

Independent Joint Mid Term Review of Tautai- Governance for Economic Growth and Australia's Budget Support Program

DFAT Management Response

Investment Summaries

Investment name: Tautai- Governance for Economic Growth Facility (Tautai)

Aidworks investment number: INN638

Investment period: 6 Jan 2021 to 30 Jun 2030

Investment value: \$45 million

Country / region: Samoa

Primary Sector: Governance & Economic Growth

Investment Objectives: The **Tautai** program is aimed at improving and strengthening Government of Samoa's fiscal and governance resilience, public financial management, debt sustainability and promoting inclusive economic growth.

Investment name: Australia's Budget Support Program (ABSP)

Aidworks investment number: INN996

Investment period: 23 May 2022 to 31 August 2031

Investment value: \$50 million (bilateral) + \$65 million (regional)

Country / region: Samoa

Primary Sector: General Budget Support

Investment Objectives: **ABSP** is a strategic investment to support Samoa's economic and social well-being, in line with Australia's commitments articulated in the Samoa-Australia Bilateral Partner Arrangement and the Samoa-Australia Development Partnership Plan. It includes allocations from bilateral funding and the regional budget support program Pacific Direct Financing Fund (PDFF) but is delivered under a single Direct Funding Arrangement and through the Joint Policy Action Matrix.

Evaluation Summary

The Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) engaged the services of an independent consultancy firm to undertake a joint Mid-term Review (**MTR**) for DFAT's flagship bilateral governance program, **Tautai - Governance for Economic Growth (Tautai)** and **Australia's Budget Support Program (ABSP)** to the Government of Samoa (GoS). The ABSP and Tautai Programs work in tandem to support the Government of Samoa's fiscal and economic priorities to improve and strengthen resilience through inclusive economic growth, to contribute to a prosperous and stable nation for its citizens.

The primary purpose of this MTR was to evaluate the extent to which the ABSP and Tautai Program have been effective in targeting levers of change to progress on their respective Intermediate Outcomes and achieve End of Program Outcomes, paying particular attention to any major obstacles hindering progress and/or opportunities to accelerate progress. The secondary purposes of the evaluation included: evaluating the relevance and coherence of the program designs, scope and implementation approaches to inform whether or not an extension into the planned second phase of the investments is appropriate; whether adjustments to the Program Logic, Monitoring, Evaluation, Research and Learning (MERL) Strategy, and/or other strategies/approaches may be required; Synthesise lessons learned, identify areas for improvement and offer contextually appropriate and politically feasible recommendations.

The independent review included an in-country mission in November 2026 to undertake extensive consultation with many stakeholders in Samoa as well as numerous online consultations for overseas based stakeholders to ensure that a broad base of perspectives were captured. This process was coordinated by DFAT Apia Post and Tautai.

The MTR report was presented to Samoan stakeholders at the Tautai External Reflections Workshop on 5 March 2026 as a validation exercise. The report was finalised 7 April 2026.

Evaluation Team:

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Summary of the Management Response

The MTR serves as an important data source for DFAT and Tautai leadership. The findings have informed discussions and decision making on the relevance and appropriateness of extending the Tautai Program for an additional four years (2026-2030), and extending the ABSP for an additional four years (2027-2031).

DFAT acknowledges and agrees with the seven recommendations provided by the review team. DFAT and Tautai have commenced measures to implement the recommendations and will continue to seek opportunities to strengthen the coordination of priorities and workplans of the two investments. The responses to each of the specific recommendations identify actions already being taken and opportunities for further action that will be implemented to strengthen the approach of both programs.

Response to the recommendations made in the report

Recommendation	Response	Action Plan	Timeframe
<p>Reaffirm ABSP as the primary budget-support instrument and Tautai as the main governance and systems facility, with a tighter focus on a limited set of core focus areas.</p> <p>Lead: DFAT Post (for ABSP positioning), MoF (for GoS confirmation of roles), Tautai facility (for operational focus).</p> <p>Support: DFAT Canberra (policy alignment), Public Service Commission (PSC) and other central agencies (for systems and workforce focus).</p>	<p>Agree</p>	<p>The new Tautai workplan focuses work on a reduced number of ‘Major Projects’, enabling it to deepen its focus on the following areas: Strengthening Fiscal Management, Public Sector Strengthening, and Strengthening Governance of Economic Sectors.</p> <p>Through the provision of general budget support, ABSP is the vehicle by which requests for support in GoS priority areas that do not fall under the remit of Tautai (or other Australian investments) can be responded to.</p> <p>An Assessment of National Systems, planned for the second-half of 2026, will be important in informing decision-</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>

Recommendation	Response	Action Plan	Timeframe
		making around the scale and focus of the ABSP.	
<p>Elevate domestic revenue mobilisation to a central objective for the next phase, with a clearly articulated ABSP–Tautai package that centres on the new customs and revenue entities and the tax system.</p> <p>Lead: MoF and Ministry of Revenue (policy and administration), DFAT Post (ABSP Joint Policy Action Matrix (JPAM) framing), Tautai facility (TA and capacity support).</p> <p>Support: DFAT Canberra (financing parameters), other JPAM partners (technical and policy inputs).</p>	Agree	<p>DFAT has agreed with Government of Samoa that domestic revenue generation will be an important objective for the next phase. Tautai has already incorporated work with the Ministry of Revenue and Ministry of Customs in the workplan for 2026/27, including supporting the new tax system.</p> <p>Domestic revenue mobilisation was raised as an emerging issue of importance at the December 2025 JPAM mission. There is ongoing discussion on potential inclusion of a new revenue related action in the JPAM.</p>	<p>Tautai annual workplan to be finalised 30 June 2026</p> <p>ABSP plan to be finalised August 2026</p>
<p>Review and update Tautai’s program logic and selected indicators, to ensure expectations capture cross-government outcomes achieved to date and align with updated GoS priorities.</p> <p>Lead: Tautai facility leadership and MERLA team.</p> <p>Support: DFAT Post (MEL standards and approvals), MoF and PSC (validation and alignment with GoS frameworks).</p>	Agree	<p>DFAT and Tautai / DT Global are discussing the usability of the current program logic, alignment with GoS frameworks including the Pathway for the Development of Samoa (FY2026/27 – 2030-31) and whether or not GEDSI should have a standalone IO or should instead be maintained as a cross cutting theme.</p>	<p>The current contract ends Nov 2026. Any changes to the program logic and/or indicators will need to be finalised by August.</p>
<p>Adopt and apply concise, jointly agreed principles for ABSP policy actions and Tautai facility funding decisions, including explicit tests for additionality and substitution.</p>	Agree	<p>Since the MTR, DFAT has held discussions with Tautai on better aligning the two programs’ theories of change, planning, monitoring and reporting processes. DFAT and Tautai</p>	Ongoing

Recommendation	Response	Action Plan	Timeframe
<p>Lead: DFAT Post and MoF (agreement of principles and application to JPAM and facility governance).</p> <p>Support: DFAT Canberra (corporate alignment), Tautai facility (operationalisation in programming and appraisal tools).</p>		<p>will jointly develop the principles and criteria for ABSP policy actions and Tautai facility funding decisions, including explicit tests for additionality and substitution, in time for the beginning of phase two.</p> <p>DFAT has commenced work with Tautai to better integrate the MEL frameworks and accountability processes of the two programs. This includes integrating the ABSP into the Tautai 6 monthly reflections sessions commencing with the next reflection session in August or September 2026.</p>	
<p>Use JPAM and sector platforms to define and periodically review division of labour between ABSP, Tautai, Tautua and other partners, starting with finance, statistics, ICT and community development.</p> <p>Lead: MoF / MFAT (JPAM and aid coordination), DFAT Post (Australian portfolio coherence).</p> <p>Support: Tautai and Tautua facilities (inputs on comparative advantage and activity mapping), other partners (World Bank, NZ MFAT, ADB, European Union).</p>	Agree	<p>JPAM planning meetings and missions (including Tautai) currently act as an effective mechanism by which development partners coordinate development assistance including technical advice.</p> <p>Great efforts were put into the differentiation and coordination between DFAT, GoS, Tautai and Tautua during the design of the two facilities. This coordination continues through DFAT Bilateral Aid Coordination meetings, and DFAT/Tautai/Tautua meetings.</p>	<p>At regularly-scheduled Bilateral Aid Coordination meetings</p> <p>Ongoing JPAM missions (next in December 2026)</p>
<p>Systematically align Tautai’s training and advisory support with PSC and sector workforce priorities, and centre a small number of high-impact ICT / data</p>	Agree	<p>The National Workforce Plan 2030 was launched 28 May 2026 and now provides clear guidance on GoS’</p>	Ongoing

Recommendation	Response	Action Plan	Timeframe
<p>investments that enable revenue, PFM and service-delivery reforms.</p> <p>Lead: PSC (workforce priorities and sustainability parameters), MoF and MCIT (ICT / data priorities), Tautai facility (design and delivery).</p> <p>Support: DFAT Post (resourcing and approvals), line ministries and non-state actors (demand articulation and participation).</p>		<p>workforce priorities. The Public Administration Sector Annual Review (25 & 26 June 2026) includes a workforce planning and development panel discussion bringing together development partners to discuss opportunities to strengthen coordination of workforce development.</p> <p>The 2026 Tautai Workplan includes a number of ICT investments including the PSC State of Technology uplift and ICT projects with the ministries of Customs and Revenue.</p>	
<p>Integrate GEDSI, climate change and locally led development requirements into Tautai workplans and use ABSP’s JPAM policy dialogue and Annual Plan process to progressively promote these considerations as standard expectations in JPAM actions, monitored through existing GoS MERL systems.</p> <p>Lead: MoF and MWCSO (policy and systems integration), Tautai facility (practical tools and support to capacity-building), DFAT Post (JPAM dialogue and ABSP Annual Plans).</p> <p>Support: PSC (integration into HR, performance frameworks), other central and sector agencies (sector-specific implementation).</p>	Agree	<p>Post will work with the Pacific Direct Financing Facility team and Pacific Recovery Economic Support phase 2 (PRES+) to strengthen integration of GEDSI and Climate Change considerations into ABSP Plans and JPAM dialogue.</p> <p>Tautai’s current contract requires the submission of a separate GEDSI strategy, workplan and budget. Tautai and DFAT will consider the opportunity to incorporate this document into the broader workplan for the next iteration of the contract, due to commence November 2026.</p>	FY 2026/27 once PRES+ is operational