should explain any relationship with previous/phased out CRPs (if any) and how the performance standards will be carried forward/continued. If the new CRP does not build on previous CRPs, then an annex could explain how the involved Centers apply their experiences with involvement in other/previous CRPs in this new CRP.</p>	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	<p>Quality at Entry assessment for new proposals/implementation plans.</p> <p>Passing the standards is a 'necessary but not sufficient' condition for future funding.</p> <p>Passing performance assessment or satisfactory self-report on improvement required as 'entry ticket'.</p> <p>If self-reporting is not convincing, limited checks could be carried out.</p>	External independent assessors, as moderated by the System's Independent Science for Development Council
Nov 2021	Year 3 Q4	Approval of new Portfolio/ proposals/ implementation plans	

## STANDARD 1: ADDING AND WITHDRAWING PROJECTS FROM A PROGRAM

**Full title of standard:** Business Cycle 2019-2021 Standard 1: Program has a transparent and logical process for selection, prioritization and inclusion of new projects and withdrawal of projects from the Program.

**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<sup>5</sup>. The unplanned withdrawal of a project also needs oversight.

**Scope:** This standard is applicable to projects added in the Business Plan period only (not applied retrospectively). The pilot exercise to be carried out in 2019 will be used to trial and hone sampling methods and may look at some earlier projects as well (as examples only).

**Documentation 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; Access to statistician (for sampling).

**Proposed method:** Rubric, as set out below

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<sup>5</sup> 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 Rubric for assessment

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3 (Proposed pass level for Business Cycle 1)	Level 4 (Potential pass level for Business Cycle 2)
<b>SUMMARY RUBRIC</b>			
No consistent process exists for adding or withdrawing projects.	A process exists for adding or withdrawing projects, but it fails to meet one or more criteria (coherence, Program involvement, transparency and consistency).	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.	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
<b>SPECIFIC CRITERIA TO ASSESS FOR EACH LEVEL</b>			
<p>One or more of the following applies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is no consistent process and/or criteria for adding/withdrawing projects to/from the Program.</li> <li>There is a lack of documentation for projects explaining why they were included in the Program.</li> <li>Some projects appear to have been added and withdrawn in an un-transparent and/or ad hoc manner.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is a structured and recorded process consistently used for making decisions for adding/ withdrawing projects to/from the Program.</li> <li>Documentation for projects includes a short explanation of why it was included in the Program.</li> <li>However, the process fails one or more of the following criteria (see level 3):                             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Logical and based on clearly defined criteria</li> <li>Appropriate consultation</li> <li>Transparency</li> </ol> </li> </ul>	<p>The decision-making process is:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>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, fit with expressed Program priorities and have clearly defined and measurable plans for activities and outputs. (However, at Level 3 the criteria may be limited, cf. Level 4.)</li> <li>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 the program (i.e. before planned finish date),</li> </ol>	<p>All of the following should apply:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The decision-making process passes Level 3.</li> <li>There is recorded evidence that the criteria have been <u>thoroughly</u> considered in decision making.</li> <li>In addition, there is evidence from the records that the criteria include consideration of all the following areas (from QoR4D):                             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><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.</li> <li>Scientific <u>credibility</u>: Each proposed new project has been assessed for its design (sound and defensible analysis and methodology) and evidence of building on past scientific/research knowledge and methodologies where relevant.</li> <li><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</li> </ol> </li> </ul>

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3 (Proposed pass level for Business Cycle 1)	Level 4 (Potential pass level for Business Cycle 2)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Decisions have been made without the appropriate involvement of Program management and Governance (see level 3).</li> </ul>	<p>d. Documentation as described in Level 3 available for every new project</p>	<p>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 specified System entities (see 'Definitions'). ii) Documentation for <u>every new</u> project (added as from July 2019) 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. This may be recorded in MIS.</p> <p>*The criteria should reflect 'proportionality', i.e. less detailed analysis would be expected for small projects, as defined in the Program's agreed criteria (see points a and b).</p>	<p>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&amp;E and support to the enabling environment are adequately resourced, to position the research for use.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Documentation for <u>every</u> new project should include the results of this assessment.</li> </ul> <p>*The criteria and analysis should reflect 'proportionality', i.e. less detailed analysis would be expected for small projects.</p>

## STANDARD 2: IDENTIFICATION OF GENDER RELEVANCE

**Title of Standard:** **Business Cycle 2019-2021 Standard 2:** Complete and accurate application of the cross-cutting marker for gender in Program results reporting.

*Note - This standard and the associated guidance (see [this link](#)) has benefited from the recommendations and comments of the CGIAR gender network.*

**Rationale for Standard:** Gender equality and women's empowerment is a key part of the Strategy and Results Framework of CGIAR and is being addressed in a variety of ways. This Cycle 1 performance Standard tackles a specific but crucial issue for reporting, which is the accurate identification of gender-relevant results in the research Programs, through the correct use of a gender marker (one of four 'CGIAR cross-cutting markers'). The markers are used by research managers, the CGIAR System Organization and System advisory services: a) to track the integration of cross-cutting issues into research portfolios over time, and b) to identify specific workstreams and outcomes where gender is a principal or significant element, for the purposes of facilitating learning across CGIAR. Correctly applying and writing a high-quality narrative justification of the gender score also requires researchers to reflect on the degree of integration of gender issues into their research, which is a useful step in 'mainstreaming' gender thinking.

**Documentation required for assessment:** Annual Program Reports and Outcome-Impact Case Reports. (online)

**Scope:** This standard is applicable to Annual Program Reports and Outcome-Impact Case Reports (OICR) from 2019, and will use the final guidance on application of cross-cutting markers (draft in [this link](#)) which is expected to be piloted and improved during 2018 annual reporting. (The pilot assessment of the standards will use emerging annual report and OICR data from 2019.)

**Expertise required for assessment:** Experience of gender in research, and especially, experience of gender issues that typically arise in Agricultural Research for Development; Access to statistician if needed for sampling.

**Proposed method:** A sample of milestones, policies and OICRs will be taken for assessment from available online reports. The specific process of sampling (and resampling, if required) will be agreed in the 2019 pilot of the standards.

### **Pass level for this standard:**

- a. **100% of milestones, Outcome-Impact Case Reports (OICR) and Reports of Policy contributions are tagged** for gender, using one of the following scores: N/A, 0,1,2.
- b. **90%<sup>6</sup> of the above gender tags are accurately applied, as assessed by a sample<sup>7</sup>.** 'Accurately applied' means that the assessor agrees that the score is correct, according to the narrative justification provided for the score and the definitions given in the guidance (see Annex).

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<sup>6</sup> While 100% accuracy is of course the aim, the need for a qualitative judgement even when applying the guidance, and human error, make it difficult to require 100% accuracy as a pass level for a whole program.

<sup>7</sup> Sampling and resampling will be carried out to minimise the risk of a 'false negative' result – and if necessary a complete census will be used (n expected to be around 100 /CRP). This will be piloted in 2019.

### STANDARD 3: FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT OF POOLED PROGRAM FUNDING

As set out in the requested action at the beginning of this document, **there is a different request of the Board for this standard**. As the metrics have not yet been finalized, the Board is requested to endorse the creation of a working group on Standard 3 that will put forward revised metrics for approval by the Board at their 13<sup>th</sup> meeting (2-4 April 2019).

An initial draft set of metrics was put forward (see below for information), however comments were received from across the CGIAR that there is an opportunity to clarify the division of responsibilities in this area; and the perception noted that the issue is too complex to address with some edits to wording at this time.

Instead, the proposal is to constitute a small working group<sup>8</sup> (comprising not more than 6 persons) including:

- Director, Finance, CGIAR System Organization;
- 1 Corporate Services Executive;
- 1 Chair of a Center Audit Committee;
- 1 Head of Internal Audit
- 1-2 CRP Leaders or their nominees (Head of Program Management Unit or Head of Finance)

The working group will be asked to come up with a detailed specification for this Standard for submission to the Board for its 13<sup>th</sup> meeting (2-4 April 2019). This specification should be in the Rubric format below, with most concentration on Level 3 (Pass Level for Cycle 1). In the event that the group cannot agree on a single specification, they will be asked to present two or more clear options to the Board for discussion and agreement.

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<sup>8</sup> Building on the premise that Centers have signed legal agreements that say funding will only be used for the purpose for which it was intended, the breadth of stakeholders proposed here is to enhance the System's ability to have confidence in this regard.

Draft metrics for financial management standard **\*\***(Noting that these are for background information only at this time, pending the outcome of the working group's discussions)

**Title of standard:** **Business Cycle 2019-2021 Standard 3:** The Program has transparent systems for planning and managing budgets to reach objectives, and clear and efficient division of responsibility between Programs, Centers and other implementing partners.

**Rationale for standard:** To provide assurance to Funders and other stakeholders that CGIAR pooled budgets (W1/2) are effectively and efficiently managed. This requires W1/2 budgets to be clearly linked to planned activities, budget-holders to be appropriately selected and trained, and systems to be in place to allow budget holders at all levels to track W1/2 expenditure related to their responsibilities for Program delivery. This standard addresses some specific weaknesses identified in earlier internal audits of some CGIAR Programs.

**Documentation required for assessment:** Program Annual Plans of Work and Budget (POWB); Underlying W1/2 budget assumptions for POWB, Budgeting instructions, W1/2 budget monitoring/variance analysis reports, Documentation on delegation of authority for W1/2, Induction/training materials for budget holders of W1/2, Reports on training of budget holders, Minutes of budget discussions involving W1/2, and any other key documents identified following the pilot of these standards. These documents should be clearly accessible and identifiable on line (to specified System entities). *(Also see Standard 6)*

**Scope:** The assessment of the POWB section of this standard will be based on POWBs prepared for 2020. (The 2019 pilot exercise will use the POWB for 2019.)

**Expertise required for assessment:** Financial management specialist / Internal auditor

**Proposed method:** Rubric, as set out below

Draft Rubric for assessment

***\*\* (Noting that this is for background information only at this time, pending the outcome of the working group’s discussions)***

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3 (Proposed pass level for Business Cycle 1)	Level 4 (Potential pass level for Business Cycle 2)
<b>SUMMARY RUBRIC</b>			
<p>W1/2 budgeting process and criteria not clearly related to planned activities in Plans of Work and Budget (POWBs).</p> <p>Delegation of budgetary authority for W1/2 unrelated to responsibilities for delivery of results with those funds. Budget holders lack effective systems to track progress against budgets.</p>	<p>W1/2 budgets are related to planned activities, but lack transparent assumptions or involvement of relevant managers.</p> <p>Delegation of authority for W1/2 is broadly appropriate, but lacks some important elements.</p> <p>Budget monitoring is in place, but systems may be inadequate and frequency of reporting may be low.</p>	<p>W1/2 budgets are related to planned activities, clearly spell out assumptions underpinning calculations and budgeting involves relevant Program managers. Budget holder responsibilities for key Program staff (specifically, the CRP director, Head of PMU, Flagship Leaders or their delegates) are clearly assigned and documented for W1/2 funding where they have responsibilities for delivery of results</p> <p>Monthly budget monitoring is in place for activities supported by W1/2, although central systems may not be adequate to support this fully.</p>	<p>High quality “zero-based”, activity-based budgeting in use by Program for W1/2. Program budget holder powers at all levels are clearly linked to their accountabilities for results delivery with the respective W1/2 budget</p> <p>Budget holders for W1/2 have and use adequately functioning financial systems, information and tools to allow them to have a real-time view of their progress against the budget in terms of Program activities funded by W1/2.</p>
<b>SPECIFIC CRITERIA TO ASSESS FOR EACH LEVEL</b>			
<p>One or more of the following applies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is a lack of clear documentation on how the budget has been prepared or who was involved, or on the calculations made.</li> <li>The documented budgeting process is not clearly related to planned activities, for example “incremental budgeting” (estimate based on previous year’s expenditure) is used.</li> </ul>	<p>1. A budgeting process exists for allocation of W1/2 in Plans of Work and Budget (POWBs).</p> <p>However, the W1/2 budget process fails to meet one or more of the criteria specified in level 3:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>e. Evidence of involvement or consultation of relevant Program managers</li> <li>f. Budgeting tools available</li> </ul>	<p>All of the following should apply:</p> <p>1. Underlying calculations for the Annual Plan of Work and Budget (POWB) make clear logical links between budgets and activities for W1/2:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Budgeting is based on planned activities for W1/2</li> <li>b. Budgeting tools and instructions for individual budget-holders are available</li> <li>c. Budgeting assumptions (e.g. realistic expectations of expenses underpinning</li> </ul>	<p>All of the following should apply:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. The Program meets all criteria specified for Level 3.</li> <li>B. In addition, High quality “zero-based” budgeting in use by Program for W1/2. Program budget holder powers at all levels are clearly linked to their accountabilities for results delivery with the respective W1/2 budget. As in 2a-d – but for all levels, including project managers / Principal Investigators</li> </ul>

Assessment Criteria for Program Performance Standards 2019-2021

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3 (Proposed pass level for Business Cycle 1)	Level 4 (Potential pass level for Business Cycle 2)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Delegation of authority documents for W1/2 do not mention individual's responsibilities in relation to delivery of the Program</li> <li>● There is no evidence of regular reporting of expenditure of W1/2 linked to planned activities</li> </ul>	<p>g. Transparency of calculations and assumptions</p> <p>2. There is some evidence that key Program staff (or their delegates) have appropriate authority and capacity to manage relevant W1/2 budgets for delivering key Program outcomes However, it fails to meet one or more of the criteria specified in Level 3, 2a-2c.</p> <p>3. There is evidence that Program budget holders regularly track expenditure on W1/2. However, program budget holders lack effective harmonized systems to track Program W1/2 progress against budgets, for example there may be extensive reliance on offline spreadsheets independently developed and held by individual managers.</p>	<p>the budget estimates taking count of anticipated changes, unit costs, timing, number of units, exchange rates, inflation) are made clear.</p> <p>d. There is documented evidence that relevant Program managers (<i>as defined prior to assessment: in 2019 this would be CRP Director, Head of PMU, Flagship Leaders and their delegates</i>) have been involved in and sign off on decisions about budgets relevant to their responsibilities for delivery of results for those funds</p> <p>2. There is evidence that key Program staff (or their delegates) have appropriate authority and capacity to manage relevant W1/2 budgets for delivering key Program outcomes:</p> <p>a. 'Delegation of authority' documents for key Program staff clearly spell out the individual's W1/2 budgetary responsibilities for delivery of the Program</p> <p>b. There is evidence that the above delegation of authority has been communicated to relevant Program staff</p> <p>c. Program budget holders are given standard budget holder training/ induction for their responsibilities on W1/2 management</p> <p>3. Monthly budget / activity report available for each budget holder on use of W1/2 for Program purposes.</p>	<p>There is evidence that budget holders for W1/2 have and use adequately functioning harmonized financial systems, information and tools to allow them to have a real-time view of their progress against the budget in terms of Program activities funded by W1/2. Assessed by checking a sample of budget reports.</p>

#### STANDARD 4: PRIORITIZATION OF POOLED FUNDING

**Title of standard:** **Business Cycle 2019-2021 Standard 4:** Program progress and priorities are regularly reviewed, and logical and transparent decisions are taken about (re)prioritization of pooled Program funding, including activities to expand or cut back.

**Rationale for standard:** The effective and efficient use of Pooled Program funding to further Program and CGIAR objectives is a cornerstone of the Programmatic approach. For Funders to be able to invest further in pooled funding channels, it is essential that they can be confident that the decisions on the use of pooled funding are logical and coherent with agreed Program priorities, including investing in high performance and cutting back investment on areas which are not expected to deliver, and that these priorities are regularly revisited.

**Documentation required for assessment:** Management documents and minutes of relevant meetings of Program Management and Governance bodies. These should be clearly accessible to specified System entities on request (see group B in standard 6)

**Scope:** The assessment for this Business cycle will focus on documentation of decisions on Program pooled funding made in 2019-2020 as known at the time of the assessment. The pilot will use available information from 2019.

**Expertise required for assessment:** General management /organizational development; general understanding of Agricultural Research for Development

**Proposed method:** Rubric, as set out below



Draft Rubric for assessment

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3 (Proposed pass level for Business Cycle 1)	Level 4 (Potential pass level for Business Cycle 2)
<b>SUMMARY RUBRIC</b>			
No consistent process exists for regular review and prioritization of pooled funds.	A process exists for regular review and prioritization of pooled funds, but it fails to meet one or more criteria (coherence, Program involvement, transparency and consistency).	There is a logical, coherent, consultative and transparent process for prioritization and reprioritization of the use of pooled Program funding.	There is a logical, coherent, consultative and transparent process for prioritization and reprioritization of the use of pooled funding (W1/2), and efficient systems exist to track expenditure and results from pooled Program funding
<b>SPECIFIC CRITERIA TO ASSESS FOR EACH LEVEL</b>			
<p>One or more of the following applies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is no consistent process for regular review of the use of pooled Program funds in the Program. Re-prioritization is normally ad hoc (for example, following announcements of funding cuts at System level).</li> <li>There is a lack of documentation explaining how decisions were made for prioritizing and reprioritizing pooled Program funds.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is a structured and documented process used for making decisions on the prioritization of pooled funding in the Program.</li> <li>However, the process fails one or more of the following criteria required to pass Level 3:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>h. Regularity</li> <li>i. Appropriate Program involvement</li> <li>j. Logical – for example funding cuts may be made as a “percentage across the board” rather than after consideration of specified criteria.</li> <li>k. Coherent with program priorities</li> <li>l. Performance-relevant</li> <li>m. Follow-up</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>The decision-making process on the use of pooled Program funding is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>d. Regular: normally, annual</li> <li>e. Based on appropriate involvement:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i) Program Management and key partners take a leading role in decisions on reprioritization of pooled Program funds.</li> <li>ii) Program Management and Governance have been consulted on the criteria to consider for (re)prioritization of funds, and no major outstanding objections are registered.</li> </ul> </li> <li>f. Logical: based on consideration of a set of defined criteria (issues)*. Distribution of funding demands complex judgements, and there is no expectation that the criteria will be used simplistically, just that they should be explicitly considered.</li> <li>g. Coherent with Program Priorities: funds should not be allocated to areas of work that have been explicitly <u>not</u> approved by System governance bodies (SMB and SC).</li> </ul>	<p>All of the following should apply:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The decision-making process passes Level 3.</li> <li>Key documentation (<i>to be defined</i>) is publicly available</li> <li>Harmonized systems exist to track expenditure and results from pooled Program funding at regular (at minimum quarterly) intervals.</li> </ul> <p>NB it may not be necessary to follow this standard though in Cycle 2, as the Cycle 1 standard should cover most of the desired criteria, and other standards exist (e.g. standard 3 on budgets and financial management) that can pick up missing aspects. (This would leave a ‘vacancy’ in the standards to be used for other issues next cycle.)</p>

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3 (Proposed pass level for Business Cycle 1)	Level 4 (Potential pass level for Business Cycle 2)
	n. Transparency	<p>h. Performance-relevant: The decision includes consideration of likely future performance of particular research areas/lines that have been funded or co-funded with pooled funding. This is a complex judgement that includes consideration of past performance (and factors affecting that) and potential future risk and return, and there is no expected 'right answer', but there should be some evidence of consideration of performance*.</p> <p>i. Transparent: The process and criteria considered for (re) prioritization of pooled funding, and the follow-up (revised budgets) are on <u>record</u> and accessible to specified System entities. (see Standard 6)</p> <p>*The decision-making process should be 'proportionate', i.e. with the level of effort and scrutiny related to the amount of funding involved in the decision making, and the defined criteria should reflect this. For example, decisions made about minor mid-year cuts in funding may not require scrutiny of performance. This is for each program to define.</p> <p>However, program budget holders still lack effective harmonized systems to track Program W1/2 progress against budgets, for example there may be extensive reliance on offline spreadsheets independently developed and held by individual managers. (see Standard 3)</p>	

## STANDARD 5: HIGH-QUALITY RESULTS REPORTING

**Title of standard:** **Business Cycle 2019-2021 Standard 5:** CGIAR System Program reporting is of adequate quality and the evidence presented is properly archived, linked and accessible.

**Rationale for standard:** High quality and checkable annual reporting on results is an essential aspect of accountability for System level funding as well as an important input into learning and improving. The CGIAR System Annual Performance Report and the CGIAR Results Dashboard depend on having reliable, checkable inputs. For this cycle, the standard will concentrate on ensuring that reporting is comprehensive, that the evidence presented is properly archived, linked and accessible, and that output claims (innovations) are properly justified with evidence. For the future, further investment is required to ensure that all outcome claims (Outcome Impact Case Reports and policy contribution claims) are properly evidenced, but that requires considerable investment in M&E, and due to the time lags, this can only realistically be required for next cycle.

**Documentation required for assessment:** Annual reports and associated tables and online inputs, and Outcome Impact Case Reports for each program.

**Scope:** The assessment for this Business cycle in 2020 will focus on analysis of the annual report and associated reporting materials on 2019. (The pilot will examine available materials from early reporting. Prior to that, the System Organization will provide some analysis of the quality of 2018 reporting, which will highlight challenges encountered without specifying the source.)

**Expertise required for assessment:** Understanding of Agricultural Research for Development and the meaning and use of each area of reporting. Access to statistical expertise (for sampling).

**Proposed method:** Rubric, as set out below

Draft Rubric for assessment

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3 (Proposed pass level for Business Cycle 1)	Level 4 (Potential pass level for Business Cycle 2 or later)
<b>SUMMARY RUBRIC</b>			
Programs don't carry out regular System-level reporting.	Programs regularly report on progress and results to the CGIAR System Organization, but reporting is not fully comprehensive and/or checkable.	Program reporting to the CGIAR System Organization is comprehensive, results claims are checkable, and the available evidence supports the statements made.	Reporting to the CGIAR System is comprehensive and fully supported by high quality evidence
<b>SPECIFIC CRITERIA TO ASSESS FOR EACH LEVEL</b>			
Programs do not carry out regular System-level reporting or do so on an adhoc basis.	<p>Programs regularly report on progress and results to the CGIAR System Organization.</p> <p>However, program reporting fails on one or more of the criteria listed in Level 3 i.e. that it should be</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Comprehensive</li> <li>2. Timely</li> <li>2. Fully checkable.</li> <li>3. Adequately evidenced, within current resource constraints</li> </ol>	<p>Reporting is:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Comprehensive: Information is provided for all parts of the relevant Program reporting template and the underlying tables and data requested. If expected data is not provided for a particular area, there is a reasonable justification given.</li> <li>2. Timely: Final reports are delivered within agreed deadlines. (in the absence of convincing justification)</li> <li>3. Checkable: Claims/statements of results, and summary data (e.g. totals), are supported by underlying data in tables and accessible databases. 'Accessible' means that these are at minimum available for immediate inspection by specified System entities (see Standard 6)</li> <li>4. Adequately evidenced, within current resource constraints:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Reporting on the <i>sphere of control</i> (specifically: innovations, and milestones that are in the sphere of control) is adequately evidenced, with links to relevant reports. Claims/statements made are supported by evidence.</li> </ol> </li> </ol>	<p>All of the following should apply:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Reporting passes Level 3.</li> <li>● Key documentation (<i>to be defined</i>) is publicly available</li> <li>● High-quality evidence from evaluation, adoption and impact studies is available to support claims in Outcome -Impact Case Reports (including for contributions to policy) and to strengthen and broaden the evidence for other impact claims.</li> </ul> <p>Meeting Level 4 would require <u>substantial</u> investment across the CGIAR in Monitoring, Evaluation, Learning and Impact Assessment (MELIA), and the resource implications and trade-offs need to be seriously considered by CGIAR System Governance.</p>

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3 (Proposed pass level for Business Cycle 1)	Level 4 (Potential pass level for Business Cycle 2 or later)
		<p>b. Evidence sources cited for Outcome Impact Case Reports are credible and high-quality (not blogs and press releases, for example). The available evidence supports the claims/statements made.</p> <p>c. All evidence sources cited for Impacts (Report Table A1) are credible peer-reviewed studies, and/or supported by transparent, checkable surveys and models (see point 2). The available evidence supports the claims/statements made.</p>	

## STANDARD 6: AVAILABILITY OF PROGRAM/PROJECT INFORMATION

**Full title of standard: Business Cycle 2019-2021 Standard 6:** Key Program and project information available, findable and accessible by specified System Entities.

### **Rationale for Standard:**

- a. Program managers should have easy access to a set of key information and documentation on their Program and the projects within it, as an essential part of managing programmatically.
- b. Documentation on programs and projects is required for external assessments and evaluations, and it is inefficient and burdensome to have to request this from individual project managers. In particular, the assessment of these Program Performance Standards requires sampling of projects, which needs some basic information to be available regarding the list of projects in the Program.
- c. CGIAR is moving towards compliance with the International Aid Transparency Initiative and this standard dovetails with that.

**Documentation required for assessment:** The proposed list of required information is below. Information in List A should be clearly accessible and identifiable online (internally in CGIAR), for easy access by specified System entities. Information in List B should be easily accessible to Programs and should be provided to one of the specified System entities within 5 working days of being requested.

**Scope:** This standard is applicable to information on the Program (as listed below) and on all projects in the Program that are in operation at some time during the Business Plan period, up to the time of the formal assessment (mid 2020) (not just new projects).

**Expertise required for assessment:** General management /organizational development; access to statistician if required for sampling projects.

**Pass level for this Standard:** Information on Programs and Projects is available to specified System entities, as set out in List A (information accessible at all times) and List B (information accessible on request) below. This list may be modified to reflect lessons from the 2019 pilot exercise for assessment of the Standards. In the second Business Plan cycle, the intention is to meet IATI standards – there are already moves in this direction in various parts of CGIAR, however no specifics have been included in these metrics as the requirements need further clarification and agreement.

## PROPOSED LIST OF REQUIRED INFORMATION

### Notes:

- It is convenient to refer in the following list to some existing documents for CGIAR Programs, but this should not be interpreted to mean that these exact documents are required. The assessment of the Standard is about accessibility to the required information, not about specific named documents (such as a 'CRP proposal'), since document types may change over time.
- Required information should be made available in its full original form (for example, minutes of a meeting as they were originally recorded, not only a brief summary of the conclusions).
- Details of this list may be modified after piloting this Standard in 2019.

### LIST A: Information that should be accessible online to specified System entities

Information in List A should be up-to-date and clearly identifiable online (internally in CGIAR), for easy access by specified System entities. The location of this information is the decision of each Program and may change over time. For example, some information may be public (e.g. on a Program website), some may be held in Management Information Systems, while some information may be held in system repositories, and a permanent link provided to the specific System entities. *The key requirement is that the links provided are easily findable and accessible to the specific System entities directly, without it being necessary to ask Program management for clarification, links or further information. This means that each program should prepare a summary sheet with links to where relevant information can be found and share this with the specified System entities. This list (and the underlying information, if needed), should be updated at minimum annually.*

### Program description

1. Program proposal (full description, including the theory of Change (ToC), structure, major activities and outputs planned, links to System targets and Outcomes)
2. Key external advice provided and decisions made on the original proposal (e.g. ISPC comments, record of discussion and approval by System Council) and on any changes since then (e.g. approval of an additional Flagship)
3. Up-to-date description and Terms of Reference of management, governance and advisory structures for Program, if different than the original Program Proposal
4. Up-to-date description of any major Program structural changes since original approval if relevant
5. List of key Program staff: leadership team, management unit, Flagship leaders or comparable, and Center/partner focal points (if they exist)

### Program policies and processes

6. Minutes of meetings of management/leadership team, governance and advisory structures since 2017
7. Essential meeting records or correspondence required to evidence other Program standards in this Business Cycle, for example Standard 1 (addition of new projects to the program), Standard 3 (Management of pooled budgets), and Standard 4 (Process for prioritization of pooled funding)

### Program inputs, activities and results

8. Annual Plans of Work and Budget as from (and including) POWB 2017, containing plans for activities, milestones, and budgets, according to the agreed templates
9. Annual reports to System Organization as from (and including) AR 2017, following the agreed templates and completing the agreed tables of information (also see Standard 5)
10. Outcome-Impact Case Reports, for at least the previous reporting year (also see Standard 5)

### LIST B: Information to be provided on request

Information in List B should be easily accessible to Program Management and should be provided to one of the specified System entities within 5 working days of receiving a formal request. *(Note that this is not a complete list of all information that may be requested during the assessment phase by the senior evaluation expert or the CGIAR System Internal Audit Function if supporting that work).*

### Program description

- Current list of key research staff associated with the Program, their job title (as regard to the Program), gender, Center and Flagship affiliation. 'Key' staff are PMU staff, Flagship and Cluster staff, Project leaders and Principal Investigators.
- Full list of current Program partnerships and the partners in each partnership (for preference), or a full list of Program partners
- Current full list of projects included in Program, and for each, where it fits into the Program (e.g. Flagship), source(s) and amount of funding, geographical scope/location and expected duration. (Note: this information is needed to sample projects for assessment.)

### Project-level information for requested projects

Some standards (and other assessments) require project-level information, normally on a randomized or stratified randomized sample of projects. It is recognized that some documents linked to projects may be confidential (e.g. technical bids for grants may be commercially sensitive), and these must be handled and stored accordingly

- Project description: project memorandum or similar (this can be more than one document, including later updates). This should contain at minimum the following information:
  - Project Title,
  - source(s) and amount of funding,
  - geographical scope/location and expected duration;
  - where the project fits into the Program (e.g. Flagship) and an explanation of how the project fits into the Program theory of change and priorities (see Standard 1),
  - project partners;
  - planned activities and deliverables
- Project reports:
  - a full set of activity/results and financial reports (annual, quarterly etc.) since the start of the project.