



ASIP-Gov: Mid-Term Review

Cowater International with Equity Economics



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ACRONYMS

Acronym	Definition
AHC	Australian High Commission
ASIP-Gov	Australia Solomon Islands Partnership for Governance
DFAT	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
DPP	Australia–Solomon Islands Development Partnership Plan
EOPOs	End-of-program outcomes
GEDSI	Gender equality, disability, and social inclusion
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IOs	Intermediate Outcomes
KEQs	Key Evaluation Questions
MEL	Monitoring, evaluation and learning
MERLA	Monitoring, evaluation, research, learning and adaptation
MTR	Mid-term review
SIG	Solomon Islands Government
TAs	Technical advisers
VAT	Value-added tax



Australia Solomon Islands Partnership for Governance (ASIP-Gov) Mid-Term Review

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1. CONTEXT AND PURPOSE

The Australia Solomon Islands Partnership for Governance (ASIP-Gov) is Australia's flagship \$35.8 million¹ governance initiative in Solomon Islands, operating from 2022 to 2025, with a two-year extension option. The program supports the Solomon Islands Government (SIG) to strengthen public financial management, enhance digital government and cybersecurity, and promote inclusive democratic processes. The program is structured into three pillars: (1) Economic Governance; (2) Democratic Governance; and (3) Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and Cybersecurity. The program is jointly managed across two branches at the Australian High Commission (AHC) in Honiara: Economic Section (Pillar 1) and Governance and Stability Section (Pillars 2 and 3).

ASIP-Gov has the following end-of-program outcomes (EOPOs):

1. SIG has strengthened public financial management and oversight
2. SIG has improved domestic revenue generation and improved capability in targeted areas
3. SIG has strengthened inclusive democratic processes and expanded opportunities for stakeholder engagement in public policy dialogue
4. the program generates strengthened relationships between SIG and the Australian Government.

EOPOs 1 and 2 are largely the focus of the Economic Governance and ICT / Cybersecurity pillars, while the Democratic pillar focuses on EOPO3. All pillars contribute to EOPO4.

This mid-term review (MTR) was commissioned by DFAT to assess the program's relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, and contribution to gender equality, disability, and social inclusion (GEDSI) against nine key evaluation questions (KEQs). It provides evidence-based insights into program performance against the EOPOs and the program's intermediate outcomes (IOs), and it examines the program's operating model, resourcing, and strategic positioning. The review also aims to inform decision making on future program directions, including the potential redesign or restructuring of ASIP-Gov's scope and delivery modalities.

¹ All dollar amounts in this MTR are Australian dollars unless otherwise specified.



1.2. SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The following key findings and recommendations are based on evidence gathered through a document review, stakeholder interviews, and analysis of program outcomes to date. They are intended to inform a potential extension and/or re-design of ASIP-Gov and guide decisions on program refinement, resourcing, and delivery.

Table 1: MTR summary

Criteria / KEQ	Finding	Recommendation
KEQ1: Is the program strategically aligned with, flexible and responsive to SIG priorities and Australia's strategic goals?	ASIP-Gov remains well aligned with both SIG and Australia's strategic goals and is responsive to SIG and Australian priorities. Overall, the three program pillars are strongly aligned with the priorities of both governments. However, the divergent scale of activities and changing structure of AHC suggests the need to consider the scope of ASIP-Gov in a future design, including with a view to realising synergies and ensuring alignment of the program with DFAT's broader investment portfolio in Solomon Islands.	1. A future program should consider the suitability of alignment and management efficiencies of the three pillars in a single, integrated program, noting changes in DFAT's portfolio and organisational structure in Solomon Islands and shifts in the operating context and priorities of SIG. 2. An additional senior leadership resource in ASIP-Gov in the Economic Governance pillar be appointed to enhance strategic thinking across the range of economic governance activities, and reduce pressure on AHC in developing activities, while maintaining the AHC leadership role in engaging SIG and guiding strategic priorities.
a) Could the EOPOs better align with the objectives of the Australian Government (including its new International Development Policy) in areas including gender, disability, climate and locally led development?	ASIP-Gov EOPOs are mostly well aligned with the objectives of the Australian Government. Localisation and gender equality is well reflected in the program logic. So far, the program has not included any specific outcomes on disability or climate issues.	3. A future program should consider how to further integrate the cross-cutting priorities of gender, disability and climate, while remaining realistic about the natural entry points available within the program's mandate.
KEQ2: What benefits (intended or otherwise) does the program generate for the Australian aid program and bilateral relationship?	ASIP-Gov's implementation approach has generated clear benefits for the bilateral relationship, reinforcing Australia's reputation as a responsive and trusted partner. The program's emphasis on relationship-building, flexibility, capacity development and sustainability is contributing to improved collaboration and institutional engagement.	4. A future program should ensure dedicated support to public diplomacy and stakeholder engagement functions, including the addition of a communications role within the program team and development of a strategic communications strategy.



Criteria / KEQ	Finding	Recommendation
KEQ3: To what extent is ASIP-Gov achieving its intermediate outcomes and EOPOs?	The program is widely viewed by stakeholders as effective, particularly in areas where strong SIG buy-in exists. It is on track to fully achieve EOPO4 and EOPO3 related to relationship building and democratic governance, and to partially achieve EOPO1 and EOPO2 related to public financial management and domestic revenue generation. These achievements reflect the value of embedded technical assistance, adaptive programming, and trusted relationships between Australian and SIG counterparts.	No recommendation made
a) Is the program delivering the right outputs to achieve the goals and outcomes of ASIP-Gov?	The program is delivering the right outputs to achieve the goals and outcomes of ASIP-Gov. However, budget reductions and subsequent increases across financial years 2023-24 and 2024-25 respectively impacted on some output delivery.	No recommendation made
b) Does the program logic, including IOs and outputs, remain relevant and achievable?	The program logic, including EOPOs and IOs, remains relevant and broadly achievable. However, some adjustments may be needed to ensure the framework remains relevant.	5. A future program should review the current EOPOs and IOs to assess continued relevance, feasibility, and alignment with evolving strategic priorities.
KEQ4: What lessons can be drawn from ASIP-Gov's performance that can be applied to improve ASIP-Gov?	The review identified several key lessons with implications for future programming. These include the importance of sustained SIG ownership, the need for stable and predictable budgeting, the value of a clearly defined and realistic scope of the program, and the central role of technical advisers in influencing outcomes. These insights will be important in informing program design going forward.	No recommendation made
KEQ5: Is ASIP-Gov's modality efficient and effective for delivering inclusive and accountable governance in Solomon Islands?	ASIP-Gov is an efficient, flexible modality for supporting inclusive and accountable governance in Solomon Islands, particularly considering the challenging and evolving operating context. The managing contractor manages the three pillars with a lean program management team and identifies opportunities and synergies across pillars, where they exist.	6. A future program should ensure the program's lean operating structure and value for money is maintained, especially if pillars are realigned.
KEQ6: Is ASIP-Gov's scope (economic governance /	Synergies across ASIP-Gov's scope and its three pillars are limited. The program	7. A future program should explore options to promote



Criteria / KEQ	Finding	Recommendation
democratic governance / ICT) correctly calibrated to realise synergies and promote programming efficiencies?	scope could be better calibrated to realise synergies and promote efficiencies across AHC programming. While ASIP-Gov has largely proven to be operating efficiently in a complex and resource-constrained environment, there are opportunities to improve strategic coherence where activities overlap with other AHC investments.	greater synergies and programming efficiencies across DFAT's development portfolio in Solomon Islands.
KEQ7: What have been the strengths and weaknesses of ASIP-Gov's management structure (the efficiency of the implementing partner / interactions with DFAT / management of advisers)?	ASIP-Gov's management strengths include strategic engagement, flexibility, relationship building and adaptability. Challenges have included budget stability and related efficiency losses beyond the control of the managing contractor or program management team who responded effectively to these changes.	No recommendation made
a) Is ASIP-Gov responsive?	ASIP-Gov demonstrates strong responsiveness through its flexible model and willingness to adapt to evolving priorities.	No recommendation made
KEQ8: To what extent are program outcomes sustainable and locally led, and what changes could be made to improve sustainability?	ASIP-Gov outcomes are mostly sustainable, particularly where local leadership and ownership are strong. However, staffing challenges, budget limitations, and uneven reform traction in SIG institutions pose ongoing risks to program outcomes that require active management and realistic expectations.	8. The impact of capacity building efforts and training should continue to be tracked or monitored to test if the outcomes are being sustained and capture lessons from these valued efforts to help guide decisions around further investment in this area, including through any re-design of the program.
KEQ9: To what extent have results been achieved in gender equality and disability inclusion and to what effect?	ASIP-Gov has a GEDSI strategy and a GEDSI adviser has recently been reinstated. While there are examples of targeted activities, particularly under the ICT and Democratic Governance pillars, there is limited GEDSI mainstreaming or targeted activities under the Economic Governance pillar.	9. ASIP-Gov should strengthen GEDSI efforts, particularly in the Economic Governance pillar, in a contextually appropriate manner, with opportunities identified in recruitment, workplace policies, public financial management, and digital access, amongst others.

Analysis and key findings were also considered for program risks, assumptions and use of MERLA.



2. INTRODUCTION

2.1. PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The Australian Solomon Islands Partnership for Governance (ASIP-Gov) works to strengthen Solomon Islands' public financial management, incentivise economic reform, improve information and communication technology (ICT) systems, support democratic processes, and expand opportunities for stakeholder engagement in public policy dialogue. With a program budget of \$35.8 million over 2022 to 2025, ASIP-Gov is in its fourth year of programming, approaching a two-year extension option from December 2025. It manages a team of 14 advisers, mostly long-term placements, with 11 based at the Ministry of Finance and Treasury (MoFT); one at the Office of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, and two at the Solomon Islands Electoral Commission.

ASIP-Gov is structured around three core governance pillars:

1. **Economic Governance** – supporting public financial management, fiscal policy, and economic reform
2. **Democratic Governance** – strengthening electoral processes, civic engagement, and institutional accountability
3. **ICT / Cybersecurity** – enhancing digital resilience, connectivity, and government service delivery.

The program is jointly managed across two branches at the Australian High Commission (AHC) in Honiara: Economic Section (Pillar 1) and Governance and Stability Section (Pillars 2 and 3).

Abt Associates is the managing contractor for the program.

ASIP-Gov's key approaches (modalities) to achieve its objectives include:

- embedded and short-term technical assistance
- targeted grant funding
- strategic policy dialogue and relationship management, led by the AHC.

ASIP-Gov's end-of-program outcomes (EOPOs) are:

1. Solomon Islands Government (SIG) has strengthened public financial management and oversight.
2. SIG has improved domestic revenue generation and improved capability in targeted areas.
3. SIG has strengthened inclusive democratic processes and expanded opportunities for stakeholder engagement in public policy dialogue.
4. The program generates strengthened relationships between SIG and the Australian Government.

There are 19 intermediate outcomes to achieve these 4 EOPOs. Refer to [Annex C](#) for ASIP-Gov's program logic.



2.2. EVALUATION PURPOSE AND PRIMARY USERS

Cowater and Equity Economics were contracted to conduct a mid-term review (MTR) of the ASIP-Gov program.

This review will guide DFAT in its strategic and management decisions regarding ASIP-Gov (noting this program term finishes in December 2025, but that there is a two-year option to extend). The review will also inform decisions that ensure that ASIP-Gov remains fit-for-purpose, adaptable, and impactful, continuing to contribute to long-term economic and governance stability in Solomon Islands. It will assess the effectiveness of the partnership in addressing the priorities of both governments and will provide clear evidence-based recommendations to improve program delivery, ensuring that ASIP-Gov remains aligned with the Solomon Islands' National Development Strategy 2016–2035, and the Joint Donor Policy Reform Group where appropriate. The review's findings will guide DFAT's decisions regarding the potential two-year extension and the need for a design refresh.

The review served three main objectives, assessing:

- the **relevance** of ASIP-Gov to Australian and SIG priorities
- the **effectiveness** of ASIP-Gov and progress against the program's EOPOs and intermediate outcomes (IOs)
- the **efficiency** of ASIP-Gov's implementation and management arrangements to deliver results and provide clear recommendations to improve processes.

The review also explored other areas including ASIP-Gov's sustainability and gender equality, disability equity and social inclusion (GEDSI) approaches, risk management, and monitoring and evaluation systems.

The primary audience for the review was AHC senior management and program staff. Secondary audiences include SIG, Abt Associates, and other partners.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. EVALUATION DESIGN

This review employed a qualitative approach, with the primary data collection being through review of key documents and 42 interviews with primary stakeholders. Data collection and analysis was guided by 9 key evaluation questions (KEQs) that covered the areas of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and GEDSI. The review also considered risk and MERLA. These KEQs were provided in the MTR's terms of reference and have framed this review, informed the data collection methods and the sampling and analysis decisions, and were used as a basis for synthesising data and structuring conclusions and reporting. The full set of KEQs is provided at [Annex D](#).

Data sources and data collection methods have been intentionally selected to ensure that multiple sources of information are available for each review question, strengthening the evidence base and positioning the team to credibly derive conclusions. Data collections methods were refined based on the review team's initial document review and evaluation expertise and were further informed by interviews with the team at the AHC in Honiara.



3.2. SAMPLING METHODS

The MTR reviewed documents proposed in the terms of reference that related to the program's key plans, strategies and reports on its design, operations, progress, monitoring and evaluation, and GEDSI. These included:

- ASIP-Gov concept note and design
- ASIP-Gov program logic
- ASIP-Gov strategies and frameworks (e.g. Monitoring, Evaluation, Research, Learning and Adaptation Plan and Framework, GEDSI Strategy, Climate Change Strategy)
- ASIP-Gov annual workplans and budgets
- ASIP-Gov progress reports (e.g. annual reports, quarterly reports, annual investment reports)
- ASIP-Gov risk register
- other material provided by DFAT and/or Abt Associates.

A full list of documents considered can be found at [Annex B](#).

Interview participants were selected based on:

- **Knowledge area:** Each stakeholder interviewed had strong knowledge and expertise in at least one of the following domains: public finance management; fiscal and budget support; Solomon Islands governance; GEDSI; monitoring, evaluation, research, learning and adaptation (MERLA); and/or an understanding of the socio-political context.
- **Varying depth of engagement with and stakes in ASIP-Gov:** Stakeholders selected for interviews included a mix of representatives from DFAT, SIG, development partners, and civil society.

The purposive sampling approach ensured that selected interview participants:

- could provide credible, useful information and insightful perspectives to answer the KEQs
- represented a range of perspectives, including stakeholders who are responsible for delivering / implementing ASIP-Gov or who are benefiting from the program and are external to the program
- could support the triangulation of findings and strengthen confidence in review conclusions.

A list of interviewed stakeholders is provided at [Annex A](#).

3.3. TRIANGULATION STRATEGIES AND FINDING VALIDATION

Following data collection, preliminary analysis was conducted, drawing on each data source and assigned evidence to each KEQ. Thematic analysis was also conducted to organise collected data against the evaluation sub-questions as well as other key issues that emerged during data collection. This approach supported validation of key findings.



3.4. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

In conducting this MTR, the review team ensured the highest ethical standards and complied with the [Australian Evaluation Society Code of Ethics and DFAT Ethical Research and Evaluation Guidance Note](#). The team sought informed consent from all participants and ensured information, data, and findings were treated with the utmost confidentiality to protect the privacy of individuals and organisations who contributed to the review process. Participants were provided with context on the nature of the information being collected and the purpose of the MTR at the commencement of the interview, and the team sought participant agreement to interviews being recorded and transcribed.

3.5. LIMITATIONS

The review team was not able to identify or interview any individuals or groups who were not directly employed by or involved with ASIP-Gov. This weakens the evidence by limiting independent perspectives, reducing objectivity, and potentially overlooking broader impacts. It may be useful to expand the interview scope if there is a program re-design or refresh, to include community groups and program clients (this would be especially relevant for the Democratic Governance pillar). This could include seeking the views of a range of groups, including women, people with disability, and civil society partners.

Limited information on performance financing was provided to the review team. The original program design notes that ASIP-Gov will design and implement a modest performance incentive scheme for willing counterpart agencies and teams. Evidence was not available to the review to confirm progress on this activity.

4. FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

In this section, the analysis and findings have been set out against the criteria and corresponding KEQs and sub-questions, as mapped in Table 1 below. High-priority questions, as specified by AHC ASIP-Gov Program Managers, are marked with asterisks (*).

Table 2: Criteria and corresponding KEQs and sub-questions

Criteria	Corresponding KEQs and sub-questions
Relevance	KEQ1. Is the program strategically aligned with, flexible and responsive to SIG priorities and Australia's strategic goals. * a. Could the EOPOs better align with the objectives of the Australian Government (including its new International Development Policy) in areas including gender, disability, climate and locally led development? KEQ2. What benefits (intended or otherwise) does the program generate for the Australian aid program and bilateral relationship?
Effectiveness	KEQ3. To what extent is ASIP-Gov achieving IOS and EOPOs? * a. Is the program delivering the right outputs to achieve the goals and outcomes of ASIP-Gov? b. Does the logic, including IOs and outputs remain relevant and achievable? KEQ4. What lessons can be drawn from ASIP-Gov's performance that can be applied to improve ASIP-Gov?



Criteria	Corresponding KEQs and sub-questions
Efficiency	KEQ5. Is ASIP-Gov’s modality efficient and effective for delivering inclusive and accountable governance in Solomon Islands? * KEQ6. Is ASIP-Gov’s scope (economic governance / democratic governance / ICT) correctly calibrated to realise synergies and promote programming efficiencies? * a. Are existing performance financing elements successfully incentivising reform identification and implementation? * KEQ7. What have been the strengths and weaknesses of ASIP-Gov’s management structure (the efficiency of the implementing partner / interactions with DFAT / management of advisers)? * b. Is ASIP-Gov responsive? *
Sustainability	KEQ8. To what extent are program outcomes sustainable and locally led, and what changes could be made to improve sustainability? *
GEDSI	KEQ9. To what extent have results been achieved in gender equality and disability inclusion and to what effect?

4.1. RELEVANCE

KEQ1: Is the program strategically aligned with, flexible and responsive to SIG priorities and Australia’s strategic goals?

Key finding: ASIP-Gov remains well aligned with both SIG and Australia’s strategic goals and is responsive to SIG and Australian priorities. Overall, the three program pillars are strongly aligned with the priorities of both governments. However, the divergent scale of activities and changing structure of AHC suggests the need to consider the scope of ASIP-Gov in a future design, including with a view to realising synergies and ensuring alignment of the program with DFAT’s broader investment portfolio in Solomon Islands.

ASIP-Gov is closely aligned with Solomon Islands and Australian policy priorities. See Figure 1.

Figure 1: ASIP-Gov policy alignment

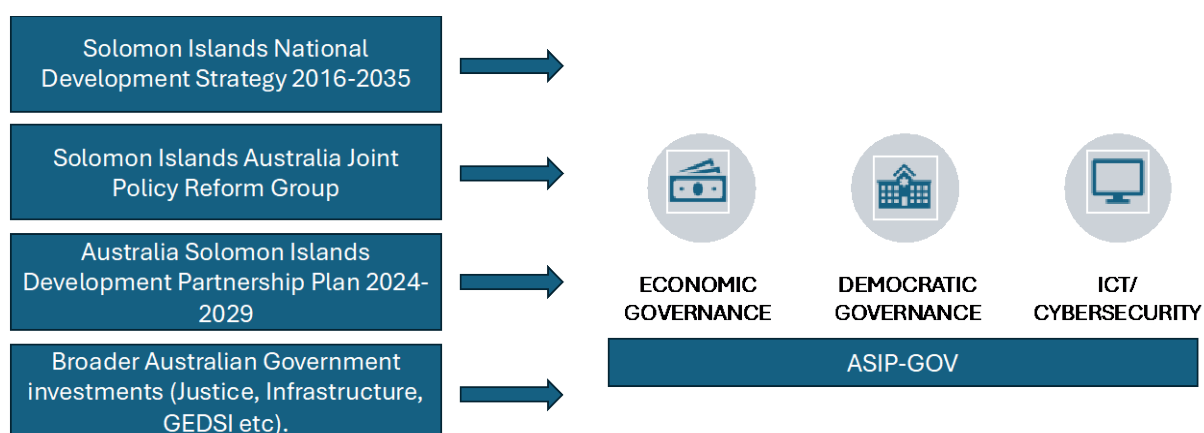


Figure Description: Four strategic inputs are shown on the left hand side: Solomon Islands National Development Strategy 2016–2035, Solomon Islands Australia Joint Policy Reform Group, Australia Solomon Islands Development Partnership Plan 2024–2029, and broader Australian Government investments (Justice, Infrastructure, GEDSI etc.). These are depicted as



feeding into three outcome areas represented by icons (finance, infrastructure, and technology) through the ASIP-GOV initiative.

ASIP-Gov supports SIG's priorities outlined in the Solomon Islands National Development Strategy 2016-2035. ASIP-Gov Pillar 1 works to support Objective 1 ('sustained and inclusive economic growth'), while all three pillars support Objective 5 ('unified nation with stable and effective governance and public order'). The program's flexible and adaptive approach enables it to respond to emerging SIG priorities and a complex delivery context.

SIG objectives are further supported through ASIP-Gov's participation in the Joint Policy Reform Group, which works closely with the government to support the national reform agenda and the government's development objectives. ASIP-Gov collaborated with SIG and other development partners to develop the Policy Reform Matrix, which is Cabinet-approved, signalling high-level buy in.

ASIP-Gov aligns strongly with key bilateral priorities outlined in the draft Development Partnership Plan 2024-2029. ASIP-Gov corresponds to:

- Objective 1 (Inclusive economic growth, infrastructure and job creation) with a focus on budget support and economic reform.
- Objective 2 (Investing in people, communities and links to Australia and the region) through a focus on outcome 2.3 linkages (between leaders and institutions strengthening the relationship between Australia and Solomon Islands) and outcome 2.2 on GEDSI (more women involved in decision-making).
- Objective 3 (Improved stability, security and resilience) through a focus on outcome 3.1 governance (Strengthened policies and systems enable Solomon Islands Government institutions to be more inclusive and accountable to citizens).

Reflecting this strategic approach to development investment in Solomon Islands, ASIP-Gov is complementary to broader DFAT investments in the country, which span an array of sectors, aligning with SIG's National Development Strategy (2016–2035). These investments include:

- Gender Equality program (\$381 million, 2012–2027), aimed at reducing gender-based violence and empowering women and girls
- Solomon Islands Justice program (\$20 million, 2021–2026), which works across the justice sector to improve access to credible legal systems and support the rule of law
- *Strongim Bisnis* (\$18 million, 2023–2026), supporting inclusive economic growth and climate-resilient practices
- Solomon Islands Infrastructure program (\$250 million), which is enhancing the country's infrastructure planning, delivery, and technical capacity.

Given this alignment to the DPP and its complementarity to other DFAT investments, ASIP-Gov demonstrates strong alignment with the Australian Government's strategic goals.

The ASIP-Gov Investment Design Document identifies that Australia's objective for this program is 'to strengthen accountable and inclusive governance in partnership with SIG'. ASIP-Gov effectively



supports this objective through each of its EOPOs and explicitly targets relationship building through EOPO4, reflecting Australia's commitment to deepening partnerships in the region.

The January 2025 Strategic Impact Assessment Partnership for Governance Report supports this assessment – it found that ‘strategic shifts in program implementation highlight the partnership’s ability and agility to respond swiftly to action new priorities’, ensuring continued support for SIG in achieving its broad objectives.

The broad scope of the program allows it to seize opportunities and flexibly respond to SIG’s evolving needs. There is clear evidence of the managing contractor and program management team building synergies across pillars and working to achieve cohesion across the teams, where possible and relevant.

At the same time, challenges related to changes in the program’s budget and shifting SIG and Australian government priorities have required the team to adopt a flexible approach to program management. This has created additional work pressure on the AHC and program management teams, in addition to creating uncertainty for some SIG counterparts.

Interviews identified a further challenge in the changing scale of activities across pillars and the related challenge of resource allocation at the AHC. Between financial years 2023/24 and 2024/25, the size of the Economic Governance pillar increased from 35.2 percent to 45.2 percent of total program funding, while the ICT / Cybersecurity pillar was 27 percent and democratic governance was 5.5 percent in FY2024/25. The remainder of the budget expenditure went to program management (14.2 percent) and management fee (7.9 percent).

One issue raised was that pillar resourcing is not necessarily commensurate with the scale of activities undertaken by each pillar, especially with respect to strategic planning capacity. Combined with the changing structure of AHC teams, consideration is likely required of the scope of the ASIP-Gov in a future phase, including in relation to DFAT’s broader investments across SIG.

Table 3: ASIP-GOV budget distribution

Pillars	FY 23/24	FY 24/25
Economic Governance	35.2%	45.2%
ICT / Cyber	24.9%	27.3%
Democratic Governance	13.4%	5.4%
Management fee	7.4%	7.9%
Program management	19.1%	14.2%

Source: ASIP-Gov Program Management Team.

Note: Pillar split not available for financial years 2021/22 and 2022/23.

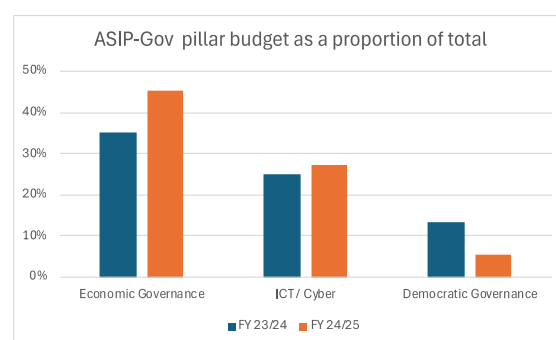


Figure 2: ASIP-GOV budget distribution

A related challenge is the expansion of support requests into new areas — such as lands, mining, communications, and aviation — which may add to the existing imbalance in the scope, scale, and relative resourcing of the three pillars, noting that the Economic Governance pillar is particularly stretched.



There are both risks and potential benefits in changing the current delivery model, and a program redesign or refresh would need to consider the impact of any change on value for money and efficiency in delivery model. On balance, the evidence supports a redesign or design refresh of ASIP-Gov, to improve coherence and alignment moving forward. In the interim, to better manage workloads, ASIP-Gov should focus efforts on activity design and implementation. ASIP-Gov's appointment of a program lead for the Economic Governance pillar would improve program leadership capacity in the near term.

Recommendation 1: A future program should consider the suitability of alignment of the three pillars in a single, integrated program, noting changes in DFAT's portfolio and organisational structure and shifts in the operating context and priorities of SIG.

Recommendation 2: An additional senior leadership resource in ASIP-Gov's program team to focus on the Economic Governance pillar could enhance strategic thinking across the range of economic governance activities, improve budget planning and reduce pressure on the AHC in developing activities, while maintaining the AHC leadership role in engaging SIG and guiding strategic priorities.

a) Could the EOPOs better align with the objectives of the Australian Government (including its new International Development Policy) in areas including gender, disability, climate and locally led development?

Key finding: ASIP-Gov EOPOs are mostly well aligned with the objectives of the Australian Government. Localisation and gender equality is well reflected in the program logic. So far, the program has not included any specific outcomes on disability or climate issues.

Australia's 2023 International Development Policy underscores a strengthened commitment to advancing gender equality, disability inclusion, climate resilience, and locally led development across all aid investments. The policy sets new minimum standards, such as the requirement for investments over \$3 million to include gender equality objectives, and places an emphasis on driving development that is locally led, inclusive, and sustainable.

Locally led and sustainable development: ASIP-Gov is well aligned with the objective of locally led and sustainable development. The program's investment in local capacity development and emphasis on partnerships and responsiveness to SIG priorities are consistent with Australia's broader policy shift towards locally owned and driven development outcomes. The EOPOs support this. EOPO4, which focuses on strengthening relationships between SIG and the Australian Government, reflects these locally led and partnership-based approaches.

ASIP-Gov's investment in locally led and sustainable development is demonstrated through its support for national training pipelines, such as the SIG-ICT Young Professionals Program, which is building a new generation of skilled public servants in priority sectors. The program also reflects its localisation commitment through the employment of Solomon Islanders in program management roles, helping to foster local leadership and ensure responsiveness to SIG needs.

Long-term technical advisers from Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea, and Fiji accounted for [50 percent] of all ASIP-Gov personnel, demonstrating a commitment to localisation and regional capability-building. Capacity is being developed in a range of ways across the program including through systems strengthening (ie. payroll and FMIS), training (i.e. the Junior Professional Program)



and improved practices (i.e.. development of handbooks and operating manuals). While the effectiveness of capacity building is variable across the program, interviews with SIG counterparts indicated that embedded advisors were prioritising capacity building as a core part of their role.

Gender: Promoting gender equality is an explicit goal for the whole program. EOPO2 includes a GEDSI-focused intermediate outcome: IO2.4 - *improved SIG policies and practices make workplaces more inclusive of women and diverse groups in targeted divisions*. Gender equality promotion is also a high priority within the Democratic Governance pillar. EOPO3 includes two intermediate outcomes – IO3.2 and IO3.4 – on women’s participation in elections and within formal and informal arenas.

Disability inclusion and climate resilience: These priorities are not mentioned explicitly in the program logic. Although broader governance reforms contribute to building systemic resilience, there is limited scope within the existing Economic Governance, Democratic Governance, and ICT / Cybersecurity activities to directly address disability or climate resilience goals.

Recommendation 3: A future program should consider how to further integrate the cross-cutting priorities of gender, disability and climate, while remaining realistic about the natural entry points available within the program’s mandate.

KEQ2: What benefits (intended or otherwise) does the program generate for the Australian aid program and bilateral relationship?

Key finding: ASIP-Gov is generating benefits for both the Australian aid program and the broader bilateral relationship with SIG. There is evidence that the emphasis on supporting capacity development and building relationships is contributing to improvements in the bilateral relationship. ASIP-Gov’s embedded, responsive approach reinforces Australia’s role as a partner of choice, a sign of the program’s soft power value. More could be done however, to promote the successes of the program.

The current AHC team and program managers are described by technical advisers and SIG counterparts as approachable and responsive to requests. This was supported by findings from the October 2024 informal MTR presentation by Graham Teskey, which noted that the program contributed positively to enhancing SIG-DFAT relationships. The presentation highlighted that the program delivered strongly against EOPO4, which focuses on strengthening relationships and partnerships, and that ‘real achievements’ in revenue-raising initiatives and in supporting democratic elections have further enhanced Australia’s reputation as a reliable and responsive partner.

Strong relationships between the current AHC team, ASIP-Gov staff, and SIG ministries were consistently cited as a key factor underpinning the program’s success. Interviews highlighted that SIG counterparts view the AHC team and ASIP-Gov staff as approachable, flexible, and supportive, contributing to effective collaboration.

However, with the loss of a dedicated communications staff member in ASIP-Gov, the ASIP-Gov team noted that more could be done to promote the successes of the program, especially given that the investment has transitioned from a largely behind-the-scenes initiative to a more public-facing program.

Additional evidence from pillar-specific interviews confirms these broader findings.



Economic Governance: Close collaboration with key SIG ministries, such as the Ministry of Finance and Treasury, has enabled targeted technical assistance on public financial management, domestic revenue, and fiscal oversight. Feedback from SIG counterparts noted that technical advisers placed within these agencies are viewed as trusted advisors rather than external consultants. This status has enabled ASIP-Gov to influence core systems and processes such as budgeting and debt management while also supporting SIG leadership in navigating politically sensitive reforms. The continuity of adviser engagement and the adaptive support model have been critical in fostering institutional trust and reinforcing Australia's role as a constructive partner.

ICT / Cybersecurity: In feedback on this pillar, ASIP-Gov was described as being 'exceptionally responsive' to SIG requests, including the timely funding and delivery of an \$1.1 million government data centre project - a project for which competing proposals had been received. Australia's rapid and responsive support was seen as critical in reinforcing Australia's position as SIG's preferred partner in ICT.

Democratic Governance: Interviews indicated that the Solomon Islands Electoral Office values the embedded technical advisers' practical and respectful approach, particularly in sensitive areas like electoral reform. Twinning arrangements with the Australian Electoral Commission to support peaceful and credible elections have also generated a very close relationship, contributing to strong bilateral goodwill.

However, it was noted that the program's success has been highly dependent on the quality of interpersonal relationships. These relationships have improved substantially over the course of the program, which has significantly contributed to the program's achievements. Maintaining strong, constructive working relationships remains critical to sustaining program benefits.

Recommendation 4: ASIP-Gov would benefit from support for public diplomacy and stakeholder engagement functions, including a communications role within the program team and development of a strategic communications strategy. As ASIP-Gov transitions from a largely behind-the-scenes initiative to a more public-facing program, this role would be instrumental in promoting the visibility of Australian aid, strengthening local engagement and raising awareness of the successes of the program.

4.2. EFFECTIVENESS

KEQ3: To what extent is ASIP-Gov achieving its IO's and EOPOs?

Key finding: ASIP-Gov is viewed as effective, particularly where strong SIG buy-in exists. The program is achieving its IOs and EOPOs to varying extents. The review found that ASIP-Gov is likely to partially achieve EOPOs 1 and 2 and fully achieve EOPOs 3 and 4 by December 2025.

In interpreting the following assessments of EOPOs and IOs, the review team notes that many outcomes are long term in nature and ASIP-Gov is only four years into implementation. Accordingly, an assessment of partially achieved outcomes reflects progress, often even significant progress, no matter if further work remains to achieve the intended outcomes. The rubric at Annex E supported the review team in making consistent and evidence-based judgements, ensuring consistency and transparency in assessments.



A finding of “Achieved” reflects strong evidence of outcome achievement; alongside a clear contribution pathways from activities to results and a validation of progress from stakeholders. A finding of “Partially Achieved” reflects that while some progress observed there was mixed evidence or inconsistent outcome achievement.

To answer KEQ3 the review team first considered EOPOs by program area as this was deemed the most relevant way to assess the achievement of outcomes based on the structure of the program. The review team also considered whether the program was producing the right outputs to achieve program outcomes (KEQ3a) and assessed each intermediate outcome based on whether it was relevant and achievable (KEQ3b).

EOPO1: SIG has strengthened public financial management and oversight.

This EOPO is assessed as being Partially Achieved. This finding is supported by evidence of progress in key areas such as improved debt sustainability, increased audit activity, and successful upgrades to the payroll system within the Ministry of Finance and Treasury. However, challenges remain, including audit backlogs and under-resourced internal audit functions. While ICT and cybersecurity investments have strengthened the enabling environment for financial management, the mixed nature of outcomes and sustainability concerns support a partial achievement rating.

Economic Governance

The 2024 Debt Sustainability Analysis indicated that the overall risk of debt distress in Solomon Islands remained moderate, while the risk of external debt distress improved to low from moderate. This suggests that advisory input is supporting debt management and outcomes.

Significant increases in the number of audits undertaken has demonstrated the effectiveness of audit support, with twinning support received from the New South Wales Audit Office; although noting that large backlogs remain. Internal audit functions are significantly underfunded and understaffed, affecting the sustainability of anti-corruption initiatives. Upgrading of the payroll systems within the Ministry of Finance and Treasury was a significant achievement.

ICT / Cyber

ICT / Cybersecurity support has also contributed to building digital infrastructure that, among its broader benefits, underpins organisational, financial and administrative management. The establishment of a secure government data centre delivered with ASIP-Gov support has improved the resilience and security of government data – incidentally including financial data. Interviews confirmed that Australia is considered SIG’s trusted partner in this work. ICT and digital investments also played a complementary role in enabling stronger public financial management systems. For instance, the payroll system upgrade mentioned above was supported by ASIP-Gov’s ICT technical assistance, illustrating a level of collaboration between the Economic Governance and ICT pillars. These investments are enhancing the enabling environment for financial oversight, digital records, and secure communication across government systems.

EOPO2: SIG has improved domestic revenue generation and improved capability in targeted areas.

This EOPO is assessed as being partially achieved. This finding is supported by clear progress in revenue collection and capacity development, particularly in Customs and ICT. Technical support and



workforce investments have contributed to improved performance, and initiatives like SIG-ICT Young Professionals Program have begun to expand digital capability across government. However, the full potential of these gains is constrained by ongoing budgetary limitations, and key reforms such as the introduction of a VAT system are still in planning stages, resulting in mixed evidence of consistent outcome achievement.

Economic Governance

Improved revenue collection in Customs is, at least in part, due to technical support and significant investment in workforce recruitment and development. There is momentum and optimism around planned organisational reform in the Office of the Auditor-General. Further investment by SIG in these systems could yield significant revenue gains, particularly critical for the successful introduction of a value-added tax (VAT) system.

ICT / Cyber

The development of a local ICT workforce has progressed well, particularly through SIG-ICT Young Professionals Program. Over the course of the program, 6,500 government employees have become regular digital users. Cybersecurity security capabilities have also improved, with SIG now independently managing some critical functions. Additionally, ICT support has enhanced digital connectivity in revenue-relevant agencies, facilitating the digitisation of Customs operations and reducing manual processing errors.

EOPO 3: SIG has strengthened inclusive democratic processes and expanded opportunities for stakeholder engagement in public policy dialogue.

This EOPO is assessed as being Achieved. This finding is supported by strong evidence of improved electoral administration, inclusive participation, and effective stakeholder engagement in the 2024 elections. The successful delivery of joint national and provincial elections without major incidents, high voter turnout, and increased representation of women demonstrate meaningful progress. ASIP-Gov's embedded technical adviser played a clear role in supporting electoral reform and institutional capacity-building, with these contributions validated through stakeholder feedback.

Democratic Governance

Recent elections were held jointly for national, provincial and Honiara city positions without any major cybersecurity incidents or civil unrest. The 2024 Solomon Islands Election Report (produced jointly by the Australian National University and Solomon Islands National University) found notable progress in electoral administration, voter education, and growing support for female candidates. There was also evidence of high compliance with election protocols at voting booths and 98 percent participation by eligible citizens. The report also noted that 'the introduction of joint national and provincial elections in 2024 marked a significant reform that received strong support from citizens'. The ASIP-Gov TA played a critical role in supporting broad consultation on the passage of four key bills. This included consultation across the regions, and with youth groups, women's groups and church groups.

The report also highlights that there was notable progress towards women's political participation in the 2024 elections. For the first time, three women were elected to parliament and five women secured positions in provincial assemblies and the Honiara City Council. However, the research



identifies increasing challenges to trust and fairness in the electoral process, with persistent concerns about voting secrecy and the rising prominence of cross-border registration.

ASIP-Gov's contribution to these positive outcomes was through an embedded advisor working in the Solomon Islands Electoral Commission (SIEC) supporting a range of policies, plans, practices and legislation and building the capacity of the Solomon Islands Electoral Office and SIEC to implement its Electoral Reform Strategic Framework. The twinning arrangement with the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) has also been a success, with the AEC providing technical advice on reforms. Senior stakeholders reported that they wouldn't change anything about their current partnership with ASIP-Gov, noting that they "always feel like we can ask", and that the ASIP-gov team was very responsive to their needs.

EPO 4: The program generates strengthened relationships between SIG and the Australian Government.

This EPO is assessed as being Achieved. Stronger relationships between SIG and the AHC have resulted in increased requests for Australian support, signalling trust and recognition of the partnership's value.

Effective engagement by the AHC team and stronger strategic oversight has improved SIG buy-in since the inception of the program. Embedded technical advisers have been praised for their responsiveness, technical skill, and contribution to building local capacity. In the economic governance pillar, TAs supported the upgrade of the Ministry of Finance and Treasury's payroll system and provided technical assistance to Customs, which contributed to improved revenue collection. In the ICT sector, ASIP-Gov has helped deliver a secure government data centre, established SIG-ICT Young Professionals Program, and has supported over 6,500 government employees to become regular digital users. Similarly, in the democratic governance pillar, the embedded TA has contributed to the successful delivery of joint national and provincial elections in 2024, and promoting ongoing electoral reforms.

In each of these examples, outcomes were delivered through close collaboration with local counterparts, supporting the transfer of knowledge, and strengthening of systems and capacity. The embedded adviser modality supports a collaborative approach, enabling sustained improvements by building trust through day-to-day engagement.

In several instances, technical advisers have successfully transitioned responsibilities to local staff over time, indicating tangible capacity gains. However, interviews identified that effectiveness is lower where political buy-in is weak, SIG systems are challenging, and staff turnover undermines progress. Workforce capacity and significant staffing gaps, particularly in leadership roles, remain a key constraint, and there is limited reform appetite in the Ministry of Public Service. The October 2024 informal midterm review presentation by Graham Teskey also identified that 'firefighting' and short-term pressures were noted as crowding out longer-term system reforms.

a) Is the program delivering the right outputs to achieve the goals and outcomes of ASIP-Gov?

Key finding: The program is delivering the right outputs to achieve the goals and outcomes of ASIP-Gov. However, budget reductions and increases across financial years 2023-24 and 2024-25



respectively impacted on some output delivery, despite the program managing these changes effectively.

Key outputs to be delivered by ASIP-Gov – as outlined in the 2024 updated program logic – are:

- appropriate, relevant and timely technical advice
- targeted policies, systems and practices improved and approved
- measurable improvement in targeted skills and capacity
- analytics and evidence for policies, decision-making and practices
- fit-for-purpose ICT systems developed, rolled out and/or updated / repaired.

Key examples of effective output delivery include:

- the provision of high-quality technical advice across multiple ministries, including in electoral reform, ICT systems, and public financial management
- institutional strengthening outputs, such as improved revenue systems in Customs, updated financial management tools, and strengthened electoral legislation that enabled the smooth conduct of the 2024 joint elections
- targeted capacity development initiatives, including SIG-ICT Young Professionals Program, the Treasury Graduate Program, and the Institute of Solomon Islands Accountants Professional Development Award, which are enhancing individual skills and building institutional capability.
- production of evidence and analysis that informs decision-making, such as policy dialogue matrices, programmatic risk reviews, and the integration of learning through biannual reflection workshops
- incremental development and rollout of ICT systems, such as the financial management information systems upgrade to Microsoft Dynamics 365; although this faced challenges due to underestimated user readiness and implementation delays.

Notably, however, budget reductions and subsequent increases across financial years 2023-24 and 2024-25 respectively impacted on some output delivery. For instance:

- In Customs, limited funding for additional technical advisers was noted as a limiting factor to increasing the gains in revenue generation. However, this is also driven by local capacity and staff retention issues. Customs could be central to the success of the incoming VAT reforms, given that Solomon Islands operates a largely cash-based economy, making point-of-entry valuation critical to VAT collection. This importance may eventually be offset by increased usage of digital transaction platforms such as M-SELEN.
- Delays in the Human Resource Management and Workforce Development stream, due to reprioritisation, also reduced the program's ability to fully deliver expected outputs under EOPO2 and EOPO3.

Despite these constraints, the program has demonstrated strong adaptability and maintained output delivery in core areas, supporting continued progress toward its governance and partnership goals.



b) Does the logic, including intermediate outcomes and outputs remain relevant and achievable?

Key finding: The logic, including EOPOs and IOs, remain relevant and broadly achievable. However, some adjustments may be needed to ensure the program logic remains relevant noting ongoing changes in the operating environment and both SIG and Australian government priorities.

ASIP-Gov's outcomes framework remains relevant and achievable. However, the evolving nature of the program and its operating context suggest that some adjustments may be warranted, to ensure the framework remains relevant. While several IOs are progressing, challenges remain, particularly with IOs related to strengthening compliance (IO 2.1), oversight institutions (IO 1.5), and gender equity (IO 2.4). This concurs with the January 2025 Strategic Impact Assessment Partnership for Governance Report findings.

External factors beyond control of the program — including delayed implementation of the Public Expenditure and Financial Accountability assessment and resourcing challenges at key SIG institutions — have also slowed progress. This highlights the importance of aligning future designs with realistic reform timeframes and comprehensive sustainability planning.

Going forward, minor adjustments to ASIP-Gov's MERLA plan and program logic could be updated to better reflect evolving priorities and operational challenges. Consideration could be given to refining or adjusting IOs to ensure the framework captures emerging opportunities, such as embedding sustainability, GEDSI outcomes, and incremental public sector reforms more systematically.

Assessment of IOs

Each IO has been assessed, based on relevance feasibility and progress², and received a rating of 'low', 'moderate' or 'high'. Relevance ratings reflect the extent to which the IO aligns with both SIG and Australian Government priorities. Feasibility and progress ratings reflect the extent to which external factors represent challenges to the achievement of the corresponding outcome and the extent to which progress has been made in the face of these challenges.

Table 4: Assessment of EOPO1's intermediate outcomes

Intermediate Outcome	Relevance	Feasibility and progress	Evidence for low rating
1.1: SIG public financial management reform agenda informed and guided by robust analysis and sound financial management information.	High. Core to the program's objectives; aligns with both SIG and DFAT priorities.	Moderate. Progress evident, but dependent on availability of sufficiently skilled public servants and sustained technical adviser support.	N/A
1.2: Ministry of Finance and Treasury has accurate and up-to-date financial reconciliations.	High. A necessary foundation for broader financial	Low / Moderate. Basic reconciliation is feasible, but full institutionalisation	Basic reconciliation processes are in place, but substantial backlogs limit full

² Feasibility here is defined as the practicality or possibility of something being achieved.



Intermediate Outcome	Relevance	Feasibility and progress	Evidence for low rating
	management reforms.	depends on internal capacity and clearance of substantial backlogs.	institutionalisation. Challenges include limited staff capacity within the ministry and competing operational priorities.
1.3: Integrity and sustained performance of targeted public financial payment systems and processes improved.	High. Directly linked to financial management information systems upgrades and public financial management outcomes.	Moderate. Progress evident through Microsoft Dynamics 365 rollout, though challenges around user capacity remain.	N/A
1.4: Ministry of Finance and Treasury Internal Audit Division undertakes effective risk-based internal audits.	High. Internal audit is central to transparency and accountability.	Moderate. Substantial progress made in recent years, supported by technical adviser, but limited by SIG capacity and underfunding and a lack of accountability ecosystem.	N/A
1.5: Office of Auditor General undertakes independent audits in line with its mandate.	High. Internal audit is central to transparency and accountability. Note: low relevance to SIG priorities.	Low / Moderate. Capacity, underfunding, and weak reporting lines continue to hinder sustained progress.	Despite increases in the number of audits, large backlogs remain. Office of Auditor General operations continue to suffer from underfunding, insufficient staffing, and weak institutional positioning within government structures, affecting follow through.
1.6: Sustainable domestic and foreign borrowing and debt management.	Moderate. Debt sustainability is an important macroeconomic concern, but this information does not appear to be currently informing fiscal policy decision making.	High. Substantial progress already made in this area. The risk of external debt distress improved from moderate to low, suggesting that technical support has had a positive effect on debt management practices.	N/A

Table 5: Assessment of EOPO2's intermediate outcomes

Intermediate Outcome	Relevance	Feasibility and progress	Evidence for low rating
2.1: Targeted revenue collection and compliance policies,	High. Critical for SIG fiscal sustainability and independence.	Moderate. Gains made but limited by staffing shortfalls.	N/A



Intermediate Outcome	Relevance	Feasibility and progress	Evidence for low rating
systems, and practices improve.			
2.2: The program catalyses finance by reducing risks for Solomon Islands and Australia.	Moderate. Second-round benefit of strong public financial management. Aligned with broader strategic goals.	Moderate. Difficult to measure and attribute directly to program actions, although donors indicated that financial strengthening and improved debt management is influencing financing options.	N/A
2.3: Targeted improvements in ICT and automation enhance efficiency.	High. Strong focus area, especially in SIG ICT. Note: Automation does not appear to be relevant in the SIG context.	Moderate. Dependent on user readiness and follow-up resourcing by SIG. Investments such as the ICT Young Professionals Program and increased digital literacy (6,500 users transitioned) show progress.	N/A
2.4: Improved SIG policies and practices make workplaces more inclusive of women and diverse groups in targeted divisions.	High. Aligned with GEDSI strategy and Australia's broader inclusion agenda.	Low / Moderate. Progress limited by contextual factors, although good progress has been made in programs targeted at young professionals.	Broader inclusion outcomes are constrained by contextual factors. While GEDSI goals have been consistent across DFAT's programming, this IO has remained aspirational. Over time, and with the loss of a dedicated GEDSI adviser, it has shifted to a more opportunistic, rather than strategic or systemic, focus.
2.5: SIG has access to enhanced human resource management and capacity in target areas.	High. Improved human resources management would reduce frictions in employing and retaining staff in areas with capacity and staffing shortages.	Low. This IO has become less achievable over time. Initial ambitions around public service reform through the Ministry of the Public Service have been tempered by a lack of traction.	Attempts to drive human resources management reform through the Ministry of the Public Service have faced significant challenges. Change has been achieved only in isolated areas (e.g. payroll system upgrades, specific ministry-based talent development). Broader reform is no longer actively pursued and institutional



Intermediate Outcome	Relevance	Feasibility and progress	Evidence for low rating
			resistance remains a major barrier.

Table 6: Assessment of EOPO3's intermediate outcomes

Intermediate Outcome	Relevance	Feasibility and progress	Evidence for low rating
3.1: Solomon Islands Electoral Office is resourced and strengthened to deliver harmonised elections.	High. Demonstrated impact through successful 2024 elections.	High. Delivered with adviser support, twinning arrangements and good SIG engagement.	N/A
3.2: Improved electoral practices enable more women to participate effectively in elections as voters and candidates.	High. Strong alignment with GEDSI goals and a core goal of inclusive governance.	Moderate. Relatively good participation by women as voters in the 2024 election. Participation as candidates is inherently limited by cultural factors and will be more difficult to achieve.	N/A
3.3: Select organisations are strengthened to increase policy dialogue and engagement with SIG on relevant issues.	Moderate. Supports inclusive governance, though evidence of scale is limited.	Moderate. Progress made, but impact varies depending on the organisation.	N/A
3.4: Women's participation and influence in formal and informal arenas is strengthened.	High. Strong alignment with GEDSI goals and a core goal of inclusive governance.	Moderate. Limited progress, with persistent structural and political barriers.	N/A

Table 7: Assessment of EOPO4's intermediate outcomes

Intermediate Outcome	Relevance	Feasibility and progress	Evidence for low rating
4.1: The program delivers responsive, timely, and relevant assistance to SIG.	High. Central to ASIP-Gov's flexible and demand-driven model.	High. Strong performance and positive feedback from SIG counterparts.	N/A
4.2: Regular and meaningful policy dialogue and program exchanges between SIG and the Australian Government maintained and expanded	High. Key to bilateral trust and engagement.	High. Well established through consistent engagement and request-driven support.	N/A
4.3: Enhanced data and evidence foster mutual learning, informed policy dialogue, and program decision-	High. Core to ASIP-Gov's MERLA-driven approach.	High. A very rigorous approach has been taken to MERLA, with some room for adjustment in outcome-level MEL	N/A



Intermediate Outcome	Relevance	Feasibility and progress	Evidence for low rating
making between SIG and the Australian Government.		systems and communication of impact.	

Recommendation 5: A future program should review the current EOPOs and IOs to assess continued relevance, feasibility, and alignment with evolving strategic priorities.

Several IOs stand out as having either limited traction or declining strategic fit:

IO 2.5 – Human Resource Management reform: This IO should be reconsidered or significantly narrowed in scope. Efforts to catalyse system-wide human resource reform via the Ministry of the Public Service have not progressed meaningfully. Future work could instead focus on targeted talent development or digital workforce initiatives in specific ministries, where traction already exists.

IO 2.2 – Catalysing finance: This IO is difficult to measure and is only indirectly related to the program’s core functions. It may be better framed as a high-level benefit of improved governance, rather than as a standalone outcome.

At the same time, some IOs with low feasibility and progress ratings should nonetheless be retained due to their strategic relevance and long-term value:

IO 1.2 – Financial reconciliations: Accurate and timely financial reconciliations are foundational to broader financial management reforms. Although basic reconciliation processes are in place, significant backlogs and limited internal capacity have constrained full institutionalisation. Despite these challenges, this IO remains critical to achieving transparent and accountable fiscal systems. Support should continue, with realistic expectations around pace and sustainability, and with close alignment to broader efforts in financial management information systems upgrades and debt management.

IO 1.5 – Office of Auditor General audits: This IO is core to transparency and accountability in governance and, despite low SIG support, the Office of the Auditor-General has produced incremental but important gains. While the Office of Auditor General continues to face systemic constraints – such as underfunding, capacity gaps, and weak institutional backing – continued support is warranted to sustain progress and uphold the integrity of the broader public financial oversight system.

IO 2.1 – Revenue mobilisation and compliance: Revenue collection, particularly through Customs, is a critical area for SIG’s fiscal sustainability. ASIP-Gov support has led to demonstrable improvements in Customs performance, but persistent staffing shortages and systemic constraints continue to limit long-term gains. Given the strategic importance of domestic revenue mobilisation, especially in the context of proposed VAT reforms, this IO should remain a priority. Future programming should include clearer performance indicators and targeted support to Customs operations and workforce development, ideally in close coordination with SIG efforts.



KEQ4: What lessons can be drawn from ASIP-Gov's performance that can be applied to improve ASIP-Gov?

Key finding: Several lessons emerge from ASIP-Gov's performance to date that can inform future program improvements. These lessons relate to the importance of SIG buy-in, budget stability, evolving scope, and role of technical advisers.

- 1) Effectiveness is consistently highest where there is strong SIG buy-in and when technical advisers are embedded, responsive, and focused on building local capacity. Interviews confirmed that advisers who have the greatest impact are those who build strong relationships that align closely with SIG priorities and systematically work toward transitioning responsibilities to local staff. This is reflected in examples from SIG ICT and electoral management sectors, where technical assistance has resulted in sustainable capacity gains over time.
- 2) Maintaining budget stability in the program and ensuring the availability of dedicated technical adviser support are critical to capitalising on opportunities for reform. Budget reductions and subsequent increases across financial years 2023-24 and 2024-25 respectively constrained the program's ability to maintain momentum in areas such as Customs revenue reform and public financial management, underscoring the importance of predictable resourcing for technical functions that are central to governance strengthening. These funding uncertainties have also placed additional pressure on the AHC, requiring staff to frequently pivot and develop new business cases to secure approvals for core activities—diverting time and resources away from strategic engagement and program oversight.
- 3) The evolving scope and complexity of ASIP-Gov requires that its MERLA plan and framework remain dynamic and responsive. Lessons from the January 2025 Strategic Impact Assessment Partnership for Governance Report and the 2023 Review and Reflection Exercise highlight that while many individual activities have been successfully delivered across core government functions — including cash management, procurement, ICT, internal and external audit, and election preparation — these achievements can be difficult to aggregate into a coherent narrative of system-wide reform or broader development impact. Strengthening outcome-level MERLA frameworks and investing in stronger promotion of the work being done by the program could help to demonstrate value to stakeholders, including within the Australian Government.
- 4) Lessons around the use and role of technical advisers are important for future programming. The 2023 Review and Reflection Exercise emphasised that technical assistance is most effective when focused on supporting specific systems, processes, or institutional teams, rather than operating in isolation or through one-on-one counterpart models. There is evidence of ASIP-Gov adopting these lessons, with technical advisers transitioning from transactional support to focus on transformation, including through system reform and capacity building. Embedding technical advisers within functional work units, ensuring they are oriented toward the principles of capacity development, and prioritising emotional intelligence and partnership skills over purely technical expertise were all identified as key success factors.



4.3. EFFICIENCY

KEQ5: Is ASIP-Gov's modality efficient and effective for delivering inclusive and accountable governance in Solomon Islands?

Key finding: ASIP-Gov is an efficient modality for supporting inclusive and accountable governance in Solomon Islands, particularly considering the challenging and evolving operating context.

The ASIP-Gov program utilises several modalities for achieving progress against the EOPOs. These modalities include:

- embedded technical advisers within SIG ministries
- remote or fly-in-fly-out consultants to assist with complex projects
- funded positions ('in-line' - i.e. reporting directly to SIG) filled by external technical advisers within SIG bureaucracy
- twinning and secondment arrangements with Australia counterpart organisations
- investment in infrastructure and software
- grant funding of SIG institutions and businesses
- bespoke leadership and development – training and mentoring of emerging and established leaders in the Solomon Islands system, including the Junior Professional Program delivered through local firm, Pasifiki human resources.

Over the past two years of the program, the program management costs accounted for 16.7 percent of the total spend on average, and the management fee accounted for 7.7 percent on average which is relatively lean by average program standards, based on the review team's experience. The managing contractor manages the three pillars with a lean program management team and identifies opportunities and synergies across pillars, where they exist though noting that synergies have been challenging to identify at times. The organisational system is proportional to the capacity and scale of the desired outcomes of the program. Review and reflection workshops inform evidence based decision making to ensure value for money in terms of organisational learning, continuous improvement and overall effectiveness. While exploring alternative delivery models is beyond the scope of this review, the current approach is assessed to be efficient.

There is variability in technical adviser scope and influence, with evidence of three main types of engagement:

- *supplementary* – carrying out day-to-day tasks and clearing backlogs
- *technical* – executing technically complex projects and investments, using positions that a government with greater resources might contract out to consultancy firms.
- *strategic* – building capacity in counterparts, identifying projects and investments that could deliver transformational change, and thinking about system improvements.

ASIP-Gov is making a concerted effort to transition technical adviser positions to ensure they are focused on strategic engagement, while balancing the enduring need for supplementary and



technical support to sustain momentum, relationships and stability. Interviewees reported minimal resource waste, good alignment with SIG priorities, and strong overall value for money.

From an operational perspective, ASIP-Gov has been effective in expending its budget and implementing against its workplans. ASIP-Gov expended \$8.017 million of its approved \$8.028 million budget for financial year, 2023/24. This is a 99.86 percent expenditure rate, reflecting operational efficiency. The 2024 Annual Workplan is largely on track, despite noted risks such as the deferred Public Expenditure and Financial Accountability assessment and a critical shortage of technical adviser support to financial management systems.

Recommendation 6: A future program should ensure the program's lean operating structure and value for money is maintained, especially if pillars are realigned.

KEQ6: Is ASIP-Gov's scope (economic governance / democratic governance / ICT) correctly calibrated to realise synergies and promote programming efficiencies?

Key finding: ASIP-Gov's scope could be better calibrated to realise synergies and promote efficiencies across AHC programming in Honiara. While ASIP-Gov has largely proven to be operating efficiently in a complex and resource-constrained environment, there are opportunities to improve strategic coherence.

There is evidence of a growing divergence in the scale, nature, and strategic alignment of the three pillars. The three pillars—Economic Governance, ICT / Cyber, and Democratic Governance—are individually internally cohesive, but they each operate with distinct goals, stakeholders, and delivery models. ASIP-Gov clearly works to promote collaboration across teams and share lessons and resources, but the growing gap in strategic alignment between each pillars, compounded by the AHC's new organisational structure, has demonstrated that potential efficiencies could be gained by transferring pillars to other existing programs.

ASIP-Gov is split across two separate teams within the AHC: the Economic Governance pillar sits within the AHC Economic team and the ICT / Cybersecurity and Democratic Governance pillars fall under the AHC Governance and Stability team. This internal separation limits opportunities for unified planning and contributes to management inefficiencies.

Since ASIP-Gov's inception, AHC staff have driven the program's evolution from a relatively discrete operational model into a more outward-facing program engaged in public diplomacy, with growing opportunities for systemic reform. This shift has also reflected evolving SIG priorities and economic reform efforts, including under new government leadership from May 2024. AHC staff have played a pivotal role in shaping this evolution, not only managing relationships and overseeing delivery, but also stepping deeply into the design and strategic direction of ASIP-Gov interventions.

This highly engaged, hands-on approach has delivered clear benefits and strengthened the program's effectiveness across all pillars. However, it also comes at a cost. The current model relies heavily on the technical expertise and personal commitment of individual AHC staff, particularly within the Economic team, which supports the largest and most complex component of ASIP-Gov. While this has enabled the program to achieve strong outcomes, it places significant pressure on staff and raises questions about sustainability. Acknowledging the value of this approach—and the workload



that it entails—strengthens the case for an additional strategic lead role within the program team, to support strategic thinking and ease the burden on AHC staff.

The relationship between the program’s budget stability and the efficiency of spending is mixed, with examples of budget cuts resulting in a transition to sustainable self-financing of activities (e.g. the Solomon Islands Institute of Accountants). In some examples, efficiency has been undermined when unexpected budget changes resulted in the loss of sunk costs and employment churn (e.g. technical advisers being let go and then re-hired a year later). While the program managed these changes effectively, reflecting its flexible and adaptable model in practice, a key lesson is the need to avoid the scale of change over short timeframes, to maintain relationships and the goodwill currently being generated by the program.

Recommendation 7: A future program should further explore synergies across pillars and DFAT’s broader programs. This would reduce reliance on individuals’ commitment and take a more systematic and strategic approach.

a) Are existing performance financing elements successfully incentivising reform identification and implementation?

Limited information on performance financing was provided to the review team. The original program design notes that ASIP-Gov will design and implement a modest performance incentive scheme for willing counterpart agencies and teams. The scheme was intended to work with groups rather than individuals. Performance incentives could include conditional cash grants, access to accredited training, scholarships, and so on. This may include grants that maintain momentum on current reforms as well as grants that represent investments in key relationships to cover core resource requirements. Evidence was not available to the review to confirm progress on this activity.

KEQ7: What have been the strengths and weaknesses of ASIP-Gov’s management structure (the efficiency of the implementing partner / interactions with DFAT / management of advisers)?

Key finding: ASIP-Gov’s management strengths include strategic engagement, flexibility, relationship building and adaptability. Challenges have included budget stability and related efficiency losses beyond the control of the managing contractor and program management team, who responded effectively to these changes.

Interviews and reporting indicate that ASIP-Gov’s management structure is effective and responsive, with notable strengths in strategic engagement, flexibility, and relationship-building with SIG counterparts. Technical advisers, the AHC, and the program more generally are successfully working with SIG to identify opportunities for effective investments. Given budget constraints, the list of opportunities is effectively prioritised, including in partnership with SIG, based on value for money and delivery of strategic developmental outcomes. The program has also more recently funded discrete projects under the Economic Governance pillar that have potential to stand alone after a start-up period. This new modality has enhanced program outcomes and represents an efficient and scalable approach to delivering targeted, high-impact support.

ASIP-Gov is managed by the Governance Partnership Program Management Team, who work in close collaboration with the AHC to execute the program. This team is locally based, with a Team Leader, who is supported by a Deputy Team Lead, an Operations Lead and a MEL (MERLA) Lead (currently



vacant). There is also a dedicated GEDSI Specialist. The embedded technical advisers also report to the Team leader. Figure 3 provides an overview of the ASIP-Gov Program Management Team.

Figure 3: ASIP-Gov Program Management Team

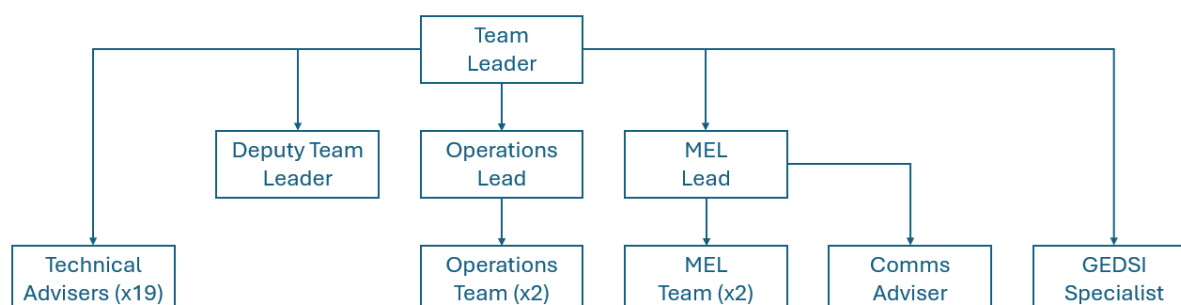


Figure Description: This figure shows a hierarchy with three levels. At the top level is a single box labelled Team Leader. On the second level, three boxes are connected directly beneath the Team Leader. These are labelled Deputy Team Leader, Operations Lead, and MEL Lead. On the third level, five boxes are connected beneath these roles: the Operations Lead connects to Operations Team (x2), and the MEL Lead connects to both MEL Team (x2) and Communications Adviser. In addition, two more boxes are directly connected beneath the Team Leader on the third level: Technical Advisers (x19) and GEDSI Specialist.

The program management team reported meeting monthly with the technical advisers to share updates on work and lessons learned. They also speak regularly with the AHC team, with geographic proximity enabling regular formal and informal coffee catchups to discuss the program.

The program management team is further supported by the contractors from Abt Associates, who provide a strategic adviser, a senior program delivery manager, and a contractor representative (all remote). This team provides practical support on program quality assurance and risk management, along with strategic support through the six-monthly reflection workshops.

There is evidence that ASIP-Gov has built a culture of testing and refining how they work and support teams, with strong engagement across technical advisers, who share lessons and work to achieve transformational change. The ASIP-Gov team's self-reflection workshops every six months are just one part of an effective MERLA strategy, generating valuable insights into what works, why it works, and how it can be improved. However, these self-reflection workshops also place a considerable burden on program resources. The costs associated with hosting—such as venue hire, catering, accommodation for staff based in Australia or other locations, and staff time—are significant. As such, it may be worth assessing whether the current format delivers the best value for money. Alternatives could include reducing the frequency to once per year, shifting to hybrid formats, or enabling virtual participation in six-monthly sessions, all of which could preserve learning benefits while reducing operational costs.

As discussed under KEQ5, the link between budget stability and spending efficiency is mixed—while some cuts led to sustainable outcomes, others caused inefficiencies and disruptions; overall, the program adapted well, but future changes should be more gradual to preserve relationships and momentum.



a) Is ASIP-Gov responsive?

Key finding: ASIP-Gov demonstrates strong responsiveness through its flexible model, willingness to adapt to evolving priorities and ability to manage complex deliverables in an ever changing context.

The program's efforts to align investments with SIG priorities and to balance technical, supplementary, and strategic technical adviser support show a responsive and adaptive approach to delivery.

Key evidence of this responsiveness include:

- Technical positions are designed and recruited in close consultation with SIG, with counterparts involved in developing terms of reference and participating in selection panels (ASIP-Gov Jan–Jun 2024 Report, p. 7).
- Long-term technical advisers from Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea, and Fiji accounted for [50 percent] of all ASIP-Gov personnel, demonstrating a commitment to localisation and regional capability-building.
- ASIP-Gov continues to strengthen its engagement with local firms such as Pasifiki HR and Ninti One, although implementation of the Indigenous Participation Strategy has been delayed due to budget limitations.
- The partnership's ability to rapidly re-prioritise activities and budgets in response to shifting political and strategic priorities has been recognised positively in DFAT's March 2024 Partner Performance Assessment.

Despite these strengths, some persistent challenges to maintaining responsiveness remain:

- Interviews and internal reporting indicate that slow recruitment processes within the Ministry of the Public Service and chronic staffing shortages within key SIG ministries (e.g. Finance and Treasury, Customs, Internal Audit Office) continue to undermine the sustainability and scalability of reforms.
- Weaknesses in basic administrative functions, such as documentation and record management, remain a constraint, particularly in financial management reforms.
- In critical institutions such as the Internal Audit Office and Customs, the lack of clear succession planning is an ongoing risk to reform momentum and sustainability. Additionally, systemic integrity issues and threats to officials continue to pose challenges, although reforms are gradually progressing.

Overall, ASIP-Gov's management structure is a clear asset to the program. Its flexibility, focus on partnership, and emphasis on continuous learning are important drivers of its current success. However, ensuring greater stability in funding and developing effective mitigation and management strategies to manage systemic human resource constraints within SIG will be critical for sustaining and expanding the gains achieved to date.



4.4. SUSTAINABILITY

KEQ8: To what extent are program outcomes sustainable and locally led, and what changes could be made to improve sustainability?

Key finding: Program outcomes are mostly sustainable, with good examples of activities being locally led, increasing focus on system development and evidence of capabilities being transferred.

Several challenges to sustainability persist, some of which apply across the Solomon Islands public sector, which the program seeks to manage within its realm of influence.

Sustainability is strongest in areas with deep SIG ownership and where local capacity has been built over time. There is evidence that embedded technical advisers, funded positions and twinning arrangements are building capacity in local public servants, confirmed by SIG counterparts who were interviewed for this review.

There are promising initiatives to train future public servants and ICT staff, which demonstrate potential for long-term self-sufficiency. These initiatives include:

- The ICT Young Professionals Program within SIG-ICT is training nine to 12 cadets each year. Graduates of this program are in high demand across the rest of the government and in the private sector.
- The Treasury graduate program is building a pipeline of young accounting professionals (although issues remain with SIG's use of cash-basis accounting).
- The Institute of Solomon Islands Accountants is delivering a Professional Development Award course to bring accounting graduates from the Solomon Islands National University up to professional accounting standards. They are exploring options for delivering a Graduate Certificate in Professional Accounting in the future.
- Technical advisers are providing direct mentoring and capacity building of SIG public servants, including to junior staff and current leaders.
- Technical advisers are developing knowledge management products, such as role handbooks and in-house procedure documentation.
- Workforce planning, recruitment and training is being delivered in Customs, built around a five-year organisational plan that is supported by the program.

ASIP-Gov is combining this extensive investment in personnel and workforce capacity development with investments in system building, including through ICT reform and public financial management, payroll and procurement systems.

There is evidence of progress in each of these areas, which is promising for achieving sustained outcomes. For example, the upgrade of SIG's financial management information systems to Microsoft Dynamics 365 has been significantly enhanced by a range of shorter-term 'sprints' supported by ASIP-Gov, addressing a range of issues identified by counterparts and improving implementation.



However, several challenges to sustainability persist, some of which apply across the Solomon Islands public sector:

- increased revenue collection is critical to sustainability – progress here is tangible although slow, with examples of systems reform in Customs and Ministry of Lands; however, ongoing improvements in revenue mobilisation are dependent on political buy-in
- significant donor support is still required in critical areas like elections, public sector reform, and public financial management, and while the program is laying building blocks for sustainability, long-term independence will require sustained investment, strong political will, and systemic reform within SIG.

Other challenges in relation to sustainability relate to the program's success being highly dependent on the quality of interpersonal relationships. Maintaining strong, constructive working relationships remains critical to sustaining program benefits.

Recommendation 8: The impact of capacity building efforts and training should continue to be tracked or monitored to test if the outcomes are being sustained and capture lessons from these valued efforts. to help guide decisions around further investment in this area, including through any re-design of the program .

4.5. GEDSI

KEQ9: To what extent have results been achieved in gender equality and disability inclusion and to what effect?

Key finding: ASIP-Gov has a GEDSI strategy and a GEDSI adviser has recently been reinstated. While there are examples of targeted activities, particularly under the ICT and Democratic Governance pillars, there is limited GEDSI mainstreaming or targeted activities under the Economic Governance pillar.

ASIP-Gov's GEDSI Strategy and Action Plan intends for the program to strengthen the participation of women and people with disabilities in the public sector and democratic processes, to enhance accountable and inclusive governance in Solomon Islands. Taking a twin-track approach, GEDSI was intended to be implemented through targeted activities under three IOs and through mainstreaming across all EOPOs and corporate operations. IOs particularly relevant to GEDSI-target outcomes are IO 2.5 (inclusive workplaces), IO 3.2 (inclusive electoral practices) and IO 3.4 (women's participation), with mainstreaming focused through IO 1.1 (public financial management reform agenda), IO 2.6 (human resources) and IO 3.3 (policy dialogue) (see program logic at Annex C). Progress on GEDSI is measured through a range of indicators embedded within the ASIP-Gov MERLA Framework, though the depth and consistency of this assessment vary across different areas.

In terms of progress on GEDSI, impact was most evident with respect to two areas:

- There has been equal gender representation in programs targeted at building capacity in young professionals; notably, the ICT Young Professionals Program and the Institute of Solomon Islands Accountants Professional Development Award course have had roughly 50/50 gender enrolments. (IO2.4)



- There has been broad engagement with youth, women, and religious groups around participation in elections, under the Democratic Governance pillar (IO3.2 and IO3.4). There were extensive consultations at national and provincial levels about changes to election regulations, which enabled the participation of women voters and candidates. Targeted media messaging informed citizens about the voting process and encouraged all citizens to vote. Merit-based recruitment through a modern recruitment tool enabled equal opportunities for women and men to participate as polling day and election workers.

However, these have been relatively modest improvements, and there is limited evidence that ASIP-Gov has made a significant contribution to shifting the dial on gender equality or disability inclusion at a broader, systemic level in Solomon Islands. However, it should be noted that GEDSI remains politically sensitive and challenging in the Solomon Islands context and in relation to government approaches to GEDSI.

Australia's investment in GEDSI in Solomon Islands is already substantial through the dedicated Solomon Islands Gender Equality program (\$381 million, 2012-2027), which works in partnership with local institutions to improve the political, social, and economic status of women and girls, and address gender-based violence. Given the presence of this parallel and well-resourced initiative, it is appropriate that ASIP-Gov's contributions reflect the scale of the opportunities and entry points that exist for the program, alongside DFAT's other investments in GEDSI.

More broadly, the composition of the ASIP-Gov team is diverse and the culture is inclusive. While budget cuts led to the loss of the dedicated GEDSI adviser, for a period, the role has recently been reinstated.

Recommendation 9: ASIP-Gov should strengthen GEDSI efforts, particularly under the Economic Governance pillar, in a contextually appropriate manner, given Australia's large investment in GEDSI through the Gender Equality program and with opportunities identified in recruitment, workplace policies, public financial management, and digital access, amongst others

5. RISKS AND ASSUMPTIONS

5.1. TO WHAT EXTENT WERE RISKS AND ASSUMPTIONS MANAGED OR ADJUSTED OVER TIME?

Key finding: The ASIP-Gov program has actively monitored and managed risks through a structured framework, with clear accountabilities and documented mitigation strategies.

The Program Risk Register shows that most high-priority risks were addressed in a timely manner, with 10 out of 15 actions marked as completed ('Done').

These included:

- development and implementation of a GEDSI Action Plan, which was finalised in late 2022
- updates to the COVID Safe Plan and Contingency Planning for governance continuity under crisis conditions



- strengthened collaboration with DFAT and AHC on election monitoring and Pacific Games participation, ensuring program responsiveness to a changing domestic context.

However, residual risks with high-level ratings remain in areas where implementation is still underway, particularly in long-term strategies such as:

- embedding GEDSI metrics across the MERLA system
- finalising and institutionalising the MERLA plan and framework
- improving partner engagement tools and long-term stakeholder coordination mechanisms.

The transition from high to medium or low residual risk ratings in some areas (e.g. COVID response and safe plan updates) indicates that risk treatments have been effective in mitigating some issues. However, persistent high-level rated residual risks in several 'In Progress' actions confirm that strategic risks related to political economy, institutional commitment, and program sustainability remain complex and require continued attention.

Overall, ASIP-Gov's approach to risk and assumption management reflects a high level of responsiveness and that a high priority is being given to managing risks by ASIP-Gov. This includes by the managing contractor, its MERLA partners and program management team and by the AHC.

6. MONITORING, EVALUATION, RESEARCH, LEARNING AND ADAPTATION

6.1. USE OF MERLA SYSTEMS: WAS DATA USED FOR LEARNING AND ADAPTATION?

Key finding: ASIP-Gov has made deliberate and consistent use of its MERLA systems to inform decision-making, drive adaptive management, and promote accountability across the program. Efficiency of MERLA efforts could be improved to reduce costs.

The MERLA framework outlines that ASIP-Gov will report against its outcome areas by summarising progress on activities, providing a commentary on the achievement of outputs or progress towards their achievement, identifying and tracking a full set of indicators at IO level, and formally considering progress towards the four EOPOs, with progress assessed through outcome harvesting (annually) and case studies. Six-monthly and investment monitoring reports provide written documentation of progress and challenges.

Additional MERLA architecture includes biannual self-reflection workshops, internal reviews, and feedback loops that are embedded in program planning and delivery. Self-reflection workshops, conducted every six months, have provided a structured space for technical advisers and program staff to assess what is working, share lessons, and identify areas for change. These workshops have contributed to the program's gradual shift in technical adviser roles from supplementary to more strategic engagement. However, the workshops also represent a high burden in terms of hosting costs (e.g. venue and catering), transportation and accommodation cost (for staff based in Australia and elsewhere), and program and AHC staff time. Consideration could be given to whether this represents the best value for money, or if similar benefit could be gained from a lower cost option.



More efficient delivery models could be considered, such as virtual participation in six-monthly reflection sessions, shifting to annual in-person engagements, or adopting hybrid formats.

The program has adjusted implementation based on internal and external reviews, such as DFAT's Partner Performance Assessment and the informal October 2024 MTR presentation. Evidence generated through MERLA systems has also been used to identify emerging areas of success, such as SIG-ICT Young Professionals Program and the Professional Development Award course, which now serve as models for inclusive capacity development.

The program and managing contractor responded effectively to the unexpected resignation of the MERLA Lead. Interim support has been provided remotely and through the managing contractor's MERLA consortium partner to maintain continuity of key functions and ensure that monitoring, reporting, and reflection activities remain on track. This responsive approach has helped sustain the program's MERLA architecture during a period of transition. That said, certain aspects of MERLA require further work including in terms of embedding GEDSI metrics across the MERLA system and finalising and institutionalising the MERLA plan and framework.

At this juncture in the program cycle, consideration could be given to evaluating the sustainability of capacity building through longer-term follow up on training participants, and developing case studies over time on counterparts' career progression (see Recommendation 8 on sustainability).

Recommendation 10: MERLA activities should continue, with an enhanced focus on value for money approaches.

7. CONCLUSIONS

ASIP-Gov has demonstrated its value as a flexible, responsive, and strategically important mechanism for advancing governance reform in Solomon Islands. Since inception, the program has evolved from a largely behind-the-scenes support model into a more outward-facing initiative aligned with both SIG reform priorities and Australia's strategic objectives, including the DPP.

The review finds that ASIP-Gov is likely to fully achieve its EOPO3 and EOPO4, related to democratic governance and institutional relationships. Based on current progression, it will partially achieve its more technically complex EOPO1 and EOPO2, around public financial management and revenue reform, largely due to contextual constraints such as staffing and resourcing shortfalls.

Pillar-level performance and evolution

Economic Governance has remained the cornerstone of ASIP-Gov, representing the largest share of investment and technical engagement. Over time, this pillar has shifted from a focus on foundational reforms (e.g. audits, payroll, reconciliations) to more strategic, system-wide reforms, including debt management and Customs modernisation. Despite strong progress in several areas, results are constrained by persistent SIG capacity limitations and the impact of budget instability. Some IOs (e.g. IO 2.5 on human resources reform) are now seen as over-ambitious and misaligned with institutional realities, whereas others (e.g. IO 1.2 on financial reconciliations and IO 2.1 on revenue mobilisation) remain challenging but strategically essential.



The ICT / Cybersecurity pillar has grown in importance and visibility over the course of the program. While initially a technical support function, it is now positioned as a strategic enabler of government capability and resilience. ASIP-Gov has supported critical digital infrastructure and capacity development, with notable outcomes in cybersecurity maturity and digital workforce expansion. While synergies with Economic Governance exist, the ICT / Cybersecurity pillar largely operates independently, with its own stakeholders, priorities, and pace of reform. That said, it is a critical aspect of progress for Economic Governance.

Democratic Governance, the smallest of the three pillars, has delivered targeted but high-visibility outcomes, particularly in electoral support. This pillar is well aligned with the Australian Government’s priorities on inclusive governance and stability. It has also offered the most direct opportunities to promote GEDSI, particularly through its work with electoral processes and civic participation. It has the least crossover with the other two pillars.

Strategic coherence and management structure

ASIP-Gov’s management structure—anchored by a local program management team, embedded technical advisers and close collaboration with the AHC—is widely viewed as a program strength. The AHC’s role in shaping strategic direction, building trusted relationships, and guiding intervention design has been critical to program success. However, this model also places substantial demands on individual AHC staff, particularly under the Economic Governance pillar, raising concerns about sustainability and bandwidth. Considering recent structural changes within the AHC and the divergent scale and focus of the program’s three pillars, there is a case for considering pillar alignment in a future program. A more streamlined structure could improve alignment with AHC team structures, reduce operational strain, and enhance the program’s overall strategic focus, though changes should be weighed against the efficiency of the existing delivery model and value for money considerations.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

Table 8: Recommendations and responsible officer

No.	Recommendation	Responsible officer
1	Consideration be given to an ASIP-Gov redesigned to consider alignment of its three pillars, reflecting the scale of its activities and DFAT’s broader portfolio in Solomon Islands.	AHC
2	An additional senior leadership resource in ASIP-Gov under the Economic Governance pillar should be appointed to enhance strategic thinking across the range of economic governance activities, and reduce pressure on AHC in developing activities, while maintaining the AHC leadership role in engaging SIG and guiding strategic priorities.	ASIP-Gov program management team, subject to AHC approval
3	A future program should consider whether and how to integrate strategic priorities – including the cross-cutting priorities of gender, disability and climate – more explicitly in the program logic while	Future design team (pending AHC decision)



No.	Recommendation	Responsible officer
	remaining realistic about the natural entry points available within the program's mandate.	
4	A future program should ensure dedicated support to public diplomacy and stakeholder engagement functions, including the addition of a communications role within the program team.	Future design team (pending AHC decision)
5	A future program should review the current EOPOs and IOs to assess continued relevance, feasibility, and alignment with evolving strategic priorities	Future design team (pending AHC decision)
6	A future program should consider the program's ongoing value for money, especially if scope and pillars are realigned.	Future design team (pending AHC decision)
7	A future program should explore options to promote greater synergies and programming efficiencies across DFAT's development portfolio in Solomon Islands.	Future design team (pending AHC decision)
8	The impact of capacity building efforts and training should continue to be tracked or monitored to test if the outcomes are being sustained and capture lessons from these valued efforts to help guide decisions around further investment in this area, including through any re-design of the program	ASIP-Gov
9	ASIP-Gov should strengthen GEDSI efforts, particularly under the Economic Governance pillar, in a contextually appropriate manner, given Australia's large investment in GEDSI through the Gender Equality program and with opportunities identified in recruitment, workplace policies, public financial management, and digital access, amongst others	ASIP-Gov
10	MERLA activities should continue, with an enhanced focus on value for money approaches.	ASIP-Gov



ANNEX A: LIST OF INTERVIEWED STAKEHOLDERS

Organisation type	Organisation / Team	Name / Position	Interview types	Date
DFAT – Honiara post	Senior Executive	Andrew Schloeffel, DHOM	In person	8 April 2025
DFAT – Honiara post	Economic Team	Emily Flahive, Counsellor, Economic Nicholas Saundersson, First Secretary, Economic Vivolyn Dolarii, Senior Program Manager, Economic Jaydee Nomisasa, Program Manager, Economic	In person	10 April 2025
DFAT – Honiara post	Governance and Stability Team	Nicole Smith, Counsellor Governance and Stability. Nicholas Yates, First Secretary Security Sara Lailey, First Secretary, Democratic Governance and Justice	In person	7 April 2025
ASIP-Gov	Advisers	Walter Rigamoto, Electoral Management Technical Adviser	In person	7 April 2025
ASIP-Gov	Advisers	David Air, SIG ICT Technical Adviser	In person	7 April 2025
ASIP-Gov	Advisers	Beau Tydd, Microsoft Dynamics 365 Project Manager	Virtual	8 April 2025
ASIP-Gov	Advisers	Stuart Millen, Customs and Excise Technical Adviser	In person	8 April 2025
ASIP-Gov	Advisers	<i>Treasury Advisers</i> Sheryl Singh, FMSS Adviser, Business Process Gregg Pavitt, FMSS Adviser, National Accounts Fiona Stanley, FMSS, Payroll Project Adviser Sarah Richards, Financial Compliance Adviser	In person	10 April 2025
ASIP-Gov	Management team	Anand Das, Team Leader Alice Fakarii, Deputy Team Leader	In person	11 April 2025



Organisation type	Organisation / Team	Name / Position	Interview types	Date
		Debbie Sade, Program Coordinator Agnes Tanihorara, MEL Coordinator		
Managing and MERL contractors	Abt Global	Graham Teskey, Strategic Adviser Pip Venning, Contractor Representative Elizabeth Hayes, Senior Program Manager	In person	11 April 2025
Managing and MERL contractors	Alinea	Thomas Hehir, COO	In person	10 April 2025
Managing and MERL contractors	Corporate Planning	Katrina Doherty, Corporate Planning Adviser	Virtual	15 April 2025
Solomon Islands Government	Ministry of Finance and Treasury	<i>Donor Projects and Funding Unit</i> Coswal Nelson, Deputy Secretary Fiscal Craig Zongahite Ross	In person	7 April 2025
Solomon Islands Government	Ministry of Finance and Treasury	<i>Internal Audit Ministry of Finance and Treasury</i> Director Narwin, Director	In person	8 April 2025
Solomon Islands Government	Ministry of Finance and Treasury	<i>Debt Management Unit</i> Samuel Tete, Director	In person	8 April 2025
Solomon Islands Government	Ministry of Finance and Treasury	<i>Microsoft Dynamics 365 Functionality Review Project</i> Accountant General Paula Uluinaceva	In person	8 April 2025
Solomon Islands Government	Solomon Islands Electoral Commission	Jasper Anisi, Chief Electoral Officer Christina Mitini, Deputy Chief Electoral Officer	In person	9 April 2025
Solomon Islands Government	Solomon Islands ICT Unit	Margaret Moveni, Deputy Secretary (Corporate Services) Cornell Hivae, Deputy Director ICT	In person	9 April 2025
Solomon Islands Government	Lands Commission	Alan Mcneil, Lands Commissioner	In person	10 April 2025



Organisation type	Organisation / Team	Name / Position	Interview types	Date
Solomon Islands Government	Customs and Excise	Comptroller Peter Hughes	In person	
Solomon Islands Government	Office of Prime Minister and Cabinet	Florence Joel, Deputy Secretary Samson Wa'ahero, Director of Digital Transformation	In person	9 April 2025
Solomon Islands Government	Office of the Auditor General	David Dennis, Auditor General	In person	9 April 2025
Regulators	Institute of Solomon Island Accountants	Pamela Naesol, CEO	In person	9 April 2025
Private Sector	Our Telekom	Majidul Haque, M-Selen Team Leader Benedict Kinuya, M-Selen Technical Adviser	In person	10 April 2025
Development Partners	Asian Development Bank	Matt Hodge, ADB Solomon Representative	Virtual	10 April 2025
	World Bank	Lodewijk Smets, World Bank Country Economist	In person	10 April 2025

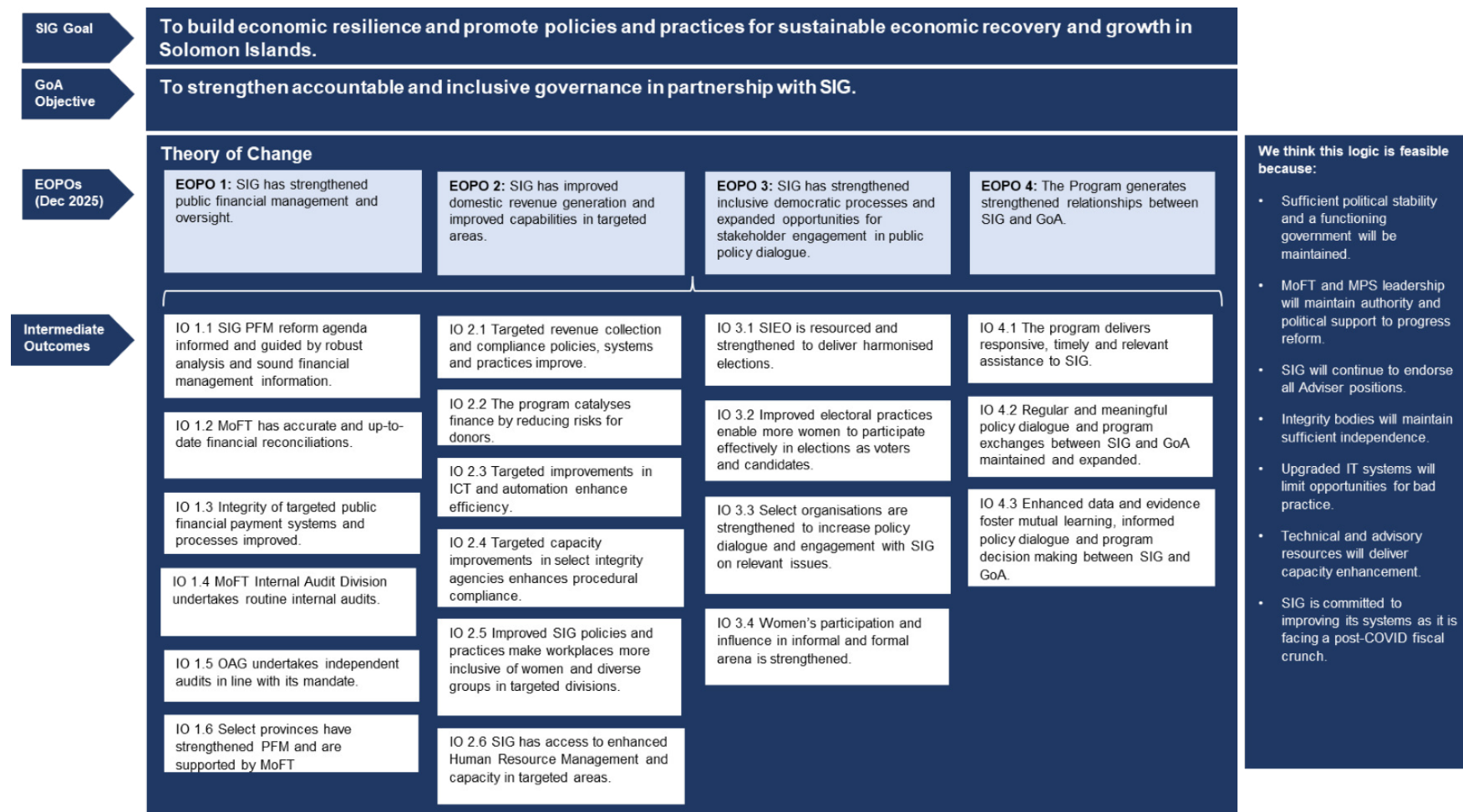


ANNEX B: DOCUMENTS REVIEWED

- Annual workplans and budgets – 2023, 2024, 2025
- ASIP Indigenous Participation Strategy
- ASIP-Gov program logic and theory of change
- ASIP-Gov risk register
- ASIP-Gov design (IDD)
- Australian National University and Solomon Islands National University 2024 Solomon Islands Elections Research Report
- Climate change strategy
- Draft Technical Adviser Report 14 August 2023 FINAL
- GEDSI strategy
- International Monetary Fund Solomon Islands: 2024 Article IV Consultation 2024
- Localisation Strategy
- Monitoring, Evaluation, Research, Learning and Adaptation (MERLA) Plan and Framework
- Other ASIP-Gov progress reports (e.g. annual reports quarterly reports, annual investment reports)
- Reflection and Learning Workshop reports
- Six-monthly reports x 6 and Reflection Workshop summary 23 May 2024
- Value for Money Framework



ANNEX C: ASIP-GOV PROGRAM LOGIC DECEMBER 2023



ANNEX D: MTR KEY EVALUATION QUESTIONS

Data collection and analysis was guided by the following key review questions.

High priority questions are marked with asterisks (*).

RELEVANCE

KEQ 1	Is the program strategically aligned with, flexible and responsive to Solomon Island Government priorities and Australia's strategic goals. *
KEQ 1	a. Could the end-of-program outcomes better align with the objectives of the Australian Government (including its new International Development Policy) in areas including gender, disability, climate and locally led development?
KEQ 2	What benefits (intended or otherwise) does the program generate for the Australian aid program and bilateral relationship?

EFFECTIVENESS

KEQ 3	To what extent is ASIP-Gov achieving its intermediate outcomes and end-of-program outcomes? *
KEQ 3	a. Is the program delivering the right outputs to achieve the goals and outcomes of ASIP-Gov?
KEQ 3	b. Does the logic, including intermediate outcomes and outputs remain relevant and achievable?
KEQ 4	What lessons can be drawn from ASIP-Gov's performance that can be applied to improve ASIP-Gov?

EFFICIENCY

KEQ 5	Is ASIP-Gov's modality efficient and effective for delivering inclusive and accountable governance in Solomon Islands? *
KEQ 6	Is ASIP-Gov's scope (economic governance / democratic governance / ICT) correctly calibrated to realise synergies and promote programming efficiencies? *
KEQ 6	a. Are existing performance financing elements successfully incentivising reform identification and implementation? *
KEQ 7	What have been the strengths and weaknesses of ASIP-Gov's management structure (the efficiency of the implementing partner / interactions with DFAT / management of advisers)? *
	a. Is ASIP-Gov responsive? *

SUSTAINABILITY

KEQ 8	To what extent are program outcomes sustainable and locally led, and what changes could be made to improve sustainability? *
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GENDER EQUALITY, DISABILITY AND SOCIAL INCLUSION (GEDSI)

KEQ 9	To what extent have results been achieved in gender equality and disability inclusion and to what effect?
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ANNEX E: EVALUATION JUDGEMENT RUBRIC

This rubric supports the ASIP-Gov Mid-Term Review team in making consistent and evidence-based judgements across the five key evaluation criteria:

1. Relevance
2. Effectiveness
3. Efficiency
4. Sustainability
5. Gender Equality, Disability Inclusion and Social Inclusion (GEDSI).

It is aligned with DFAT's Design and Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (DMEL) Standards 9.14, and can be applied across the four end-of-program outcomes and three program pillars.

Evaluation criteria rubric

Evaluation Criterion	Definition	Achieved	Partially Achieved / Mixed
Relevance	The extent to which the program is aligned with Solomon Islands Government and Australian priorities, remains fit for purpose, and is responsive to changing needs.	Program is highly aligned with current Solomon Islands Government and Australian policy priorities; strong responsiveness and adaptability demonstrated.	Program is generally aligned but may not reflect evolving priorities or stakeholder needs; limited adaptability.
Effectiveness	The extent to which the program is achieving its intended outcomes, including EOPOs and intermediate outcomes.	Strong evidence of outcome achievement; clear contribution pathways from activities to results; stakeholders validate progress.	Some progress observed but mixed evidence or inconsistent outcome achievement.
Efficiency	The extent to which resources (financial, human, technical) are used economically and deliver value for money.	Program demonstrates strong value for money; efficient modalities and clear link between inputs and results.	Some inefficiencies evident; inputs do not consistently yield expected outputs or results.
Sustainability	The extent to which benefits are likely to be sustained after the	High potential for sustainability; strong local capacity, systems	Moderate sustainability risks; partial capacity or ownership but some



Evaluation Criterion	Definition	Achieved	Partially Achieved / Mixed
	program ends, including through local ownership.	integration and ownership evident.	steps taken to address them.
GEDSI	The extent to which the program advances gender equality, disability and social inclusion in outcomes and delivery.	GEDSI is mainstreamed across activities and outcomes; disaggregated data used; significant positive outcomes observed.	GEDSI is partially addressed; some targeted efforts or results; data use or outcomes limited.

Note: 'Not Achieved' is defined as: The program does not meet the expectations for the criterion; there is little or no evidence of progress or performance; corrective action is required to address shortcomings.



ANNEX F: EVALUATION PLAN



ASIP-Gov:
Mid-Term Review Plan
Cowater International

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9. INTRODUCTION

9.1. OVERVIEW OF ASIP-GOV

The Australia Solomon Islands Partnership for Governance (ASIP-Gov) works to strengthen Solomon Islands' public financial management, incentivise economic reform, improve ICT systems, support democratic processes, and expand opportunities for stakeholder engagement in public policy dialogue. It is in its fourth year of programming, approaching a two-year extension option. The program has three pillars: (1) Economic Governance; (2) Democratic Governance; and (3) ICT and cybersecurity.

Its four end-of-program outcomes (EOPOs) include:

1. Solomon Island Government has strengthened public financial management and oversight.
2. Solomon Island Government has improved domestic revenue generation and improved capability in targeted areas.
3. Solomon Island Government has strengthened inclusive democratic processes and expanded opportunities for stakeholder engagement in public policy dialogue
4. ASIP-Gov generates strengthened relationships between the Solomon Island and Australian governments.

ASIP-Gov is jointly managed by two teams at the Australian High Commission Honiara: Economic Section (Pillar 1); and Governance and Stability Section (Pillars 2 and 3).

Abt Associates is the program's managing contractor.

9.2. OVERVIEW OF THIS DOCUMENT

This document presents a plan for the midterm review of ASIP-Gov. It summarises the review methods, including:

- **Framework** – purpose, primary audience, and parameters that establish the foundation and boundaries of this review.
- **Methods** – process, key review questions, data sources, analysis techniques, and reporting methods employed in this review.
- **Implementation process** – workplan, responsibilities, potential risks and limitations associated with the execution of this review.



10. MIDTERM REVIEW FRAMEWORK

This section defines the purpose, primary audience, and parameters that establish the foundation and boundaries of this review.

10.1. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The midterm review will be guided by the following principles:

- **Fit for purpose:** The review's design and questions will be specifically crafted to suit the context and objectives, ensuring relevance for the intended audiences.
- **Collaborative:** The review team will maintain a flexible and collaborative approach, adapting to evolving needs, managing expectations, and leveraging existing knowledge. This will support the review to stay on track and flexible when / if socio-political or program issues emerge.
- **Evidence-based:** The review will employ a transparent and systematic process, balancing privacy and confidentiality with the need to clearly demonstrate the basis for all conclusions. It will be undertaken in line with DFAT's Ethical Research and Evaluation Guidance Note and DFAT's Design and Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (DMEL) Standards.

10.2. SCOPE

PURPOSE

The midterm review will guide DFAT in its strategic and management decisions regarding ASIP-Gov (noting that there is a two-year option to extend).

The review will ensure that ASIP-Gov remains fit-for-purpose, adaptable, and impactful, continuing to contribute to long-term economic and governance stability in Solomon Islands. It will assess the effectiveness of the partnership by addressing the priorities of both governments, and will provide clear evidence-based recommendations to improve program delivery, ensuring that ASIP-Gov remains aligned with the Solomon Islands' National Development Strategy 2016–2035. The review's findings will guide DFAT's decisions regarding the potential two-year extension and design refresh.

It serves three main purposes, including assessing:

- the relevance of ASIP-Gov to Australian and Solomon Islands governments' priorities
- the effectiveness of ASIP-Gov and progress against intermediate and end-of-program outcomes
- the efficiency of ASIP-Gov's implementation and management arrangements to deliver results and provide clear recommendations to improve processes.

AUDIENCE



The primary audience for the review is the Australian High Commission Honiara senior management and program staff.

Secondary audiences include the Solomon Islands Government and Abt Associates.

PARAMETERS

The scope of this evaluation covers the period from the commencement of ASIP-Gov in 2022 to commencement of the review in March 2025.

It focuses on all three pillars of the program and the four end-of-program outcomes.

This midterm review is not a contractual performance assessment of the managing contractor.

11. MIDTERM REVIEW METHODS

This section outlines the process, key review questions, evaluation criteria, data sources, analysis techniques, and reporting methods employed in this review.

11.1. APPROACH

This review will employ a mixed-methods approach, with the primary methods being review of key documents and consultations of key stakeholders.

The review questions provided in the Terms of Reference informed the data collection methods as well as sampling and analysis decisions, and they will be used as a basis for synthesising data and structuring conclusions and reporting. These methods have been refined based on the review team's initial document review and evaluation expertise and will be further informed in consultation with the Australian High Commission Honiara team.

Data sources and data collection methods have been intentionally selected to ensure that multiple sources of information are available for each review question, strengthening the evidence base and positioning the team to credibly derive conclusions. Appendix 3 demonstrates how data from a variety of data sources will be used to address each key review question.

KEY DOCUMENTS REVIEW AND ANALYSIS

Key documents, reports and program documentation have initially been identified in the Terms of Reference and from the review team's expertise. This list will be added to following consultations with DFAT and key stakeholders.

These documents will be reviewed to understand the program and the implementation context.

Documents and data related to activities, outputs and outcomes will be sourced (primarily) from Honiara Post, as well as from the Solomon Islands Government and other key stakeholders where possible.

The document review will inform the draft and final midterm review report.



KEY INFORMANT CONSULTATIONS

Consultations with priority individuals and groups are critical to the review as these involve gathering relevant information; validating the desktop review findings; and testing the rationale and assumptions.

Semi-structured consultations will be conducted to assess strategic and operational issues related to program performance. Consultations will be conducted with key stakeholders from DFAT, the Solomon Islands Government, financial regulators and development partners (refer to Section 3.6 below). This list is subject to input from Honiara Post.

These will take place in-person in Honiara and online (via Zoom, MS Teams or WhatsApp), depending on the preferred methods of each stakeholder. Length of consultations will range from 30-90 minutes, depending on respondent.

Noting that as several of the listed organisations will be involved in the scheduled ASIP-Gov reflection sessions (8 –10 April 2025), the need for consultations in addition to these sessions will be assessed during the in-country visit.

11.2. SAMPLING

Documents have been selected by the Terms of Reference and the expertise of the review team. They are primarily the program's key plans, strategies and reports on its design, operations, progress, monitoring and evaluation and GEDSI.

Consultation participants have been selected based on:

- **Knowledge area:** Each stakeholder interviewed will have strong knowledge and expertise in at least one of the following domains: public finance management; fiscal and budget support; Solomon Islands governance; gender, disability and social equity; monitoring, evaluation and learning; or an understanding of the socio-political context.
- **Varying depth of engagement with and stakes in ASIP-Gov:** Stakeholders selected for consultations include a mix of DFAT, Solomon Islands Government, development partners, and civil society representatives.

The proposed sampling approach will ensure selected consultation participants:

- can provide credible, useful information and insightful perspectives to answer the key review questions
- represent a range of perspectives, including stakeholders responsible for delivering / implementing ASIP-Gov or are benefiting from the program and are external to the program
- can support the triangulation of findings and strengthen confidence in review conclusions.



11.3. PROCESS

The process will encompass the following stages (see workplan below for timing):

No.	Project stage	Milestone / Deliverables	Verifiable indicator
1	Kick-off meeting – Mon 31 March 2025; 3pm-4pm (Honiara time)	N/A	N/A
2	Document review of relevant material provided by DFAT	N/A	N/A
3	Midterm Review Work Plan, including review methods	1. Midterm Review Work Plan (this document)	DFAT acceptance in writing
4	In-country fieldwork in Honiara - including participation in the reflection workshop (8-10 April 2025)	N/A	N/A
5	Aide memoire outlining major findings and preliminary recommendations	2. Aide memoire (max. 5 pages)	DFAT acceptance in writing
6	Draft reporting	3. Draft Midterm Review report	DFAT acceptance in writing
7	Final reporting	4. Final report (15-20 pages, plus annexes)	DFAT acceptance in writing
8	Knowledge-sharing presentation	5. Knowledge-sharing presentation	N/A

11.4. KEY REVIEW QUESTIONS

Data collection and analysis will be guided by the following key review questions.

These questions are based on the review questions provided in the Terms of Reference. They have been refined and prioritised based on the review team’s document assessment and evaluation expertise, and will be further refined in consultation with Honiara Post.

When used in consultations, the questions will be tailored to each respondent, based on their role and level of ASIP-Gov knowledge and experience.

High priority questions are marked with asterisks (*).

RELEVANCE

1. Is the program strategically aligned with, flexible and responsive to Solomon Island Government priorities and Australia’s strategic goals. *
- a. Could the end-of-program outcomes better align with the objectives of the Australian Government (including its new International Development Policy) in areas including gender, disability, climate and locally led development?



2. What benefits (intended or otherwise) does the program generate for the Australian aid program and bilateral relationship?

EFFECTIVENESS

3. To what extent is ASIP-Gov achieving its intermediate outcomes and end-of-program outcomes?*
- a. Is the program delivering the right outputs to achieve the goals and outcomes of ASIP-Gov?
- b. Does the logic, including intermediate outcomes and outputs remain relevant and achievable?
4. What lessons can be drawn from ASIP-Gov's performance that can be applied to improve ASIP-Gov?

EFFICIENCY

5. Is ASIP-Gov's modality efficient and effective for delivering inclusive and accountable governance in Solomon Islands? *
6. Is ASIP-Gov's scope (economic governance / democratic governance / ICT) correctly calibrated to realise synergies and promote programming efficiencies? *
- a. Are existing performance financing elements successfully incentivising reform identification and implementation? *
7. What have been the strengths and weaknesses of ASIP-Gov's management structure (the efficiency of the implementing partner / interactions with DFAT / management of advisers)? *
- a. Is ASIP-Gov responsive? *

SUSTAINABILITY

8. To what extent are program outcomes sustainable and locally led, and what changes could be made to improve sustainability? *

GENDER EQUALITY, DISABILITY AND SOCIAL INCLUSION (GEDSI)

9. To what extent have results been achieved in gender equality and disability inclusion and to what effect?

11.5. CRITERIA FOR EVALUATING KEY REVIEW QUESTIONS

An evaluation judgement rubric has been created to ensure consistency and objectivity in assessing the key review questions (see Appendix 2).

The rubric has been structured to assess:



- the strength of evidence available, taking into account the number, type and strength of data sources and timeliness of available data
- the strength of outcomes against key criteria / key review questions.

The following three performance levels will be used against each of the five key evaluation criteria: (1) Achieved; (2) Partially Achieved / Mixed; (3) Not Achieved.

This rubric will be used by the review team to make considered, preliminary assessments, and document these within relevant analysis templates (see Section 3.7). This will facilitate analysis and sense-making and support the review team in reaching transparent, evaluative judgements. The review team will be oriented to the rubric and use it throughout the review.

This rubric is aligned with DFAT's Design and Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Standard 9.14 and can be applied across the end-of-program outcomes and program pillars.

11.6. DATA SOURCES

The following outlines a preliminary and indicative list of documents and interviewees for data collection. These lists will be refined and prioritised further by the review team and DFAT, as informed by initial and emerging findings and recommendations.

DOCUMENTS FOR REVIEW

The review team will seek to review the following indicative document types, subject to their availability:

- ASIP-Gov concept note and design
- ASIP-Gov program logic
- ASIP-Gov strategies and frameworks (e.g. Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Framework, GEDSI strategy, Climate change strategy)
- ASIP-Gov annual workplans and budgets
- ASIP-Gov progress reports (e.g. annual reports, quarterly reports, annual investment reports)
- ASIP-Gov risk register
- Other material provided by DFAT and/or Abt Associates.

LIST OF PROPOSED CONSULTATIONS

This list will be updated throughout the review process.

Organisation type	Organisation / Team	Name / Position	Interview types
DFAT – Honiara post	Senior Executive	TBC	TBD
DFAT – Honiara post	Economic Team	TBC	Group



Organisation type	Organisation / Team	Name / Position	Interview types
DFAT – Honiara post	Governance and Stability Team	TBC	Group
ASIP-Gov	Advisors	TBC	TBD
Solomon Islands Government	Ministry of Finance and Treasury	TBC	Group
Solomon Islands Government	Solomon Islands Electoral Commission	TBC	Group
Solomon Islands Government	Solomon Islands ICT Unit	TBC	Group
Regulators	Institute of Solomon Island Accountants	TBC	Group
Development partners	Asian Development Bank	TBC	TBD
Development partners	World Bank	TBC	TBD
Development partners	UNDP (electoral system strengthening)	TBC	TBD

11.7. DATA ANALYSIS

The analysis of data collected through consultations and document reviews will follow a systematic approach, including:

- Templates for summarising qualitative and quantitative data will be developed and used by the review team.
- Consultation notes will be carefully reviewed to identify key themes and patterns related to the key review questions. Document reviews will be analysed in a similar manner, with findings cross-referenced against consultation data to strengthen the validity of conclusions. Findings from consultations and the documents review will be integrated to develop a comprehensive narrative that provides clear, evidence-based answers to the key review questions.
- Thematic analysis will be used to synthesise the information, identifying connections and discrepancies across data sources.
- Review team members' initial rubric assessments on strength of evidence available and strength of outcomes will be recorded within templates, along with additional observations, reflections and questions. Summarising (or reducing) data in this way will support initial conclusions.
- Review team members will share key insights and identify / articulate review conclusions and potential recommendations. As such, verification will occur initially between review team members, and then with DFAT.
- Structured follow-up consultations with stakeholders (other than DFAT) are not planned as part of this review. However, during data collection, team members will clarify their interpretation of information provided with key informants.



All data will be held in confidence by the review team, with secure, restricted access files set up on a secure drive.

11.8. REPORTING

The primary report will be the ASIP-Gov Midterm Review report.

This report will be approximately 15-20 pages, plus annexes. It will comply with DFAT Design and Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Standard 10 and DFAT accessibility requirements.

DFAT intends to publish this report online along with DFAT's management response.

The review team will present the final report in a knowledge sharing presentation, using a slide-deck format. Along with the final report, this slide-deck presentation will be provided to DFAT for use and distribution to other key stakeholders.

While producing the report and slide deck, the review team will consider ways to present findings in visually effective, 'rapid knowledge transfer' formats, while keeping DFAT accessibility requirements front of mind.

12. MIDTERM REVIEW IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS

This section outlines the workplan, responsibilities, potential limitations and risks associated with the execution of this review.

12.1. WORKPLAN

Task	Indicative timing	Indicative date (week beginning)
Briefing at Post	Week 1	17 March
Desk stop review	Week 1 and 2	17 March
Draft Review plan	Week 2	24 March
Deliverable Review Plan	Week 2	24 March
Post to review and comment	Week 3	31 March
Briefing on in-country preparations	Week 3	31 March
Consultations Mon PM, Thurs PM, Fri AM*	Week 4	7-8 April
Reflection workshop	Week 4	8-10 April
Feedback sessions	Week 4 and 5	7 April



Task	Indicative timing	Indicative date (week beginning)
Prepare Aide memoire	Week 5	14 April
Review / Verify / QA	Week 5	14 April
Deliverable – Aide Memoire	Week 5	14 April
Analyse data and draft report	Week 6 and 7	21 April
Review / Verify / QA	Week 7	28 April
Deliverable – Draft report	Week 7	28 April
Post to review & comment	Week 8 and 9	5 May
Finalise report	Week 10	19 May
Deliverable – final report	Week 10	19 May

**Due to the team's participation in the reflections workshop from 8–10 April 2025, availability for additional discussions will be limited to the afternoon of Monday 9 April 2025, afternoon of Thursday 10 April, and all of Friday 11 April 2025.*

Subject to travel arrangements, it is possible that some members of the review team will be available for a full day of consultations on Monday 7 April 2025.

12.2. RESPONSIBILITIES

Team member	Team position	Role
Amanda Robbins <i>Equity Economics, Managing Director</i>	Co-Team Lead	Amanda will be the key contact for this project. She will lead the evaluation and ensure cohesion between team members and review components. She will contribute to data collection, analysis and reporting.
Gabrielle Stewart <i>Equity Economics, Director International</i>	Co-Team Lead GEDSI & MEL	Gabrielle will co-lead the project and provide GEDSI and MEL expertise at all stages of the review, including the planning, analysis and drafting stages. She will contribute to data collection, analysis and reporting.
Heather Ruberl <i>Equity Economics, Senior Economist, Climate & Fiscal Policy</i>	PFM & Economic Governance Advisor	Heather will lead drafting of the evaluation report, and contribute to data collection, analysis and reporting. She will ensure alignment with the Midterm Review plan, including the workplan.
Brown Onahikeni <i>Independent Development Professional</i>	In-country Technical Advisor	Brown will provide technical and contextual expertise, particularly during consultations and analysis, and support in-country consultations.
Erin Anderson	Quality Assurance and Evaluation	Cowater's Design and Evaluation Support Hub will be responsible for quality assurance, ensuring high-



Team member	Team position	Role
<i>Design and evaluation specialist</i>		quality deliverables and value for money and providing quality review against the DFAT Standards.
<i>Cowater Design and Evaluation Support Hub</i>		

12.3. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

This evaluation will be conducted in accordance with DFAT’s Ethical Research and Evaluation guidance note.

The review team will take into account the following ethical issues when undertaking consultations and throughout the review process:

- **Informed consent:** The review team will provide information about the review’s objectives, processes and potential impacts to all participants in the process.
- **Confidentiality and anonymity:** The review team will ensure that data is anonymised when reporting findings to prevent the identification of individuals or groups without their consent.
- **Power dynamic and coercion:** The review team acknowledges and will seek to mitigate the inherent power imbalances between the review team and stakeholders. The team will aim to mitigate this power imbalance by using evaluation methods that empower stakeholders to voice their needs and concerns without fear of reprisal or undue influence, ensuring that participation is genuinely voluntary and collaborative. Stakeholders will also be assured of confidentiality and anonymity.
- **Cultural sensitivity and respect:** Understanding and appreciating local knowledge, customs, and social norms is essential to ethical evaluations and review. The review team will incorporate culturally appropriate practices, actively involve local stakeholders, and demonstrate respect for every community’s values, ensuring that engagements are both effective and centring local knowledge and systems.

12.4. QUALITY ASSURANCE

The review team will assess all key deliverables in accordance with DFAT Standards and Cowater’s and Equity Economics’ quality review processes.

The Equity Economics in-house quality assurance process involves Director-level assessment of deliverables, including reviewing for strategic alignment, coherence and quality. This will apply to the Aide Memoire, draft and final reports.

Further, Cowater’s Design and Evaluation Support Hub is responsible for quality assurance, and so will ensure the Aide Memoire and draft and final reports are of high quality, meet value for money standards, and align to the review’s objectives. The hub will provide a quality assurance review of



these three deliverables (in particular) in accordance with guidance provided by DFAT Monitoring and Evaluation Standard 10.

The review will also be assessed and quality assured by DFAT.

As discussed in Section 3.9 and illustrated in Section 4.1, there will also be staged verification – initially occurring between review team members and then with Honiara Post.

12.5. LIMITATIONS AND RISKS

Key risks and proposed mitigation strategies for the project are as follows:

Risk	Mitigation strategy
Delays in accessing existing documentation.	Implement a clear and structured approach to document sharing in the inception meeting. Equity Economics will adopt a flexible approach to accommodate potential delays and revise the project schedule accordingly. We will work to agreed timeframes with the deliverable reflecting the documentation provided.
Delays in conducting consultations due to stakeholder availability.	The review team will adopt a flexible approach to accommodate potential delays, noting we will work to deliver based on available information within agreed timeframes. Regular check-ins with DFAT during this period will be used to highlight any pressing issues or questions. The review team will offer virtual meetings before or after the in-country mission, if stakeholders are unavailable or need to cancel a meeting during the in-country mission.
Some stakeholders are difficult to access.	DFAT Post will work closely to identify best dates for engagement with stakeholders – particularly any government stakeholders - as well as communicate the objective and importance of the review. The design team will be sensitive to political issues and take advice from DFAT Posts and DFAT Canberra on when and how to engage with government stakeholders. Where stakeholder interviews are not available, the review team will focus efforts on and/or pivot focus to consultations with DFAT and other stakeholders. The review team will assess and note the risks associated with not being able to consult with these particular stakeholders.
Delayed stakeholder feedback on draft reports.	Implement a structured feedback process with pre-defined deadlines. Regular check-ins with DFAT during this period will be used to highlight any pressing issues or questions.
Team member unavailability due to unforeseen circumstances	Core team members will prioritise this project and make every effort to ensure their availability throughout the project lifecycle. The composition of the team to include co-leads and cross-cutting expertise allows for full coverage of the project scope and timeframes. We also have a large team of additional qualified personnel within our organisation and a large network of qualified sub-consultants who possess the necessary expertise to cover any gaps in availability. The Cowater design and evaluation hub is also available to support the project and ensure high quality deliverables.



Risk	Mitigation strategy
Delays in travel logistics. including delayed and/or cancelled flights, visa delays etc. may delay and/or shorten the in-country mission and push back other deliverables.	Visa applications, if required, will be submitted as early as possible. Travel logistics will be organised as early as possible.
The in-country mission is delayed or cancelled due to extreme weather events (travel will be in cyclone season), political instability, or social unrest.	Where practical, Cowater will provide early warning of weather and political events, using best practice systems and services so the review team can plan and respond to any disruptions. The review team will also be in regular contact with the Australian High Commission Honiara team in lead up to travel and consultations, and so will have open communications channels that may provide early warning of weather and political events that would delay / prevent travel to Solomon Islands and/or consultations from taking place.



APPENDIX 1: INTERVIEW DISCUSSION GUIDE

Note: This consultation guide is designed as a framework, which our experienced team will adapt as needed to maximize the relevance of each consultation. We understand the importance of consistency and will ensure any adjustments are made thoughtfully, based on emerging insights, while maintaining the core objectives.

Alignment with key review questions	Questions
Introduction	<i>[Interviewer to give background on the purpose of the interview]</i> - How are you involved with ASIP-Gov / How long have you been involved with ASIP-Gov?
Program context and evolution	- Could you describe your understanding of ASIP-Gov's structure and what it is aiming to achieve? <i>[Interviewer's note: Probe on staffing roles etc].</i> - Could you describe ASIP-Gov's primary activities and/or functions? Tell me about the day-to-day work that ASIP-Gov does? - How does the program carry out activities / what modalities does it use? (e.g. technical assistance, direct financial assistance, capacity building). - Do you think ASIP-Gov's objectives have changed since it began? If so, how? - Have the activities or functions of ASIP-Gov changed over time? If yes, how? <i>[Interviewer's note: Probe on staffing changes etc.]</i>
Effectiveness	- What do you think the program is doing well? - What do you think the programs biggest challenges are? How do you think the program could be improved? - Do you think the program is achieving its intermediate outcomes and end-of-program outcomes? <i>[Interviewer's note: Outline and probe on each of the below as needed:</i> <u>End-of-program outcomes:</u> 1. Solomon Islands Government has strengthened public financial management and oversight. 2. Solomon Islands Government has improved domestic revenue generation and improved capability in targeted areas. 3. Solomon Islands Government has strengthened inclusive democratic processes and expanded opportunities for stakeholder engagement in public policy dialogue; and 4. the Program generates strengthened relationships between Solomon Islands Government and Australian Government. <u>Intermediate outcomes:</u>



Alignment with key review questions	Questions
	- Is the program's logic (including EOPO and IOs) still fit for purpose and relevant? Why or why not?
Relevance	- What do you see as the benefits of the ASIP-Gov program both for the Australian aid program and the bilateral relationship between Australia and the Solomon Islands? - How does the program help achieve Australia's goals in the Pacific? <i>[Interviewer's note: Probe on Australia government strategic interests, as well as more broadly what ASIP-Gov achieves in the Pacific, additional probe: can you give some specific examples]</i> - Could the programs EOPOs better align with the objectives of the Australian Government? <i>[Interviewer's note: Probe on alignment with the new International Development Policy and in areas including gender, disability, climate and locally led development]</i> - How well do you think the program aligns with SIG's objectives? Can you give any specific examples? - o sustained and inclusive economic growth - o poverty alleviated across the whole of Solomon Islands, basic needs addressed and food security improved; benefits of development more equitably distributed - o all Solomon Islanders have access to quality health and education - o resilient and environmentally sustainable development with effective disaster risk management, response and recovery - o unified nation with stable and effective governance and public order. - How flexible and responsive do you think the program is in meeting changing aims and objectives? Do you think change has been needed to date? Can you give any specific examples?
Efficiency	- Do you think the program is efficient? Where is it most efficient? Where are the opportunities for improvement? - Do you think the program provides value for money? Why / Why not? - In terms of how the program implements activities (i.e. the modalities you mentioned previously), do you think these are the most efficient and effective ways for delivering inclusive and accountable governance in Solomon Islands? Why / Why not? - How does ASIP-Gov interact with other programs in the Solomon Islands? - As you know, the program's three pillars are: (1) Economic Governance, (2) Democratic Governance and (3) ICT & Cybersecurity. Do you think this scope allows ASIP-Gov to work most efficiently with other programs or initiatives? Why / Why not?



Alignment with key review questions	Questions
	- Does the program have the right incentives (financial or other) to successfully achieve its outcomes (e.g. to incentivise reform identification and implementation)? Why / Why not? [Interviewer's note: Probe Solomon Islands Government interest / engagement] I'd like you to now think about the management structure of ASIP-Gov. - What does the management structure look like? - What are the strengths / weaknesses of this management structure? [Interviewer's note: Probe efficiency of implementing partner, interactions with DFAT, management of advisors etc.]
Sustainability	- Would you consider the ASIP-Gov program to be sustainable? - What do you think sustainability means or looks like in the context of ASIP-Gov? - To what extent are program outcomes sustainable and locally led? - What changes do you think could be made to make the program more sustainable?
GEDSI	- How is gender equality and disability inclusion incorporated into the program? - Do you think the program does GEDSI well, or not? Why / Why not? - To what extent do you think results have been achieved in GEDSI? - Do you have any specific examples of where you think the program has contributed to GEDSI outcomes?



APPENDIX 2: EVALUATION JUDGEMENT RUBRIC

This rubric supports the ASIP-Gov Mid-Term Review team in making consistent and evidence-based judgements across the five key evaluation criteria:

6. Relevance
7. Effectiveness
8. Efficiency
9. Sustainability
10. Gender Equality, Disability Inclusion and Social Inclusion (GEDSI).

It is aligned with DFAT's Design and Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (DMEL) Standards 9.14, and can be applied across the four end-of-program outcomes and three program pillars.

EVALUATION CRITERIA RUBRIC

Evaluation Criterion	Definition	Achieved	Partially Achieved / Mixed
Relevance	The extent to which the program is aligned with Solomon Islands Government and Australian priorities, remains fit for purpose, and is responsive to changing needs.	Program is highly aligned with current Solomon Islands Government and Australian policy priorities; strong responsiveness and adaptability demonstrated.	Program is generally aligned but may not reflect evolving priorities or stakeholder needs; limited adaptability.
Effectiveness	The extent to which the program is achieving its intended outcomes, including EOPOs and intermediate outcomes.	Strong evidence of outcome achievement; clear contribution pathways from activities to results; stakeholders validate progress.	Some progress observed but mixed evidence or inconsistent outcome achievement.
Efficiency	The extent to which resources (financial, human, technical) are used economically and deliver value for money.	Program demonstrates strong value for money; efficient modalities and clear link between inputs and results.	Some inefficiencies evident; inputs do not consistently yield expected outputs or results.
Sustainability	The extent to which benefits are likely to be sustained after the program ends, including through local ownership.	High potential for sustainability; strong local capacity, systems integration and ownership evident.	Moderate sustainability risks; partial capacity or ownership but some steps taken to address them.



Evaluation Criterion	Definition	Achieved	Partially Achieved / Mixed
GEDSI	The extent to which the program advances gender equality, disability and social inclusion in outcomes and delivery.	GEDSI is mainstreamed across activities and outcomes; disaggregated data used; significant positive outcomes observed.	GEDSI is partially addressed; some targeted efforts or results; data use or outcomes limited.

Note: 'Not Achieved' is defined as: The program does not meet the expectations for the criterion; there is little or no evidence of progress or performance; corrective action is required to address shortcomings.



APPENDIX 3: DATA COLLECTION MATRIX

The following table shows how the key evaluation questions will be answered, with reference to the data sources.

Theme	Key evaluation questions	Consultations	Documents
RELEVANCE	- Is the program strategically aligned with, flexible and responsive to Solomon Island Government priorities and Australia's strategic goals. * - Could the end-of-program outcomes better align with the objectives of the Australian Government (including its new International Development Policy) in areas including gender, disability, climate and locally led development? - What benefits (intended or otherwise) does the program generate for the Australian aid program and bilateral relationship?	DFAT – Honiara post - Senior Executive DFAT – Honiara post - Economic Team DFAT – Honiara post - Governance and Stability Team ASIP-Gov Advisors Solomon Islands Government Ministry of Finance and Treasury Solomon Islands Electoral Commission Solomon Islands ICT Unit Institute of Solomon Island Accountants Asian Development Bank World Bank UNDP - electoral system strengthening	ASIP-Gov concept note and design ASIP-Gov Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Framework and program logic ASIP-Gov annual workplans and budgets ASIP-Gov progress reports ASIP-Gov strategies and frameworks
EFFECTIVENESS	- To what extent is ASIP-Gov achieving its intermediate outcomes and end-of-program outcomes? - Is the program delivering the right outputs to achieve the goals and outcomes of ASIP-Gov? - Does the logic, including intermediate outcomes and outputs remain relevant and achievable? - What lessons can be drawn from ASIP-Gov's performance that can be applied to improve ASIP-Gov?	Priority consultations DFAT – Honiara post - Senior Executive DFAT – Honiara post - Economic Team DFAT – Honiara post - Governance and Stability Team ASIP-Gov Advisors ----	ASIP-Gov concept note and design ASIP-Gov Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Framework and program logic ASIP-Gov strategies : GEDSI and Climate change (value-for-money if it exists)



Theme	Key evaluation questions	Consultations	Documents
		Secondary consultations Solomon Islands Government Ministry of Finance and Treasury Solomon Islands Electoral Commission Solomon Islands ICT Unit Institute of Solomon Island Accountants Asian Development Bank World Bank UNDP - electoral system strengthening	ASIP-Gov annual workplans and budgets ASIP-Gov progress reports
EFFICIENCY	5. Is ASIP-Gov's modality efficient and effective for delivering inclusive and accountable governance in Solomon Islands? * 6. Is ASIP-Gov's scope (economic governance / democratic governance / ICT) correctly calibrated to realise synergies and promote programming efficiencies? * a. Are existing performance financing elements successfully incentivising reform identification and implementation? * 7. What have been the strengths and weaknesses of ASIP-Gov's management structure (the efficiency of the implementing partner / interactions with DFAT / management of advisers)? * b. Is ASIP-Gov responsive? *	DFAT – Honiara post - Senior Executive DFAT – Honiara post - Economic Team DFAT – Honiara post - Governance and Stability Team ASIP-Gov Advisors Solomon Islands Government Ministry of Finance and Treasury Solomon Islands Electoral Commission Solomon Islands ICT Unit Institute of Solomon Island Accountants Asian Development Bank World Bank UNDP - electoral system strengthening	ASIP-Gov concept note and design ASIP-Gov Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Framework and program logic ASIP-Gov progress reports ASIP-Gov strategies : GEDSI and Climate change (value-for-money if it exists) ASIP-Gov annual workplans and budgets ASIP-Gov risk register



Theme	Key evaluation questions	Consultations	Documents
SUSTAINABILITY	8. To what extent are program outcomes sustainable and locally led, and what changes could be made to improve sustainability? *	DFAT – Honiara post - Senior Executive DFAT – Honiara post - Economic Team DFAT – Honiara post - Governance and Stability Team ASIP-Gov Advisors Solomon Islands Government Ministry of Finance and Treasury Solomon Islands Electoral Commission Solomon Islands ICT Unit Institute of Solomon Island Accountants Asian Development Bank World Bank UNDP - electoral system strengthening	ASIP-Gov concept note and design ASIP-Gov Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Framework and program logic ASIP-Gov strategies : GEDSI and Climate change (value-for-money if it exists) ASIP-Gov Localisation Strategy (if it exists) ASIP-Gov progress reports
GENDER EQUALITY, DISABILITY AND SOCIAL INCLUSION (GEDSI)	9. To what extent have results been achieved in gender equality and disability inclusion and to what effect?	DFAT – Honiara post - Economic Team DFAT – Honiara post - Governance and Stability Team ASIP-Gov Advisors	GEDSI strategy Climate change strategy ASIP-Gov progress reports ASIP-Gov risk register ASIP-Gov Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Framework and program

