



28 May 2025

Evaluation Policy (2025)

WHO Evaluation Office (EVL)

Approved by WHO Executive Board Decision **EB157(2) (2025)**

1. Previous versions of the WHO evaluation policy were adopted by the Executive Board in decisions EB131(1) (2012) and EB143(9) (2018). Since 2018, the Secretariat has published a series of frameworks and guidance documents to guide evaluation work and promote the culture of evaluation across the Organization. These include the Practical guide to evaluation for programme managers and evaluation staff (2023),¹ the Implementation framework of the WHO evaluation policy (2022),² the Framework for evaluations of WHO's contribution at country level (2022),³ and a Framework for strengthening evaluation and organizational learning in WHO (2015).⁴
2. Following recommendations of the Independent Expert Oversight Advisory Committee,⁵ in 2024 the Secretariat conducted a comparative review of the WHO evaluation function and those of selected United Nations entities.^{6,7} The Executive Board, in its decision EB155(1) (2024), requested a revision of the Evaluation Policy taking into account the comparative review, and for the Secretariat to submit it for consideration by the Board at its 157th session, following review by the Independent Expert Oversight Advisory Committee. Discussion at the 155th session of the Executive Board concerning updating of the policy also considered the evaluation annual report (2024)⁸ and the report of the fortieth meeting of the Programme, Budget and Administration Committee.⁹
3. An integral part of WHO's oversight and accountability system, the independent, Organization-wide evaluation function produces high-quality evaluations informing evidence-based decision-making, strengthening accountability and transparency for results, facilitating organizational learning and enhancing performance. As such, evaluations inform the design and implementation of WHO's and its partners' health policies, programmes and budget priorities.
4. The global context in which WHO operates has evolved considerably since 2018, with an increased focus on results that requires a stronger evaluation function to increase the Organization's accountability,

¹ [Practical guide to evaluation for programme managers and evaluation staff](#). Geneva: World Health Organization; 2023 (accessed 23 April 2025).

² [Implementation framework of the WHO evaluation policy](#). Geneva: World Health Organization; 2022 (accessed 23 April 2025).

³ [Framework for evaluations of WHO's contribution at country level](#). Geneva: World Health Organization; 2022 (accessed 23 April 2025).

⁴ [A framework for strengthening evaluation and organizational learning in WHO](#). Geneva: World Health Organization; 2015 (accessed 23 April 2025).

⁵ Documents EBPBAC36/2, EBPBAC37/2, EBPBAC38/2, EBPBAC40/2 and EBPBAC41/2.

⁶ [Comparative study of WHO evaluation function with selected UN entities: report](#). Geneva: World Health Organization; 2024 (accessed 23 April 2025).

⁷ Document EBPBAC40/2.

⁸ Document EB155/4.

⁹ Document EB155/2.

transparency and performance improvement through learning and use of evaluation recommendations. The world has experienced substantial changes and disruptions such as the pandemic of coronavirus disease (COVID-19) resulting in unacceptable impacts on human health and well-being across all countries and communities, more fragile national health systems and health emergency preparedness and response systems, and deepening country fiscal constraints, all resulting in significant reductions in progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals and greatly affecting the poorest and most vulnerable people. The rise in health and humanitarian emergencies, conflicts and crises pose considerable risks for global health.

5. The critical role of evaluation in development is acknowledged in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,¹⁰ the United Nations General Assembly's resolutions on capacity building for the evaluation of development activities at the country level¹¹ and on strengthening voluntary national reviews through country-led evaluation,¹² the outcome of the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit,¹³ and the resolution in 2020 on the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system.¹⁴ These instruments provide new directions for the conduct of evaluation, including underscoring the value of joint United Nations' and system-wide evaluations to support more effectively the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals related to health. In addition, one of 12 key performance indicators included in the Multilateral Organization Performance Assessment Network (MOPAN) methodology focuses on the independent evaluation function of United Nations and multilateral entities, which in turn contains seven specific indicators on various aspects of an evaluation function. MOPAN's assessment of WHO for 2022-2023 provided lessons that have been used in the revision of this policy.^{15,16}
6. The revised evaluation policy (2025) is aligned with and supports the Fourteenth General Programme of Work, 2025–2028, which articulates WHO's commitment to achieving results and impact as an evidence-based Organization. It builds on previous versions of the evaluation policy, ensuring that the independent evaluation function continues to mature, particularly at the decentralized level, with regional offices having key roles identifying thematic and cross-regional evaluation priorities, designing, implementing and quality assuring decentralized evaluations. The revised policy takes into account relevant resolutions and decisions of WHO governing bodies, WHO's policies issued since 2018, and recommendations of the comparative review summarizing best practice across United Nations entities. It is rooted in the United Nations Evaluation Group norms and standards for the evaluation function along with specific guidance¹⁷ and is informed by internal and external changes in the social, political, economic environment. These have all been used to frame the Secretariat's evaluation function to ensure timely delivery and use of rigorous evaluative evidence, supporting WHO in achieving its mandate and the strategic priorities of the Fourteenth General Programme of Work.

PURPOSE

7. The purpose of this policy is to define the overall framework for the independent evaluation function at WHO, its vision and goals, and to foster and enhance the culture and use of evaluation across the

¹⁰ United Nations General Assembly resolution 70/1 (2015).

¹¹ United Nations General Assembly resolution 69/237 (2014).

¹² United Nations General Assembly resolution 77/283 (2023).

¹³ United Nations General Assembly document 71/353 (2016).

¹⁴ United Nations General Assembly resolution 75/233 (2020).

¹⁵ [MOPAN Methodology: 2020 Assessment Cycle. MOPAN 3.1 Methodology](#) (website) (accessed 24 April 2025).

¹⁶ [MOPAN. WHO – World Health Organization](#). 2024 (website) (accessed 24 April 2025).

¹⁷ [UNEG. Norms and standards for evaluation. New York: United Nations Evaluation Group](#); 2016 (accessed 24 April 2025).

Organization, in adherence with best practices and with the norms and standards for evaluation of the United Nations Evaluation Group. The evaluation function supports WHO in achieving its core mandate and strategic priorities of its general programme of work, including its operational and normative roles. The policy guides the planning, conduct and use of evaluation findings and recommendations to strengthen organizational learning, accountability and evidence-based decision making. Annex 1 depicts the theory of change for the evaluation function.

8. The WHO accountability framework embodies the “three lines of defence (assurance)” model¹⁸ with evaluation in the third line providing independent assurance critical for ensuring accountability, transparency and assessment of management effectiveness. Several types of assessments are included in the framework, all crucial to strengthening performance, accountability and institutional learning. This policy addresses only the assessments qualifying as “Evaluation” and excludes other forms of assessments conducted in WHO, such as audits, monitoring, reviews, performance assessment and surveys.

POLICY STATEMENT

9. Evaluation is an essential independent function in WHO, carried out at all levels of the Organization. It ensures accountability and oversight for performance and results and reinforces organizational learning in order to inform evidence-based decision-making and support individual learning. The policy is applicable across the Organization and its operational contexts while affording necessary flexibility at decentralized levels but still ensuring its independent functioning.

EVALUATION DEFINITION

10. An evaluation is an assessment, conducted as systematically and impartially as possible, of an activity, project, programme, strategy, policy, topic, theme, sector, operational area or institutional performance. It analyses the level of achievement of both expected and unexpected results by examining the results chain, processes, contextual factors and causality using such appropriate criteria as relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, coherence and sustainability. An evaluation should provide credible, useful evidence-based information that enables the timely incorporation of its findings, recommendations and lessons into the decision-making processes of organizations and stakeholders.¹⁹
11. The independent evaluation function fosters evidence-based decision-making in the Organization promoting the results-based management system.²⁰ It enhances fulfilment of WHO’s mandate, supporting that the Organization is fit for purpose. It strengthens its performance, accountability and learning systems and complies with United Nations’ evaluation principles, norms and standards while ensuring evaluations are independent, impartial, credible, and useful and that evaluation processes are transparent and fully engaged with stakeholders.²¹ Evaluation is an essential part of WHO’s results-based management system that involves all aspects of the programme cycle: planning, prioritization, budgeting, managing the organization toward results, monitoring and reporting results, evaluating performance – and using the knowledge and learning gained to feed into mid-course corrections, decisions and actions in pursuit of results. These functions are mutually supportive as they share a common goal, which is to help WHO to deliver results in a more transparent and efficient way. As an accountability function,

¹⁸ Described in the [United Nations Joint Inspection Unit report JIU/REP/2023/3 Review of accountability frameworks in the United Nations system organizations](#), pp. 13–14, (accessed 24 April 2025).

¹⁹ [UNEG. Norms and standards for evaluation](#). New York: United Nations Evaluation Group; 2016, p. 10 (accessed 9 May 2025).

²⁰ [Independent Evaluation of WHO’s Results-Based Management \(RBM\) Framework \(2023\)](#) (accessed 24 April 2025).

²¹ [UNEG. Norms and standards for evaluation](#). New York: United Nations Evaluation Group; 2016, p. 23 (accessed 9 May 2025).

evaluation contributes to oversight in the Organization. While maintaining its independence and recognizing differentiated purposes and methods used, evaluation in WHO collaborates with other organizational oversight functions (such as audit, investigation, ethics and internal controls) as noted in the United Nations Evaluation Group's Norms and standards for evaluation.

12. WHO has two broad categories of evaluation:

- (a)** corporate evaluations, which are managed, commissioned or conducted by the Evaluation Office, and include thematic evaluations and programmatic evaluations; and
- (b)** decentralized evaluations, which are managed, commissioned or conducted by divisions/departments/offices in headquarters, regional offices or country offices other than the Evaluation Office, and mainly comprise programmatic and thematic evaluations. In these instances, the Evaluation Office provides quality assurance and technical backstopping. It should be noted that country programme evaluations can be commissioned by either country offices, regional offices or the Evaluation Office (described in paragraph 32(c)). In addition, WHO participates in and/or leads United Nations/multilateral interagency joint evaluations (see paragraph 34).

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PRINCIPLES AND NORMS²²

14. To ensure that the evaluation function achieves the aims of the above-mentioned policy statement, evaluations must systematically apply the key principles of impartiality, independence, credibility and use, and norms for quality, transparency and ethics as inscribed in the United Nations Evaluation Group's norms and standards. As set out below, these are interrelated and underpin the approach to evaluation in WHO and are applicable to all categories and types of evaluation. Application of these principles, norms and standards ensures quality and enhances accountability and learning throughout WHO to improve performance and results.

Impartiality

- 15.** The key elements of impartiality are objectivity, professional integrity and absence of bias. The requirement for impartiality exists at all stages of the evaluation process, including planning, formulating the mandate and scope, selecting the evaluation team, providing access to stakeholders, conducting the evaluation and formulating findings and recommendations.
- 16.** Evaluators need to be impartial, with the implication that evaluation team members must not have been (or expect to be in the near future) directly responsible for the policy setting, design or management of the evaluation subject.

Independence

- 17.** Independence of evaluation is necessary for credibility. It influences the ways in which an evaluation is used and allows evaluators to be impartial and free from undue pressure throughout the evaluation

²² See United Nations Evaluation Group's Norms and standards for evaluation, 2016, and [OECD Development Assistance Committee. Quality Standards for Development Evaluation, DAC Guidelines and Reference Series](#), Paris: Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development Publishing; 2010 (accessed 24 April 2025).

process. The independence of the evaluation function comprises three key aspects: behavioural, organizational and structural independence. As such, WHO is committed to safeguarding the independence and impartiality of all its evaluations.

(a) Behavioural independence entails the ability to evaluate without undue influence by any party. Evaluators must have the full freedom to conduct their evaluative work impartially, without the risk of negative effects on their career development and must be able to freely express their assessment. The independence of the evaluation function underpins the free access to information that evaluators should have on the evaluation subject.

(b) Organizational independence requires that the central evaluation function is positioned independently from management functions, carries the responsibility of setting the evaluation agenda and is provided with adequate resources to conduct its work. Organizational independence also necessitates that evaluation managers have full discretion to directly submit evaluation reports to the appropriate level of decision-making and that they should report directly to an organization's governing body and/or the executive head. Independence is vested in the Evaluation Office and in the Organization's evaluation function to directly commission, produce, publish and disseminate duly quality-assured evaluation reports in the public domain without undue influence by any party.

(c) Structural independence requires that the Evaluation Office has transparent view of discretion and ability to manage its budget and resources (staff and activity) allocated to it.

18. Evaluators shall not be directly responsible for the policy, design or overall management of the subject under review. WHO staff members performing evaluations shall abide by the ethical principles for and standards of conduct of staff.²³ External contractors shall abide by WHO's requirements for external contractual agreements. Evaluators must maintain the highest standards of professional and personal integrity during the entire evaluation process.

19. WHO's policy on preventing and addressing retaliation²⁴ and other relevant policies will protect evaluation staff members participating in evaluations from retaliation or repercussions.

Utility (Use)

20. In commissioning and conducting an evaluation, there should be a clear intention to use the resulting analysis, conclusions or recommendations to inform decisions and actions. The utility of evaluation is manifest through its use in making relevant and timely contributions to organizational learning, informed decision-making processes and accountability for results. Evaluations could also be used to contribute beyond the Organization by generating knowledge and empowering stakeholders.²⁵

21. Utility relates to the impact of the evaluation on decision-making and requires that evaluation findings be relevant and useful, presented in a clear and concise way, and monitored for implementation. The utility of an evaluation depends on its timeliness, relevance to the needs of the programme and stakeholders, the credibility of the process and products, and the accessibility of reports.

²³ [WHO Code of ethics \(2023\)](#). Geneva: World Health Organization; 2023 (accessed 24 April 2025).

²⁴ [Preventing and addressing retaliation](#). Geneva: World Health Organization; 2023 (accessed 24 April 2025).

²⁵ [UNEG. Norms and standards for evaluation](#). New York: United Nations Evaluation Group; 2016, p. 10 (accessed 24 April 2025).

22. Utility will be ensured through:

- (a) the systematic prioritizing of the evaluation agenda based on established criteria and consultation with relevant stakeholders;
- (b) inclusion in an evaluation's terms of reference of provisions for timely commissioning and conduct, dissemination of findings and specifying the intended use of the evaluation and users;
- (c) requirement for a management response to be produced within 60 days of completion of evaluation;
- (d) the systematic follow-up, monitoring and reporting of recommendations and management responses;
- (e) the systematic use of evaluations' findings and recommendations for evidence-based decision-making to design and implement policies, strategies, programmes/projects and budgets;
- (f) public access to evaluation products; and
- (g) alignment with the results-based management framework.

Credibility

- 23.** Evaluations must be credible. Credibility is grounded on impartiality, independence and a rigorous methodology. Key elements of credibility include transparent evaluation processes, inclusive approaches involving relevant stakeholders and robust quality assurance systems. Evaluation results (or findings) and recommendations are derived from – or informed by – the conscientious, explicit and judicious use of the best available, objective, reliable and valid data and by accurate quantitative and qualitative analysis of evidence. Credibility requires that evaluations are ethically conducted and managed by evaluators that exhibit professional and cultural competencies.²⁶

Quality

- 24.** Quality relates to the appropriate and accurate use of evaluation criteria, impartial presentation and analysis of evidence, and coherence between findings, conclusions and recommendations.
- 25.** Quality will be ensured through:
- (a) the continuous adherence to evaluation methodology as elaborated in WHO's evaluation guidance documents and the applicable guidelines and the norms and standards for evaluation of the United Nations Evaluation Group; and
 - (b) a comprehensive quality assurance system, including independent quality assessments for evaluation processes and products and annual reporting on the quality of all corporate and decentralized evaluations.
- 26.** The Evaluation Office supports the three levels of the Organization by providing quality assurance for evaluations undertaken. In addition, regional evaluation officers provide quality assurance for evaluations undertaken at the country and regional levels, along with the Evaluation Office as needed.

²⁶ [UNEG. Norms and standards for evaluation](#). New York: United Nations Evaluation Group; 2016, pp. 10–11 (accessed 24 April 2025).

Transparency

27. Transparency is an essential element of evaluation that establishes trust and builds confidence, enhances stakeholder ownership and increases public accountability. Evaluation products should be publicly accessible.²⁷
28. To achieve transparency, stakeholders should be aware of the reason for the evaluation, the selection criteria and the purposes for which the findings will be used. Transparency of process is also important, as is the accessibility of evaluation materials and products.
29. Transparency will be ensured through the approaches described in this policy. The commissioner of the evaluation will ensure a continuous consultation process with relevant stakeholders at all stages of the evaluation process. The evaluation report shall contain details of evaluation methodologies, approaches, sources of information and costs incurred. In accordance with the WHO disclosure policy, evaluation plans, reports, management responses and follow-up reports will be made public on the WHO Evaluation Office's website.

Ethics

30. Evaluation must be conducted with the highest standards of integrity and respect for the beliefs, manners and customs of the social and cultural environment; for human rights and gender equality; and for the "do no harm" principle for humanitarian assistance. Evaluators must respect the rights of institutions and individuals to provide information in confidence, must ensure that sensitive data are protected and cannot be traced to their source and must validate statements made in the report with those who provided the relevant information. Evaluators should obtain informed consent for the use of private information from those who provide it. When evidence of wrongdoing is uncovered, it must be reported discreetly to a competent WHO body (such as the relevant office of internal oversight).²⁸

Human rights, gender equality and disability inclusion

31. The universally recognized values and principles of human rights and gender equality need to be integrated into all stages of an evaluation. It is the responsibility of evaluators and evaluation managers to ensure that these values are respected, addressed and promoted, underpinning the commitment to the principle of "no-one left behind".^{29,30} Pursuant to the United Nations Evaluation Group's guidance on integrating disability inclusion in evaluations and reporting on the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy entity accountability framework (2022)³¹ and on integrating human rights and gender equality in evaluations (2024), and the WHO policy on disability,³² evaluations must incorporate consideration of human rights principles, gender equality, persons living with disabilities and the inclusion of other groups in vulnerable situations.

²⁷ [UNEG. Norms and standards for evaluation](#). New York: United Nations Evaluation Group; 2016, p. 11 (accessed 24 April 2025).

²⁸ [UNEG. Norms and standards for evaluation](#). New York: United Nations Evaluation Group; 2016, pp. 11–12 (accessed 24 April 2025).

²⁹ [UNEG. Norms and standards for evaluation](#). New York: United Nations Evaluation Group; 2016, p. 12 (accessed 24 April 2025).

³⁰ [Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluations](#). New York: United Nations Evaluation Group; 2024 (accessed on 24 April 2025).

³¹ [Guidance on Integrating Disability Inclusion in Evaluations and Reporting on the UNDIS Entity Accountability Framework Evaluation Indicator](#). New York: United Nations Evaluation Group; 2022 (accessed on 24 April 2025).

³² WHO. WHO policy on disability. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2021 (accessed 24 April 2025).

Types of evaluations

32. WHO's Secretariat conducts the following main types of evaluations according to the norms and standards mentioned above:

- (a) **Thematic evaluations** focus on selected Organization-wide topics, such as a new way of working, a cross-cutting theme or core function, or an emerging issue of corporate institutional interest. Thematic evaluations provide insight into the evaluation criteria of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development including relevance, effectiveness, sustainability and as appropriate, efficiency, impact and coherence. They require an in-depth analysis of a topic and the work of the Organization and cut across organizational structures. The scope of these evaluations may range from the entire Organization to a single WHO office.
- (b) **Programmatic evaluations** focus on a specific programme. This type of evaluation provides an in-depth understanding of how, what and why results and outcomes have been achieved over several years with WHO's contribution and examines their relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, sustainability and/or coherence. Programmatic evaluations address achievements in relation to WHO's results chain, require a systematic analysis of the programme under review and document accountability needs and lessons, including those for the design of successor programmes or at a mid-term to focus more on learning and course corrections. The scope of programmatic evaluations may range from a country to interregional or global levels.
- (c) **Country programme evaluations**³³ focus on the contributions of WHO at the country level, recognizing that the success of WHO's efforts heavily depend on the country context and efforts by multiple partners. These evaluations examine the relevance, effectiveness, impact, sustainability and coherence of WHO objectives, actions and contributions in individual countries to ensure that WHO is effectively addressing the health needs of the country within its capacity, as formulated in WHO's general programme of work and key country-level strategic instruments, including the country cooperation strategies, country prioritization exercises, biennial WHO country office workplans and national health strategies based on WHO's comparative advantage. Evaluations will review outcomes and results achieved at country level using the inputs from all three levels of the Organization. They also document good practices and gaps for learning and provide a foundation for formulating a subsequent country cooperation strategy in a country.

33. WHO's governing bodies may, at their discretion, also commission an evaluation of any aspect of WHO. For external assessments or evaluations, the Secretariat will fully cooperate in these through a process of disclosure of appropriate information and, as required, confidentiality agreements.

Joint evaluations

34. Joint evaluations are conducted with other United Nations or multilateral entities for a joint initiative or programmatic effort where contributions of multiple partners are interlinked and not separately assessable. WHO participates in and/or leads such evaluations which can occur at global or at country level. The purpose of these evaluations is to foster joint learning and accountability.

³³ [Framework for evaluations of WHO's contribution at country level](#). Geneva: World Health Organization Evaluation Office; 2022 (accessed 24 April 2025).

Humanitarian emergencies

35. An important subset of joint evaluations comprises Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluations which assess preparedness and response interventions to a particular crisis and are overseen by the Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluations Steering Group and managed by ad hoc evaluation management groups. For these evaluations, the specific individual agency contributions will not be assessed, except for joint work, adding specifics when relevant.

PLANNING AND PRIORITIZATION OF EVALUATIONS

36. WHO will develop a biennial, Organization-wide evaluation workplan, including indicative costing and funding sources, for corporate and decentralized evaluations as part of the Organization's planning and budgeting cycle. These shall be submitted to the Executive Board for approval through the Programme, Budget and Administration Committee. The Secretariat will also update the biennial workplan, as needed, in the annual report to the Programme, Budget and Administration Committee and the Executive Board. The approved workplan will be implemented by inclusion in the Organization's Programme budget and operational planning processes, including regional and country office workplans as well as costing and resource allocation, and results monitoring.
37. The workplan shall be established in consultation with senior management at headquarters and regional offices and with heads of WHO country offices, with feedback from the Independent Expert Oversight Advisory Committee, based on established coverage norms, strategic priorities and selection and prioritization criteria (requirement, utility and significance).
38. The following categories shall be considered in the development of criteria for the selection of topics for evaluation:
- (a) organizational requirement relevant to: requests from governing bodies (decisions, resolutions, approved strategies or policies); global, international or regional commitments; and specific agreements with stakeholders, partners or donors;
 - (b) organizational significance relating to: strategic priorities of the general programme of work and core functions; level of investment; risks identified in the principal risks and risk registers; recurrent issues emerging from evaluations and internal and external audits; performance issues or concerns in relation to achievements of expected results; country cooperation strategies (if selected) at the middle or penultimate year of the period of a strategy; and
 - (c) organizational utility relating to: a cross-cutting issue, theme, programme or policy question; potential for staff or institutional learning and/or innovation; and degree of comparative advantage of WHO.

Additional selection criteria will include ensuring minimum coverage norms.

Coverage norms

39. The biennial evaluation workplan should ensure adequate coverage of evaluations across the Organization and categories in order to provide a representative, unbiased picture of WHO's contribution to achievement of results, and ensure that policies, strategies and programmes are evidence-based (see Annex 2). The design of new strategies, programmes and country strategies must be informed by an adequate and relevant body of evaluations.

40. Minimum coverage for corporate and decentralized evaluations at the country, regional and headquarter levels, along with responsibilities for evaluation management and indicative funding sources, is presented in Annex 2. In addition, various organizational levels and entities commissioning evaluations have the flexibility to prioritize topics, interventions and timing in line with their policy or programme cycles and stakeholder needs.

Internal WHO alignment and efficiencies

41. As a core part of the results-based management function, evaluation is key to and interlinked with the Organization's planning, prioritization, budget, results monitoring and reporting and learning cycle. As such, evaluation will align with and be complementary to the respective managerial and enabling functions across the Organization.
42. Evaluation works closely and collaboratively with other oversight/accountability and enabling functions, such as audit, ethics and legal. In addition, evaluation is one of several distinct yet complementary functions, including audit, research, monitoring, data and analytics, and organizational learning that together form an evidence ecosystem. Though functionally independent, the evaluation function is committed to maximizing efficiencies and cooperating with all these functions in a whole-of-organization manner wherever appropriate and feasible, notably in coordinating development of respective workplans to avoid concurrent or duplicative reviews of the same entity and conducting analyses of root causes and identifying ways to enhance WHO's business case and value added.
43. Even as it seeks to actively collaborate, evaluation must retain its independence. Through leadership, joint work planning and funding and capacity strengthening, the Evaluation Office will ensure full coherence with the decentralized evaluation function including in regional and country offices.

Risks

44. Successfully planning and implementing biennial evaluation workplans across the Organization will consider the Organization's principal risks, risk management strategy, risk appetite framework, risk register and planned mitigation measures. Additional risks can vary across the Organization, such as political sensitivity, evaluator availability or absorption capacity. The Evaluation Office will develop and monitor mitigating measures for identified Organization-wide risks for the evaluation function; with each level of the Organization tailoring mitigation strategies for their respective risks. Risks are also reflected in the assumptions included in the theory of change (see Annex 1). These include the organizational context in which the function operates (for example: independence; effective results-based management systems; enabling environment for evaluation; organizational leadership; ownership and support; and incentives for evaluations and their use), resources (for example, adequate and predictable financial and human resources commensurate with needs), and governing bodies' and partners' demand for evaluations.

EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

45. The evaluation methodology and process for both corporate and decentralized evaluations are informed by the United Nations Evaluation Group's norms and standards (2016) and the evaluation criteria of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development,³⁴ and are detailed in WHO Evaluation Office guidance (which will be periodically revised following the approval of this policy and emerging

³⁴ [Evaluation criteria](#). (website). Paris: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (accessed 24 April 2025).

international norms, standards and practice, as needed). The Evaluation Office will support innovations in the use of evaluative methodologies and their application across the Organization's evaluation function, including for example use of artificial intelligence,³⁵ developmental evaluation and other tools and approaches.

46. In order to enhance evaluation uptake, the Evaluation Office will use participatory, utilization-focused, developmental evaluation approaches, engaging key stakeholders, including affected communities and partners.
47. The Evaluation Office is responsible for establishing a framework that provides guidance, quality assurance, technical support and enhancing professional practice for the evaluation function across the Organization.

RESOURCING OF THE EVALUATION FUNCTION

48. The Director-General will allocate adequate resources, as recommended by the United Nations Joint Inspection Unit,³⁶ to implement the biennial Organization-wide evaluation workplan which includes not only the evaluations to be conducted but all activities required to ensure the strengthening of the evaluation culture and the professionalization of evaluation conduct across the Organization, including for quality assurance processes, follow-up activities and initiatives to promote the use of findings across the Organization.
49. The Director-General, Regional Directors, Deputy Director-General and Assistant Directors-General, directors and heads of WHO country offices will ensure that resources are adequate to implement their respective components of the Organization-wide evaluation workplan. An appropriate evaluation budget must be an integral part of the operational workplan of a programme or project and shall be discussed as necessary with stakeholders during the planning phase of each project/programme/initiative. Funding for evaluations should be aligned with the biennial planning and budget cycle with appropriate allocations made.³⁷
50. A resourcing model for the whole Organization will include the elements of paragraphs 48 and 49, along those that follow to ensure holistic planning and integration into its work and processes. To meet the coverage norms (Annex 2), evaluation should be funded from both assessed and voluntary contributions. In determining the amount required to finance the evaluation function in WHO, factors to be considered include: the Organization's mandate and size; the goals and desired results, outcomes and impact to be achieved as reflected in the general programme of work; the types of evaluations to be considered; the size and budget of a given programme or project to be evaluated; and the role of the evaluation function in institutionalizing and strengthening decentralized evaluation and advancing national capacities for evaluation and evaluation partnerships. With respect to financial benchmarking, the Joint Inspection Unit concluded that United Nations organizations should fund their evaluation function using a range that is between 0.5% and 3.0% of organizational expenditure.³⁸ The WHO-commissioned comparative review in 2024 documented United Nations entities spending 1.0% of the programme budget to be used for evaluations and recommended that WHO progressively raise resources towards this target. Consequently, based on a clear taxonomy for evaluations, the Organization will progressively strive to

³⁵ [Ethics and governance of artificial intelligence for health](#). Geneva: World Health Organization; 2021 (accessed 24 April 2025).

³⁶ [United Nations Joint Inspection Unit. Analysis of the Evaluation Function in the United Nations System, document JIU/REP/2014/6](#), p. 29 (accessed 25 April 2025).

³⁷ Document PBAC41/2, paragraph 28.

³⁸ [UNEG. Norms and standards for evaluation](#). New York: United Nations Evaluation Group; 2016, p. 16 (accessed 25 April 2025).

increase allocation of its expenditure for the evaluation function over the next two bienniums towards international benchmarks.

51. Two mechanisms commonly used in other United Nations entities and bilateral aid organizations are: (a) a dedicated programme/project budget line (proposals and donor agreements) for evaluation; and (b) pooled resources within the Organization to support the evaluation function and to promote and ensure independence. With expected growth in evaluation coverage and required resources needed, particularly at regional and country office levels, specific strategies will be developed to reach the WHO evaluation coverage norms drawing from various sources (including voluntary contributions and/or pooled funding) and learning from innovations in the United Nations system and emerging good practices adapted to WHO's context as appropriate. An immediate option is to use the common practice of having programme evaluation budget line items (as agreed) and requiring set-asides for evaluations of large programmes or projects (for example, more than US\$ 10 million life-of-project, or less as desired).
52. The Evaluation Office, in collaboration with other organizational entities, will routinely monitor expenditures for conducting and managing evaluations across the Organization, and include its findings in the evaluation annual report to the Executive Board.

Human resources and organizational capacity

53. In order to strengthen the evaluation function and culture across the three levels of the Organization, a cadre of evaluation professionals (corporate and regional evaluation officers) with harmonized competencies, clearly defined roles and responsibilities, and alignment with results-based management structures and managerial responsibilities is required. Primary responsibilities include leading evaluation activities, supporting decentralized³⁹ evaluations whenever relevant and/or requested, serving as the focal point for planning decentralized evaluations and country programme evaluations in their respective regions in line with the United Nations Evaluation Group's norms and standards and provisions for impartiality and independence set out above. Regional evaluation officers support their respective Regional Directors and Regional Committees, as requested, by providing updates on evaluation workplans and lessons derived from recommendations.
54. To promote the culture and practice of evaluation across WHO, the Evaluation Office, in collaboration with regional offices, facilitates development and implementation of Organization-wide capacity strengthening for all evaluation staff members involved in the commissioning, management and implementation of recommendations of evaluations, including use of shared competency frameworks, learning pathways and programmes, and tailored training. The Evaluation Office facilitates an Organization-wide Global Network on Evaluation to: engage all evaluation staff members in capacity development; share information and learning; participate in the preparation of the biennial Organization-wide evaluation workplan; facilitate development and tracking of management responses; contribute to the annual report on evaluation; and advise programmes across WHO on evaluation issues, as needed. Additional training/capacity development will be developed to orient and increase evaluation understanding for and practice by programme officers, particularly at country office level and in humanitarian or fragile contexts.

³⁹ Evaluations not conducted by the Evaluation Office or by Regional Office evaluation officers.

ACCOUNTABILITY AND OVERSIGHT WITHIN WHO

55. Within the WHO accountability framework there are clear definitions on from whom, and to whom authority flows and for what purpose including for the evaluation function. It further defines the accountability of those with authority and their responsibility in exercising that authority. The evaluation policy defines the specific roles and responsibilities of the main actors in the evaluation process as well as the mechanism used to monitor implementation of the evaluation policy including across the three levels of the Organization.
56. The Director-General, Regional Directors, senior management, directors and heads of country offices across the Organization play a critical role in, and share accountability for, promoting a culture of evaluation, ensuring the implementation of this policy, including its coverage, resourcing and use, while upholding United Nations Evaluation Group's norms and standards, particularly by safeguarding evaluation independence.

Roles and responsibilities

57. The Executive Board of WHO⁴⁰ will:
- (a) approve the revised WHO evaluation policy (2025) and subsequent amendments, as needed;
 - (b) provide oversight of the evaluation function within the Organization and ensure that the evaluation function is duly independent;
 - (c) encourage the use of credible and independent evaluation evidence as an input to strategic planning and decision-making;
 - (d) provide input to the biennial Organization-wide evaluation workplan on the items of specific interest to Member States;
 - (e) approve the biennial Organization-wide evaluation workplan, including its indicative budget and ensuring adequate resourcing;
 - (f) consider and take note of the annual report of the implementation of the biennial Organization-wide evaluation workplan; and
 - (g) periodically revise the evaluation policy, as necessary.
58. As part of its terms of reference,⁴¹ the **Independent Expert Oversight and Advisory Committee** reviews the evaluation function for WHO as a whole, and provides advice to the Executive Board through the Programme, Budget and Administration Committee. Areas of guidance include the staffing, resources and performance of the evaluation function, including provision of advice to the Director-General on the selection and performance of the Director, Evaluation and on the biennial workplan for evaluation activities, and monitoring the timely, effective and appropriate implementation of all evaluation recommendations. The Committee further provides guidance on implementing the evaluation policy,

⁴⁰ And its subsidiary organ the Programme, Budget and Administration Committee.

⁴¹ See document EB150/5, Annex and summary records of the 150th session of the Executive Board, twelfth meeting, section 1 (document EB150/REC/2/2022).

particularly regarding the Evaluation Office's role in strengthening oversight and accountability, promoting learning and improving the Organization's responsiveness to evaluations.

59. The Evaluation Office is the custodian of the evaluation function and reports directly to the Director-General and reports to the Executive Board annually on matters relating to evaluation at WHO. The Office is responsible for the following functions:

- (a) safeguarding the independence and impartiality of the evaluation function in line with the United Nations Evaluation Group's norms and standards;
- (b) leading the development of a biennial Organization-wide evaluation workplan;
- (c) informing senior management about evaluation-related issues of Organization-wide importance;
- (d) facilitating the input and use of evaluation findings and lessons learned for strategic decision-making, programme planning and organizational learning;
- (e) coordinating the implementation of the framework for evaluation across the three levels of the Organization;
- (f) collaborating, as appropriate, with other oversight functions (for example, audit) to ensure complementarity and coherence while upholding independence;
- (g) developing key performance indicators and monitoring compliance across the Organization with the policy;
- (h) mobilizing sustainable financial support for all evaluations in the Organization from internal and external sources (voluntary and assessed contributions), partners and stakeholders through voluntary contributions;
- (i) developing, disseminating and facilitating use of guidance for management responses to evaluations (for business owners) and for maintaining a system to track follow-up;
- (j) ensuring that all evaluations conducted in the Organization include an Evaluation Reference and/or Management Group that throughout the evaluation process provides guidance, review and input into the scope and methodology to be used and draft reports, and ensures that all processes are followed according to the WHO evaluation policy; the Group will not interfere with the work of the independent evaluators;
- (k) upholding ethical standards in evaluation, including informed consent, confidentiality and safeguarding of vulnerable populations;
- (l) maintaining a publicly available inventory of evaluations performed across WHO to enhance knowledge sharing and institutional memory;
- (m) maintaining a roster of experts and entities with evaluation experience;
- (n) providing guidance material and advice for the preparation, conduct and follow-up of evaluations, including promoting participatory approaches in evaluation planning and implementation by engaging relevant stakeholders across all levels;

- (o) reviewing evaluation reports on compliance with the requirements of the policy, and ensuring quality of evaluation processes and deliverables;
 - (p) strengthening capacities in evaluation among WHO professional evaluation staff members (for example, making available standardized methodologies or training on evaluation), as well as awareness-raising materials for all business owners;
 - (q) submitting an annual report on corporate and decentralized evaluation activities to the Executive Board; and
 - (r) supporting the periodic review of and updates to the policy as needed.
60. The Director-General shall appoint a technically qualified Director of the Evaluation Office after consultation with the Executive Board. The Director-General shall likewise consult the Board before any termination of the incumbent of that office. The Director, Evaluation Office serves for a fixed term of four years with a possibility of reappointment only once for a further term of four years and is barred from re-entry into the Organization after the expiry of their term.

USE OF EVALUATION FINDINGS

61. Recommendations contained in evaluation reports reflect the value added by the evaluation process. Each evaluation shall have an identified owner, such as the responsible officer of a division, department, programme, office or project. It is the responsibility of the owner to use the findings of the evaluation and develop an action plan for implementing the recommendations.
62. Evaluations improve organizational learning and performance by requiring that the object of, intent of and alignment with the general programme of work and organizational goals be clear at the outset before their being commissioned or conducted. Evaluations should also align with the results and impact frameworks of the general programme of work and with the Programme budget, and take into account progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals. At the country level, this requirement involves aligning evaluations with the country office's strategic planning cycle, governmental planning timelines, advocacy initiatives and WHO's planning and budgeting processes.

Management responses

63. To maximize accountability and use of evaluation recommendations and lessons learned in decision-making in a timely fashion, the evaluation owner will ensure that a management response is issued within two months of completion of a given evaluation. Following approval by senior management (namely the Office of the Director-General or relevant Assistant Director-General at headquarters, or by the Regional Director or Director, Programme Management for the regional and country offices), management responses are published on the WHO website to ensure transparency.
64. The Director-General, in collaboration with Regional Directors, will establish a mechanism to ensure effective follow-up and monitoring of the implementation of evaluation recommendations in a systematic manner, coordinating efforts with the evaluation owners. Senior management will review the status of implementation progress for management responses on at least a bi-annual basis. Use of the Consolidated Platform for Recommendation Tracking and its dashboard along with status reports on progress in the implementation of the recommendations will be submitted as part of the evaluation annual report to the Executive Board through the Programme, Budget and Administration Committee.

Continuous monitoring and reporting of follow-up to recommendations are key to enhancing the use of evaluations for learning and accountability purposes.

Organizational learning

- 65. The Evaluation Office and regional offices will increase their capacity to respond proactively to knowledge needs of the Organization and develop mechanisms to foster timely Organization-wide sharing of learning.
- 66. The Evaluation Office along with regional offices will synthesize evidence of completed evaluations and conduct cross-cutting analyses of evaluation findings/conclusions, recommendations and their implementation to identify emerging trends, root causes and potential solutions. It will increase the utility of evaluations to nurture dialogue with policy-makers and programme decision-makers. Results of evaluation synthesis reports will be submitted to the Executive Board and made publicly available.
- 67. The Evaluation Office, in collaboration with Regional Offices, will develop an Organization-wide and management-driven learning agenda and plan focused on crucial questions affecting the achievement of organizational results. It will also collaborate with global, regional and country communities of evaluation practice.
- 68. In addition to further strengthening learning within WHO, the evaluation function will enhance the global knowledge base by sharing evaluation evidence with the United Nations Evaluation Group, other United Nations entities, evaluation stakeholders and partners, as well as Member States, think-tanks, the academic community, the research community, and communities of practice.

Disclosure and dissemination of evaluation reports

- 69. All evaluations should have a plan for dissemination of their reports at the outset to further bolster evaluation use.
- 70. Evaluation reports, related products and their management responses will be made publicly available in accordance with the Organization's disclosure policy. These documents will be widely disseminated to ensure public access and to enhance visibility to promote greater awareness and use of their recommendations. Communication channels and means to increase transparency include, but are not limited to, informal information sessions for Member States, digital platforms and internet pages, dashboards on the WHO Member States portal, as well as social media, webinars, newsletters, podcasts and specific targeting.
- 71. Lessons learned from evaluations will be distilled, reported and disseminated as appropriate.

COMMUNICATION OF THE POLICY

- 72. This policy will be disseminated across the Organization along with complementary guidance to ensure its meaningful and consistent implementation. The Evaluation Office will draw up and implement a communication plan which will be championed by senior management to strengthen the evaluation culture across the three levels of the Organization and develop a common understanding of WHO evaluation policy standards, expectations and potential use.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

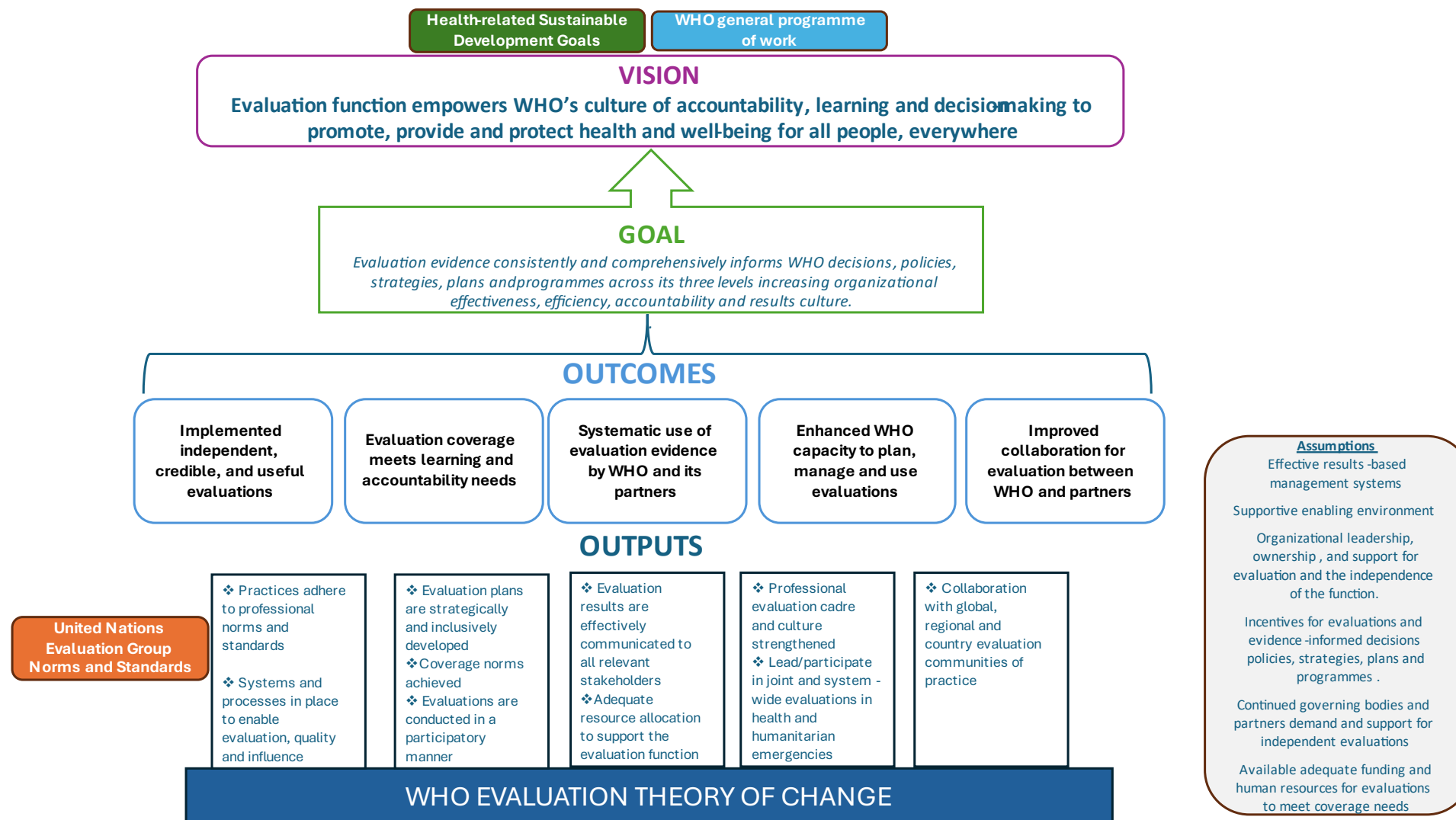
73. Key performance indicators for the evaluation function and policy implementation will be monitored by the Independent Expert Oversight Advisory Committee and the Secretariat, and reported on an annual basis as part of the Evaluation annual report to the Executive Board through the Programme, Budget and Administration Committee. A comprehensive monitoring framework with specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound indicators will be developed and aligned with WHO's strategic priorities to track the progress and impact of evaluations. Regular reviews will assess the overall quality and effectiveness of the evaluation function and identify areas for improvement.
74. WHO will request the United Nations Evaluation Group to conduct an independent peer review once at least every five years, in order for instance to identify good practices and provide recommendations to further strengthen the WHO evaluation function and inform future policy revisions. This policy will be reviewed at least every five years and updated as appropriate.

* * *

For further information and evaluation resources
contact: evaluation@who.int or visit:
who.int/about/evaluation



ANNEX 1: THEORY OF CHANGE



ANNEX 2: MINIMUM COVERAGE NORMS FOR INDEPENDENT EVALUATIONS

Category	Type of evaluation	Evaluation subject and frequency	Evaluation management (lead)	Indicative funding source
Corporate evaluations	Thematic (headquarters or Organization-wide)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All strategic priorities (from among their outcomes) within the general programme of work period The general programmes of work will be evaluated by their penultimate year of implementation. Evaluations mandated by the Executive Board or World Health Assembly 	HQ/EVL ¹ HQ/EVL HQ/EVL	HQ/EVL; management unit contribution Same Same
	Programmatic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At least one WHO programme per year At least one corporate process or mechanism of strategic importance per biennium All programmes or projects with a life-of-project budget above US\$ 10 million, and less if desired, to be evaluated within their life cycle 	HQ/EVL HQ/EVL According to location managed by programme with HQ/EVL and Regional Office support	HQ/EVL; management unit contribution Respective programmes/projects (including assessed contributions, voluntary contributions or specific donor evaluation line item)
Country programme evaluations (WHO contributions at country level)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At least one WHO country office per year per region, for instance to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> countries with off-track health indicators and/or high risks which will be subject to evaluation every programme cycle² at the time useful to the country countries with a country cooperation strategy, if selected for evaluation, at the middle or penultimate year of the period of the strategy 	Jointly managed by respective Regional Office and HQ/EVL	Regional Office/WHO country office, with HQ/EVL contribution/support, to one evaluation per year per region at a set amount

¹ WHO Evaluation Office at headquarters.

² The programme cycle may imply the period covered by a Country Cooperation Strategy, the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework or general programme of work.

Category	Type of evaluation	Evaluation subject and frequency	Evaluation management (lead)	Indicative funding source
Joint evaluations		Participate or lead in:		
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At least one inter-agency evaluation per year (if strategic opportunities arise) At least one evaluation of emergency and humanitarian intervention per year,³ including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> health emergencies where system-wide scale up is declared and evaluated through the Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluation mechanism and/or health emergencies scale up is declared by WHO and not covered by the Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluation mechanism As opportunities arise: country level joint evaluations, for example with the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework or other bodies 	<p>HQ/EVL participates in Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluation Management Group</p> <p>Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluation Management Group</p> <p>WHO Health Emergencies Programme with the support of HQ/EVL</p> <p>United Nations Country Team (or other United Nations entity lead)</p>	<p><i>If WHO contributes some funding: HQ/EVL</i></p> <p><i>If WHO contributes some funding: HQ/EVL</i></p> <p>WHO Health Emergencies Programme; possible HQ/EVL</p> <p><i>If WHO contributes: WCO or RO</i></p>
Decentralized evaluations	Thematic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Thematic evaluations initiated by a department or programme at headquarters, Regional Office or WHO country office; or at the request of funding partners 	Respective division or department at headquarters, Regional Office or WHO country office, or hosted partnership	Business owner's budget line; voluntary contributions (evaluation budget line)
	Programmatic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All programmes or projects with a life-of-project budget above US\$ 10 million, and less if desired, to be evaluated within their life cycle 	According to location managed by programme with HQ/EVL and/or Regional Office support	Respective programmes and projects (including assessed contributions, voluntary contributions, or specific donor evaluation line item)

³ The selection is made through consultations between the WHO Health Emergencies Programme and the WHO Evaluation Office.