

Strategic Review

Fiji Australia Institutional Partnerships Program (IPP)

Report

January 2025

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Executive Summary

The Fiji-Australia Institutional Partnerships Program (IPP), Phase Two, is a multi-component governance support program which commenced in July 2020 and is scheduled to conclude in September 2025. The program encompasses a mix of modalities across seven areas:

Twinning Arrangements

- Electoral
- Parliament
- Statistics
- Taxation

Regional Programs

- Media
- Parliament and UNDP
- PFM ADB

Personnel and projects

- Flexifund for Civil Service Reform
- **Electoral systems support**, through the Fiji Electoral Office (FEO) working with the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC)
- **Media strengthening**, through the Fijian Media Association (FMA) and other Fiji media entities, working with the Australian Broadcasting Commission (ABC) and its Pacific Media Assistance Scheme (PACMAS)
- **Parliamentary support**, through the Parliament of Fiji, working with the Victorian Parliament and the United Nations Development Program's (UNDP) Fiji Parliament Support Program
- **Public Financial Management**, through the Ministry of Economy and Ministry of Women, Children and Social Protection (MWCSP) with support of the Asian Development Bank (ADB)
- **Statistical gathering capacity**, through the Fijian Bureau of Statistics (FBoS) with the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS)
- **Taxation and revenue collection**, through the Fijian Revenue and Customs Service (FRCS) and Australian Taxation Office (ATO)
- **Civil service-wide reform**, operationalised through a 'Flexifund' which has both a fund for 'short term responsiveness' and specific project activities aimed at rapid response to emerging Government of Fiji priorities.

Positive regard across IPP

Overall, the program is positively regarded by Fijian, Australian and other stakeholders. The program is making relevant, effective, and useful contributions to its two intended

outcomes: strong peer-to-peer and institutional relationships between Australia and Fiji; and support for Fiji to strengthen performance in selected institutions. A symbiotic relationship exists between the two outcomes as program-funded activities have effectively strengthened peer-to-peer and institutional relationships (EOPO1), and as a result, Australia is increasingly seen as a reliable, valuable, and flexible partner working in areas of significant priority to the Government of Fiji (EOPO2). IPP contributes to a wide range of sectors and institutions, enhancing Australia's status as a donor, at a relatively modest cost. Highly relevant and specific technical collaboration is seen as 'the glue' in the Program, helping consolidate institutional linkages and positioning Australia as a 'partner of choice.'

Relevance to current context

Leaders and officials of Fijian, Australian and multilateral partner organizations largely agree that IPP is highly relevant to the current governance context of Fiji. The program's seven activity areas are those where there is both an appetite for reform, and where reform can reasonably be expected to contribute to improved governance, public service performance and delivery. This context facilitates fertile ground for valued and productive relationships, and provides a platform or launching pad for additional Australian or partner support.

The 2022 election in Fiji brought a more reform-minded government to power, keen to demonstrate a commitment to improved governance, transparency, and civic engagement. IPP partnerships were able to navigate this change of government with relative ease and this has further highlighted the strength and resilience of institutional partnerships. The review found partnerships have proven to be resilient during political change and the ability of partners to navigate political change has enhanced levels of trust between institutions.

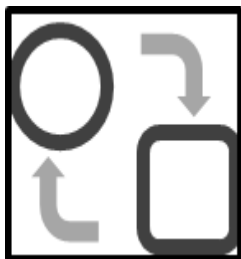
Changing domestic contexts have influenced IPP's implementation. The first two years were affected by the COVID pandemic, restricting travel and direct relationship-building, while also demanding more Fiji-driven approaches. Since the 2022 Fiji election, the second two years of program implementation operated with a significantly different Government of Fiji in power: this opened opportunities to do things differently and for institutional partnerships to become more dynamic and locally led. Lessons and relationships from the first phase have also influenced processes and activities in this phase.

Achievements

Achievements have been made across diverse aspects of public sector roles and responsibilities in the seven activity areas. IPP-supported activities have contributed to stronger systems and policies in some areas, including key civil service and public financial management reforms related to workforce planning, ensuring high quality fiscal updates, the strengthening of internal audit systems and informing fiscal strategy ahead of budget preparation. Activities have also created new processes and updated approaches for engagement in taxation, statistics, electoral, media and parliamentary areas.

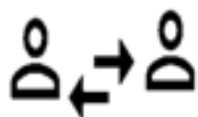
Achievements associated with IPP-funded support reflect the initial selection of activities as priorities expressed by Fijian leaders and officials, and the ability of Australian and other funded personnel to provide timely access to high quality technical information and advice. IPP achievements are founded in trust-based respectful partnerships, developed over extended periods: without these relationships, achievements would not have been as relevant or sustainable.

IPP has been highly effective and made good progress in contributing to its intended outcomes. The program has contributed to strengthening the performance and capacity of Government of Fiji agencies through enabling leaders and officials to address priorities in more informed and timely ways, and through support for complementary efforts undertaken by UNDP and ADB, effectiveness has been further enhanced and consolidated.



Success factor 1: Flexibility and responsiveness

The program's effectiveness reflects its relevance to a dynamic and complex political economy and the efficiency of program implementation. The timeliness of responses, in a period of significant change, is particularly well-regarded by Fiji leaders and officials.



Success factor 2: Maturing relationships

Relationships between Fijian and Australian partners have shifted: previously Australian officials were considered as 'gap fillers' while now, Australian organisations provide specific technical responses to priorities articulated by Fijian leaders and senior officials, reflecting agency-wide change agendas.



Success factor 3: Fijian-led priority-setting

In the latter half of this review period, Fijian leadership in relation to priority-setting and work-planning has become increasingly evident, consistent with 'locally-led development.' IPP's experience suggests that considerable time spent on developing trust-based and respectful partnerships, as well as other contextual factors, contribute to this level of local leadership.



Success factor 4: Mix of modalities

The mix of modalities used in IPP is well-suited for flexibility and responsiveness in a period of rapid change. The mix includes: twinning arrangements; support for UNDP, ADB and

PACMAS regional programs; and placement of a small number of specialist personnel and a flexible fund for activity funding.

Program management and compliance with DFAT policies

The review found a high degree of satisfaction among partners with current program management processes, and identified opportunities to enhance strategic oversight and support overall. Fiji partners expressed interest in improved donor coordination.

The review found that despite the critical importance of governance to achieving gender equality and disability inclusion, these areas had not received sufficient leadership, resources, and attention during this program phase. Program monitoring, evaluation and learning processes have been moderately resourced and there is scope to increase evaluative practice to maximise links between work areas and identify lessons. Attention to climate change adaptation has been minimal: increased activity is recommended in Phase 3.

Future planning

The review team suggests that planning for the next phase takes a strengths-based approach to build on strengths in the Fiji governance context and institutional partnerships. A strengths-based approach will further contribute to Fijian-led development approaches being a model for the broader Pacific region, and enhance Australia's contribution as a partner of choice in Fiji.

Recommendations

Recommendations reflect the consistent view from all partners involved in implementing IPP for the program to continue largely as is, given the value they place on the current modality and the partnerships established. Recommendations are therefore primarily focused on adding value and fine-tuning the current approach, to further strengthen IPP performance.

Recommendations are also based in recognition that the current phase will conclude in nine months and that changes within this current phase need to be realistic and achievable.

It is recommended that responsibility for responding to these recommendations sit with the Australian High Commission in Fiji's Governance team. Given the high level and broad nature of the recommendations, the review team deems it not appropriate to cost these recommendations.

1. A new phase of IPP should be designed, with the process commencing in mid 2025, to support continuity from the current phase. Given the program is well regarded by the Government of Fiji and has made strong progress towards its two EOPOs, consideration should be given to increasing the scope and budget for the new phase.
2. The next phase of IPP should maintain an appropriate balance between enabling partners to respond to specific technical priorities of each Fiji agency, while responding to opportunities to work in more coordinated ways that model and progress whole-of-government public service reform.

3. The next phase of IPP should maintain the use of a mix of complementary partnership approaches to consolidate reform outcomes, with an emphasis on institutional twinning between Fijian and Australian public sector agencies, and continuation of funding for related activities of multilateral agencies in Fiji.
4. The current management structure should be remodelled to enhance capacity for more proactive and strategic program management, to better contribute to:
 - strengthened capacity to progress outcome-level governance-type results
 - monitoring and engagement of emerging opportunities for rapid response assistance for keeping reforms underway, including leveraging of synergies between pillars
 - ensure responsiveness to timebound opportunities such as preliminary planning for the upcoming census and elections
 - identify synergies and efficiencies and build linkages between activities (i.e. slightly expand communities of practice approach), when useful, including:
 - a. sharing lessons about effective capacity-strengthening and partnership approaches
 - b. alignment of Flexifund efforts within MCS with work being undertaken by other ministries e.g. collaboration between MoF, MCS and FBOS in relation to HRMIS and FMIS
 - trial ‘partnership brokering’ of two selected partnerships to help better understand the quality of these partnerships and ways to further strengthen partnerships in future, given their current stage and experience
5. Increase cross-program resources and attention to identifying opportunities and implementing progress on GEDSI.
6. Strengthen and better resource MEL to generate shared learning about what works well and success factors, and better collate information about the program’s overall contribution to strengthened institutional partnerships, individual agency capacity, development outcomes and progress in terms of Australia’s standing as Fiji’s partner of choice.
7. To inform the next phase of IPP, consider the benefits and costs of using the Fiji Program Support Platform to add value (without risking loss of direct government-to-government relationships), including the degree to which it can:
 - a. Assume responsibility for some administrative tasks undertaken by AHC officials
 - b. Contribute to more proactive GEDSI programming
 - c. Contribute to strengthening MEL capacity of IPP partners.
8. Consider the potential for a future phase of IPP to actively facilitate and strengthen Fiji’s contribution to governance reform in the Pacific region through funding of opportunities for other PICs to observe and benefit from IPP twinning activities.
9. Within a future phase, a more structured Flexifund with clearer outputs and outcomes identified, and a robust, cross-government steering committee should be

put in place to identify appropriate activities and steps needed to progress each focus area towards an agreed development outcome. This should be complemented by a 'flexible fund' that can both support key activities, but also other relevant, sometimes ad hoc initiatives given their diplomatic value and ability to position Australia as a first port of call and partner of choice.

10. For the remaining period of IPP implementation, consider the following activities:

- Facilitated discussions across Fijian participating agencies on their own learning about partnerships/twinning arrangements, transitioning to different ways of working with international partners, and other topics of relevance (this may be understood as a Fiji community of practice event, equivalent to the Australian version)
- Facilitated discussions among both Australian and Fijian partners about priorities for a subsequent phase, to inform the design process
- Facilitated reflections within each partnership area, perhaps using a qualified partnership broker, about the quality of partnership and ways to strengthen partnerships in future, given their current stage and experience
- Commissioning more detailed case studies about institutional partnerships to showcase governance reform achievements and Australian and Fiji relations for promotion and diplomatic purposes.

1. Introduction

1.1 Overview

Phase Two of the Fiji-Australia Institutional Partnerships Program (IPP) commenced in July 2020 and is scheduled to conclude in September 2025. Up to \$22 million is available for the program, with approximately \$4.4 million available per year (with flexibility between years).

IPP supports a range of collaborative arrangements and activities summarised as follows:

- **Electoral systems support**, through the Fiji Electoral Office (FEO) working with the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC)
- **Media strengthening**, through the Fijian Media Association (FMA) and other Fiji media entities, working with the Australian Broadcasting Commission (ABC) and its Pacific Media Assistance Scheme (PACMAS)
- **Parliamentary support**, through the Parliament of Fiji, working with the Victorian Parliament and the United Nations Development Program's (UNDP) Fiji Parliament Support Program
- **Public Financial Management**, through the Ministry of Finance and Ministry of Women, Children and Social Protection (MWCSP) with support of the Asian Development Bank (ADB)
- **Statistical gathering capacity**, through the Fijian Bureau of Statistics (FBoS) with the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS)
- **Taxation and revenue collection**, through the Fijian Revenue and Customs Service (FRCS) and Australian Taxation Office (ATO)
- **Civil service reform**, operationalised through a 'Flexifund' which has both specific project focus and a mechanism to facilitate 'short term responsiveness' to emerging Government of Fiji priorities.

IPP Phase Two was designed prior to the global COVID-19 pandemic and scheduled to commence in July 2020, just months following its onset. In response to the pandemic, Australia's 'Partnership for Recovery' Strategy focused on strengthening health security, maintaining social stability, and stimulating economic recovery. This Strategy also expressed Australia's ambition to further establish itself as a trusted 'partner of choice' for its neighbours. IPP's objectives were well-aligned with the Strategy's emphasis on supporting social stability and stimulating economic recovery. The program was also well placed to contribute to Australia's aim of being a 'partner of choice' for Fiji, through its strong focus on relationships, responsiveness, and respect.

1.2 Review context

Australia established formal diplomatic relations with the Republic of Fiji following its independence in October 1970, and extensive, multi-faceted engagement has continued between the two countries since. Fiji and Australia enjoy strong trade and investment ties, with Australia being one of Fiji's major trading partners and source of foreign investment. Australia is also a popular destination for Fijians wanting to study abroad. In terms of security, Fiji and Australia collaborate through the 2018 Boe Declaration on Pacific regional security which has contributed to growing defence and security cooperation, including co-deployment of Australian and Fijian forces in response to regional crises. Climate change is another issue of acute importance to Fiji, with Australia providing support to the Fiji Government to

implement its Climate Change Act which legislates mitigation and adaptation action. Australia is also a reliable partner to Fiji at times of natural disasters, and was also a major supporter for Fiji's COVID response.

This historic breadth of engagement between Fijian and Australian institutions has laid a firm foundation in which longstanding government to government relations, such as those supported by IPP are common. The dynamics of institutional partnerships are therefore familiar to both Fijian and Australian stakeholders.

The value and contribution of firmly established partnership foundations were exemplified in the ability of IPP partnerships to navigate the election of a new Government of Fiji in December 2022 with relative ease. The new government resulted in new people in key positions, new ways of working and changed priorities, through which IPP relationships were sustained and able to adapt.

Officials involved in IPP consider the new government to be committed to reforms that strengthen Fiji's system of governance and transparency. These changes have positively influenced IPP's ability to plan participatorily, identify priorities and further strengthen relationships, and opened unexpected opportunities. The capacity of this program (and the institutional partnerships modality) to not only navigate these changes and opportunities, but also be highly responsive to them, emerged as a key theme of the review.

Another contextual issue relevant to IPP is that Fiji is currently experiencing high levels of workforce turnover and vacancy rates, with loss of labour to overseas markets and movement within domestic markets. Unfilled public sector positions create challenges, particularly in relation to the effectiveness of the twinning model and sustaining peer-to-peer relationships.

Overall, IPP benefits significantly from sustained and broad-based partnering between Fijian and Australian institutions that preceded it, while also contributing to further strengthening and future opportunities. The openness of the current government also heightens opportunities for engagement given greater willingness for decentralised engagement that allows broader engagement of staff from Fijian (and Australian) institutions.

1.3 Review purpose/audiences

The purposes of the review are: to assess progress of the IPP; to identify areas of strength and areas for improvement until the end of phase; and to inform design of the next phase. This Report includes recommendations to support DFAT's management decisions in relation to future phases (Section 6).

The review's primary audiences are the Australian High Commission (AHC) in Suva, DFAT more broadly, Government of Fiji stakeholders, and other development partners in the governance sector in Fiji.

2. Summary of the Program

2.1 Expected outcomes

IPP seeks to serve dual objectives. Firstly, it seeks to foster a trusted working relationship between Fiji and Australia. Secondly, IPP seeks to support Fiji's stability, prosperity and resilience to shocks through the strategic use of partnerships, policy dialogue and financing. The program works towards two end of program outcomes (EOPOs):

- Australia and Fiji have strong peer-to-peer and institutional relationships (relationship outcome)
- Australia supports Fiji to strengthen performance across selected institutions, in line with Fiji's priorities (development outcome)

The program design is explicit in its intention that Fiji's policy directions and interests should guide implementation, reflecting the maturing nature of the bilateral relationship between Australia and Fiji, and Fiji's status as a growing middle-income economy. For these reasons, the design aimed to remain flexible and allow for locally-led that could enable easy adaptation to changing circumstances. This approach aimed to apply the concept within IPP of 'thinking and working politically.'

An assumption of the program and its theory of change is that effectiveness in supporting strengthened performance across participating Fijian institutions will contribute to strong peer-to-peer relationships and foster a trusted working relationship between Fiji and Australia. This was a source of frequent discussion throughout the review since it presents a potential tension, given it could be that effectiveness in strengthening performance at institutional level does not translate to stronger peer to peer relations and Australia's diplomatic objective of consolidating its position as a preferred partner. The review worked from many different angles to test the strength of the program logic through questions related to the quality of programming and performance outcomes compared to earlier partnerships programming, the 'comparative contribution' of IPP compared to other partners to help determine the status given to IPP auspiced partnerships, and also the qualitative nature of the partnership and changes observed by Fijian partners through this IPP phase.

2.2 Structure and governance

IPP acts as a de-facto governance facility, managed within the AHC in Suva, with the First Secretary, Governance as IPP lead. AHC leads overall coordination of all IPP supported projects and agreements and provides administrative support for multiple activities. There is no program-specific inter-Government governance structure or system.

The Fiji Program Support Facility is a related and significant entity responsible for implementation of most other Australian Government development programming until its closure at the end of 2024. It supported implementation and administration of the 'Flexifund' but was also expected to support IPP administration and monitoring and evaluation, however, that did not eventuate.

An annual process for planning, approval, funding and reporting by each of the respective partnerships is managed by the AHC. Day to day coordination and administration includes provision of advice about local conditions and processes. Implementation is largely undertaken through flexible workplans using annual grants to Australian Government partners and multilateral agencies.

2.3 Monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) systems

The program design included a high-level performance framework. Program MEL had three objectives:

- i. To support live evidence-based analysis and decision making to enable DFAT management to undertake responsive and flexible programming;
- ii. To reinforce and embed the investment's approach of investing in and leveraging a broad range of partnerships and of supporting genuine GoF determined support;
- iii. To assess the initiative's contribution to impact and change pathways towards outcomes.

The program uses an external contractor, Abt Global, to provide 6-monthly monitoring inputs, using indicators and performance questions as a basis for partner checks. Reports are prepared for AHC Suva detailing data in each IPP area of work. See Section 4.3.5 for details.

3. The Review

3.1 Methodology

The TORs for the Review (see Annex 1) included reference to: relevance; effectiveness; efficiency; GEDSI; climate change; and locally-led development. The broad activity area nature of IPP meant the review required methods to consider both overall program performance as well as the performance of multiple diverse individual partnerships, to understand processes and achievements in relation to these evaluation areas. In addition to analysis of a range of reports produced at both levels (Annex 5), interviews were held with over 60 people (see Annex 2) involved in governance, management, and implementation of IPP-funded activities, either directly or indirectly. The list of stakeholders was jointly developed by the evaluation team and the AHC, and presented in the Review Plan.

Details of the Review methodology are included in Annex 3. A feature of the methodology was the organisation of collective sense-making processes, including three workshops in Fiji and several follow-up meetings (see Annex 6), as well as one on one sense-making meetings with all Australian partners.

3.2 Limitations

Limitations of the review included:

- Scheduling and contracting delays prevented the review team's Partnerships Specialist from travelling to Fiji, meaning in-Fiji interviewing was undertaken by only the Team Leader and Local Governance Specialist. This reduced the overall contribution of the Partnerships Specialist and her longstanding experience of field work in Fiji.
- While the review team spoke with targeted personnel in Fiji and Australia who are currently involved in implementation, there were many personnel with prior or current experience of the program who were not consulted. This likely contributed to a greater focus on IPP's current performance given many interviewees were not involved at IPP commencement.
- The review team focused only on current partnerships and did not consult with other ministries or government entities that might also be well suited to IPP. It is suggested that the design of the next phase consult more broadly to determine interest and suitability to benefit from IPP.

- The review scope (including 30-page reporting limit) meant that detailed evaluation of the performance of each of the seven activity areas was not possible. The report focuses on aggregation of findings and assessment of the whole program, according to evaluation criteria, and includes a text box for each area. The review also draws on secondary evaluative data undertaken by the IPP MEL team.
- Fiji-based collective sense-making workshops were facilitated online by the review team's Partnership Specialist rather than in-person. This was mitigated by the on-the-ground presence of the Team Leader in all workshops in Fiji.
- The timing of the collective sense-making workshops needing to be at the end of field work meant that the planned collective sense-making workshop for Australian stakeholders could not occur due to end-of-year scheduling challenges. Individual meetings were held instead which had a benefit of providing for more activity specific analysis.

4. Findings

4.1 Relevance

4.1.1 Relevance to current Fiji context

Leaders and officials of Fijian, Australian and multilateral partner organizations involved in IPP universally agree that the program is highly relevant to the current governance context of Fiji. This reflects both Fiji's status as a maturing democracy and a leader within the region, as well as the appropriateness of IPP modalities and ways of working within a fluid context. The program's seven activity areas are considered by stakeholders as areas where there is both an appetite for reform, and where reform can reasonably be expected to contribute to improved governance, public service performance and delivery. This context facilitates fertile ground for valued and productive relationships, and provides a platform or launching pad for additional Australian or partner support. The modalities used in IPP are also well-suited in terms of their flexibility and capacity for responsiveness in a period of rapid change in Fiji.

The 2022 election in Fiji brought a more reform-minded government to power, keen to demonstrate a commitment to improved governance, transparency, and civic engagement. This has the potential to impact program relevance. However, IPP partnerships were able to navigate this change of government with relative ease, highlighting the strength and resilience of institutional partnerships fostered through this and previous institutional partnerships programming. The review found that partnerships have proven to be resilient during political change. Further, the ability of partnerships to navigate complex political change and quickly grasp new opportunities has enhanced levels of trust between institutions and contributed to the credibility of the modality as a mechanism well suited to locally led development.

Since the election, shifts in governance approaches have occurred, and IPP has been very well placed to respond and adapt, given long-established and deeply valued trust-based relationships with Australian Government agencies. The review found a shared perspective among informants that the post-2022 election governance context is an opportune time for progression of key aspects of public sector governance and system strengthening. Examples of newly emerging opportunities raised by interviewees include: improving civic and media engagement; more efficient and inclusive budgeting; greater commitment to transparency; focus on whole-of-government human resource management; and recognition of the priority for longer-term, whole of cycle planning for milestone events such as elections and census.

The changed culture of the new government includes increased confidence among Fijian leaders and officials to respond to opportunities to ‘do things differently’ in terms of their own roles in strengthening public sector governance. This confidence has also contributed to Fijian officials asserting greater levels of leadership and ownership of IPP work planning as they aim to chart a workable reform pathway within their area of work. This shift has been welcomed by Australian partners who have taken steps to adjust and respond accordingly.

The program also aligns neatly with Fiji’s new National Development Plan (NDP) 2025-2029 which is founded on the vision of empowering the people of Fiji through unity, achieved through three pillars: economic resilience, people empowerment and good governance.¹

4.1.2 Relevance to Australian development policy

Australia’s current International Development Policy (2024) emphasizes the importance of the Pacific region and, noting ‘we [Government of Australia] are dedicated to achieving our shared aspirations and we will respect Pacific priorities at every step’ (page 14) and ‘Australia’s international development program works in partnership to support reform, service delivery, and system strengthening’ (page 25).

The policy approach is to work with partners to:

- build effective, accountable states that drive their own development
- enhance state and community resilience to external pressures and shocks
- connect with Australia and regional architecture
- generate collective action on global challenges that impact us and our region.

Despite the IPP design predating Australia’s new development policy, the program aligns neatly with these proposed approaches. The program works through key Fijian ministries and government entities to build effectiveness through system strengthening and increased transparency and levels of accountability. Through support to capacity development, planning and monitoring, participating institutions regard themselves as more robust, resilient to shocks and capable of resolving risks. This in part occurs through IPP support whereby Australian institutions assist with connecting their Fijian partners to regional and global architecture, for example the ATO connecting FRCS to key trading institutions such as the IMF, WTO and development banks. The program also aims to support Fiji’s progress towards its Sustainable Development Goals.

The program is also de facto supportive of the South Pacific Regional Trade and Cooperation Agreement, a non-reciprocal trade agreement through which Australia and New Zealand offer duty-free and unrestricted access for specified products, given that IPP works with government entities relevant to enabling of trade and ensuring a stable economic and investment landscape.

Of particular relevance to a program aiming to develop trusting, effective relationships with Fijian partners, the program aligns strongly with elements of Australia’s commitment to ‘locally led development’ which states:

‘Australia will: take a more flexible and innovative approach to program planning and implementation, including design, contracting and delivery arrangements, and monitoring and evaluation approaches that increase participation from local actors; provide multi-year funding and capacity development to local organisations, with

¹ Fiji National Development Plan 2025-2029 and Vision 2050: Government of Fiji, Suva (2024), Fiji. P.13

support as needed to meet policy requirements; take risk-informed opportunities to provide direct financing to partner governments to support them in achieving their economic and social development aspirations...'²

Australian policy areas where IPP is less aligned are Climate Action and GEDSI. While climate was not an area of engagement proposed for IPP, the program does have GEDSI ambitions which have made only modest progress (see Sections 4.4 and 4.5).

4.1.3 Relevance of theory of change

The IPP Theory of Change states that “IPP operates as a facilitator, enabler and broker, that aims to influence the formal and ‘informal’ rules of the game in Fiji by providing technical advice relevant to management of public finances, the functioning of the public service, and on the operation of Parliament, alongside policy engagement and budget support”. This approach is framed by the two EOPOs described above at section 2.1.

The first EOPO (the ‘relationship outcome’) targets strengthened peer-to-peer and institutional relationships between the Governments of Fiji and Australia: this outcome remains relevant and has been progressed. Mature, locally led relationships between Australian and Fiji public sector agencies are both symbols of and contributions to this policy agenda. The second EOPO (the ‘development outcome’) related to improved organizational performance also remains relevant, given the Government of Fiji’s interest in public sector reform, to advance local capacity and ownership, and Australia’s ongoing commitment to support public sector governance strengthening and development in the region.

The theory of change assumes that by IPP providing technical advice and finance relevant to Government of Fiji priorities that public service reforms will be implemented that contribute to improved service delivery, thus progressing the ‘development outcome’. As Fiji benefits from strengthened approaches, Fijian institutions place increasing value on the relationships established with Australian and Australian-supported multilateral partners. As relationships consolidate and intensify, Australia’s status as a ‘partner of choice’ for Fiji will progress. Strengthened relationships will in turn lead to more nuanced and granular programming between partners that will contribute to further improvements in performance of Fijian institutions that will enhance both effectiveness and efficiency (the ‘development outcome’), thus creating positive momentum towards deep institutional partnerships and understanding.

A strength of the approach has been the broad, high-level nature of the EOPOs, which has allowed for work in the seven activity areas to be nuanced, flexible and responsive to organization-specific issues and opportunities as defined by leaders and officials in individual Government of Fiji agencies. This flexibility has facilitated both EOPOs since it has allowed Fijian partners to effectively progress their own priorities, thus contributing to strengthened relationships and perceptions of Australia as a reliable partner.

While there are benefits of the program’s theory of change sitting at a high level, the ‘whole of program’ potential of IPP and potential synergies between program pillars has been an area not actively considered or actioned in implementation. While over-engineering IPP would come with some risk, synergies between activities have potential to render the program whole greater than the sum of its parts. For example, when Australian partners come together through the community of practice meetings, they told the review team how they had benefited from learning about other approaches and lessons that they then applied to

² Australia’s International Development Policy 2023, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (2023), p.21

their own work. If Fijian partners were brought together, they could potentially benefit from hearing about different aspects of partnership, and different ideas and approaches about governance. The AHC could also promote more interaction about approaches, partnership ways of working, and technical opportunities, between the program pillars to enhance overall benefits. For example, the work undertaken on engagement with media organizations, in the media pillar, could benefit other Fijian agencies seeking to increase public engagement. The Ministry of Finance also seeks support in rolling out gender responsive budgeting across government.

Explicit consideration and exploration of potential synergies seems to be a missed opportunity. This is particularly the case with regards to the Flexifund which has established itself as a valued mechanism at the centre of civil service reform. Synergies and connections across different pillars could be useful in consolidating and reinforcing momentum generated through the Flexifund towards civil service reform. In future, the sweet spot for the program would be to find a balance between meeting specific technical priorities of each individual Fiji agency, while also working in a coordinated way to leverage synergies that progress whole of government public service reform (see **Recommendation 2**).

4.2 Effectiveness

4.2.1 Contributions of IPP

Box 1

Talking taxation - Fijian Revenue and Customs Service and Australian Taxation Office

‘FRCS is a tax office. The ATO is a tax office. The OECD, ADB and IMF are not tax offices. The relationship is different. The relationships we have with ATO are unlike any we have with other organisations.’

Over this current phase, the ATO and FRCS have forged a strong, trusting relationship based on shared interest around evolving tax practice and revenue collection and strengthened systems for identifying priorities and accessing technical expertise. FRCS values the progressive strategies of the ATO to promote and win public support for voluntary tax compliance in Australia, and now draws on them in its own work. Through IPP, the ATO has supported FRCS in a range of processes which support efforts to better engage clients and promote voluntary compliance in Fiji. Areas of cooperation include: debt management and alternative dispute resolution; website improvements; curriculum development to support better understanding of the tax system in schools; strategies for promoting women into leadership roles; and the introduction of a ‘Tertiary Entry Level Paid Program’ aimed at drawing high achieving graduates into FRCS.

Workplan development occurs at the highest levels, with the CEO, Executive and International Programs Team at FRCS all involved, contributing to a strong partnership dynamic. FRCS greatly value ATO’s commitment to the partnership and their consistent ability to provide people to FRCS with high levels of cultural awareness and participatory leadership capacity. This is particularly valued since FRCS lost more than 200 staff to the COVID-19 virus, followed by a major restructure. The ATO in turn appreciates FRCS’s capacity to clearly articulate their priorities, which facilitates a dynamic, fast-paced partnership that is responsive, has quick turn around and consistently links niche technicians with each other – initiating relationships that extend beyond just those supported through IPP. Designated partnership managers in both

institutions are also spoken of as key to effectiveness and the smooth-running implementation of the overall workplan.

In the 2023-2024 fiscal year, FRCS achieved a historic milestone by surpassing \$3 billion in revenue collection for the first time and those involved in IPP activities attribute much of this achievement to systems and developments initiated in partnership with the ATO.

The review found IPP has been highly effective and has made good progress in contributing to intended outcomes. The program's effectiveness reflects the IPP modality's relevance to a dynamic and complex context (as noted above) and efficiency of implementation (see Section 4.3 below). The program has contributed to strengthening performance and capacity of Government of Fiji agencies through enabling leaders and officials to address priorities in informed and timely ways, with support from Australian officials and other technical personnel with deep knowledge of topics. Through IPP support to complementary efforts undertaken by UNDP and ADB, effectiveness has been further enhanced and progress consolidated. A future phase of IPP is recommended. See **Recommendation 1**.

IPP has facilitated access for Government of Fiji officials to world class technical knowledge, comprising a breadth of experience of Australian and international partners. The nature of knowledge varies across partners and reflects the scope of each partnership, developed over many years in most cases. The partnership between the Fijian Revenue and Customs Service and the Australian Taxation Office, described in Box 1 above, illustrates that the range of areas of engagement covered through a suite of different activities can be broad and deep, and contribute to a strengthened institutional relationship given the breadth of person to person contact that it facilitates across the two organisations.

Box 2

IPP, the ADB and the AHC

Australia has long been active in efforts to support and progress PFM reform in Fiji, with IPP being a source of funds for ADB to mobilise dedicated technical assistance personnel who they regard as having been key in maintaining momentum for complex and politically challenging reforms. This contribution is one of a suite of AHC initiatives, alongside the Public Expenditure and Financial Accountability assessment and the Australian led Assessment of National Systems. Collectively, these activities helped ensure Australia was active, visible and contributing to key policy dialogue that resulted in legislative and policy reforms in PFM, including an amendment to the key PFM legislation in Fiji, the Fiji Financial Management Act in July 2021. This has further evolved since, as key initiatives such as strengthening of Public Sector Investment Planning, the revision of Procurement Regulations and implementation of the new whole of government Financial Management Information System have been rolled out.

IPP in this context is another string to the AHC's bow in terms of progressing policy discussions with Government of Fiji around PFM and consolidating the architecture for Australia's budget support to Fiji, thus helping inform AHC strategy in this key relationship area. It also carries value as the mechanism through which advisors support Ministry of Finance, where trusting and respectful relationships strengthen capacity for collaboration and addressing priorities.

This overall effort is key in laying the groundwork for Australia to actively engage in policy dialogue and provide budget support to the Government of Fiji, because IPP-funded personnel

helped ensure confidence in Fiji's strengthened PFM systems. It also helped ensure strong collaboration with ADB, which hosted and managed the technical assistance facility that was co-financed by Australia through the IPP. However, the contribution of IPP to this achievement is best understood as one contributor within the broader picture of AHC's multi-faceted strategy to contribute to PFM reform in Fiji.

In the program logic, a symbiotic relationship exists between the two IPP EOPOs. Program-funded activities have effectively strengthened peer-to-peer and institutional relationships, and as a result, Australia is increasingly seen as a reliable, valuable, and flexible partner working in areas of significant priority to the Government of Fiji. According to one senior public official, 'the different pillars of IPP are all key in supporting Fiji towards more functional democratic governance.' There is also evidence of strengthened organisational performance in each work pillar of IPP, reflecting the program's focus on responding to locally articulated priorities for reform. Fijian partners place value on timely and responsive access to specific technical assistance. The appropriateness of support in turn strengthens peer-to-peer relations and enhances Australia's reputation as a 'reliable, valuable and flexible partner.'

While the IPP design suggests an aspiration for the program to directly influence policy within the different areas of focus, results tend to be uneven. However, IPP does act as a conduit that helps inform the AHC more generally regarding the current context of work occurring across the seven activity areas, and also enhances understanding as to the appetite and capacity that exists for reform within these different sectors. In this sense, IPP itself is an important platform supporting understanding within the AHC about where policy dialogue is most possible. However, actual policy dialogue is often driven by the Australian IPP partner in collaboration with the broader AHC team and other key partners, such as the ADB in the instance of PFM and PSM. Box 2 above highlights this aspect of IPP's contribution in PFM.

Areas of weakness in terms of impacting policy dialogue relates to GEDSI and climate change. While IPP's program design suggests the program would initiate policy dialogue with regards to inclusive governance, gender equality and climate change, there is limited evidence of this, as discussed in Section 4.4 and 4.5 below.

Box 3 below illustrates this in the relationship between the Fijian Electoral Office and the Australian Electoral Commission. In terms of IPP's intermediate outcomes (IOs), Fijian stakeholders spoke repeatedly of Australia being increasingly recognised as a reliable and responsive partner and *partner of choice on matters of public policy in key areas (I.O. One)*, with increasing levels of trust evident between Australian and Fijian partners at institutional level that transcend the personal relationships which had tended to be the basis of relationships previously. Measuring 'trust' is difficult. When comments were made regarding greater levels of trust, the review team took time to interrogate the history and evolution of partnerships and what had changed from earlier times to build trust. Two key themes emerged in that discussion - growing levels of trust that Australian partners were genuine in their intent to support local agendas and locally led development, and that deepening relationships were contributing to confidence to decentralise approaches to a point where they are now more institutionally based (and sustainable) and less reliant on personal relationships, as had previously been the case.

Breadth of sectoral interaction is another contributing factor to Australia's status, to which IPP makes a major contribution at relatively modest cost. Evidence of Australia being a 'partner of

choice’ is seen in Fijian institutions viewing Australia as the development partner they feel best suited to assist with coordination and broader assistance coming from other development partners. For example, FRCS sought ATO assistance to help coordinate relevant development partners to avoid overlap, enhance efficiency and ensure coordinated responses to FRCS priorities.

IPP is recognized as providing Fijian institutions with access to assistance that is technically specific and nuanced, timely, and of high-level technical capability. This is highly responsive to resolving *problems related to day-to-day practices and/or policies (I.O. Two)* and further consolidates Australia’s reputation and standing as a partner of choice. Highly specific technical collaboration is seen as ‘the glue’ helping consolidate institutional linkages and positioning Australia as a ‘partner of choice’ given the relevance and accessibility of its technical contribution. Breadth of sectoral engagement is significant since it sets Australia apart from other donors, and opens the door to Australia being included in bigger picture development planning events, such as the invitation of the AHC’s Counsellor for Governance to be the only non-Fijian to attend a two day meeting of all Permanent Secretaries in 2023.

Box 3

Evolving relationships – the Fijian Electoral Office and the AEC

A key finding of this Review is that the evolving and longstanding nature of relationships supported through IPP have contributed to and complement maturing Fijian systems and strengthen local capacity. AEC support to the FEO began in 2004 and initial support was operationally focused: Australian personnel deputised to support Fiji’s election management and oversight. In the time since, Fiji has experienced significant political turmoil, including the suspension of elections for sustained periods. Throughout, relationships have been maintained between the FEO and AEC, though progression and evolution of this relationship have at times proven challenging.

In early 2024, steps were taken to review the relationship to take stock of the current context and capability of the FEO. The purpose of the review was to update and upgrade the partnership to help ensure AEC support was focused and empowering of a key Fijian institution that both parties understood was increasingly operationally strong, and still had ongoing interests in accessing support in specific areas. This key meeting allowed for reflection on the past contribution of AEC to FEO and the shared desire to consolidate their future relationship as one that was increasingly led by the FEO.

The health of the relationship can be seen in terms of recognition by FEO that they can today rely on the AEC as a trusted ally with shared commitment to the running of free and fair elections, regardless of changing political winds which might be blowing in the broader Fiji-Australia bilateral relationship.

Evolution of both the relationship and capacity can be seen in the current workplan which highlights FEO ambitions to strengthen stakeholder engagement and systems for ‘whole of electoral cycle’ management, shifting beyond a focus on ‘election day.’ FEO is now also engaging AEC Communities of Practice in relation to ‘Women in Electoral Management’ and ‘Improving Disability Access’.

Another significant evolution in the partnership is the close working relationship of the AEC and New Zealand Electoral Commission (NZEC) in the Pacific, with the NZEC (and the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade) also committed to collaboration and responsiveness to FEO's vision and leadership. This coordination is valued by the FEO especially given a context whereby domestic elections can severely limit the availability of AEC or NZEC.

The prominence of Australia's position as a reliable provider of technical assistance helps ensure that Australia is recognised as a major contributor as the *Government of Fiji adopts and implements policies and processes for inclusive and sustainable economic recovery and growth (I.O. Three)*. Evidence exists across each IPP pillar of this outcome, such as Australia's contribution to planning for a 'Functional Review' of the Fijian civil service, graduate recruitment schemes being rolled out to mitigate challenges related to staff retention, and reviews of the Statistics Act and Financial Management Act.

As already mentioned, the I.O. in which there has been limited progress relates to *GOF adopting and implementing GEDSI-sensitive improvements in key electoral, legislative, scrutiny and oversight systems and processes (I.O.4)*. While there have been some relevant activities undertaken in relation to this I.O., overall there has been insufficient proactivity in this policy/outcome area. This appears to reflect over-reliance on organic progress emerging through different partnership activities. The I.O. also assumes demand within partner institutions to prioritise GEDSI relevant activities. An exception to this assessment is work undertaken through the PFM workstream related to Gender Responsive Budgeting, and facilitated collaboration between MoF and MWCSP. While this work is incomplete, it is a potentially profound reform once effectively rolled out across government. See Section 4.4 below for further discussion.

4.2.2 Variations across IPP

Variations in effectiveness between IPP arrangements reflect various interlinked factors including organisational size, scope, degree of complexity, leadership commitment, staffing capability, and competing interests within each Fijian and Australian organization. A significant variable factor is the capacity of the Australian twin to make in-kind contributions to the partnership. In the case of ATO support to FRCS, it is estimated that around 60% of ATO staff contribution to the FRCS relationship is funded outside IPP. This common occurrence of in-kind contributions by an Australian partner in addition to IPP funding magnifies perceptions of IPP achievements given that Fijian partners attribute the overall contribution of their Australian partner to IPP. This also speaks to the value for money proposition of IPP, given partner contribution often exceeds the IPP investment.

However, this perception of contribution has the potential to run the other way too, as in the case of IPP support to PFM reforms. In this case, IPP's contribution is more understood as an integrated approach of the AHC, with IPP being just one of several different contributions, and the reforms primarily viewed as an ADB achievement. This has implications in terms of progressing IPP's relationship outcome, since Australia's contribution can have low visibility. However, in the case of PFM, this risk is mitigated due to the AHC's active role in PFM deliberations and budget support, as well as the contribution made by the AHC's PFM advisor. (See Box 2 above) These combined efforts are acknowledged by the Ministry of Finance as making an extremely valuable contribution to key reforms, such as the Financial Management

Act, ensuring high quality fiscal updates, the strengthening of internal audit systems and informing fiscal strategy ahead of budget preparation. IPP is also valued for having contributed the funds necessary for high quality technical assistance to be brought in by the ADB to provide longer term capacity building in relation to key policy areas such as review of the Audit Act. This capacity for sustained technical assistance is cited by the Ministry of Finance and ADB as key in facilitating the strong results that were achieved.

Some arrangements supported by IPP do not involve partnering with government, such as support to the media sector, where funding is provided through PACMAS to Fijian Media Association. Box 4 below describes the media component of IPP. While the media stream sits outside government and has very little visibility across other IPP partners, there was appreciation and understanding across government partners regarding the inclusion of media within the IPP portfolio, recognising both the degree to which media actors were marginalised under the last government and their important contribution in terms of ensuring accountability and transparency across government.

The 'Flexifund' is implemented using a different approach from other IPP work areas. It aims to position Australia/DFAT at the cutting edge of civil service reform in Fiji. While this has proven successful, there is room for further gains in terms of complementary programming whereby the Flexifund better engages other IPP partnerships and activity areas. (see Box 5 in Section 4.2.4).

Box 4

Support to media strengthening through PACMAS

The IPP Design Document identified media as a sector of interest given its capacity to facilitate discourse across government, business, and civil society.

IPP provided funding to the Pacific Media Assistance Scheme (PACMAS), 'a long-term media development program that works to support Pacific media's role to hold space for locally-led civic discussion and debate.' (from <https://www.abc.net.au/abc-international-development/projects/the-pacific-media-assistance-scheme>). The programming decision was based on PACMAS's focus on strengthening the quality of journalism in the region. This was seen as a valuable contribution given severe constraints imposed on the media sector by the previous Government of Fiji. It became an even more dynamic opportunity following the change of government in 2022 and repeal of the Media Industry Development Act in 2023, which was responsible for an independent statutory body that regulated and controlled mass media in Fiji.

With support of IPP (and drawing on additional regional funding), PACMAS has developed a collaborative relationship with Fiji Media Association, a registered industrial association that represents people working across the Fijian media industry. This collaboration has contributed to the capacity of FMA to support improved governance and contribute to practices of key government institutions. For example, FMA provided media training to the Fiji Police which strengthened communications capacity of Police so they more effectively engage the Fijian public.

However, independent media in Fiji faces an existential threat related to their business model, failing equipment and difficulties associated to the transition to new media. They are also needing to relearn the role of being a 'free media' after years of media repression. These issues

preoccupy FMA members, contributing to difficulties in this activity area achieving sufficient traction to fully benefit from IPP support.

4.2.3 History and breadth of IPP

Importantly, the effectiveness of this phase of IPP is seen as having its roots in preceding long-standing partnerships, which have generated genuine trust and shared understanding as the basis for collaboration. Over time, but to different degrees in each partnership, there have been clear shifts from individual-based towards institutional-level relationships, contributing to more sustainable and broader collaboration. Longevity in partnerships has contributed to deeper cultural understanding that supports relationship development and effective collaboration on change agendas, including potential for addressing more complex issues.

Not all IPP partnerships feature longevity. While the FRCS-ATO relationship commenced ten years ago, it has only flourished in the past five years. It now stands out as one of the most robust and valued of all partnerships supported by IPP. A relatively intensive partnership has emerged during this phase because of the breadth and relevance of the agreed workplan and significant efforts undertaken by the ATO to be culturally-attuned in optimising their partnership with FRCS. Significantly, ATO has committed its own additional resources to the relationship. The achievement of a trusting partnership has been fast-tracked through breadth and depth of programming and proactivity in relation to cultural understanding.

Many people and organisations are involved in implementing IPP in Australia and Fiji, which means both actual and potential benefits are widespread. While awareness among officials of being part of the 'whole IPP' is low, there is a shared sense of the mutual benefit of supported arrangements and positive experiences involved. Understandably these experiences contribute to positive mutual regard and enhanced effectiveness in achieving change.

Deepening relationships over time enable interactions to be more sophisticated and based on lessons about what works well, what approaches can be repeated or changed, and how complementary processes can be enhanced. As deeper relationships have developed between Fijian and Australian officials on specific topics, Australian officials have invited Fijian officials to participate more actively in their organizational activities in regional and global fora. One example is ABS facilitating opportunities for FBoS to share experience and knowledge through the Pacific Statisticians' Leadership Forum. This subsequently contributed to FBoS providing support to Kiribati in relation to business registration; a GIS officer being seconded from Tuvalu to spend time at FBoS; and support being provided to both Tokelau and Niue in relation to the statistical dimensions of disaster management.

Such is the strength of the FRCS-ATO relationship that FRCS sought ATO support to help resolve the sensitive matter of European Union 'blacklisting' of Fiji which, amongst other issues, followed the introduction by the previous Government of a tax incentive package which the EU Code of Conduct Group deemed as not in line with EU tax standards. The blacklisting was complex and Fijian officials were uncertain about what needed to be done to resolve the problem. FRCS approached ATO to build understanding about next steps. ATO was able to assist FRCS, directing them to the right people within the EU, and joining FRCS in several meetings with the EU and OECD to help develop a pathway to resolve issues and

ultimately get off the list. While this will take some time, FRCS now has a plan, supported by the ATO, to resolve the blacklisting.³

The shift from personality based to institutional relationships is a major achievement of IPP in this phase. While this is evident across all twinning relationships to some extent, it appears that the degree to which institutional relationships have progressed correlates to the breadth of the programming that is occurring and the degree to which technical relationships are decentralised. Decentralisation, in turn, appears to be affected by the leadership's management style and confidence to delegate technical relationships to mid-level managers and technicians.

4.2.4 Factors contributing to overall program effectiveness

The review found extensive evidence of healthy and maturing relationships that are increasingly locally-led. The factors contributing to effectiveness were identified by both Fijian and Australian stakeholders, and are summarised below.

Mix of modalities

The key factor contributing to effectiveness is the relevance, mix and adaptability of modalities used in IPP, and their strategic application to individual activity areas in forms that are seen as highly appropriate to the current context of Fijian governance. The strengths of these can be summarised as follows:

- *Twinning* - Twinning arrangements are valued for their capacity to provide access to nuanced and high-quality technical assistance that traditional development programming is unable to provide with the same breadth of access. The emphasis on a slow build of relationships, without pressure of 'delivery' against specific, timebound and summary-level development outcomes (which do not necessarily reflect the priorities of each individual organization) is particularly well-regarded – especially in the current context of rapidly opening opportunities for reform. Highly technical and specific support provided through these twinning arrangements is viewed as acutely relevant to the current context of Fijian agencies, each of which has distinct and increasingly nuanced technical priorities.
- *Investing in multilateral programming* - Complementary support provided through public sector governance activities of multilateral agencies, namely ADB and UNDP, allows for continuity and/or expansion of existing, well-regarded partnerships. IPP's support provided through UNDP and ADB focuses on higher-level, longer-term sector-wide reform processes, complementing the work undertaken through twinning arrangements at agency-specific levels. In these contexts, Fijian partners reflected positively on the synergistic value of support coming through both IPP-funded Australian twins and multilateral partners.
- *Longer term technical support, complemented by a flexible funding mechanism* - Given IPP ambitions related to public service reform, a need was identified for a tailored IPP delivery modality that facilitated placement of long-term personnel supported by grants for ongoing and short-term projects that worked across ministries and enabled broader reforms. The Flexifund is highly regarded by the Ministry of Finance (MoF), the Ministry of Civil Service (MCS), and the Public Service Commission (PSC) for its utility, suitability to purpose, flexibility and the timeliness of inputs and quality of support provided. It is also

³ At the time of writing this report, the EU blacklisting of Fiji was still in place.

appreciated for its capacity to evolve in step with shifting areas of focus of the Government of Fiji, notably those that came with the change of government. Flexifund placement of long-term technical assistance personnel, embedded in MCS/PSC contributes to nuanced understanding of current issues, opportunities and obstacles impacting civil service reform, which in turn informs investment decision-making.

Embedded personnel have the potential to contribute to a more ‘programmatic’ IPP supporting identification of opportunities to establish linkages between different IPP pillars. However, there is currently only limited awareness amongst Fijian IPP partners of IPP work outside their area of operation, even for those working within the Flexifund. This is discussed further in Section 4.3.

- *Complementary programming* – The programming decision to include the non-government sector of media within IPP is understood by different Government of Fiji IPP partners to be relevant and valuable in the current context, given its potential contribution to accountability and transparency. There is also demand across the different activity areas to strengthen capacity in relation to civic engagement and communications, which has the potential to open up an income stream for media agencies willing to work in such a space.

This strategic mix of modalities is widely viewed as relevant and appropriate for contributing to organisational performance and strengthening governance across different public sector contexts. The review found shared interest in maintaining this mix of modalities (see **Recommendation 3**). Each modality has strengths and limitations meaning that the offering of a strategic mix of modalities has helped maximise benefits and counter-balance limitations. For example, twinning arrangements respond well to the technical and task-oriented focus of public sector officials faced with immediate challenges and timebound opportunities, but may require additional efforts to ensure contributions are culturally and contextually relevant if they are to be sustained.

In contrast, work on high-level public-sector-wide reforms such as those occurring through the Flexifund, even if broadly contextually relevant, can miss specific issues and opportunities in each agency and seem less relevant to officials facing immediate technical challenges. In addition, long-term in-house advisory support can have strengths associated with good local understanding and day-to-day relationships, but risks associated with depending on a single person’s expertise. Therefore, an informed mix of modalities, plus careful attention to ongoing monitoring and reflection about modalities themselves is viewed as highly relevant since it can maximise contributions to sustainable and effective change.

Flexibility and responsiveness

The review found the degree of flexibility and responsiveness in program implementation to be highly relevant in terms of identifying ‘live’ opportunities to support reform processes. The review team was told of numerous situations in which Fijian priorities were responded to quickly and appropriately by officials of Australian twinned organizations, and further consolidated through additional support provided by other Australian funded partners and/or mechanisms. Many key informants stated they do not experience this level of responsiveness through more traditional development programming structures and that it is not as possible under most other donor-funded arrangements. One senior official noted that ‘the responsiveness we enjoy through IPP is unique and deeply valued as our government considers different reform options’.

Flexibility and adaptability associated with the twinning arrangements were viewed by Fijian partners as empowering and contributing to their own leadership and confidence.

Relationships are seen by both Fijian and Australian partners to have shifted: previously Australian partner officials were commonly considered as ‘gap fillers’ while now, Australian organisations provide specific, increasingly technical responses to specific priorities articulated by Fijian leaders and senior officials, reflecting agency-wide change agendas. The timeliness of responses, in a period of significant change and opportunity, is another strength particularly well-regarded by Fiji leaders and officials.

Interestingly, requests to Australian partner agencies for advice or assistance are occasionally met with ‘sorry, we cannot help with that at present’, such as when the AEC is needing to oversee an election in Australia. Examples were given where Fijian officials have either sought support from other sources, such as New Zealand, or considered the situation to be an opportunity for their own reflection, leadership, and commitment to work out ways to proceed themselves, using locally-available resources. Several officials reported that they valued these times as opportunities for increasing their self-reliance, leadership, and confidence, and felt no ill-will towards the Australian organisation, as they understood the reality of public sector resources and calendars. The review team interrogated whether non-availability of technical assistance could potentially undermine peer to peer relations and reduce the degree to which Australia is viewed as a ‘partner of choice’. Interestingly, it was mostly interpreted as evidence of the increased maturity of the relationship, and a show of confidence in the increasing equity of the relationship and capacity of Fijian institutions to successfully navigate ‘quiet times.’

Locally-led development

The transition during this phase of IPP towards more demand driven, locally-led approaches is viewed by both Fijian and Australian partners as a feature of IPP’s effectiveness, since this has helped evolve partnerships and demonstrated ‘partnership values’ that are not always apparent in more traditional development programming. This highlights the importance of the quality of relationships given how culturally important relationships are in Fiji, and the key role that respectful and functional relationships play in development effectiveness.

As Fijian officials have gained new knowledge and experience in navigating increasingly complex issues, often shared across the world, this has contributed to higher levels of confidence in managing these challenges, which in turn leads to increased levels of leadership and initiative. It was also often noted that a new generation of leaders is emerging in the Fijian public sector, often with advanced academic qualifications, which positions them to engage more deeply with their ‘technical twin.’ The review also found that in partnerships where officials intuitively used a strengths-based approach, they described deeper and more respectful relationships than those which focused primarily on a list of problems, gaps and weaknesses in the Fijian partner organisation (see Section 5.4 for further discussion).

A remarkably common theme running through both the process of key informant interviewing and the sense-making workshops, was the use by Fijian officials and organisations of words such as ‘unique,’ ‘different,’ or ‘better than more traditionally structured development programming’ when describing IPP, often in the context of highlighting the modalities capacity to be responsive and adaptive in a context of rapid change. This sentiment was stated primarily in reference to twinning arrangements, with multilateral partnerships viewed as more ‘traditional’ in their management and implementation. This reflects the features of IPP

whereby Fijian partners' own priorities form the basis of collaboration within the twinning arrangements, the relationships are respectful and informed, the arrangements are based on the premise that Australian twinning organizations are 'on tap, not on top' and that engagement is flexible and responsive.

Organisation specific responsiveness

While the themes described above were widely held across participants to be contributing factors to effectiveness, there were predictably partnership and institution-specific factors for each IPP activity area, recognising that different people and institutions are involved and various modalities are used. IPP's responsiveness to specific priorities identified within each individual pillar is an important contributing factor to effectiveness. Tailoring of approaches to the specific context and priorities in individual pillar is summarised as follows:

- **Electoral support** has been effective in embracing multiple, significant contextual shifts within the activity area related to: appointment of a new Supervisor of Elections; civic education opportunities of the post-national election phase; and a shift in the partnership approach from focus on 'election day' to a strengthened, overall election cycle. This shift aims to further consolidate 'electoral architecture' and appreciation for the restoration of democracy in Fiji through civic engagement that help rebuild public perceptions of participatory democracy. This significant shift to a 'whole of electoral cycle' focus contributed to review of how the AEC could best support the FEO and contribute to institutional strengthening. This relationship evolution is one of the strongest in terms of the Fijian entity experiencing a fundamental shift on the power relationship of the partnership, with a clear sense coming from both the AEC and FEO that the partnership is and now locally led and that considerably stronger levels of trust now exist in terms of the degree to which the FEO can rely on AEC support in helping ensure free and fair elections. This has been a highly significant progression and positioned the AEC as a preferred partner, given changed dynamic and clarity of purpose across the leadership of the two agencies.
- The **Flexifund** was spoken of across all directly participating Fijian entities as a highly appropriate mechanism for the current governance context of Fiji. Through the entirety of its offering, the Flexifund is viewed as being able to respond effectively to evolving opportunities related to civil service reform, drawing on different tools to target specific and opportunistic priorities relevant to maintaining momentum for reform. The mechanism is able to provide support to major structural initiatives such as development of a new whole of government Human Resource Management Information System (HRMIS) that is expected to contribute accurate and up to date management of the Government of Fiji's single most costly element – its staff. However, its flexible funding is also able to quickly action opportunities related to training, attendance at key meetings, and other incidental needs relevant to progression of reform efforts. This responsiveness is greatly valued by participating government agencies, with the breadth of Flexifund capacity to respond to different opportunities arising setting Australia apart from other donors, thus contributing significantly to the ambition of Australia being a 'partner of choice' for Fiji.

The challenge for the Flexifund is the scale of the civil service reform challenge, given it has many dimensions and longitudinal needs. For example, integration of HRMIS with the Financial Management Information System established by the Ministry of Finance is a

glaring need that has barely progressed. Similarly, the 'Business Process Improvement' pillar of the Flexifund is viewed as well considered and well-suited to surfacing important priorities, but such is the breadth of 'improvements' identified that the activity area is perceived as not sufficiently well-structured or resourced to effectively respond. The third 'flexible funding' element allows for opportunistic funding of a broad range of reform related activities. While the Flexifund is viewed positively by key Government of Fiji decision-makers, its results have been uneven given HRMIS is incomplete and BPI is only able to make modest progress on a small number of needs given structural and resourcing issues. This possibly highlights that the most valued aspect of the Flexifund is its flexible funding capacity, and the ability to support a breadth of training, travel and material needs. This capacity to respond to small scale needs is viewed by the Government of Fiji as an important element of the overall IPP offering. While this is diplomatically strategic, it is very difficult to assess progress and development outcomes that emerge from these disparate activities.

In future, encouragement and expectations for a similar mechanism will almost certainly come from Government of Fiji officials. However, a more structured Flexifund with clearer outputs and outcomes identified, and a robust, cross-government steering committee should be put in place to identify appropriate activities and steps needed to progress each towards an agreed development outcome. This should be complemented by a 'flexible fund' that can both support key activities, but also other relevant, sometimes ad hoc initiatives given their diplomatic value and ability to position Australia as a first port of call and partner of choice. Box 5 below describes this work area in more detail. (See **Recommendation 9**)

- **Media sector support**, while different from other modalities, sits comfortably in the program's theory of change given the relevance of strengthened media capability to civic engagement, community interest in governance reform and accountability of government. Approaches applied through PACMAS aim at strengthening the overall media landscape by supporting a functional and sustainable FMA capable of fulfilling its role as a peak body, and one whose role is understood and accepted by authorities. Importantly, government representatives in other IPP activity areas were supportive and encouraging of IPP's media sector engagement, and could see opportunities for collaboration in terms of widely held ambitions across government to better engage their stakeholder community and use media in more sophisticated forms.

A challenge within IPP's media work is the perilous financial state of many independent Fijian media organisations. This is literally an existential issue, given the need for an immediate capital injection to survive given antiquated equipment and a subsequent inability to operate in the 'new media' space. This is understandably 'front of mind' for the sector and distracting in terms of IPP sector engagement. IPP's work through the Fijian Media Association is a logical entry point for sector engagement. If media is to continue as an activity area, urgent consideration will need to be given to supporting reform of business plans to support sector sustainability.

- **Parliament support** contributes to Parliament of Fiji's ability to respond to a changed context following the 2022 election and heightened expectations of the representative function of Parliament. IPP-funded efforts of Victorian Parliament support Parliamentary processes such as the role of the Speaker, the performance of Standing Committees and administrative support to the day-to-day functioning of the Parliament. This is an area

where twinning is greatly valued, given common systems and the technical skills available through the Victorian Parliament contributing to strengthening of committee systems and systems for ensuring requested information is available to Parliamentarians.

- **Support to PFM** has been strategic and responsible in terms of recognising, supporting, and aligning with work of the ADB as the lead Development Partner in PFM. IPP support to ADB allowed it to move beyond its traditional model of 'surge support' for policy work to one that allowed for more ongoing, intermittent expert engagement with Government of Fiji. This helped ensure continued access to external resources to review policy implementation, support iterative adjustments and challenge assumptions during policy development processes. This approach facilitated greater ownership of PFM reform processes by Government of Fiji, since it allowed time for ideas to mature and for senior officials to understand PFM reforms as a process requiring multiple approaches.
- **Statistics support** has responded to openness of the new government to transparency and expectations of stronger data from which evidence-based policy development can occur. The three areas of collaboration between FBoS and the ABS are well calibrated to effectively engage emerging opportunities through strengthening FBoS leadership capacity to be responsive to the information demands of an increasingly data hungry government. Census planning is another urgent priority with significant steps needing to be taken now to ensure a strong and meaningful census.

Support to the strategic capacity of FBoS is complemented by ABS 'coal face' support to the improvement of statistical business processes and the production, dissemination and use of quality, timely core statistics. Focus on demonstrating that FBoS has the necessary capacity to deliver on government's statistical requirements is timely, and in turn has the potential to progress institutional strengthening and resourcing of FBoS given enhanced credibility and appreciation for what FBoS brings to policy discussions aiming to be evidence based. This dynamic can be observed through the Permanent Secretary of Finance recognising the importance of IPP's contribution for capacity building across key reform landscapes, noting the value that support to FBoS can provide whole of government policy development. FBoS management describe their relationship with the ABS as unique, maturing and an obvious first port of call when needing technical support.

- **Support for taxation reform** has been remarkable within IPP. FRCS officials consider that the relationship with ATO has strengthened significantly over this phase of IPP due to clearer responsiveness and the expertise of dedicated contact people in each agency. The workplan ambition was cited as key to progression, and had the effect of decentralising the partnership to more technical levels. This contributed to broad-based participation within FRCS and the ATO and heightened technical responsiveness as relationships were commenced at 'technician level' on increasingly granular taxation topics. It also contributes to intimate 'technician to technician' relationships that contribute to strengthened peer to peer relations (EOPO 1).

A further example of the flexibility and responsiveness of IPP is the ATO being able to adjust and respond to the major impact of COVID-19 on FRCS. At one time, a senior legal official in FRCS passed away and FRCS requested ATO to second a senior person to the FRCS legal team: this was approved by the ATO with AHC support. While this could have been viewed as 'gap filling,' the secondee used the opportunity to scope options for broader ATO support to both the Legal Team and Corporate Services. While this was an

important substantive contribution in its own right, the secondment was integral in strengthening bonds and building trust between the two institutions, and highlighted that the ATO and the AHC were available to backstop FRCS in difficult circumstances.

Overall, modalities used in IPP align very well with the concept of Fiji progressing as a maturing democracy with evolving systems and clarity of vision, where institutions are seeking to assume greater levels of leadership and needing to identify increasingly granular forms of technical advice and support. This context of responsiveness and flexibility has contributed towards strong progress in relation to both EOPOs given the value placed on the assistance provided; the ability of that assistance to strengthen performance of select institutions in progressing opportunities and resolving challenges; and the overall satisfaction with the model and the support provided contributing to strengthened peer to peer relations and consolidation of Australia's position as a partner of choice.

A feature of Fijian partner satisfaction with IPP is the program's laser focus on responsiveness within the individual activity areas. While this siloed approach is highly effective in strengthening peer to peer relations, there do appear to be opportunities for linkages between pillars and for the program to model collaboration in resolving complex governance challenges. While this could be perceived as a missed opportunity, the reward for a more ambitious, coordinated, programmatic approach to IPP needs to be measured against the suitability and satisfaction of current partners who perceive the current approach as highly responsive to their organisational needs. When asked during the Fijian partner Sense-Making workshop if there was interest amongst partners for greater collaboration between pillars or engineering through IPP of 'communities of practice' around common development issues, there was an emphatic 'no'. Instead, Fijian partners spoke of their desire for the program to proceed as currently structured. Acknowledging progress made in this phase in terms of advancing local ownership and approaches being locally led, it is important that this sentiment be respected. Nonetheless, there is likely a middle road whereby AHC's IPP management capacity is strengthened to better monitor and engage emerging opportunities for rapid response assistance capable of keeping the reform ball rolling, including the leveraging of synergies between pillars (see **Recommendation 4**). With this strengthened capacity, the program can both maintain current organisation focused approaches, but also create a dynamic of dialogue with partners around areas of potential collaboration that begin to break down siloed thinking in relation to reform efforts, while remaining consistent to the program being demand driven and locally led.

Box 5

Flexifund – Supporting responsiveness in dynamic times

The Flexifund is both an outlier in IPP in terms of its multi-faceted implementation approach, and a centrepiece of IPP given its centrality, responsiveness and profile with the Government of Fiji. The Flexifund modality is strongly endorsed and valued by the Ministries of Finance and Civil Service, as well as the Public Service Commission. Part of this appreciation is that it has been able to evolve and adapt according to circumstances. It currently has a threefold focus: HRMIS, BPI and a 'responsiveness' mechanism that allows IPP to quickly and strategically support priorities and opportunities identified by the Government of Fiji. Both HRMIS and BPI have potential to energise and facilitate more integrated, whole of government approaches. The 'responsiveness' mechanism allows agility for IPP to quickly respond in a time of a rapidly evolving Fijian governance landscape. This capacity has been significant in positioning

Australia as a partner of choice, allowing for frequent and dynamic access to officials central to progressing the reform process.

HRMIS addresses a key governance challenge by empowering decision-makers through enabling access to accurate data on the context, functions and cost of government staffing. Significant progress has been achieved with HRMIS now operating in 30 of 31 ministries (the remaining ministry is Fiji's largest employer – the Ministry of Education). However, HRMIS remains a work in progress with seemingly endless options for further add-ons, and little shared understanding around what 'task completion' looks like. While the potential for HRMIS to gather data is significant, urgent priorities have not been addressed, such as integration and harmonisation of HRMIS with the Ministry of Finance's own payroll information management system, FMIS. This goal has been mooted by observers as being 'close' but there appears to be no agreed road map or sponsor for such an outcome.

The BPI stream was originally conceptualised as a mechanism to surface opportunities and drive priority 'whole of government' business processes. However, BPI is now guided by priorities of the 'Reducing Red Tape' sub-committee – one of several cross-ministerial committees set up to address issues within the civil service that are seen to hinder whole of government performance. While this purpose and structure have logic, the mechanism is currently not well structured and under-resourced, and subsequently not well-placed to make much of a dent on business process issues.

While some cynicism was directed at the Flexifund's 'responsiveness' mechanism, given the variety of activities that it supports, there is genuine appreciation for it within the Government of Fiji, especially given interest in 'doing things differently'. Flexibility and breadth of application of the mechanism are greatly valued by officials and described as evidence of Australia's commitment to the bilateral partnership since it allows the agenda (albeit broad) to be set by Fijian leaders. Given this perspective, this highly flexible stream of Flexifund contributes significantly to the EOPO of strengthened peer-to-peer relations, while also being effective in positioning Australia as 'a partner of choice on matters of public policy.' These achievements reflect that IPP and the modality are considered to be better than traditionally structured development programming.' Government of Fiji use of the 'responsiveness mechanism' also helps visibility and active communication between AHC and key leaders.

While there is some legitimacy to concerns that Flexifund lacks focus and structure and is therefore not ideal as a means to contribute to pre-determined development outcomes, this can be addressed in a future IPP phase through guidelines to support decision-making which balances responsiveness with contributing to priority reform opportunities.

4.2.5 Expanding benefits from Fiji to the Pacific

The review found growing interest across the Pacific region to engage and learn from Fiji's expertise, reform agenda and experience in governance. This dynamic and level of demand is highlighted by some forms of exchange (secondments, study tours, knowledge sharing, etc.) already occurring in many of the activity areas engaged by IPP: electoral, parliament, statistics, PFM, and taxation. Fijian officials expressed an interest in more strategic and fully responding to such requests, but also recognition that it can present challenges – especially given present challenges related to short-staffing in the Fiji civil service. While no firm data exists, a figure of

20% job vacancy rates was often quoted. This leaves limited capacity for staffing of non-core functions, such as contributing to other Pacific countries' governance expertise.

In this context, regional mechanisms are important in terms of helping bring some structure to knowledge transfer around the region. The Pacific Islands, Australia and New Zealand Electoral Administrators Network; the Pacific Statisticians' Leadership Forum and the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Pacific Region are examples of regional networks for technical experts around the Pacific region where Australia is an active participant.

Box 6

UNDP and ADB work – contributions from IPP to regional programs

IPP provides funding support to UNDP and ADB for selected Fiji focused activities, which contributes to broader regional programming efforts. For example, BRIDGE (Building Resources in Democracy, Governance, and Elections) workshops run by UNDP draw together Electoral Management Bodies from across the region, building relationships between officials that contribute to other knowledge transfer activities. Similarly, ADB's PFM work draws on progress achieved in Fiji to open discussions with other Pacific countries with regards to options for strengthening of PFM systems.

UNDP's Fiji Parliamentary Support Project supports systems strengthening in Fiji, and informs and contributes to UNDP's regional efforts through its 'Strengthening Legislatures in Pacific Island Countries project' which operates in Fiji, Samoa, Vanuatu, Solomon Islands, Republic of the Marshall Islands, and the Federated States of Micronesia. This regional project applies a South-South and Triangular Cooperation methodology which aims to promote collaboration between countries to share knowledge, skills, and resources. In Fiji, the Victorian Parliament works as a close partner to the Parliament of Fiji, but also provides twinning support to Nauru and Tuvalu – who both now benefit from IPP's investment in strengthening parliamentary systems.

Box 6 summarizes the regional aspects of IPP links, through support for ADB and UNDP's work in public financial management.

There is potential for IPP to contribute further to south-south collaboration on governance as a contribution to promoting locally led development approaches, and supporting existing efforts in the region, including through the Pacific Island Forum Secretariat which undertakes a wide range of regional cooperation activities. Given its status in the region and perceptions of advanced capacity, Fiji has a potentially significant role to play. Fijian IPP partners are interested in facilitating such opportunities, though they recognise resource implications. See

Recommendation 8.

UNDP and ADB are well-placed to support further south-south collaboration, especially since both host regional offices in Fiji, and undertake multi-country regional programming in electoral, parliamentary support and PFM, as well as gender equality and climate action.

Victorian Parliament also maintains relationships with Parliaments in Nauru and Tuvalu where their work benefits from their efforts in Fiji which are funded through IPP. Other state parliaments of Australia are also active with Pacific counterparts.

4.2.6 Achievement of GEDSI outcome

The review found that while several useful activities and processes related to gender equality, disability inclusion and other forms of social inclusion have been supported in some work areas of IPP, but overall the Program has not made a significant contribution to this intermediate outcome. (See GEDSI in Section 4.4 below)

4.2.7 Risk management

IPP's intended approach to risk management was included in the program design and risk register, with a specification that risks be reviewed and discussed in six-monthly AHC review meetings. Activity level risks are managed within each partnership and discussed in annual reporting discussions with partners, including progress, non-compliance, and any reputational risks. Investment level risks (including in relation to progress and any reputational risks) were included in the design and are reviewed every three months. Risk is also considered within the Annual Aid Investment Monitoring process. The most recent annual rating (2024) for risk and safeguarding was 'adequate' (4/6).

While the program is rated low risk, there is inherent general risk when partnering with and funding many different organisations. Risks are exacerbated by the program having been lightly staffed with only one staff member dedicated to program management for most of its implementation period to date and a second administrator commencing in 2024. Limited resourcing and out-sourcing of MEL further enhances risk. Of the risks documented in the risk register, gender and social inclusion related risks are significant given the program has not sufficiently activated or monitored GEDSI performance. This overall management context restricts capacity to actively consider risk, even in the context of a program assessed low risk.

The observation that the risk register requires more energetic consideration was echoed by the 2023 Fiji Development Program Audit. This assessment related to both the thoroughness of the risk register and the frequency of its review, including identification and assessment of risks for fraud, child protection and sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment.

Based on the 2023 audit, more proactive management of risks and safeguarding approaches was commenced, with particular focus on ensuring partner understanding and compliance of relevant DFAT policies and requirements, and ensuring IPP agreement managers maintain an understanding and oversight of delivery partner risks. To ensure responsiveness to the audit, quarterly reviews of the risk register now take place as a standard monitoring procedure.

4.3 Efficiency

4.3.1 Ways of working and responding to GoF priorities

The Government of Fiji has experienced development partnerships with Australia for decades and across that time witnessed a range of programming modalities. This experience allows Fijian officials to undertake comparative analysis about which modality works best for which context. Officials also integrate their assessment of their own institution's current capacity and strengths, political economy factors, and the current governance context when appraising the appropriateness of different modalities to their area of interest.

Across the course of this review, Fijian officials spoke with a consistent voice in their enthusiasm for the increasingly technical nature of IPP partnerships, the ‘intermittent TA’ model and the capacity of IPP to respond rapidly to emerging demands, as identified by Fijian institutions. This model of technical support, backstopped by access to high quality expertise within partner agencies, is seen as highly suitable to the context of maturing Fijian systems and capability and the need for responsiveness to increasingly specific and niche requests.

Several officials active in IPP expressed the view that ‘twins’ not being available from time to time gives them time to reflect on progressing local ownership. This aligns with increased demand for more locally-focused approaches as well as Australia’s commitment to locally led development. While these approaches are appropriate in terms of ‘development practice,’ they are also highly efficient in terms of progressing beyond the traditional practice of long term, Fiji-based technical assistance as a capacity strengthening method. The ‘intermittent TA’ model contributes to increasing accountability of Fijian officials to continue progress against workplans, in the absence of external contributions. It also dramatically reduces costs, compared with embedded technical assistance personnel.

The ‘twinning’ model is also efficient in terms of its capacity to provide access to a breadth of capacity, rather than the inevitably narrow skill offering of a single embedded advisor. Access to breadth is increasingly important given a context of narrowing and increasingly granular topics that do not necessarily lend themselves well to a coherent program logic. Breadth of access to technical skills can be seen in the ATO’s relationship with FRCS where inputs range from debt management to guidance on ratification of multilateral instruments to managing fraud. With the twinning model, FRCS is able to access a cross-section of granular world class technical guidance in diverse areas that no single embedded person could cover. With the Government of Fiji increasingly supportive of the modality of ‘intermittent TA’ as appropriate to context, it becomes an even more efficient approach.

While the ATO’s capacity to respond and adapt to a diversity of FRCS priorities is primarily a strength of the program, it does also present challenges in terms of activity monitoring and outputs given these are both diverse and constantly in motion. This is especially the case in a context such as the current phase of IPP where the MEL investment is light. Greater investment in MEL could capture more detailed activity level results, and their contribution to organisational strengthening. More importantly, it could more deeply explore and disaggregate factors that contribute to strengthened institutional relationships and parameters for measuring what reasonably constitutes ‘partner of choice’.

While there is great enthusiasm for the twinning model, there is clear appreciation for the complementary support provided through IPP to multilateral programming, with some officials commenting that this contribution is highly appropriate in terms of acknowledging that Fiji has ongoing technical capacity interests and self-sufficiency goals. Support to PFM and civil service reforms are also widely recognised as significant whole of government interventions of the broader IPP approach where success will positively impact other pillars. **Box 7** below illustrates this approach in the parliamentary services area.

Box 7

Partnership between Fiji Parliament and Victorian Parliament

The openness of the new Government of Fiji and its interest in fostering greater accountability has in turn opened up opportunities and expectations of greater accountability amongst Parliamentarians in Fiji. It has also demanded more dynamic parliamentary systems and

processes that better ensure Parliamentarians have access to the information required to fulfil their obligations. The partnership between the Parliament of Fiji and the Victorian Parliament is based on shared interests and fostering relationships in niche areas, and has been effective in supporting strengthening of Fiji's parliamentary systems.

Upon commencement of the new Parliament in 2023, the Parliament of Fiji was able to draw on the Victorian Parliament to provide support in areas integral to the functioning of Parliament, such as briefing of new Parliamentarians, strengthening Standing Committees, enhancing the role of key positions such as the Speaker, Committee Chairs and the Whip through mentoring, and presentation of public accounts and estimates.

Opportunities continue to arise with the partnership, with great appreciation coming from the Parliament of Fiji for the relevance and utility of the support provided from Victoria. Strengthening future work planning processes will likely contribute to helping develop clearer and agreed workplans, and also timelines for inputs.

4.3.2 Program governance and management

Assessing the efficiency of IPP governance and management is complex: conclusions depend largely on the reader's perspectives about the programmatic potential of IPP. Within the AHC, a widely held view is that program management has been insufficiently resourced and overly burdened by administration, and that this has restricted the degree to which time can be dedicated to strategic considerations. However, this review found both Fijian and Australian officials are satisfied with existing arrangements and consider they have sufficient access to the Program Manager and AHC more broadly, to enable them to optimise their IPP work. The review found that both perspectives are valid, so paid attention to considering options for future program management, to be considered in the design of the next phase.

Firstly, Fijian and Australian stakeholders recommend that the program's management system continues to enable their direct access to the AHC, and expressed concern about the prospect of a contractor acting as an IPP 'gatekeeper.' Australian stakeholders expect a direct government-to-government relationship, while acknowledging contracted services could add value in some roles.

More proactive strategic oversight, partnership facilitation/brokering, and greater support for sharing lessons between participating partners (cross-agency) would likely enhance coherence and results. However, there is also a risk in terms of over-engineering IPP given high levels of satisfaction within individual pillars for features of the current approach, and the potential to undermine existing relationships and benefits. One stakeholder noted 'it is better to have great partnerships than strong program governance: the alternative is worse.' Generally speaking, there was a common sentiment emerging throughout the review of a desire amongst Fijian partners for a future IPP to be more or less the same in structure and governance as the current phase. However, when this was interrogated further, partners recognise and value that relationships are already constantly evolving according to context, and express interest in cross-government collaboration, as long as it is not at the expense of continued access to the technical assistance provided by the Australian partner.

Currently, IPP is managed simply as a mechanism that allows Australia engagement in seven individual work areas, using various modalities. While these different pillars are of relevance to each other, the management approach to date has taken limited steps towards leveraging

the programmatic potential of IPP as a whole. For example, IPP could facilitate strengthening of ties between FBoS and other IPP participating ministries and institutions which are increasingly data hungry, recognising limits on their own data gathering capacity. Similarly, there is potential to link expertise in media, with interest in improved civil society engagement within central agencies.

More generally, cross-learning approaches across IPP could have provided greater opportunities for Fijian partners to understand and learn of the work undertaken by other partners and steps taken to address shared priorities. Such an approach may have surfaced the scope for collaboration that IPP could have facilitated and counted as an achievement in terms of supporting more integrated, lateral approaches to governance. More proactive monitoring and management than is currently the case, is likely required to help surface such opportunities in a timely manner.

Given Australia's position as the largest bilateral development donor in Fiji, there is enthusiasm and some expectation amongst other development partners that the AHC will provide leadership in terms of coordination of different partner efforts, including in the governance sector. Coordination already occurs to varying degrees (often on an ad hoc basis). However, there is interest for more structured coordination within and between IPP topic/sector areas – particularly from other development partners. Perspectives of Fijian partners as to the need for coordination is more mixed. Some, such as FRCS, place great value on the support they have received from the ATO to engage multilateral institutions and mechanisms. Other partners see less need for coordination because they work in sectors with a limited number of significant actors.

IPP management is currently insufficiently resourced to undertake more energised and proactive program management. It is probable that the results of greater investment in program management and greater proactivity in leveraging synergies between different IPP activities will be a worthwhile investment, but may also add complexity to the program, and introduce some risks associated with facilitating inter-agency collaboration.

Government of Fiji perspectives on current IPP performance and structures are clearly critical to future phases. Government leaders consider the program is working effectively as currently structured. There is consistent satisfaction amongst both Australian and Fiji partners about levels of access to the IPP program manager, though some said that more time for discussion and input from the program manager to strategic considerations would likely strengthen programming performance of individual pillars.

Another time/efficiency question in terms of management is the degree which it is realistic that one program manager can be intimately across the day-to-day details of seven different, and often highly technical work streams. The pressing need for IPP to analyse, plan and undertake activities more effectively in the areas of GEDSI and climate change, through support to its IPP partners, is also relevant to the management context. (see below at 4.4)

The administrative workload of the current Program Manager is already significant, in addition to non-IPP related work. If more proactive and strategic program management is to occur, either additional staffing capacity will be needed or alternative approaches put in place to deal with day-to-day program administration. To that end, it is noted that a decision was taken in 2024 to appoint a second person to support IPP management, and that has already relieved some of the administrative burden of the First Secretary, Governance.

The commencement of the next phase of the Fiji Program Support Platform is another variable in determining the most appropriate program management model in the remaining period of IPP, and in the next phase. The review team's understanding is that the Platform will include personnel with expertise in governance, GEDSI, climate change and MEL. These all have potential to contribute to a revised management model for IPP. However, concerns were expressed by IPP stakeholders that there are risks associated with relying on Platform resources given those resources will be called upon extensively across Australia's other programs in Fiji. It is recommended that final decision-making regarding an appropriate model for management for a future IPP phase is based on assessment of resources available at the Platform and the requirements of IPP (see **Recommendation 7**).

4.3.3 Value for money

At a cost of around A\$4 million per year, IPP provides an affordable mechanism through which Australia can provide Fijian partners access to focused, highly technical, world-class expertise, information, training, and advice. Further, it achieves broad reach in its spread of work areas, and some depth in those work areas. This breadth is key in contributing to Australia's reputation as a reliable, engaged, and responsive partner, since it differentiates Australia from other development partners which focus more narrowly.

IPP twinning arrangements also enable access to substantial in-kind contributions from Australian partners which add further value to the IPP investment. While the in-kind contribution of Australian partners varies, their overall contribution to Fiji far exceeds the value of specific investments provided through IPP. In the case of the ATO, 60% of staffing contributions to their partnership with FRCS is internally funded, with ATO largely using IPP funds for travel and in-Fiji costs (see **Box 1** on FRCS and ATO). Other funding streams also add value, for example PACMAS's regional effort complements IPP-supported activities in media.

4.3.4 Donor harmonisation

Through the AHC and other development programs, IPP maintains helpful connections with relevant public sector reform activities of other donors, including direct IPP-relevant partnerships with the Government of New Zealand, UNDP and ADB. In all three cases, there is strong appreciation for the way relationships are managed, and for AHC's willingness to work collaboratively and to identify agreed outcomes within the different pillars. Constructive relationships are maintained with other development partners as well, including UK and US, with some interest from the UK to partner with IPP in its efforts by opening access to UK expertise to contribute to different IPP work areas. As noted above, increased Australian leadership in donor coordination is expected among some stakeholders.

4.3.5 Monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL)

In December 2020, Abt Global was contracted to provide 'light touch and agile' MEL services for IPP. A MERL Plan was developed to track progress on IPP, against EOPOs and Intermediate Outcomes. At EOPO level, the MERL Plan included the following four groups of questions, with related indicators and expected sources of information:

- To what extent is Australia invited to engage and support Fiji's development agenda? To what extent is Australia considered a genuine partner in reform?
- To what extent is there sustained and increased international / regional and bilateral cooperation between the two governments?

- To what extent has GOF put in place policies and budgets to advance economic governance improvements in the context of COVID-19 recovery? To what extent has Australia contributed to this?
- To what extent have corporate performance improvements been effectively implemented by line ministries? To what extent has Australia contributed to this?

A further 10 questions were intended to track progress towards Intermediate Outcomes. Collective learning and joint reflection processes have not been a feature of program strategy decision-making to date, but offer potential benefits in future.

The review team reviewed annual monitoring reports from 2022 and 2023, which suggested progress was ‘on track’ in most areas, with several showing ‘mixed results’ or ‘insufficient evidence’. However the light touch nature of the plan means that there is very little quantitative data to draw on. The MERL Plan identified two risks associated with a ‘light-touch’ approach: inadequate capacity and resourcing for MERL at the partner level affects quality of IPP MERL as a whole; and limited resourcing for IPP MERL and the ‘minimal but sufficient’ approach taken, does not provide comprehensive-enough performance information. By mid-2024, Abt Global noted there were ‘inconsistencies and gaps in tracking’, which affected an ‘ability to make judgements about progress towards results’ (‘Report and results mapping exercise’ July 2024) and new monitoring approaches were proposed.

While there was clear intent for a ‘light-touch’ MEL approach for IPP, risks identified at the outset appear to have come into play: there is limited shared engagement across the program of the program’s theory of change and of processes to understand change over time, as well as limited monitoring evidence of contributions at outcome level. Most reporting data appears to be at activity and output level, and the mapping exercise in mid-2024 indicated that reporting by each of the implementing partners varied widely in terms of alignment, quality, and timeliness.

The review found many activities supported within IPP support Government of Fiji agencies to enhance their own data collection, analysis, and related MEL systems, not just in the statistics work area. This is a valuable contribution, and could be enhanced in future through improved coordination and efficiencies. At a broader developmental level, one partner suggested ‘there may well be more value in supporting Government of Fiji to increase agencies’ MEL capacity, rather than spend too much on MEL for IPP.’ However, it is also noted that the current approach was not designed to address MEL needs of Fijian partners, and that Fijian partners did not seek MEL support from their Australian partners.

Another facet of the light-touch MEL reporting is limited reporting of important achievements, and thus insufficient capturing of the full contribution of IPP. While a light-touch MEL system may have some benefits in terms of cost and partner relations, the limited *strategic* attention to MEL thinking within IPP management results in less-than-ideal accountability and lack of evidence of contribution to complex qualitative measurements such as the quality of partnerships, and Australia’s contribution to strengthened partner institutions.

A more robust MEL investment in future could increase understanding of the day to day factors that affect relationship development, and also collation of a deeper and more thorough account of policy and capacity building achievements. It could also facilitate greater

understanding of interactions at play between policy and capacity progress, and relationship strengthening. See **Recommendation 6**.

Fijian institutions also expressed some interest in strengthening their own MEL capacity, especially given demands of the current government for ministries to be more accountable and structured in their reporting, and also demands from Parliamentarians for more current reporting from government in forms that are appropriate to the needs of Parliamentarians.

4.3.6 Cross-program and cross-partner learning and adaptation

There is limited visibility/awareness of the ‘IPP whole’ across Government of Fiji and development partners: individual partner’s understanding of the program is concentrated in their individual pillar. There are opportunities to strengthen linkages between IPP activities and other activities of the Australian development program in Fiji. These need not be extensive nor should they compromise IPP’s core focus, but there are a range of different activities occurring across the Australian development program of relevance to IPP, especially in the case of cross-cutting issues. There is also potential for other Australian programs to work in ways that helps consolidate work occurring through IPP, such as the roll-out of MCS reforms or utilization of FBOS as the nation’s lead statistical body. (see Section 4.4 below and **Recommendations 2 and 4**)

Limited access of IPP activities to resources and capacity in the Fiji Support Facility was identified as an inefficiency in the current IPP phase. Even those working through the Flexifund, which is directly managed by the Facility, consider they had little access or privileges in drawing on the Facility’s knowledge and resources (though this was said to have improved over the past 18 months). While it is understood the Facility (and its successor Platform) has finite resources, greater alignment and awareness of programming approaches would enhance IPP (see **Recommendation 7**).

4.4 Gender Equity, Disability and Social Inclusion (GEDSI)

4.4.1 Programming context

IPP Phase Two was designed prior to the Australian Government commitment for all DFAT programs to include a gender equality objective. However, an intermediate outcome was set for this phase that ‘Government of Fiji adopts and implements GEDSI-sensitive improvements in key electoral, legislative, scrutiny and oversight systems and processes.’ A ‘Gender Equality, Disability and Social Inclusion Governance Situational Analysis Report’ prepared by the Fiji Program Support Facility in 2022 (updated in 2023), identified ‘possible entry points’ for IPP to support mainstreaming. It suggested a focus on ‘gender equality and inclusive budgeting, gender review of OMRs to support gender equity in line with the Ministry of Economy GESI Policy and Action Plan, [and] GEDSI review of policies and legislation’ (page 16). A ‘GEDSI checklist and performance assessment tool’ was also prepared (revised February 2023) for IPP, with the purposes of assisting partners to develop action plans and better integrate GEDSI considerations into their work and to enable monitoring of progress. GEDSI-specific indicators in the IPP MERL Framework were:

- % IPP funded partners with active GEDSI action plans / indicators
- evidence of uptake of technical advice and GEDSI-sensitive policy/system recommendations (output level indicator)
- # and nature of specific and meaningful changes in GoF partner policy, practice, systems or processes relating to GEDSI, to which IPP program partners have contributed (intermediate outcome indicator).

4.4.2 Findings

Monitoring in 2023 about gender aspects of IPP implementation rated progress against indicators as ‘mixed’ or ‘challenging.’ Monitoring reports noted the following examples of gender equality focused activities:

- Flexifund BPI team and the Fiji Facility have provided support to the Ministry of iTaukei Affairs (MITA) to develop their gender policy
- GEDSI is integrated into the FRCS Tertiary Entry Level Program supported by ATO
- ADB’s TA for gender responsive budgeting has resulted in 18 government agencies applying GRB in the budget cycle
- AEC conducted a desk top GEDSI analysis of FEO.

This review found partner organizations in Fiji and Australia recognized the importance of GEDSI consideration and shared examples of their work in relation to gender equality or disability inclusion, including:

- an invitation from the Australian Electoral Commission for officials from the Fiji Electoral Office to observe a meeting of the AEC’s Disability Working Group in 2024
- formation of a women in media group in Fiji, following participation of some Fijian media personnel in a 2022 training activity supported by PACMAS
- support through ADB for Reserve Bank of Fiji to better address gender issues
- support through ADB for Ministry of Finance to provide codes in the chart of account for expenditure on gender and climate change.

These examples illustrate both the kinds of opportunities that are available and the potential of IPP to integrate GEDSI further into the program. Beyond these examples, there does not appear to be shared and clear program-wide leadership and sufficient resources for IPP management and implementing partners to achieve the stated outcome. Given the significant gender related requirements placed on other Australian-funded programs and the fact that the Government of Australia promotes itself as a leader on disability inclusion, this is a remarkable limitation in IPP. The critical role of governance agencies in progressing gender equality, disability rights and social inclusion, suggests that this is a major missed opportunity.

The relative lack of progress across IPP in relation to GEDSI appears to be the result of the limited strategic and coordinated oversight of the program, where cross-cutting issues have not been adequately led, resourced, and supported. This reflects a weakness in the initial design which assumed Australian partners would have capacity and interest to progress DFAT GEDSI policies. Reliance on Australian and Fijian organisations to appropriately analyse entry points and strategies to achieve GEDSI outcomes is insufficient without dedicated expertise and resources, and sustained leadership, coordination, and support. The review team found the situation in relation to GEDSI appears to relate to three key factors: limited demand for GEDSI support from Fijian agencies; insufficient time allocation for GEDSI within the contract with Abt Global; and an assumption that Australian partner capacity in relation to GEDSI could be relied upon to make progress towards this intermediate outcome.

While resourcing, access to training and time allocations can be resolved with relative ease, the issue of limited demand from Fijian organisations is more complex, especially given a major strength of the program being its ability walk the talk of locally led development. While this is a challenge, the review team found openness and interest across Fijian organisations to

strengthen the degree to which they integrate GEDSI approaches within their day to day work. It is also noted that those staff within Australian institutions are also not GEDSI specialists, potentially contributing to GEDSI not being given prominence in work plan discussions.

The review team identified several opportunities to make progress towards this important outcome area. Firstly, where a Fijian partner prioritises focus on a GEDSI-related outcome (such as the Ministry of Finance's interest in Gender Responsive Budgeting), there is scope to build on the progress made to date. This highlights the importance of locally-led GEDSI work-planning and enabling links between pillars within IPP. Secondly, linking IPP activities to other relevant Australian-funded programs in Fiji and the Pacific region more broadly, which already undertake GEDSI-related work, will help strengthen GEDSI in IPP. This includes understanding when and how best to draw on support of the Ministry of Women, Children and Social Protection, noting its limited resources and existing heavy workload. Thirdly, while contact persons for IPP within Australian partner organisations may not be GEDSI specialists, all Australian institutions have substantial relevant capacity that IPP could benefit from with a more concerted and deliberate focus, and careful cross-cultural considerations. The AHC could encourage Australian partners to more actively draw on this expertise, ensuring cultural aspects are well-understood. A more proactive IPP management approach should prioritise efforts to support Fijian organizations involved in IPP to more actively identify and define their own gender equality, disability inclusion, and social inclusion agendas. (see **Recommendation 5**).

4.5 Climate change

IPP was designed prior to the release of Australia's new International Development Policy in 2023, which placed significant emphasis on responsiveness to climate risk, particularly in the Pacific region. Despite Fiji's high degree of vulnerability to climate extremes such as drought and extreme rainfall, the review found little evidence of deliberate attention to climate change adaptation or other related topics in IPP.

There are opportunities within each pillar to more actively incorporate climate related issues, and for IPP to model mainstreaming of climate consideration across its work areas, despite many of them not being obvious 'climate entry-points.' This is consistent with Fiji's 'Voluntary National Review'⁴, which concludes that while Fiji has made significant progress in developing climate-related policies, strategies, and plans, the challenge lies in their implementation.

4.6 Locally-led development

The review found the way twinning arrangements in IPP have developed over time has led to relatively high levels of locally-led development, and that this is viewed as a significant and positive feature of the program by both Fijian and Australian stakeholders. This phenomenon applies in most of the twinning arrangements and to some extent in other aspects of the program, but there are variations across participating agencies.

Without a joint program governance structure or system, there is no documented evidence of *shared* Fiji leadership of the reforms being addressed directly by the program, but since these reforms are led by Fijian officials, it is clear there is national ownership. Most senior officials involved in IPP met for the first time during the Collective Sense-making workshop for this

⁴ Voluntary National Review - Strengthening Resilience to Meet the Challenges of Climate Change and Other Global Issues, July 2023, p.77

review and this reflects the absence of coordinated local program ownership. Despite this, the level of Fiji leadership is high within individual partnerships.

The review found signs of a new generation of Fijian public sector leaders who value the importance of self-led development, and increased recognition of the importance of Fijian values being applied to address national change agendas. Now IPP is supporting locally-led development, it is well-placed to make a relevant and sustainable contribution. The review also found interest from other Pacific countries in Fiji's experiences, demonstrating broader potential contributions from IPP through South-South engagement and mutual learning.

While programming based on institutional partnerships is not new, it does harmonise well with theory and practices associated with locally-led development. IPP activities are increasingly determined through use of co-design and partner-led design approaches. These provide opportunities for Fijian leaders and other stakeholders to identify reform pathways, assumptions, and risks. Further, the demand-driven nature of IPP allows for good levels of responsiveness to emerging issues. The twinning model also allows for appropriately-paced relationships that occur according to Fijian partner timelines, and are not 'forced' to fit time-bound and externally controlled program logic.

Interviews with Fijian partners provided consistent feedback in relation to the linear progression to partnerships in which they lead and direct workplans. They commonly noted this has not always been the case: Australian partners were previously seen to overly control the direction of work-planning. Another theme of this partnership evolution is its contribution to greater levels of trust: Fijian partners began to accept the Australian partner was genuinely committed to being responsive and demand-driven, and therefore it was necessary for the Fijian partner to actively lead work-planning deliberations.

4 Discussion

This section discusses seven themes which emerged from analysis of the findings described above. These themes are listed here and discussed further below:

- Governance in Fiji is fluid and complex, so agile programming remains appropriate
- IPP works across multiple public sector organizations, each with different priorities
- Effective, trust-based institutional partnerships are precious and fragile, take a long time to build, and benefit from deliberate nurturing and funding to sustain them
- Future efforts which recognize and build on strengths to date will contribute to more relevant and sustainable change than 'gap-filling' approaches
- DFAT's policies on GEDSI, disability equity and climate change require concerted effort
- Improving donor coordination is essential for achieving sustainable positive change
- Features of IPP's management approach are valued and enhancements are possible.

5.1 Governance is complex

As is well-known by those involved in IPP, governance is a highly contested, complex, and fluid concept and phenomenon. While some governance systems and structures are shared between Fiji and Australia, the practice of governance is understood differently, reflecting historical, geographical, cultural, economic, and other factors which have interacted in diverse ways. The 2023 Country Governance Assessment for Fiji, prepared for DFAT by Abt Global,

highlights complexities, issues and sensitivities involved. The dynamic nature of governance is illustrated by comments from IPP stakeholders about changes since that report was compiled. Officials involved in implementing IPP-funded activities confirmed that cultural and political factors which shape governance in Fiji require constant attention and reflection. They noted the importance of trust-based institutional partnerships in which both responses to and influences on the nature and scope of changes in governance can be navigated.

Several stakeholders noted the particular importance of understanding cultural aspects of governance, particularly how power is either distributed in relatively more egalitarian or hierarchical ways. They noted that understanding the consequences of cultural value differences for governance is key to engaging with change processes. Stakeholders identified that collaboration is more effective in supporting sustainable change when relationships are sustained over the long-term, and when Australian officials engaged in technical training and project tasks are appropriately briefed on cultural value differences.

Bringing about changes in governance also involves understanding how change is understood differently in cultures. For example, in Australia, a culture which is relatively comfortable with change and innovation, institutions place great value on: planning and organising change in linear and inclusive ways; carefully defining and managing risks; and bringing about transformative reforms. In contrast, in Fiji, which is relatively less comfortable with change, changes are more likely to be incremental, driven by senior leaders, and achieved through consensus rather than by majority preference. For IPP, this means people involved in change processes require understanding of cultural and political economy aspects of collaboration. For example, the ATO noted ‘we have identified that FRCS prefers continuity rather than change’ and therefore adjusts its ways of working to respect this cultural value. Most Fijian and Australian agencies stressed the importance of cultural understanding about how change happens, and several Australian partner agencies mentioned their efforts to increase cultural competence among those involved in partnership activities. Constant joint discussion and reflection is required within partnerships and at the program level overall, to navigate the different degrees of comfort with expected changes, either at topic level or broader systemic levels. Stakeholders identified that ‘making change happen’ requires skills to work both in the short and long-term, and approaches for topic-specific and broader engagement. This complex and nuanced dynamic also points to the importance of IPP management having capacity to keep abreast of subtle shifts and openings in different partnership dynamics.

Program ‘coherence’ is an interesting aspect of IPP’s work in governance, since the combination of a locally-led approach and a donor-funded approach potentially creates a tension. IPP works on multiple public sector governance issues at the same time, with a wide range of Fijian leaders and officials in different agencies, who may not necessarily share similar frames of reference about governance, or be at similar stages in their leadership journey, or be on similar organisational trajectories. Commonly, donor-funded programs seek to be coherent in their approach, summarizing comprehensive issues into relatively simple high-level outcomes or approaches (e.g. ‘inclusive governance’) that make sense from the cultural perspective of the donor country. If emphasis is given to locally-led development thinking, then it is not necessarily important for all activities to be coherent or consistent from the donor perspective, i.e. the donor’s perspective is secondary. Donors, particularly if well-coordinated and culturally-attuned, can contribute to coherence across diverse Fijian stakeholders if and when there is interest in achieving this (see Section 5.6). Thus, future phases of IPP may seek to identify opportunities to support coherence within the Fijian public

sector, rather than prioritise program coherence per se. This could include cross program linkages that help to bring to life ‘whole of government’ government reform objectives.

A degree of ‘local coherence’ is already occurring within IPP as implementation in each of the seven areas is primarily driven by Fijian priorities, capacity, and timelines, alongside internal assessments of feasibility. The shift to more locally-led programming (compared with earlier phases) is consistent with culturally-attuned approaches to pursuing governance reform.

5.2 Multiple stakeholders with different reform priorities

While each of the organisations engaged in IPP-supported work may have shared interest in ‘improved governance,’ they differ widely in terms of purpose, leadership style, size, scope, cultural values, and direction, as well as their connection to political contexts in Fiji. These differences influence the kinds of priorities identified within each partnership and how these priorities are expressed. Differing priorities in turn shape the nature of partnerships with Australian partners. Thus, IPP overall is engaged in a diversity of ideas and processes, with varying degrees of cross-program consistency. When additional frames of reference and priorities are identified by multi-lateral agencies, e.g. ADB and UNDP, with their own institutional plans, determination of governance goals can be further complicated.

Significant differences between Australian and Fijian partners in IPP are notable in terms of the ways in which priorities are responded to in some twinning arrangements. For example, the ATO has 34,000 staff while the FRCS has 700 staff, resulting in vastly different numbers of staff working on each topic area, depth of skill, and diverse levels of responsibilities between officials. The ATO focal points explained the effort required to interpret different contexts when working through requests for engagement, shaping the way activities are undertaken, and preparing ATO’s technical specialist personnel to make culturally appropriate responses. They noted that pre-activity briefings are carefully prepared and delivered and that they are continually concerned about the ‘risk of losing focus and deep understanding of the context and specifics’ behind each request and activity. Other Australian partners, in parliamentary services, statistics and media for example, also noted the different scales and scope of twinned organizations and their different organisational cultures and priorities. Maintaining the ability to work at different scales on multiple priorities takes understanding and skills, so current and future programming needs to ensure this is reflected in funding arrangements.

Box 8

Adapting to a changed context – the drive towards more reliable data

Since 2022, the Government of Fiji has increasingly valued and prioritized the collection and distribution of high quality and independently verified data to inform evidence-based policy reforms and development. Previously, the emphasis was on Government influence over data being gathered, and how it would be used.

The new context presents the Fijian Bureau of Statistics with opportunities and challenges, to ensure reliable data collection and distribution, and greater transparency on how Fiji can best strengthen economic growth and resilience while safely resolving high debt levels.

For reliable data to be generated, structural shifts are required, as a culture of holding on to and not sharing data still prevails across many government departments. FBOS sees IPP as providing opportunities to both deepen its partnership with the Australian Bureau of Statistics, and work across the IPP portfolio to identify opportunities for collaboration in data gathering

that support strengthening the quality of data gathered. This effort is intended to shift agencies towards a culture of viewing data as a ‘public good.’

To that end, IPP has the potential to both contribute to strengthening FBOS through tailored support from the ABS, and identify key priority areas for collaboration across other sectors and central agencies. The Ministry of Finance has expressed enthusiasm for IPP to support FBOS in strengthening data quality gathered by key Government of Fiji institutions.

A key opportunity to contribute to improved data in Fiji is the upcoming census, due in 2027. Taking a whole-of-cycle approach to the census is a unique opportunity for IPP to support FBOS as it plans to implement Fiji’s most ambitious, comprehensive and quality census to date.

In summary, the review team found that those involved in IPP have appropriately and commendably avoided a one-size-fits-all approach to working on governance reforms in Fiji across multiple institutions. As noted in Section 4, trusting institutional linkages and responsiveness of IPP to real and immediate priorities of Fijian partners are what sets it apart from other partnerships. Approaches which are nuanced, negotiated, customised and dynamic are best suited to these various contexts, even though this tends to make planning and monitoring processes more difficult to undertake in neat and straightforward ways. (Box 8 highlights the potential for IPP to navigate complex opportunities, while both supporting an individual institution, and also achieving ‘whole of government’ gains.)

5.3 Institutional partnerships are precious

Fijian and Australian officials involved in implementing activities funded by IPP are well-aware of the precious nature of the institutional relationships in which they are working. All those interviewed for the review noted the value of good relationships, the high levels of mutual respect and trust that underpin relationships, and the critical importance of sensitively servicing and sustaining relationships. This extended beyond twinning arrangements to include relationships with UNDP and ADB personnel. For example, AEC officials noted that their good relationship with UNDP staff helps them navigate complexities involved in the changing electoral context in Fiji. Similarly, officials of the Victorian Parliament appreciate both Fijian and broader Pacific parliament support programming of UNDP and the utility of their team being on the ground in Suva on a day-to-day basis. The FEO and Parliament of Fiji spoke highly of strong levels of coordination and complementary in support they receive through IPP from their Australian twin and UNDP.

As noted in Section 4, there is widespread recognition that relationships between Fiji and Australia cannot be taken for granted. Most stakeholders described how it had taken many years for partnerships to transition from individual-to-individual connections to broader and deeper institutional relationships towards ones that are now genuinely locally led. They noted the enduring nature of these relationships and that they can now weather changes in government or other events and shocks. Several also noted that connections would continue through other regional and global networks, even if funding such as that provided through IPP was discontinued.

Overall, the review found that direct institutional partnerships, which have taken years or decades to develop, are critical to collaboration and sustainability of public sector reforms. Furthermore, the maturing of the partnerships towards ones that are now more truly locally

led and responsive is cited by Fijian partners as evidence of the trust they now place in the relationships.

Longevity of relationships has allowed them to move through various stages (e.g. forming, storming, norming and performing) to achieve deep levels of trust and mutual respect that exist now, distinguishing them from other project-based relationships. Continued efforts by all involved, to maximise the quality of partnerships, are therefore essential for future work in the governance sector. As noted above, Fijian leaders and officials explained that their experience with IPP differed positively from their experience with other donors in terms of their direct connections with Australian partners or twins, and sought assurance this would not change. Similarly, several Australian officials noted that they experienced different arrangements in other countries, whereby relationships with national agencies were funnelled and mediated through a third-party, such as a managing contractor: experience through IPP was significantly more effective and positive. The review team concluded the introduction of a contractor or other gate-keeper between Government of Fiji and Australia agencies could introduce risks to these existing, long-established relationships (see section 5.7 below) as well as potentially to overall bilateral diplomatic relations between the Governments.

Given the critical nature of partnerships in public sector reform processes, dedicated efforts to maximise the quality of partnerships will both help them endure and focus on sustainability beyond technical aspects of programming. IPP stakeholders noted their own efforts in Phase 2 to contribute to quality relationships, beyond delivery of agreed activities. The value of partnerships has been promoted in communities of practice meetings organised among Australian IPP partners and could also be supported through future events among Fijian agencies. Several noted that an emphasis on sustaining quality partnerships was explicitly supported by their own institutions while others said that this was not the case, and they would value increased support and understanding in this way of working. In future programming, there may be value in offering partnership brokering support. This includes facilitated processes to enable partners to focus attention on the quality of their partnership, alongside and in addition to technical aspects of collaboration. Sessions may enable partners to: negotiate agreed principles and ways of working; regularly reflect on whether principles and ways of working remain 'fit for purpose;' and identify steps to improve over time. Given the dynamic nature of governance and the potential for the Governments of Fiji and Australia to change priorities in relation to development cooperation, there is also value in supporting partners to be able to respond if partnerships shift or cease. Facilitating processes to support positive 'de-coupling' could help maintain government-to-government relationships beyond individual agency relationships, in case this occurs.

5.4 Planning and implementation using a strengths-based approach

Given IPP's partnership strengths plus organisation-specific achievements to date and a clear emphasis on locally-led development, the review team suggests that future planning takes a strengths-based approach to build on these and other strengths in the Fiji governance context. This contrasts with a problem-based approach which traditionally drives development programming and which focuses on defining problems and proposing levels of 'solutions.' By definition, a strengths-based approach starts with enabling those involved in any context to identify their own strengths (and in a partnership context, the strengths of the partners) as the basis for determining future priorities. For example, a team of officials in a government agency may reflect on what they already know, what they have already achieved

and what resources are already available to them, then use this knowledge to determine their subsequent priorities, or their 'preferred future' (Winterford et al 2023). This approach to planning contrasts with an approach which starts with identifying gaps, weaknesses, and problems before determining how these can be filled, fixed, or overcome, usually with an inaccurate perception that external inputs will be the source of 'solutions.' A strengths-based approach does not 'ignore' realities in each context, but seeks to achieve improvements by focusing attention on what exists already, rather than by focusing on what is missing. This suggestion is consistent with ways IPP relationships have evolved, particularly since 2022.

A strengths-based approach is highly relevant to cross-cultural co-operation and peer-to-peer relationships in governance, since it demonstrates respect between governments rather than pitching one government as having only problems, weaknesses, and gaps, against another government that only has solutions, strengths, and endless resources.

5.5 Compliance with DFAT policies

As noted in Section 4, the review found that implementation within IPP is increasingly consistent with DFAT's 2024 guidance on locally-led development.⁵ Examples of gender and disability inclusive work were found in some partnerships though overall, IPP does not rate highly on compliance with DFAT policies on GEDSI and climate change, for several reasons. Given the centrality of governance reform for achieving positive change in these areas, there is shared understanding that more leadership and strategic effort are appropriate in future programming. It is not likely that substantial change can be achieved in the remaining months of Phase 2, but more concerted efforts and more dedicated and applied resources and leadership around GEDSI and climate change are recommended in the next phase. While such support will ideally be actively sought by Fijian leaders, better resourcing of cross-cutting issues will at least allow capacity to surface issues and opportunities for consideration in work-planning. It is also noted that Australia's policy settings in relation to GEDSI and climate change are now more firmly set, and that these can also offer guidance as to how to bring energy to these important issues.

Consistent with other themes noted above, and global lessons, work in these policy areas benefits from local leadership, trust-based partnerships, a strengths-based approach, and flexible and responsive approaches. Efforts to strengthen gender and disability analysis and action are most effective when they are context-specific and coordinated with existing Fijian policies and commitments, given that increasing inclusion may involve changing core cultural values. As noted in Section 4.4, strengthening action on gender, disability and social inclusion also needs to be well-coordinated with and draw on analysis and experience from other Australian-funded programming lessons, networks, and resources. Learning from and links with other Australian-funded efforts could help inform future GEDSI strategies in IPP.

In terms of resources related to disability, DFAT's International Disability Equity and Rights Strategy 2024 is a useful framework for development of more effective engagement with the Government of Fiji and civil society organizations in future IPP programming. It is also understood that considerable work has already been undertaken by the AHC advocating disability equity and rights, and that lessons learned through this process could assist IPP related government engagement.

⁵ <https://www.dfat.gov.au/publications/development/dfat-guidance-note-locally-led-development>

While Fijian organisations of persons with disability have led Pacific and global efforts in representing members and advocating for disability inclusion over decades, they are also under-resourced and in great demand. While they have important capacity to inform a future IPP design, expectations about their engagement in complex governance reforms need to be realistic.

5.6 Donor coordination

The review confirmed that the governance sector is a crowded space in terms of donor activities, and there remains substantial opportunity for improved donor coordination. As is evident from other themes discussed in this report, there is no single technical means to achieve coherent governance reform at a national level, though plenty of lessons about appropriate approaches and principles. Many organisations operate in the sector with diverse agendas for strengthening systems, structures, and processes. Donor coordination is key to maximising the value and sustainability of externally-funded efforts and minimize contradictory or duplicated effort, particularly in a country the size of Fiji.

Many IPP stakeholders look to DFAT to either lead donor coordination processes, or preferably to more actively support the Government of Fiji to lead, given the relative size of Australia's contributions to the sector. While DFAT expressed a reluctance to overstep its sense of leadership, there is scope for greater contributions to enable collaborative facilitation of joint planning and reflection processes on support for governance reform, with Fijian leaders. There is also an appetite amongst Fiji partners for better coordination which could contribute to Australia's interest in being seen as Fiji's partner of choice. The value of increased donor coordination is well known, and the potential to extend reform benefits in future is significant. Importantly, donor coordination should not necessarily focus on technical 'fixes' or technocratic ways forward, but on supporting Fijian leadership, maximizing the quality of programming contributions to Fiji-determined governance reforms, and reducing chances of duplicated activities and contradictory messaging. While such an approach may differ from past donor coordination efforts, it would demonstrate Australia's commitment to locally led development, and be a logical progression, building on the mature relationships that have developed within IPP.

5.7 Management of IPP

Management and administration of IPP has been undertaken within the AHC, with MEL and GEDSI elements sub-contracted to an external provider. With one A-based officer and one Fijian officer now responsible for program management and administrative duties, as well as other diplomatic duties, AHC staff consider that the current level of IPP management responsibilities is unsustainable. A program of this size and complexity may normally require a dedicated team of personnel with a mix of responsibilities across strategic direction (such as a Program Director or small governance team with cross-cultural sector-specific expertise), program management (Program Manager), administration and finances (Program Officer), and ongoing part-time GEDSI/MEL specialisation. As noted in Section 4.3 above, those involved in implementing activities funded by IPP are satisfied with current management arrangements and they value advice provided, links made, processes used to approve funding, and the community of practice events which have been organised. The review also found strengths associated in each activity area in terms of autonomy enjoyed by partners, and the contribution this makes to true understanding and responsiveness to locally-determined priorities, and progression of peer-to-peer relationships. There is a risk of losing these

strengths, if future program structures involved tighter, more controlling, or more externally-driven management approaches.

From a development program management perspective, future management would benefit from increased resources and attention at a strategic level, and relatively finessed and nuanced management, to minimise the risk of IPP becoming like other programs which do not have its current strengths. A wholesale handover of responsibilities from the AHC to the Fiji Platform is not recommended, but relatively limited options are available for sourcing and organising strategic level expertise: either within the AHC or by a managing contractor. The review team is not in a position to determine which is the 'best' option for the future phase, given the complexities and trade-offs involved. Position descriptions/responsibilities and locations/reporting lines of different roles, can be determined during the design of the next phase of IPP, and the review team suggests the following factors may need to be considered:

- Government-to-government relations are most effective when directly supported within a government context, rather than through a third (commercial) party
- Administration may be sub-contracted or outsourced, but when this is done, considerable efforts are required to sustain effective communications to maximise the quality of administration processes, which may counteract the benefits of outsourcing
- GEDSI and MEL inputs may be sub-contracted or outsourced, but when this is done, considerable efforts are required to ensure strategic coherence, and leadership is required to analyze complex and contested ideas about data, cultural values and change for example, beyond program administration
- Strategic program management in the context of cross-cultural governance reform, requires senior-level experience and the ability to reflect deeply about how change happens, provide space for and facilitate group negotiations about complex topics, analyze and integrate data and information at different levels of complexity, and navigate 'trade-offs' in terms of what will and will not be supported and what can and cannot be expected as 'results.'

For the remaining period of IPP implementation, the following activities are suggested:

- Facilitated discussions across Fijian participating agencies on their own learning about partnerships/twinning arrangements, transitioning to different ways of working with international partners, and other topics of relevance (this may be understood as a Fiji community of practice event, equivalent to the Australian version)
- Facilitated discussions among both Australian and Fijian partners about priorities for a subsequent phase, to inform the design process
- Facilitated reflections within each partnership area, perhaps using a qualified partnership broker, about the quality of partnership and ways to strengthen partnerships in future, given their current stage and experience
- Commissioning more detailed case studies about institutional partnerships to showcase governance reform achievements and Australian and Fiji relations for promotion and diplomatic purposes. (**See Recommendation 10**).

For the next phase, there is value in the design team determining ways to increase strategic program management, including through additional resources, to find the sweet spot balancing continuity and 'steady as she goes' with more proactive program leadership. As this review is being undertaken at a time of transition in the management of the Fiji Platform, it is difficult to determine ideal interactions between IPP and the Platform, in relation to shifting

administrative, GEDSI and MEL responsibilities, but options may be clearer by the time the design of the next phase commences.

Feedback during the review highlighted the value placed by both Fijian and Australian stakeholders on direct engagement with the AHC, and that this direct relationship is an important contributing factor to strengthened peer-to-peer relationships, and perceptions of Australia as a reliable and trusted partner. The review therefore finds that the primary interface between Fijian partners and the program should continue to be through an AHC-based manager.

The review concludes that more robust investment is required in GEDSI and MEL for the program to comply with DFAT policies. While it is feasible that these services are provided through the Platform, it is important that they are i/ managed by the AHC-based IPP manager, and ii/ adequately resourced and have sufficient time to engage with and build relationships with Fijian and Australian partners. If the Platform's GEDSI and MEL advisors do not have sufficient time to adequately support IPP, consideration should be given in the next phase for IPP to draw GEDSI and MEL services from the relevant DFAT panels, reporting directly to the IPP Program Manager.

Due to staffing and time constraints, a challenge of the current program relates to IPP staying abreast of the dynamic and fluid governance context in Fiji. Given the Platform's plan to recruit a Governance advisor, it may be useful for IPP management to access the Governance advisor from time to time, to augment understanding of opportunities and risks arising.

Day to day IPP administration (finance, travel, recruitment) could logically be undertaken by the Platform personnel given they have dedicated teams in place to manage such activities.

5 Recommendations

Recommendations reflect the consistent view from all partners involved in implementing IPP for the program to continue largely as is, given the value they place on the current modality and the partnerships established. Recommendations are therefore primarily focused on adding value and fine-tuning the current approach, to further strengthen IPP performance.

Recommendations are also based in recognition that the current phase will conclude in nine months and that changes within this current phase need to be realistic and achievable.

It is recommended that responsibility for responding to these recommendations sit with the Australian High Commission in Fiji's Governance team. Given the high level and broad nature of the recommendations, the review team deems it not appropriate to cost these recommendations.

1. A new phase of IPP should occur, with design commencing in mid 2025. Given that the program is very well regarded by the Government of Fiji and has made strong progress towards its two EOPOs, consideration should be given to increasing the scope and budget for the new phase.
2. A new IPP phase should maintain an appropriate balance between enabling partners to respond to specific technical priorities of each Fiji agency, while being alert to opportunities to work in more coordinated ways that model and progress whole of government public service reform.
3. A new IPP phase should maintain the program's use of a mix of complementary partnership approaches to consolidate reform outcomes, with an emphasis on institutional twinning between Fijian and Australian public sector agencies, and continuation of funding for selected relevant, and complementary activities of multilateral agencies in Fiji.
4. The current management structure should be remodelled to enhance capacity for more proactive and strategic program management able to better contribute to:
 - strengthened capacity to progress outcome-level governance-type results
 - monitoring and engagement of emerging opportunities for rapid response assistance capable of keeping the reform ball rolling, including the leveraging of synergies between pillars
 - ensure responsiveness to timebound opportunities such as preliminary planning for the upcoming census and elections
 - identify synergies and efficiencies and build linkages between activities (i.e. slightly expand communities of practice approach), when useful, including:
 - a. sharing lessons about effective capacity-strengthening and partnership approaches
 - b. alignment of Flexifund efforts within MCS with work being undertaken by other ministries e.g. collaboration between MoF, MCS and FBOS in relation to HRMIS and FMIS
 - trial 'partnership brokering' of two selected partnerships to help better understand the quality of these partnerships and ways to further strengthen partnerships in future, given their current stage and experience

5. Increase cross-program resources and attention to identifying opportunities and implementing progress on GEDSI.
6. Strengthen and better resource program MEL to generate shared learning about what works well and success factors, and better collate information about the program's overall contribution to strengthened institutional partnerships, individual agency capacity, development outcomes and progress in terms of Australia's standing as Fiji's partner of choice.
7. To inform the next phase of IPP, consider the benefits and costs of using the Fiji Program Support Platform to add value (without risking loss of direct government-to-government relationships), including the degree to which it can:
 - a. Assume responsibility for some administrative tasks undertaken by AHC officials
 - b. Contribute to more proactive GEDSI programming
 - c. Contribute to strengthening MEL capacity of IPP partners.
8. Consider the potential for a future IPP to actively facilitate and strengthen Fiji's contribution to governance reform in the Pacific region through funding of opportunities for other PICs to observe and benefit from IPP twinning activities.
9. Within a future phase, a more structured Flexifund with clearer outputs and outcomes identified, and a robust, cross-government steering committee should be put in place to identify appropriate activities and steps needed to progress each focus area towards an agreed development outcome. This should be complemented by a 'flexible fund' that can both support key activities, but also other relevant, sometimes ad hoc initiatives given their diplomatic value and ability to position Australia as a first port of call and partner of choice.
10. For the remaining period of IPP implementation, the following activities should be considered:
 - Facilitated discussions across Fijian participating agencies on their own learning about partnerships/twinning arrangements, transitioning to different ways of working with international partners, and other topics of relevance (this may be understood as a Fiji community of practice event, equivalent to the Australian version)
 - Facilitated discussions among both Australian and Fijian partners about priorities for a subsequent phase, to inform the design process
 - Facilitated reflections within each partnership area, perhaps using a qualified partnership broker, about the quality of partnership and ways to strengthen partnerships in future, given their current stage and experience
 - Commissioning more detailed case studies about institutional partnerships to showcase governance reform achievements and Australian and Fiji relations for promotion and diplomatic purposes.

Annex 1

Review Terms of Reference

BACKGROUND

The Fiji-Australia Institutional Partnerships Program – Phase 2 (IPP) seeks to serve dual objectives. The IPP seeks to foster a trusted working relationship between Fiji and Australia. The IPP also seeks to support Fiji's stability, prosperity and resilience to shocks through the strategic use of partnerships, policy dialogue and financing.

The program is guided by Fiji's policy direction and interests, reflecting the nature of the bilateral relationship between Australia and Fiji, and Fiji's status as a growing middle-income economy. The program seeks to remain flexible in order to adapt to changing circumstances and aims to reflect the concept of 'thinking and working politically' in its approach.

RESPONDING TO COVID-19

Phase 2 of the IPP launched in the context of COVID-19 having a profound impact on the region. Fiji's effective containment of COVID-19 severely impacted on Fiji's economy, and it was projected to have a long road to recovery.

At the time, Australia's 'Partnerships for Recovery' strategy outlined Australia's development response to COVID-19, focussing on strengthening health security, maintaining social stability, and stimulating economic recovery, as the underpinnings of shared prosperity that would allow us to emerge from this crisis. Australia aimed to be a partner of choice for our neighbours in responding to the pandemic throughout the response and recovery phases, and in building longer-term resilience.

In this context, the program was designed to directly contribute to two of the three key pillars of Australia's COVID-19 response: supporting stability; and stimulating economic recovery. Through its strong focus on relationships, responsiveness and respect, the IPP would also contribute to Australia's aim to be/remain Fiji's partner of choice.

HOW THE IPP SUPPORTS AUSTRALIA'S POLICY OBJECTIVES

In support of our objectives, the program aimed to deliver the following end of program outcomes (EOPOs):

- Australia and Fiji have strong peer-to-peer and institutional relationships (relationship outcome)
- Australia supports Fiji to strengthen performance across selected institutions, in line with Fiji's priorities (development outcome).

To ensure the program is appropriately balancing its dual objectives, the IPP tracks progress against four intermediate outcomes:

- Australia recognised as partner of choice on matters of public policy in key areas
- Problems related to day-to-day practices and/or policies resolved with assistance from IPP TAs/institutional partners
- GOF adopts and implements policies and processes for inclusive and sustainable economic recovery and growth
- GOF adopts and implements GEDSI-sensitive improvements in key electoral, legislative, scrutiny and oversight systems and processes.

Program progress is assessed against a Performance Assessment Framework (PAF). The PAF is managed and reported against by a managing contractor (separate to the Facility).

The IPP is implemented through:

- partnerships between Government of Fiji and Government of Australia agencies, multilateral institutions and development banks, civil society, other donors and other stakeholders;
- Various mode of support including long and short-term TA, some embedded, some Fly in and fly out, training, exchanges and study visits to Australia;
- policy engagement between Australia and Fiji; and
- Financing through a flexible fund and grants. The flexible fund enables the program to support the Government of Fiji's highest priorities, in an environment with strong demand for support and technical assistance.
- Grants support twinning relationships between Australian and Fijian Government agencies; and support work by multilateral and development banks and other partners, where the work is outside the government, or the executive arm of government.

PRIORITY AREAS FOR ENGAGEMENT

Priority areas for engagement are determined jointly and flexibly by the Governments of Fiji and Australia. Phase 2 priorities are:

- Emerging priorities for Fiji's economic recovery and stability, supporting the COVID response
- Public financial management, supporting Australia's commitment to general budget support • Civil service reform, supporting a priority reform for Fiji
- Australia's engagement with Fiji on parliament and elections
- Government-to-Government twinning partnerships.

Implementation

The program runs from July 2020 to September 2025. Up to \$22 million, approximately \$4.4 million per year, is available for this investment. The design incorporates funding flexibility to scale up or down as needed, within this envelope.

The IPP is managed in house, with DFAT Suva leading on overall program strategy and management for (at May 2024, ten projects/agreements). The existing Fiji Program Support Facility supports implementation and administration of the flexible fund. It was intended the Facility would also support cross-cutting support for program administration and monitoring and evaluation, however this has not eventuated. Other components of the program are delivered through grants (to multilateral agencies, Australian Government partners and other organisations) or direct expenses, both administered by DFAT.

PURPOSE OF THE REVIEW

The purpose of the review is to assess progress of the IPP since July 2020, identify areas of strength and areas for improvement, to inform key actions until the end of the program and the design of the next program phase.

The review will provide recommendations to support DFATs management decisions in relation to future phases. The review's primary audiences are the Australian High Commission Suva, DFAT more broadly, Government of Fiji stakeholders, and other development partners involved in the governance sector in Fiji. Noting the document will be publicly available,

sensitivities of audiences such as the Australian and Fiji Governments should be taken into consideration.

SCOPE

To address its purpose, the review should answer key evaluation questions (KEQ). Figure 1 below suggests some preliminary KEQ. These will be confirmed and refined with the Team Leader at the start of the review and finalised in the review plan.

PRELIMINARY KEY EVALUATION QUESTIONS

1. To what extent is the design of Phase 2 still relevant in the current context? Consider ongoing relevance of the:
 - The EOPOs and IOPOs
 - Theory of Change
 - Partners in the Governance sector - GoF, other donors etc
 - Whether this modality continues to be most appropriate for DFAT/GoF needs?
2. How effective has IPP been in delivering on its intended objectives. Consider evidence of:
 - Achievement of the EOPOs and IOPOs
 - Whether current activities/ approaches are contributing to the EOPOs
 - Effective policy dialogue and influence, for example in: GoF public sector performance, public financial management, inclusive governance, climate change, gender equality
 - Support for the program within GoF Agencies and any evidence of sustained capacity building
 - The effective management of risks, particularly to the delivery/achievement of program outcomes
3. How Efficiently has IPP been delivered? Consider:
 - The delivery modalities, including GoF capability to absorb/use the support through these different modalities
 - Management, including whether staffing is appropriate
 - Whether governance arrangements are fit for purpose and support GoF ownership
 - Harmonisation with other donor/delivery partners in the sector
 - The extent to which MEL data has been used/useful for management decision making
 - Evidence of cross-program and cross-partner learning and adapting
4. To what extent has IPP contributed to improvements in Gender Equality, Disability Inclusion and Climate Change? Consider evidence of:
 - Appropriate Gender/Disability/Climate assessments and forward plans
 - Efforts that have had some impact/change in GoF agencies
 - Opportunities to strengthen GEDSI and climate programming and impact going forward
5. What have we learned and what do we need to improve? Including:
 - Key lessons from delivering IPP
 - Recommendations to inform/improve delivery in the remainder of IPP2?
 - Recommendations to inform/improve the next phase of the program?

METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The review team will develop a Review Plan that describes the methodology to answer the KEQ. This methodology will include the following activities:

- DESK PREPARATION
 - Briefing session with AHC (virtual or in-person)
 - Document review
 - Prepare the Review Plan
- DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS
 - Consultations in Suva and virtually
 - Preparation and presentation of aide memoire
- REPORT DRAFTING
 - Draft Review report
 - Reception of feedback
 - Presentation on the findings to the Primary Audience
 - Finalisation of Review report with Annex of recommendations to feed into any new design.

As part of the data collection and analysis phase, it is expected the following sources of information be consulted:

- Relevant Literature: background documents including: the Fiji National Development Plan; Australia- Fiji Development Partnership Plan 2024 (draft); Australia's development policy and Performance Framework; International Gender Equality Strategy; International Disability Equity and Rights Strategy; IPP program documents (Design document, annual plans and reports) (see Annex 2 for a list of reading materials)
- Consultations with stakeholders: Australian High Commission representatives including the Development team; key GoF stakeholders; implementing partners; Fiji Program Support Facility Team; other relevant development partners (e.g. MFAT, UKFCDO, USAID and State Department, JICA and NGOs).
- Consultations with other DFAT stakeholders (as required): Gender Equality, Disability and Social Inclusion Branch, Australia-Pacific Climate Partnership, OTP Economics team.
- Other key informants, as agreed to in the Review Plan.

DELIVERABLES

The Review team is expected to produce and submit the following deliverables:

- A Review Plan agreed with Suva Post Review
- An Aide Memoire (max 10 pages) with preliminary findings and roundtable discussion testing initial findings and their significance.
- A draft Review report
- A final Review report (max 30 pages excl. annexes),

TEAM AND INPUTS

The Review will be conducted by a team of independent consultants who are not directly involved in program management, and who have reputable experience relevant to Fiji and/or Pacific governance.

The Review Team Leader will be an evaluator, responsible for the technical quality of the Review and all deliverables including the Review Plan, draft, and final reports.

Together the team will demonstrate sufficient expertise of the governance landscape in the Fijian or Pacific context, GEDSI and Climate Change expertise with demonstrated ability to apply DFAT policies to development programming; MEL expertise including demonstrated experience monitoring complex diverse portfolios of programs focused on behaviour change; experience of programs that apply adaptive and thinking and working politically approach; and sound understanding of DFAT policies.

The team must include at least one local team member.

Annex 3 details the professional requirements for the composition of the team.

Together the team will demonstrate sufficient expertise in program strategy, MEL, governance and public administration, the governance sector in Fiji, and DFAT systems and processes.

DFAT First Secretary, Governance will assist with organising in-country consultations and coordinating feedback from stakeholders on the draft Aide Memoire and Review report.

The Review will start in June/July 2024 and be finalised by October 2024, with an in-country mission (of approximately two weeks in Suva only) in July or early August 2024.

The overall days available for the Team to conduct the Review Team is 140 days.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

In conducting this review, the Review the team should:

- Comply with the Australasian Evaluation Society code of ethics, available at: [https://www.aes.asn.au/images/stories/files/About/Documents%20 %20ongoing/code_of_ethics.pdf](https://www.aes.asn.au/images/stories/files/About/Documents%20%20ongoing/code_of_ethics.pdf), and o DFAT Aid Evaluation Policy
- Obtain informed consent in writing from review participants after they have been advised of what information will be sought and how the information will be recorded and used.
- Treat all information and findings as confidential.
- Reference appropriately all published or unpublished documents used in the review.

Annex 2 Interviews undertaken as part of Strategic Review

DFAT

Name	Organisation	Role
Rebecca Brown	AHC	First Secretary Governance
Janeet Kissun	AHC	Program Manager - Governance
Andrew Shepherd	AHC	Counsellor, Development Cooperation
Emily Elliot	AHC	Senior Program Manager - Gender
Iliesa Lutu	AHC	Senior Program Manager - Disability
Clair McNamara	AHC	Deputy High Commissioner
Keshwa Reddy	AHC	Senior Program Manager - Budget Support and Economic Governance
Pranil Singh	AHC	Public Financial Management Advisor

Ministry of Civil Service

Name	Organisation	Role
Luke Rokovada	Public Service Commission	Chair
Parmesh Chand	MCS	Permanent Secretary
Branka Farquharson	PSC/MCS	Governance Advisor (FlexiFund)
Dinesh Chand	MCS	Human Resource Management Information System Advisor (FlexiFund)
Tevita Buklu	MCS	Human Resource Management Information System Advisor (FlexiFund)
Asnita Kumar	MCS	Business Program Improvements Advisor (FlexiFund)
Mohammad Imran	MCS	Business Program Improvements Advisor (FlexiFund)
Leonora Sinclair	PSC	Project Coordinator

Ministry of Finance

Name	Organisation	Role
Shiri K. Gounder	MoF	Permanent Secretary
Asenaca Mae	MoF	Manager Financial Policy & Assurance
Letila Tuiyalani	MoF	Manager-International Cooperation Division
Sisilia Nalaide	MoF	Manager – Debt Management
Atin Chand	MoF	Manager – Financial Operations
Kelera Kolivuso	MoF	Acting Head of Budget

Fiji Revenue and Customs Service

Name	Organisation	Role
Mohnish Prasad	FRCS	Manager International, Corporate Services
Anish Kumar	FRCS	Senior Technical Specialist - International Team

Fijian Bureau of Statistics

Name	Organisation	Role
Kemueli Naiqama	FBOS	Chief Executive
Filomena Browne	FBOS	Head Economic Statistics Division

Parliament of Fiji

Name	Organisation	Role
Abele Sakulu	Parliament of Fiji	Deputy Secretary General
Lois Vakarau	Parliament of Fiji	Head, Corporate Services
Seniteli Wainiu	Parliament of Fiji	Manager Inter-Parliamentary Relations
Josua Namoce	Parliament of Fiji	Manager Research and Policy Analyst

Fiji Electoral Office

Name	Organisation	Role
Ana S. Mataciwa	FEO	Supervisor of Elections
Eric-Chad Drodrolagi	FEO	Community and International Engagement Coordinator

Fiji Media Association

Name	Organisation	Role
Rosivita Doviverata	FMA	President
Stanley Simpson	FMA	Secretary General

Fiji Program Support Facility

Name	Organisation	Role
Fiona Pakoa	Facility	Head of Programs
Graham Teskey	Facility	Governance Advisor
Neil McFarlane	Facility	Climate Change Advisor

ABT Global (Responsible for MEL and GEDSI support)

Name	Organisation	Role
Fiona Mactaggart	Abt Global	MEL Advisor
Annemarie Reerink	Abt Global	GEDSI Advisor

United Nations Development Program

Name	Organisation	Role
Rustam Pulatov	UNDP	Team Lead - Effective Governance and Inclusive Growth
Daniel Hinchcliffe	UNDP	Senior Elections Advisor
Luisa Senibulu	UNDP	Project Manager, Accountable and Inclusive Governance
Thomas Gregory	UNDP	Parliamentary Development Manager
Nicola Glendining	UNDP	Project Manager, Governance for Resilient Development in the Pacific
Lisa Buggy	UNDP	Risk Informed Development Specialist, Governance for Resilient Development in the Pacific

Australian Bureau of Statistics

Name	Organisation	Role
Michael Abbondante	ABS	Director
Brigitte Batschi	ABS	Program Management Officer
Ed Leslie	ABS	Coordinator, Pacific and Fiji Programs

High Commission of the United Kingdom

Name	Organisation	Role
Josh Kemp	DfID	Counsellor, UK Integrated Security Fund Programme

High Commission of New Zealand

Name	Organisation	Role
Alex Shahryar-Davies	MFAT	Deputy High Commissioner
Kartik Pratap	MFAT	Senior Economic Resilience Advisor

Australian Taxation Office

Name	Organisation	Role
Gabrielle Jackson	ATO	Director of International Relations, Capacity Building and Transparency
Isabelle Hu	ATO	Assistant Director

Pacific Media Assistance Scheme

Name	Organisation	Role
Kate Seymour	PACMAS	Project Manager
Rita Narayan	PACMAS	Project Manager
Madeleine Broadbridge	PACMAS	Project Manager

Parliament of Victoria

Name	Organisation	Role
Sally West	PoV	Usher of the Black Rod
Robert McDonald	PoV	Clerk, Legislative Council
Brigitte Noonan	PoV	Clerk, Legislative Assembly
Brittany Turner	PoV	Executive Support Officer

Annex 3 Details of the Review methodology

The IPP Theory of Change and Program Logic was used as a ‘road map’ to guide the Review’s lines of enquiry. Evidence gathering involved consideration of both the overall IPP modality and individual partnerships to determine the relevance, effectiveness, and efficiency of the overall program. Consultations with key informants were used to verify monitoring information collected to date and provide opportunities for reflection on the overall program. The process of data triangulation was enhanced through collective sense-making workshops and meetings.

Specific efforts were made to understanding how IPP has sought to promote gender equality, disability inclusion and climate change adaptation, and whether these approaches have contributed to pathways to change (or actual change) to date. The review also explored program performance through the lens of localization and the degree to which partnerships are locally led, and whether systems for knowledge transfer have been successful and can be maintained.

Principles and ethical considerations

This Review used an ethical approach based on the Australasian Evaluation Society Guidelines “Guidelines for the ethical conduct of evaluations.”

http://www.aes.asn.au/images/stories/files/membership/AES_Guidelines_web_v2.pdf

Since the Review worked with and sought the views of public sector officials across Government of Fiji and Australia agencies, appropriate measures were taken to respect confidentiality, accountability, and ethical interactions. Consultations were undertaken with required introductions and permissions. An email outlining the purpose of the Review was provided via email prior to the interview.

Overall approaches

Reflecting the programming, partnership, and cultural contexts of IPP, the Review Team applied a strengths-based approach to understanding and analyzing performance. This approach sought to:

- engage participants in identifying what has occurred to date within IPP
- generate shared understanding of factors which have contributed to program successes to date
- identify future/preferred priorities based on achievements to date (reflecting knowledge/understanding of contextual realities known by those involved in implementation).

A mix of review methods were used as follows:

- Document review
- Initial meetings with key officials
- Face to face semi-structured interviews with selected stakeholders in Suva in Fiji, and Canberra and Melbourne in Australia

- Phone/on-line semi-structured interviews with some officials in Fiji and Australia
- Group sense-making workshops in Fiji
- Regular check-ins with officials at the Post.

Assessment methods

Document review

The Review Team reviewed documents from program commencement (IDD, PAF, Results framework, etc.), and monitoring and review reports prepared during program implementation. The Review Team paid attention to adaptations made during implementation to identify actions undertaken. The review of program documentation enabled the Review Team to develop foundational understanding of individual activities, both in terms of their design, activities undertaken, and results achieved to date.

See Annex 5 for a list of documents reviewed.

Initial interviews with critical officials

An initial short series of meetings was organized with a small number of key stakeholders, including DFAT Suva staff, representatives of the Fiji Program Support Facility and Government of Fiji representatives closely involved with coordinating IPP activities. These helped clarify details of the Review design.

Face to face semi-structured interviews

Stakeholders were identified jointly with the AHC in Suva. Annex 2 includes a list of people met in Fiji and Australia.

Questions used in these interviews reflected the Key Evaluation Questions in Annex 4, and were allocated in detailed Interview Guides for each type of stakeholder.

Some key informants were contacted more than once, to deepen understanding, clarify or verify information, or triangulate information provided by others during the data collection process.

Phone/on-line semi-structured interviews

Some potential interviews were undertaken using on-line methods, including with stakeholders in Canberra.

Group sense-making workshops

A series of three small-group sense-making workshops were facilitated by the Partnership Evaluation Specialist, following data analysis of the initial round of key informant interviewing. See Annex 6 for more details.

Regular check-ins

The Review Team maintained regular communications with AHC officials throughout the Review process. These meetings enabled the review team to:

- share information that will support a smooth Review process, including setting up meetings with officials in Fiji and Australia
- identify sources of information
- share and test initial findings as they emerge

- discuss priorities as Review issues emerge
- discuss expected and draft contents of the Aide Memoire (initial findings and recommendations presentation).

Sampling Strategy

The Review team sought to either interview or communicate with all personnel identified as key stakeholders though acknowledge that not all officials were available and interested in contributing to the Review.

Data Analysis

The review used a range of data analysis methodologies as appropriate to the data sets. This will include:

- A critical theme analysis of reports and transcripts of interviews to analyse and organise the evidence against review questions
- Quantitative and qualitative analysis of relevant data from documents/reports
- Categorisation of respondents' answers to review questions, from interview transcripts, to draw out themes, possible significant differences in views and/or outcomes or trends in different groups (e.g. in different organizations, partnerships, and types of engagement etc.)
- Development of initial findings according to review questions using first-cut analysis of data
- Group sense-making of initial findings to triangulate data, check analysis, generate shared understanding of progress, and to develop and agree on recommendations.

Annex 4 Key Evaluation Questions and Sub questions

Assessment Criteria	Key Evaluation Question and Sub-Questions
Relevance	<p>1. To what extent is the Fiji-Australia Institutional Partnerships Program (IPP) relevant to the current Fijian context?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. Do IPP EOPOs and IOPOs remain relevant to the current governance context of Fiji?b. Does the IPP Theory of Change adequately capture the current context of program relationships, approaches and logic? (DFAT only)c. Is the program 's 'twinning' approach the best fit for achieving program goals?d. How could the program approach be made more relevant to GoF and GoA priorities in a future phase?
Effectiveness	<p>2. How Effective has IPP been in contributing to its intended outcomes?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. What contribution has IPP made to strengthening performance of program partners, and is that contribution in line with GoF priorities?b. Are <u>all</u> current activities contributing to program EOPOs and IOPOs, or are contributions uneven?c. Is the program effective in achieving policy dialogue and influence in different technical areas, notably public sector performance, public financial management, inclusive governance, climate change and gender equality?d. How are decisions reached at program level and at individual partnership level? Is the current process working well? Is decision-making sufficiently transparent?e. What is the quality of communications between partners?f. What evidence exists of increased capacity amongst partners, and what has been the program's contribution to this change?g. What processes are in place to identify and manage risks, particularly in relation to the delivery/achievement of program outcomes?h. What factors/key drivers contributed to IPP results? What opportunities exist to further enhance results?

Assessment Criteria	Key Evaluation Question and Sub-Questions
Efficiency	<p data-bbox="496 344 1257 374">3. How well have IPP resources been managed and used?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="544 403 1326 472">a. How efficient are the ways of working within the agreed delivery modalities? <li data-bbox="544 499 1257 607">b. Are suitable measures in place to understand GoF priorities, and understand whether or not different modalities are responding to these priorities? <li data-bbox="544 633 1342 741">c. Is the program staffing structure and governance suitable to maximising efficient, strategic, responsive and effective day to day program management? <li data-bbox="544 768 1230 837">d. Are governance arrangements fit for purpose and supportive of fostering GoF ownership? <li data-bbox="544 864 1358 934">e. Are program efforts sufficiently harmonised with efforts of other donor/delivery partners in IPP's respective sectors? <li data-bbox="544 960 1310 1030">f. To what extent is program MEL data used and useful in supporting decision-making? <li data-bbox="544 1057 1310 1126">g. Does evidence exist of cross-program and cross-partner learning and adaptation?
Inclusion	<p data-bbox="496 1160 1267 1229">4. To what extent has IPP contributed to improvements in Gender Equality, Disability and Social Inclusion (GEDSI)?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="544 1258 1362 1366">a. To what extent and in what areas has IPP supported partners to identify, introduce and implement reforms that open opportunities for the empowerment of women? <li data-bbox="544 1393 1299 1500">b. To what extent and in what areas has IPP supported partners to identify, introduce and implement reforms towards disability equity and rights? <li data-bbox="544 1527 1310 1597">c. Was the IPP Gender and Disability Inclusion Action Plan implemented, and is it still relevant to today's context? <li data-bbox="544 1624 1369 1693">d. What opportunities exist to strengthen GEDSI programming and impact going forward? <li data-bbox="544 1720 1342 1789">e. What lessons more broadly exist for progressing inclusion within IPP?
Climate Change	<p data-bbox="496 1821 1321 1890">5. To what extent has IPP contributed to understanding about the impacts of climate change and strategies for adaptation?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="544 1917 1362 1986">a. To what extent and in what areas has IPP supported partners to identify, introduce and implement reforms that

Assessment	Key Evaluation Question and Sub-Questions
Criteria	
	enhance understanding and build pathways towards adaptation and resilience?
Localisation	<p data-bbox="496 461 1062 490">6. To what extent has IPP been locally led?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="544 517 1235 589">a. Is the program flexible and innovative in terms of encouraging local leadership and ownership? <li data-bbox="544 611 1369 640">b. Are there examples of effective local leadership within IPP? <li data-bbox="544 663 1369 734">c. What opportunities exist to embed locally led development within a future IPP phase?

Annex 5 Documents reviewed

Overall program documents

IPP Design Document 2020
Country Governance Assessment Fiji 2023
Fiji IPP MERL Framework with performance against indicators and questions 2022
Fiji IPP MERL Framework with performance against indicators and questions 2023
Fiji IPP CoP Report Mapping Exercise 2024 (slides and report)
Service Order, MEL inputs
Risk Matrix

Electoral twinning arrangement

AEC IPP Annual Report 2021
AEC Partner Report Card 2022
Partnership Check FEO 2023
Activity Schedule for AEC 2023-25
Draft Story of Significant Change – Fiji General Election 2022
VOTE Fiji Project Document

Flexifund

Partnership Checks 2022 and 2023
Partnership Check, MCS and PSC 2023
HRMIS Flexifund Report Cards 2022 and 2023
Business process improvements Project Report Cards 2022 and 2023
Flexifund Project Report Cards 2021, 2022 and 2023
Flexifund Results Framework 2021
Story of Significant Change – Business Process Improvements 2022
Story of Significant Change – HRMIS 2022

Media

Partnership Check -PACMAS 2023
PAMAS Phase 4 DFAT Presentation 2023
PACMAS Phase 4 Transition Report
PACMAS Progress Report 2020-21
PACMAS Workplan 2023-34 and narrative
Independent Evaluation Report of PACMAS 2021

Parliament

Fiji Parliament Partnership Check 2022
UNDP Partnership Check 2022
Victorian Parliament Partnership Check 2023
Fiji Parliament Support Project Activity Report 2020
Grant Agreement – Fiji Parliamentary Partnership
Parliament – FPSP II Evaluation Report 2021

Public Financial Management

ADB Fiji Annual Reporting 2021

ADB Fiji Report Card 2022
ADB Partnership Check 2023

Statistics

ABS Fiji IPP Annual Report 2021
FBoS Partnership Check 2022
Fiji IPP Partnership Check ABS 2022
Fiji IPP Partnership Check FBOS 2023
Activity Schedule Record of Understanding
ABS Fiji Program Proposal 2023-25
Partnership Check 2023

Taxation

ATO Fiji IPP Annual Report 2021
Story of significant change – GRB Performance 2021
Story of Significant change – PFM Reforms 2021
Partnership Check – FRCS 2022
Activity Schedule
ATO and FRCS Workplan 2024-25
Partnership Check 2023

Fiji Support Facility

Six monthly reports 2023 and 2024
Annual reports for 2022 and 2023

GEDSI

GEDSI Checklist and Performance Assessment Tool
GEDSI Situational Analysis 2023

Government of Fiji

National Development Plan 2017

DFAT

Annual Investment Monitoring Reports 2022, 2023 and 2024

Annex 6 Outline of Sense-making workshop

The methodology for the Strategic Review of the Fiji-Australia Institutional Partnerships Program included the facilitation of ‘collective sense-making workshops⁶.’ In this Review, the method is used to include groups of program stakeholders in analysis of findings and generation of shared recommendations.

The workshops will share combined data gathered during key informant and focus group interviews held in September and October, with larger groups of stakeholders. While the main purpose is to enable stakeholders to *collectively* discuss the data and reflect on their *own experiences* within the overall program context, the workshops will also enable the Review team to more deeply understand initial findings, and maximise ownership of shared recommendations.

Therefore, the purposes of the Sense-making workshops are:

1. To provide an opportunity for key stakeholders to undertake their own analysis together, of selected information gathered during the Review process
2. To enable program participants/interested agencies to collectively ‘make sense’ of the data
3. To generate shared understanding of the complexity of governance and partnership issues and the diversity of views about appropriate approaches
4. To contribute to generating motivation for sustaining any positive benefits identified, i.e. to be able to act on the knowledge gained.

Process

Production of data sheets

The Review Team will develop Data Sheets comprising key data and quotes from stakeholders who have been interviewed, in relation to the *following five selected Review topics*:

1. Changes that have occurred in Fiji organisations to which IPP has contributed
2. Quality of partnerships and activity implementation
3. Program governance and management
4. Factors which have contributed to effectiveness and efficiency
5. The focus of future collaboration

Approximately 2 pages of data will be collated for each topic and provided to all workshop participants within the workshop context (i.e. not provided beforehand). Information will

⁶ This method is used to enable people in a review (or research/evaluation) process to give meaning to their own experience. It contributes to minimising third-party interpretations of information or data and is intended to be accessible and inclusive. The method is suitable where data is complex and where people have rich narratives about their own real-life experience. Most importantly, the method places the voices and interpretations of people at the centre.

include a variety of statements, quotes, opinions, and ideas, expressed in consistent language style to facilitate easy reading and quick understanding.

Slightly different data sheets will be provided for different groups, reflecting their dominant interests and priorities. Given the time available, a maximum of 4 questions will be included in each workshop, except for the workshop with senior Fiji public sector officials, in which 5 questions will be included.

Distribution of data sheets

Data sheets are likely to be provided as follows (subject to further discussion):

For Workshop 1: Australian High Commission officials

1. Quality of partnerships and activity implementation
2. Program governance and management
3. Factors which have contributed to effectiveness and efficiency
4. The focus of future collaboration

For Workshop 2: Fijian public sector senior officials from MCS/Flexifund/Statistics/Parliament/Electoral/ PFM/Tax

1. Changes that have occurred in Fiji organisations to which IPP has contributed
2. Quality of partnerships and activity implementation
3. Program governance and management
4. Factors which have contributed to effectiveness and efficiency
5. The focus of future collaboration

For Workshop 3: Fiji-based development partner representatives

1. Changes that have occurred in Fiji organisations to which IPP has contributed
2. Quality of partnerships and activity implementation
3. Factors which have contributed to effectiveness and efficiency
4. The focus of future collaboration

For Workshop 4: Australian based partners

1. Changes that have occurred in Fiji organisations to which IPP has contributed
2. Quality of partnerships and activity implementation
3. Program governance and management
4. The focus of future collaboration

Session structure

5 minutes: Welcome, introductions and brief explanation of the ***purpose/process***

5 minutes: Handout of ***first data sheet*** and introduction to the following questions (written up on a large butcher's paper or whiteboard) and the rubric (written up on a large butcher's paper or whiteboard) to consider and discuss about the first data sheet

1. Are there any surprises about what is in the data or what is missing?

2. In general, what can we see from the data? [key themes] How might we explain these findings?
3. Are there any exceptions to the general picture?
4. What might we recommend based on our understanding of this data?
5. How would we rate the Program's contribution to performance and partnerships, applying the rubric below?

15 minutes: Discussion about the **first data sheet** using these 5 questions

10 minutes: Feedback and agreement on the key points from discussion and the rating of the program using the rubric

15 minutes: Discussion about the **second data sheet** using the same 5 questions

10 minutes: Feedback and agreement on the key points from discussion and the rating of the program using the rubric

[1 hour up to here]

15 minutes: Discussion about the **third data sheet** using the same 5 questions

10 minutes: Feedback and agreement on the key points from discussion and the rating of the program using the rubric

15 minutes: Discussion about the **fourth data sheet** using the same 5 questions

10 minutes: Feedback and agreement on the key points from discussion and the rating of the program using the rubric

10 minutes: Wrap up to cover:

- **Overall conclusions about sense-making findings**
- **Reflections on the process**
- **Information about next steps in the review process and distribution of the report**
- **Thanks to participants**

[total of 2 hours allocated]

NB Two posters will be prepared as follows:

POSTER 1 Questions for reflections in relation to each topic:

1. In general, what can we see from the data? How might we explain these findings?
2. Are there any exceptions to the general picture?
3. Are there any surprises about what is in the data or what is missing?
4. How would we rate the program's contribution to performance and partnerships, applying the rubric below?

POSTER 2 Rubric for assessment against each topic area:

Level of performance	Description
Excellent (always)	Clear example of exemplary performance or best practice in this area – no weaknesses
Very good (almost always)	Very good to excellent performance on virtually all aspects; strong but not exemplary; no weaknesses of any real consequence
Good (mostly with some exceptions)	Reasonably good performance overall. Might have a few slight weaknesses but nothing serious
Adequate (sometimes, with quite a few exceptions)	Fair performance. Some serious but non-fatal flaws on a few aspects
Poor (or occasionally with clear weakness evident)	Clear evidence of unsatisfactory functioning, serious weaknesses across the board on crucial issues
Insufficient evidence	Evidence unavailable or of insufficient quality to determine performance

Expected results

This process is not intended to generate additional sources of data, though it may verify existing data and generate shared agreement on findings and recommendations. The main purpose, as noted above is provide the opportunity for stakeholders to access the semi-data and reflect on it individually and collectively for their own benefit.

After each group discussion, opportunities will be provided to share key messages discussed at each workshop. These messages will be incorporated into the Findings (Section 4) and the Discussion (Section 5) parts of the Review report, as appropriate.

Annex 7 Summary of IPP partnerships/topic areas

• Electoral

Support through IPP to Fiji's electoral systems occurs through a partnership between the FEC, AEC and UNDP, with further complementary support provided by the NZED. Prior to 2023, the focus of the partnership was ensuring that robust systems for the December 2022 election were in place. Since then, the focus has shifted to more systematic support aimed at progressing the FEC's 2020-23 and 2024-27 Strategic Plans, including support to Municipal Council Elections scheduled for 2024.

AEC support to Electoral Management Bodies such as FEC is built around three intermediate outcomes:

- Intermediate Outcome 1: Improved Institutional and individual capacity of Electoral Management Bodies (EMBs) to deliver on their mandates
- Intermediate Outcome 2: Strengthened relationships and coordination among key stakeholders
- Intermediate Outcome 3: AEC support for critical operational activities enables EMBs to deliver elections

In Fiji, the FEC has requested support in the form of BRIDGE workshops to be run by the AEC. BRIDGE is a globally delivered professional development course in election administration, built around a range of different modules. In advance of the Municipal Council Elections, the FEC has requested that the AEC run workshops through BRIDGE applying the Operational Planning module and the Voter and Civic Education module. UNDP is also more broadly active in civic education, and creating space for civil society to contribute to the electoral process.

• Flexifund

Flexifund is a flexible means to quickly adapt to Fiji's dynamic governance context, where opportunities for engagement can open and close very quickly. For example, the Flexifund was able to quickly mobilise a relevantly skilled transition team to support the MCS and PSC in early 2023 in setting systems in place for commencement of the new government.

Additionally, Flexifund has three longer term points of engagement aimed at supporting the MCS through three outcomes:

- MCS delivering business processes across the Fiji Public Service - supporting targeted ministries with business process improvements (BPI)
- MCS supporting and improving the Human Resources Information Management System (HRMIS) system across Fiji— supporting progress towards a unified civil service management information system
- A stronger partnership between the Australian High Commission in Suva and the Ministry of Civil Service, through facilitating functional and responsive relationships between MCS, PSC and the Australian Public Service Commission

• Media

IPP support to media in Fiji occurs primarily through the regional Pacific Media Assistance Scheme (PACMAS), which commenced in 2008 and has consistently been active in Fiji. The fourth phase of PACMAS has three end of investment outcomes, all of which are being operationalised in Fiji:

- Pacific news media outlets are more viable and digitally smart
- Pacific audiences engage with quality public interest media content
- Enabling environment for professional, independent and inclusive Pacific media is improved

The PACMAS program is operationalised in Fiji through:

- Support to the Fiji Media Association
- Support to an emerging 'Women in Media' grouping
- Responsiveness and opportunistic training across the Fijian media landscape, in relation to events such as the repeal of the Media Industry Development Act 2010
- **Parliament**

Support to the Fijian Parliament is multi-faceted and occurs with the assistance of UNDP and the Victorian Parliament. The work stream has three components:

- Support for strengthening Parliamentary Committees
- Support to advance General House Procedures
- Support for Parliamentary services

UNDP's involvement with support to the Parliament is integrated with its electoral work. It also includes a significant focus on GESI and how gender and inclusion issues can be advanced in their work with the Parliament of Fiji.

- **Public Financial Management**

Support to Fijian systems for Public Financial Management is led by the ADB who have a longstanding and well-regarded reputation and capacity in the area, and how it plays out in the Pacific region. Support occurs through three components:

- Supporting tailored policy advice and targeted analysis to promote longer term fiscal sustainability for improved growth and public service delivery (with a focus on fiscal planning and supporting government to shift to a fiscal recovery mindset)
- Strengthening capacity of government agencies to implement PFM reform priorities (focused on high quality project appraisal)
- Establishing gender responsive budgeting (working closely with the Ministry of Women)

The GRB component currently has particular momentum, and is being rolled out across ministries, and is also now part of the investment appraisal process.

- **Statistics**

IPP work in relation to statistics involves a partnership between the Fiji Bureau of Statistics (FBOS) and the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). While a longstanding relationship, the partnership was reviewed in 2023 to reconsider the best possible approach for ABS support to FBOS, with the following areas now the focus of the partnership:

- Focus on fiscal planning and supporting government to shift to a fiscal recovery mindset
- Statistical production and use
 - National accounts
 - Seasonal adjustment
 - Geospatial software training

Work in the pipeline involves the setting up of a Statistical Advisory body from across government, and also efforts to better integrate GEDSI considerations within statistics gathering.

- **Taxation**

IPP has supported efforts to build a strong and effective working relationship between the Fiji Revenue and Customs Service (FRCS) and the Australian Taxation Office (ATO) with the aim of supporting FRCS in its work to design and implement a strong, transparent, and effective tax compliance regime in Fiji.

In May 2024, a new workplan was agreed between the two agencies, funded by IPP, which has 12 different work areas ranging from debt management and dispute resolution to data analytics and tax crime. The program also has gender dimensions including efforts to promote women in leadership roles within FRCS.