

Investment Design Document Update

Trilateral Partnership
for Educational Quality and Assessment Programme (EQAP)
Phase 2

Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific Community

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Acronyms

ACARA	Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority
ACER	Australian Council for Educational Research
AERO	Australian Education Research Organisation
AITSL	Australian Institute for Teacher and School Leadership
APTC	Australia Pacific Training Coalition
CRGA	Committee of Representatives of Governments and Administrations
CPEM	Conference of Pacific Education Ministers
DDG	Deputy Director General
DFAT	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Australia)
EMIS	Education Management Information Systems
EQAP	Educational Quality and Assessment Programme
EU	European Union
GEDSI	Gender Equality Disability and Social Inclusion
GPE	Global Partnership for Education
HLC	High Level Consultation
IDDU	Investment Design Document Update
IT	Information Technology
MFAT	Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (New Zealand)
PaBER	Pacific Benchmarking for Education Results
PacREF	Pacific Regional Education Framework
PBEQ	Pacific Board for Education Quality
PICT	Pacific Islands Countries and Territories
PIFS	Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat
PILNA	Pacific Islands Literacy and Numeracy Assessment
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SPC	Pacific Community
TOs	Technical Organisations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation
USP	University of the South Pacific

Executive Summary

Australia and New Zealand will continue to provide flexible financing for a second five-year phase (2023-2027) for the Education Quality and Assessment Program (EQAP) of the Pacific Community (SPC) to support implementation of its Business Plan.

EQAP is the division in SPC that leads on efforts to improve the quality of regional and national education in the Pacific. A regional public good, EQAP supports SPC member countries' efforts to strengthen their education systems, providing education services for regional and national education systems to supplement systems and capabilities, where necessary.

EQAP's support provides a multitude of goods and services that will continue to respond to the needs of SPC member countries including: Education Data, Quality and System Management; Information Technologies for Education; Education Policy; Education Research; Large Scale Assessments; Curricula and Assessments; Teacher Competencies and Qualifications and Accreditations.

EQAP is a key implementing partner, convener and Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) lead in advancing agreed regional education policy priorities outlined in the Pacific Education Regional Framework (PacREF) and by the Conference of Pacific Education Ministers (CPEM). This support aligns with Australian and New Zealand bilateral education investments across the Pacific. It is also underpinned by partnership principles between Australia/New Zealand and SPC including: mutual respect and responsibility, enhanced donor harmonisation, a focus on improving results and understanding impact and visibility and transparency.

Over Phase 1 of this ten-year investment, EQAP has institutionalised a country-led and demand-driven planning process with strong IT, finance and budgeting systems. EQAP's Business Plan (2023-26) builds on previous lessons and experience, and sets out clear outcomes, priority actions and monitoring and evaluation systems.

The partners agreed the Partnership was intended for 10 years, split across two phases of 5+5 years. Australia is projecting an allocation of AUD27.4 million over 5 years for Phase 2 (2023-27). New Zealand anticipates seeking funding approval for the full ten-year period. Australia and New Zealand's base funding will continue to be used as a flexible funding mechanism to support the full delivery of activities across EQAP's Business Plan (2023-26). This has been a key feature of Phase 1 enabling EQAP to ensure activities remain demand-driven by SPC member countries, while meeting EQAP's regional commitments, obligations and key deliverables.

EQAP's Annual Financial Report, as part of the SPC overall audited financial reports, will remain the primary reporting and accountability mechanism, in line with a partner-led/core funding approach. Australia and New Zealand will hold separate Agreements with SPC for the Partnership.

The collaborative approach affords significant opportunity for engagement for Australia and New Zealand. Both countries are Members of the governing body of SPC and Members of the Pacific Board for Education Quality, where high level engagement with Pacific Island Countries and Territories (PICT) decision makers set the strategic direction for both SPC and EQAP. Partners will

maintain open and constructive relationships throughout implementation to support deeper insight, sharing of views and interests, and enable preparation for formal engagements (such as PacREF and CPEM events), such as joint policy positions.

The expected outcomes of the design for Phase 2 are articulated in EQAP's Business Plan (2023-26) and program logic, captured through Vision, Mission and Outcome statements. The Business Plan structure and process identifies the intermediate outcomes and key results areas with indicators for each of these outcomes.

Revised EQAP Business Plan 2023-26

SPC Vision

A resilient and prosperous Pacific, in which all Pacific people each their full potential and live long and healthy lives.

EQAP Mission

A Pacific education sector that is inclusive, accessible, equitable and provides quality lifelong learning for all.

Outcomes

1. Quality assured evidence to inform educational policy, planning, implementation and management across the Pacific.
2. Inclusive and accessible performance assessments of Pacific learners occur frequently, reliably and against curricula.
3. Quality assured and recognised qualifications to be increasingly taken up by employers and learners.
4. Information and expertise in Pacific education to be available and stakeholders are aware of it.

There is also a specific purpose for adopting a collaborative approach to the support from Australia and New Zealand. These *policy objectives* include:

1. To strengthen the organisational capacity of EQAP, working effectively with others to improve education quality as part of the regional education architecture.
2. To promote and demonstrate effective regionalism, in line with Australia and New Zealand policy direction for deeper engagement in the Pacific and stronger alignment amongst Pacific island nations in international policy positions and commitments.
3. To elevate Australia and New Zealand's engagement in policy dialogue in the education sector in the Pacific, making education quality a higher policy and political priority, alongside bilateral investments, and reducing aid delivery transaction costs and activities.

A key set of eight products and/or services corresponding to EQAP's regional obligations to PICTs are newly articulated for the design of Phase 2, as well as a set of intermediate policy outcomes related to Australia and New Zealand's policy objectives. The design takes a gender mainstreaming approach

in line with the SPC Strategic Plan, the Human Rights and Social Development Business Plan and the Pacific Regional Culture Strategy. To this end, specific gender responsive intermediate outcomes are included to guide effective mainstreaming across the investment.

Finally, in this second phase, EQAP, Australia and New Zealand will continue to enhance regional and technical and policy exchange, including by deepening institutional linkages and engagement between education systems across the region. This work will complement existing technical partnerships that EQAP has with the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) and New Zealand's Qualifications Authority (NZQA).

ACER will continue to provide ongoing strategic, policy and technical support to EQAP throughout implementation. ACER has a long-standing relationship with EQAP and has provided high quality technical and capacity support for the organisation. ACER will provide international recognition and ensures standards for the partners.

1. Introduction

1. The Educational Quality and Assessment Programme (EQAP) is a division of the Pacific Community (SPC) which has been supported by Australia and New Zealand under a tri-lateral partnership arrangement since 2018, intended as a 10-year commitment. The program is supported through a flexible grant arrangement that contributes to the internal Business Plan of EQAP, using partner systems for demand-driven planning responding to SPC Member priorities and needs, and SPC internal budgeting and reporting processes. The Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) provides ongoing technical and strategic support to EQAP under a partnership arrangement outlined in the design. This design document update¹ provides a refresh of the design for Phase 2 to account for changes in the operating and policy context, progress to date and lessons learned.

2. EQAP is a regional public good that provides services to 15 Pacific Island Member countries of SPC in key areas. It also supports qualifications recognition and quality assurance for technical vocational education and training in the Pacific. EQAP administers the high-profile Pacific Islands Literacy and Numeracy Assessment (PILNA), and the South Pacific Form Seven Certificate (SPFSC).

3. The partnership and flexible grant funding approach to support EQAP is highly regarded by stakeholders and has demonstrated strong outcomes. An independent mid-term review (MTR) of the EQAP Business Plan (conducted in 2021) highlighted the strength of the organisation's leadership role in the regional education architecture, and strength of the demand-driven planning approach and responsiveness to Member countries' needs. The Review found that EQAP was increasingly recognised by external parties for its broad technical competence and the quality of its products. It noted the partnership approach with DFAT and New Zealand (and flexible grant funding modality) had proven to be 'highly efficient' by using EQAP's existing organisational planning, reporting and governance arrangements. A 2021 Investment Monitoring Report (IMR) by DFAT found that EQAP 'performs as one of the strongest regional organisations supported by DFAT in the Pacific'. In particular, the IMR acknowledged EQAP's work in pivoting its operations during the pandemic. Despite COVID-19, all 15 member countries successfully completed PILNA testing in 2021-2, using a range of virtual and innovative practices in implementation. Based on lessons-learnt and feedback from member countries during the pandemic, EQAP has continued to weave innovative tools and approaches into its service delivery. Its staffing footprint has grown with more in-country staff than pre-COVID. EQAP has developed a new Business Plan (2023-26), and New Zealand has approved a new three-year funding cycle (2022-24) (subject to approval of this overall trilateral partnership design update) based on ongoing positive assessments in annual reviews.

4. This design update was developed through a series of consultations in early 2023 conducted with EQAP, DFAT, MFAT (NZ), ACER and stakeholders in the region. The process identified and analysed the most significant developments in the policy and operating context. These developments continue to strongly justify the fundamental approach to the original design, with

¹ This document adopts a 'partner-led' design approach and template rather than a stand-alone DFAT led-design. It is an update of the design document originally negotiated and approved by all partners. The EQAP Business Plan provides the underlying theory of change and Program Logic, and M&E arrangements. DFAT and MFAT appraisal and review need to refer to the EQAP Business Plan and MTR documents for full analysis.

only minor amendments required to the key features of the implementation arrangements. More substantive updates to several aspects of the design were identified as a result of this analysis related to governance and management structures, partnership intermediate outcomes, gender responsive monitoring and analysis, additional opportunities for institutional linkages and performance payment triggers.

2. Situation Analysis

Key developments in the Policy and Operating Context

5. Education continues to be a significant priority shared by governments of Pacific Island countries, Australia and New Zealand. Changes of Government in Australia (2022), Fiji, Samoa, Vanuatu and PNG during Phase 1, with subsequent changes in personnel of government education Ministers and Heads/Secretaries of Education ministries has resulted in confirming and extending commitment to education as a key pathway to economic prosperity, human development, political stability and resilience to climate change. Education is also seen as a fundamental platform for increasing regionalism and labour mobility. The more recently formed Conference of Pacific Education Ministers (CPEM, replacing the former Forum Education Ministers meetings) has re-affirmed commitment to regional standards and pathways for education, and reinforced the role of regional public goods (such as EQAP and the University of the South Pacific) as critical actors. The PacREF (Pacific Regional Education Framework: Moving Towards Education 2030) and its governance and implementation arrangements has gained traction and support from Pacific countries, stakeholders and donors.

6. EQAP has established itself as a policy technical leader and plays an important coordination and monitoring and evaluation role for PacREF. There are more actors involved in the regional education efforts, particularly the World Bank, the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), the Asian Development Bank, across more sub-sectors at regional and bilateral level (basic, primary, secondary and tertiary). This is requiring EQAP to extend its efforts in supporting harmonisation and coordination, as well as providing services that support education statistics and management information systems at country level that underpins these functions.

7. The COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on Pacific Island countries, including their national budget and execution for the education sector, as well as household, school and individual student levels. Most Pacific Islands Countries and Territories (PICTs) face challenges in addressing the education needs of their populations, in training and remunerating teachers, delivering fit-for-purpose relevant and best practice curriculum, and funding resources required for twenty-first century learning. EQAP was able to adapt to the operating environment to deliver services to PICTs virtually and through new ways of working, creating efficiencies and opportunities that are being incorporated into business as usual. The IT capacity of EQAP in particular places it well to utilise technology for new functions, supporting teaching and learning in new ways (e.g. year 13 curriculum now has online modules) and there are opportunities to extend these approaches further as more demand emerges from PICTs for these services.

8. The evolving implementation of the PacREF and engagement of new actors (GPE, World Bank, ADB, and enhanced engagement from UNESCO, UNICEF, USP and APTC) has required adjustments from EQAP in planning, management and financing arrangements, which could undermine its effective approach. The PacREF is now a strong Pacific-led framework for prioritising harmonised actions on improving education quality across the Pacific, and is starting to demonstrate outcomes and efficiencies from collaboration and cooperation. This has been hard won through high levels of engagement and leadership from key actors. EQAP has prioritised engagement in PacREF and seen the potential benefits from the regional approach, particularly in focusing and directing their efforts with PICTs that helps match the ‘demand’ for services from SPC Member countries, with the ‘supply’ capacity being developed within EQAP and elsewhere. The complex coordination and financing arrangements of PacREF (GPE-funded through ADB systems, to ‘lead’ entities for particular functions, including EQAP) have required EQAP to integrate a “project based” funding approach for the IT, financing and planning systems to coordinate with EQAP’s bottom up, country-based planning process. This is an increasing challenge, with potential to distort the fundamental operating principles of the EQAP approach. The flexible funding approach supporting EQAP’s Business Plan and country led planning process has been critical to budget execution and meeting PICTs needs at the right time which has led to outcomes. This needs to be monitored and protected through the arrangements of this investment and partnership approach, and in ongoing policy dialogue by Australia and New Zealand with PacREF actors and in other regional forums.

9. EQAP is increasingly recognised as a regional public good, strongly supported by governments in the Region. Its growing capability and regional role is placing increasing expectations and demands for services which itself could become a threat to continued success if potential growth is not managed carefully. Stakeholders recognise that EQAP has strengthened its engagement in the regional architecture, has increased the quality of its products and services, and is highly responsive to Member country needs. EQAP was able to execute its budget through the period of COVID-19 pandemic (100% spent, compared to lower levels by other SPC divisions as much as 60% spent) and attract new sources of funding (from fee-for-services to Members, as well as other donors). It has a high level of staff retention, has grown in numbers of senior technical staff as well as IT, finance and admin staff since 2017 (nearly doubling in total staff numbers). It has performed on the key foundational ‘deliverables’ to meet its regional commitments that underpin all regional and bilateral education investments in the Pacific. EQAP is now working collaboratively, with cost sharing arrangements, with other Divisions of SPC, on for example gender and inclusion analysis and strategies for education, which can be extended further in the next phase.

Key EQAP Deliverables that meet Regional commitments

- i. **PILNA**, large scale primary assessments every 3 years
- ii. **EMIS**, education data support for the Pacific
- iii. **Education Policy Bank and Research Bank**, research and policy analysis
- iv. **PacSIMS** (Pacific School Information Management System, for the South Pacific Form 7 Certificate, conducted annually)
- v. **PRAS**, Pacific Regional Assessment System, qualifications for TVET
- vi. **Status of Pacific Education Report**, produced for CPEM Bi-Annual meetings
- vii. **PacREF M&E Reporting**
- viii. **Curriculum Assessment and Reform Reports**, for participating countries with regional implications

These achievements which reflect enhanced capability have been able to be achieved through adherence to the underlying development strategy of the EQAP Business Plan and the 2018 design principles and theory of change: primarily a “Business Plan” which articulates mandate and scope of

service offering, with key outcomes and process to analyse performance, matched with an underlying planning process and business system (for finance, IT, M&E) that is a 'demand-driven' country level process. In the first phase, EQAP has built the business systems and organisational capability and culture, to institutionalise these arrangements, using IT and finance platforms (with, for example, six codes for each expense item and an IT system with eight functional modules for work planning and education data and analysis). These are now fully functional and highly effective, not dependent on any individual staff member. EQAP has developed and extended its practice of monitoring and evaluation working within the SPC mandated approach and methodology. This provides aggregate and synthesis data, as well as case studies and impact stories. The information and analysis available through this system is highly analytic, high quality and data rich. DFAT, MFAT and EQAP need more effective means to access, engage with, and utilise this information to meet their different purposes.

There is a potential tension in how EQAP responds to increasing expectations at a regional level, attracts more 'project based' funding coming from donors, and increasing opportunities for bilateral funding from Member countries and development partners. There is a natural limit to the growth EQAP is able to attain, or is desirable, due to the interdependence including: (i) the absorptive capacity of Member countries to conduct activities and undertake reform and use data and information when made available; (ii) the ability to attract, train and deploy new staff with requisite technical proficiency; (iii) the a pool of qualified and experienced personnel in the Pacific (specialists at Masters and PhD level are required); (iv) the ability to develop and deploy new and expended IT and finance systems; and (v) the ability to manage a more complex workflow that matches 'supply' and 'demand' with new donor requirements and more complex and larger teams of people with more interdependencies and transactions. The current work-plan has already gone from 300 individual activities to plan, budget and implement annually, up to 900. Some clarification in governance arrangements on responsibilities for managing potential growth, in mandate, scope and operations, is required, between the PBEQ, SPC CRGA, PacREF and CROP HRD governance mechanisms and the Partnership Committee, to enable EQAP to navigate growing expectations and role with operational capacity and performance.

10. The regional education architecture has matured and developed considerably in the past five years, representing an increasingly coherent and harmonised approach. It remains however, complex and transaction heavy, with many participants engaged in multiple forums, presenting a challenge for partners in this investment. Australia, New Zealand and EQAP are all involved in different ways in elements of the regional architecture. This includes the PacREF Steering Committee (policy and strategic direction for education reform and capacity development priorities); the Pacific Heads of Education Systems (technical and managerial, operational implementation of education reform at country level); the PacREF Implementing Agency Fono (implementation planning and coordination of PacREF activities); the Conference of Pacific Education Ministers (high level policy and political direction and commitments); the Council of Regional Organisations in the Pacific Human Resource Development working group (CROP HRD, a broader group of stakeholders working on human capital priorities, led by USP); the Pacific Board for Education Quality (oversight of EQAP planning and priorities, budgeting and resource allocation, and qualifications endorsement); and the Committee of Representatives of Governments and Administrations (CRGA) which governs SPC. EQAP also has a line management relationship within SPC as a 'division' of SPC. While

challenging, partners acknowledge that this architecture “is what it is” and not easily subject to rationalisation or influence from outside. Each body serves a distinct purpose, even if many of the participants are the same. While respecting and acknowledging their individual interests and mandates, Australia, New Zealand and EQAP could collaborate more on joint policy positions and interests in preparation for key regional events and to work collectively to steer the policy agenda and prioritisation that uses the data and evidence produced by EQAP in a meaningful manner. The Partnership Meetings of this investment have tended to focus on EQAP’s role and performance (partnership objective 1) rather than explore opportunities for enhancing collaboration and mutual accountability (objectives 2 and 3). There are also opportunities for DFAT to refine its internal management arrangements for better information sharing and engagement with EQAP to better access information available and participate in policy dialogue, building on the good practice experienced to date.

11. The significant investments in education at country level by development partners reinforces the need for a regional public good, such as EQAP, and effective coordination, in the Pacific context. DFAT and MFAT have numerous bilateral investments in Pacific Island countries, and actors, such as the World Bank and ADB are working in secondary education in some countries, which is anticipated to expand in future years. EQAP has not always been involved in early stages of design and planning, and member countries at times seek assistance from multiple sources, which is not well integrated and coherent. A regional body is increasingly relevant in the Pacific where there is limited human resource capacity, particularly for curriculum design and standards, teacher accountability, assessment, and education systems policy which are highly technical, require specialised post-graduate training, and can be highly political in nature. EQAP as a regional entity is able to recruit and maintain the human resources needed for these functions, providing career pathways for education system specialists from national Ministries of Education, and create economies of scale and regional consistency of approach. EQAP often provides the continuity of leadership and advice to Secretaries and Ministers of Education whose terms are subject to the election cycle. Increased attention from EQAP to country level coordination in its demand driven planning process is required, including support for Member countries to coordinate at local level. EQAP will need to maintain agency to agency dialogue with development partners, and DFAT and MFAT will need to remain disciplined in support of a regional approach when planning and implementing bilateral programs. Strengthening the agenda and process for Partnership Meetings are a mechanism to support this coordination and communication.

12. There are different operational expressions of the joint policy commitment to strengthen the skills and qualifications system that underpins labour mobility across the Pacific. This has implications for EQAP and the potential sustainability of a regional approach and education system. EQAP has a mandate from its Members to provide services in regional qualifications assessment and accreditation of training institutions. It has not historically been sufficiently resourced (by members or others) to fulfil this role in the manner which is required across the Pacific, and therefore has not had the breadth and depth of capacity to meet the demands of institutions, providers, students or employers. New Zealand has facilitated a technical partnership between the EQAP and New Zealand’s Qualifications Authority. This is in part a response to PACER-plus commitments and acknowledges that at present, national and regional Pacific qualifications systems are yet to fully realize the benefits of quality-assured regional and international qualifications to enable Pacific

people to participate in skilled employment and labour mobility opportunities. Australia has worked through the APTC investment (Australia Pacific Training Coalition) which operates and works within the regional architecture but is not a Pacific regional institution. A core issue for all stakeholders is that the policy architecture for skills in the Pacific is less clear than region's education architecture. Many but not all Pacific governments have integrated skills and education Ministries with leaders carrying multiple responsibilities. The CROP HRD Working Group is one body with scope in its mandate to take this issue forward, but to date has not been driving resolution of the issue. The CPEM is seen as a possible forum to raise the issue (as many of the same participants are present). At CPEM 2023, the Ministers present 'agreed to the importance of developing skills and student pathways'. Similarly, a recent PacREF Mid-Term Review identified the issue but noted that 'the possible inclusion of skills/TVET in the PacREF longer term is an issue for discussion at the PHES SC in the first instance'.

13. The implicit understanding from DFAT has been that EQAP will utilise Australian funding for education sector priorities and this can continue for the next phase. However, the underlying policy and operational challenge will need to be addressed by all partners within the forthcoming period to maximise the benefits of a country led planning process and flexible grant arrangement.

14. EQAP's primary contribution to gender inclusion is in ensuring data analysis and collection is sex disaggregated and can be used to prompt and inform policy analysis through a gender inclusion lens. For example, PILNA, EQAP's landmark regional report provides the only data snapshot of girls' education at a regional level in the Pacific. EQAP works closely with the Australian Council for Education Research (ACER) to implement relevant gender-best practice into the technical side of their work both in data collection and analysis. PILNA's design undergoes a comprehensive process to avoid gender bias in learning assessment items each testing round. PILNA data on literacy and numeracy in grades 4 and 6 also enables PICTs to access sex disaggregated data on boys' and girls' performance at a regional and national level. Regionally, EQAP's seminal Status of Pacific Education Report, presented as a standing item at the Conference of Pacific Education Ministers, provides high level visibility of gender disparity and inclusion information (*inter alia* location, disability and poverty levels) by country in educational indicators. At a global level, EQAP has supported Pacific ministries of Education to submit UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) data questionnaires that have contributed to the visibility of the Pacific – and Pacific girls and boys – on the world stage. In 2022 EQAP supported 11 PICTs to submit to UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) questionnaires. UIS data is available on SPC's Pacific Data Hub, which provides data visualisations of the SDG 4 education indicators for Pacific Islands countries broken down by gender disparity (SPC Education Data Hub). EQAP also works directly with Ministries of Education (MoEs) on strengthening their in-house data collection system (EMIS) and capacity. This data has been, and will continue to be, employed by EQAP and Ministries in decision-making around COVID-19 recovery programming and the gendered impact of the pandemic and providing valuable baselines for measuring progress over time.

15. While EQAP is not an advocacy or education policy making organisation, it works closely with MoEs to ensure they are aware of the data, and they are supported to interpret it and consider policy options. In 2022 EQAP in partnership with ACER carried out data mining workshops with 9 MoEs on the PILNA reports, for example, enhancing capacity on evaluating data by gender. EQAP also communicates their data in a range of ways – including speeches, policy briefs, blogs, Facebook

posts, press releases, and through highlighting key findings through engagement in regional forums involving senior education administrators. EQAP also collects and analyses activity level and organisational gender equality data on staffing, participation in activities across all outputs which then feeds back into planning and engagement through the Business planning process. The recently approved SPC Strategic Plan (2022-31), Pacific Regional Culture Strategy (2022-2032), HRSD Business Plan (2021-25) and the newly established Pacific Islands Forum Women Leaders Meeting all confirm the Pacific's acknowledgement of the importance of gender equality across the education system, and its concomitant enhanced focus in this design.

Lessons and Implications for the design update

16. The core features of the design remain relevant, with a number of areas for strengthened engagement and focus envisaged for this next phase.

The principles underpinning the design remain appropriate and useful to Partners. They have been used as the basis for New Zealand's Business Case and approval of their three-year funding commitment. They are aligned with the direction of DFAT's aid policy, particularly support of regionalism, Pacific-led development, localisation and strengthening of institutions for longer term sustainability. The flexible grant funding model has been essential to EQAP being able to fully execute its budget and meet country-led priorities through a bottom-up planning system. A planning, IT and finance system has been developed that best utilises flexible funding while demonstrating full transparency and accountability.

The EQAP Business Plan has been institutionalised and supported by systems in a manner that reinforces an effective planning and monitoring and evaluation system. The Business Plan represents scope, mandate and service offering, with a country level bottom-up planning process resulting in an activity workplan that is updated each three months. The core deliverables produced by EQAP as part of its regional commitments and obligations are reflected in this design update for ease of internal DFAT/MFAT communication for particular audiences. The technical partnership with the ACER has been highly effective, and an efficient and value-for-money means of strengthening quality of services while remaining Pacific-led. Outcomes and reporting aligned to internal SPC systems is best practice and provides an important ongoing focus on outcomes (not activities), with easily accessible information and data supported by rich stories and analysis. Further exploration of access to this information for use by different audiences (particularly DFAT) is integrated into this design update. Risk Management has been well supported by internal EQAP systems and by regular Partnership Meetings, as well as ongoing communication and relationships between partners. Policy dialogue and engagement between partners and other actors has been well supported by the arrangements of the design, with amendments to reflect changes in the regional architecture included in this update. There are opportunities for DFAT to streamline and strengthen its internal communications and policy responsibilities for EQAP and with regional education actors.

17. There are several areas of the design which are subject to more substantive revision in this design update.

The governance and management arrangements are updated to reflect the changes in the regional architecture, particularly the importance of the Conference of Pacific Education Ministers, PacREF

Steering Committee, and Implementing Agencies Fono in policy dialogue; and clarifications on the scope and purpose of the Partnership Meetings to respond to opportunities for better coherence, alignment and mutual accountability.

A set of Intermediate Outcomes under each partnership Policy Objective are proposed in order to articulate and report on expectations of achievements from this phase of the *partnership*. These will enable DFAT and MFAT to undertake secondary analysis of the available internal EQAP reporting and prepare for Partnership meetings and prepare internal monitoring reports more easily, using additional M&E resources directly contracted to DFAT. This will seek to minimise additional transaction costs for EQAP, while increasing policy engagement with and between the partners.

In order to strengthen and enhance visibility of EQAP's approach to GEDSI, a gender analysis will be carried out by EQAP early in this phase. This analysis will review the state of gender equality in education in the Pacific, document and analyse EQAP's existing workstreams, MEL system as well as identify entry points, approaches, partnerships, and processes to strengthen the mainstreaming of GEDSI in EQAP's work. The analysis will inform an EQAP GEDSI strategy which will be developed with a payment trigger linked to its completion.

There are further opportunities to strengthen regionalism and linkages with the Australian and New Zealand education system by creating more opportunities for a broader set of institutions (including Australia and New Zealand government affiliated institutions) to be accessed by EQAP. There are a range of government and statutory institutions in Australia and New Zealand that have potential for technical exchange and policy dialogue in policy, research, teacher training and accreditation for mutual benefit distinct from the existing technical services available through ACER. During Phase 2, a concerted effort will be made to build relationships, share knowledge and experience and carry out policy dialogue between Australia, New Zealand and EQAP.

The original flexible funding grant included an allocation for an innovation fund to incentivise Member countries to propose activities and engage in a self-determined reform agenda. This was found to be unnecessary as the EQAP country-led process enables Member countries to propose, plan and prioritise activities using the funding available within the EQAP annual workplan and budget allocation process. Some minor changes to the payment triggers and approval process are included to realise some transaction efficiencies, while the underlying approach remains sound and useful for both DFAT and EQAP. Triggers for Phase 2 aim to ensure key adjustments of the design are embedded in EQAP systems and practice.

Rationale and justification

18. The rationale for continuing to support EQAP with a long-term view, that builds sustainable capacity, and is Pacific-led, remains as relevant and appropriate as for the first phase:

- EQAP fulfils a unique role in educational quality in the Pacific region which is essential for improvements in the education systems of PICTs. It is a recognised Agency by PIFS, the Conference of Pacific Education Ministers, national Ministries of Education and other stakeholders, as the Pacific based, owned and run agency for education quality. While other entities, under commercial contracts, such as Australia and New Zealand Universities or contractors, could undertake individual tasks provided by EQAP, this would not be within the PacREF, and not a sustainable approach to building and supporting Pacific capacity.

- Investment in EQAP promotes regionalism. EQAP has a strong sense of ownership amongst PICTs, is now embedded within SPC, has engagement from the Council of Regional Organisations in the Pacific (CROP) Agencies, and fulfils an important role as a regional public good.
- The services provided by EQAP align with Australia’s and New Zealand’s broader interests in skills recognition and labour mobility, as well as in quality education, which contribute to employment and economic growth.
- Australia and New Zealand have a strong commitment to SPC, and have invested in building the organisational capacity, systems and leadership of the organisation over a long period. Long term, flexible and secure funding to EQAP reflects the benefits of previous support and utilisation of existing governance and management arrangements and institutional relationships.
- EQAP has strong internal organisational capacity and systems which position it well to deliver high quality services to PICTs. The structure and management arrangements of its Business Plan are a sound basis for managing towards outcomes, providing reporting and analysis on progress, and promoting continuous improvement and managing risk. SPC’s finance and procurement systems have been strengthened (qualifying for the EU 7 Pillar delegated cooperation assessment) and are recognised by DFAT and MFAT.
- Leadership and management of EQAP and SPC demonstrate capacity and an approach to building partnerships with PICTs, other regional institutions, and development partners, in a manner which allows for strengthened policy dialogue, continuous improvement, and strategic management.
- New Zealand and Australia seek to harmonise their efforts in the Pacific, particularly in Education, and reduce transaction costs in aid delivery. A collaboration with EQAP is a demonstration of more effective donor harmonisation and expression of good donor practice in line with Paris, Accra and Busan Declarations within a supporting enabling environment.
- As a regional agency, EQAP actively encourages the application of regional standards and cooperation that promotes collaboration and exchange of resources, knowledge, and expertise amongst countries in the region. It also provides a platform for countries to learn from each other, promote self-reliance, and strengthen their collective capacity to achieve sustainable development. It fosters a sense of solidarity and partnership, enabling countries to work together to overcome common challenges and achieve shared goals.

3. Investment Description

Delivery Approach

19. Australia and New Zealand will collaborate with EQAP (in line with their respective SPC Partnership Agreements), and ACER to support improvements in the quality of education in the Pacific that works within Pacific-based policy, structures and systems to ensure sustainability and ownership. The principles behind this approach are outlined in the respective agreements that Australia and New Zealand have with SPC.

20. Australia and New Zealand will provide flexible financing that supports the implementation of EQAPs Business Plan for a period of 10 years. Australia provided AUD18.07 for Phase 1 (2017-18 – 2022-23) which has been completed and allocated AUD3.7 million for 2023-24 for the first year of phase 2. Phase 2 will continue for 2023-4 to 2027-28 (completed by November 2027). Australia is projecting an allocation of AUD 27.4 million over ~5 years for Phase 2. NZ have entered an Agreement for their second triennial funding agreement 2022-23 to June 2024-25 of \$5 million (NZ\$) within the broad scope of the trilateral 10-year commitment.

21. The outcomes expected, key results, indicators of success and reporting provided will be those of the program logic as articulated in EQAP's Business Plan. The 2023-26 Business Plan has updated the four key outcome areas for EQAP, and identified key action priorities and indicators for progress analysis and reporting. The Business Plan articulates the mandate, scope and priorities for EQAP's services, while the country-led planning, finance and IT system supports the demand-driven nature of the Annual Workplan developed by EQAP and revised each quarter.

22. The formal governance and management structures will be those that are already in place through the Partnership agreements between New Zealand and Australia and SPC (through membership of the CRGA), through bilateral the High-Level Consultations between the countries and SPC, through participation in the PBEQ (a sub-Committee of CRGA of which Australia and New Zealand are participants) and through SPC's internal management structure. At the operational level, six-monthly Partnership Meetings will continue to enable partners to review performance, share information, and plan policy dialogue and actions related to the complex regional education architecture.

23. A Partnership Agreement for technical services is held between SPC and ACER, which was renewed in early 2023. Each year ACER negotiates a scope of services against a budget allocation set by EQAP. ACER was selected through the design of Phase 1 as the lead technical organisation. Building on the success of EQAP's partnership with ACER, Phase 2 presents the opportunity to expand EQAP's institutional linkages with other Australian and New Zealand technical partners to meet the demand for technical education services across the region.

24. EQAP will continue to conduct Reflection workshops three times a year with staff related to its results framework, aiming to strengthen over time the inclusion of more qualitative indicators and deeper analysis of impact. In 2026, EQAP and partners will carry out a Review of this partnership. Where feasible this Review will be carried out jointly between the Partners with Partners jointly considering the TOR and workplan for the Review.

25. Performance based assessments will provide triggers for future tranche payments (for DFAT funding only). In Phase 1, an overly complex approach was taken intended to "incentivise" performance and quality through base, project and innovation funding allocations. EQAP met all of the performance targets, and the innovation fund was found to be unnecessary. This is because the country-led planning process enabled countries to propose and deliver their priority activities within the funding allocations available. For Phase 2, the performance assessment process will be used to trigger the next tranche payment, with an opportunity for DFAT to qualify the tranche payment and make part payments if performance concerns are identified. Actions will be negotiated and agreed

as requirements for the full payment to be completed. This provides funding predictability for EQAP planning, but also risk management and quality assurance for DFAT to fulfill due diligence obligations.

26. The joint partnership affords significant opportunity for policy engagement towards outcomes for New Zealand and Australia. While the partners are Members of the CRGA, and Members of the PBEQ, in Phase 1 these forums focussed on the narrow role of EQAP and management functions. The real opportunities for policy influence of all the partners is in the external regional architecture of the PacREF, CROP HRD Working Group, and the Conference of Pacific Education Ministers. The open and constructive relationships maintained through implementation by the Partners allows for deeper insight, sharing of views and interests between partners. Engagement at Partnership Meetings, and through ongoing relationships will enable preparation for formal engagements through building coalitions and relationships with key stakeholders. The effectiveness of Australia and New Zealand being able to pursue development and public diplomacy interests will depend upon the active participation, relationships and engagement by Australia and New Zealand officials. This structure for engagement in the Partnership is a more effective role for the Partners to play in influencing and engaging with PICTs than through more traditional formal project and contract management roles related to an EQAP project design.

27. There are several mechanisms for performance monitoring and dispute resolution through the governance and management mechanisms. At implementation level, dialogue every six months through the reflection sessions on performance, outcomes and risks can alert partners to issues arising and challenges, and creates opportunities to suggest changes and improvement through management and leadership. More formally, Partners have access to SPC Management (the DDG), and then through High-Level Consultations (HLCs) each year and then through the CRGA. This approach reinforces and strengthens existing management relationships rather than duplicating or bypassing through new separate arrangements. Through Phase 1, EQAP has played an important role in maintaining discipline in relying on the formal SPC line management and CRGA functions for operational and management issues; and using the partnership relationships for strategic, policy and quality issues. All partners will need to reinforce the intent underlying the partnership with their allocation of policy and operational roles and responsibilities in implementation.

Theory of Change and Expected Outcomes

28. The theory of change underpinning this delivery approach (demonstrating effectiveness in Phase 1) continues to be appropriate, being that:

- By working within Pacific-based systems and structures,
- Continuous incremental improvement in education quality can be promoted that are locally appropriate,
- Lead to stronger demand from parents, teachers, managers of education systems and policy makers and political decision makers,
- Owned and sustained by Pacific Island States,
- Because the institutional arrangements building and responding to are demand-led and managed by Pacific Island leaders with political, economic and personal interests in success,

- And Australia and New Zealand can help shape the priorities for education quality by influencing the political, diplomatic and economic landscape that creates an enabling environment and ensure a joined-up approach with other bilateral investments in education.

Phase 2 will more explicitly emphasise and document how gender equality and disability inclusion underpin the theory of change and expected outcomes in line with EQAP’s mission for a Pacific education sector that is inclusive, accessible, equitable and provides quality lifelong learning for all.

29. The expected outcomes articulated in the 2023-26 EQAP Business Plan and program logic relate to the Vision, Mission and Outcomes. Note that these have been updated and revised from the earlier Business Plan related to phase 1:

<p>SPC Vision A resilient and prosperous Pacific, in which all Pacific people each their full potential and live long and healthy lives.</p> <p>EQAP Mission A Pacific education sector that is inclusive, accessible, equitable and provides quality lifelong learning for all.</p> <p>Outcomes</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Quality assured evidence to inform educational policy, planning, implementation and management across the Pacific. 2. Inclusive and accessible performance assessments of Pacific learners occur frequently, reliably and against curricula. 3. Quality assured and recognised qualifications to be increasingly taken up by employers and learners. 4. Information and expertise in Pacific education to be available and stakeholders are aware of it.

30. The Business Plan structure and process identifies the key results and priority actions with indicators related to knowledge, attitudes and practice for each of these outcomes.

31. There is also a specific purpose for adopting a collaborative and partnership approach to the support from Australia and New Zealand for EQAP. This strategic intent can be summarised as the *policy objectives*, which stakeholders have agreed continue to be relevant for Phase 2. The policy objectives have been further developed for Phase 2 with Intermediate Outcomes to outline expectations for achievement for this second phase of the Partnership, and in part to meet new internal DFAT quality assurance standards. They include:

1. To strengthen the organisational capacity of EQAP, working effectively with others to improve education quality as part of the regional education architecture;

Intermediate Outcomes:

- 1.1 Country level planning for EQAP services led by Pacific governments ensures coordination with a broad range of local stakeholders and existing bilateral investments of Australia and New Zealand.

- 1.2 Services and products provided by EQAP equally address the needs, priorities and interests of girls and boys, men and women.
 - 1.3 Organisations of People with Disability (OPDs) involved in key regional and country level planning events and mechanisms and have their concerns and needs heard.
 - 1.4 Evidence of activities and services provided by EQAP supporting education system policy and reform in response to demand from Pacific countries.
 - 1.5 Increased focus on identifying, analysing and documenting gender related gaps, barriers to accessing education and learning outcomes.
2. To promote and demonstrate effective regionalism, in line with Australia and New Zealand policy direction for deeper engagement in the Pacific and stronger alignment amongst Pacific island nations in international policy positions and commitments;

Intermediate Outcomes:

- 2.1 Relationships and networks between Pacific, Australian and New Zealand education authorities for mutual benefit established through technical exchange, knowledge sharing and capacity building.
 - 2.2 DFAT, MFAT and SPC work jointly to prepare and engage in regional fora, particularly the CROP HRD Working Group and CPEM.
 - 2.3 Demonstrably stronger engagement with regional gender networks including but not limited to PWL, SPC HRSD, Pacific Partnership to End Violence Against Women and Girls (PPEVAWG).
3. To elevate Australia and New Zealand's engagement in policy dialogue in education sector in the Pacific, making education quality a higher policy and political priority, alongside bilateral investments, and reducing aid delivery transaction costs and activities.

Intermediate Outcomes:

- 3.1 EQAP meets its regional obligations to provide the data, analysis and reporting products available to relevant stakeholders in the region with improving quality as a basis for constructive policy dialogue on education policy reform and practice (refer to 8 key deliverables).
- 3.2 EQAP increasingly provides gender responsive evidence to support existing global and regional commitments to address gender inequalities in education.
- 3.3 EQAP works collaboratively with USP, other regional and international organisations associated with the PacREF and CROP HRD and CPEM to improve coordination and alignment of efforts in education assessment and quality.

32. The policy objectives (and new intermediate outcomes) form the basis of the agenda for regular Partnership Meetings. They will also be monitored and reporting on internally by Australia and New Zealand through a secondary analysis conducted by a contracted M&E Resource, through their own diplomatic channels, drawing on their engagement in the partnership, the results reporting from EQAP, and feedback from other stakeholders including Posts and PICTs through various international forums. Minutes of joint meetings and reporting from ACER will also provide information for this analysis. DFAT and MFAT's internal analysis against the partnership objectives and intermediate outcomes will be subject to discussion at the Partnership Meetings.

4. Implementation Arrangements

Business Planning and Reporting

33. The Business Plan developed by EQAP will be the foundational planning, management and monitoring tool for the partners. The SPC template has been adapted by EQAP to meet its particular needs. It has a sound internal logic and works as a planning tool to integrate demand side Member requests with 'supply side' regional programming.² As a Business Plan for an ongoing services provided regionally to Members, the Plan is distinguished from a more traditional 'project based' Logframe/program logic in the following ways:

- The four high level outcomes reflect the mandate of the organisation, and the impact it is aiming to have on changes from improved quality of education. Change against these high-level outcomes will be incremental and is beyond the direct control and scope of EQAP to effect, relying on external factors such as uptake of advice and reform by Member countries, additional financing into education systems, support of bilateral donors, and commitment from political leaders, parents, teachers and other stakeholders. These outcomes are suited to periodic impact evaluation rather than ongoing monitoring and reporting.
- The Key Results Areas reflect the targets for the Business Plan period (normally 4 years) and are equivalent to 'intermediate outcomes'. These are evolving from Business Plan to Business Plan.
- Indicators of success are matched to the KRAs. They are matched to domains of knowledge, attitude and practice in line with SPC M&E guidelines.
- Priority Actions, are identified which provide a basis for matching against country led planning requests in the Annual Workplan which is updated each three months.

34. EQAP prepares an Annual Report against the Business Plan for its Advisory and governance body the PBEQ, of which New Zealand and Australia are also Members. The presentation of the Report includes the quantitative data against the indicators, plus a written narrative (in presentation form) and verbal presentation. This results information is then collated by SPC into the overall organisational report for the CRGA, of which Australia and New Zealand are also Members.

Selection of Technical Organisations and Affiliate Organisations

35. A Technical Organisation, ACER, was selected during the joint design of Phase I. The technical organisation acts as a "critical friend", working to build capacity and provide policy and strategic advice to EQAP and the Partners, as well as providing technical services for implementation. EQAP has benefited from the ongoing relationship with a highly professional, internationally recognised organisation with a breadth of technical expertise and a longstanding commitment to educational quality in the Pacific. There continues to be an ongoing need for technical support in a range of highly specialised functions. Examples might include advanced psychometric analysis, sampling methodology, quality assurance in item development and contextual questionnaire development, and analysis against cognitive data. ACER had been previously selected through multiple long and short-term procurement exercises to provide this technical support. Through Phase 1, EQAP has continued to seek additional technical expertise from

² Refer to EQAP Business plan 2016-2018 (UPDATED November 2016) and Monitoring and Evaluation Framework; and the detailed work plan spreadsheet.

other technical partners through open procurement in addition to drawing on its partnership with ACER, the Technical Organisation.

36. A Partnership Agreement for services of ACER is held between SPC and ACER. ACER proposes an Annual Workplan to EQAP for negotiation and approval by the Director. ACER will continue to participate in six monthly Partnership Meetings as a partner to contribute technical advice to DFAT and MFAT as well as SPC.

37. The services to be provided by the Technical Organisation to be incorporated into the Partnership Agreement (and annual grant agreements) include:

- i. Provide strategic and policy advice to the Partners, on the mandate, scope and quality of EQAP's Business Plan and Workplans.
- ii. Work collaboratively with the EQAP Management Team to strengthen organisational capacity in identified technical areas.
- iii. Contribute to maintenance of quality standards of EQAP core products and documents.
- iv. Prepare an Annual Workplan for approval by the EQAP Director; implement Workplan drawing on range of technical advisors and support staff.
- v. Participate in the implementation of key activities and provide technical consulting services for specified tasks directed by EQAP in the agreed Workplan.
- vi. Participate in three times per year Reflection sessions on EQAP progress, performance, context, risks and policy engagement with PICTs.
- vii. Establish opportunities for the Pacific education quality agenda to be represented in international fora.

38. ACER will nominate a Program Director to represent ACER in strategic policy and management discussions with a minimum number of days input per year and participate in Reflection sessions and Partnership meetings. The Program Director will coordinate and supervise ACERs inputs to the Agreed Workplan.

39. There are opportunities in Phase 2 to strengthen a regional approach and enhance two-way and trilateral policy engagement between Australian, New Zealand and Pacific institutions further through this program. Of particular focus are Australian and New Zealand statutory and government authorities that may have technical and policy education expertise that could be of benefit to EQAP and PICTs. This engagement could provide deeper understanding of and connection between Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific. The focus of engagements will be on technical exchange, capacity building and policy dialogue between relevant statutory and government authorities and EQAP in line with the region's identified priority policy areas under PacREF.

40. Partners to this design will continue to look for opportunities to strengthen relevant relationships and over the life of Phase 2 to build linkages with:

- government owned/supported statutory authorities with policy and representational responsibilities.
- senior personnel with significant experience in policy development, governance and administration of education systems who possess
 - Specific technical capabilities in sub-sectors of education quality

- Interest and commitment to supporting Pacific-led education quality
- Capacity to contribute to Pacific regionalism.

41. It is anticipated that as relationships and expertise develop, these organisations may be engaged for services to support EQAP in delivery of its Priority Actions and activities under its Annual Workplan where external resources are required. Further discussion and agreement between Australia, New Zealand and SPC over the scope of the potential linkages and institutions, to ensure alignment with the ACER and NZQA partnerships and reach into the skills and qualifications agenda may be required over the life of Phase 2.

Governance and management arrangements

42. The Partners will continue in Phase 2 to work within the established governance structures for the oversight of EQAP, which provide for active participation of Australia and New Zealand in critical decision-making processes of SPC. These include:

- Australia and New Zealand are full Members of the CRGA, the governing body of SPC. This allows for high level engagement on governance of SPC and funding directed to EQAP, with opportunities to influence strategic policy and management directions of the program.
- Australia and New Zealand have bilateral Partnership Agreements with SPC, which outline obligations and accountability for core funding and principles for bilateral cooperation. These are subject to annual bilateral High-Level Consultations, and allow for strategic management issues, dispute resolution, and risk management to be addressed as needed.
- Australia and New Zealand and full members of the PBEQ, which enables strategic policy dialogue with Member PICTs and EQAP management.
- The Technical Organisation, ACER, will be a sub-contractor of SPC, accountable to the EQAP Director.

43. SPC is responsible for management oversight through the relevant Deputy Director General. Day to day management of EQAP is the responsibility of the EQAP Director.

Partner Roles and expectations

44. The governance and management arrangements are structured for Australia and New Zealand to elevate their engagement on education quality to focus on policy engagement with key stakeholders and decision makers: the representatives of PICTs on PBEQ, engagement through PIFs and the Conference of Pacific Education Ministers and through the SPC governance body the CGRA. The regional coordination and management mechanisms for the PacREF (the Steering Committee and Implementing Agency Fono) provide a complementary means of ensuring coherence and efficiency in effort by EQAP. Time and effort will be devoted to policy analysis and stakeholder relationships, rather than activity and financial management. To play this role, informal relationships with EQAP will also be maintained, through regular or ad hoc meetings and discussions, focused on keeping abreast of changes in the context, achievements and results of EQAP, and negotiating opportunities to influence the policy discourse through joined up preparation and analysis with bilateral programs and Post relationships in-country. Partners will also be able to draw on the six-monthly Reflection processes to gather information and develop policy positions for

forthcoming opportunities for policy dialogue with stakeholders (refer to Monitoring and Evaluation section). The roles and functions of Australia and New Zealand are summarised in the following table.

<i>Purpose/Function</i>	<i>Opportunity</i>	<i>Responsibility Australia</i>	<i>Responsibility NZ</i>
Policy and Strategic direction SPC mandate role, management, governance	CRGA	DFAT Suva Post (input DFAT Canberra) DFAT SPC Focal Point	MFAT Education Wellington Pacific Regional Division
Strategic policy direction of education quality and regional education architecture	CPEM	DFAT Canberra (input Suva Post)	MFAT Education Wellington
Strategic management, risk management, financial oversight (for EQAP collaborative program)	HLCs	DFAT SPC Focal Point briefed by DFAT Suva Post and DFAT Canberra	MFAT Education Wellington (input from Suva Post)
Policy dialogue with PIFS Education Ministers, Heads of Education Systems	CPEM CROP HRD WG	DFAT Canberra DFAT Suva Post	MFAT Education Wellington with input from Suva Post
Policy dialogue with PICT Ministries of Education, Treasury, Foreign Affairs, Labour related to education quality	Bilateral project governance structures; ongoing HLCs	Bilateral PICT Posts, (briefed by DFAT Suva Post)	MFAT Education Wellington, supported by Pacific Education Regional
Monitoring – outcomes and performance	Informal communication, 6 monthly Reflection sessions Annual Quality Check	DFAT Suva Post	MFAT Posts, briefed by MFAT Education Wellington
Activity management, Financial management, Contract management	Administrative arrangements, Agreements	DFAT Suva Post	Suva Post, with technical advice from MFAT Education Wellington

Financial Arrangements and Performance Based Funding

45. Funding provided by Australia and New Zealand will be flexible financing to support the overall implementation of the EQAP Business Plan. Funding from Australia and New Zealand (ANZ Base Funding) will be used flexibly across the outcome areas of the Business Plan. Other income streams, normally Project specific income accounts, will be tagged to specific outcomes, activities and expense items. EQAP will prepare an internal budget that allocates income streams to expenses in the General Ledger, and across outcomes and activities of the annual Workplan. When expenses are incurred, each expense will be coded against its General Ledger category, Outcome area, and relevant project/action code. In this way funding can be allocated in a flexible manner, but all income streams can be audited for actual expenses at the end of each financial period. Financial accountability will be through the standard, whole of EQAP expenses Annual Financial Report which is incorporated into the SPC audited financial statements provided to CRGA. This identifies all income streams and all expenses. No additional financial reporting for the ANZ base funding stream will be provided separately.

46. Funding allocation for this trilateral collaboration for Phase 2 is projected to be AUD27.4 million from Australia over approximately five years. This represents 40 per cent of total EQAP costs annually, in line with the contribution made by Australia through Phase 1. Total budget projections for this second phase against the Business Plan were developed by EQAP taking into account other funding sources, increasing demand from PICTs, identification of priority areas for additional technical and organisational capability, opportunities for additional partnerships, an analysis of an optimal path for manageable growth, and consideration of long-term financial viability and sustainability. Australia will enter into a new ~five year funding Agreement, with allocations subject to Australia’s annual budget commitments and forward estimates.

Phase 2	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	TOTAL
Australia	AUD 4.85m	AUD 4.99m	AUD 6.46m	AUD 5.77m	AUD 5.29	AUD 27.36
NZ Core	NZD 0.5m	tbc	tbc	tbc	tbc	

** NZ Core funding 2018-19 – 2022-24 = \$9 million

Contributions from New Zealand are provided in three-year triennial funding rounds. New Zealand has provided a total of NZD9.0m for Phase 1 and are yet to expense NZD 0.5m at the commencement of Phase 2. While forecasts are expected to remain consistent with previous expenditure this is subject to the availability of funds. An initial tranche payment is released on signing of a Grant Contribution Arrangement, and annual payments are made on 31 March following the achievement of performance milestones in August and February each year. Performance milestones triggering disbursements help reinforce the use of SPC’s Planning, Evaluation, Accountability and Reflections and Learning policy and requirements. An additional, separate five-year activity to improve the recognition of qualifications in the Pacific will start in late 2023, in the form of a partnership between EQAP and NZQA with funding support from MFAT. The total funding to EQAP is \$2,461,836, distinct from programmatic funding.

Australia will provide two tranches per year, in January/February, and June/July.

47. As further outlined in associated grant agreement, Australia will link payment of tranches to an internal performance-based assessment endorsed by DFAT. This builds on the mechanism introduced in Phase 1 (for which separate allocations related to incentive and innovation funding were found to be unnecessary). EQAP will undertake an internal assessment against the criteria each financial year to trigger the first tranche payment for the start of the next financial year (assessment in June for payment in July). If there are emerging issues or concerns raised by DFAT in response to the assessment, specific actions will be agreed to trigger the second tranche payment in the year (report in December for payment in January).

48. The Performance Assessment matrix, with criteria, as follows:

Performance related Tranche payment trigger:

Annual Performance assessment:	Assessment criteria
<i>Management:</i> EQAP maintains senior management staffing complement with appropriate qualifications, skills and experience for their roles	Qualifications and skills matrix for senior management against Position Description criteria, with less than 20 per cent vacancy rate annually (over the 12-month period).

<i>Operations:</i> satisfactory audit ratings for financial reporting, compliance with procurement requirements, IT systems maintained for operations with limited time-outs	SPC Audited statements unqualified management letter for EQAP; SPC compliance certification from DDG less than 5 per cent breaches by volume and Number of procurements; SPC IT certification on time out/functionality less than 15 per cent.
<i>Relationships:</i> PBEQ functions appropriately with regular Minuted meetings; satisfactory completion of Member Requests in the Business Plan	PBEQ Minutes show >80 per cent attendance of PICT members >80 per cent of Actions related to member Requests in BP completed.
<i>Quality:</i> Data and analysis documented in research reports and policy documents meet peer review standards for publication and/or appropriate quality standards	Review of five major publications/products by Technical Organisation (as peer reviewer) assessed as meeting satisfactory quality standards and the needs of intended audience as appropriate at least 75 per cent of the time.
<i>Outcomes:</i> Annual results reporting demonstrates that EQAP is delivering outcomes according to its Business Plan, and meeting PICT needs.	Results reporting for Key Result Areas shows <i>satisfactory progress or improvement</i> across 75 per cent of indicators; Priority Actions in the Business Plan are “on track” with satisfactory progress at least 80 per cent of the time within the planned period. SPC Senior Management will endorse the statement prior to submission to DFAT.

49. The Assessment Criteria are structured to be able to have factual information collated by EQAP, and reviewed by a third party as identified and ‘certified’ through a signed statement. Where criteria are partially met, EQAP can indicate a percentage of completion against the criteria and propose specific actions to be included in the triggers for the Second Tranche Payment. A formal letter from EQAP to Australia (DFAT Suva) will be prepared providing the assessment against the criteria. DFAT Suva Post will make a recommendation to the Delegate on the basis of the evidence provided.

Agreements

50. Separate but aligned Agreements between Australia and New Zealand are already in place for Phase I, with SPC for this trilateral collaboration of education quality in the Pacific. These Agreements have been prepared in line with the existing high level Partnership Agreements held between Australia and New Zealand with SPC from time to time.

51. The New Zealand Government has entered into a ‘caretaker period’ which places limitations on entering into major new policy commitments. As a result, New Zealand will advise on their contribution for the full ten-year period (by extending support for an additional 3-year period) once the new government has been elected. Australia will sign an Agreement for ~five years funding for the second phase of this collaborative design.

52. Both Agreements will note key elements of this design. The Agreement with DFAT will note the partnership between SPC (through a Head Agreement) and ACER as the Technical Organisation in this collaborative design, which was renewed earlier in 2023.

Monitoring and Evaluation

53. EQAP has developed a Monitoring and Evaluation Framework to report on immediate outcomes, result areas and indicators. An Annual Report is prepared for the PBEQ and information is included by SPC in its overall organisational Annual Report, which is provided to the CRGA and donors. The Framework was enhanced for the 2023-26 Business Plan to include further qualitative indicators, and standards of quality, and includes opportunities for stakeholder feedback and satisfaction as key performance measures. In addition to this, for Phase 2, DFAT will commission an external M&E Resource (see Annex 1) to support it to undertake the secondary analysis and use the reporting available from EQAP to satisfy internal reporting demands and needs. The M&E Resource will focus in particular on preparing reporting against the partnership objectives and Intermediate Outcomes related to the policy objectives for this phase. Over the course of Phase 2, gender equality indicators will be incorporated across the existing M&E framework and monitoring progress towards increasing visibility of gender responsive reporting will be a core part of the Mid Term review.

54. The following arrangements will be established for the monitoring and evaluation of this collaborative design:

M&E Function/Purpose	Mechanism	Timing and responsibility
Strategic Review and impact analysis	Mid-term Review included in year 3 of each Business Plan by SPC	TOR to be prepared by EQAP, commented by partners; implemented by EQAP with external independent support
	Independent Evaluation	TOR to be prepared by DFAT, endorsed by other Partners ³
	EQAP M&E Framework collecting ongoing evidence of outcomes and impact	EQAP
Outcome monitoring	Annual Results Report provided to PBEQ	EQAP
Output and Activity monitoring	EQAP in house Reflection Sessions; Senior Managers reporting to Director	EQAP
Progress, context and risk monitoring	Six Monthly Partnership Meeting sessions Exception reporting from EQAP to donors	EQAP, DFAT, MFAT, ACER
Policy objectives monitoring Intermediate outcomes monitoring	Secondary analysis by external M&E Resource drawing on EQAP internal data and reporting in preparation for Partnership Meetings Partnership Meetings Investment Monitoring Reports (IMR) (DFAT); NZ Annual Monitoring Assessments Informal cable/formal messages/briefing as requests and appropriate	Externally contracted M&E Resource EQAP, DFAT, MFAT Australia; New Zealand Posts

³ Consideration should be given to merging the MTR and Independent Evaluation processes in line with respective policies and procedures.

Financial monitoring	Annual Financial and Result reports to CRGA HLCs SPC Internal Audits	EQAP SPC
Agreement monitoring	HLCs	EQAP, DFAT, MFAT

55. In the Agreements with Australia and New Zealand, EQAP will undertake to provide exception reporting on key risks, changes to implementation, policy issues arising, or issues of concern, through brief email exchange, or where warranted more formal written communications. Exception reports would only be provided where an issue arises that has a potentially significant impact on the partner, the relationships, policy alignment or achievement of results; and should not be related to inputs or activity plans. Through the course of Phase 1 in building a closer understanding of each Partner’s internal drivers and needs, EQAP has been able to calibrate the type and frequency of exception reporting that is useful to the Partners. Australia and New Zealand will continue to provide feedback on the utility and timeliness of exception reports when provided, but this mechanism should not become a replacement for informal communications or routine reporting.

56. An additional mechanism to EQAP’s normal internal business processes, the Six-Monthly Partnership Meeting involves a reflection session with the Partners, held in conjunction with their internal reflection on progress and planning. This has been regarded as highly beneficial by partners during Phase 1. The focus of this session will be on the policy objectives of the collaboration, and a policy dialogue structured against the key monitoring questions related to these objectives, as follows:

Policy Objective	Monitoring Questions for discussion
1. Strengthened organisational capacity and mandate of EQAP	<p>What changes have taken place in EQAP management and operations in this period?</p> <p>What have been the improvements and/or challenges to gender equality and inclusion reporting in this period?</p> <p>What has been the improvements and/or challenges to quality of products and activities completed in this period?</p> <p>What risks to operations or outcomes have emerged? (refer to risk framework)?</p> <p>What changes in the operating or political context may affect EQAPs performance?</p> <p>How are skills being developed in an ongoing and consistent way?</p>
<i>Related Intermediate outcomes</i>	<i>Secondary analysis and synthesis of available reporting from EQAP prepared by M&E Resource for consideration and discussion</i>

<p>2. Promote and demonstrate effective regionalism</p>	<p>How effective has engagement been from Member States in this period?</p> <p>What feedback or observations have been received from partners (from Posts, other stakeholders etc) in this period?</p> <p>To what extent have EQAP, Australia and New Zealand been able to work collaboratively in regional forums?</p>
<p><i>Related Intermediate outcomes</i></p>	<p><i>Secondary analysis and synthesis of available reporting from EQAP prepared by M&E Resource for consideration and discussion</i></p>
<p>3. Making education quality a higher policy and political priority, by elevating Australia and New Zealand’s engagement</p>	<p>What actions have Partners undertaken to promote a reform agenda amongst Member PICTs for education quality in this period? (including reporting back from Australia and New Zealand from key political and regional events)</p> <p>What progress in education systems and policy have been observed in PICTs in this period?</p>
<p><i>Related Intermediate outcomes</i></p>	<p><i>Secondary analysis and synthesis of available reporting from EQAP prepared by M&E Resource for consideration and discussion</i></p>

57. The Chairing of sessions will rotate between Partners as in Phase 1 or as agreed between the Partners from time to time. All partners (Australia, New Zealand, EQAP and ACER) should come prepared for the reflection sessions with notes and evidence against the questions posed for discussion, using the template developed during Phase 1. This will include feedback and information related to the Intermediate Outcomes identified for this design update.

5. Feasibility and Risk Analysis

Sustainability

58. The design of trilateral collaboration for support of EQAP has been geared towards sustainability. The strategy of working within and through existing Pacific institutions with a mandate from Pacific Island countries—within a recognised regional institution with an ongoing mandate for education quality—is the primary mechanism to promote sustainability. Within this approach, a focus of building capacity and strengthening EQAP as an institution has been enabled through flexible financing as opposed to project-based financing for discrete activities. The longer-term approach to support has provided predictability and continuity for EQAP which will enhance prospects for sustainability. There are important signs that the approach is working through Phase 1, such as EQAP has increased significantly its income from fee-for-service to Member countries and EQAP has attracted more diverse sources of funding for specific activities. SPC has maintained its base level of core funding for EQAP from Member contributions and this will remain a challenge through Phase 2 – given the increasing demands on SPC and the economic challenges facing PICTs to

increase their contributions. With the increasing level of interest from the donor community (particularly the ADB, World Bank, GPE and EU), there are prospects for EQAP to be well positioned for a diverse and predictable stream of development partner funding in the medium term, thus reducing its reliance on DFAT and MFAT specifically. DFAT and MFAT may have opportunities to support EQAP efforts to promote co-funding EQAP through a partnership or flexible funding modality to support the Partnership rather than fund standalone projects.

Risk Analysis and Management

59. There are significant risks for EQAP delivering quality services and having an impact that improves the quality of education in the Pacific. The key risks and management plans are outlined in the Risk Register found in separate excel spreadsheet and updated at regular intervals during meetings of the Partners. The overall residual risk rating is moderate.

60. The key context risk is continued lack of clarity over a regional architecture and clear policy agenda and priorities for skills and TVET. This was identified as a possible risk prior to the investment, with an eventual minimal impact on outcomes throughout Phase 1. This is due to the possibility that increasing pressure and demand on EQAP to deliver in skills will distort the funding made available under the flexible funding mechanism, and move resources from primary and secondary education. However, the risk was well managed and mitigated, with EQAP directing funding and activities to education priorities and activities proposed by Member countries where traction and uptake was strong. As labour mobility and the skills agenda becomes more important to Pacific stakeholders, there may well be increasing pressure on EQAP to play a stronger role, which may be challenging with limited resources. The Partners continue to have a responsibility to continue dialogue with regional institutions and PICTs, and engage with political and policy actors, until a common approach is agreed.

61. The key implementation risk is possible staff changes in EQAP amongst the leadership and senior management team, which could result in a loss of momentum and possible loss of confidence amongst PICTs and the Partners. This was regarded as highly likely at the start of Phase 1 potentially having a significant impact on outcomes. However, this risk was well managed and did not eventuate, with a very low staff turnover through the first five-year period. The risk mitigation strategy of the design was to provide funding certainty and continuity so that that staff have secure contracts and confidence in the organisation's ability to undertake its tasks, and to provide a supportive operational environment from SPC management and Partners through their engagement and interaction. This approach will continue in Phase 2. If the risk does eventuate, which is possible, the risk management plan is for SPC to plan ahead and manage recruitment processes effectively, and for Australia and New Zealand to engage through HLCs with SPC to highlight and resolve inaction or delayed or inappropriate recruitment processes.

62. A further implementation risk is the increasing transaction costs for EQAP of multiple grants and project-based funding which may undermine the partnership and flexible financing approach of this investment. This is a possible and moderate risk, as it can be managed by EQAP, but warrants

ongoing discussion and intervention from Australia and New Zealand with other development partners where possible.

63. The key modality risk is different expectations of Partners and shifting policy priorities from Australia and New Zealand, which was regarded as possible at the start of Phase 1 having a significant impact on outcomes. This did not eventuate through Phase 1, with ongoing and strong commitment and clarity of policy direction throughout the period. The key mitigation strategy of the design appears to have been effective: using trilateral collaboration, with an additional technical organisation, to create a culture of cooperation and continuity amongst personnel as staff turnover is often high amongst donor partners, so that the policy direction is maintained and not subject to the views of individual officers and organisations. It was also mitigated by a high level of discipline and commitment from EQAP to work with development partners to reinforce Pacific-led priorities and interests in policy engagement and operational management. The governance mechanisms provide multiple opportunities for any Partner to elevate and raise issues of concern as they arise, and they are not resolved at the operational level. SPC and ACER as 'partners' are able to utilise the operational mechanisms, as well as governance mechanisms, to promote policy coherence and consistency amongst donors if required.

Gender Equality, Disability and Social Inclusion

64. EQAP makes a foundational contribution to gender equality, disability and social inclusion in the Pacific region through sex disaggregated data on education performance, through analysis (and policy recommendations) of education policy and systems in Pacific countries, and through teacher standards and professional education. Since the 2012 PILNA assessment of literacy and numeracy in grades 4 and 6, the Pacific has had sex disaggregated data on boys' and girls' performance. The 2015, 2018 and 2021 assessment continued to show differences in boys' and girls' performance, and this led to questioning by Pacific island governments for the reasons for this difference, and to recommendations for policy and system reform. As EQAP continues its work and develops trend data, the opportunities for Partners (including Australia and New Zealand) to advocate for improvements in gender equality on the basis of this data will only increase.

65. At an operational level, EQAP contributes to career pathways for senior experienced women in the Pacific in the education sector. The senior professional team of EQAP includes both men and women, drawn from senior public sector positions in Pacific island countries. Employment with EQAP affords international opportunities to present papers, seek professional development, and enhance their professional reputation. EQAP also provides an opportunity for the voices of women to participate in regional fora, through SPC and PIFS, which can often be impeded at national level. SPC hosts Pacific Women Lead (the following program from DFAT's flagship gender program in the Pacific) creating additional opportunities for collaboration and joint activities (which have already been implemented with cost-sharing arrangements between the programs).

66. EQAP has adopted a sensitive strategy to promotion of gender equality in its communications with Member countries, while being pro-active and forward leaning on disaggregation of data and analysis of evidence of outcomes that relate to differences in boys' and girls' education. This has not always been immediately accessible to DFAT and MFAT, nor reported

separately. The partners have agreed in consultations for this design update to strengthen this area of EQAP's work over Phase 2.

In order to strengthen and enhance visibility of EQAP's approach to GEDSI, a gender analysis will be carried out by EQAP early in this phase. This analysis will review the state of gender equality in education in the Pacific, document and analyse EQAP's existing workstreams, MEL system, Business Plan and applicable strategies and frameworks as pertain to GEDSI. The analysis will identify entry points, approaches, partnerships, and processes to strengthen the mainstreaming of GEDSI in EQAP's work. The analysis will inform a subsequent GEDSI Strategy which will be developed with a payment trigger linked to its completion. The GEDSI Strategy developed will not seek to duplicate on existing SPC and EQAP strategies. Rather, it will seek to articulate and document more explicitly the approach EQAP will take in carrying out its core business. The analysis and GEDSI strategy will incorporate the Do No Harm principle that applies to all SPC's work in relation to work on gender and disability equality data collection and use, considering and minimising potential risks and harm to all involved in activities and interventions.

67. EQAP has been cautious in adopting outcome commitments for disability inclusion in its services due to the overwhelming scale of the resources and policy reform required to achieve real results for students, teachers and communities. In this phase of the partnership, a modest intermediate outcome of: *Organisations of People with Disability (OPDs) involved in key regional and country level planning events and mechanisms and have their concerns and needs heard* has been included under partnership policy objectives. This provides a basis for Partnership Meeting discussions on progress and priorities for disability inclusion that partners can collaborate on, and enables EQAP to highlight, through the secondary analysis work of a separately contracted M&E Resource, what activities and progress is being made. Over time, DFAT and MFAT would expect that more specific activities for disability inclusion are requested by Member countries through the Country planning and consultation process, and this can be reflected in monitoring reports against this outcome and GEDSI Strategy developed.

Safeguards

68. The safeguards requirements relevant to this activity include child protection, PSEAH, human rights (New Zealand), fraud and anti-corruption. Climate change and environment considerations are addressed in implementation but not directly affected by the operations of EQAP.

69. EQAP focuses on primary and secondary education, and while the Agency works primarily with education systems and policy, field work for assessment, and teacher accountability, is undertaken by EQAP staff and contractors in schools. The existing bilateral Partnership Agreements with SPC contain provisions for SPC to align its internal policies with those of Australia and New Zealand concerning child protection, PSEAH and other mandatory policies and procedures from time to time. SPC will ensure that EQAP policy and operations maintains compliance with these standards, in particular the need for Working with Children Checks where applicable, and adherence to a code of conduct when working with children, and the reporting of any suspected incidents to Australia or New Zealand in line with the respective grant agreements.

70. The Partnership Agreement between New Zealand and SPC requires compliance with relevant Human Rights charters and codes of practice. SPC will be responsible for ensuring that EQAP complies with these standards.

71. SPC procurement rules and regulations contain provisions and processes to ensure anti-corruption practices are maintained and audited. SPC has been assured by the European Union against the 7 pillars assessment which includes an assessment of anti-corruption practices.

72. SPC has established an internal audit function to oversee fraud, mismanagement of funds and value for money considerations. SPC as a regional organisation receiving core funding is subject to DFAT's ongoing due diligence and partner performance assessments, where management of fraud and corruption are considered.

73. While EQAP operations do not directly affect the environment and climate change, except in incidental ways through air travel, printing and use of energy. EQAP is conscious of the challenges facing Pacific Island countries and incorporates these considerations in curriculum development and assessment exercises. SPC has developed policies for environment and climate change which will be applied by EQAP.

Annex 1 – TOR for External Monitoring and Evaluation Resource

Terms of Reference

Monitoring and Evaluation Resource

Trilateral Collaboration for Educational Quality and Assessment Programme (EQAP) Phase 2

Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific Community

Title: M&E Resource

Inputs: Up to 25 days per year

Accountability: Senior Program Manager/Counsellor, DFAT Suva Post

Reporting: 6 monthly Partnership meetings of Australia, New Zealand and SPC (EQAP)

Preamble

The Educational Quality and Assessment Programme (EQAP) is a division of the Pacific Community (SPC) which has been supported by Australia and New Zealand under a tri-lateral partnership arrangement since 2018, intended as a 10-year commitment. The program is supported through a flexible grant arrangement that contributes to the internal Business Plan of EQAP, using partner systems for demand-driven planning responding to Member priorities and needs, and SPC internal budgeting and reporting processes. The Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) provides ongoing technical and strategic support to EQAP under a partnership arrangement outlined in the design.

Funding from Australia and New Zealand contributes to the overall Business Plan of EQAP which has four high level outcomes:

1. Quality assured evidence to inform educational policy, planning, implementation and management across the Pacific.
2. Inclusive and accessible performance assessments of Pacific learners occur frequently, reliably and against curricula.
3. Quality assured and recognised qualifications to be increasingly taken up by employers and learners.
4. Information and expertise in Pacific education to be available and stakeholders are aware of it.

These outcomes are subject to ongoing monitoring and evaluation through SPC's organization wide methodology and approach, which is analysed and reported through various means, including the Annual Report of EQAP and SPC, and through the website for ongoing stories of change and achievements. EQAP maintains a detailed database for collecting information against activities and outputs of the Business Plan, related to the regularly updated Country Workplans. The underlying approach for monitoring and evaluation supports the strategic intent of the partnership which is to use internal SPC systems and strengthen them over time, and to reduce the transaction costs of

individual project reporting. EQAP will continue to be fully responsible for the internal M&E against its own Business Plan, and its data collection, analysis and reporting process.

The Partnership also has policy objectives which represent the strategic intent of the funding contribution for Phase 2. For Phase 2, it is proposed that an additional complementary M&E function be introduced to enable a secondary analysis of the internal M&E information to be undertaken against these partnership objectives. This aims to assist DFAT and MFAT to strengthen policy engagement and better communicate and report on the work of EQAP with internal stakeholders without requiring substantial changes to the SPC methodology, approach and reporting system.

The Policy Objectives, and associated Intermediate Outcomes outlined in the Design Update Document, shall form the basis of the agenda for regular 6 monthly Partnership Meetings.

Purpose:

The M&E Resource assists DFAT and MFAT strengthen their policy engagement and communicate and report on the work of EQAP, by conducting secondary analysis of available data, information and reporting from SPC (EQAP), supplemented by stakeholder feedback available from EQAP, regional stakeholders and Pacific Island Countries and Posts.

Objectives:

The objectives of this role include:

1. To provide a 6 monthly report against Partnership Objectives and Intermediate Outcomes for Partnership Meetings, drawing on existing SPC (EQAP) internal reporting information and external stakeholder feedback.
2. To provide input that assists DFAT and MFAT to complete annual performance reporting and internal communication of the work of EQAP.

Key responsibilities:

1. To review SPC (EQAP) internal monitoring information collected as part its M&E system against the Business Plan and synthesise and analyse such data and information against the Partnership Objectives and Intermediate Outcomes including GEDSI related issues.
2. To review available stakeholder feedback information available from Posts, PICs and other forums, as made available by DFAT and MFAT from time to time (e.g., from cables, minutes, consultation records, other IMRs from bilateral programs), including but not limited to key EQAP products and services
3. To support DFAT and MFAT to seek feedback from stakeholders and conduct consultation sessions led by DFAT/MFAT.
4. To assist MFAT and DFAT in assessing progress and achievements of the objectives and Intermediate Outcomes.
5. To present findings and emerging issues (if any) to Partnership Meetings between DFAT, MFAT, SPC and ACER.

Methodology:

The M&E Resource will have two inputs per year in June/July and December/January/February to align appropriately with six monthly Partnership meeting cycles or as otherwise agreed between the Partners from time to time.

Each 6 monthly input will consist of:

- 2 days review and analysis of available data and information (from EQAP, DFAT and MFAT existing sources)
- 1 day discussion with DFAT and MFAT headquarters and Posts
- 2 days consultation with EQAP (accessing relevant information, testing and verifying synthesis and analysis)
- 3 days drafting reports with findings and emerging issues against the Partnership Objectives and Intermediate Outcomes
- 1 day presenting findings and emerging issues to the Partnership Group (virtually or in-person).

The M&E Resource will develop a framework for collecting and analysing information against the Partnership Objectives and Intermediate Outcomes, which includes an approach to assessing the key deliverables/products and services under relevant IOs and identifying emerging issues. The M&E Resource will not be required to develop recommendations, as this will be the subject of Partnership level discussions, and internal DFAT and MFAT deliberation on consideration of the M&E reporting.

The M&E Resource will support the Suva Post in requesting stakeholder feedback through consultations led by Post, and through feedback requested from Pacific Island country Posts with bilateral education investments. Stakeholder feedback will be incorporated into the framework for analysis and assessment of EQAP reporting information.

Reporting:

Three reports per year will be prepared:

- a. 6 monthly progress report
- b. Annual Partnership report, and
- c. Analysis report that contributes to DFAT Annual Investment Monitoring Report

Selection Criteria

1. Extensive experience in monitoring and evaluation of development programs, particularly in the Pacific.
2. An understanding of education systems policy and practice.
3. An ability to work with regional and international organisations and demonstrated experience supporting and strengthening partner systems.
4. Familiarity and demonstrated capability in DFAT and MFAT internal reporting systems and requirements.
5. Commitment to multi-year engagement in the role