RFP/BPPS/2017/003 – Policy Review of Quality Standards for Programming

Round 1: Questions and Answers

13 March 2017

#	Question	Answer
1	The RFP states that: "Key background documents that will be provided to facilitate this work include: 1. Quality Standards for Programming prescriptive content, rating tools, and background papers (including the 2016 HQ PAC lessons learned paper; 2. Data on Project QA from Power BI and customized data extractions upon request, along with QA ratings completed for CPDs by the HQ PAC Secretariat; 3. Data and evidence entered on the corporate planning system's project spaces, including Project QA assessments; 4. OAI's RBM Performance Audit; the Joint IEO/OAI Institutional Effectiveness Assessment; MOPAN, MAR, 2016 QCPR" How will access to data be provided? Will it all be electronically or is physical presence at UNDP expected/required?	All of the data is entered by country office staff responsible for quality assurance in a Sharepoint-based platform called the Corporate Planning System. Each project in UNDP has a dedicated "project space" where key information about the project is collected from various corporate systems (including financial data.) The quality assurance rating is done in a dedicated tab on this space, including the responses to the 24-26 question rating tool, accompanied by a place to upload evidence and a management response where applicable. The raw data of all responses, evidence, management responses, and others (i.e., who submitted and approved the QA form, what corporate output and outcome the project is linked to) will be provided in excel format. In addition to excel files, we use Power BI to analyze the data entered in the system. This allows us to see what has been done in a given country, region, or globally with respect to quality assurance, and the aggregate strengths and weaknesses in scores along a set of selected parameters (for example, gender and sustainability). All data will be available electronically. Physical presence at UNDP is not required, but can certainly be arranged if desired.
2	In what format can the data be shared? Will any training be required to access the data	The data will be provided in excel format. Log in credentials to access the Corporate Planning

	off site or on site (i.e. gain familiarity with the database system)? Please explain.	System and Power BI will also be provided. We will certainly discuss together the system, how it works and the data, and will be available to answer any questions.
3	Will the background document provide the consulting team with a deeper understanding of the process by which the tools are completed? This will be essential in the team's assessment, but also the design of tools.	The core background documents are linked to the original RFP, and additional background documents will be provided to the team selected for the assignment to more fully understand the QA system and the instructions that UNDP staff received to aid them in the completion of the tools. Access to relevant UNDP staff will be made available for further discussion as needed. Any document or information that we have related to this exercise will be made available to the team as and when needed to complete the analysis and recommendations.
4	Have any changes been made to the system or the process of completing the QA since the OAI's RBM Performance Audit? Please explain.	Shortly after the data for the RBM performance audit was collected, the QA system was launched as a requirement for the entire organization. The RBM performance audit looked at a small dataset from a pilot exercise. As of February 2017, 100% of projects in UNDP (over 3500 development projects) have been quality assured in the system against these standards using these rating tools. This is the first time we have such a large dataset on quality of all of UNDP's projects. In addition, some changes were made to the rating tools, such as allowing a "not applicable" button to some questions which may not apply to all projects.
5	Since the sample size (n=450) has already been determined, has the actual sample composition been determined as well? If yes, how was the decision made - by whom and based on what variables?	We would like the sample composition to provide statistically significant findings on the credibility of the data at the global and regional levels. This means that enough projects in each region will need to be quality assured to make a meaningful conclusion on the credibility of data collected in that region. This is why the sample size overall is 450 – each of our 5 regions would need about 85 projects randomly selected to have this data. For the balance, we would also like to ensure the largest projects in the organization are checked. This data can be presented separately since these projects will not be selected randomly.
6	The RFP states that "Collect user feedback on the relevance and usability of the quality standards and quality assurance process." At what user-level? Local? Country? Regional?	User feedback is at all levels. We have projects at the country, regional and global levels and we would like feedback on the suitability at all levels.

	International?	
7	The RFP notes, “User feedback will be collected through a survey sent to all QA assessors and QA approvers as well as follow-up interviews with a sample of these." Please tell us how the population size (#) of QA assessors and approvers will complete the survey? Will the consultants have to distribute the survey (from our system based on contact information provided by the UNDP) or does the UNDP plan to distribute the survey through their system (either through a CRM like platform or other mail delivery system)? This information is critical to finalizing a scope of work, especially as relates to establishing a sample size for interviews. How the surveys will be distributed, while minor, can be critical when we considering follow-ups/reminders to boost completion rates.	We will provide the email addresses for all UNDP staff who have completed the exercise so a survey can be sent to them. We do not have the final number yet, but it is in the hundreds. The survey can be conducted through SurveyMonkey or any software of the team’s choosing. We would like it done completely by the team to preserve independence. We will also provide the contact details for particularly vocal staff who would like their voice heard on the application of these standards. We would like independent recommendations on how this feedback can be taken into account without sacrificing the integrity and credibility of the exercise. We don’t have a set number of required interviews, but would like some to be done at the country, regional and global levels. We are looking for enough to make meaningful recommendations to strengthen the system.
8	The goal of this project is to conduct a “spot check of the Project QA data to advise on the credibility of the self-reported data and the rigor and evidence-base that underpins the completion of the exercise.” There seems to be two distinct units of analysis: - the ratings for 7 quality criteria and - evidence to support the ratings The RFP talks about two main measuring concepts that need to be operationalized and against which the units of analysis will be assessed: - credibility of the self-reported data - rigor of evidence provided The RFP also talks about “purpose” "given capacity and resources limitations”. Have “purpose” and “capacity” been already defined in/by the system? How?	First, it is important to note that the ratings (i.e., exemplary, highly satisfactory, satisfactory, needs improvement, inadequate) are provided by the system automatically based on the answers to the questions provided in the system. We can provide method for the rating calculation to the selected team. So, the credibility of the data is based on the strength of the evidence underpinning the responses to each of the questions. The term “purpose” is as defined in our 2014-2017 Strategic Plan, which committed that “programmes and projects will adhere to uniform quality standards and process for which managers will be accountable.” This is related to the Strategic Plan priority to “achieve higher quality programmes through better planning, design, monitoring and evaluation, underpinned by stronger results based management… [and] provide incentives to increase the quality of programme delivery at the country level.” Capacity and resource limitations refers to capacities in our programme units, including country offices. It means the staff available and sufficiently skilled to complete this exercise in a rigorous and credible manner. We have received messages (including from the RBM performance

		audit and the forthcoming Institutional Effectiveness Assessment) that offices lack the capacity to complete quality assurance as intended. We are looking for more concrete evidence on this, and a proposed way forward so we can address it.
9	Do proposals need to come up with their definitions for thresholds of "credibility"? For example, should 'credibility' be viewed as an homogenous concept/standard across countries/projects?	We know there will be a credibility gap – that a certain degree of answers in the QA system are inflated. We are looking for a better understanding of the magnitude of this. For example, do only 3% of the questions have inflated responses, or is it more like 60%? Do some questions have a bigger gap in understanding of the concept than others (such as for theory of change?) If so, how big is this gap, on average? We don't have a set methodology for define this, but we want to be able to use it to qualify the data when we report on it, or use it in decision-making. We can also use this information to target capacity building for staff, to improve the credibility of the data for next year and beyond.
10	Since there will be no field work, how should contextual/situational analyses be considered? Also, should local capacity be considered when assessing capacity to provide reliable information? For example, in the case below: "1. Does the project's Theory of Change specify how it will contribute to higher level change? (Select the option from 1- 3 that best reflects the project): * 3: The project has a theory of change with explicit assumptions and clear change pathway describing how the project will contribute to outcome level change as specified in the programme/CPD, backed by credible evidence of what works effectively in this context. The project document clearly describes why the project's strategy is the best approach at this point in time. * 2: The project has a theory of change. It has an explicit change pathway that explains how the project intends to contribute to outcome-level change and why	The team is not requested to consider the context for each project – that would not be possible in the available time. We will provide a copy of UNDP's approach to theory of change, and will explain what we expect to see in a project document to meet each potential response. The team will be requested to verify if a theory of change does exist based on the available documents, and if so, if it meets the standard corporate requirements (please refer to response 2) or if it exceeds minimum requirements (please refer to response 3). Please note that **programmes** in UNDP are defined as higher-level strategic contributions to outcome areas to be achieved over the medium term in a defined geographic area (for example, UNDP's 5 year strategy in India) and **projects** deliver outputs which contribute to the achievement of the programme. So, we may have dozens of projects developed to achieve the programme in a particular country (or region or globally, for the regional and global programmes). While the quality standards and assurance tools apply to both programmes and projects, the

	the project strategy is the best approach at this point in time, but is backed by limited evidence. * 1: The project does not have a theory of change, but the project document may describe in generic terms how the project will contribute to development results, without specifying the key assumptions. It does not make an explicit link to the programme/CPD's theory of change." Do consultants need to assess how the ToC was determined as well as its adequacy vis-a-vis local resources/capacity/context?	scope of this work is primarily at the **project level**.