

Australia's PNG Institutional Partnerships Program (PIPP)

Independent Mid-Term Review
Evaluation Report

May 2025

Acknowledgments

The Mid Term Review was undertaken by Dr David Carpenter and Dr Pamela Kamya.

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ACAP	Agency Capacity Assessment and Plans
AEC	Australian Election Commission
AGD	Attorney-General's Department
AGE	Australian Government Entities
AGO	Auditor-General's Office
AHC	Australian High Commission, Port Moresby
AIFFP	Australian Infrastructure Finance Facility for the Pacific
ANAO	Australian National Audit Office
ANU	Australian National University
APSC	Australian Public Service Commission
ATO	Australian Taxation Office
BOM	Bureau of Meteorology
CASA	Civil Aviation Safety Authority
CEPA	Conservation and Environment Protection Authority
CSIRO	Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation
DAFF	Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries
DCCEEW	Department of Climate Change, Energy, Environment, and Water
DFAT	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
DITRDCA	Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications & the Arts
DJAG	Department of Justice and Attorney-General
DMPGM	Department of Mineral Policy and Geohazards Management
DPM	Department of Personnel Management
ECP	Enhanced Cooperation Program
EOIO	End-of-Investment Outcomes
GA	Geoscience Australia
GEDSI	Gender Equality, Disability and Social Inclusion
GESI	Gender Equality and Social Inclusion
GoA	Government of Australia
GoPNG	Government of PNG
ICSA	Immigration and Citizenship Services Authority
IDC	Inter-Departmental Committee
IMTR	Independent Mid-Term Review
IPP	Institutional Partnerships Program
IRC	Internal Revenue Commission
JOM	Joint Oversight Mechanism
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning

MERLA	Monitoring, Evaluation, Research Learning and Adaptation
MFAT	Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (New Zealand)
NAQIA	National Agriculture and Quarantine Inspection Authority
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NMSA	National Maritime Safety Authority
NSO	National Statistics Office
NWS	PNG National Weather Service
ODA	Official Development Assistance
PACER Plus	Pacific Agreement on Closer Economic Relations Plus
PACMAS	Pacific Media Assistance Scheme
PIF	Pacific Islands Forum
PIFS	Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat
PIPP	PNG Institutional Partnerships Program
PM&C	Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet
PM&NEC	Prime Minister and National Executive Council
PNG	Papua New Guinea
PNGCS	PNG Customs Service
PNGEC	PNG Electoral Commission
POM	Port Moresby
PRP	Pacific Research Program
PSEAH	Preventing Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment
PWSPD	Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development
RFT	Request for Tender
SGP	Strongim Gavman Program
SPC	Pacific Community
ToC	Theory of Change
TOR	Terms of Reference
WoG	whole-of-government

1. Introduction

The purpose of this Independent Mid-Term Review (IMTR) is to evaluate the overall effectiveness of Australia's PNG Institutional Partnerships Program (PIPP) and recommend adaptations that may be needed to enhance performance over the remaining course of the program and beyond, while also providing guidance to Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) on decision-making regarding program direction. This report is structured as follows. This introductory section discusses the evolution of support for institutional partnerships between Australian and PNG public service agencies, including the changes brought about through the design of PIPP. It also discusses some of the pressing development issues in PNG and Australia's support to the country. Section 2 presents the findings against each of the five primary evaluation questions and supporting secondary questions. Section 3 presents a conclusion. Section 4 includes six recommendations for DFAT's consideration.

1.1 Background

There is a long history of formal and informal engagement between Australian and PNG public service agencies. Recent support for institutional partnerships includes the Enhanced Cooperation Program (ECP) (2004–2008), the Strongim Gavman Program (SGP) (2009–2016) and the Institutional Partnerships Program (IPP) (2017–2022), which immediately preceded the PNG–Australia Institutional Partnerships Program (PIPP) (2022–2026). Over the years the approach to these partnerships has varied considerably. For example, under SGP the focus was on embedding senior Australian officials in key Government of PNG (GoPNG) agencies with the agreement of the PNG government. These agencies included the Internal Revenue Commission, Customs, Justice and Attorney General's, Auditor General's, Treasury and Finance, among others. At one stage, 42 senior Australian officials¹ were embedded in 15 GoPNG agencies. Following a review of that program in 2012,² changes were instituted to improve program administration, joint governance, and coordination with the broader Official Development Assistance (ODA) program. Emphasis was also placed on improving international development effectiveness through an enhanced focus on Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL); capacity building; and the broadening of modalities to include special projects and other activities. Over time, the number of senior officials embedded in GoPNG agencies was reduced.

In 2016, the O'Neill government, which at the time was facing an internal political crisis, effectively terminated SGP by banning Australian advisers from working in GoPNG agencies. This significantly disrupted the long-term institutional partnerships between Australian and PNG public service agencies. However, the strong personal networks that had existed for many years were maintained, and after a period of hiatus, the IPP commenced in 2017 focusing on re-establishing key partnerships and diversifying support. The range of modalities was extended to include a limited number of long-term deployees, more short-term deployments, reverse deployments and other targeted training and mentoring activities. There was also an increased emphasis on MEL, gender equality and capacity building.

1.2 Australia's PNG Institutional Partnership Program (PIPP)

PIPP is a four-year (December 2022–June 2026), \$53.8 million program that builds on the long history of Australian support to PNG public service agencies. As with the preceding programs, it remains the primary means by which Australia, through its participating Australian Government Entities (AGEs), generates and maintains institutional relationships with PNG partner agencies. These relationships are maintained bilaterally (between the two agencies) but are embedded within a framework of whole-of-government (WoG) engagement and reflect both sectoral and bilateral priorities. Each partnership reflects the unique nature of the individual relationships, the priorities for each partnership, the activities undertaken, and partnership governance and engagement pathways. The types of institutional engagements are specific to each partnership and include combinations of long-term deployees, short-term missions, reverse deployments and

¹ Mostly EL2 and SES Band 1 level APS officers.

² Callan, M. (2012). Review of Strongim Gavman Program. Australian Agency for International Development.

various types of training. Table 1 provides details of PIPP partnerships and the nature of these engagements as of November 2024.

Table 1: PIPP partnerships and engagements as of November 2024^{3,4}

#	Australian Government	PNG Government	Engagement
1	Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS)	National Statistics Office (NSO)	1 long-term (LT) deployee + short-term missions + PNG Government official visits to and trainings in Australia
2	Attorney-General's Department (AGD)	Department of Justice and Attorney-General (DJAG)	1 LT deployee + short-term missions + trainings in Australia for PNG Government officials
3	Australian National Audit Office (ANAO)	Auditor-General's Office (AGO)	2 LT deployees + short-term missions + secondments in and official visits to Australia for PNG Government officials + regional conference participation
4	Australian Public Service Commission (APSC)	Department of Personnel Management (DPM)	Short-term missions + PNG Government official visits to Australia
5	Australian Taxation Office (ATO)	Internal Revenue Commission (IRC)	Short-term missions + PNG Government official visits to and trainings in Australia
6	Department of Finance	Department of Finance	1 LT deployee + short-term missions + secondments in Australia for PNG Government officials
7	Department of Home Affairs	Immigration and Citizenship Services Authority (ICSA)	3 LT deployees + short-term missions + PNG Government official visits to and trainings in Australia + regional and international workshops
8	Department of Home Affairs	Customs Service (PNGCS)	3 LT deployees + short-term missions + PNG Government official visits to Australia + regional study tours
9	Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (PM&C)	Prime Minister and National Executive Council (PM&NEC)	Short-term missions + PNG Government official visits to and secondments in Australia
10	Treasury	Treasury	1 LT deployee + short-term missions + PNG Government official visits to Australia

Several bilateral institutional relationships and activities exist outside of PIPP (these are referred to as non-PIPP AGEs). These agencies can access PIPP logistical services to support the delivery of their activities. This review also includes these arrangements within its scope. These partnerships include:

- Australian Election Commission (AEC) and the PNG Electoral Commission (PNGEC)
- Bureau of Meteorology (BOM) and the PNG National Weather Service (NWS)
- Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) and the National Agriculture and Quarantine Inspection Authority (NAQIA)
- Department of Climate Change, Energy, Environment, and Water (DCCEEW) and the Conservation and Environment Protection Authority (CEPA)
- Geoscience Australia (GA) and the Department of Mineral Policy and Geohazards Management (DMPGM)

³ See PIPP Factsheet 2024.

⁴ Note: The Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (DAFF) were added as an 11th PIPP AGE on 16 January 2025.

- Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, and the Arts (DITRDCA) and the Department of Transport PNG, Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA) PNG, National Maritime Safety Authority (NMSA), and PNG Air Services Limited.

DFAT is the program owner and plays a pivotal role in the funding, design, procurement, and delivery of PIPP, including risk management. PIPP is managed by the PNG Branch in DFAT Canberra (Desk) with additional support provided by the Program Strategy and Gender Team at the Australian High Commission (AHC) in Port Moresby (Post). DFAT manages Australia's bilateral relationship with PNG, the Australian WoG relationships supporting the PIPP, and the services provided by the Managing Contractor (MC) through the PNG Institutional Partnerships Program Support Service (PIPPSS). Australian agencies directly assist GoPNG agencies in line with activities agreed within the partnership parameters and as stipulated in Records of Understanding between Australian agencies and DFAT, with PIPPSS providing program, logistical and other support as required. AGE program teams provide strategic and operational support to deployments and contribute to the overall bilateral relationship with partners in PNG. Australian Public Service (APS) deployees lead on the delivery of their agency work plans. AGEs also host GoPNG deployees in their offices in Australia (so-called 'reverse deployees').

The MC delivering PIPPSS collaborates with DFAT and AGEs on the day-to-day management of the program. PIPPSS communicates directly with the DFAT PIPP Program Manager (at Desk) on contract management and implementation issues, including emerging issues within the program and any updates or changes to the risk profile. PIPPSS is a focal point for program implementation, including deployment support activities, strategic and operational advice, and enabling services to support partnerships to deliver their work plans. It also provides MEL, capacity building and Gender Equality, Disability and Social Inclusion (GEDSI) support to PIPP AGEs.

PIPP's implementation is guided by three End-of-Investment Outcomes (EOIOs) and eight corresponding Intermediate Outcomes (IOs), as follows:

EOIO1: Selected Australian and PNG government entities have stronger or maintained institutional relationships

- IO1.1 – Demonstrated commitment by GoA/GoPNG entities to develop and nurture institutional relationships.
- IO1.2 – Jointly agreed multiyear partnership priorities and annual work plans promote GEDSI and sectoral cohesion.

EOIO 2: Institutional relationships generate benefits for both Australian and PNG government entities

- IO2.1 – Improved capacity and systems within GoPNG partner entities to deliver core mandate.
- IO2.2 – Joint and complementary operations benefit AGEs.
- IO2.3 – Partnership activities support reform efforts prioritised under bilateral relationship including sector and GEDSI initiatives.

EOIO 3: Efficient and effective program management and enabling services support PIPP implementation.

- IO3.1 – Enhanced governance and management.
- IO 3.2 – Enhanced communication and outreach within and across sectors.
- IO 3.3 – Enhanced sustainability.

1.3 Key features of the PIPP design

In the context of Australia's historical support for institutional partnerships, it is important to briefly outline the key features of the PIPP design and the major changes to institutional partnering envisaged therein. As noted above, PIPP was preceded by IPP, which had a budget of \$63 million over four years and supported 12 Australian agencies working with 18 GoPNG partners. Over the course of its implementation, IPP supported

498 deployments (63 long-term) and 146 reverse deployments. Initially, the PIPP budget was some \$10 million smaller than IPP's budget and was envisaged to support a smaller number of partnerships and deployments. The assumptions about the level of deployments were carried over to the PIPPSS contract, as discussed in Section 2.5 below.

As noted in the 2023 design update,⁵ the smaller budget and presumed reduction in the number of partnerships precipitated a revision to the governance and reporting arrangements to ensure these were proportionate to the investment. This meant that each AGE had discretion in selecting the framework it used to meet DFAT's requirements for reporting on program performance. This flexibility extended to the nature of each strategic agreement, mechanisms for the review of priorities and approaches to foster mutual accountability. The design highlighted how PIPP would further the strategic intentions outlined in the Australia-PNG Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (CSEP) by moving the relationship between Australia and PNG to one of 'true partnership', with a focus on economic and strategic cooperation in areas of shared interest. A key focus of the design was also on the mutual benefits of cooperation, as such benefits are, according to the design, indicative of a 'true partnership'.

The design highlighted several other key priorities for PIPP. It re-emphasised the key role DFAT would play in clarifying Australian WoG objectives and linkages to emerging policy priorities, and in providing practical and productive advice and support to advance progress in policy dialogue and capacity development. This included providing support to AGEs and facilitating strategic discussions via bi-annual PIPP Inter-Departmental Committee (IDC) meetings in Canberra, which enabled strategic discussions on current Government of Australia (GoA) priorities, WoG issues, past performance, lessons learned and challenges. The design also emphasised that PIPP would support sector specific initiatives and reforms by dovetailing with other forms of Australian assistance provided via other programs or modalities, including the main sectoral ODA investment in economics, law and gender. This would see AGEs integrated into wider sector priorities and initiatives in consultation with AHC sector leads. As noted in the Design update: "...it has been recognised in this design update and reflected in the revised program logic that the effectiveness of existing PIPP partnerships will be increased if they are clearly aligned with and situated in the suite of broader sectoral strategies developed by the AHC".⁶

The design also described how PIPP would enhance deployee support in PNG through greater capacity development in strategic, MEL and other areas that would assist with 'rapid integration' into GoPNG workplaces. It stated that PIPP would "create an alumni network for all interested past AGE deployees who have worked within PNG... that could possibly provide guidance to AGEs on projects; assist with establishing connections with PNG counterparts; assistance with professional development sessions". Finally, it called for stronger support for cross-cutting issues including additional technical resources available for partnership support and capacity development; embedding GEDSI; and monitoring and evaluation, including adaptive management.

1.4 Development context

On the economic development front, PNG continues to face a range of budgetary challenges, but the medium-term economic outlook is generally positive. GDP growth has rebounded since the COVID-19 pandemic (projected to reach 4.5 per cent in 2024 and 4.6 per cent in 2025), headline inflation is at an all-time low of 1.3 per cent in 2024, and resource GDP is expected to grow due to the commencement of new projects over the medium-term.⁷ While PNG has experienced modest headline growth over many years, this has not translated into appreciable growth in per capita GDP. Poverty levels remain very high, particularly in remote and regional areas, and access to electricity, education and health services has stagnated and, in some regions, gone backwards. PNG remains in the low human development category on the UN Human Development Index, ranked 155 among 189 countries on that index.⁸ Regarding governance, issues with

⁵ See PIPP Design Update 2023.

⁶ See PIPP Design Update 2023 p.13.

⁷ See International Monetary Fund, [Papua New Guinea: Third Reviews under Extended Arrangement under the Extended Fund Facility and an Arrangement under the Extended Credit Facility, Request for Extension, Rephasing of Access, and Modification of Quantitative Performance Criteria, and Request for an Arrangement under the Resilience and Sustainability Facility-Press Release; Staff Report; and Statement by the Executive Director for Papua New Guinea](#).

⁸ See Human Development Reports, [Country Insights](#).

stability remain, as evidenced by the political unrest in January 2024 and the various motions of no-confidence in parliament throughout 2024. Instability arising from crime and civil unrest continue to plague the country and there are persistently high rates of family and sexual violence.

According to the World Bank, there is a need to foster greater economic stability, boost productivity, develop human capital and provide greater access to economic and social infrastructure.⁹ DFAT has a wide range of programs in many sectors that support progress in these areas. Australia remains PNG's largest development partner with a total estimated ODA budget of \$637.4 million in 2024–25. Australia also provides highly concessional financing for infrastructure projects (~\$1 billion) through the Australian Infrastructure Finance Facility Program (AIFFP). A total of \$3.1 billion in non-ODA budget support has also been provided to PNG since 2020, which makes Australia PNG's largest bilateral lender.¹⁰ The conditions that underpin the provision of budget support include tightened foreign investment screening, the blocking of economically non-viable or high-risk projects, and participation in the IMF's economic reform program.

Regarding public sector administration — which is ultimately what PIPP seeks to improve — the PNG public service continues to suffer from a broad range of challenges, many of which have persisted for decades. Issues with senior level appointments, staff recruitment and professional development, workforce planning, performance assessment, poor organisational systems and processes, budget (un)predictability, human resource capability and competing and duplicative structures continue to plague public sector administration in the country. The persistence of these issues is reflected in PNG's most recent (2023) World Bank Country Policy and Institutional Assessment (CPIA) 'Quality of Public Administration' rating of 2.5/6, which is down from 3.0/6 from 2008–2018.¹¹ The World Bank's CPIA 'Quality of Public Administration' component takes into consideration a range of measures regarding civil service management, budget planning and execution, procurement practices, and regulatory quality and institutional capacity building. PNG's performance in this area is on par with countries such as the Central African Republic, Republic of Congo and Burundi, and lower than Pacific neighbours such as Samoa (4.0), Tonga (3.5), Fiji (3.5) and Kiribati (3.0). The only country in the Pacific region with weaker public sector performance is Solomon Islands (2.0).

2. Findings

This section presents the IMTR's findings against the Key Evaluation Questions (KEQs) and accompanying Secondary Evaluation Questions (SEQs). These questions are defined in full in the Evaluation Plan (Annex 1), which should be read in conjunction with this IMTR.

2.1 How relevant is PIPP?

Relevance is the extent to which an intervention's objectives and design respond to beneficiaries, country, and partner/institution needs, policies, and priorities, and continue to do so if circumstances change.¹² There are three aspects of relevance that were explored through this evaluation, each of which has its own secondary evaluation question. The findings against each of these questions are presented below.

To what extent are the institutional partnerships between Australian and GoPNG government agencies mutually beneficial?

The findings explain the types of mutual benefits that are derived from the various partnerships, the significance of these benefits to the respective agencies, and whether there are unforeseen or undocumented mutual benefits that could be consolidated and pursued further during the remaining years of implementation. The evaluation team sought feedback from key informants on the types of benefits derived from the various partnerships. On the Australian side, the benefits are strategic, functional, organisational and risk mitigating in nature.

⁹ See World Bank, [Overview: Development news, research, data](#).

¹⁰ See DFAT, [Papua New Guinea](#).

¹¹ See World Bank, [CPIA quality of public administration rating \(1=low to 6=high\) - Papua New Guinea Data](#).

¹² OECD, [Evaluation Criteria](#).

There are a range of strategic benefits for Australia that emerge from the institutional partnerships supported by PIPP. First are those that help advance Australia's international, regional and bilateral priorities and commitments. Many APS agencies have a mandate to work with other countries to improve global governance and technical capability in a wide range of areas. These international commitments often have a regional architecture. An example is the ANAO's role in the Pacific Association of Supreme Audit Institutions (PASAI), in which Australia is an active member.¹³ PASAI is one of seven regional organisations belonging to the International Organisation of Supreme Audit Institutions (INTOSAI) and has a mandate to build and sustain public auditing capacity across the Pacific by sharing knowledge with, and providing support to, its members.¹⁴ The work of the ANAO, as discussed in Section 2.2., is highly effective in the PNG context and has directly led to an improvement in auditing capability in the advancement of PASAI/INTOSAI objectives.

Further examples include Australia's support via the ATO for the Convention on Mutual Administrative Assistance on Tax Matters,¹⁵ which is a multilateral instrument that facilitates global tax cooperation; and the global initiatives to improve statistics capability supported by the ABS, which include the United Nations Global Platform for Official Statistics.¹⁶ Support through PIPP (and other DFAT-funded regional and bilateral programs) allows these agencies to advance these international commitments. Without the financial support provided by PIPP such agencies would face significant constraints partnering with PNG agencies. PIPP funding allows those agencies to do more than they would otherwise be able to do with their own resources.

A second strategic benefit relates to how institutional partnerships with PNG agencies allows Australia to advance its regional geo-political, security and cooperation priorities. A case in point is the recent announcement of a trilateral partnership between Australia (Home Affairs), PNG (through ICSA) and Solomon Islands to strengthen Solomon Islands' existing Border Management System (BMS).¹⁷ The aim being to maximise the economic benefits of migration while maintaining the integrity and security of their borders. This initiative will draw on the substantial gains made by ICSA in recent years with e-visa processing and other border security outcomes to improve Solomon Islands' manual BMS. Maintaining the integrity of Solomon Islands' border is clearly in Australia, PNG and Solomon Islands' national interest(s), and working with PNG allows Australia to assist with elevating ICSA on the regional border security stage, as noted by Home Affairs: "PNG's leadership in this space provides immense benefits to Home Affairs and to Australia more broadly as ICSA guides other Pacific nations to good border management practices which strengthen security in the region".¹⁸ In this case assisting PNG strengthen its BMS also facilitates broader regional security objectives.

A third strategic benefit observed by some Australian officials is the access afforded by PIPP to senior PNG officials. The goodwill generated through these partnerships establishes the foundation for high-level engagement on strategic issues of importance to Australia, whether that be discussions on macro-economic issues, security, or transborder matters. An example is the case of Australian Treasury, whose officials, for the reasons discussed in Section 1, had not had consistent, high-level relationships with senior PNG Treasury officials for many years. PIPP has helped facilitate the re-engagement of Australian and PNG Treasury officials, which has helped rebuild trust and facilitate more open dialogue in areas such as the IMF loan arrangements in PNG.¹⁹ This dialogue assists the Australian Treasury conform with the International Monetary Agreements Act (1947), which makes provisions for how Australia can make loans in support of IMF processes. Treasury's latest PIPP reporting calls for greater people-to-people links between the respective agencies.

The operational benefits for Australian agencies are also significant. 'Operational benefit' refers to the ability of an agency to advance an Australian policy, law or priority more effectively by partnering with GoPNG agencies. For example, Australian agencies work closely with PNG counterparts on a wide range of transborder issues. The work of Home Affairs, Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (DAFF), Attorney General's Department and the ATO fall into this category. A wide range of transboundary issues are managed through these partnerships, which include the illegal movement of people and goods, money

¹³ Australia's Auditor-General sits on the governing council of that body.

¹⁴ [Pacific Association of Supreme Audit Institutions](#).

¹⁵ See OECD, [Convention on mutual administrative assistance in tax matters](#).

¹⁶ See [UN Global Platform](#).

¹⁷ Government of Solomon Islands, [Security support to boosts the country's economy](#).

¹⁸ See Home Affairs, PIPP Six Monthly Progress Report, August 2024, p.6.

¹⁹ See Australian Treasury, PIPP Six Monthly Progress Report, August 2024.

laundering and counter-terrorism financing, extradition, family court matters, biosecurity issues, and tax crime. Australian stakeholders were broadly of the view that the embedding of staff within counterpart agencies supported by PIPP, and the relationships formed through such arrangements, enabled them to more efficaciously deal with transboundary issues as they emerge and to advance Australia's various operational activities. The close working relationship that exists between Australian officials and senior PNG leaders and working level staff allows for the escalation and resolution of issues and facilitates greater operational coordination in a wide range of areas, including in transnational crime. The operational coordination facilitated by PIPP helps enhance Australia's physical and financial security by strengthening a wide range of border management arrangements.

Australian officials also highlighted the many organisational benefits emerging from participation in PIPP. This included the professional development of both long- and short-term staff who participate in the program. These benefits include greater cross-cultural sensitivity, higher levels of emotional intelligence, greater resilience, stronger leadership capability, more awareness of gender inequality issues, and enhanced capability development expertise. The latter point is an interesting one raised by several officials engaged in a technical capacity. Due to technical capability constraints in some PNG agencies, and the small size of PNG agencies compared to Australia, Australian deployees are required to develop innovative and customised approaches to building capacity at the individual and team level. This often requires them to 'go back to basics' and think about the fundamentals of a good technical process (e.g. good planning, budgeting, statistical processes etc). This helps build local capacity but also forces the Australian official to adopt a somewhat broader perspective than may be required in their Australian position (due to the comparatively narrower scope of tasks in Australia). Officials were of the view that this helped them develop more well-rounded skills and a better understanding of government systems. While the program has not funded the AGE alumni network envisaged in the design, one additional reason to do so could be to trace the professional development and career trajectory of staff who have participated in past institutional partnerships in PNG or elsewhere. This may assist with current delivery and networking, while also promoting the benefits of working with developing country partners from a career and employment satisfaction perspective, which may assist with recruitment in Australia.

An additional benefit observed by some officials was regarding the management of fiduciary risk via improvements in GoPNG fiscal integrity. Australian economic agencies support a wide range of activities in PNG, from macro-economic advice, budgeting and payment systems to economic statistics and financial and performance auditing. Any improvement in capability in these areas is clearly beneficial to Australia considering the high-level of budget support and ODA provided to PNG. Some stakeholders were of the view that this support should be deepened and elevated (e.g. more systematic and high-level support) and expanded to include partnerships with the Bank of PNG/Australian Prudential Regulation Authority (APRA). The risks associated with this (drawing on the experience of SGP for example) were also raised. At present, there is no overarching economic portfolio strategy and somewhat limited coordination between PIPP economic agencies and DFAT's primary economic program in PNG, the Australian–PNG Economic Program (APEP).

It is clear from the above discussion that the benefits to Australia from the institutional partnerships facilitated by PIPP are significant at an aggregate level. However, it is important to highlight that such benefits are variable across agencies. The agencies that benefit the most are those that have international and regional commitments, or those that have operational responsibility for the management of transboundary issues and the furtherance of Australian policies or enforcement of laws beyond the border. These agencies are required to advance these commitments and obligations with their own resources. Access to PIPP, and other DFAT funding, allows them to do more than they otherwise would be able to do with their own resources and, importantly, incentivises them to focus on PNG, which is of significant strategic importance to Australia and DFAT. Then there are the economic agencies that play a role in supporting fiscal integrity, public financial management and macro-economic stability in PNG, such as Treasury, Finance and the ANAO. The incentive for Treasury's participation in PIPP is clear (see above), and the same holds for the ANAO. However, the incentive behind Finance's participation in PIPP is less clear and this is reflected in the design, performance and management of that support (see Section 2.2).

The organisational benefits derived by PNG agencies from participation in PIPP are considerable. PNG officials consulted as part of this evaluation highlighted improvements in human resource capability, stronger and more confident leadership, higher quality systems and processes, greater organisational integrity and trust across the PNG government, and shifts in workplace norms and expectations, including in absenteeism

and presenteeism. These outcomes are discussed further in Section 2.2 (Table 3). The improvements in human resource capability have occurred in a wide range of technical areas, including economic statistics, tax policy and systems, auditing, budget forecasting, legal policy development, and customs processes, to name a few. There have also been improvements in fundamental skills such as the use of software applications, technical writing and communication more generally. PNG government officials have also reported improvements in work performance, critical thinking, analytical problem solving, time management, work planning, leadership and management. PNG officials are of the view that exposure to Australian workplace norms and expectations via reverse deployments and from working alongside APS officers has increased professionalism.

While there remain some critical constraints at the senior leadership level and in recruitment and resourcing, many GoPNG officials were of the view that their organisations operate more effectively because of their participation in PIPP — although there is no empirical data to support this. It is clear from the interviews with both Australian and PNG stakeholders that there is growing demand within PNG agencies for a shift from building individual technical capability through training and reverse deployments to strengthening organisational systems and processes, strengthening leadership and improving workforce planning. Australian officials are keenly aware that the sustainability of technical and policy outcomes is dependent upon these long-term organisational improvements.

One key outcome for PNG agencies is an elevation in status, credibility and integrity that results from the improvement in organisational capacity brought about via institutional partnerships with Australian agencies. There is wide disparity in capacity between agencies in PNG and in this context trust between agencies is important. Clearly it is in Australia and PNG's benefit for this disparity to be narrowed as this can help build trust between GoPNG agencies — trust that, historically, has been lacking between some key agencies. This is particularly important in economic ministries. Officials from the NSO and AGO reported how their partnerships with Australian agencies give them more confidence to engage with external stakeholders such as the IMF and PNG Treasury and Finance on economic issues. For example, the AGO has reported increased quality rating of audit reports, which has raised the credibility of these reports resulting in enhanced credibility for the agency more generally. Officials from the NSO also reported more substantive engagement with their colleagues in PNG Treasury and Finance on a range of economic statistics issues, including GDP and CPI measurement. It is important that those agencies with a role to play in economic policy and fiscal transparency and integrity have comparatively strong capability, credibility and trust in the PNG context. A case could be made for prioritising support to these agencies, but presently there is no mechanism to prioritise such partnerships within PIPP.

To what extent are the current sectors prioritised by PIPP relevant to GoA, Australian and GoPNG strategic objectives?

The activities and sectors prioritised by PIPP are highly relevant to the strategic priorities of Australia, GoA agencies and GoPNG, however, more can be done to explain the exact nature of this relevance. Presently, PIPP support is provided to three so-called 'sectors': economics, stability, and enabling partnerships. These 'sectors' were designated as part of the design process using nomenclature like that used under previous institutional partnership programs. Oversight of these 'sectors' is the responsibility of Sector Leads at the AHC, who have a role to play in WoG coordination, review of PIPP work plans, monitoring and evaluation (M&E), sectoral coordination, and the provision of advice on political economic and emerging contextual issues to AGEs. Sector Leads do not have a role to play in sector prioritisation across the program. The involvement of Sector Leads in the coordination and advancement of PIPP activities is variable and constrained by heavy workloads. Some of these issues are discussed in forthcoming sections.

The overarching strategic document informing the design of PIPP was the Australia-PNG Comprehensive Strategic and Economic Partnership (CSEP).²⁰ This high-level document provides the overarching framework for deepening bilateral cooperation across security, trade and investment, governance, development cooperation, health, education, gender equality, climate change, and people-to-people and institutional links. This document has six pillars that cover a wide range of bilateral cooperation areas. The CSEP does not,

²⁰ See DFAT, [Papua New Guinea–Australia Comprehensive Strategic and Economic Partnership](#).

however, prioritise any sectors or modes of cooperation, and is too high-level to inform the scope of institutional partnerships between Australia and PNG or to allow for a judgement regarding their relevance.

A more useful document from a relevance perspective is the Australia–PNG Development Partnership Plan (DPP)(2024–29).²¹ Developed after extensive consultation with Australian and PNG stakeholders (including PIPP institutional partners), the DPP provides concrete guidance on how the CSEP priorities will be taken forward over the medium term via development cooperation, aligns with PNG planning mechanisms, and provides a framework for reporting back to DFAT on ODA expenditure. Importantly, the DPP is outcomes-focused with clear priorities. PIPP is included under Objective 4 of the DPP framework, which focuses on 'Building close friendships and enduring ties'. Specifically, it contributes to Outcome 4.2: 'Institutional linkages: Developing and maintaining partnerships of mutual strategic benefit between PNG and Australian institutions'. A performance indicator for this is included in the DPP Performance Assessment Framework.

However, as discussed above and in Section 2.2, the activities of PIPP and non-PIPP AGEs are relevant to a much wider range of joint Australian and PNG priorities and outcomes than those currently reflected in the DPP or the program's MEL arrangements. The outcomes delivered by PIPP agencies are not presently captured by the DPP Framework or PAF. Table 2 below presents an augmented DPP Framework and additional detail on how PIPP is relevant to the various DPP outcomes and priorities. To capture the actual relevance of PIPP's activities, it is important to highlight the joint outcomes Australia's institutional partnerships support. This outcomes-based approach should inform the design of the next institutional partnerships program and be incrementally introduced into PIPP reporting ahead of the next phase, as discussed in Section 4. This will enable PIPP to aggregate reporting up to the 'program' level, paint a much more coherent picture of the contribution of PIPP to these relevant priorities, and allow the activities of non-PIPP AGEs to be countenanced. It may also facilitate greater coherence across PIPP, and between PIPP and other DFAT programs, as discussed in other parts of this report. Importantly, the outcomes-based approach can provide a mechanism to communicate to GoPNG exactly how institutional partnerships between the two governments are supporting PNG's broader priorities and Australia's objectives.

²¹ See DFAT, [Australia's – Papua New Guinea Development Partnership Plan 2024 – 2029](#).

Table 2: DPP Framework highlighting PIPP relevance and contribution to outcomes

Objective	Objective 1: Building an economic partnership for prosperity	Objective 2: Promoting improved law, order and governance	Objective 3: Investing in people and building resilient communities	Objective 4: Building close friendships and enduring ties
Outcomes	Outcome 1.1 Economic stability: Supporting improved macroeconomic management, public financial management and broader economic reform (direct contribution from Treasury, Finance, NSO, ANAO) Outcome 1.2 Infrastructure for growth: Investing in high-quality resilient and accessible infrastructure to drive economic growth (indirect contributions from Treasury – e.g. government budget allocation and decision-making; direct contribution from DITRDCA) Outcome 1.3 Shared and equitable benefits of growth: Increasing and diversifying trade, agriculture and supply chains to expand livelihood opportunities (direct contribution from DAFF, CSIRO)	Outcome 2.1 Peace and stability: Supporting PNG to maintain security and stability, advance the rule of law and strengthen policing (direct contributions from AGD, Home Affairs) Outcome 2.2 Accountability: Supporting PNG Government institutions to be accountable to their citizens and uphold human rights (direct contributions from the ANAO, NSO and Treasury) Outcome 2.3 Institutional effectiveness: National, subnational and community institutions are more effective, responsive and transparent (direct contributions from all PIPP activities)	Outcome 3.1 Service delivery: PNG systems delivering greater skills development and more sustainable access to and use of essential services that are responsive to people's needs (no direct contribution but indirect contribution through Treasury's efforts in budgeting) Outcome 3.2 Institutional and individual resilience: Supporting institutions, communities and individuals to respond and adapt to climate and disaster risks, and economic and social shocks (indirect contribution by all agencies working with counterpart 'institutions') Outcome 3.3 Gender equality, disability and social inclusion: Supporting PNG to address barriers that prevent Papua New Guineans from fulfilling their potential, and opening opportunities for voice and leadership (direct contributions from all PIPP agencies)	Outcome 4.1 Individual linkages: Building and maintaining positive people-to-people and community relationships, networks and linkages between Papua New Guineans and Australians living in PNG and Australia (direct contributions from all PIPP agencies) Outcome 4.2 Institutional linkages: Developing and maintaining partnerships of mutual strategic benefit between PNG and Australian institutions (direct contributions from all PIPP agencies)

To what extent has PIPP been able to flexibly respond to emerging priorities and partnerships?

PIPP has been able to respond effectively to emerging priorities in PNG on an agency-by-agency basis in most cases, but gaps in high-level program governance and a lack of visibility of PIPP resource allocation and GoPNG prioritisation affect its ability to address whole-of-government public service priorities in any meaningful way. As highlighted in Section 2.2, PIPP AGEs work closely with PNG officials in the formulation of work plans and activities to ensure these align to pressing priorities in each agency, including those identified in GoPNG strategies and work plans. There is direct alignment between PIPP AGE work plans and PNG agency priorities across the board. Several AGEs have senior staff allocated to ensuring this alignment occurs and work closely with senior PNG officials helping them better articulate their agencies' priorities. The

PNG officials consulted for this evaluation emphasised how they use long- and short-term PIPP and non-PIPP resources for this express purpose — namely to address emerging priorities they are struggling to address with their own resources and capability. A key emerging priority emphasised by many PNG officials has been the need to shift from building individual technical capability to focusing more on sustainably building organisational capability through improvements in organisational systems and processes and leadership. This was the highest priority noted by GoPNG officials.

The Australian officials interviewed for this evaluation discussed how they spend a large proportion of their time working on improving organisational capability at the behest of senior PNG officials, alongside developing technical capability. As noted by many Australian deployees, corporate planning and related capability (e.g. human resource management, work force planning, performance assessment, strategic planning, resource use, budgeting, etc) is very weak in most PNG government agencies. Thus, deployees who initially assumed they would be working on technical issues in their area of expertise find themselves working to improve corporate outcomes. This need has been recognised by Home Affairs and ICSA, which have recently recruited an EL2 from a corporate area to improve ICSA corporate performance. Short-term deployments by those with expertise in corporate issues have also increased in response to this need, and consultants have been recruited to provide leadership and related training. This raises questions about the optimal balance between ‘corporate’ and ‘technical’ deployments under PIPP.

Noting the above, it is important to highlight the relative lack of resourcing for the Australian Public Service Commission (APSC) under PIPP, which has the technical capability to address these issues in a systematic fashion, supporting PIPP AGEs. Engagement with the Department of Personnel Management (DPM) or the Somare Institute of Leadership and Governance (SILAG), which provides training for public servants in PNG, is missing from the program. Reporting²² suggests that the APSC has struggled to engage with senior leadership within DPM since the beginning of the program due to changes in leadership within the APSC and de-prioritisation of the relationship by DPM. The evaluation team understands that working at the systemic level over the long-term to address public service challenges is challenging in this context, but many of the issues that constrain the effectiveness of PIPP’s outcomes emerge from poor recruitment practices, performance issues, a lack of leadership and weak workplace norms. The outcomes of PIPP’s activities will only be sustained if there are systemic changes within the PNG public service that address these underlying issues.

It is also important to highlight that the Joint Oversight Mechanism (JOM), intended to provide high-level governance, oversight and steering of the program, has not functioned as planned in the design. As a result, GoPNG has not been able to articulate its public service priorities in any systematic fashion or comment on the relevance of these activities to these priorities. Only one JOM meeting has been held since the program’s inception (27 February 2024),²³ with attendance from DFAT, PM&NEC, DPM and DFA. This was identified as a weakness in the latest DFAT Investment Monitoring Report (IMR).²⁴ Both DFAT and GoPNG have not invested suitable resources into the oversight of PIPP at a high level. Changes within GoPNG, particularly the Department of the PM and the National Executive Council, have led to confusion over what entity is responsible for GoPNG’s input into such processes. Due to these issues, there has been no opportunity for GoPNG to articulate its priorities for institutional partnerships with Australia as a whole. This also that means DFAT lacks a high-level forum through which to communicate how PIPP is supporting important and effective improvements in public service capacity in PNG, which is a lost opportunity.

While this may be the case, it is instructive to note that GoPNG is forthright in articulating its priorities in a range of other sectors and ensures that mechanisms are put in place to govern Australia’s ODA investments in these sectors. As such, this lack of engagement may signify a lack of focus and prioritisation on this important issue by senior leaders in PNG and by agencies such as DPM and others. Issues with the joint governance of institutional partnership programs between PNG and Australia have persisted across multiple phases, not just under PIPP,²⁵ and need to be addressed (see Section 4).

²² APSC Annual Report, PIPP 1.1.2024-31.12.2024

²³ PIPPSS Annual Report, 1.1.2024 – 31.12.2024

²⁴ See Annual Investment Monitoring Report 2023, PIPP, INN836.

²⁵ See Oxford Policy Management (2019) Institutional Partnerships Program, Evaluation Phase 1, June 2019.

2.2 How effectively is PIPP being implemented?

DFAT defines effectiveness as the extent to which the expected results (i.e. outputs or outcomes) of an aid activity have been achieved.²⁶ At the mid-term of a program, it is important to assess performance over the initial years of implementation, while also ascertaining whether the program is on track to deliver against the End-of-Investment-Outcomes (EOIOs). This allows for the identification of adaptations that may be required to improve performance over the remaining years. The examination of effectiveness was supported by three secondary evaluation questions, the findings of which are presented below.

What activity, or combination of activities, have been most effective in delivering against the Intermediate Outcomes?

Issues with the program logic and weaknesses with M&E make it very challenging to determine what activities, or combination of activities, have been most effective in delivering against the Intermediate Outcomes (IOs). There has not been sufficient investment in activity-level monitoring and evaluation or synthesis to support such an assessment (see Section 2.3 for further discussion). Nonetheless, Australian and GoPNG officials interviewed for this evaluation expressed strong views on what forms of support were more effective than others in the PNG public service context. Long-term embedded deployment was seen as the most effective for a range of reasons. First, long-term deployees spend time developing an understanding of workplace specific-norms. These norms include the informal 'rules of the game' that influence employee behaviour and interactions within specific GoPNG agencies. This includes, among other things, norms concerning engaging with senior leaders, upwards management, team dynamics, conducting training, escalating issues, punctuality, supervising staff, and effective communication. To be effective, APS deployees, whether short- or long-term, need to develop a nuanced understanding of the 'rules of the game' within the agency they are expected to be effective in, and this takes time. APS deployees noted how they were much more effective as their awareness of these norms increased over time; for some deployees this awareness took many months to develop, while for others less time was required.

Second, evidence from interviews suggests that long-term deployees also improve the effectiveness of activities delivered by Short-Term Mission (STM) deployees by helping to customise capacity building activities, drawing on their awareness of local workplace norms. Long-term deployees, who have significantly greater understanding of cultural context and organisational constraints, can assist short-term deployees customise their targeted support, making it more effective in what may be an unfamiliar context. Long-term deployees do this in numerous ways, including by helping ensure STM deployees with suitable aptitudes are recruited in the first place; pre-briefing STM deployees on cultural context and workplace issues; advising on and assuring the quality of training content and pedagogical methods; and identifying key staff within GoPNG agencies for training and coaching. GoPNG staff highlighted the importance of conducting capacity building activities in a method that increases the confidence of participants, as this increases the probability that new skills and aptitudes will be used in a workplace setting. Some PNG officials noted that training can make them anxious if not delivered in a culturally-sensitive manner.

Senior GoPNG officials who had participated in institutional partnership capacity building initiatives over the years gave many examples of how they have used the skills gained via STM-supported training and mentoring to improve their workplace performance. Examples included better leadership and supervisory capacity (within the NSO, AGO and Treasury); stronger technical capability in a wide range of areas (NSO, AGO, DJAG, Treasury, ICSA, PNGGCS, IRC); greater awareness of GEDSI issues and capability to advance progress in those issues; and efforts to foster greater workplace professionalism (NSO, Treasury, AGO, DJAG). A key point that was repeated by several senior GoPNG officials regarding capacity building was the inability of some senior officers to 'let go and move on', as one officer described it.²⁷ Such officers are reluctant to give up some of the technical tasks they have comparatively strong capacity in, as they assume that the quality of the technical outputs will be reduced if they do so, which raises issues about sustainability and organisational-level capacity. Long-term deployees also assist with this transition by supporting junior officers to undertake complex tasks while building technical capability through mentoring.

²⁶ See DFAT Investment Monitoring Report Guidance.

²⁷ Anonymous senior GoPNG official.

Third, as long-term deployees' awareness of workplace norms increases, they also develop a more informed understanding of the pressing priorities in their workplace — from organisational, policy and political perspectives — and then draw on this understanding to design activities that advance these priorities. In a place where there are many competing priorities, and where these priorities aren't necessarily weighted, it is important for deployees to work closely with PNG officials in the identification and anticipation of pressing priorities.

Fourth, long-term deployees also assist with the maintenance of existing relationships and the forging of new relationships between GoPNG staff and GoA staff in Australia. This is vitally important to the Australia–PNG relationship, which over time has been characterised by a reduction in people-to-people links, as the historical web of relationships between Australia and PNG is not being renewed.²⁸ Long-term deployees identify new technical and corporate staff in Australia who can assist PNG officials and follow up on counterpart requests for advice and assistance, helping build people-to-people links that did not previously exist.

Fifth, long-term deployees also play an important role in ensuring that reverse deployments are managed as effectively as possible from both a technical and pastoral care perspective. GoPNG officials noted how the inputs from long-term deployees helped ensure that reverse deployments went smoothly, drawing on lessons and experiences from PNG. Examples included linking PNG deployees from agencies together to provide social support, debriefing reverse deployees on their return to PNG, helping address workplace issues in Australia, and assisting with the design of relevant and meaningful tasks and activities for reverse deployees to undertake in Australia.

Australian and GoPNG officials were of the view that to be effective, long-term deployees need to have structured work plans and be fully embedded in the counterpart agency. PNG officials were of the view that without a strong work plan that addresses the priorities of the PNG government, there may be misalignment of priorities, and in these cases, they would prefer short-term demand-driven arrangements. This view is largely influenced by experiences from previous programs such as SGP and IPP. PNG officials were also of the view that hybrid approaches — where long-term deployees are embedded both in the AHC and in a GoPNG department (as is the case with the AGD deployment) — were less effective than fully embedded positions. Full embedding ensures that the APS deployee is wholly committed to the GoPNG agency and reduces confusion over affiliation, tasking, prioritisation etc.

Short-term deployments were seen as effective in building technical capability, particularly if part of a longer term and well-planned portfolio of STM work. In these cases, the various STM deployments build on and reinforce each other over time. However, these demand-driven activities were seen as less strategic than long-term deployments. With these arrangements, program managers from Canberra often play a role similar to an LTA by maintaining ongoing relationships, co-developing work plans, and developing an awareness of GoPNG workplace norms etc. However, as noted by several Canberra-based program managers, maintaining ongoing relationships from afar is challenging when there are shifts in senior leadership in PNG and limited resources for in-country missions.

In the evaluation team's view, the most effective approach to delivering on PIPP's IOs, particularly those related to strengthening institutional partnerships and building GoPNG organisational capability, is when culturally-aware and experienced APS staff are posted as long-term deployees in complementary parts of an organisation. This includes having deployees operating at strategic/corporate and technical/operational levels and carrying out well planned, high priority work that has a sustainability orientation. According to many APS advisers and GoPNG staff interviewed for this evaluation, this helps ensure that the technical/operational capability built is reinforced and sustained by improved leadership, workforce planning and changes in organisational policies and procedures. Examples of this systematic approach include the work of Home Affairs (Customs/Immigration) and the ANAO, which operate at multiple levels within their respective partner organisations. The work of the ANAO is particularly instructive in this regard (see text box below).

²⁸ As noted by Ian Kemish in [Australia–PNG: relationships are what matter \(Lowy Institute\)](#).

ANAO's evidence-based, multi-layered approach to building and sustaining organisational capability²⁹

The work of the ANAO has been widely recognised by numerous evaluations as highly effective. As noted by the Institutional Partnerships Program Quality and Technical Advisory Group (IPP QTAG) in 2020: "The ANAO–AGO partnership is strongly supported at the highest level in the Australian institution, with a commitment to the value of audit institutions being important features in modern democratic societies. Strongly supported by a committed and capable program management team, the suite of activities in the work plan have been tested and adapted over time to meet the needs of developing a modern audit institution". This recognition is warranted.

The ANAO has adopted a systematic, evidenced-based approach to its PIPP partnership that has delivered significant results in a difficult context. The ANAO's workstreams address widely recognised constraints. The 2019 Supreme Audit Institution Performance Measurement Framework (SAI PMF) Review Report of AGO identified three pressing priorities to improve the services it provides: 1. Build internal staff capability and capacity; 2. Challenge the threats to independence and financial capacity; and 3. Strengthen the internal control environment. ANAO's workstreams seek to address these weaknesses, which are key priorities recognised by the AGO. Building on the findings of an expert external entity gives an element of objectivity and relevance to ANAO's work plan and helps raise AGO's profile with PASAI and the GoPNG agencies it interacts with.

The ANAO supports the AGO through the well-considered use of long- and short-term resources. Two long-term officers are embedded in the AGO. The first is a long-term Senior Adviser – Executive who works closely with the Auditor General and other senior AGO staff focusing on corporate governance, strategy, and planning. The second is a long-term Senior Adviser – Technical who works with auditors in technical areas supporting the conduct of financial, IT and compliance audits, and improving audit systems and processes. The ANAO also deploys a range of short-term employees in corporate and technical areas at various levels of seniority, including a recent deployee at APS 6 level who will work closely with AGO staff in the conduct of audits embedded in AGO audit teams. The terms of reference for short-term employees are developed by long-term staff in concert with PNG counterparts and designed to support the various workstreams. This layered approach (corporate-technical-operational), which sees ANAO staff operating at multiple levels within the AGO, provides the ANAO with extensive insight into the strengths and weaknesses of that agency. For example, deficiencies in the conduct of audits as observed by staff at an operational level can inform the work of the technical adviser who can devise training and improvements to systems and processes that can improve such performance. In turn, the work of the corporate level adviser can help escalate issues and shape governance and decision-making at a high level in a way that ensures technical and human capital outcomes are sustained over time.

The ANAO has faced challenges in delivering this systematic approach. The AGO faces a wide range of issues, not the least of which is absenteeism and a lack of resources, but significant advancements in the breadth and timeliness of audits have been made over the last two years, as has been recognised by Finance and Treasury. One issue the ANAO faces is with its own absorptive capacity and 'fatigue', which results from the fact it is a small agency with a strong commitment to improving audit systems internationally but with a large domestic responsibility. This 'international fatigue' is a symptom of the ANAO's historically strong commitment to institutional partnerships across the Indo-Pacific.

To what extent is PIPP on track to deliver its EOIOs?

EOIO1

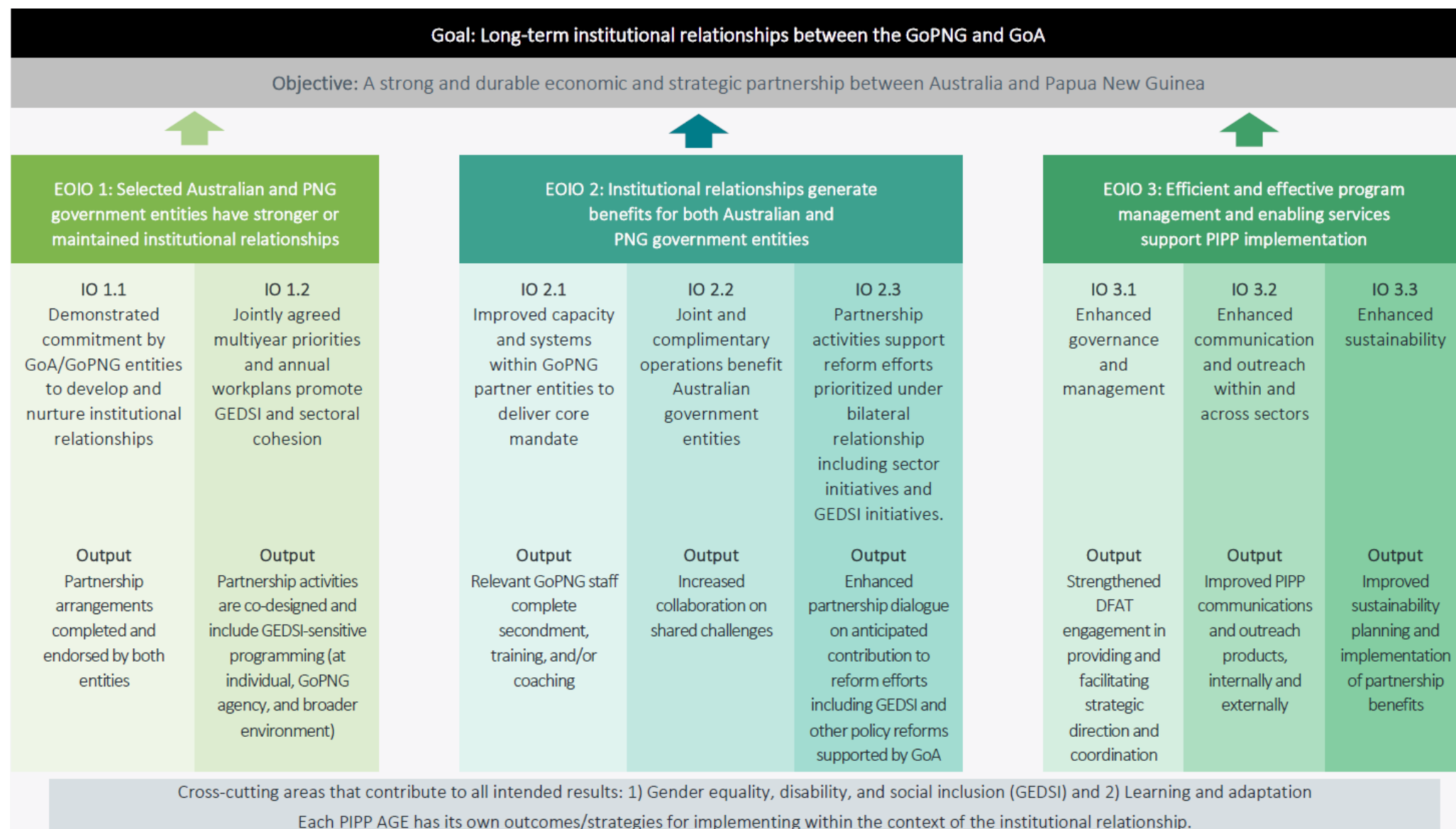
The evidence from this evaluation suggests that PIPP is making significant progress towards achieving EOIO1, however, due to various program logic and M&E-related issues, this progress is difficult to assess with any confidence. Typically, at the mid-term review stage, determining the extent to which an end-of-program outcome is on track involves assessing progress at the intermediate level, as this signifies whether the intended end state may or may not be realised. A credible assessment of such an effort rests on two

²⁹ Informed by ANAO PIPP Reporting 2023 and 2024, and key Informant interviews in PNG and Canberra; PIPP QTAG 2020.

things: 1) a well-thought-out program logic with a clearly defined end state and intermediate outcomes that reflect the types of changes that are actually contributing to achieving that end state; and 2) robust monitoring data that captures the actual changes taking place. There are issues in each of these areas as noted below.

Regarding the program logic (see Figure 1), as highlighted in the design update, a refocusing took place in 2023 that sought to align PIPP's objectives to the strategic intentions of the CSEP. This included moving the relationship between Australia and PNG to one of true partnership, with a focus on economic and strategic cooperation in areas of shared interest. While each of the outcomes in the program logic is important in its own right, the EOIO that most directly supports a 'true partnership' is EOIO1 'Selected Australian and PNG government entities have stronger or maintained institutional relationships'. This EOIO was modified during the design update, with the word 'stronger' replacing the word 'strong', in recognition of the fact that some agencies already had 'strong' partnerships, e.g. Home Affairs, ANAO etc.

Figure 1: PIPP Program Logic



Despite the focus on having ‘stronger’ or ‘maintained’ partnerships, these terms were not clearly defined in the design, and nor were the conditions for achieving them articulated. As such, during the inception period, a partnership continuum was developed as part of the Monitoring, Evaluation, Research Learning and Adaptation (MERLA) Framework to monitor the trajectory of these partnerships. This continuum has four criteria: 1) implementing a shared vision; 2) senior leadership engagement from both sides; 3) communication and collaboration on issues of mutual interest; and 4) localisation of relevant program activities. While this continuum is providing some useful (albeit limited) monitoring data, it does not capture the substantive changes currently taking place that are genuinely strengthening partnerships between the respective government departments. This represents a missed opportunity. Evidence from this evaluation suggests that at the time of the design update, and indeed for many years, the parameters that underpin a ‘stronger’ relationship between Australian and PNG government agencies have been very well known. Therefore, more effort should have been made to surface these factors and design a program logic that accurately captured what ‘stronger’ looks like in the Australia–PNG public service context.

Due to this design deficiency, the PIPP MERLA Framework is not capturing the changes occurring at the intermediate level, which, as noted above, is needed to assess the trajectory towards the ‘end state’. Under this outcome area, IO1.1., namely ‘Demonstrated commitment by GoA/GoPNG entities to develop and nurture institutional relationships’ is particularly salient. As noted in the design update, the word ‘nurture’ was added to this outcome statement to indicate the need for continual efforts to improve and strengthen each discrete institutional partnership. It is these continual efforts that can lead to the end state of a stronger partnership. Thus, to assess the extent to which EOIO1 is on track, we must look at the trajectory of these continual efforts to ‘nurture’ relationships — efforts that are not being sufficiently captured by the partnership continuum or any other monitoring or evaluation process.

Key informants from AGEs and GoPNG consulted as part of this IMTR expressed strong views on how partnerships are being nurtured and what the critical determinants for this are, emphasising the importance of shifts in norms and attitudes on both sides. According to GoPNG officials, there are several key shifts in norms and attitudes that underpin stronger institutional partnerships between Australian and PNG public service agencies. The signing of MOUs, leadership engagement and communication/collaboration (partnership continuum criteria 1, 2 and 3) are important. However, in the PNG context, more emphasis is placed on the way Australian officials and agencies conduct their relationships with PNG officials and agencies, both formally and informally. An example is cultural sensitivity and the understanding of workplace norms (as discussed above). Long-term deployees who have taken the time to understand and work within the ‘rules of the game’ in PNG agencies tend to be more effective. This is because such efforts build trust, which fosters meaningful communication and substantive discussion of problems and their potential solution. This type of open, problem-based dialogue is clearly a determinant of a ‘true partnership’ as called for under the CSEP. Another example is the diversification of these trust-based relationships (e.g. so they are not just between long-term deployees and PNG counterparts). Several GoPNG officials said that a feature of a stronger partnership is when they can simply pick up the phone and contact the right person in Australia who they know and trust and who can help them, without the assistance of a long-term deployee. At present, the extent of these workplace networks between Australia and PNG officials is not effectively captured, and there is no monitoring of them despite their primary importance.

AGE and GoPNG officials participating in PIPP highlighted several other ways institutional relationships are being nurtured, which include:

- investing the necessary time to customise training and mentoring and seeking feedback from PNG counterparts on its effectiveness (some partnerships could do more in this area, while others, such as Treasury and ABS, are doing well)
- designing reverse deployment experiences that take into consideration the pastoral care needs of PNG staff and ensuring they have meaningful workplace experiences in Australia (which can be constrained by issues such as bad planning, security clearances, lack of understanding of PNG counterpart capabilities and interests, and unanticipated workloads by host staff in Australia)
- ensuring relationships with GoPNG agencies are prioritised and Australian agencies are responsive to requests from GoPNG officials
- recruiting APS staff with the right mindset and adaptability to be effective in the PNG context from the outset

- investing resources over and above those provided by PIPP in areas of joint importance (e.g. Home Affairs)
- demonstrating institutional-level understanding that GoPNG agencies aim to strengthen their domestic and regional reputation, and explicitly supporting this including through joint programs and initiatives (such as Home Affairs' work on regional Border Management System efforts and ANAO's support to the AGO within the PASAI framework)
- adopting innovations from GoPNG agencies and learnings from reverse deployees, and
- deploying more senior staff who can assist with higher level organisational capability issues (see Home Affairs/ICSA).

These 'nurturing' efforts are all occurring to varying degrees, however, despite the emphasis in the design on learning and adaptation, the MEL approach does not facilitate AGE/GoPNG reflection on 'how' to better nurture these institutional relationships, which strategies may be more effective than others, and the barriers to doing so. The perception of Australian agencies held by GoPNG officials and vice versa is very important in this context, but limited effort is being made to capture any change in attitudes on either side. PNG–Australia relationships have been characterised for many years by asymmetry.³⁰ Institutional partnerships such as PIPP can help address this imbalance, and how this is being done should be a focus of PIPP. In the public service context, this means shifting perspectives on both sides and measuring changes in attitudes.

Going forward, DFAT should consider conducting practical, targeted research into best practice approaches for nurturing and strengthening relationships between Australian and PNG public service agencies. There are plenty of lessons to draw on. Resources could be sourced from existing facilities, such as the ANU–UPNG relationship under APEP, or through the Pacific Research Program Phase II (ANU), which includes a PNG-focused research program. This would help address the knowledge deficits in this area while informing the next design. Such research could be undertaken by PNG and Australian researchers with expertise in public service institutional issues in the respective countries.

On the issue of robust monitoring data, under EOIO1, agencies are expected to report on progress through their six-monthly and annual reporting, as well as through an annual assessment using the partnership continuum. The partnership continuum suggests benchmarks for AGEs to use when assessing and reporting on progress. However, use of the tool has been inconsistent. While AGEs report on the status of their institutional partnerships, this reporting is quite descriptive and lacks reflection on progress towards a 'stronger' partnership or assessment of factors that may be contributing to or hindering such strengthening. Partnership continuum data is primarily self-reported, however, there has been some corroboration using data from GoPNG officials, but again, this has not been undertaken consistently.

Table 3 presents the latest partnership continuum data for each of the institutional partnerships. Columns 2 and 3 present the mean AGE self-assessment scores against the four criteria, rated on a scale of 1–4, where 1 indicates 'Limited' and 4 indicates 'Good'. As is evident from Table 3, AGEs have reported a strengthening in partnerships across the board, or a maintenance of already strong relationships.

³⁰ See recent research by Whitlam Institute as reported in [PNG voices: regional partnerships must be based on respect \(Lowy Institute\)](#).

Table 3: Strength of Australian–PNG Government Partnerships

Partnership	ABS–NSO	AGD–DJAG	ANAO–AGO	APSC–DPM	ATO–IRC	FIN–FIN	HA–CUST	HA–ICSA	PM&C–PM&NEC	TREAS–TREAS	MEAN
2022	2.5	3.75	3	1.8	3	1.5	4	3.5	2.8	3.5	3.1
2023/24³¹	3.5	3.75	3.5	3.25	3.5	2.5	4	3.5	3	4	3.5

As highlighted in Table 3, there has been a consistent improvement in partnership ‘strength’ as measured by the four criteria since the baseline year. The qualitative data from interviews with GoPNG/AGEs and officials and other reporting largely corroborates the trends observed in Table 3 (see below).

ABS–NSO: strong relationship with senior level engagement occurring in technical/operational areas of mutual interest, however, MOU yet to be signed and somewhat limited executive-level engagement. Diverse array of people-to-people links, strong understanding of institutional context, and joint work planning.

AGD–DJAG: solid relationship with strong co-design processes that ensure activities align with DJAG corporate plans, strong and consistent high-level engagement at Attorney General and Secretary levels and regional engagement by senior officials. Collaboration can be affected by DJAG staff capacity and availability. Responsive support from AGD in the emerging priority area of AML/CTF well received and highly relevant.

ANAO–AGO: senior engagement is a feature of the relationship, including Auditor-General level engagements, and multiple senior regional engagements including at PASAI meetings and Australian states. Clear priorities based on objective auditing standards and multi-layered strategic and technical support set the foundation for a strong partnership.

APSC–DPM: partnership strengthening outcomes have been reversed in recent times due to disengagement by DPM senior leadership, which was due to changes in the APSC international team and the loss of key people-to-people relationships, which reinforces the importance of these relationships.

ATO–IRC: MOU signed in 2024, strong engagement from senior IRC staff in ATO support, including responsiveness in planning and assisting with addressing constraints when they emerge.

Finance–Finance: partnership was weak at the beginning of PIPP and has improved through the work of long-term deployee but remains the weakest of all the partnerships. This is due to a lack of engagement from senior staff in Canberra and Port Moresby, lack of prioritisation and resourcing by the Department of Finance in Canberra, and a weak mandate to operate internationally. Different functions between both departments also affects this relationship (e.g. Treasury does the budget in PNG, not Finance). More effort is required to strengthen senior engagement and identify areas of mutual interest.

Home Affairs and Customs and ICSA: strong and multilayered partnerships with senior support on both sides, jointly agreed priorities, and clear operational alignment. Strong and growing engagement from senior regional Home Affairs executives and organic networks developing without involvement of long-term deployees. Evidence of GoPNG localising relevant activities, including engaging in joint operations.

PM&C–PM&NEC: senior level engagement exists, as does an MOU, but finding areas of mutual interest has been challenging and has resulted in delays. More work needed to co-develop a work plan and suite of activities that meet PM&NEC priorities, but this is challenging due to a lack of articulation of these priorities on the PNG side.

Treasury–Treasury: relationship has strengthened over time following a significant breakdown after events of 2016, and the solid work of the long-term deployee is laying the foundation for this. Senior (SES)

³¹ Not all AGEs have completed 2024 Partnership Assessments, so the latest data is used where possible.

engagement is increasing as evidenced by recent high-level bilateral meetings, calls from GoPNG and mid-level Treasury officials for more people-to-people links.

EOIO2

Evidence from program reporting and from this IMTR suggests that significant progress is being made under this outcome area, however, due to deficiencies in the program logic as well as inconsistent monitoring, the full extent of these benefits is not being captured. EOIO2 states that “Institutional relationships generate benefits for both Australian and PNG government entities”. This outcome statement is supported by three intermediate outcomes: IO2.1 “Improved capacity and systems within GoPNG partner entities to deliver core mandate”; IO2.2 “Joint and complementary operations benefit Australian government entities”; and IO2.3 “Partnership activities support reform efforts prioritised under bilateral relationships, including sector and GEDSI initiatives”.

Before moving on to discuss progress towards EOIO2, it is important to highlight that the outcome statement cannot be considered an end state as required by DFAT’s M&E standards. It is very challenging to discuss progress towards something that is not an end state in itself. At the beginning of the program, institutional relationships between Australian and PNG government agencies were providing many benefits for both partners, drawing on the foundations laid by previous institutional partnership programs. Various previous evaluations have highlighted many benefits. The standard practice with DFAT designs is to review program evaluations, assess the status of progress at the end of an implementation phase, conduct up-to-date political economy analysis, consult with stakeholders and draft outcome statements that reflect progress-related ambitions for the new phase. This would have resulted in the identification of the various types of benefits arising from institutional partnerships between Australia and PNG — such as those identified and discussed in Section 2.1 — as well as the articulation of performance ambitions in these areas for individual agencies and the program as a whole, where appropriate.

Despite this high-level program logic issue, the IOs themselves make sense. As noted in Section 2.1, the support that Australian Government agencies have provided GoPNG agencies has, without doubt, helped them deliver on their core mandates (IO2.1). Improved joint and complementary operations also clearly benefit Australian government entities (IO2.2), particularly those with transboundary mandates, and activities clearly support reform efforts (IO2.3). Standard practice at the IMTR stage is to assess the extent of progress under each intermediate outcome area, discuss the balance of progress across them, and then assess the likelihood of achieving the end-state outcome. In this case, that is not possible for the reasons outlined above. However, progress in each IO area is discussed below.

As noted under Section 2.1, PIPP is directly contributing to improved capacity and systems within GoPNG partner entities to deliver core mandates (IO2.1). There are many tangible examples of this. Presented below are indicative results under this IO in a range of areas specific to each partnership, along with an assessment of whether progress under this IO is ON-TRACK or OFF-TRACK, considering the specificities of each institutional partnership. Due to the absence of baseline data, inconsistencies in the use of Agency Capacity Assessment and Plans (ACAP) — which analyse a PNG agency’s capacity to deliver its mandate but are not mandatory — and general underinvestment in M&E, it is difficult to report on PIPP’s contribution to ‘organisational level’ improvements in a robust manner.

The benefits to Australia from partnerships with GoPNG agencies (IO2.2) are explained at length in Section 2.1 and therefore do not require further elaboration here. For IO2.3 “Partnership activities support reform efforts prioritised under bilateral relationships, including sector and GEDSI initiatives”, progress has been variable. Progress on GEDSI issues is discussed at length in Section 2.4 and does not need to be repeated here. Efforts to support sectoral priorities, as identified by PNG and Australia, are discussed under evaluation sub-question 3 below.

ABS–NSO: The ABS directly supports the NSO in its core mandate to generate and communicate credible economic statistics. This includes supporting the timely delivery of GDP estimates and supporting the capacity of NSO officials to engage and consult with other PNG government agencies on economic statistics. It also includes improving the frequency and credibility of CPI measurements and communication to stakeholders on what these measurements mean. The ABS also assists with building the technical capacity of the international trade team, while also supporting improvements in the NSO’s capacity to produce business statistics and associated annual surveys and indicators. As noted in Section 2.1, supporting

improvement in NSO credibility is significant considering the role statistics departments play in supporting evidence-based policy-making. ON-TRACK.

AGD–DJAG: The AGD directly supports DJAG to deliver on its mandate by improving guidance for DJAG lawyers who rely on handbooks to prioritise and implement departmental activities. These activities include updating the Central Authority Handbook (which supports and guides AML/CTF-related activities); and updating the LPG Branch Handbook, which is a reference tool for new staff on the branches mandate and how to operationalise that. Training in certain legal and administrative fundamentals is also undertaken (including for lawyers from the Office of the State Solicitor). The appointment of a new AGD AML/CTF long-term deployee will augment this other organisational support and further help advance the DJAG mandate on AML/CTF, which is in the interest of both PNG and Australia. ON-TRACK.

ANAO–AGO: As highlighted in the text box above, the ANAO's work systematically addresses key AGO organisational issues identified by the SAI PMF 2019 report into AGO's organisational capacity. Major results include improvements in risk management (especially regarding staffing and finance), development and ownership of a capability framework, improvements in quality assurance capability, technical audit methodological improvements, individual auditor capacity building in technical and management areas, improvements in relations with external agencies, stronger audit processes, and improvements in capacity to manage the work of contractors. ON-TRACK.

APSC–DPM: Due to the issues mentioned above, APSC has experienced difficulties in engaging with DPM and assisting it to deliver its core mandate. There has been some one-off training provided but no assessment of how and to what extent it is leading to any organisational improvements. DPM continues to suffer from organisational inertia and needs to articulate more clearly how APSC can support it to more effectively deliver its services. OFF-TRACK.

ATO–IRC: The ATO's work directly supports IRC deliver its core mandate in a wide range of areas, but because it is delivered through STM modalities, it is not as systematic as the support provided by Home Affairs or the ANAO. The ATO has supported the development of frameworks and policies in data governance and professional partnerships, and provided technical assistance to improve processes and systems related to case management, letter drafting (which supports voluntary compliance), and debt management. Through its reverse deployee program, the ATO has also built individual staff capacity in a wide range of areas, including data and information sharing, compliance, risk management and tax crime. Due to a lack of post-training and deployment M&E, it is difficult to assess the impact of any capability uplift, which is the case with most training under PIPP. ON-TRACK.

Finance–Treasury/Finance: Difficulties in establishing a clear work plan for Treasury support, along with misaligned mutual interests, impeded progress on the Australian Finance–PNG Treasury Support initiative. Subsequent work in improving Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) processes was driven by an APEP adviser, though it could have been delivered by a technical adviser and was not a core skill set of the Finance deployee. There is a need to establish a solid G2G work plan that enables Australian Finance to draw on its public sector perspective to support PNG Finance in an area of high priority. However, this has been difficult due to a lack of high-level engagement on both sides. Individual capacity is presumably being built through reverse deployments but there is no analysis of their impact. There is a need to adopt a problem-driven approach to the structure of such deployments to ensure they deliver meaningful impact in PNG. OFF-TRACK.

Home Affairs–ICSA/Customs: Home Affairs' work in PNG directly supports ICSA/Customs in delivering its core mandate by improving customer service outcomes and transborder security, enhancing business efficiencies, and increasing revenue for GoPNG. This includes supporting legislative amendments, improving business systems and processes and building individual technical and managerial capability. The work in improving systems and processes is particularly important from the perspective of ICSA's core mandate. Results in this area include enhancing the ICSA Border Management System, advancing progress towards an e-passport for PNG citizens (which has strong political interest), and supporting the development of an Advanced Passenger Information System (APIS). Individual capability uplift is evident in a range of areas including team management, communications, facial recognition, APEC travel card processes, forensic document analysis and a wide range of other technical areas. ON-TRACK.

PM&C–PM&NEC: A shift in the focus of support from PM&C to PM&NEC, and away from supporting Cabinet processes, precipitated a delay to implementation, with ongoing work now focusing on the design of new activities. There have been difficulties obtaining approval for activities that may support organisation-wide improvements, with the focus now moving to more targeted skills development activities. Evidence suggests that the effectiveness of reverse deployments may be affected by security clearance, tasking and scoping issues. As with Finance, there is a need to ensure reverse deployee training is directly tied to priorities in PNG. OFF-TRACK.

Treasury–Treasury: Treasury’s work directly contributes to the mandate of the Budget Coordination and Analysis Division by improving the quality of technical analysis and evidence-based policy briefing. Training in budget fundamentals, data analysis and communication, and M&E, coupled with relevant, hands-on and culturally sensitive support from a committed long-term deployee, has helped build individual capacity. There is a strong demand for more support across other treasury divisions to address a large skills gap. Australian Treasury’s support is highly appreciated, and it is an opportune time to build on these solid foundations to expand support into corporate and other technical areas. ON-TRACK.

EOIO3

Performance in this area has been mixed and needs to be strengthened incrementally as the program heads to its next phase. There are opportunities to build on progress to ensure the next phase of PIPP is more strategic, relevant and effective.

EIO3 “Efficient and effective program management and enabling services support PIPP implementation”, is supported by three IOs: IO 3.1 “Enhanced governance and management”; IO3.2 “Enhanced communication and outreach within and across sectors”; and IO 3.3: “Enhanced sustainability”. As noted in the design update, efficient and effective program management and enabling services support highlight DFAT’s role as an ‘enabler’, rather than a manager of an aid program. In this context, DFAT has a key role to play in the success of the program in terms of governance and management arrangements, communication and outreach, and increasing the likelihood that positive changes observed in institutional partnerships, the institutional capacity of GoPNG partner agencies, and benefits to Australia will be sustainable.

There are myriad issues with the way this EOIO and its IOs are structured from a program logic perspective. As with the other EOIOs, EOIO3 is not an end state, and the terms in each outcome statement are not defined appropriately, which makes assessing progress difficult. In addition, the logic is somewhat convoluted. For example, IO3.3. “Enhanced sustainability” (presumably of institutional partnerships between Australia and PNG) could be thought of as contingent on ‘Efficient and effective program management’, ‘Enhanced governance and management’, and even ‘Enhanced communication within and across sectors’. The sustainability of institutional partnerships between Australia and PNG is, in some respects, the most important emergent outcome of all, but there has been very little focus on it during implementation.

As highlighted in the MERLA Framework, evidence that supports DFAT’s efficient and effective program management include: 1) Evidence of high-level DFAT engagement in providing and facilitating strategic direction and coordination; 2) Evidence of implementation of decisions/recommendations from IDC meetings and 6-weekly deployee meetings; 3) Evidence that new PIPP policies or strategies (e.g. GEDSI) and practices (e.g. cross-AGE learning) are improving partnerships; 4) Evidence that PIPP stakeholders are receiving concise and timely information tailored to their needs; 5) Evidence of the managing contractor work plan being satisfactorily implemented; 6) Ongoing maintenance of the Deployee Handbook; and 7) Risk management strategies and their effectiveness are reviewed at least annually and communicated. Findings in each of these areas is presented below:

- Strategic direction: While DFAT management of PIPP at the initiative level is responsive, strong and well-regarded, evidence from this evaluation suggests that much more needs to be done to strengthen DFAT’s strategic oversight and guidance — this issue is also discussed in the context of sectoral cohesion below. Such strengthening would see greater engagement between DFAT and PIPP AGEs at multiple levels, including in explaining to AGEs the mutual benefits of G2G partnerships; identifying cross-agency priorities at the WoG and sector levels in PNG; briefing AGE staff on political context and risks; facilitating engagement with other DFAT-funded programs; facilitating high-level discussions with GoPNG about its public service reform/strengthening priorities; linking PIPP

outcomes to DPP reporting; and drafting sectoral strategies that AGE agencies can align with and complement.

- IDC meetings: The IDC meetings provide a good overview of current issues and progress but are not being used as strategically as envisaged in the design. This strategic engagement should be elevated ahead of the design of the next phase and used to garner input into that design.
- Effect of strategies: The effect of these strategies varies considerably. While the MERLA Framework has been utilised, resourcing for M&E is insufficient, and the MERLA itself does not support the collection of the most relevant data. The GEDSI strategy has been under-utilised, as discussed in Section 2.4. Issues related to learning are discussed in Section 2.3.
- Timeliness: Timeliness is an aspect of efficiency and is therefore discussed in Section 2.5.
- PIPPSS work plan: As noted in Section 2.5, the support unit is delivering its work plan, outputs and reporting on time and in accordance with the contract and demonstrating significant flexibility in doing so.
- Deployee Handbook: This is being updated in accordance with the contract and as needed.
- Risk management: Risk management aligns with DFAT's standard practices. The Risk Register is updated annually as needed by the support unit, with any changes communicated to DFAT.

Regarding the performance of PIPPSS, it should be noted that most of the budget for support services is for logistical and security support, and this budget allocation is being increasingly stretched due to the growth in deployments (see Section 2.5). The support services provided by Abt Associates are highly valued by both AGE and non-AGE staff and are critically important in the PNG context. Due to budget constraints, Abt Associates has very limited capacity to support programmatic enabling services and must carefully manage its programmatic resources. There are very limited financial resources available to improve the performance of both AGEs and non-AGEs within the current contract. Some AGEs and non-AGEs require this support more than others. It is also important to highlight that some agencies, particularly those with limited exposure to the GoPNG organisational context, could benefit from more program-level enabling support, particularly in capacity development. Feedback from agencies suggests that program inputs have been helpful but limited. The same applies for MEL and GEDSI support. There has been some criticism of coordination efforts and learning forums, which in some cases have not been well planned. GoA officials reported how they would have been more effective earlier on in their deployments if they had better 'development' orientation, capacity building advice, mentoring support and substantive learning and coordination opportunities.

From an effectiveness perspective, it is important to highlight that PIPP cannot be considered a programmatic modality, but a series of discrete, bilateral partnerships. As such, it is not a mechanism designed to improve allocative efficiency based on considerations of effectiveness—a long-standing characteristic of institutional partnership programs between Australia and PNG. This makes it very difficult to assess the effectiveness of PIPP as a 'program'. Within a program, a decision can be made to allocate more resources to 'activities' that are more 'effective' than others. This is what underpins value for money in the international development literature. The structure of PIPP precludes such choices, as each partnership is considered equally valuable, with no overarching prioritisation from a strategic — and therefore allocative — perspective. There is also no mechanism to reallocate funds based on effectiveness criteria. This means that the partnerships that are performing well may receive fewer resources than less effective partnerships, or they may be unable able to scale up support even when doing so could maximise outcomes. There are also cases in which some AGEs are underspent and will likely remain so. In these circumstances, mechanisms could be put in place to transfer unspent financial resources to the partnerships that may use them most effectively. However, this would require an elevation in program-wide monitoring and evaluation, strategy development, and prioritisation criteria, utilised by a joint governance mechanism accountable for evidence-based decision-making.

How, and to what extent, is PIPP contributing to other DFAT sector programs?

PIPP's contribution to other DFAT sector programs is limited, and the contributions that are made largely result from the initiative of AGE deployees. There is limited capacity within DFAT at the program, sector or

senior level to drive such cohesion. As one key informant noted, “PIPP is a bit set and forget”³² from a strategic perspective.

AGE staff interviewed as part of this evaluation highlighted the need to improve coordination between their activities and other DFAT-funded programs. At present, such coordination is limited. Examples of duplication and lost opportunities for synergy with other DFAT sector programs were provided by AGE staff, including in training, technical engagement with other DFAT-funded programs, and input into program strategies. DFAT Post has limited oversight of PIPP work plans and limited capacity to monitor progress and drive cohesion. Communication at the whole of sector level is variable and could be improved according to some Australian officials. It is important to note that the PNG Government lacks a functioning governance mechanism to align work plans with overall country objectives and to report back to both governments on the relevance and effectiveness of support provided through PIPP, as noted in Section 2.1.

Cohesion across a development program cannot occur without strategic guidance, the right incentives, good planning and requisite human resources. None of these parameters are present in the current implementation context. There are no overarching strategies that could guide sectoral cohesion, such as a DFAT ‘PNG Economic Strategy’. For example, a planning mechanism does exist (the DPP), but it is not being used to highlight the many ways PIPP already contributes to DPP outcomes, as explained in Table 1 above. Some key programs are not supporting sectoral cohesion, despite this being part of their design and included in their statement of requirements, and DFAT resources at Post are stretched. In this context, it is not surprising that a lack of coherence is an issue. PIPP and future programs should respond to, and be situated within, broader sector programs and strategies, and opportunities for collaboration between different implementing actors needs to be explored and driven through these strategies. The strategies should be developed by DFAT in Port Moresby, with the assistance of technical experts and other Australian government departments. An ‘Economic and Public Financial Management Strategy’ could be prioritised due to the prominence of issues in this area.

The findings in this area mirror those of the IPP QTAG review,³³ which stated, “The strategic alignment of individual partnerships needs to be joined up with Australia’s other same sector investments, and opportunities for collaboration need to be explored. IPP is a small program, with very specific investments targeted to some 16 individual agencies, designed to both build agency-level partnerships and contribute to a broader, overarching partnership between the Papua New Guinea and Australian governments. A senior AHC official described IPP as an input into a broader strategic investment. IPP will only be effective if IPP support is situated within the broader sectoral and strategic engagement between the two governments.” This finding led to the following recommendation: “Recommendation 7: IPP needs to be situated within broader sector programs and strategies, and opportunities for collaboration between different implementing actors need to be explored. This should include an explicit focus by AHC teams on the contribution that IPP can make to their broader sector programs”. A similar recommendation is made below.

2.3 To what extent is PIPP’s Monitoring, Evaluation, Research Learning and Adaptation (MERLA) Framework fit for purpose?

A key feature of the PIPP design was the emphasis on M&E, along with increased resourcing and support for DFAT and AGEs in all related aspects. This included the development and operationalisation of a comprehensive MERLA Framework that could fulfil accountability, learning and adaptation objectives. This question assesses the extent to which the MERLA Framework is fit-for-purpose and supports evidence-based decision-making and learning across the program. This primary question was supported by two secondary questions. The findings are presented below.

Is the MERLA Framework providing DFAT with the evidence it needs to form a judgment on the effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, sustainability and GEDSI outcomes of the investment?

A range of issues with PIPP’s M&E system have been raised throughout this report. These and other M&E-related issues are expanded on under this question and the subsequent secondary evaluation question. First,

³² Anonymous key informant.

³³ Institutional Partnerships Program | Evaluation Phase 1 2018–19 | Part A: The Evaluation Report

it is important to point out that the MERLA Framework was developed in accordance with the design requirements and has been a useful tool in assisting AGEs and DFAT to assess progress. Guidance provided by the MERLA Manager has been targeted and well-received by AGEs, and the support unit has diligently managed the M&E and program support budget. However, it is also the case that 1) the various M&E related tools have been used inconsistently by AGEs, as noted in previous sections, and 2) resourcing for programmatic M&E support is significantly lower than would be expected for an investment of this size, flexibility and ambition.

Regarding the latter point, DFAT's M&E Standards suggest a range for M&E investment between 4 per cent and 7 per cent³⁴ of the total budget — in PIPP's case this equates to between \$2.15m and \$3.76m. Such investment is typically at the higher end of that range for a facility such as PIPP. PIPP's budget for program-level M&E-related expenses in the design was \$609,700, or 1.2 per cent of the total budget at the time of the design.³⁵ This figure includes human resources and MEL activities. Even if the M&E inputs of the various AGE PIPP program managers and employees are included in the aggregate calculation of M&E investment, it would still be significantly lower than that suggested by DFAT standards (and not well coordinated). While the design flagged an increased focus on M&E — and this did materialise compared to previous investments — it still fell well short of the resourcing required. The next question examines some of the implications. The core issue lies in the very limited resourcing available under PIPP for foundational M&E services.

Second, in addition to the resourcing issues, there have been a whole range of other design issues that have had far reaching M&E-related implications. This includes EOPOs that are not defined as end states, poorly worded IOs, and issues with the program logic hierarchy, as discussed in Section 2.2. For example, from the program logic hierarchy perspective, EOIO2 (derivation of benefits) and EOIO3 (provision of enabling services) could be seen as subsidiary to EOIO1. EOIO1 reads much more like an 'end state', which is what is required by the DFAT M&E Standards and by program logic convention, while EOIOs 2 and 3 read more like intermediate outcomes. Deriving benefits from a partnership and delivering effective and efficient enabling services are pre-conditions for stronger institutional partnerships.

As highlighted in DFAT's M&E Standards: "...outcomes are defined as an end-state (not as a way of getting there) and are clear about who and what is expected to change by the end of the investment. The type of change could be change in knowledge, behaviour, or condition". It also states that IOs should stipulate "Short-term effects include, for example, changes in counterpart or beneficiary knowledge, attitudes, and skills, while medium-term effects often reflect changes in behaviour, practice, and decisions".³⁶ The implications of poorly defined outcomes are significant and have had a downstream effect on the efficacy of the MERLA Framework. It has meant that the MERLA system has been unable to capture the actual changes in 'knowledge, behaviour and condition' that are occurring through PIPP — this IMTR has sought to capture some of these changes.

The limited resourcing for M&E has meant that the program-level ambitions for M&E noted in the design and outlined in the contract between DFAT and Abt Associates have not eventuated. M&E has focused on supporting individual AGEs with reporting, providing some limited M&E training, developing tools to assist with monitoring, and facilitating learning sessions, primarily because this is all that could be funded with the available resources. A range of other M&E activities were required to ensure strong program-level M&E, which would have enabled DFAT to "form a judgment on the effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, sustainability and GEDSI outcomes of the investment". These activities include the development of partnership-level program logics (for all partnerships) linked to the higher level (and better articulated) program logic; accompanying partnership-level M&E frameworks; the consistent use of key monitoring and evaluation questions (to drive reflection at AGE-level on issues such as effectiveness, efficiency, relevance etc); more investment in activity-level evaluation; synthesis of lessons learned across activities; more M&E capacity building at the levels of AGE and GoPNG officials; consistent baseline studies; up-to-date political economy analysis; facilitation of problem-driven planning sessions between partners; and synthesised program-level reporting. Such activities are standard practice for DFAT international development

³⁴ See Standard 5 of DFAT's Monitoring and Evaluation Standards - [Design and monitoring, evaluation and learning standards](#).

³⁵ See PIPP Design Update 2023, Table 5.

³⁶ See Standard 3 of DFAT's Monitoring and Evaluation Standards - [Design and monitoring, evaluation and learning standards](#).

investments of this size, including those that have G2G components or a focus on fostering institutional partnerships.³⁷

The lack of these program-level M&E processes has made it very difficult for DFAT to assess the performance of the program in any robust manner. This is because there is no program-level monitoring, evaluation and reporting in these performance areas. DFAT forms a view of the effectiveness, relevance and sustainability of PIPP through the aggregation of AGE-level six-monthly and annual reporting, and there has been little attempt to synthesise reporting to ensure PIPP is more than the sum of its parts. While PIPP is certainly a 'non-traditional' investment in some senses, a lack of fit-for-purpose M&E has meant that the totality of benefits and outcomes emerging from these important partnerships is not being captured, which is a lost opportunity.

Is the MERLA Framework assisting AGEs and DFAT make evidence-based programming decisions?

At the program level, evidence-based decision-making under PIPP is impeded by the various issues noted above. There are three additional issues that warrant attention here.

First, the absence of consistent activity-level evaluation across most partnerships³⁸ creates challenges with making evidenced-based decisions at the partnership level. This is a resourcing, training and process issue. Many of the GoPNG and APS officials interviewed for this evaluation wanted to know more about the effect of their various partnership activities, including how and to what extent they were generating sustainable outcomes. Many examples were given, including the best method for structuring reverse deployments to ensure they are effective and culturally appropriate; the impact of reverse deployments on skills uplift and organisational capability in PNG; how best to conduct foundational training (e.g. writing, IT, communications etc) in PNG government agency environments; effective ways to provide technical training; and best practice approaches to mentoring and coaching, etc. Evaluating activities and delivery approaches is vital in the G2G context, as such lessons can assist AGEs design more effective activities while also helping new partnerships and employees 'hit the ground running'. AGE reporting describes what organisational capacity has been built but there is little reflection on how capacity was built or how change came about. This, again, is a lost opportunity, as the lessons from such evaluation could help improve implementation across the program and become part of PIPP's institutional knowledge — knowledge that could be carried over to the next phase of implementation.

Second, as evidence from this evaluation has highlighted (see Section 2.2), DFAT's enabling role in the advancement of PIPP's outcomes needs to be strengthened. The absence of a monitored 'way of working' between DFAT and Abt and Associates and DFAT and AGEs has not helped in this regard. This 'way of working' could have been better articulated at the design phase, with roles and responsibilities clearly explained, performance indicators developed, and dialogue on progress in this area discussed between DFAT–Abt and Associates–AGEs. DFAT's Facilities Performance Assessment Framework could have been used for this purpose, as flagged in the contract between DFAT and Abt and Associates, including ways of working dialogues and strategic health checks.

Third, the highest level of evidenced-based decision-making usually takes place through appropriately structured governance mechanisms, which, when facilitated properly, allow senior stakeholders to reflect on program direction and strategic issues and priorities, drawing on evidence from the M&E system. As we have seen, the JOM has not been functioning and high-level GoPNG input into programming at the initiative level has been virtually non-existent (although it is strong at the partnership level). The IDC has also not acted as a forum for high-level programmatic reflection as these meetings are mostly transactional and information sharing in nature. More should be done to generate program-wide lessons of the many benefits and outcomes of Australian–PNG institutional partnerships, and to elevate discussion and reflection on these areas to senior PNG and Australian officials.

³⁷ Examples include Prospera in Indonesia which supports 16 Australian government agencies, and the \$50 million Southeast Asia – Australia Government-to-Government program. See DFAT, [Southeast Asia and Australia Government to Government Partnerships Program](#).

³⁸ Some AGEs do better than others in this regard. The AGD-DJAG partnership has generated some useful activity-level insights which have been useful for their program.

2.4 To what extent is PIPP enhancing GEDSI outcomes in PNG through its activities?

The elevation of gender equality was a key focus of the PIPP design and has achieved even greater significance since the release of the GoA's International Development Policy, which prioritises GEDSI. This is a particularly important cross-cutting priority for all Australian international development programs, regardless of the implementation context. This primary question was supported by three secondary questions, and the findings in each of these areas are presented below.

Do the activities agreed to by AGEs and their counterparts reflect the priorities and approaches of the PIPP GEDSI strategy and the PNG National Public Service Gender Equity and Social Inclusion Policy (2013)?

The PIPP GEDSI strategy endorsed by DFAT in September 2023 adopts a strategic 'light touch' twin track approach to GEDSI. The strategy identifies four key priorities:

1. Integrating GEDSI within agency capacity assessment and plans, home agency and host agency arrangements, partnership program logic, and/or partnership work plans, including allocation of budget to achieve GEDSI outputs and mobilising AGE leadership commitment.
2. Supporting AGEs to improve gender balance and diversity, improve accessibility, model good practice in PIPP recruitment and mobilisation processes, and strengthen accountability for gender equality and diversity in PIPP terms of reference.
3. Increasing opportunities for, and strengthening capacity of, PIPP participants from underrepresented and/or disadvantaged groups, with a focus on professional development and mentoring of women and people with disability in the PNG public service.
4. Enhancing knowledge and understanding of what works to promote GEDSI in institutional partnerships, through improved monitoring, evaluation, reporting, learning and adaptation.

The strategy establishes processes such as joint planning, joint capacity building, and institutional support towards stronger partnerships to sustain GEDSI results. It also identifies principles that are highly important for both countries, including effective male engagement that encourages 'do no harm approaches', listening and learning, as well as leveraging off and collaborating with other Australian Government activities and long-term approaches to GEDSI. While the strategy is explicit about obtaining AGE commitment, there is less focus on seeking commitment from the GoPNG agency leadership in GEDSI commitments. While joint planning is an appropriate focus, there is a need for leadership to drive the implementation of these plans. Table 4 presents details of the alignment between PIPP's GEDSI Strategy and GoPNG's GESI Policies.³⁹

³⁹ Note: GoPNG does not include 'disability' in this policy unlike DFAT.

Table 4: Alignment of PNG and PIPP GESI Policies

PNG GESI Policy	PIPP GEDSI Strategy	Evidence of Alignment
Cross-cutting issues such as gender equity, disability and HIV/AIDS can be addressed in the workplace through the practice of mainstreaming. The philosophy of mainstreaming can be extended to people of diverse language, ethnicity, cultural background, age, religious belief and family responsibilities. It can also address inequity brought about by differences in educational level, life experience, work experience, socio-economic background, sexual orientation, marital status and disability.	Takes on a twin track approach that is inclusive of mainstreaming.	Joint work plans that include gender mainstreaming activities.
GESI principles incorporated into legislation, corporate and strategic plans, agency programs, policies, guidelines, codes of conduct and behaviour, performance management systems, leadership models, reward and recognition, recruitment practices, complaints processes and feedback mechanisms, conditions of employment, training, budgets and expenditure and organisation and salary structures.	The principles of PIPP's GEDSI strategy are aligned to GoPNG's principles.	Support for leadership models particularly for women.
Employment	Training on international best practice within the public service with GoPNG counterparts.	Improvements in HR structures e.g. within the HR division of the Department of Finance.
Women in Decision-Making	Support for women in leadership.	Women are being promoted through capacity building support offered through PIPP to higher roles.
Gender-Based Violence	Needs support in strategy.	Needs strategy support.
Education & Training	Large focus on education and training.	The PIPP program has provided extensive education and training opportunities.
Health & Wellbeing	Needs support in strategy.	Needs support in strategy.
HIV/AIDS	Needs support in strategy.	Needs support in strategy.
Economic Empowerment	Needs support in strategy.	Needs support in strategy.

One of the major challenges is commitment from DPM in the review of the GoPNG GESI Policy to provide strategic direction to the public service. While there were efforts by APSC to support the review of that policy in 2023, there has been little follow up or commitment by DPM to operationalise outcomes. While the PIPP GEDSI Strategy identifies government engagement and commitment as a risk, whole-of-government GESI policy issues are not being systematically addressed to any great extent. This may affect the sustainability of progress made at the agency level.

As shown in Table 5 below, several GoPNG agencies participating in PIPP are yet to endorse their own GESI policies and/or commence meaningful implementation of GESI activities. Where there is strong commitment from agency leaders there is more traction in GESI implementation, and such leadership is needed to ensure the outcomes of AGE GEDSI activities are sustained. As seen in Table 5, only 3 of the 10 PIPP partner agencies have a GESI policy endorsed by senior leadership, which creates a very difficult implementation environment for AGEs, suggesting there is limited high-level engagement in this area at the policy level.

Table 5: PNG Government Agency GESI Policy Endorsement

PNG Government Agency	Endorsed GESI Policy	Draft GESI Policy
ICSA	✓	
Treasury	✓	
DJAG		✓
Department of Finance		✓
IRC	✓	
PNG Customs		✓
National Statistics Office		✓
Auditor General's Office		✓
PM&NEC		
DPM		✓

Regarding the implementation of the PIPP GEDSI Strategy, several areas require support going forward, for example:

- Priority 1: focusing on GoPNG Agency capacity to integrate GEDSI activities is an effective approach. The inclusion of GEDSI activities within the plans of all deployees ensures that activities take into consideration institutional contextual realities and helps mainstream these activities. Support from the GEDSI advisor, and recent additional support from a local GEDSI officer from the Business Coalition for Women (BCfW) assists with this. However, several AGE deployees consulted as part of this evaluation called for additional support on specific GEDSI issues relevant to their GoPNG partner. Program-wide GEDSI resources are constrained, with the BCfW adviser limited to working three days a week across the entire PIPP program. Opportunities to scale up the findings from pilots and other targeted GEDSI activities will be limited, given the constrained resource envelope.
- Priority 2: progress in this area has decreased with the percentage of women deployments dropping from 52 per cent in 2023 to 48 per cent in 2024. There is a need to better understand the incentives/disincentives for women to undertake PIPP deployments. Suggestions to improve deployment conditions noted by women deployees included better access to counselling facilities, establishing women deployees networks, strengthening social networks, and having a more flexible approach to leave that would enable deployees to more frequently engage with family members.
- Priority 3: the focus on building women's leadership capacity is highly relevant to PNG's GESI policy, which has a strong focus on gender equality in leadership. Women who have undertaken agency leadership programs have been promoted within their organisations to mid-senior levels. AGE trainings have been effective in enabling a greater recognition of women leadership styles, and best practice approaches in leadership. While a principle on men's engagement is listed in the strategy, it is not clear how engagement of men is being used to support women in leadership. To ensure the sustainability of GEDSI outcomes, men need to support women who have undertaken leadership training or participated in reverse deployee programs.

- Priority 4: GEDSI reporting has focused on activity-based reporting, such as the number of trainings conducted and the number of Communities of Practice (CoP) held. However, what would be more meaningful is monitoring, evaluation and reporting on the outcomes after the capacity building activities are carried out. Apart from personal accounts from beneficiaries, the M&E framework must also capture tangible outcomes. At present it is not possible to ascertain with any degree of confidence the outcomes from the wide range of GEDSI initiatives undertaken by AGEs, whether that be women's leadership, agency-level mentoring or reverse deployments. This is due to a lack of activity-level evaluation and synthesis.

Three other areas highlighted in the PIPP GEDSI Strategy require further support, including:

Coordination

There is a need to better coordinate GEDSI-related activities within counterpart agencies to avoid 'fatigue'. As noted above, GESI policies in many counterpart agencies have not been endorsed and there is variability in agency-level support. In this context, having multiple uncoordinated GEDSI activities within counterpart agencies and sectors, implemented by different Australian Government-funded actors, is problematic. There is a need to develop an overarching WoG PNG GESI Strategy to drive such coordination.

Capacity

While a lot of effort is expended on GEDSI training (pre-departure and during deployment) and the development of tools to support deployees, it has not been possible to capture to any significant degree how this training has built GEDSI capacity and contributed to GEDSI outcomes within GoPNG agencies. This is due to deficiencies in the M&E system.

Risk Management

Risks that are not explicitly covered in the GEDSI strategy that require consideration include:

- a) The exposure of deployees to counterparts in GoPNG who are experiencing high rates of sexual and gender-based violence outside of the workplace. The deployees may be confronted with issues such as absenteeism and low work performance by those affected. The risk becomes high when they hold a critical role towards implementation of activities within the deployee's work plan. This has a flow on effect on the deployees feeling the need to step in and do the work for them.
- b) An additional risk is the exposure of reverse deployees to sexual harassment within the GoPNG workplace upon return from Australia. While this has not been reported by GoPNG or AGE staff, it should be noted that there is no clear pathway for deployees to report sexual harassment in many agencies.
- c) Another risk includes deployees facing discrimination emanating from a disability or their LGBTQI status. Having an LGBTQI identity may expose deployees to discrimination in the highly conservative PNG society, and it is unclear what inclusive support would be available to deployees in PNG. The disability and social inclusion risks for both deployees and government counterparts requires focus going forward.

How effective are AGEs at reaching women, people living with a disability, and other transactionally marginalised population groups in their respective GoPNG partner agencies?

The focus of AGEs on reaching women has been effectively progressed through the women's mentoring program. Female GoPNG officials who participated in such training highlighted how it was effective in boosting their confidence and improving their work performance. Female GoPNG officials provided accounts of how their professional advancement would not have progressed as far without support from AGEs on building capacity of women — primarily due to an absence of GoPNG capacity building programs.

As noted in investment monitoring reporting,⁴⁰ outcomes related to disability have not been delivered and this area presents a challenge across government. While disability assessments have been carried out in

⁴⁰ See Annual Investment Monitoring Report 2023, PIPP, INN836.

some partnerships, the work plans of deployees do not capture specific activities that are advancing outcomes in this area. M&E in this area is weak, and there is no ongoing monitoring and limited data to assess progress. There are gaps in the PNG Public Service GESI Policy regarding support for people with disability. Only a limited number of deployees have received training on disability, and therefore this should be an area of focus for deployees and AGEs going forward. There needs to be increased focus on implementing the findings and recommendations from the disability assessments in partnerships with GoPNG agencies. The effectiveness of AGE support for transactionally marginalised population groups cannot be clearly assessed for a range of reasons, including a lack of data on these groups, limited planning and weak M&E.

Would there be benefits to increasing PIPP's focus on GEDSI, and what may this look like?

There are numerous benefits that would result in an enhanced focus on GEDSI. Three main areas are highlighted below for future consideration.

Women in leadership

The Australian Government, through its recent International Gender Equality Strategy, has a focus on supporting locally led approaches to women's leadership. There would be benefits to increasing support in women's leadership capacity that is already being built through PIPP. Research has shown that in PNG a woman in leadership must show her mark "han mak"⁴¹ as an indication of her credibility to overcome social biases against women's leadership. One opportunity to showcase women's leadership capabilities is to allow them to work closely with reverse deployees to implement projects that they have set out to achieve through their AGE programs. The showcasing of results from women's leadership would enhance support from within the GoPNG public service.

Men's engagement

Interventions should focus on systematically changing societal norms related to women's leadership roles within PNG. The PIPP GEDSI strategy identifies a guiding principle concerning men's engagement to support women in leadership. Men are most likely to support women when they can see tangible outcomes of what women can achieve as leaders. Thus, it is critical to support women in achieving tangible outcomes from the capacity built through the current engagement. Supporting men to talk and engage in conversations about positive changes from women's leadership is the way forward. The approach BCfW is piloting with GoPNG, which involves facilitating increased dialogue about changing social norms, may yield positive benefits.

Disability engagement

Elevating the role of people with disability in the PNG public service is important. Presently, PNG does not have a disability priority within the public service GESI policy, so increasing PIPP's focus in this area would be highly beneficial. Providing an enabling environment through policy development and implementation support is an important first step. Such advancements will provide a greater awareness of the type of support that can be provided to marginalised population groups, including people with disabilities, people with HIV, and others experiencing intersecting identities.

2.5 To what extent is PIPP being implemented efficiently?

Efficiency is concerned with how well resources are being used and if their use is likely to result in the timely and economic achievement of results.⁴² This question is supported by two secondary questions, and the findings in these areas are presented below.

⁴¹ PNG National Research Institute [DPNo178_Challenges_and_critical_factors_affecting_women_in_the_2017_national_elections-Case_of_Lae_and_Huon_Gulf](#).

⁴² OECD, [Understanding the six criteria: Definitions, elements for analysis and key challenges](#).

Do PIPP's systems and processes foster efficiency and drive value for money?

The PIPPSS provides support services for PIPP and non-PIPP AGEs in a wide range of areas, including security and workplace; health and safety; residential accommodation; work-related travel; communications; health; asset management; and pastoral care. This is in addition to the programmatic support in M&E, GEDSI and capacity development discussed in other sections of this report. The provision of these services is outlined in 16 service orders with different AGEs. Tasking notes under each service order delineate the exact nature of the services that PIPPSS provides each agency. PIPPSS is not responsible for the achievement of EOIOs — as is the case in other DFAT-funded programs — only the provision of support services.

The systems and processes which guide PIPP implementation, and the role of PIPPSS in these areas, are outlined in the PIPP Governance and Management Framework. This framework provides strategic, programmatic, and operational guidance for all PIPP stakeholders, including outlining the support services provided by PIPPSS as well as guidance for AGEs on deployment processes. A range of other operational documents provide guidance, including a Deployment Handbook and Safety and Security Plans etc. PIPP and non-PIPP stakeholders interviewed for this evaluation commended PIPPSS on the thoroughness and quality of the support provided, and the responsiveness of PIPPSS team members. A survey of PIPP AGE stakeholders in 2024 (n=53) reported that 94 per cent of respondents were 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with the services provided.⁴³

The PIPPSS provides value for money for DFAT in the management of its support services to AGEs. Significant efforts were made to reduce costs and improve efficiency during the inception period, and this has resulted in approximately \$1.8 million in savings compared to the previous phase.⁴⁴ These efforts have included, inter alia, consolidating long-term accommodation, which has reduced accommodation (and related) expenses; testing the market for security services and sub-contracting more efficient and tailored services; reducing support unit staff numbers (from 31 to 8); and reducing mobilisation and other operational support costs. Ongoing efforts to reduce costs and improve efficiency are highlighted in PIPPSS reporting, and these efforts are acknowledged by DFAT as evidenced in Investment Monitoring Reporting.

It is clear that PIPPSS is providing high quality, responsive services that provide a high level of comfort for PIPP and non-PIPP AGEs. However, evidence from this evaluation suggests that PIPPSS's absorptive capacity has been reached and further demands from PIPP and non-PIPP agencies risk exceeding the support unit's capacity to continue to deliver quality services. The principal reason for this is the significant, unplanned demand for support from PIPP and non-PIPP agencies since the program's inception. This demand could have been anticipated in the post-COVID context, given the strategic imperative to diversify and strengthen Australian–PNG relationships, as outlined in the CSEP and other strategic documents, and reinforced by senior Australian and PNG politicians in recent years.

Table 6 presents details of the number of deployments supported by the PIPPSS in 2023 and 2024 and compares these figures to the deployments anticipated in the contract, which was based on estimations in the design and associated statement of requirements. It is clear from these numbers that the design and contract significantly underestimated the demand for support unit services from PIPP and non-PIPP AGEs. The number of long-term deployees supported each year is around 2.5 times more than estimated, and the number of STMs supported is around 14 times more than estimated. The growth in non-PIPP AGE support is particularly striking, with approximately 50 per cent growth in non-PIPP AGE short-term employee support from 2023 to 2024, and with total non-PIPP employee support increasing from 30 per cent to 40 per cent of all STM deployments over the same period.

⁴³ See PIPPSS AGE Survey Report 2024.

⁴⁴ See Annual Investment Monitoring Report 2023, PIPP, INN836; PIPPSS 2023 and 2024 Annual Reports.

Table 6: Support Unit Delivery

Contract (estimated deployments supported)	2023 (actual)	2024 (actual)
Approximately less than 10 long-term deployees	26 – including 24 PIPP long-term deployments and dependants, 1 non-PIPP, and 1 PIPP short-term advisor	24 – including 21 PIPP long-term deployments, 3 non-PIPP, and 1 PIPP short-term advisor
Up to 10 short-term deployees	141 – including 99 PIPP, and 42 non-PIPP	146 – 86 PIPP, 60 non-PIPP
Up to 10 GoPNG short-term missions	36	37

Much of the extra strain on support unit resources stems from the increase in non-PIPP deployment support, according to senior support unit staff. While the scope of PIPPSS support to non-PIPP AGEs is defined in individual service orders, it tends to be more ad hoc and unpredictable than support for PIPP AGEs. Requests for support often fall outside the scope of services provided, requiring significant effort to manage expectations and meet one-off demands. Therefore, although non-PIPP deployments are proportionally fewer than PIPP deployments, PIPPSS staff estimate that the level of effort required to support them is at least equivalent. Many non-PIPP agencies have very limited experience in PNG. They may also lack their own deployment systems and processes, may not have program support in Canberra (which can reduce the burden on PNG-based support services), and they may have unique requests for support. As noted by senior PIPPSS staff, on average, each non-PIPP agency deployment utilises more time and resourcing than a PIPP agency deployment.

While non-PIPP AGEs are not officially part of PIPP, there is a need to monitor increases in demand that may affect PIPPSS absorptive capacity and to re-calibrate resources if needed. It may also be prudent to review, as part of the next design process, the pros and cons of maintaining the PIPP/non-PIPP AGE distinction. This review should focus on strategic, programmatic and operational considerations. At the strategic level, if the aim is to foster a diversity of institutional partnerships between Australian and PNG agencies, then the PIPP/non-PIPP distinction is irrelevant. However, at the programmatic and operational levels, there are a range of important issues to consider. From a programmatic perspective, Australian agencies forging new or expanded institutional partnerships with PNG agencies (outside of the program) presents a whole range of opportunities and risks that need to be considered. As noted in Sections 2.2 and 2.3, the full extent of the benefits accruing to Australia and PNG agencies is not presently being captured under PIPP, and therefore it is certainly not being captured outside of that arrangement. Doing so may enable a much fuller picture of Australian support to be documented, which could be used for strategic and public diplomacy purposes. This may also facilitate a more responsive and adaptive use of the institutional partnership modality, which would enable DFAT (and Australia) to better respond to PNG requests for support (and to report on their impact). In addition, having ‘non-PIPP AGEs’ under the PIPP umbrella, coupled with improvements in enabling services (such as M&E and capacity development support), may help such entities deliver their mandates more effectively.

At the operational level, leveraging PIPPSS to provide pay-for-service support for non-PIPP AGEs is an efficient model for many reasons, particularly because the efficient processes and systems that are already in place to support APS deployees under PIPP can readily be utilised. However, there may be even more efficiencies and value for money under an expanded Australian WoG modality.

Is PIPP structured in a way that drives operational efficiency?

As noted above, the PIPPSS is driving a high level of efficiency and value for money for DFAT. The key constraint from an implementation perspective is the role of DFAT. As noted in the design, DFAT has a key role to play as an enabler of PIPP’s outcomes, providing strategic and programmatic support at various levels. The findings of this report (and other institutional partnership evaluations) suggests that DFAT resourcing is insufficient and this lack of human resource support has a range of strategic and programmatic implications. At the strategic level, there is minimal high-level engagement, as noted in various parts of this report. Within the AHC, PIPP is seen as a ‘set and forget’ type investment — an unfortunate stance given its significant

contribution towards Australia's strategic ambitions in PNG. There is a need to re-engage at this level with both Australian and PNG counterparts through the IDC and JOM mechanisms.

At the programmatic level, DFAT staff are doing a highly commendable job with very limited resources. AGE stakeholders interviewed as part of this evaluation noted the high quality and responsive work of DFAT staff in Canberra and Port Moresby. AGE program managers have an excellent relationship with the DFAT activity manager in Canberra, which helps ensure their programs run smoothly. However, the low level of resourcing at Post has several impacts. These include limited input into work plans, limited oversight of the program and its opportunities and risks in the PNG context, limited technical inputs, and a lack of time to drive sectoral cohesion across the international development program or engage with GoPNG partners in public service reform priorities. The relevance, effectiveness, and efficiency of PIPP would be significantly enhanced if DFAT allocated additional strategic and program-level resources to the management and oversight of Australia's institutional partnerships with PNG, especially if this included dedicated strategic program oversight in PNG.

3. Conclusion

The purpose of this IMTR is to assess the overall effectiveness of PIPP. The evidence presented here demonstrates that in most cases, institutional partnerships between Australian and PNG government agencies generate significant strategic, organisational and operational benefits for public service agencies in both countries. Partnerships between most agencies are stronger, and new partnerships are being formed that help diversify and strengthen the overarching relationship between Australia and PNG. While PIPP has been able to respond effectively to emerging priorities in PNG on an agency-by-agency basis in most cases, gaps in high-level program governance, and a lack of visibility of PIPP resource allocation and GoPNG prioritisation, affect its ability to address WoG public service priorities. This will ultimately affect the sustainability and impact of its activities.

As noted in this and previous evaluations, there are a range of ongoing issues that have constrained the effectiveness and sustainability of institutional partnership programs over time. The primary issue among these is underinvestment in program enabling services, such as M&E, GEDSI support, capacity building, and operational services. Increase in demand has placed significant pressure on the PIPPSS from an operational perspective and programmatic enabling services need to be strengthened across the board. Weaknesses with the design of the program and a lack of fit-for-purpose M&E has meant that the totality of benefits and outcomes emerging from these important partnerships is not being captured, which is a lost opportunity. In addition, more proactive management by DFAT is required to maximise the development, trade, foreign policy and security-related outcomes of these institutional partnerships. However, a lack of cohesion, coordination and planning at the WoG level is constraining this.

4. Recommendations

1. The Joint Oversight Mechanism should restart and be used proactively to surface and discuss GoPNG public service priorities. The results from this evaluation could be used to kick-start that process. Membership of the JOM should be discussed with GoPNG and Australian Government counterparts to ensure appropriate, high-level leadership. Consideration should be given to expanding membership to include Australian and GoPNG agencies with strong partnerships, as this would highlight their importance to key agencies such as PM&NEC and DPM.
2. DFAT's representation at PIPP Inter-Departmental Committee meetings in Canberra should be elevated to SES Band 1 level (at all times), and discussion regarding strategic issues in institutional partnerships between Australia and PNG should be the focus of these meetings. The findings of this evaluation could be used to precipitate this higher-level WoG strategic engagement.
3. DFAT in Port Moresby should consider investing further resources (~EL1 level) in the strategic management of PIPP, including driving greater sectoral and WoG coordination. At present, the resources do not exist at Post to do this. Tasks could include managing the development of sector strategies (in economics to begin with); gradually aligning PIPP work plans and MEL with DPP outcomes; augmenting existing enabling services; engaging with GoPNG agencies in public service

priorities; following up on JOM outcomes; developing strategic communication products; actively monitoring non-PIPP agency activities; investigating the feasibility of new partnerships (e.g. Bank of PNG and APRA); and establishing and managing AGE and non-AGE social and workplace networks.

4. DFAT should begin the design of the next phase of the PNG–Australia institutional partnerships program as soon as possible, considering the June 2026 end date of PIPP. This design should involve DFAT, GoPNG and Australian WoG partners. The design process could be used as a mechanism to engage GoPNG in the process, while also elevating Australian WoG engagement. The design should focus on 1) scoping the level of ambition for Australian–PNG institutional partnerships on both sides and defining appropriate end-state outcomes; 2) analysing the political-economic and institutional factors that may constrain the achievement of outcomes; 3) producing a strong program logic with clear and well-defined end-of-program and intermediate outcomes; 4) testing the pros and cons of the PIPP/non-PIPP AGE distinction and assessing other models (e.g. core partnerships, tiered partnerships etc); 5) accurately modelling demand for support services (as much as possible); 6) establishing workable governance arrangements; 7) ensuring programmatic and operational support services are adequate and will support strategic ambition and effective delivery (particularly M&E); and 8) aligning M&E and reporting to DPP outcomes and priorities.

Annex 1: PNG – Australia Institutional Partnerships Program (PIPP) - Mid-Term Review: Evaluation Plan

1. Introduction

This evaluation plan provides conceptual, methodological and operational guidance for the Independent Mid-Term Review (IMTR) of the PNG Institutional Partnerships Program (PIPP) commissioned by the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT). Section one provides background context for the evaluation, discusses its purpose and scope, and defines the evaluation questions. Section two outlines the approach and methodology. Section three includes a range of evaluation management issues namely: roles and responsibilities, work planning, and ethical considerations.

1.1. Program background and context

The PIPP is a four-year (2022–2026), AUD53.8 million program, with the option of a further extension to 2030. PIPP is a partnership between the Government of Papua New Guinea (GoPNG) and the Government of Australia (GoA) that supports the development of long-term government-to-government institutional relationships. PIPP is the principal means by which the GoA – through its participating departments – generates and maintains institutional relationships in key sectors with GoPNG partner agencies. Each partnership reflects the unique nature of the individual relationships, the priorities for each partnership, the activities undertaken, and partnership governance and engagement pathways. PIPP provides a framework for engagement that offers technical advice and support to these partnerships to improve their effectiveness and further bolster the PNG–Australia bilateral relationship. Several bilateral institutional relationships and activities exist outside of PIPP (referred to as non-PIPP AGEs). These agencies can access PIPP logistics services to support the delivery of their activities. PIPP partnerships as of 1 July 2022 are listed in Table 1.

Table 1: PIPP partnerships as of 1 July 2022

Sector	#	Australian Government Entity (AGE)	Papua New Guinea (GoPNG)
Economic	1	Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS)	National Statistical Office (NSO)
Economic	2	Australian National Audit Office (ANAO)	Auditor-General's Office (AGO)
Economic	3	Australian Taxation Office (ATO)	Internal Revenue Commission (IRC)
Economic	4	Department of Finance (Finance)	Department of Finance (PNG Finance)
Economic	5	The Treasury (Treasury)	Department of Treasury (PNG Treasury)
Stability	6	Attorney-General's Department (AGD)	Department of Justice and Attorney General (DJAG)
Stability	7	Department of Home Affairs (Home Affairs)	PNG Customs Service (PNGCS) Immigration and Citizenship Authority (ICA)
Enabling Partnerships	8	Australian Public Service Commission (APSC)	Department of Personnel Management (DPM)
Enabling Partnerships	9	Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (PM&C)	Prime Minister & National Executive Council (PM&NEC)

PIPP's Theory of Change (TOC) contains three end-of-investment outcomes (EOIOs) and associated intermediate outcomes (IOs), and outputs. The TOC includes cross cutting outcomes around gender equality, disability and social inclusion (GEDSI), and learning and adaptation.

EOIO 1: Selected Australian and PNG government entities have stronger or maintained institutional relationships

- IO 1.1: Demonstrated commitment by GoA/GoPNG entities to develop and nurture institutional relationships
- Output 1.1 – Partnership arrangements are completed and endorsed by both entities
- IO 1.2: Jointly agreed multiyear partnership priorities and annual workplans promote GEDSI and sectoral cohesion
- Output 1.2 – Partnership activities are co-designed and include GEDSI-sensitive programming (at the individual, GoPNG agency, and broader environment).

EOIO 2: Institutional relationships generate benefits for both Australian and PNG government entities

- IO 2.1: Improved capacity and systems within GoPNG partner entities to deliver core mandate
- Output 2.1 – Relevant GoPNG staff complete secondment, training, and/or coaching
- IO 2.2: Joint and complementary operations benefit Australian government entities
- Output 2.2 – Increased collaboration on shared challenges
- IO 2.3: Partnership activities support reform efforts prioritised under bilateral relationships, including sector and GEDSI initiatives
- Output 2.3 – Enhanced partnership dialogue on anticipated contribution to reform efforts, including GEDSI and other policy reforms supported by GoA

EOIO 3: Efficient and effective program management and enabling services support PIPP implementation

- IO 3.1: Enhanced governance and management
- Output 3.1 – Strengthened DFAT engagement in providing and facilitating strategic direction and coordination
- IO 3.2: Enhanced communication and outreach within and across sectors. This IO was updated to reflect the increased focus on sectoral cohesion
- Output 3.2 – Improved IPP communications and outreach products, internally and externally
- IO 3.3: Enhanced sustainability
- Output 3.3 – Improved sustainability planning and implementation of partnership benefits.

DFAT is the program owner and plays a pivotal role in the funding, design, procurement, and delivery of PIPP, including risk management. PIPP is jointly managed by the PNG Branch in DFAT Canberra (Desk) and the Program Strategy and Gender Team at the AHC in Port Moresby (Post). DFAT manages Australia's bilateral relationship with Papua New Guinea, the Australian WoG relationships supporting the PIPP, and the services provided by the Managing Contractor (MC) through the PNG Institutional Partnerships Program Support Service (PIPPSS). DFAT is the manager of risk and is accountable for PIPP funds.

Australian agencies directly assist GoPNG agencies in line with activities agreed within the partnership parameters and as stipulated in Records of Understanding between Australian agencies and DFAT, with PIPPSS providing program, logistical and other support as required. AGE program teams provide strategic and operational support to deployments and contribute to the overall bilateral relationship with partners in PNG. APS deployees lead on the delivery of their agency work plan. AGE's also host GoPNG deployees in their offices in Australia.

The MC delivering PIPPSS collaborates with DFAT and AGEs on the day-to-day management of the program. PIPPSS communicates directly with the DFAT PIPP Program Manager on contract management and implementation issues, including emerging issues within the program and any updates or changes to the risk profile. PIPPSS is a focal point for program implementation, including deployment support activities, strategic and operational advice, and enabling services to support partnerships to deliver their work plans. It also provides MERLA, GEDSI and other support for the program and Australian agencies.

1.2 Purpose

As outlined in PIPP Investment Design Document (IDD), the purpose of this IMTR is to evaluate the overall effectiveness of the program and recommend adaptations that may be needed to enhance PIPP's performance over the remaining course of the program, while also providing guidance to DFAT on decision-making around program direction. This IMTR will also capture any changes to the public sector reform context in PNG that may have a bearing on the program.⁴⁵

1.3 Scope

The evaluation includes in its scope all the activities, partnerships, organisational systems and implementation strategies from the time of program commencement in 2022 to the present, and prospectively, to 2026. To better understand the history of Australia's investment in this space, and the place of PIPP in that chronology, the evaluation will also adopt a longitudinal perspective, drawing on historical documents and perspectives as required. As highlighted in the Terms of Reference (TOR), this IMTR will generate useful, practical, and constructive information to address the evaluation questions and align with DFAT's aid investment quality criteria: relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, and gender equality (including social inclusion and disability).

The three focus areas of the IMTR are:

- To test the relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of the delivery modality (PIPPSS, AGEs and non-PIPP AGEs), with a focus on:
 - determining the extent to which PIPP is meeting partners' expectations
 - assessing how, and the extent to which, PIPP is strengthening collaboration
 - assessing the relevance of the focus sectors noting the new International Development Policy and associated Australia-PNG Development Partnership Plan 2024-2029, and whether these remain flexible to shifting priorities across DFAT's development portfolio
 - assessing whether human and financial resources are sufficient to achieve the program outcomes, and
 - assessing how efficiently human and financial resources are being used.
- To assess the quality and efficacy of PIPP's Monitoring, Evaluation, Research, Learning and Adaptation (MERLA) framework with a focus on:
 - assessing the validity of PIPP's TOC and GEDSI Strategy (and other strategies that guide implementation)
 - assessing the suitability of MERLA resources and the quality of support PIPPSS provides in this area, and
 - assessing the extent to which AGEs are engaging with the MERLA framework and using it to strengthen implementation.
- To assess program performance (including in progressing GEDSI outcomes), with a focus on:
 - determining how, and the extent to which, outputs and intermediate outcomes are being delivered as foreshadowed in the TOC
 - determining if the EOIO trajectory is realistic at the midpoint in implementation and whether the balance across the EOIO's is appropriate
 - assessing if the annual workplan aligns with DFAT's and GoPNG's requirements, and
 - determining if outcomes will be sustained in the GoPNG institutional context without ongoing PIPP support.

⁴⁵ See p.20 PIPP IDD

1.4 Evaluation questions

The sufficient description of evaluation questions is an important part of any evaluation and is a requirement under Standards 5.6. and 5.7 of DFATs M&E Standards for Evaluation Planning⁴⁶. It is necessary for an evaluation team to re-interpret and clarify evaluation questions drawing on the TOR, the stated purpose of the evaluation, the donor's information requirements, DFATs evaluation criteria and the OECD-DAC evaluation criteria (where applicable) – this clarification is provided below.

Primary Evaluation Question 1: How relevant is PIPP?

Relevance is the extent to which an intervention's objectives and design respond to beneficiaries, country, and partner/institution needs, policies, and priorities, and continue to do so if circumstances change.⁴⁷ There are three aspects of 'relevance' that will be explored through this evaluation, each of which has its own secondary evaluation question:

1.1. To what extent are the institutional partnerships between Australian and GoPNG government agencies mutually beneficial?

In response to previous evaluations, the PIPP IDD emphasised the need for GoA and GoPNG agencies to derive mutual benefits from their institutional partnerships, as this can incentivise stronger, more enduring partnerships and support mutual accountability. This question will determine the types of mutual benefits that are derived from the various partnerships, the significance of these benefits to the respective agencies, and whether there are unforeseen or undocumented mutual benefits that could be consolidated and pursued further during the remaining years of implementation.

1.2. To what extent are the current sectors prioritised by PIPP relevant to GoA Australian and GoPNG strategic objectives?

A key aspect of 'relevance' is policy and strategic relevance, as this helps ensure buy-in from both donor and recipient. With that in mind, this question will explore the extent to which PIPP supports the strategic and policy objectives of Australia and PNG as set out in various policies, including the PNG DPP, PNG–Australia Comprehensive Strategic and Economic Partnership (CSEP), the Bilateral Security Agreement (BSA) and PNG's Medium-Term Development Plan IV (MTDP IV).

1.3. To what extent has PIPP been able to flexibly respond to emerging priorities and partnerships?

During implementation development priorities can change and new opportunities for partnering can emerge that need to be pursued. It is important that programs remain flexible and adaptable in a dynamic environment. To this end, this question will explore the extent to which PIPP has been able to effectively support emerging partnerships (including those of non-AGE's), while supporting Australia's priorities around GEDSI and Climate Change. This question will also examine the extent to which PIPP has the capability and flexibility to pre-empt and adapt to address emerging priorities within the GoPNG context, and whether there is a need to engage more strongly with PNG agencies in establishing priorities.

Primary Evaluation Question 2: How effectively is PIPP being implemented?

DFAT defines effectiveness as the extent to which the expected results (i.e., outputs or outcomes) of an aid activity have been achieved.⁴⁸ At the mid-term of a program, it is important to assess performance over the initial years of implementation, while also ascertaining whether the program is on track to deliver against the EOIO's. This allows for the identification of adaptations that may be required to improve performance over the remaining years. With that in mind this question is supported by three secondary questions:

⁴⁶ See DFAT (2017) Monitoring and Evaluation Standards, April 2017

⁴⁷ [Evaluation Criteria - OECD](#)

⁴⁸ See DFAT Investment Monitoring Report Guidance

2.1. What activity, or combination of activities, have been most effective in delivering against the Intermediate Outcomes?

AGEs implement a range of different activities, which are designed in cooperation with GoPNG counterparts and outlined in each Partnership Agreement. This question will assess the efficacy of these different delivery mechanisms, the conditions which support more effective delivery, and the issues which may constrain effective activity implementation in different contexts.

2.2. To what extent is PIPP on track to deliver its EOIOs?

Drawing on the above, this question will examine to extent to which PIPP is on track to deliver against its EOIO's, and the balance of progress between the respective EOIO's. This question will identify gaps in performance and suggest how, and the extent to which, PIPP may need to adapt to ensure EOIO's are delivered as foreshadowed in the TOC. This question will also include a review of the logic underpinning the TOC and the assumptions contained therein.

2.3. How, and to what extent, is PIPP contributing to other DFAT sector programs?

A focus of the IDD was to drive greater coherence between PIPP and other DFAT/GoA programs. This question will assess how, and the extent to which, PIPP's activities are supporting these other programs (e.g. Law and Justice, Climate Change, Kokoda, Home Affairs and PM&C), the barriers that may constrain effective support, and how PIPP and other DFAT sector programs may need to adapt to foster greater coherence.

Primary Evaluation Question 3: To what extent is PIPP's Monitoring, Evaluation, Research Learning and Adaptation (MERLA) Framework fit for purpose?

A key feature of the design of PIPP was the elevation of M&E and greater resourcing and support for DFAT and AGEs in all aspects thereof. This included the development and operationalisation of a comprehensive MERLA Framework that can fulfil both accountability and learning/adaptation objectives. This question will assess the extent to which the MERLA Framework is fit-for-purpose and supports evidence-based decision making and learning across the program. This primary question is supported by two secondary questions:

3.1. Is the MERLA Framework providing DFAT with the evidence it needs to form a judgment on the effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, sustainability and GEDSI outcomes of the investment?

This question will focus on the accountability dimension. As the program owner it is incumbent on DFAT to form a view on program performance and risk issues, and to report on this through its Investment Monitoring Reporting process. A good MERLA Framework should provide DFAT with the evidence it needs to form an independent view on performance and risk in the abovementioned areas. This question will assess the extent to which the MERLA is fit-for-purpose from this point-of-view.

3.2. Is the MERLA Framework assisting AGEs and DFAT make evidence-based programming decisions?

This question focuses on the learning and adaptation dimension. A good MERLA system should generate information that enables implementers to adapt their activities and strategies to incrementally improve performance. There are several dimensions that need to be explored under this question, including the quality of the monitoring system, the resourcing for MERLA, the timeliness of communication, M&E capability within AGE's, and organisational learning processes.

Primary Evaluation Question 4: To what extent is PIPP enhancing GEDSI outcomes in PNG through its activities?

The elevation of gender equality was a key focus of the PIPP design and has achieved even greater significance since the release of the GoA's International Development Policy, which prioritises GEDSI. This is a particularly important cross cutting priority for all Australian aid programs regardless of the implementation context. This primary question is supported by three secondary questions:

4.1. Do the activities agreed to by AGE's and their counterparts reflect the priorities and approaches of the PIPP GEDSI strategy and the PNG National Public Service Gender Equity and Social Inclusion Policy (2013)?

This question will assess the extent to which the PIPP GEDSI Strategy is influencing policy actions and activities on the ground and is, in effect, being operationalised. This question will examine the quality of that strategy and determine how it has guided AGE/GoPNG partnerships and programming. It will also examine the extent to which activities support PNG's GEDSI policy priorities.

4.2 How effective are AGEs at reaching women, people living with a disability, and other transactionally marginalised population groups in their respective GoPNG partner agencies?

This question will determine the extent to which material results are being achieved that advance GEDSI outcomes for women, people with disabilities, and other transactionally marginalised groups through the various partnerships. This question will also assess which activities and approaches are achieving GEDSI outcomes and in which context, the barriers to achieving these outcomes, and learnings that can inform partnerships going forward.

4.3 Would there be benefits to increasing PIPP's focus on GEDSI, and what may this look like?

This question will draw on the preceding two questions to examine whether there is a need to further emphasise and increase PIPP's focus on implementation of specific areas within the GEDSI Strategy over the remaining period of the program. This will include outlining the additional support that may be needed to increase focus on GEDSI within the program and the constraints to doing so.

Primary Evaluation Question 5: To what extent is PIPP being implemented efficiently?

Efficiency is concerned with how well resources are being used and if their use is likely to result in the timely and economic achievement of results.⁴⁹ This question will focus on assessing the extent to which PIPP can be considered operationally efficient and how the design, structure, implementation and governance of the program supports efficient delivery. This question is supported by two secondary questions:

5.1. Do PIPP's systems and processes foster efficiency and drive value for money?

This question will examine the extent to which the management systems that underpin PIPP's operations are functioning well and driving value for money. Such systems include financial management, human resource management, risk management, and governance and decision-making.

5.2. Is PIPP structured in a way that drives operational efficiency?

This question will examine the structure and function of PIPP, including the roles and responsibilities of DFAT, AGEs and PIPPSS, and assess the extent to which this structure and function is efficient, with clear roles and responsibilities.

2. Evaluation design

The following section outlines the evaluation design, including the evaluation approach and methodology.

2.1 Approach

A utilisation-focused, collaborative approach will be used for this IMTR. Evaluations are ultimately judged by their utility i.e., their actual use by 'real people in the real world'. While independent evaluations play an important role in ensuring accountability and assessing performance, it is the salience and utility of their recommendations that are the hallmarks of a high-quality evaluation. The collaborative approach outlined

⁴⁹ [Understanding the six criteria: Definitions, elements for analysis and key challenges | Applying Evaluation Criteria Thoughtfully | OECD iLibrary \(oecd-ilibrary.org\)](#)

here seeks to maximise the utility of the evaluation for the primary intended users, e.g., DFAT staff who must make decisions on the future direction of PIPP. Several fundamental principles underlie utilisation-focused evaluations; these include:

- the identification and close collaboration with primary intended users
- a commitment to use by intended users
- careful and thoughtful stakeholder engagement
- the customisation of evaluation designs based on situational issues; and
- high quality participation.⁵⁰

The way in which these principles will be operationalised throughout the various phases of the evaluation is outlined below.

Scoping and planning the evaluation

DFAT clearly outlined the objectives of the evaluation in the TOR, these objectives, and additional contextual and strategic issues were discussed at the kick-off meeting in November 2024. This enabled the evaluation team and DFAT to develop a shared understanding of these objectives and to establish a collaborative way of working together, which includes weekly meetings over the course of the evaluation. The purpose of this evaluation plan is to provide conceptual, methodological and operational guidance for the conduct of the evaluation based on our shared understanding of DFAT's objectives for the IMTR and DFAT's M&E Standards for Evaluation. As the primary intended users, it is imperative that DFAT staff read the plan carefully, particularly the articulation of the evaluation questions, as these questions will guide the data collection process explained below. DFAT's feedback on the draft evaluation plan has been incorporated into this final version. Outlined below are various additional entry points for DFAT to collaborate in the evaluation process. As the primary intended users, it is important that DFAT staff devote sufficient time and resources to proactively collaborate with the evaluation team at these points.

Implementation

Data collection

Once the evaluation plan has been finalised, the evaluation team will commence the implementation stage, which includes data collection, analysis and interpretation – see the work plan for details of tasks and timing. Prior to the commencement of data collection, key informants will be identified in close collaboration with DFAT staff. Semi-structured interview guides will be developed, and these will be shared with DFAT prior to the commencement of data collection - feedback on these questions is another important opportunity for collaboration. The evaluation team will seek DFAT's advice on protocol issues regarding the recruitment of key informants from GoPNG, and letters advising counterparts of the purpose of the evaluation will be sent to the various stakeholders. Team members will then commence interviewing key informants and reviewing key documents. The two members of the evaluation team will participate in all interviews with key informants. In addition to consistently using the semi-structured interview guide for all interviews the team will also use a standard template for the recording of data and emerging themes. The team will meet once a week during the implementation phase to discuss the major themes emerging from the interviews.

Data analysis and interpretation

The evaluation team will conduct preliminary analysis of the data collected in the field and draft an Aide Memoire that summarises the emerging issues. The aim of this is to assist with data interpretation and to understand which emerging themes and issues are of the most relevance and importance to DFAT noting the evaluation's objectives. The team will then undertake further data analysis and synthesis and begin drafting the evaluation report. Prior to the submission of this report, the team will facilitate a provisional findings workshop with DFAT that will respond directly to each of the evaluation questions. A key focus of

⁵⁰ Patton, M (2000) "Utilisation-Focused Evaluation", in Stufflebeam, D.L., Madaus, G.F., and T. Kellaghan (eds) *Evaluation Models*, Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers

these discussions will be to summarise the key lessons learned from the evaluation and to test some of the recommendations that the evaluation team may be including in the evaluation report.

Reporting and dissemination

After the completion of the provisional findings workshop an evaluation report of between 20 and 25 pages (exclusive of annexes) will be drafted in accordance with DFAT's M&E Standards. The Table of Contents for this report will include:

Executive Summary

Introduction

- Purpose of the Evaluation
- Summary of Evaluation Questions
- Summary of Methodology

Findings

- Evaluation Question 1
- Evaluation Question 2
- Evaluation Question 3
- Evaluation Question 4
- Evaluation Question 5

Conclusion

Recommendations

Technical appendices

- Semi-Structured Interview Guides
- List of Key Informants
- Statement of Compliance with DFAT M&E Standard 6 – Independent Evaluation Reporting

2.2 Methodology

Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews are a qualitative method of inquiry that uses a set of open-ended questions to explore themes and issues salient to an evaluation. A semi-structured interview does not limit respondents to a set of pre-determined answers but instead prompts key informants to delve into the context and pursue issues that may not have been raised. Semi-structured interviews target key informants. Key informants are individuals who are likely to possess information and insights on the topics being investigated, especially those who have first-hand knowledge about the specific situation under investigation.⁵¹ In this case these are people who have first-hand knowledge of the issues that will be investigated under the five evaluation questions. The categories of key informants for this project include:

- **Category 1 DFAT staff:** includes DFAT staff at Post/Desk engaged in the joint oversight of PIPP and other DFAT staff involved in policy and strategic issues, e.g., DFAT GEDSI staff
- **Category 2 Counterparts from the Government of PNG:** employees directly involved in the implementation or review of PIPP activities, including senior staff who can provide comparative

⁵¹ Kumar K (1989) Conducting Key Informant Interviews In Developing Countries, A.I.D. Program Design and Evaluation Methodology Report No. 13, Centre for Development Information and Evaluation, Agency for International Development, Washington D.C.

overviews; operational staff who can provide an overview of technical issues; and staff who can provide context regarding shifts in policy and the relationship between Australia and the GoPNG

- **Category 3 Australian Government Entities:** AGE/non-AGE staff directly involved in the implementation of activities with counterparts in PNG, senior staff who oversee deployments or are involved in the governance of the program, and staff in Australia who can discuss the benefits of the program for Australian agencies
- **Category 4 PIPPSS staff:** MC long-term or short-term staff who directly support the implementation of PIPP through the PIPPSS, and
- **Category 5 Third Party Experts:** knowledgeable former advisers, academics, design team members and other experts who have a detailed knowledge of institutional partnerships between GoA and GoPNG entities who can provide an assessment of the relevance and effectiveness of such partnerships.

It is important to classify key informants based on the type of information they can provide and the insights they have on key issues. This helps with the identification of the most important informants.

Focus groups

Where practical, focus group discussions will be used to gather data from informants with similar perspectives (e.g., AGE/ DFAT Desk). We understand that during consultations with large groups that include senior staff, junior staff may be less forthcoming. As such, focus groups will contain staff at a similar level of seniority to foster discussion. Focus groups will not be used in place of key informant interviews but rather to broaden stakeholder participation.

Document analysis

This evaluation will draw on a range documentation to understand the context of implementation and progress to date. Categories of documents available to the evaluation team include:

- **Category 1:** Program-related documentation (e.g., design documents, annual reports, activity reports, PIPPSS management documents, impact stories, MERLA documentation, AGE strategic and planning documents)
- **Category 2:** DFAT documentation (IMR's, PPA's, Gender strategies, policy documents, IDP etc)
- **Category 3:** Grey literature from development cooperation partners/multilaterals/GoI and CSO groups on topics germane to the evaluation
- **Category 4:** Academic literature on topics germane to this evaluation, and
- **Category 5:** GoPNG policies and plans.

Key documents in each category will be prioritised and systematically analysed to better understand the context of implementation and progress to date. This process will occur alongside the conduct of semi-structured interviews as these interviews will also be used to clarify issues emerging from the document analysis.

Data analysis and triangulation

The qualitative data from key informant interviews and document analysis will be analysed using standard qualitative coding techniques, including the use of orienting concepts and provisional codes that pertain to the evaluation criteria, and other issues that are consistently emerging through the data. These issues and themes will be discussed on a weekly basis between the evaluation team. Triangulation methods will be employed to mitigate recall bias and to corroborate the insights emerging from the qualitative data. In particular, the evaluation will review contemporaneous documentation and data relating to evidence gathered through interviews. Data source triangulation will be used to ensure that insights emerging from data analysis are valid and credible.

GEDSI analysis

Specific attention will be paid to analysing the GEDSI-related outcomes of PIPP's activities. This will involve assessing the achievements of the mainstreamed and targeted approaches, the scale and quality of what has been achieved, and missed opportunities in PIPP's operating context. There will be a focus on the

assessment of the GEDSI Strategy risk assessment and implementation plan to assess if the program is on track at midterm and a trajectory to be achieved at program end and if risks still hold relevance to implementation success. The analysis will use standard quantitative and qualitative analytical methods to assess the implementation of GEDSI Strategy against DFAT's Good practice note on GEDSI, Gender Equality in Monitoring and Evaluation and the Disability Inclusion in the DFAT Development Program. The qualitative analysis will be used to assess the strengths-based approach the program utilises towards implementation of the GEDSI Strategy. The quantitative analysis will test information against the M&E Framework of the strategy to assess the levels of sex segregated data and case study development. A results-based assessment tool will be developed to support the GEDSI analysis.

3. Evaluation management

3.1 Roles and responsibilities

The team will work under the direction of the Team Leader, David Carpenter. All team members will contribute to tasks and deliverables as set out in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Roles and responsibilities (Evaluation Team)

Role	Person	Responsibilities
Team Leader and M&E Specialist	Dr David Carpenter	David will lead and manage the review team, ensure the TOR is delivered to a high standard and on time, coordinate the team's inputs, and liaise regularly with DFAT. He will review background documents and lead the formulation of the evaluation plan. He will lead key informant interviews and analyse findings. David will be the lead author of the evaluation report and will lead the presentation of results.
GEDSI expert	Dr Pamela Kamya	Pamela will provide expert advice on GEDSI matters, participate in key informant interviews in PNG, analyse data, present GEDSI findings and assist with drafting the final report.

In recognition of the collaborative approach to this evaluation, it is also important to identify the roles and responsibilities of DFAT as the primary intended user of the findings of the evaluation, the roles and responsibilities of the different DFAT staff are included in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Roles and responsibilities (DFAT)

DFAT Role	Responsibilities
DFAT AHC (POM)	Support the evaluation team re protocol and logistics issues in PNG, collate DFAT and other documentation as needed, review Aide Memoire, participate in provisional findings workshop, review draft report and provide feedback, work with evaluation team and DFAT Desk on disseminating findings.
DFAT (Desk)	Overall management responsibility for the evaluation, support the evaluation team re protocol and logistics issues in Canberra, collate DFAT and other documentation as needed, review Aide Memoire, participate in provisional findings workshop, review draft report and provide feedback, work with evaluation team and DFAT Post on disseminating findings.

3.2 Work plan

The work plan for the evaluation is presented in Table 4. The project will be undertaken in three phases: 'Planning', 'Implementation' and 'Reporting and Dissemination'. The period for field work in Canberra and for any virtual field work that may be required is extended over a three-week period for scheduling flexibility. The time set aside for 'Data Analysis and Synthesis' and 'Draft Evaluation Report' extends over a five-week period, which is more than needed but reflects the need to sequence with the APEP evaluation, which Dr

Carpenter is also leading. A few days have been allocated at the end of the project to assist DFAT with the development of dissemination products, which are yet to be determined.

Table 4: Work plan

Week Beginning	25-Nov	2-Dec	9-Dec	16-Dec	6-Jan	13-Jan	20-Jan	27-Jan	3-Feb	10-Feb	17-Feb	24-Feb	3-Mar	10-Mar	17-Mar	24-Mar	31-Mar	7-Apr	14-Apr
1. Planning																			
1.1. Kick off meeting	26th																		
1.2. Draft Evaluation Plan		13th																	
1.3. Finalise Evaluation Plan			20th																
2. Implementation																			
2.1. Preliminary document analysis																			
2.2. Design Interview Guides																			
2.3. Field work (CBR/Remote)																			
2.4. Field work (POM)																			
2.5. Preliminary analysis																			
2.6. Aide Memoire										21st									
2.7. Data analysis and synthesis																			
2.8. Preliminary Findings workshop													10th						
3. Reporting and Dissemination																			
3.1. Draft Evaluation Report															28th				
3.2. Finalise Evaluation Report																4th			
3.3. Draft Dissemination products																			

3.3 Ethical considerations

The evaluation will be undertaken in accordance with the Code of Ethics of the Australasian Evaluation Society and the Guidelines for Ethical Conduct of Evaluations. Before evaluation activities commence, members of the management team will confirm that all other team members are aware of the code; and during the evaluation they will ensure that appropriate ethical practices are followed. Ethical practices in accordance with the Code and Guidelines include:

- disclosure of conflicts of interest
- data protection and management of personal information in accordance with the Privacy Act
- consideration of the interests of a range of stakeholders, particularly potential impacts of marginalised groups
- ensuring that participants in the evaluation are provided with clear information about the evaluation and how the collected data will be used, including assurances of confidentiality where appropriate
- discussing findings, particularly negative findings, with relevant partners before presenting them
- being direct, comprehensive and honest in the disclosure of findings and the limitations of the evaluation, and
- before commencement of interviews, participants will be fully informed of their rights as evaluation respondents using information sheets and a verbal briefing of the project