



UNEG Framework for Professional Peer Reviews of the Evaluation Function of UN organizations

The UNEG Framework for Professional Reviews of the Evaluation of UN Organizations was approved as a UNEG reference document at the UNEG Annual General Meeting 2011.

This framework builds on the [Framework for Professional Peer Reviews](#) developed by the DAC/UNEG Joint Task Force on Professional Peer Reviews of Evaluation Functions in Multilateral Organizations, January 2007.

Background and Rationale

1. This Framework for professional peer reviews of the evaluation function of United Nations (UN) organisations is a contribution to the efforts in the international community to strengthen a shared agenda for improving performance in development and international cooperation. Since 2004, with support of the DAC Network on Development Evaluation¹, this framework for professional peer reviews has been developed based on internationally recognized standards. In 2005, the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Norms and Standards (N&S) for Evaluation in the UN System² were adopted and since then they have played an increasingly important role as the touchstone for the peer reviews. In this framework they form the starting and end point for the peer review process. A joint DAC/UNEG Task Force has developed previous versions of this framework which was applied in a number of peer reviews³. The current “UNEG Framework for Professional Peer Reviews of the Evaluation Function of UN Organizations” incorporates lessons from earlier peer reviews as well as additional revisions to ensure that it is now is a UNEG Framework for Peer Reviews.

2. The UNEG N&S recognize the variety in mandates, organizational types and unique roles and tasks throughout the UN, and therefore introduce an “**evaluation policy**” as a means for the organization to translate the UNEG N&S to its specific circumstances. Many UN organizations and programs have adopted an evaluation policy and where this is the case, this policy will be used as a starting point for the peer review. The role of the evaluation policy in ensuring a sound professional application of the UNEG N&S in the organization concerned is incorporated in Standards 1.1 to 1.4 and in Norms N2 and N3.

3. The peer review will focus on three core issues that together provide a perspective on how the evaluation function performs: **independence, credibility** and **utility**. Independence is stressed in the Norms, specifically in N6.1 to N6.5. It supports and enables the Impartiality of evaluations, as related in N5, which together with Quality (N8) and Transparency (N10) lead to Credibility of evaluations, as laid down in N1.2. Together with Intentionality (N4) and Timeliness (N4.2) they assure the Utility of evaluations, as required in N1.2.

4. Depending on the applicability to the organization being reviewed, as described in the evaluation policy of the organization, a normative framework for each peer review will be derived from the UNEG N&S. Given the central importance of the normative framework to the peer review process and its results, this framework for the organization concerned needs to be agreed between those who conduct the peer review (the review panel) and organization at an early stage. Based on this normative framework, the peer review has several purposes:

¹ See [DAC Network on Development Evaluation](#).

² UNEG Norms for Evaluation in the UN System, [UNEG/FN/Norms\(2005\)](#) and UNEG Standards for Evaluation in the UN System, [UNEG/FN/Standards\(2005\)](#).

³ The framework was developed on the basis of the pilot peer reviews of the evaluation functions of respectively UNDP (2005) and UNICEF (2006). It was subsequently applied in peer reviews of the evaluation function of WFP (2007), OIOS (2009), GEF (2009) and UNIDO (2010).

- Providing an independent and professional assessment on the extent to which the UNEG N&S have been adopted in the organization concerned. This assessment may lead to the formulation of potential improvements in the evaluation policy and practice.
- Building greater knowledge, confidence and use of evaluation systems by management, governing body and others. This may lead – if appropriate – to better understanding of the current quality and needed improvements in evaluation; better integration of the evaluation function and evaluation findings into performance management; improved evaluation practice throughout the organization; and stronger evaluation planning and budgeting.
- Within the organization, providing a way of “evaluating the evaluators” through a professional peer assessment against the UNEG N&S, thus respecting the necessary degree of independence of the evaluation function from direct assessment by management;
- Sharing good practice, experience and mutual learning, building greater internal capacity and external confidence in UN evaluation systems and thus ultimately reducing demands for external assessments of the organization’s performance and effectiveness⁴.

5. The peer review will assess the extent to which the evaluation function contributes to the **accountability** and **learning** in the organization for: the governing body and senior management of the organization, its member states, and communities and donors providing support to the organization. Furthermore, the peer review should also provide a perspective on the extent to which evaluations cover the **achievements** of the organization.

6. The primary intended **audience** for the results of these professional peer reviews are decision-makers (senior management, governing body and evaluators) and other users of evaluation – including where appropriate the intended beneficiaries in member countries. Given this primary audience, it is especially important to avoid engaging or appearing to engage in special pleading or professional courtesy among professional evaluators, and to ensure that the review embodies objective and demanding standards for advancing organizational performance and accountability. An important first step in the process of the peer review will be to further identify the primary audience in the organization under review.

7. This Framework sets out both specific recommendations and options for the “**Approach and Methodology**” for professional peer reviews, beginning with an explanation of the nature, strengths and limits of a peer review. Because the peer reviews are intended to assess the evaluation function against the UNEG N&S in a wide range of organizations, the framework allows for necessary flexibility, for example to adapt for de-centralised and centralized evaluation systems or to feature or put emphasis on special issues for particular organizations.

⁴ Such external assessments have been initiated by donors commissioning so-called joint donor evaluations of the UN organisation or program at issue.

8. The Framework also clearly recognizes that work may need to be done to adapt or elaborate it in some cases – for example, to very small or highly specialized organizations, and/or those with limited evaluation capacities. The framework also includes an explicit treatment of the risks that may arise in these reviews, and ways of managing them.

9. The Framework outlines the **key roles and responsibilities** of different parties involved in the reviews, beginning with the peer panel, including appropriate criteria for selection of its members, and the main expectations for its tasks. Similarly, it outlines the major roles and responsibilities that will fall on the organization under review, which will normally be carried mainly, but not exclusively, by its evaluation unit.

10. To facilitate the work of those launching future reviews, the main lines of the approach, and some important practical lessons, are illustrated with typical steps and sequences, in a section providing a “**phase-by-phase organization of a peer review process**”. The document concludes with brief discussions of the time and resources that are likely to be required for a professional peer review of the evaluation function, and of the planned monitoring and assessment of experience with these reviews.

11. UNEG will facilitate, guide and monitor the peer reviews. On the one hand to ensure feedback to the UNEG N&S of experiences as they emerge through the peer reviews. On the other hand to support the application of the UNEG N&S in future peer reviews of UN organizations.

Approach and Methodology

The overall approach

The nature, strengths and limits of a professional peer review

12. Peer review can be described as the systematic examination and assessment of the performance of an organization by its peers, with the ultimate goal of helping the reviewed organization improve its policy making, adopt best practices, and comply with established standards and principles. The examination relies heavily on mutual trust among the organizations involved in the review, as well as their shared confidence in the process.

13. It is not intended to serve as a procedure for resolving differences and peer review never implies a punitive decision or sanctions; it generally goes beyond fact-finding to include an assessment of performance, and is characterized by dialogue and interactive investigation. Peer pressure does not take the form of legally binding acts, as sanctions or other enforcement mechanisms. Instead, it is a means of peer persuasion which can become an important driving force to stimulate organizations to change, achieve goals and meet standards.⁵

⁵ The basic parameters of peer review outlined here are taken from “[Peer review: a tool for co-operation and change: An analysis of an OECD working method](#)” by F. Pagani (2002), OECD, Paris. They have been adapted to the special character of reviews under this framework.

14. Professional peer reviews generally contain the following structural elements, and the following sections of this framework outline recommendations and options for applying them to these reviews of the evaluation function in multilateral organizations:

- A basis for proceeding: including the necessary agreement for cooperation, and a clear question for assessment;
- A normative framework: an agreed set of principles, standards and criteria against which performance is to be reviewed;
- Designated actors and roles in carrying out the peer review; and
- A set of procedures for planning, assembling and testing the base of evidence and findings, leading to the final result of the peer review – an exchange around the conclusions drawn primarily from the diverse professional experience and judgments of the peer panelists themselves, deliberating as a group.

15. The device of professional peer assessment, already well tested in the development field, has been agreed to bring a number of special strengths to this undertaking, as illustrated in international processes such as those of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), World Trade Organisation (WTO) and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). First, it starts with a shared appreciation of the distinctive challenges of work and evaluation in the various fields of international cooperation, and the fact that all concerned are constantly striving to improve. Second, it can adapt and apply the most pertinent professional principles, norms and standards in coming to an assessment. Third, drawing on experienced professional peers from other institutions (participating as individuals) will maximize the opportunities for sharing relevant experience and lessons. Finally, the resulting assessment should carry particular weight, both internally and externally, for the independence and professional credibility of its results. All these aspirations highlight the importance of the quality of the panel and its support, as well as the openness and cooperation of the organization being reviewed.

16. To avoid unrealistic expectations, it is important to be clear that a professional peer review of the evaluation function in an organization is not in itself an assessment of the effectiveness of that organization. However, it can and should contribute to the basis for assessing the effectiveness of the organization, by testing the capacity and quality of the organization's own evaluations of effectiveness, providing insight in evaluation coverage, especially as regards programming of evaluations, and thus the confidence that can be placed in them and whether they provide a representative picture of the achievements of the organization. Further, while a peer review of the evaluation function is focused on one important part of an organization's performance management systems, at the same time it is also likely to shed light on other parts, such as the framework for managing for results, organizational learning, etc. Maintaining this specialized focus on evaluation will be important for the reviews, while also taking into account how it actually works with these inter-related systems in the organization.

17. It should also be stressed that these peer reviews:

- Are not themselves full-fledged evaluations – they are less comprehensive and in-depth assessments but, as outlined below, they should adhere to a rigorous methodology – applying the key principles of evaluation while taking full advantage of the particular

benefits of a peer mechanism. It is explicit that the final conclusions will clearly be a judgment by the Panel concerned.

- Must themselves reflect the accepted standards of good practice in development cooperation by seriously engaging developing country partners in the process of the review, in the learning acquired, and in the use of the results.
- Are designed to be targeted and lean – without sacrificing the rigour required for their basic validity and credibility – to avoid making unreasonable demands of time, expense and additional workload on both Panel members and the organization being reviewed.

18. The professional peer reviews are intended to assess the evaluation function against the UNEG N&S in a wide range of organizations, as such the Framework has a blend of standard and flexible elements. Thus it contains clear guidelines on a consistent broad normative framework using applicable norms and standards, and also provides some tested, step-by-step options and practical suggestions for carrying out the review. At the same time, it is intended to allow for necessary flexibility to adapt for decentralized and centralized evaluation systems or to feature special issues or emphases for particular organizations. Thus there are a number of issues that are likely to require decision as the plan is finalized for each individual review exercise. It is also clearly recognized that work may need to be done to adapt the model much further in some cases – for example, to very small or highly specialized organizations, and/or those with extremely limited existing evaluation capacities.

19. Finally, because the evaluation community is undergoing professional development in many areas, developing principles, norms and standards and guidelines on many issues, the peer review framework cannot be static and has to be dynamic and flexible. To some extent experimentation is to be expected, and the documentation and sharing of experience and lessons is encouraged, including information exchange and collaboration with other evaluation communities, with a view to maintain the framework at the highest level of international practice.

Risks and their management

20. Among the possible risks that may be encountered in carrying out these professional peer reviews, six appear to be most prominent:

- a. A major risk is that the peer review falls into an institutional vacuum if there is not a genuine and sustained demand from senior management and/or the governing body;
- b. The review might become too heavy to be justified e.g. very burdensome on the organization being reviewed and/or the panel, or too expensive or extended;
- c. At the other extreme, it might become too light to be credible e.g. too cursory or superficial a treatment, or having insufficient engagement of the panel members to warrant the claim of a properly informed peer assessment;
- d. It might become, or be perceived as, too “cosy” an assessment among professional evaluation peers, lobbying for this professional function or exercising too much “professional courtesy” in its assessments; or

- e. Because it requires access to sometimes-sensitive information and leads to important assessments of the quality of the work of organizations and teams, each review will encounter and have to manage different views on process and substance, and could become bogged down in disputes at various levels;
- f. It might be perceived as a donor-driven exercise to justify decreased voluntary contributions to the organization concerned if the conclusions of the review are negative;
- g. At the other extreme it might be perceived as an exercise conducted to provide justification for higher voluntary contribution if the review is very positive.

21. The Framework has been designed to include features to mitigate each of them to the extent possible. At the same time, it will be important for all parties embarking on such a review to register and discuss these risks explicitly at an early stage, and build any necessary risk-mitigation measure into the specific review plan.

22. The fourth risk – that of serious disputes which might come to threaten the integrity or completion of the review – also needs to be anticipated and specifically managed. It should be stressed that differences of approach and interpretation are intrinsic to any such exercise, and that the open “dialogue and interactive investigation” in the process are a major part of its value. Nonetheless, even in very well institutionalized peer review systems, intractable conflicts can arise among participants at various levels. In such cases senior management of the organization, or alternatively its governing body and UNEG may interact to help resolve or manage the conflict. This contingency should be specifically recognized and provided for in the agreed peer review plan between the panel and the host organization.

23. The last two risks will only emerge in the case where a peer review is sponsored by a donor to the organization concerned. They need to be confronted in the mixture of panel members, where restraint should be applied in appointing members from donors that have a high financial stake in the organization or donors that are in the process of reconsidering the level of their voluntary contributions. Furthermore, they need to be mitigated by ensuring the rigor and credibility of the peer review itself.

Focus of the peer reviews of evaluation.

24. The professional peer review will focus on the evaluation function within the organization; take its evaluation policy and its central evaluation unit as a starting point and working towards understanding how evaluation operates at the various levels, in order to review the quality of the function in light of the objectives of the organization and the UNEG N&S. Specific aims would be:

- a. To assess structural aspects of how the evaluation function operates in the organization. Depending on the organization reviewed, this should look at the evaluation function in the perspective of how the organization can better report on and increase its effectiveness in reaching its goal.
- b. The peer review should look at policy issues, starting with the evaluation policy of the organization and other related policies, as well as issues of planning, budgeting and coverage.

- c. It should address various relevant levels in the organization, such as the governance level (board, council), central management functions and the central evaluation unit, decentralized evaluations both in headquarters and in field offices, and outsourced evaluations in interventions.

25. It should look at existing capacity and need for capacity strengthening, use of relevant and appropriate evaluation methodologies, and the quality of the evaluations undertaken, in preparation, implementation and reporting. Another key focus should generally be to look at collaboration in evaluation with local partners and stakeholders, as well as harmonization and coordination with other external partners.

The Framework for Assessment

A core assessment question

26. The professional peer reviews of evaluation are to be centred on a “core assessment question”:

‘Are the agency’s evaluation policy, function and its products: independent; credible; and useful for learning and accountability purposes, as assessed by a panel of professional evaluation peers against the UN Norms and Standards and the evidence base.’

27. As reflected in this question, the approach and methodology hinges on using the UNEG N&S and their applicability to the organization in question, as set out in the evaluation policy of the organization. If no evaluation policy exists, other policy or guiding documents of the organization will need to be studied to identify the specific way in which the UNEG N&S should apply to the organization. This will be reflected in the normative framework that will be developed by the peer panel.

28. The peer review will then **cluster** the treatment of the many issues **under three crucial criteria for the evaluation function**, specified as:

- **Independence** of evaluations and evaluation systems. The evaluation process should be impartial and independent in its function from the process concerned with the policy making, the delivery, and the management of assistance. A requisite measure of independence of the evaluation function is a recognised pre-condition for credibility, validity and usefulness. At the same time, each review should bear in mind in that the appropriate guarantees of the necessary independence in a particular organization will differ according to the nature of its work, its governance and decision-making arrangements, and other factors. Moreover, most organizations aim to encourage the active application and use of evaluations at all levels of management, meaning that systemic measures for ensuring the necessary objectivity and impartiality of this work should receive due attention. Indicators of independence are broadly covered by UNEG Norms N6.1 – N6.5 and amplified in the relevant Standards.
- **Credibility** of evaluations. The credibility of evaluation depends on the expertise and independence of the evaluators and the degree of transparency of the evaluation process. Credibility requires that evaluations should report successes as well as failures. Recipient

countries should, as a rule, fully participate in evaluation in order to promote credibility and commitment. Whether and how the organization's approach to evaluation fosters partnership and helps build ownership and capacity in developing countries merits attention as a major theme. Indicators of credibility are mainly treated in UNEG Norms N5.1 – N5.3, N8.1, N9.1 – N9.3 and N11.1 – N 11.5 and amplified in the relevant Standards.

- **Utility** of evaluations. To have an impact on decision-making, evaluation findings must be perceived as relevant and useful and be presented in a clear and concise way. They should fully reflect the different interests and needs of the many parties involved in development co-operation. Importantly, each review should bear in mind that ensuring the utility of evaluations is only partly under the control of evaluators. It is also critically a function of the interest of managers, and member countries through their participation on governing bodies, in commissioning, receiving and using evaluations. Indicators of utility are mainly treated in UNEG Norms N2.6, N1.3, N 8.2, N10.1, N 10.2 and N.12.1 - N12.3 and amplified in the relevant Standards.

Normative Framework

29. UNEG has been asked by the UN General Assembly to further work on professional and technical norms and standards in evaluation, including for example quality standards for evaluations and performance criteria for evaluation units and evaluators. These newly emerging and periodically updated norms, standards and guidelines need to be incorporated into the normative frameworks for future peer reviews. Since this will require an element of translation of the norms and standards, or guidelines, into a normative framework for the organization to be peer reviewed, peer review panels and their host organizations should thus consider and decide at an early stage on any additional norms, standards and guidelines that should be applied, in an experimental spirit, for the review in question, and then document and report on the experience with their use.

30. In the same experimental vein, it should also be recognised that these peer reviews may be one of the most important continuing general tests of the usefulness of the prevailing norms and standards for evaluation, and they should thus be prepared to suggest ways to strengthen them on the basis of these experiences.

31. Given the central importance of the normative framework to the whole professional peer review process and its results, it is important to reach agreement between the peer review panel and organization on this Framework at an early stage.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Peer Panel

32. The expertise and commitment of the peer panel itself, together with the cooperation of the organization being reviewed, is essential to the successful conduct of the peer review. Given the likely demands of other responsibilities on most panel members, the demands of this work need to be well-organized and prepared, and highly experienced and skilled consultants are also likely to be required.

33. In selecting participants for the panel, which should be restricted to five or six participants, experience confirms that the major criteria for selection of the group should include a combination of the following attributes:

- a. Independence from the particular organization being assessed;
- b. Professional evaluation expertise;
- c. Understanding of the context and use of evaluation in development cooperation and multilateral organizations;
- d. An acceptable gender mix;
- e. Participation from UN organizations;
- f. Participation from bilateral agencies and/or international financial institutions, where relevant;
- g. Participation from country/ies receiving assistance, including those with evaluation responsibilities;
- h. Participation from independent evaluation experts, and where relevant other research fields, oversight disciplines or knowledge sharing expertise; and
- i. Capacity to deal with senior management and governing body levels.

34. The panel should be tailored to the organisation to be reviewed. It should have members that reflect that organisation's particular profile, including those who are not necessarily staff of UN agencies. The distinction between panel members and advisors/consultants could be flexible. In some cases – especially for smaller organizations – it may be more practical to have a panel where some members undertake a larger amount of work than the others and no consultants are included.

35. It is recommended that either one UN evaluation unit, UNEG or a bilateral evaluation office sponsoring the peer panel or several members of the peer panel take the **lead responsibility** for managing the process and either directly providing logistical and secretariat services, or contracting in relevant support, as well as taking care of the process of publishing the report and disseminating it. Furthermore, the Chair of the panel will actively engage with the organization's senior management and/or governing body to encourage their interest and involvement in the peer review and its results. Furthermore, the Chair of the panel or the lead agency involved in the peer review will ensure that the key conclusions and possible lessons from the review are communicated to UNEG and that the review report and supporting evidence are easily accessible to UNEG members and other interested parties.

36. UNEG will facilitate the presentation of the peer review report at the highest appropriate level of the organization, to senior management and/or the governing body. This could take the form of a joint presentation by UNEG and the Chair of the panel.

37. Although the peer panel takes overall responsibility for the process, together with the organization reviewed, the most intensive direct roles of panel members would normally be concentrated near the beginning and end of the overall process:

- First, in clearly defining the Terms of Reference (ToR) of the peer panel and normative framework to be proposed for the particular review, with the organization being reviewed; and
- Validating the evidence and findings, bringing together the judgements, conclusions and recommendations of the review, presenting and following up the results.

38. The major part of the intervening data-gathering and analysis work could be delegated to carefully-selected consultants, responsible to the panel and working within the agreed ToR using the normative framework.

The evaluation unit of the organization under review

39. The evaluation unit is likely to be the internal initiator, principal organizer, and substantive collaborator on the review within the organization concerned. The extent to which a governing body or senior management are willing and able to take active roles in initiating and organizing the review will likely have major benefits to the credibility and usefulness of the review. The evaluation unit (or other principal partner to the review from the organization) will be responsible to undertake considerable work in the following areas:

- Informing and obtaining the necessary endorsements by senior management, and if possible the governing body, to conduct the review and assure the necessary cooperation;
- Interacting with the panel on the draft ToR for the peer review;
- Interacting with the panel on the normative framework;
- Up-dating or preparing a self-assessment of the evaluation function in the organization;
- Facilitating all necessary access to its own data and internal interviewees, and assisting in identifying and securing similar access throughout the rest of the organization;
- Helping ensure the presentation of the results to senior management and the governing body, and its dissemination throughout the organization; and
- Contributing its views on the experience to UNEG, and providing follow-up reports (after one and two years) on actions taken and other impacts of the review.

Phases of the Peer Review Process

40. The peer review process involves in principle three distinct phases. The first phase is the **preparatory phase** in which the ToR for the peer review (and the panel) are formulated, the normative framework is developed and the self-assessment of the evaluation function takes place on the basis of this

normative framework. The second phase, termed the “**fact-finding phase**”, consists of a document review, focused on assembling the factual information needed for the peer review; a first visit of the peer panel to validate this information laid down in a “factual report”, seek clarification where needed and help panel members to understand how the evaluation function works. The latter will involve conducting structured interviews with stakeholders in the organization (evaluation department, other staff and senior management) in order to solicit their views on the evaluation function. If field visits are needed, they will be undertaken during this phase. The results of “fact-finding phase” will be incorporated into a draft peer review report. The final phase of the peer review would be the **peer exchange** itself followed by producing the final report. The final phase consists of a second visit to discuss practices and potential improvements based on the draft final report. The deliberations during the **peer exchange** would lead to a final report that will be presented to the evaluation unit concerned and to senior management and/or the governing body of the organization, to ensure that issues identified are taken up beyond the evaluation function. Below the different activities in the respective phases of the review are provided in more detail.

Phase 1: Preparatory Phase

41. The first step is the invitation by the organization (preferably the governing body or senior management) to conduct the professional peer review. It should be noted that such peer reviews are likely to be best planned and scheduled to coincide with important decisions, reviews and/or relevant events. Endorsement by senior management of the host organization and if possible by its governing body should if possible be ensured before the invitation takes place. At the very least, the latter should be informed and engaged at the outset and at key milestones in the process. Demonstrating benefits from other experiences may be helpful in stimulating interest and demand by both senior management and governing bodies.

42. UNEG will facilitate in identifying a volunteer (ideally in some rotational order) representative of a lead peer organization, willing to offer direction, coordination and financial support, backed by other peer organizations also willing to participate. In addition to the substantial in-kind contributions required of the organizations forming the peer panel (time and travel costs), direct costs involved in conducting the review may be borne by the lead organization ideally with a contribution from the other members of the panel. Some organizations being reviewed might in some cases want to take some share in the direct costs. Furthermore, the possibility of support out of the UNEG budget could be considered in certain cases. In those cases where the main funding originates from the organization to be peer reviewed, UNEG may facilitate the independence of the peer review panel by acting as intermediary for these funds. UNEG (either its Task Force mandated to work on peer reviews or the UNEG Bureau⁶) will support the lead organization and the other organizations interested to support the review, in establishing the membership of the peer panel. The peer panel will be established in consultation with the host organization concerned.

43. Following the establishment of the panel, further preparatory work is needed to inform the panel’s ToR and normative framework for the peer review. Familiarization of the panel with the evaluation function in the context of the organization’s mission, governance, policies, structures, budget, staffing and operations is necessary in order to inform the ToR and the normative framework. It is important to first try to understand the organization, and how the evaluation function can best serve it,

⁶ Consisting of the UNEG Chair, UNEG vice-Chair and UNEG Secretariat.

prior to looking in depth at the machinery. Furthermore, the way that the organization will handle the peer review needs to be identified beforehand, in order to fully understand the context for the peer review.

44. If appropriate and where needed the lead organization, or the Chair of the peer panel will ensure the selection and appointment of consultant/s to support the peer panel.

45. The panel will prepare ToR for the peer review, which will be shared and discussed with the organization undergoing the peer review. The ToR will formulate the specific goals of this peer review, identify the scope and limitations, establish the roles and responsibilities, establish the panel itself, the main audience of the peer review and the process and timeline of the peer process itself, as well as the budget of the peer review. Furthermore, the ToR will incorporate a mapping of the stakeholders of the evaluation function in the organization.

46. Preparation of a normative framework suitable for the organization to be reviewed will be undertaken by the panel on the basis of the UNEG N&S and the evaluation policy of the organization, or other appropriate guiding or policy documents in the absence of a policy. This normative framework will also be discussed with and agreed upon with the evaluation unit in the organization. It will contain the criteria on which the peer assessment will be based, derived from the UNEG N&S, but appropriate to the organization.

47. On the basis of this normative framework the evaluation unit of the organization will carry out a self-assessment of the evaluation function, taking into account any additional guidance of UNEG on self-assessments.

48. In summary, the outputs of the first phase are **ToR** for the peer review to be undertaken, an agreed upon **normative framework** on how the UNEG N&S apply to the organization to be reviewed, and a **Self-Assessment** of the evaluation unit of the organization on how the evaluation function measures up to the normative framework. In this phase the contacts between the panel and the evaluation unit will have been mostly through electronic means or telephone conversations – if desirable, video- or teleconferences could be organized.

Phase 2: Fact-finding Phase

49. The first step of the second phase is to gather facts on the evaluation function, such as evaluation reports, reviews, annual reports of the organization and any additional documentation that could throw some light on the self-assessment and on the application of the UNEG N&S in the organization. The ToR should describe how this fact-finding desk review will take place and who will undertake it. If done by a (or more than one) consultant, this needs to be incorporated in the budget of the peer review.

50. The draft document review report will be send to the evaluation unit of the organization in advance of the (first) visit of the peer panel to the organization, so that it can be verified and used as a basis for discussion.

51. A visit of the panel to the organization will take place, organized and supported by the evaluation unit. During this visit, a first peer exchange will take place on the self-assessment and on the draft desk review, which will enable further clarification on both sides. Furthermore, this is the opportunity for the panel to look into the reality behind the documents studied so far. A series of meetings and interviews

with other stakeholders in the organization should be arranged for during this visit and if possible and applicable with senior management and/or the governing body.

52. After the visit the evaluation unit could submit factual information relevant to issues raised during the first visit of the panel and/or contained in the report of the documentary review.

53. If field visits are planned to take place, they could be undertaken at this stage, after the first visit to the organization, and with the support of the evaluation unit. However, field visits increase the costs of the peer review considerably and their added value needs to be ascertained. If field visits of the panel take place, they should be well focused on specific issues, for example on the conduct of decentralized evaluations or specific questions regarding the application of UNEG N&S in evaluation practice.

54. Integrating the results and insights from the documentary review, the interviews at headquarters level and possible field visits, the panel will complete the triangulation, refinement and confirmation of its evidence, analysis and findings. On that basis, it will then prepare the draft peer review report.

Phase 3: The Peer Exchange and the Final Report

55. The draft peer review report will serve as the basis for the Peer Assessment meeting with the host evaluation unit to consider the results in depth and to have a peer exchange on the issues observed and how they could be tackled. This second visit of the peer panel should focus on this peer exchange and on creating an atmosphere between professionals in which technical and professional issues are discussed in a frank and open manner. This exchange provides a final opportunity for review of the panel's findings, conclusions and recommendations and to identify issues on which the views between the panel and the reviewed organization diverge.

56. Taking into account the results of the meeting, the panel finalizes the report. The peer review panel bears the responsibility for the content of its report, but offers the evaluation unit, and where appropriate, management, the opportunity to provide dissenting views, which are incorporated in the report in footnotes or an annexe. The panel then transmits its final report to the organization, either directly or through UNEG.

57. The (Chair of the) panel will present the main findings of the peer review report to the organization, ideally to its governing body. The governing body may discuss the findings of the peer review together with the management response on the review report prepared by the leadership of the organization reviewed.

58. Panel and evaluation office concerned will each prepare notes on lessons learned from the exercise and present these to UNEG, or its mandated Task Force for peer reviews with a view to periodically adapt the approach of future peer reviews if needed.

Applying a “Reduced” Framework

59. Self-identified “small organizations” in the UN or self-identified small evaluation units may propose to UNEG to organize a condensed version of the peer review, in order to keep the costs relatively low and commensurate to the value to be gained from the peer review. UNEG may agree to this

perspective and initiate a less intensive peer review, in which the second and third phase would be integrated.

60. The first phase would remain the same in general terms, but it is assumed that in a reduced peer review, no consultants will be hired and the panel would be reduced to no more than at the most four panel members, and at a minimum two panel members. The lead organization would ensure that the desk review of existing documentation would take place, but this is not assumed to be a major exercise, as there would be not that many documents to review in any case. Nevertheless, ToR will need to be written, and a reduced normative framework needs to be developed, and a Self Assessment needs to take place on this basis.

61. The second and third phase could be integrated as follows. The two visits of the panel should be merged into one, starting the visit with the validation of the factual report, following up with further evidence exchanges, including interviews with management and stakeholders and finishing the visit with the peer exchange and meeting with management. This visit could take place in one week, with peer exchanges and interviews taking place on the Monday and Tuesday, internal reflection for the peer panel planned for the Wednesday, the final peer exchange taking place on Thursday and the presentation of the findings and recommendations on the Friday. This is indicative – in any case the ToR for the peer review need to spell out how this visit would take place and what the specific requirements and arrangements would be.

Planning and Budgeting

62. UNEG peer reviews will need to be done with lower budgets and with less time spent on them than has been the case for the peer reviews that were undertaken within the Joint DAC/UNEG Framework for Peer Reviews. Two costs assessment more or less spell out the extremes of the expenditure so far, both in terms of in-kind contributions and in funding. The GEF peer review may have cost more than 260 staff days (of panel members) to complete and about \$ 200,000 in consultants and travel costs. The OIOS peer review, which started from a less ambitious perspective, has cost about 90 staff days (of panel members) and about \$140,000.

63. The current Framework aims to reduce consultants and travel costs and focus more on peer exchanges. It also aims to reduce the number of visits to the organization. Suggested figures would go in the direction of about 100 staff days and \$100,000 for a regular peer review and about 50 staff days and \$50,000 for a “reduced” peer review. In any case, these estimates need to be substantiated in the ToR developed for each peer review.

64. Nevertheless, the Framework implies a high level of ambition for professional peer reviews. This is reasonable in view of the fact that the teams (panel and advisors) should be very qualified and that the reviews must produce credible information to many different stakeholders. Therefore the ambition is also to involve highly qualified and senior professionals in peer reviews, so that the reduced funding levels are compensated in the high quality of the work delivered.

65. In general peer reviews should take between six to nine months from start to finish.

Key References

[Framework for Professional Peer Reviews](#), DAC/UNEG Joint Task Force on Professional Peer Reviews of Evaluation Functions in Multilateral Organizations, January 2007.

[Peer Review of the Evaluation Function of the Global Environment Facility](#) (GEF), Belgian Development Cooperation, May 2009.

- [Response of the GEF to the Peer Review of the GEF Evaluation Function](#), GEF, July 2009
- Lessons Learned from the GEF Evaluation Function Peer Review, Joint Note from the GEF Evaluation Office and the Peer Review Panel, 15 March 2010.

[Peer Review of the Evaluation Function of the United Nations Development Programme](#) (UNDP) Evaluation Office, DANIDA et al, December 2005.

- Peer Review of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Evaluation Office, Key Issues and Lessons Identified, 17 March 2006.

[Peer Review of the Evaluation Function of the United Nations Children's Fund](#) (UNICEF), DANIDA et al, May 2006.

- Peer Review of Evaluation Function at United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF): Management Response, 31 May 2006.

[Peer Review of the Evaluation Function of the UN Office for Oversight Services](#) (OIOS), SDC, 2009

- Lessons Learned by OIOS from the UNEG Peer Review of the Office of Internal Oversight Services of the United Nations (OIOS), April 2010
- [OIOS Management Response to the UNEG-DAC Peer Review](#), OIOS, March 2009.

[Peer Review of the Evaluation Function of the World Food Programme](#) (WFP), Sida, 2007.

[UNEG Norms for Evaluation in the UN System](#) (UNEG/FN/Norms[2005]), UNEG, 2005.

[UNEG Standards for Evaluation in the UN System](#) (UNEG/FN/Standards[2005]), UNEG, 2005.