

2023 SEP independent evaluation – key recommendations and responses

The evaluation into the Supporting Elections in PNG program was conducted by Tetra Tech over the period July-September 2023. The evaluation was conducted independently, drawing on literature review, field research in Port Moresby including extensive interviews with a range of Australian and PNG stakeholders, and desktop analysis. The observations and opinions contained within the report do not necessarily reflect the views of the commissioning agency (the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade). The below management responses relate to the evaluation’s policy recommendations.

Recommendation	Response	Timeframe	Next steps / Comments
1. Greater emphasis should be placed on strengthening linkages between HQ and the provinces, noting that election delivery is increasingly decentralised.	Agree	Q1 2024	This will be included in the refreshed design.
2. A future SEP Design should provide greater clarity on the relationship between program EOPOs and additional components to ensure that the major focus of the program is on technical support to administration of electoral events.	Agree	Q2 2024	Ensure any additional components are designed and planned with EOPOs in mind, and program design is shared with all partners. This will be included in the refreshed design.
3. The next iteration of SEP should include an EOPO focussed explicitly on whole-of-government coordination	Agree	Q2 2024	Refers to whole-of-PNG-government coordination. This will be included in the refreshed design.
4. EOPO 2 should be reworded to emphasise strengthened linkages between headquarters and the provinces	Agree	Q2 2024	This will be revised in the refreshed design.
5. The inclusion of an EOPO explicitly focussed on strengthened institutional capacity within the PNGEC should be considered in the next iteration of SEP	Agree	Q2 2024	New EOPO to be provided in the refreshed design.

Recommendation	Response	Timeframe	Next steps / Comments
<p>6. Future investments should ensure ownership of overall SEP EOPOs, which in the current iteration were lost when a Strategic Program Manager was unable to be recruited. The circumstances leading to this may be mitigated through the use of a managing contractor.</p>	<p>Partially agree</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>DFAT will recruit a program coordinator to lead implementation of the new investment. DFAT will not be prescriptive on how a program coordinator will be procured.</p>
<p>7. While it is understood that AEC is not well positioned to continue to commit to deploying longer-term staff, and that IFES' strength lies in deployment of short-term independent international expertise, a clear need exists for capacity building at the leadership/management level.</p>	<p>Consult AEC / IFES</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>DFAT to continue liaising with implementation partners on suitable staffing profiles for next phase of the program.</p>
<p>8. Future investments should ensure either a program coordinator or managing contractor role is in place so that coordination of grants and overall reporting is not unduly placed on the Political Team at the High Commission.</p>	<p>Agree</p>	<p>From 1 July 2024</p>	<p>Agreed – see recommendation 6.</p>

Recommendation	Response	Timeframe	Next steps / Comments
<p>9. Engage a Strategic Operations Adviser as originally envisaged in the SEP Design. This role could provide several key benefits including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordination and organisation of the Strategic Management Committee function (since morphed into the donor coordination committee); • enhanced coordination between key political reform bodies such as IDEC and the SPC, and the PNGEC; • regular political economy reporting on the rapidly-evolving context of the reform recommendations currently underway between IDEC, SPC and NRI; and • support to major program partners to conduct more rigorous program planning and evaluation against the original SEP theory of change and Results Framework. 	Agree	Q1 2024	Terms of reference have been prepared.

Recommendation	Response	Timeframe	Next steps / Comments
<p>10. Conduct retrospective work on the SEP Results Framework. There is still a strong possibility for the SAGE objectives to be tied back into SEP Outcomes using an 'outcome harvesting' approach. Such an effort would be useful to help develop a more comprehensive stocktake of the program than the evaluation team was able to achieve.</p>	Done	Completed	<p>IFES to prepare interim and final reports for SAGE in accordance with new results framework (January & June 2024), using 'outcome harvesting' approach.</p>
<p>11. Ongoing SAGE programming should utilise a more rigorous M&E framework, including collecting data on beneficiaries, impact and linking outputs to outcomes.</p>	Done	Ongoing	As above
<p>12. Future SEP programming should reinforce the need for either a managing contractor or a strengthened program coordinator role to ensure that program reporting provides a clearer breakdown of expenditure against individual program Components.</p>	Agree	Q2 2024	Agreed – see recommendation 6.
<p>13. The PFM adviser function planned in the IDD but not ultimately contracted should be considered again for future investments as a means to support corporate functions at PNGEC.</p>	Agree	Q2 2024	Agreed – see recommendation 6.