



FINAL EVALUATION REPORT – ABC International Development and DFAT

Pacific Media Assistance Scheme (PACMAS) Phase Four Independent Evaluation

March, 2026

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

The Pacific Media Assistance Scheme (PACMAS) is a long-term Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) investment **supporting an independent, professional and resilient Pacific media sector that is valued by Pacific audiences**. PACMAS Phase Four (PACMAS-4), implemented by ABC International Development (ABCID), commenced in July 2023 and is due to complete by the end of 2026. The program works across 12 Pacific countries, with a focus on six priority countries.

Building on longstanding media sector partnerships and training experience, Phase Four has **deliberately shifted its focus towards strengthening media systems**. This change addresses a rapidly evolving global and regional media and geopolitical landscape, including digital disruption, declining Pacific audience engagement with local media, workforce and institutional fragility, increasing geopolitical pressure, and the spread of mis- and disinformation.

Key streams of work in PACMAS-4 include:

- A streamlined, contemporary **training and capacity development program**, delivered both online and in person, augmented by Australia-based exchange and mentoring opportunities
- **Digital transitions** support for select media outlets
- Grants funding, equipment and mentoring support for the generation and production of **quality media content**, telling deeper and more diverse Pacific stories
- Core support for voluntary, sector-representative **media associations**, to revitalise governance and organisational capacity
- Support for emergent **Women in Media networks**, championing women's leadership, workforce equity, inclusion and wellbeing, and supporting gender-responsive content development.

Evaluation Purpose, Scope and Methodology

This Independent Evaluation was conducted between October 2025 and March 2026. It focuses on the **value, performance and progress of the PACMAS-4 program as an investment** and generates evidence to **inform decision-making regarding the design and scope of a potential next phase**. This includes consideration of whether the investment should continue and the key strategic lessons and priorities emerging from Phase Four.

The evaluation was initiated just over two years into a systems-reform-oriented investment originally designed for a five-year timeframe. Performance has therefore been **assessed against realistic progress in strengthening institutional, professional, and systems foundations**, rather than against end-of-program outcomes. The evaluation covered **all PACMAS-4 workstreams** across 12 Pacific Island countries and regional initiatives. Reflecting scope and strategic intent, it focused on **investment-level performance** rather than detailed component- and country-level assessments.

A **mixed-methods approach** was employed, including triangulation of analysis across:

- Review of program documentation, including design materials, program research, reports and monitoring tools and data
- Semi-structured interviews, focus groups and consultations with stakeholders across country contexts and donor, policy and program staff
- Case study vignettes
- Structured evaluative reasoning using a five-point rubric framework.



Evaluation Criteria and Key Evaluation Questions

The evaluation was guided by four criteria and five Key Evaluation Questions (KEQs):

Criterion	Key Evaluation Question
Relevance	KEQ1: To what extent is PACMAS-4 meeting the needs of key participants and stakeholders?
Effectiveness & Efficiency	KEQ2: To what degree has PACMAS-4 been implemented as intended, including an effective and efficient modality and approach?
Effectiveness & Efficiency	KEQ3: To what extent is PACMAS-4 progressing towards producing valuable outcomes?
Equity & Inclusion	KEQ4: Is PACMAS-4 effectively promoting gender equality, disability equity and broader social inclusion?
Sustainability	KEQ5: To what extent are PACMAS-4 benefits likely to endure?

Overall Findings

PACMAS-4 is a **strategically sound and valuable regional investment** that is strengthening the institutional, professional and relational foundations of the Pacific media sector in the face of significant structural and geopolitical challenges. The program is strongly aligned with contemporary sector needs. Phase Four of the PACMAS program has positively shifted multiple interconnected parts of the Pacific media system, including journalist capability, digital transition, media association and outlet capacity, sector equity and leadership, production of quality audience-oriented content, and women's professional networks. ABCID's implementation has been technically proficient, values-led, grounded in Pacific realities, and effective and efficient within a modest budget.

The evaluation finds that PACMAS-4 has significant value in **supporting the enabling conditions needed to sustain and revitalise high-quality, valued Pacific journalism through media systems reform**. The program is enhancing the professional capacity, institutions and sector coordination that underpin a Pacific media sector positioned to adapt to substantial and evolving challenges. Its multi-pronged, reinforcing approach is generating credible progress toward greater sectoral resilience and represents a substantial and appropriate achievement at this stage of the investment.

Early and intermediate outcomes are visible across all End-of-Program Outcome domains. Media associations and outlets have strengthened, workforce capability in contemporary journalism practice has grown, content production has diversified in its coverage and use of digital platforms, women's empowerment and equity within the sector have advanced, and local leadership and regional collaboration have deepened. These gains reflect meaningful progress in strengthening the institutional, professional and relational foundations essential to the survival and resilience of the Pacific media sector. As expected at this stage of a systems reform investment, the evaluation primarily observed the earlier stages of change pathways. Longer-term outcomes, including audience growth and commercial viability, remain emerging. Realising these results will require more time, sustained investment and stronger data.

Performance is **strongest in some country contexts where multiple program levers intersect and reinforce one another**, supporting momentum and outcomes. This reflects the Phase Four design, which concentrates deeper investment and engagement in six priority countries while maintaining lighter engagement across the wider Pacific region. As a result, relevance and outcomes are more variable in secondary countries. While this prioritised investment approach reflects a limited resource envelope and supports depth of change in some contexts while maintaining regional reach, it highlights the challenge of achieving consistent sector strengthening across a diverse region within current resource levels.

Performance was assessed for each criterion against a five-point rubric. Overall, PACMAS-4 is performing **strongly** against the criteria of relevance and effectiveness and efficiency. Performance is assessed as



achieving in relation to gender equality (as part of equity and inclusion) and sustainability, and **developing** for disability and broader social inclusion.

Criterion	Performance level	Performance level	Performance level	Performance level	Performance level
(intentionally blank)	Very limited	Developing	Achieving	Strong	Excellent
Relevance	nil	nil	nil	Yes	nil
Effectiveness and Efficiency	nil	nil	nil	Yes	nil
Gender Equality	nil	nil	Yes	nil	nil
Disability and Social Inclusion	nil	Yes	nil	nil	nil
Sustainability	nil	nil	Yes	nil	nil

Key Findings by Criterion

Relevance - Strong

PACMAS-4 demonstrates **strong alignment with the needs and priorities of the Pacific media sector**. The systems-strengthening shift has been well-received and widely endorsed by stakeholders as appropriate to the region's current challenges. Critical contemporary needs – including supporting digital transition, shoring up journalism fundamentals, providing core capacity support to media associations as anchor institutions and local leaders, and improving gender equity within the sector – are being addressed.

The program is regarded as **credible, responsive and grounded in longstanding relationships**. Relevance is strongest where engagement is sustained, multi-stream and sufficiently resourced. It is more variable in contexts where lighter-touch engagement and limited investment constrain perceived strategic fit.

Effectiveness and Efficiency - Strong

PACMAS-4 has been **implemented largely as intended and demonstrates strong performance relative to its scope and modest available resources**. Effective and efficient implementation has been **supported by ABCID's specialist expertise, sectoral credibility, trusted partnerships and adaptive, values-led delivery**. The program has delivered substantial activity across multiple streams and 12 diverse country settings within a modest budget. In doing so, it has balanced regional reach and responsiveness with targeted deep investments in pilot initiatives and priority contexts.

Good early progress is evident in outcomes including strengthened journalistic capabilities, revitalised and active associations, media outlets advancing the digital transition agenda, expanded and diversified multimedia content production, and Pacific-led Women in Media leadership networks. These gains have contributed to strengthened sectoral collaboration and inclusion, stronger institutional foundations, and enabled a greater orientation to producing quality, multiplatform content of interest to local audiences.

Progress towards later-stage outcomes is not fully testable. The timing of the evaluation and data limitations (such as limited audience metrics) constrain assessment of assumptions linking skills development, content production and digitisation to audience growth and improved financial viability.



Equity and Inclusion

Gender Equality - Achieving

The Women in Media (WiM) initiative has generated strong Pacific-led momentum and tangible early outcomes. It is making meaningful progress in creating safe, peer-supported professional networks for women across the region and in strengthening visibility, confidence, safety and collective voice within the sector. WiM reflects deliberate investment and sustained strategic attention to gender equality that is responsive to Pacific leadership. It is beginning to shift norms around women's leadership, participation and working conditions in media, while also influencing the production of content that is more representative, sensitive and less likely to reinforce harmful norms.

While gender equality has received focused investment through targeted initiatives and leadership pathways, **mainstreaming across all program streams and outcomes remains uneven.** Continued consolidation and embedding will be required to deepen and sustain progress in Phase Five.

Disability and Social Inclusion - Developing

Disability equity has not yet been structurally embedded to the same degree as gender equality. Progress has been constrained by limited prioritisation and resourcing in the Phase Four investment design, including the absence of a clearly resourced strategy. As a result, dedicated initiatives, partnerships and consistent guidance across workstreams have remained limited.

Strengthening this area will be critical in Phase Five to support workforce participation and inclusion of people with disabilities within the media sector, as well as to promote accessible content that represents people with disabilities positively and avoids reinforcing harmful norms.

Sustainability – Achieving

PACMAS-4 has laid credible institutional and relational foundations for longer-term sectoral ecosystem sustainability. Strengthened media associations, professional networks, digital capability pilots, and leadership pathways are contributing to sector resilience and helping build a more inclusive and adaptable media ecosystem that remains relevant to Pacific audiences.

However, structural constraints limit how quickly and consistently PACMAS-supported change can take hold. These include small and fragmented markets, limited workforce size and high attrition, and the financial fragility of associations and outlets. The ambition of sector-wide reform is substantial relative to current levels of investment, which constrains how deeply initiatives can be embedded across all contexts. Sustainability prospects are strongest where multiple initiatives operate together over time, particularly in countries with sustained, multi-stream engagement.

Taken together, Phase Four represents an essential investment in the survival, reform and revitalisation of Pacific media systems across the region. It has established a credible platform that strengthens prospects for longer-term sector viability, provided investment continues, and expectations are calibrated to different country contexts and starting points.

Key Lessons from Phase Four

Systems reform requires time and realistic expectations. Early gains are most visible in institutional and professional foundations rather than in rapid commercial progress and deep transformation of sectoral inequities and exclusions.

Balancing depth with reach requires sufficient resourcing and strategic choices. Intensive initiatives demand sustained relational, governance and technical investment.

The partnership model is a core strength, and Pacific leadership strengthens sustainability. Trust-based, Pacific-responsive delivery enhances legitimacy and ownership. Pacific-to-Pacific exchange and Pacific staffing enhances reform momentum and sectoral identity.



GEDSI progress requires structural embedding, resourcing and Pacific expertise. Gender equality gains demonstrate what is possible when initiatives are clearly Pacific-led and resourced. Disability inclusion requires equivalent strategic focus.

Strategic Implications

The evaluation supports progression to a Phase Five with a five-year timeframe, increased and consolidated resourcing, and retention of a systems reform orientation. Phase Four has laid credible foundations. Phase Five should focus on consolidation, strategic depth and scaled investment rather than major redesign.

Recommendations

Key summarised recommendations are as follows:

Design and Investment

Recommendation 1: Progress to Phase Five design preparation with a five-year investment timeframe and increased resourcing aligned with reform ambition.

Recommendation 2: Consolidate and align investment architecture to enable deeper multi-stream engagement in priority countries.

Recommendation 3: Refine the Theory of Change and MEL framework with clearer short- to medium-term outcomes, realistic indicators, differentiated country pathways, and a strategy for audience growth and engagement measurement.

Recommendation 4: Develop a tailored small-states strategy to address geographic unevenness in engagement and outcomes and sustainability constraints.

Implementation

Recommendation 5: Deepen localisation and Pacific leadership, increasing regional staffing and Pacific-to-Pacific exchange.

Recommendation 6: Increase communications, MEL and GEDSI resourcing to strengthen clarity, monitoring, and a focus on inclusion and equity.

Strategic Priorities

Recommendation 7: Strengthen and resource a Pacific-led, intersectional GEDSI strategy, particularly disability equity.

Recommendation 8: Sustain institutional support to media associations as a central systems lever.

Recommendation 9: Continue and strategically scale digital transition and business capability support.

Recommendation 10: Strengthen workforce capability, leadership and wellbeing pathways.



Acknowledgement of Country

Strategic Development Group acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of Country of the lands on which this work was undertaken, and the continued connection to land, waters and community of them and other Indigenous people around the world.

We especially acknowledge the Custodians of the land where Strategic Development Group staff members live and work – the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung and Bunurong people in Melbourne and the Mornington Peninsula, the Ngannawal people in Yass, the Ngannawal and the Ngambri people in Canberra, the Wodi Wodi people of the Dharawal nation in Wollongong, the Pydairrme people of the Paredarmerme nation in the Tasman Peninsula, and the Turrbal and the Yuggera people in Brisbane.

We pay our respects to their Cultures, Country and Elders - past, present and emerging - and thank them for their ongoing care for the land, coastlines and ecosystems of this country, going back thousands of years. We recognise the enduring connection of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to Country, culture, family and community.

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We also wish to thank the evaluation commissioners – the PACMAS leadership and the Research, Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning teams at ABC International Development, and the DFAT Pacific Media and Broadcasting Branch – for their invaluable guidance and support throughout the evaluation process.



ACRONYMS LIST

Acronym	Expanded
ABC	Australian Broadcasting Corporation
ABCID	ABC International Development
AI	Artificial Intelligence
AGM	Annual General Meeting
DFAT	Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
EOPO	End of Program Outcome
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FoJ	Foundations of Journalism
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
GEDSI	Gender Equality, Disability and Social Inclusion
GoA	Government of Australia
IO	Intermediate Outcome
JAWS	Journalists Association of (Western) Samoa
KEQ	Key Evaluation Question
LGBTIQ+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, Questioning and other expanding and new parts of gender and sexual identities
MASI	Media Association of the Solomon Islands
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MC	Managing Contractor
MDI	Media Development Initiative
MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning
MoJo	Mobile Journalism
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OECD-DAC	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development – Development Assistance Committee
OPD	Organisation for Persons with Disabilities
OTP	Office of the Pacific (DFAT)
PACMAS	Pacific Media Assistance Scheme
PACMAS-4	Pacific Media Assistance Scheme Phase Four
PINA	Pacific Islands News Association
PNG	Papua New Guinea
RMSF	Regional Media Support Fund
SOGIESC	Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression, and Sex Characteristics
TOC	Theory of Change
TOR	Terms of Reference
ToT	Training of Trainers
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WiM	Women in Media



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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. About the Pacific Media Assistance Scheme

The Pacific Media Assistance Scheme (PACMAS) is a longstanding Australian Government media assistance program supporting the development of the media sector and independent, high-quality journalism in the Pacific region. Commenced in 2007, PACMAS is funded and managed by the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and is a key investment under the Indo-Pacific Broadcasting Strategy.¹ It complements the Australian-Pacific Media and Broadcasting Partnership² and aligns with Australia's International Development Policy.³

The fourth phase of PACMAS (PACMAS-4) aims to contribute to **Australia's strategic commitments to a stable and prosperous Pacific region** with democratic processes and better governance. It does so by supporting public access to high-quality, independent, public-interest-oriented, and inclusive journalism, enabled by a resilient, diverse, and capable sector. Within DFAT, PACMAS is managed by the Pacific Media and Broadcasting Branch of the Pacific Economic and Infrastructure Division in the Office of the Pacific (OTP).

The **Australian Broadcasting Corporation's International Development (ABCID) media development unit has implemented PACMAS** since Phase Two began in 2010 and led the design for Phase Four, within the parameters established by DFAT. Under DFAT's investment management, ABCID is responsible for program delivery, including design and implementation of activity streams, partnerships with regional media organisations, and provision of technical expertise. In implementing PACMAS, ABCID draws on personnel and resources across the ABC and select external specialists.

ABCID also manages and/or implements other related media sector investments in the region, most notably the Regional Media Support Fund (which extends into Asia) and the Papua New Guinea-focused Media Development Initiative (MDI), as well as several bilateral investments complementary to PACMAS that are outside the scope of this evaluation.

1.2. PACMAS Phase Four

Phase Four of the PACMAS program (PACMAS-4) commenced in July 2023 and is due to complete in mid-2026, with a short-term extension likely to extend PACMAS to the end of 2026. The total value of PACMAS-4 is AUD 9.28 million for the core three-year period, plus an additional \$110,000 to support the continuation of Fiji bilateral activities in FY25-26 and the planned six-month program extension.

PACMAS-4 **operates at both regional and country levels.** Consistent with the PACMAS-4 investment design parameters and the scale of resources available to the program, Phase Four concentrates deeper engagement and investment in six 'priority countries': Fiji, Samoa, the Solomon Islands, Tonga, Vanuatu and Kiribati. This builds on longstanding PACMAS support in these larger Pacific media markets while expanding priority engagement to a new focus country, Kiribati. Smaller Pacific Island countries – namely Tuvalu, Nauru, the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI), the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), Niue, and Palau – are supported through more targeted or opportunistic engagement in specific areas where feasible ('secondary countries'). This prioritised approach was intended to enable deeper engagement and systems strengthening in selected contexts while maintaining a regional footprint and value across the broader Pacific.

PACMAS-4 supports the **goal** of Pacific people valuing their media as the source of Pacific news, conversations, culture and stories in the public interest. PACMAS-4 works towards this overall goal through

¹ <https://www.dfat.gov.au/people-people/indo-pacific-broadcasting-strategy>

² <https://www.dfat.gov.au/sites/default/files/pacific-media-broadcasting-partnership.pdf>

³ <https://www.dfat.gov.au/publications/development/australias-international-development-policy>

its **objective** of fostering a more professional, resilient, and diverse Pacific media sector. PACMAS-4's **End of Program Outcomes** (EOPOs) and **Intermediate Outcomes** (IOs) are outlined in Table 1 below.

End-of-investment outcomes	Intermediate outcomes
EOPO 1: Pacific news media outlets are more viable and digitally smart	IO 1: Journalists produce public interest content that meets quality standards
EOPO 1: Pacific news media outlets are more viable and digitally smart	IO 2: Media outlets have strengthened digital business models, plans, and products
EOPO 2: Pacific audiences engage with quality Pacific public interest media content	IO 3: Pacific media produces and distributes quality public interest content that promotes gender equality, disability and social inclusion
EOPO 3: Enabling environment for professional, independent and inclusive Pacific media is improved	IO 4: Media associations more effectively protect and promote independent, professional and inclusive media
EOPO 3: Enabling environment for professional, independent and inclusive Pacific media is improved	IO 5: Women media networks empowered to promote women's equal participation in the media industry

Table 1: PACMAS-4 desired outcomes

The program's primary partners are media associations: the Pacific Islands News Association (PINA), the peak media industry body with representatives from across the Pacific, and national media associations. PINA is a partner and sub-grantee, and national media associations are partners and, in some cases, sub-grantees. At the country level, relationships with media associations and women in media (WiM) networks support PACMAS's engagement with individual outlets and journalist practitioners.

A shift in focus

Following an Independent Evaluation of Phase 3⁴ (2017-2023) in September 2021, ABCID led the Phase Four design process. The design responded to DFAT's Design Concept Note and was supported by a 12-month consultation process. **Phase Four has seen a significant strategic shift in program design and modality** from Phase Three, which was primarily focused on supporting media reporting on development issues and placed a strong emphasis on journalist training. Phase Four continues training but with a more consolidated offering, **seeking to strengthen and support the resilience of the media sector and the overall system in the face of significant contemporary contextual challenges.**

In this phase, PACMAS has taken an **explicit approach to addressing identified threats and challenges** – particularly from social media, international media access, and competition with other digital content – that have led to a drift away from Pacific audiences' consumption of locally produced news and current affairs. In this sense, PACMAS-4 seeks to **support renewed demand for Pacific media content** by placing greater emphasis on multimedia and digital content, as well as on improved diversity, local relevance, and the quality of journalism. In this phase, a consolidated offering of **training and mentoring programs** has focused on strengthening the foundations of quality journalism in the contemporary global context, building digital skills, bespoke packages such as pre-election training, and on-the-job, tailored mentoring.

Importantly, however, PACMAS-4 does not focus solely on skills and support for diversifying and digitising content to attract audiences. Central to the PACMAS-4 program theory is the view that, **for the Pacific media sector to produce content valued by local audiences, investment is required to build and revitalise strong sectoral systems foundations.** In this context, PACMAS focuses on institutional capacity support for

⁴ <https://www.dfat.gov.au/publications/development/pacific-media-assistance-scheme-pacmas-3-independent-evaluation-report-and-management-response>

media associations, as representative sector bodies that can lead professional standards, collective organising and advocacy for media freedom. PACMAS-4 has also focused on internal gender equity within the media sector to support workforce diversity and representative, inclusive journalism. Institutional capacity support for select media outlets is delivered through intensive investment in digital and content projects, accompanied by mentoring.

Causal pathways

PACMAS-4 is designed around four main causal pathways, as summarised below:

- Capacity → Quality → Credibility → Audience engagement → Viability**
 Training journalists, supporting editors and improving workplace standards lead to higher-quality, more inclusive public-interest content. This builds trust and credibility with audiences, increasing reach and engagement, and forms the foundation for medium-term financial and organisational viability.
- Digital transition → Audience growth → Monetisation options**
 Strengthening digital skills, strategies and products enables media outlets to reach audiences across platforms, experiment with new formats and pilot monetisation approaches. Audience growth is considered a necessary first step before revenue diversification becomes feasible. Diversified revenue streams may include advertising, sponsorship, subscriptions or audience payment models, as well as strengthened justification for public investment (particularly in the case of state broadcasters).
- Content partnerships → More Pacific stories → Audience relevance**
 Financing and brokering collaborative content production with Pacific-led storytelling increases the supply and circulation of Pacific-made content, filling gaps left by international media and social platforms and deepening and diversifying stories. Content development is supported by matched mentoring and equipment investment. Greater relevance and representation drive audience demand for Pacific media.
- Associations and networks → Professional norms and advocacy → Enabling environment**
 Stronger media associations and WiM networks improve sectoral self-regulation and leadership, peer support, greater equity and safety within the profession, and advocacy for independence, inclusion and media freedom, helping the media operate more effectively, even in politically constrained environments.

Key assumptions underpinning these causal pathways and the overall theory of change for PACMAS, according to its design, are understood to be:

- Pacific audiences want more locally produced, high-quality public-interest content and will engage with it if it is accessible and credible.
- Audience reach precedes financial viability; revenue models (commercial or subsidised) depend on engagement.
- Skills gaps, high staff turnover and weak digital capability are binding constraints that can be addressed through sustained, practice-based support rather than one-off training.
- Media associations and women in media networks can serve as legitimate change agents for professional standards and inclusion, even without direct legislative reform.
- Continued access to reliable broadcast and digital infrastructure is essential for all other outcomes to be realised.

Implementation Model

PACMAS-4 is designed to be delivered through a **partnership** between the Australian Government and ABCID, rather than via a managing contractor model. ABCID is an arm of the ABC, a statutory agency and leading independent media outlet. The program draws on **the ABC's technical expertise** in broadcasting, journalism, digital content and media systems, as well as its established knowledge of the Pacific media environment and context, and its relationships with Pacific media organisations.

Implementation is led by a **PACMAS team based in Australia, accompanied by a Pacific-based team** in Phase Four. The Australian team comprises a project director, two project managers with regional responsibilities, and a part-time gender equality, disability and social inclusion advisor. The Pacific team comprises a regional team leader and country coordinators in priority countries. ABCID's Research and MEL function also provides significant support for the program.

The program is intended to operate through a **partnership-based approach**, with activities shaped through consultation with Pacific media actors (particularly, in the first instance, media associations) and adapted to diverse national and organisational contexts. Phase Four places greater emphasis on localisation, including Pacific-based staff roles and greater involvement of local practitioners in training and content development.

Gender equality, disability and social inclusion (GEDSI) are intended to be addressed through a twin-track approach that combines targeted initiatives (such as support for WiM networks and content funding mechanisms) with mainstreaming across training, organisational support and sector-level activities. In the PACMAS-4 design, gender equality was identified as the primary GEDSI priority, reflecting DFAT policy expectations for investments of this scale and associated resource allocation decisions. This resulted in a more limited emphasis on disability inclusion within Phase Four.

PACMAS-4 Focus Areas

Focus Areas	Implementation activities
Online and in-person journalist training	• Trade-craft skills for cadet journalists and media staff • Training-of-Trainers program for senior journalists • Training on thematic reporting skills • Digital skills and mobile journalism (MoJo) training • New content development training
Skills and leadership enrichment support to journalists and media leaders	• Mentoring, leadership programs and Australia-based learning attachment opportunities • 'Helpdesk' support for broadcasting technicians and units
Incubation support for new, quality content development, with an intended focus on GEDSI	• Through the Content Fund, which encourages new ideas and supports their development through funding, technical support, equipment and mentoring
Organisational capacity support for media outlets	• Focused on digital transitions and financial viability through the support for development and implementation of digital strategies and projects, as well as some technology infrastructure provision
Organisational capacity support for regional and national media associations	• Support for governance, strategic planning, policy review and development of quality standards, support for convening summits and key meetings, provision of media literacy training, refreshing membership databases.
Network growth and capacity support for WiM networks	• Provision of administrative and activity funding for WiM network • Conference funding and attendance support

Table 2: PACMAS-4 Focus Areas

Contract arrangements

While the original intention for PACMAS-4 was a three-year program with an option for a two-year extension, department-wide procurement processes have limited the ability to exercise that option. As such, PACMAS-4's scope was subsequently limited to three years (1 July 2023 – 30 June 2026). The overall Phase Four funding value, administered through an annual grant to ABCID, is AUD 9.28 million for the core three-year period (1 July 2023 – 30 June 2026), plus an additional \$110,000 to support the continuation of Fiji bilateral activities in financial year (FY) 2025-26. A six-month extension to end-December 2026 is anticipated to support preparations and bridging to an anticipated Phase Five (to commence in 2027).

1.3. Evaluation context, purpose and scope

The purpose and focus of this Independent Evaluation are based on the original Terms of Reference (TOR) and the results of initial briefing conversations with the ABCID PACMAS and Monitoring, Research and Evaluation teams, and the DFAT Pacific Media and Broadcasting Branch, as further documented in the Evaluation Plan (October 2025).

Purpose

A primary driver of this evaluation is to **support preparation for a likely PACMAS Phase Five**, including informing decisions about future program design, investment and procurement. To support preparation for Phase Five, the evaluation commenced just over two years into a phase originally designed as a five-year program but subsequently compressed to three years. As such, the timing of the evaluation is closer to that of a mid-term review than to an end-of-phase evaluation.

Within this context, the evaluation is both **formative and summative**. It is intended to balance the need for timely, useful judgements and recommendations to support improvements and adjustments during PACMAS-4 implementation with judgements of overall program value to inform strategic decision-making. The evaluation is also both a **process (implementation) and outcomes evaluation**, with a focus on earlier and intermediate outcomes, reflecting the point of implementation and stage of program maturity.

ABCID, together with DFAT, commissioned an evaluation to assess the program's value across **relevance, effectiveness and efficiency, equity and inclusion, and sustainability**. The evaluation aims to fulfil three interrelated purposes:

- **supporting accountability** to funders and intended beneficiaries
- **informing program improvement** by informing the final stages of Phase Four implementation
- **generating evidence-based judgements and insights** to support next-phase decision-making.

Context and scope

The evaluation team commenced the Independent Evaluation a little over two years into Phase Four implementation, and more than one year before the anticipated conclusion of Phase Four (including a short extension period). Accordingly, the evaluation team **calibrated the evaluation to assess programming dimensions appropriate to this timing and the relative nascency of key PACMAS-4 strategic areas**. For example, regarding outcomes, the evaluation team has focused on early and intermediate outcomes as markers of progress towards EOPOs, rather than assessing the program against the EOPOs themselves.

We have also considered other aspects of what makes a program 'good' during implementation, in the context of piloting some key initiatives for the first time and building systems reform foundations. As such, the evaluation team has assessed the relevance of the PACMAS-4 investment strategy to stakeholder needs and the current context; the quality and effectiveness of implementation within the design parameters of Phase Four; and the capture of lessons learned from unfolding initiatives to inform their maturation over time.

As it is neither post hoc nor near the end of the phase, it is beyond the scope of this evaluation to make comprehensive summative judgements. However, the evaluation team recognises the decision-makers' need for a fulsome judgement of the program's value to inform critical decisions about continuation, strategic direction, and investment for a possible next phase. While the timing limits a complete view of Phase Four, it still informs strategic considerations for Phase Five.

The scope of the evaluation does not extend to assessing bilateral investments complementary to PACMAS, nor to examining the coherence of PACMAS with other investments under the Indo-Pacific Broadcasting Strategy.

To meet decision-making needs, the evaluation was conducted between October 2025 and March 2026, including two rounds of feedback on the report, with approximately 50 days across the evaluation team. Scope and methods were designed to support focused, pragmatic and fit-for-purpose evidence generation

aligned with the evaluation's objectives and timing. The scope of the evaluation also precluded any travel or in-person consultations.

1.4. Design and methodology

This process and outcomes evaluation adopts a **pragmatic mixed-methods design with a qualitative primary research strategy, an equity orientation, and a rubric-based approach to evidence synthesis and evaluative reasoning**. The evaluation team developed the design, methodology and framework in collaboration with ABCID and DFAT, guided by a plan and feedback processes.

1.4.1. Evaluation principles

Key principles underpinning the evaluation design included:

- **Pragmatism and utilisation:** A focus on generating the most useful and relevant evidence and insights to inform strategic decision-making and program improvement.
- **Cultural responsiveness:** Valuing and centring of Pacific perspectives, within the evaluation team and as evaluation participants, and appropriate engagement approaches, including flexible scheduling, respect for diverse expertise and knowledge, and careful handling of politically and culturally sensitive issues.
- **Equity:** Inclusion of Pacific gender equality and disability rights expertise within the evaluation team; a strengths-based orientation; and deliberate attention to whether program results are experienced equitably across contexts and stakeholder groups. This included examining how power imbalances and structural marginalisation shape access and participation, and whether PACMAS-4 is contributing to gains in equity and inclusion, or unintentionally reinforcing inequities.

1.4.2. Evaluation criteria and questions

The evaluation is guided by four evaluative criteria – relevance, effectiveness and efficiency, equity and inclusion, and sustainability – and by five key evaluation questions, as outlined in Table 3 below. A complete list of subsidiary lines of inquiry is provided in Annex 2.

Evaluation criteria	Key evaluation questions (KEQs)
Relevance	1. To what extent is PACMAS-4 meeting the needs of key participants and stakeholders?
Effectiveness and efficiency	2. To what degree has PACMAS-4 been implemented as intended, including an effective and efficient modality and approach?
Effectiveness and efficiency	3. To what extent is PACMAS-4 progressing towards producing valuable outcomes?
Equity and inclusion	4. Is PACMAS-4 effectively promoting gender equality, disability and broader social inclusion?
Sustainability	5. To what extent are PACMAS-4 benefits likely to endure?

Table 3: Evaluation Criteria and Key Evaluation Questions

Evaluation team

The Strategic Development Group ('Strategic') evaluation team comprised two lead members: Anna Trembath, team leader and evaluation specialist (Australia-based), and Katrina Ma'u Fatiaki, gender equality and Pacific media specialist (Tonga-based). Anna and Katrina conducted all primary research. Setareki Macanawai (Fiji-based) provided lead team members with strategic advice on disability equity, rights, and inclusion considerations, and Strategic CEO Zoë Mander-Jones (Australia-based) provided strategic advice and contextual knowledge of DFAT and ABCID. Two other Strategic staff members provided quality assurance support on key deliverables: Cat Renshaw for technical review, and Erin Corvisy for editing and design.

1.4.3. Methods

Methods were selected to generate fit-for-purpose evidence aligned with the evaluation's timing, scope and decision-making focus.

Interviews and focus group discussions

Over seven weeks, the lead team members conducted **31 interviews and focus group discussions** with **46 stakeholders** across the 12 PACMAS country locations and with Australia-based stakeholders (DFAT representatives, ABC staff, and Content Fund mentors). The lead evaluators conducted all consultations online via Teams.

The evaluation team deployed a stratified purposive sampling strategy to ensure coverage across a range of stakeholder groups, geographic locations, and PACMAS and sectoral roles, and to capture a range of voices and perspectives. Stakeholder groups consulted included:

- **Intended direct beneficiaries or local partners:** media association and media outlet representatives, journalists, broadcasting technicians and other media practitioners, and members of WiM Networks (noting overlap across these groups)
- **Funding agency and policymakers:** including DFAT activity manager representatives from OTP and Post, and Embassy / High Commission representatives
- **The implementing agency:** ABCID's PACMAS and Research and Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) teams in Australia, PACMAS regional and country staff based in the Pacific, and other ABC staff who are engaged with PACMAS for specific inputs
- **External journalism and media experts** engaged by ABCID to provide specialist support to PACMAS, but not employed by the ABC.

Sampling strategies were informed by the evaluation questions and the program's strategic priorities in Phase Four, with particular attention to new streams of work and to visibility across implementation and outcomes. ABCID and DFAT provided suggestions on, and an introduction to, stakeholders, and the evaluation team followed up with a written invitation to participate. See Annex 4 for an outline of the consulted stakeholders.

Document review

The evaluation included a **targeted review of close to 40 key documents** (see Annex 6). Upon commencement, ABCID provided a package of core program documentation that included the design, a monitoring and evaluation framework, workplans and progress reports, the previous phase evaluation, a document summarising progress and monitoring data across the key outcomes, and key research pieces. Other documentation supplied and requested during the evaluation included: budgets, outlines and baselines for key pilot initiatives, specific monitoring tools, and training course outlines. Documents were selected using purposeful inclusion criteria, focusing on relevance to the evaluation questions and Phase Four strategic shifts.

The document review was used to:

- establish the intended program logic and strategic direction of Phase Four;
- assess reported progress and implementation approaches;
- support strength of evidence determination; and
- triangulate findings through stakeholder consultations.

Case illustrations

The evaluation used brief **case study vignettes** to illustrate how selected initiatives and approaches were experienced in practice across different contexts. These provide concrete narrative examples that support and contextualise broader findings.

Expert insights

In addition to primary data collection and document review, the evaluation drew on **expert insights from members of the evaluation team** with specialist expertise in disability inclusion, gender equality and media systems in the Pacific context, and strategic international development and DFAT policy. These insights informed the analysis and interpretation of findings and supported sense-checking of emerging conclusions and recommendations.

1.4.4. Analysis

Qualitative data were **thematically analysed**, using a primarily deductive coding approach based on the evaluation questions, lines of inquiry, and intermediate outcomes. The approach included some inductive analysis to allow for the emergence of unanticipated themes. Primary consultation and secondary evidence from the document review were synthesised using an Evidence Table aligned with the evaluation criteria and evaluation questions.

Evaluative sensemaking and reasoning

Collaborative sensemaking and validation

The evaluation team undertook evaluation sensemaking through **structured, collaborative analysis**, including regular internal synthesis discussions and targeted input from team members providing expert advice on specific areas (such as disability equity and inclusion and foreign aid investment). Collaborative sensemaking discussions were a deliberate methodological choice. They **supported dialogic shared interpretation and reflexivity within a culturally and professionally diverse evaluation team**. This process enabled testing of assumptions across different contextual perspectives.

The team also held **two validation workshops with ABCID and DFAT** to test emerging findings and interpretations. An **aide memoire slide pack** summarising preliminary findings and recommendations was circulated to DFAT stakeholders, generating limited additional feedback from DFAT Pacific Posts.

Two rounds of feedback were also incorporated into the evaluation report.

Rubric-based performance assessment

Once evidence was collated, **synthesis and performance judgement were undertaken using a rubric**. To support more nuanced performance assessment, the rubric was refined during the evaluation process from an earlier three-point scale to a five-point scale. The rubric supports performance assessment against the four evaluation criteria of relevance, effectiveness and efficiency, equity and inclusion, and sustainability. For each criterion, performance was assessed using a five-point scale, defined as follows:

Rating	Description
Very limited	Performance is weak or highly uneven, with significant gaps or weaknesses
Developing	Some positive elements are evident, but important gaps or inconsistencies remain
Achieving	Performance is generally strong and fit-for-purpose, with manageable gaps or areas for improvement
Strong	Performance is consistently strong, with only minor weaknesses
Excellent	Performance reflects best practice or exceptional outcomes, with clear, consistent evidence and no critical weaknesses

Performance level assessment was **calibrated to the program's stage of development**. PACMAS-4 has been operating for just over two years, and several core initiatives are still in early or mid-implementation. Systems reform is **long-term, non-linear and unfolds differently across diverse and evolving Pacific contexts**. Performance was therefore assessed against progress in building institutional, relational and sector foundations, rather than against end-of-program outcomes.

Each evaluation criterion comprises **multiple sub-criteria**. Judgements at the criterion level were reached by **synthesising performance across sub-criteria**, rather than by simple averaging. For example, an overall rating of *Achieving* for effectiveness and efficiency would require most sub-criteria to demonstrate performance at or above the *Achieving* level, with no critical weaknesses. See Annex 4 for further information about the rubric assessment.

Evidence triangulation and weighting

In forming performance judgements, the evaluation team drew on **multiple sources of evidence**, including primary data from interviews and focus group discussions, program documentation and monitoring data, prior evaluation and program research. Emerging findings were also **tested and refined** through formal validation sessions, reviews of the draft evaluation report, and regular sense-checking discussions with the implementing agency.

Greater confidence was placed in findings where there was **convergence across data sources**, with stakeholder accounts and documented evidence reinforcing one another. Both primary and secondary data were recognised as having strengths and limitations, and judgements were informed by **consistency and corroboration of patterns and themes** across data sources.

Overall judgements were informed through **triangulation across stakeholder experience, program documentation, and evidence of learning and adaptation**.

Strength of evidence

In addition to performance ratings, the evaluation team assessed the **strength of evidence underpinning key findings and judgements** to support transparent interpretation of conclusions. Strength of evidence reflects the **breadth, consistency and triangulation** of available data, and is provided alongside performance ratings to ensure that conclusions appropriately reflect the level of confidence warranted. Assessments of strength of evidence were informed by:

- the **number and diversity of data sources** contributing to a finding
- the **consistency of evidence** across stakeholder groups and contexts
- the **balance between primary and secondary data**, recognising that both may have strengths and limitations
- the presence of **gaps, uneven coverage or divergence between data sources**, particularly at the country level.

The strength of evidence scale used is intentionally designed to support appropriate confidence judgements in a complex, multi-country evaluation with a constrained resource scope, rather than to suggest definitive findings. Strength of evidence was categorised using the following scale:

Strength of evidence	Description
Good	Evidence is drawn from multiple sources and demonstrates a generally consistent pattern across stakeholder groups and contexts. The available evidence is sufficient to support program-level conclusions with a reasonable level of confidence. Where differences in perspectives exist, these can be plausibly interpreted.
Emerging	Evidence indicates some consistency in findings but is uneven, limited in scope, or based on a smaller number of sources. Divergence between data sources is present and only partially explained. Findings should be interpreted as indicative.
Limited	Evidence is constrained by small sample sizes, limited availability of secondary data, or significant unresolved divergence between data sources.

1.4.5. Ethics

As outlined in the Evaluation Plan, this evaluation was conducted in accordance with [DFAT's Ethical Research and Evaluation Guidance Note](#). Ethical considerations were embedded across the evaluation

design and implementation, including the conduct of interviews and focus group discussions. DFAT and ABCID reviewed and provided feedback on identified ethical considerations and treatments as part of the Evaluation Plan development process, prior to the commencement of data collection. Consistent with DFAT guidance, the evaluation also applied a do-no-harm approach, including attention to power dynamics, potential sensitivities in small professional communities, and the voluntary nature of participation.

Ethical and methodological decisions regarding primary data collection were made jointly by the Australian evaluation lead and the Pacific co-lead (a gender equality and media sector expert), reflecting a commitment to contextually appropriate and relational evaluation practice. The Pacific co-lead led approximately half of all stakeholder consultations, both evaluators were involved in key discussions and debriefed regularly, and the Pacific co-lead provided ongoing advice to the Australian evaluator on appropriate engagement.

All participants were first contacted with a written information and consent letter outlining the purpose of the evaluation, introducing the evaluation team, describing how information would be used, including the intent to publish the evaluation, and that best efforts would be made to anonymise (other than in agreement for case studies). The evaluation team has taken reasonable and proportionate steps to support confidentiality and anonymity, recognising the sensitivity of some feedback, the small size of Pacific media and professional communities, and the practical limits to anonymity in such contexts. For case studies, profiled individuals gave permission to be identified and they reviewed content.

Verbal consent was also sought at the outset of each interview or discussion. Participation was voluntary, and participants could decline to answer questions or withdraw at any point. Participants were also invited to identify any accessibility needs or reasonable accommodations required to support their participation. The evaluation team was prepared to respond flexibly to such needs within the constraints of an online consultation approach, determined by the commissioners.

1.5. Limitations

No significant limitations were encountered in delivering against the Terms of Reference (ToR) and evaluation plan, aside from some minor adjustments to reporting dates. With flexibility in scheduling and, where necessary, the identification of alternative contacts, the evaluation team met their intended targets for the stratified purposive sampling strategy. Additional interviews were conducted when it was assessed that important perspectives were missing from the original evaluation plan or when thematic saturation had not yet been reached.

The primary limitations of the evaluation relate to its **timing, scope and mode of data collection**, rather than to access to stakeholders or quality of engagement (which was high). As outlined earlier, the evaluation was undertaken over a relatively short period and focused on strategic, investment-level insights to support future decision-making, rather than on in-depth assessments of individual intervention components.

Given the small size and connected nature of many Pacific media environments, and the expected inclusion of a stakeholder list in reporting, constraints on **anonymity limited the extent to which quotes or highly specific examples could be used**, particularly when feedback was sensitive or critical. While this may reduce the illustrative detail in the report, it reflects a necessary ethical choice to protect participant confidentiality and minimise potential risk. Findings are therefore more synthesised at a thematic level rather than attributed to specific roles, organisations or locations.

The evaluation was also conducted entirely, as specified in the ToR, through **online consultations**. This approach provided broad geographic coverage but limited opportunities for in-person rapport-building, observation, and informal engagement. While this approach was appropriate to the evaluation's scope and timing, it may have constrained the depth of contextual insight that field-based methods can provide. This limitation was significantly offset by a Pacific co-lead researcher with cultural knowledge, language, sectoral expertise, and relationships. While online, engagement in interviews was high.

In addition, the availability and consistency of **outcomes-level evidence**—both quantitative and qualitative—were constrained by the program’s stage of maturity and the nature of PACMAS-4 as a phase of strategic redirection and innovation. During the early years of implementation, the program’s Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) approach appropriately prioritised **learning, adaptation and refinement of new initiatives**, alongside the establishment of baselines and monitoring and quality tools, including in-Pacific co-design. While this approach is appropriate in supporting responsive implementation, it also means that **evidence of outcomes was still emerging and uneven across initiatives** at the time of the evaluation. As a result, conclusions about outcomes rely more heavily on triangulated qualitative insights, early indicators of change and evidence of learning and adaptation, rather than on fully developed or longitudinal outcome data.

Finally, while evidence was gathered across all PACMAS country locations, the **scope and design of the evaluation do not support robust country-by-country performance assessments or comparative judgements**. Findings are therefore presented at regional program and thematic levels, with insights at a country level where appropriate.

2. FINDINGS

In this section, the evaluation team discusses the findings and recommendations in accordance with the evaluation criteria and KEQs.

2.1. Relevance

2.1.1. KEQ1. *To what extent is PACMAS-4 meeting the needs of key participants and stakeholders?*

Overall assessment: Strong

Finding: PACMAS-4’s **performance against the criterion of relevance** is assessed as **Strong**. Evidence from stakeholder interviews and program documentation suggests that the program is aligning well with priority needs identified during the Phase Four design. Just over two years into a systems reform phase, the program remains well positioned to meet key sector challenges. Further, PACMAS-4 is widely regarded as remaining responsive and flexible to emerging needs and aligned with Australian Government strategic policy objectives.

Stakeholders strongly endorsed the strategic shift towards a multipronged, systems-strengthening approach, particularly in supporting strengthened media institutions, workforce capacity and gender equity, and the accompanied production of diverse, multimedia content to engage Pacific audiences. The growing program model emphasis on Pasifika staffing, leadership and regional peer connections was also widely welcomed and has driven perceptions and experiences of relevance in contexts where these implementation mechanisms have been accessed.

However, relevance is experienced unevenly in smaller and secondary-priority countries. This largely reflects the Phase Four design, which concentrates deeper engagement and resourcing in priority countries while maintaining lighter engagement across the region, alongside contextual constraints in some settings. However, this pattern warrants consideration in future Phase Five planning. Moving forward, a key priority for strengthening PACMAS relevance in meeting stakeholder needs and systems reform design intent is greater resourcing and tailored strategies for supporting these contexts.

Overall, there is clear evidence of more need and demand for PACMAS engagement than can be serviced through the PACMAS-4 design and resourcing. Higher levels of overall investment and tailored support for specific country contexts will reinforce the whole-of-Pacific-system effect that PACMAS-4 aims for.

Additional areas where relevance could be deepened include strengthening editorial and mid-level leadership capacity in politically challenging and low-resourced environments (now in train), and more systematic attention to disability equity, relevance and inclusion.

Some expectations raised by stakeholders, such as large-scale institutional transformation, expanded commercial viability, and broad equipment distribution, extend beyond the scope and resourcing of PACMAS-4. However, they are indicative of the depth of systemic need across the Pacific media sector.

Strength of evidence: Good.

A range of evidence was available for triangulation including the program design, and stakeholder interviews, noting the limitation of a small number of interviews conducted per Pacific Island country.

How relevant is the program's strategic shift towards systemic strengthening of the media sector in the current Pacific context?

Strong relevance in light of Phase Four design intent

The evaluation found **strong convergence between challenges and needs identified during Phase Four design** (see Annex 8). These needs were further reinforced by **PACMAS-4's commissioned 2025 study, *State of the Media: Pacific*⁵**, and by **priorities articulated by stakeholders** during evaluation consultations. Digital transition pressures, institutional fragility, workforce stress and attrition, gendered workforce barriers, and political and community pressures experienced by journalists were independently reaffirmed across stakeholder interviews.

The close correspondence between identified sector needs and PACMAS-4 response provides a strong evidentiary basis for the relevance assessment. Stakeholders pointed to specific PACMAS-4 interventions addressing these pressures, including digital skills and Mobile Journalism (MoJo) training, association governance and staffing support, WiM networks, and Pacific-led training models. Program monitoring data reinforces this assessment. High uptake of training streams, demand for Content Fund and digital project support, and repeat engagement of stakeholders in different PACMAS-4 workstreams indicate sustained sector appetite for the redesigned model.

Phase Four represented a **deliberate redesign approved within the PACMAS-4 investment design parameters in response to a changing media and geopolitical environment** (see Annex 8 for a detailed outline of identified threats, challenges and sectoral needs). Design consultations identified interconnected, systemic pressures including audience fragmentation, mis- and disinformation, weakened institutional foundations following COVID-19, internal equity gaps and limited workplace-based learning pathways. The current evaluation **confirms that these pressures remain salient across diverse country contexts**, indicating that the program's strategy of addressing the underlying drivers of Pacific media system fragility continues to align with sector-defined priorities.

In response to these challenges, Phase Four shifted from a predominantly training- and content development-focused model to a systems-strengthening approach. Stakeholders consistently described this systems orientation as more appropriate to sector fragility and long-term resilience than a narrower training and content model. However, a strong emphasis on capacity development continues to be highly regarded by stakeholders in the current media environment. For example, one senior journalist in a priority country described:

...[W]ith the media landscape in small island countries, the onslaught of too much information, mis- and disinformation, in my view we need to strengthen the capacity and training of people with a strong background of ethics and techniques so they can decide what is misinformation and disinformation, fake news, and what should be proper information that our communities can discern, for health, education, wellbeing ...

The convergence between sector-defined needs, design intent and early program responses reinforces the evaluation's overall assessment of strong relevance.

⁵ [State of the Media: Pacific - ABC International Development](#)

PACMAS-4 is operating strategically at multiple, reinforcing levels of the Pacific media ecosystem

Evidence indicates that PACMAS-4 is **strengthening multiple interconnected components of the Pacific media ecosystem**, particularly in priority countries where bilateral investment complements the core regional contract. The program strategically combines practitioner capacity development, digital and institutional support to outlets, core association strengthening, and sectoral equity initiatives such as WiM networks.

Media, program staff and Post stakeholders consistently described these interventions as mutually reinforcing where multiple levers operate concurrently. This supports the relevance of the systems model, particularly in contexts where sufficient scale and in-country staffing enable coherence across activities. The reinforcing dynamic was most visible where regional funding was complemented by bilateral investment and strong local staffing presence. For example, in Fiji, stakeholders described clear linkages between association revitalisation, WiM organising, workforce training, sectoral advocacy and policy development. In Samoa, association revitalisation and subsequent advocacy for media freedom were directly linked by association leaders, Post representatives and PACMAS staff to sustained PACMAS-4 support, contextualised training delivery and in-country coordination.

By contrast, **this reinforcing dynamic was less visible in secondary contexts**, where engagement is necessarily lighter due to the scale of resources available and the investment prioritisation of selected contexts. For example, stakeholders in Niue, Nauru and the Federated States of Micronesia expressed appreciation for discrete supports, including training packages and infrastructure inputs, but more commonly described limited follow-through and lower visibility of the program's longer-term intent and strategy.

A strategic response to priority external threats and internal challenges

There is **strong evidence that PACMAS-4 is responding strategically to major shifts in the global media environment, external pressures on the Pacific media sector, and internal sectoral challenges.**

Stakeholders consistently affirmed the strategic focus on **digitisation, multi-platform engagement and locally driven content** as essential to maintaining relevance and strengthening public interest journalism. Multi-pronged support for digital transitions (digital skills training, digital strategies, monetisation grants, and MoJo training and equipment) alongside the Content Fund was widely described as timely and necessary, with stakeholders frequently requesting broader rollout of these pilot initiatives.

Evidence from interviews indicates that **ongoing sectoral financial fragility** remains a defining feature of the Pacific media landscape. This includes significant structural limitations on commercial revenue, constrained public broadcaster funding, and the financial vulnerability of voluntary associations. In this context, the evaluation finds that **PACMAS's role in supporting institutional survival and stability across the region is highly relevant.** Examples of PACMAS-4's support for institutional survival and stability include core staffing support for associations, support for association governance, project-based grants funding, equipment investment and capacity development investment, including in digitisation and journalism foundations. I

In the current phase, PACMAS is broadly viewed as a **trusted investment that supports independent journalism** and provides an essential supportive institutional basis for the sector, particularly in a shifting donor landscape (including the withdrawal of USAID). Several stakeholders also noted that the credibility of the PACMAS investment, delivered through the independent ABC, is especially important in contexts where alternative funding sources may risk influencing editorial independence.

Given the challenging operating environment for journalism as described in the Investment Design and by stakeholders throughout the evaluation, and resulting impacts on practitioner retention, PACMAS-4's accompanying **focus on workforce capacity development, retention and equity was widely regarded as highly relevant.** Stakeholders almost universally affirmed the continued unique value of ABCID-led training, exchanges and on-the-job mentoring in strengthening journalistic skills, professionalism and confidence. These opportunities were also seen as critical in supporting practitioner retention and renewing vocational commitment to and enthusiasm for journalism.

In response to gendered barriers within the media sector, the WiM network initiative was strongly supported by most stakeholders who were aware of this initiative. Network members and organisers described the networks and regional engagements as safe and empowering spaces that **address gendered barriers within the sector**, strengthen peer support and foster leadership development. By contrast, **disability inclusion remains underdeveloped** relative to stakeholder interest and represents an area for strengthening.

A strong and evolving model of Pasifika-driven priorities, leadership and regional connections

The **increased localisation in Phase Four is widely regarded as substantially enhancing stakeholder experience of PACMAS's relevance**. PACMAS has a longstanding model of working through associations (where present) to set priorities and engage the sector, and a strong ethos of being locally-led and supporting independent journalism, rather than driving externally determined agendas. This emphasis on local leadership has been enhanced in practice in Phase Four through the formation of a Pacific staffing team, training co-design, contextualisation and co-delivery, an increased emphasis on regional connections through trainings and conferences, and increased investment in associations. Pacific staff members come with significant sectoral experience and relationships.

On the whole, **stakeholders acknowledged and affirmed the importance of PACMAS-4's practice moving toward greater localisation**. They highlighted the importance of contextualisation, culturally grounded approaches and Pacific-to-Pacific strengths-based learning. Engagement and participation were consistently reported by diverse stakeholders to be stronger where in-country coordinators and associations are present and functioning well. In relation to training, one PACMAS country coordinator noted that *"contextualisation is very crucial and I've found that when we've had that, the interest and participation has gone up"*.

In some contexts, such as Samoa, feedback from multiple stakeholders (associations, staff and Post) suggests that in-country staffing has been instrumental in revitalising relationships with media associations and supporting progress toward stronger governance foundations. When these enabling ingredients for localisation and responsiveness are less present, particularly in secondary countries, countries without media associations, or where staffing has been less effective, perceptions of PACMAS's relevance in identifying and meeting local needs become more uneven. This largely reflects the program's design emphasis on priority countries and scale of resourcing.

Some stakeholders in certain countries, including Fiji and Tonga, **emphasised the importance of greater transparency and shared decision-making in shaping program priorities**. Media partners and Pacific staff expressed a desire for stronger involvement in setting strategic directions in any future phase, reflecting **an interest in deeper Pacific ownership and self-determination in the broader context and relational investment in PACMAS**.

PACMAS-4 has also focused on **building stronger regional-sectoral connections**, a move well-received by stakeholders. PACMAS-4 enhances regional ties across the Pacific media system through its partnership with PINA, and face-to-face events like conferences, training, and peer-learning. Stakeholders valued these regional activities for promoting shared learning, professional networks, and ongoing support. Many examples show continued collaboration after gatherings, including active communication networks among practitioners. One stakeholder said, *"regional connections are useful not just in women's spaces [i.e., the WiM networks] but any form; it's how Pacific Islanders solve things, face-to-face, and the dialogue that happens outside meetings is where the value comes from"*. In one example, a broadcasting technician from Micronesia stays in touch with others via WhatsApp after PACMAS-4 training, helping each other troubleshoot and share technical advice.

Localisation approach enables PACMAS-4 to be responsive to emerging needs and opportunities

ABCID's relational model of partnerships and the program's amplified focus on locally-led priorities have enabled PACMAS-4 to remain **flexible and responsive to emerging needs and strategic opportunities**. For example, the 2025 provision of 'snap election training' to journalists in Samoa on a short turnaround was considered a success by multiple stakeholders, supporting higher-quality reporting than would have been possible without the training. One DFAT stakeholder noted that this responsiveness to an emerging

training need was “*really, really well received*”. A PACMAS in-region staff member noted that discussions with journalists highlighted that the training was “*very successful and very beneficial*”, including in a context that had changed substantially from the previous election that saw a proliferation of “*influencers, fake news, diaspora influence*”, underscoring the need for “*independent and factual reporting*”. A media association representative noted:

We gave them [ABCID] what we needed and they looked at what we had and we determined what we needed from the trainers that came over. This worked out very well, which is a very crucial kind of thing that we can look at in the future, them coming in country and working very closely on our needs. This seemed like a new model; it was what we’ve always wanted, coming to the ground and having that exchange with us.

To what extent is PACMAS-4 meeting the diverse learning needs of journalists and media representatives, at different points of career development?

The evaluation finds that **PACMAS-4 is strategically meeting contemporary workforce learning and professional development needs**. Phase Four saw a consolidation and significant update to its core training offering, including Foundations of Journalism (FoJ), the digital skills program, and MoJo training. The redesigned PACMAS training and capacity development model is widely regarded by participating and delivering stakeholders as **relevant, contemporary, contextualised and appropriately streamlined**.

FoJ supports core vocational orientation and skills development for both early-career and experienced journalists adapting to a changing media landscape. FoJ’s Training of Trainers (ToT) model strengthens local capacity and reinforces Pacific leadership. One journalist from a priority country said, “*The ToT has been great; this is a program I have loved. It’s equipped me to be a good trainer.*” Association leaders also stressed that FoJ and Pacific co-delivery help **renew collective ownership of professional standards and promote intergenerational exchange**.

The digital skills training program and MoJo training also received strong support across consulted participants for their relevance in **expanding journalism coverage in rural and remote areas** (via MoJo) and to **adapting journalism to the contemporary environment and audience needs**.

Stakeholders valued the **combination of in-person and online offerings, contextualised delivery and opportunities to apply skills and deepen learning through digital projects and the Content Fund**. ABCID’s ability to **deliver bespoke training** at short notice (such as pre-election training in Samoa and the Solomon Islands) and to **broker exchanges in Australia** were also noted. There is consistent demand for expanded in-country and Pacific-to-Pacific exchanges.

Taken together, this evidence suggests **PACMAS-4 is meeting contemporary workforce development needs in a manner aligned with both sector demand and the program’s systems intent**. However, many media stakeholders from across the region noted that **constraints in office and media technology equipment and infrastructure** limit the full application of skills acquired during training, affecting perceived relevance.

To what extent is support provided meeting the needs of media associations and Women in Media networks?

There is clear evidence that **PACMAS-4 is well aligned with meeting the early core capacity and investment support needs of media associations and WiM networks**, enabling sectoral advocacy, standards, policy, and equity outcomes. Strategies to support associations have been designed based on useful association baseline research undertaken by ABCID and tailored to specific contexts. In monitoring and progress reports, the implementing agency has identified and documented a key lesson: the need to start where associations are. In most instances, this has meant commencing at the basics of reestablishing active, well-governed bodies.

Early stabilisation support for associations and councils, including staffing, office assistance, and governance foundations, is seen by association stakeholders as valuable. Representatives from six of the seven supported associations and councils described PACMAS-4’s core institutional support for staffing

and governance as vital, timely, and highly relevant, especially in a tightening donor environment. For example, a representative of the Media Association of the Solomon Islands (MASI) commented.

Our partnership with PACMAS started a year ago. In fact, PACMAS came at the right time to work together and also unite the media family, at the time we needed to strengthen MASI. In the previous years, BBC Media Action supported us in a small way, but that ended. The timing has been very relevant; we were able to set up an office and recruit a coordinator, and now we have a very functioning media association at the moment. PACMAS support and approach is very crucial....we now have a good functioning office where some of our team members can meet and members of the association can seek help.

The Media Association of Tonga was the main exception regarding satisfaction with the relevance of PACMAS-4 support. The challenge appears to be relational.

Association and other stakeholders, including Posts, also highlighted the **strategic value of the sequencing and pace of association investment**; for example, ensuring that Annual General Meetings (AGMs) are held before funds are received. The model has enabled various associations to re-engage memberships, advocate for press freedom, and diversify funding. Concrete examples were cited in Fiji, Samoa and the Republic of the Marshall Islands. Most associations also described how **co-organising and delivering key PACMAS-4 training**, especially FoJ and bespoke training, helped energise association leaders and engage their membership.

WiM networks and organisers spoke positively about PACMAS's support and emphasised **the importance of these spaces in advancing gender equality and women's career progression in the media sector**. WiM networks in Fiji, the Solomon Islands and Tonga have been supported through a Fiji-based coordinator, through conference and activity funding, bespoke training, and strategic planning.

WiM originated from organising by Fijian women journalists and remains locally driven. As with associations, PACMAS has supported the initiative at a pace reflecting local demand and readiness. Particularly in Fiji, the momentum and legitimacy of WiM has been strengthened through structural alignment with media associations as peak sector bodies.

To what extent is PACMAS-4 aligned with current policy settings of the Australian Government, including strategic priorities in the Pacific region? Is there any tension between Pacific needs and Australia's strategic interests in the region?

PACMAS-4 demonstrates **strong alignment with Australian Government strategic and policy priorities in the Pacific**. DFAT stakeholders affirmed PACMAS-4's contribution to the Indo-Pacific Broadcasting Strategy and to broader Australian regional interests, such as democratic governance, regional stability, and the strengthening of access to trusted information and locally produced content. PACMAS's support for journalism in key moments of the democratic process, as demonstrated by the Samoa snap election training, was noted by several stakeholders.

There is **limited evidence of significant tension between Pacific-identified needs and Australian strategic objectives within the PACMAS program**. Evidence suggests that the program's focus on independent journalism, Pacific-led content and support for informed, engaged constituencies aligns with both Pacific sector priorities and Australia's regional interests. The management of potential tensions, particularly around perceptions of external donor influence on media independence, is strengthened by ABCID's positioning as a trusted, technically credible media partner in the region. Alignment at Post with democratic governance priorities rather than public diplomacy also supports management of this tension.

However, **PACMAS operates within a broader ecosystem of Australian-funded media and public diplomacy investments, including regional and bilateral investments. Some tensions or misalignments within the broader Australian media support landscape affect perceptions of PACMAS at points**. In some contexts, other Australian-funded media initiatives are conflated with PACMAS, or partners do not fully understand the respective scopes of different investments. This can lead to misplaced criticism, unrealistic expectations, or confusion regarding PACMAS's mandate and boundaries. For example, PACMAS was

sometimes criticised for not being sufficiently supportive of equipment investment, when equipment investment is primarily the mandate of the Regional Media Support Fund.

Greater clarity regarding the distinct purposes, comparative advantages, and complementarities of Australia's media investments in the Pacific may further strengthen alignment and protect PACMAS's reputation as a program that supports independent journalism and a more resilient media system. There is also scope to increase PACMAS's alignment with Australia's International Gender Equality Strategy⁶ and Australia's Disability Equity and Rights Strategy⁷.

Interviews and findings validation feedback suggest that **some secondary country Posts perceive less value in PACMAS**, likely reflecting the lighter level of engagement and limited clarity about the program's strategic role in these settings.

To what extent is PACMAS-4 experienced as consistently relevant across the different country contexts?

The review found that **relevance is strongest where multiple initiative levers are active**, and more variable in contexts where PACMAS engagement is intentionally lighter.

Evidence from stakeholder interviews and program documentation indicates that PACMAS-4 is **most relevant and impactful in priority countries**, typically larger Melanesian and Polynesian contexts with more established media sectors, where the program concentrates deeper engagement and resources. Several factors underpin this stronger relevance, including higher levels of investment, the presence of trusted in-country staff, strong relationships with DFAT Post, complementary bilateral engagement, and the ability to implement multiple, reinforcing interventions across practitioners, associations, institutions and networks.

In smaller and secondary countries, engagement is necessarily lighter due to PACMAS-4 design parameters and the scale of available resources. Stakeholders in these contexts more commonly reported intermittent engagement and few opportunities for tailored support. While this reflects differences in program footprint rather than strategic misalignment, it shapes how relevance is experienced across the region, including by Posts. These dynamics are further influenced by contextual factors such as smaller and more isolated media markets, and sectors often lacking associations or independent outlets. Within these constraints, the program has sought to remain responsive and provide tailored support wherever feasible.

Gaps, limitations and future priorities

Despite strong overall alignment with priority needs, stakeholders identified areas where PACMAS-4's relevance could be further strengthened. These largely relate to the **depth, scale and pace** of institutional change rather than to the direction of the program. The gaps described below, point less to a need for strategic redirection, and more to the **importance of sustained and appropriately scaled investment, calibrated expectations and clearer articulation of scope as systems reform progresses**. At just over two years into a systems-strengthening phase and within a finite resource envelope, the foundations of institutional reform are visible but uneven and necessarily incremental. The balance between ambition, resourcing and realism will remain important in framing expectations for any future phase.

Depth of institutional change

A recurring theme across a range of stakeholders, including Pacific media representatives and Australian experts, was the **need for deeper institutional transformation**. This includes strengthened association governance, administrative sustainability, business transition planning and revenue diversification for media outlets, and expanded editorial and mid-level leadership capability in politically challenging and low-resourced environments. Stakeholders also emphasised **continued demand for equipment and infrastructure support, enhanced Pacific-to-Pacific exchanges, strengthened investigative journalism**

⁶ <https://www.dfat.gov.au/publications/development/australias-international-gender-equality-strategy>

⁷ <https://www.dfat.gov.au/publications/australias-international-disability-equity-and-rights-strategy-advancing-equity-transform-lives>

capacity, and more **systematic attention to disability inclusion**. PACMAS-4 is regarded as providing commendable foundations for institutional change, including through digital transition support, grants funding and association core support, but stakeholders stressed the depth and urgency of need across a fragile sector.

Pace of change

PACMAS-4 represents a deliberate strategic shift from training-centric support to systems-strengthening. Institutional reform at sector level is inherently gradual and dependent on governance reform, leadership continuity and broader political economy conditions. **Expectations of institutional depth and sector-wide transformation at the two-year mark should therefore be carefully moderated when assessing relevance.** Many of the perceived PACMAS-4 gaps reflect the early stage of a systems reform trajectory rather than strategic misalignment.

Scale and scope

There is an **inherent trade-off between the region-wide systems-strengthening ambition embedded in the PACMAS-4 design and the level of resources available to operationalise that ambition across diverse Pacific contexts**. PACMAS-4 operates across 12 countries within a relatively modest resource envelope, given the breadth of structural challenges identified in the investment design concept.

As a result, some PACMAS-4 pilot initiatives (for example, digital transitions projects, MoJo, Content Fund) are necessarily targeted and selective in their reach. Where these interventions are active, stakeholders report relevance, value and impact. However, the scale of the program means these benefits are currently concentrated in a subset of contexts and actors rather than a wider scale reach across the region. The selective reach of deeper projects is appropriate for a phase focused on piloting and learning what works in diverse Pacific contexts. Looking forward, there may be opportunities to expand the reach of these approaches where conditions allow, while maintaining the contextualisation and relational engagement that underpin their effectiveness.

Equipment and infrastructure constraints remain a practical limitation in some contexts. Although MoJo kits, Content Fund support and limited equipment investments are highly valued, demand exceeds available resources and Pacific stakeholders' awareness of funding pathways outside of PACMAS is uneven. **Greater clarity regarding the coherence and division of roles across Australia's media development investments** may help manage expectations and reduce confusion and criticisms regarding PACMAS's mandate.

It is also important to clarify scope. **Certain stakeholder expectations fall outside the defined objectives and agreed design parameters of PACMAS-4.** These include expanding the number of media outlets or developing the workforce pipeline through higher education institutions. While workforce sustainability and sector vitality remain important contextual concerns, PACMAS-4 was not mandated or resourced to lead structural expansion in these areas.

Across several contexts, **uneven awareness of PACMAS's overall strategy and integrated systems reform intent appears to limit sector-wide visibility and shared understanding of the program's approach.** Strengthening communication around the program's architecture, sequencing and boundaries may further enhance perceived relevance and alignment. This would be further enabled by early clarity regarding investment settings and contractual arrangements in any future phase, including clearer integration of bilateral investments within the overall program budget and contract.

2.2. Effectiveness and efficiency

Overall assessment: Strong

Finding: PACMAS-4 is rated as **Strong for effectiveness and efficiency** at this stage of implementation. The program is being implemented largely as intended with an effective partnership-based modality and is demonstrating credible progress along its intended causal pathways. Delivery has been broad and multi-stream, tailored to 12 different country contexts, with a modest budget.

Effective and efficient implementation has been supported by ABCID's principles-based approach, technical expertise and sector credibility, and a largely trusted, complementary DFAT-ABCID partnership. Stakeholders consistently affirmed the quality, responsiveness and contextual relevance of PACMAS delivery.

Early and intermediate outcomes are emerging across each of the EOPO areas, particularly in strengthened journalist capacity, revitalisation of media associations, increased digital and multimedia content production, and growing sector collaboration. Several Phase Four initiatives are in earlier stages of a sequenced reform program, particularly in digital transition efforts, and some implementation delays have occurred. As such, longer-term viability and sustainability efforts are not yet fully observable, and certain causal assumptions underpinning systems change remain only partially testable at this stage. Nonetheless, PACMAS-4 has established important systems stabilising and change foundations, in line with the theory of change.

Strength of evidence: Good. Multiple sources of information were available for triangulation and show convergence. Noting limited monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) resourcing, some gaps in program outcomes monitoring constrain assessment of higher-level outcomes, including application of training to practice, audience engagement, and trajectories of business viability.

2.2.1. KEQ2. To what degree has PACMAS-4 been implemented as intended, including an effective and efficient modality and approach?

To what extent are program activities and outputs in line with the design and annual workplans, and/or proactively adapted to meet challenges or contextual shifts?

Good implementation progress, some limited delays and setbacks, and evidence of adaptive management

PACMAS-4 has been **implemented broadly in line with its Phase Four design and annual workplans, with evidence of adaptive delivery** in response to contextual shifts across the Pacific media environment and lessons learned in a piloting phase. The program has delivered substantial activity across its core streams across 12 diverse country contexts. The breadth of delivery relative to available budget reflects a program that builds upon significant experience and expertise by the implementing agency and leverages existing partnerships to support reach. Reach and outputs largely accorded with design intentions and workplans, noting that quantified activity targets and indicators were primarily articulated within annual workplans rather than consolidated. In the absence of consolidated targets, implementation has been assessed against planned scope, sequence and documented workplan commitments, together with stakeholder confirmation. Future phases would benefit from clearer aggregation of annual targets.

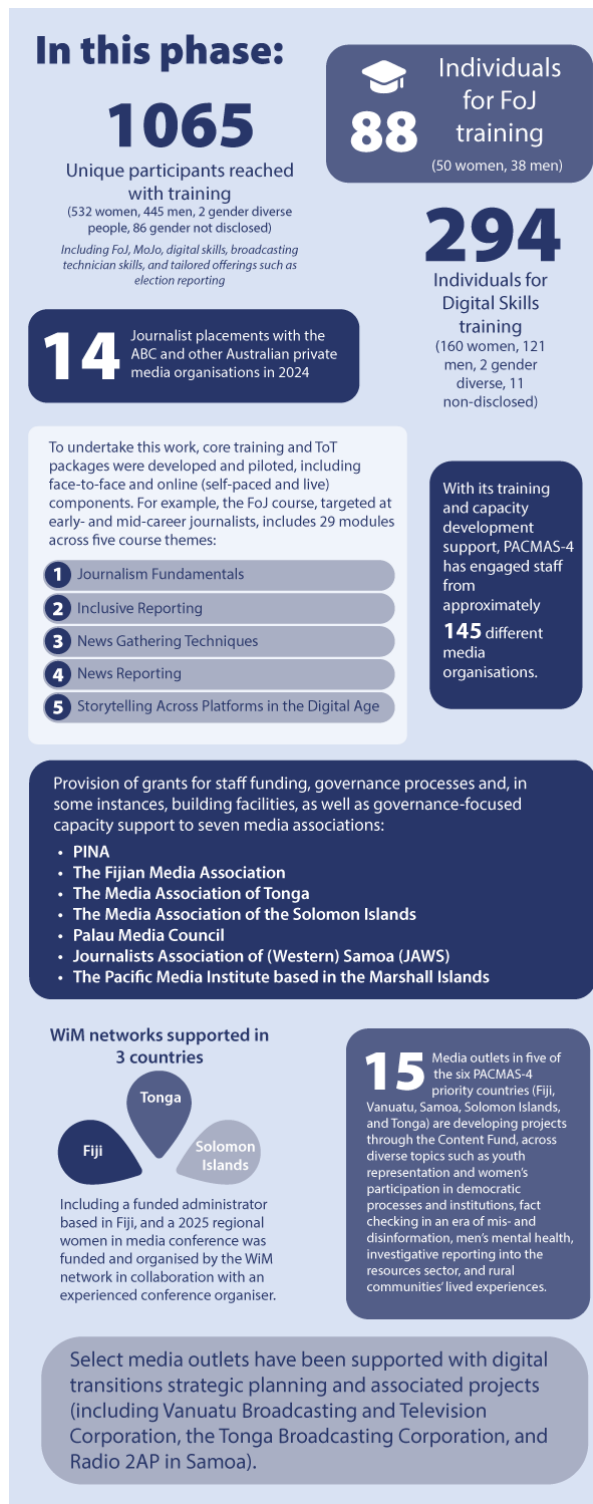


Figure 1 – Key Implementation Facts/Achievements

PACMAS-4 has delivered and adapted plans in contexts that have experienced significant change since Phase Four began. This has included changes in government in the Solomon Islands and Palau, an earthquake in Vanuatu that affected media infrastructure and staffing, restrictions and bans on foreign travel into Kiribati in the lead-up to elections, and the defamation cases and development of draft

media protocols by the Samoan government that could significantly impact a free press and journalist safety. In each of these instances, the evaluation observed that the program was adapted to support media in navigating these contextual shifts (including support for infrastructure rebuild in Vanuatu).

While overall implementation has aligned with design intent and workplans, **a small number of initiatives have experienced delays or slower-than-expected momentum.** These setbacks do not reflect strategic drift but rather lessons learned regarding the time and relational investment required to establish and govern new initiatives, reset institutional partnerships, and navigate changing operating environments.

A key challenge in this phase has been **incorporating Kiribati as a new priority country in Phase Four.** In addition to being a smaller context without a national media association, Kiribati's Ministry of Foreign Affairs imposed restrictions on incoming international visits from 2024, followed by a complete ban on diplomatic visits from mid-2024 to early 2025, in the lead-up to national elections. This limited ABCID travel to Kiribati for training and program management, constraining in-country engagement and providing a challenge to the establishment of a sustained program presence in country. While these restrictions were an unexpected contextual challenge, the experience highlights potential lessons for PACMAS engagement strategies in smaller and more remote contexts, including strengthening the role and flexibility of country coordinators in maintaining engagement with local media institutions and exploring regional connections and support mechanisms. This experience also highlights a program assumption that may require adaptation in smaller contexts – that media associations and in-country staffing provide the primary entry points for sector engagement and reform, which may not be feasible in all countries.

In addition, ABCID has found that work with **media associations** to reset partnerships and strengthen governance and institutional capacity has taken longer than expected to build momentum. However, as explored further below, momentum with media associations is now building and, in some instances, such as Samoa, has been greatly aided by the in-country presence of Pacific PACMAS staff members.

Another example of a delayed activity is the **Content Fund**. This example reflects the **intensity of establishing a new program stream** with a modest resourcing envelope, particularly in balancing demand, delivery, governance of funds distribution, and consistent stakeholder communication. After the initial dissemination of the concept, encouragement to apply, and receipt of applications from Pacific media

outlet partners, delays and communication issues arose around the selection process and the commencement of funded support for selected projects. Some participants in Pacific media outlets expressed dissatisfaction with a perceived lapse in communication about this activity for several months. This roadblock has largely been smoothed out now that projects are underway.

Review of reporting documentation and interviews with DFAT and ABCID confirm a strong level of transparency and communication of challenges, delays, and risk mitigation strategies, as well as a good level of satisfaction from DFAT with ABCID's communication of implementation progress and challenges. It was suggested that this could be further improved by implementing a more structured, real-time activity tracking system (for example, a shared activity tracker).

Strong monitoring, evaluation, learning and program research, with some improvement opportunities

Monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) systems are **functioning mostly as intended**. They are playing a **valuable role in contributing to adaptive implementation, real-time course correction, and collaborative defining of quality and success** with Pacific stakeholders. Strong activity, output and training experience data is collected, and progress against the PACMAS-4 M&E Framework (MEF) has been strong, with some caveats. Systematic and longitudinal outcomes-level data collection has been more constrained due to resourcing limitations, an early implementation period, and a focus on adaptive learning in this phase.

ABCID's internal M&E and research team are active, trusted partners for PACMAS and have undertaken significant work during this period. Key contributions include detailed learning accompaniment for PACMAS initiatives, the collaborative design (with partners) of new WiM-aligned tools such as the Women's Career Mapping tool and regular WiM network snapshots, a baseline study and development tracker for Pacific media associations, the development of a Content Quality Tool for use in the Content Fund, a data insights and monitoring dashboard, management and support for the development of the *State of the Media: Pacific* research project, production of case studies, and structured regular reflection and learning processes with the PACMAS team and partners.

The evaluation found **strong evidence of embedded reflective practice underpinning real-time program adaptation**. Stakeholders described regular dialogue between MEL and delivery staff, including active feedback loops during the Content Fund pilot to refine quality standards and implementation processes. Learning and reflection sessions are held internally and with key partners, and there is clear evidence that feedback, including from Pacific staff, has informed practical adjustments. These adjustments include contextualising training packages, refining equipment support, and developing newsroom leadership programming. Adaptive management practices appear robust and appropriately calibrated to a reform-oriented phase involving piloting and iteration.

Some MEL challenges have been encountered. The *State of the Media: Pacific* updated baseline research project took longer and required more resources than expected, necessitating support for Pacific researchers and diverting resources from regular M&E. As a result, some activities planned to support outcomes monitoring and assessment, such as participant tracer studies, have not been undertaken (in agreement with DFAT). Additionally, there are **systemic limitations in the data landscape**, including difficulties in generating and ethically accessing audience metrics or feedback, and in obtaining information on Pacific media outlets' revenue. These data limitations make it **difficult to test how digital transitions and content support affect audience engagement and revenue growth**, with reliance mostly on feedback from media outlets. Strengthening outcome-level monitoring and clarifying intermediate indicators for audience engagement and organisational viability will be important in a subsequent phase to enable more systematic testing of these causal pathway assumptions.

The systems reform focus of Phase Four also poses monitoring challenges, given the breadth of the work and the ambitious nature of even intermediate outcomes, limited MEL resourcing, and constraints in Pacific media data availability. This could be supported by identifying earlier or more proximate outcomes

that sit more clearly within program influence and reflect what can be reasonably achieved within a two-to three-year timeframe. Given ongoing data limitations (for example, audience metrics), focused longitudinal and qualitative tracking (such as through case studies) may also strengthen the program's ability to capture emerging change. MEL staff are currently planning for a case study approach.

The evaluators regard this **MEL focus on baselining, real-time developmental learning, and support for refinement and adaptation as appropriate and valuable for a phase of the program that involves significant innovation and piloting**. More systematic outcome-level tracking (including earlier or more proximate outcomes) will be important in Phase Five to enable fuller testing of causal pathways from capability development to quality content development, organisational and sector-level change and audience reach.

To what extent are program resources being efficiently utilised and tracked?

Excellent value for money and strong resource utilisation within a constrained funding envelope

The evaluation finds that PACMAS-4 demonstrates **strong resource utilisation and excellent value for money relative to the scale and ambition of the investment and alignment with critical needs**. With a total envelope of approximately AUD 9.3 million over three years across 12 Pacific countries, the program has delivered multi-stream systems-oriented support encompassing workforce capability development, digital transition, institutional strengthening of media associations, and enabling environment reform. This represents a **lean regional investment footprint for a systems reform program operating across diverse and often fragile political economies**.

By way of comparative context, the Media Development Initiative (MDI) in Papua New Guinea, a single-country investment under the Indo-Pacific Broadcasting Strategy, is funded at approximately AUD11.2 million over four years (2022-2026). PACMAS-4 operates across 12 countries within a smaller overall envelope, underscoring the comparatively constrained per-country resource base within which the regional program is delivered.

DFAT monitoring data indicate that **financial expenditure has broadly aligned with implementation progress**. This alignment suggests effective financial pacing and resource management in line with delivery momentum. Expenditure has also been relatively balanced across the program's three end-of-program outcome areas, supporting a diversified approach to practitioner capacity development, institutional strengthening, digital transition, and enabling environment interventions.

While some delays in expenditure occurred in specific initiatives, most notably during the Content Fund, these largely reflected the governance and sequencing demands of piloting a new funding mechanism and have since been addressed. In limited instances, activities such as the *State of the Media: Pacific* research project exceeded original cost estimates due to evolving operating conditions and the need to support Pacific researchers. These factors did not materially undermine overall financial efficiency.

Stakeholder perceptions broadly support a strong value-for-money assessment. Partners and DFAT representatives consistently described PACMAS-4 as a high-quality investment delivering substantial outputs and credible early outcomes relative to its funding base. In some smaller or secondary contexts, DFAT Posts questioned whether episodic engagement delivers optimal return. This highlights the importance of tailored strategies and higher levels of investment in smaller states, rather than indicating programmatic inefficiency.

The evaluation notes a **significant structural tension between the program's reform-oriented ambition, its geographic reach and its comparatively modest funding base**. While implementation has been efficient, the current resource level constrains the extent to which deeper institutional transformation and sustained country-level engagement and communications can be achieved within a three-year cycle. In particular, the resource envelope limits the program's ability to move beyond foundational capabilities and into more sustained organisation and sectoral transformation (including disability inclusion and business viability), which require longer-term, more intensive support.

Program efficiency has also been affected by evolving clarity around the overall program timeframe and by contractual and budget management complexities associated with the broader investment and

contracting arrangements. This includes shorter-term bilateral investments operating in parallel with the head contract. These arrangements have created additional coordination and budget management demands for program delivery.

Efficient implementation model and lean staffing

The evaluation finds that a **central driver of efficiency and value for money in PACMAS-4 is implementation through the ABC, a statutory authority with embedded media capability and international development experience**. The program leverages the ABC's existing training architecture, technical expertise in journalism and digital transition, established operational systems, procurement capacity and longstanding regional relationships. This reduces duplication, start-up costs and contractor overheads that would likely arise under alternative delivery models. ABCID builds on core training courses offered across the ABC workforce, including digital skills and journalism fundamentals, and adapts them to Pacific needs and contexts. Operational efficiencies are further reinforced through coordination with complementary investments under the Indo-Pacific Broadcasting Strategy, particularly the MDI in Papua New Guinea, enabling shared learning and technical synergies.

Staffing costs represent a relatively modest share of total expenditure (34%), compared with program delivery and partnership investments, enabling a strong focus on direct sectoral support. The program's emphasis on regional staffing has further strengthened contextual responsiveness and relationship-based delivery, including renewed relationships and progress with media associations, identifying co-trainers, and contextualising training packages. The evaluation finds that **staffing resources may currently be insufficient** to maximise program value, maintain consistent stakeholder communication, support outcomes-oriented MEL, and drive progress in the GEDSI space. Additional staffing should be considered.

Some additional **Pacific staffing challenges were identified**, including turnover, temporary vacancies and feedback regarding the scope for Pacific staff leadership and decision-making influence. While overall staff motivation and commitment to PACMAS were strong, stakeholders suggested further refinement of the regional staffing model, including greater leadership opportunities for Pacific staff and review of remuneration competitiveness, to strengthen retention and long-term sustainability.

To what extent are the relative partnership strengths of the delivery and funding agencies recognised and leveraged strategically to support outcomes?

A strong, complementary partnership between DFAT and ABCID – with some opportunity for improvement

PACMAS-4 **benefits from a strong, largely complementary collaboration between DFAT, as the funder and policy steward, and ABCID, a uniquely positioned implementing partner**. From stakeholder engagement, including with Posts and review of program design and workplanning documents, the evaluation finds that **respective institutional strengths are generally well recognised and leveraged** in support of program outcomes. DFAT provides strategic direction, diplomatic positioning and alignment with broader Australian policy objectives, while ABCID contributes technical media expertise, regional relationships and sector credibility.

ABCID's position as part of a statutory public broadcaster provides a distinctive comparative advantage in the geopolitically sensitive field of media assistance. This institutional positioning supports a careful balance between providing donor-funded support and preservation of media independence, reducing perceptions of political influence and strengthening legitimacy across diverse Pacific political contexts.

DFAT and ABCID have established generally respectful and functional governance and ways of working. Regular engagement among DFAT Canberra, DFAT Posts, and ABCID supports communication, planning, and responsiveness. DFAT Posts reported overall satisfaction with engagement and reporting quality.

While the partnership is operationally strong, the evaluation also **identified opportunities to deepen its strategic framing**. Stakeholder interviews revealed that the partnership would benefit from a stronger strategic framing of the DFAT–ABCID relationship, moving beyond a primarily transactional grant management approach towards a more partnership approach. There is scope to further articulate the

partnership as a strategic collaboration, with clearer recognition of complementary institutional roles and a shared systems reform agenda.

Areas for partnership strengthening include more systematic upfront coordination at design stage to support alignment between bilateral investments and regional programming allocations; greater regularity and consistency of communication with DFAT Posts in smaller and secondary countries; clearer coherence across Indo-Pacific Broadcasting Strategy and bilateral investments (including equipment support pathways); and stronger DFAT facilitation of linkages with complementary strategies, particularly in relation to gender equality, disability inclusion and broader social inclusion programming.

There are also **opportunities to extend the partnership ecosystem** beyond DFAT and ABCID, including greater engagement with Pacific-based gender equality/women's rights organisations, organisations of persons with disabilities (OPDs), and relevant Pacific government counterparts to support broader systems change objectives.

Overall, the **DFAT–ABCID partnership is a key enabler of PACMAS-4 effectiveness**, with refinement focused on strategic alignment rather than structural redesign.

To what extent are intended practice principles observable and reflected in stakeholders' program experiences?

Excellent principles-based implementation practice

The evaluation finds **strong evidence that Phase Four's intended practice principles** — flexible, needs-responsive partnership; progressing localisation; and evidence-informed adaptive management — **are consistently observable in both program documentation and stakeholder experience**. The program's ethos is also to **remain accessible across the region** as much as possible, given the broad need and the interconnected nature of the Pacific media sectors. Across interviews, these principles were described as hallmarks of PACMAS delivery rather than as aspirational language.

ABCID's **practice of working through national media associations** to set and refresh annual priorities is well established. Where new initiatives have emerged, they have typically been **grounded in visible Pasifika-led momentum**. The WiM initiative, for example, grew from leadership by Fijian media practitioners in Phase Three rather than donor-led design. Stakeholders repeatedly emphasised **the value of trusted relationships and responsiveness**. Several partners cited **concrete examples of PACMAS listening and adapting**, including contextualisation of training packages in consultation with associations and the introduction of equipment grants after feedback that journalists were returning to under-resourced newsrooms, unable to apply newly acquired skills. A senior journalist in a priority country noted that *"the PACMAS team has been amazing and awesome. The dialogues have been engaging and I've always loved working with them. Communication has been great with them"*.

There is also **clear evidence of progress in localisation**. The establishment of a regional Pacific staffing model, increased use of Pacific co-trainers, and facilitation of regional peer exchanges were widely endorsed. Stakeholders expressed appreciation for the credibility and contextual insight brought by Pacific staff, while encouraging further expansion of Pacific-to-Pacific learning and leadership influence in future design processes. Some stakeholders, including PACMAS Pacific staff, described **a desire for deeper listening and co-design** in the lead-up to Phase Five.

The evaluation also notes that **some local priorities appear contested in some environments**. For example, outside of Fiji, WiM and prioritisation of sectoral gender equality appears contested, especially in Tonga and to some degree in the Solomon Islands. In a range of other contexts, including Samoa, women described the need for WiM-type network support but had met resistance from association leaders and other influential figures. Some associations may reflect existing power structures (including gendered), so ongoing engagement beyond established leaders and associations will remain important to ensure generational, gender and disability perspectives are incorporated into priority-setting processes.

Finally, **the program's evidence-based and adaptive ethos is experienced as operational rather than rhetorical**, with regular feedback loops informing course correction and refinement of initiatives. Overall,

Phase Four principles are substantively embedded in implementation practice, with refinement focused on deepening inclusion and local leadership rather than altering the underlying model.

2.2.2. KEQ3. To what extent is PACMAS-4 progressing towards producing valuable outcomes?

PACMAS-4 is showing credible early and intermediate progress across all three EOPO areas, with the strongest progress evident early outcomes levels. Under EOPO 1 (media outlets more viable and digitally smart), there is strong evidence of strengthened journalist capability, early foundations for digital transition, and some indications of audience growth. Under EOPO 2 (audience engagement with quality public interest content), promising examples of improved content production and diversification, aligned with audience interests, are emerging, though it is too early to systematically assess audience engagement. Under EOPO 3 (an improved enabling environment), early institutional strengthening of media associations and WiM networks is evident, with growing advocacy and governance effects.

At this stage of implementation, the evaluation finds that **early stages of the intended causal pathways are being credibly activated**. There is evidence that strengthened journalist capability and emerging digital strategy are contributing to improved content practices, platform diversification and increased audience consideration and interaction in supported outlets. Institutional and network support to media associations and WiM networks is translating into more active sector governance, coordination, inclusion and advocacy capacity. However, the leveraging of these shifts into measurable audience-scale expansion and organisational viability remains nascent and difficult to measure.

Overall, progress towards IOs is assessed as strong, with EOPO-level effects emerging but at differing levels of maturity. The relative absence of audience-level indicators and consolidated institutional viability data will present some challenges to future causal pathway and outcomes assessment.

EOPO 1: Pacific news media outlets are more viable and digitally smart

EOPO 1 is premised on a sequenced pathway: strengthened journalistic capabilities and digital content production contribute to improved content quality and audience engagement, which in turn support revenue generation and improved outlet viability. At this stage of implementation, the **evaluation finds credible activation of the early stages of this pathway, with downstream effects on commercial or funding viability still emerging**.

Progress toward EOPO 1 is therefore assessed as **emerging but grounded in strong intermediate IO-level gains**. Foundations for viability and digital maturity are being laid, though measurable revenue and sustainability impacts have not yet been consolidated.

IO 1: Journalists produce public interest content that meets quality standards

There is strong evidence that **PACMAS-4 has strengthened journalist capability, professional confidence and awareness of quality standards** across participating contexts – causal pathway precursors to producing public interest, quality content. Participants consistently report applying new skills and quality principles in practice, and illustrative examples suggest improvements in content production and editorial decision-making. IO1 is therefore assessed as progressing strongly and credibly activating the first stage of the EOPO 1 pathway.

Phase Four has centred on **capacity building** through the FoJ program, digital skills and MoJo training, bespoke workshops and exchanges, and training for broadcasting technicians. The FoJ program — delivered through a blended model combining face-to-face introduction with structured online modules and contextualised co-training by Pacific trainers — has reached 88 graduates and 37 senior representatives through ToT streams. Designed in response to high turnover and limited foundational training in under-resourced newsrooms, the program was recognised with a Gold Award at the Australian Good Design Awards in 2025, with judges noting that it “*sets a benchmark in its field and is a powerful model for respectful, high-impact international development.*” This external recognition reinforces stakeholder accounts of the program’s quality and contextual appropriateness.

PACMAS monitoring data indicate consistently high satisfaction rates, with 100% of surveyed FoJ participants reporting that the training would improve their job performance. Interview evidence corroborates this. As one Pacific PACMAS staff member reflected:

Foundations of Journalism is close to my heart ... there was a high turnover of journalists and very little training available on the basics of journalism. It was designed to address the needs of journalists.

Beyond high satisfaction rates and intent to apply learning, there are credible **indications of early translation of skills into newsroom practice**. PACMAS monitoring data indicate that participants in Doorstop Interview Skills training in Tonga, Samoa and Fiji reported increased confidence in questioning authority figures and subsequently applied these skills in high-profile contexts such as the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) and the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM). These examples suggest movement beyond training participation toward practical application in politically significant reporting environments.

Stakeholder interviews reinforced this pattern. A senior media stakeholder from a smaller context reflected:

Personally my background isn't in journalism so ... I lacked confidence but development over the past three years and interacting with other journalists in the region which is supported by PACMAS and the quality of our content has improved.

Journalists who had undertaken MoJo training similarly described immediate **application of new techniques** to profile remote and rural communities, broadening representation and strengthening public interest coverage. In one case, an editor who had recently stepped into a leadership role described embedding PACMAS-learned standards into newsroom oversight:

I was passed the ball to look after our media outlet ... everything I learn, I apply ... Quality journalism is the bread and butter for our news organisation.

Systematic tracking of the translation of training into quality content production is, however, currently constrained by data availability. MEL staff have previously trialled content quality monitoring and found it too resource-intensive. There is a need for stronger outcomes data on the translation of training to practice.

Peer-to-peer learning across the region was also repeatedly cited as influential in shifting newsroom practices, indicating diffusion of professional norms beyond individual participants. Media association representatives consistently noted the importance of PACMAS-4 training in bringing the sector together, supporting associations' legitimacy and member engagement, and providing a sense of vocational pride and uplift for a workforce under pressure.

Taken together, available evidence (participant reporting and illustrative examples documented by the program) provides **plausible indication that PACMAS-supported capability development is influencing newsroom behaviours and professional standards** — a necessary precursor within the EOPO 1 viability pathway. Consistent with the Phase Four design and MEF, the strongest attribution of PACMAS-supported skills to identifiable content outputs sits within the Content Fund and structured case study streams, where mentoring and monitoring mechanisms are embedded. At the time of this evaluation, these streams were still underway, limiting consolidated assessment of content-level effects across the broader PACMAS program.

Overall, **the program demonstrates strong progress toward IO 1**. Early evidence suggests that strengthened journalist capability is beginning to translate into improved newsroom practices and higher-quality public interest content. Sustained production of such content is a necessary step within the broader EOPO1 pathway toward stronger outlet viability and digital maturity. However, the full effects of this pathway will depend on complementary mechanisms (such as the Content Fund and digital transition projects) that support continued application, mentoring and practice within newsrooms, as well as clearer data about the application of acquired skills and knowledge to practice.

IO 2: Media outlets have strengthened digital business models, plans, and products

There is credible evidence that PACMAS-4 **has laid important foundations for digital transition among participating outlets**, particularly through strategy development, skills building and supported pilot projects, and with the **broader workforce through training**. Progress is necessarily differentiated across contexts, reflecting design parameters necessitating concentrating intensive digital transition support on a small number of outlets while supporting broader digital skills diffusion through training delivered regionally. Within this model, accompanied outlets demonstrate more substantive organisational shifts, while sector-wide digital literacy, interest and awareness have increased. IO 2 is therefore assessed as demonstrating emerging but strategically coherent progress within a sequenced digital reform causal pathway.

In Phase Four, PACMAS introduced an integrated approach to digital capability development that combines wide-reach digital skills training with more intensive digital transitions strategies and projects for select media outlets. While digital skills training strengthens individual capability and builds interest, the transition projects provide structured mentoring opportunities for outlets to enact organisational change. In practice, the training stream acts as a precursor and enabling mechanism for organisational digital transition, with the two approaches intended to operate in tandem.

Early outcomes from digital skills training and transition projects are emerging. The digital skills trainer described consistent uptake and practical application of remote training:

By and large, we have had good success with remote trainings ... in terms of effect, we've seen various case studies, and we've had good success,

noting that ongoing informal support allows him to observe participants applying learning in newsroom contexts.

Stakeholders reinforced the practical value of the digital skills training. One newsroom participant explained:

[The trainer] has been really supportive in terms of online trainings ... like writing intros and stories, nailing your stories into intro and hook ... it has really benefitted our newsroom ... Before we were not up to that standard but now we are receiving comments from the public that things have really improved.

This reflects not only skills acquisition but emerging audience feedback loops — an early indicator of the pathway from digital capability to engagement.

Accompanied digital transition projects provide clearer organisational-level shifts. For example, Vanuatu Broadcasting and Television Corporation (VBTC) was supported to develop a digital strategy, including through an intensive bootcamp, leading to the establishment of a dedicated multimedia team, new workflows and expanded social media presence (Facebook, YouTube, TikTok, Instagram and website platforms). VBTC reported increased audience engagement and improved language diversification to reach diaspora audiences. Importantly, the organisation described its digital strategy as contributing to its ability to survive and “make a profit” within a shifting government funding environment. VBTC staff describe this support as critical in keeping the organisation afloat and reestablishing their legitimacy and relevance with the government and with audiences:

PACMAS has supported us greatly in terms of our multimedia division, we never had that before ... We saw the need ... because social media became very big with Vanuatu audiences so we decided to set up a section to concentrate mostly on social media. We identified various young people, trained them, then identified a few people to train for a multimedia unit and they spent a few weeks in Brisbane with [the ABC digital trainer] and then [the trainer] came back here and spent a few weeks with them.

I see quite a lot of improvement on social media than before and less complaint. It's really, really been supportive and we're really appreciative of that ... We used to get complaints that VBTC wasn't putting news on social media page and other news outlets were. Now people are

coming to us for the news; we are really pleased. The language skills have improved as well. Before we were only concentrating on Bislama; now we are doing English as well which is great, and trying to incorporate French. This really helps improve choices of how people come to accept whether or not to read in English or Bislama because we have a lot of Ni-Vanuatu who are travelling overseas so most of them prefer to read in English and are accessing us this way ... Online we've noticed an improvement (in audience reach) since multimedia training; quite a lot ...

With PACMAS-4 the Tonga Broadcasting Commission launched a bilingual, interactive website, and Samoa's Radio 2AP undertook digitisation and archival preservation work. This project was described as “*a rare, golden opportunity ... something that comes around once in a lifetime,*” with both cultural preservation value and expanded audience accessibility anticipated for its 50-year anniversary.

These projects **illustrate the intended sequencing of digital transition under Phase Four**: interest generated through the digital skills training program, strategy development, team capability strengthening, workflow reform and platform diversification preceding monetisation experimentation. Early audience reach improvements are observable in some cases. However, translation into stable revenue growth remains limited. Stakeholders also consistently noted the resource-intensive nature of digital transition, the scale of institutional change required, and the ongoing challenges posed by infrastructure constraints and competition from unregulated social media platforms.

At the same time, **digital transition outcomes remain early-stage and more limited to specific outlets that have received investment under the pilot digital transitions stream**. While some outlets report increased reach and modest advertising gains supported by marketing plans, stakeholders emphasised the ongoing competitive pressures posed by social media platforms. One project participant reflected:

Audience reach has improved but it's still not enough ... We need to improve our commercial sales and advertising.

Outlets beyond the intensively supported cohort expressed demand for greater digitisation and marketing assistance, suggesting that **PACMAS-4 has catalysed sector-wide awareness of digital imperatives**, even where deep accompaniment has not been feasible. In testing the EOPO 1 causal assumptions, the evaluation finds credible evidence of progress along the early stages of the digital transition pathway — namely strategy development, capability strengthening, workflow reform and platform diversification.

There is **emerging evidence of improved audience engagement** in accompanied outlets. However, the subsequent assumption that audience growth will be expansive and translate into sustained and diversified revenue streams remains only partially evidenced at this stage. This reflects both the design's sequencing and the structural constraints facing Pacific media markets.

It also reflects that Phase Four has prioritised foundational digital capability and content quality over direct commercial strategy and monetisation experimentation. Several stakeholders highlighted the importance of complementary institutional reform, including leadership development and business strategy strengthening, to underpin longer-term viability. As such, sector-wide digital sustainability will require greater scale, sustained accompaniment and expanded attention to leadership and commercial capability in future phases.

Overall, **IO 2 demonstrates emerging but strategically coherent progress toward EOPO 1, with foundations laid but commercial transformation still in development**.

EOPO 2: Pacific audiences engage with quality Pacific public interest media content

With the Content Fund currently supporting projects across 15 media outlets, **progress toward EOPO 2 is emerging but remains at an early stage.** There is **credible evidence that PACMAS-4 has strengthened the production and distribution of diverse, multi-platform, Pacific-driven, public-interest content** that is responsive to practitioner priorities and supports moving beyond routine news-cycle reporting. However, with most Content Fund projects still in production, systematic evidence of audience engagement effects is limited at this point. Progress is therefore strongest at the production end of the causal pathway.

Importantly, one of the implicit design assumptions of Phase Four was that content actively promoting gender equality, disability equity and broader social inclusion would emerge organically through the Content Fund mechanism. A recent internal assessment of early outputs arising from the Content Fund suggested that a majority of funded projects are amplifying a wider diversity of voices and experiences, including those of women, and, in some more limited cases, people with disabilities. This suggests that the Content Fund is contributing to more inclusive representation and storytelling. Further, project case studies (both documented by the team and engaged with by the evaluators) demonstrate that Content Fund provides a useful mechanism for real-time working through of issues related to ensuring positive representation, challenging discriminatory norms, and enabling safe engagement with diverse people.

At the same time, the available evidence does not yet allow a systematic assessment of the extent to which Content Fund outputs are consistently advancing GEDSI objectives in a more explicit or transformative way. Amplifying diverse voices is an important contribution, but it is not always the same as intentionally addressing gender equality, disability equity or broader social inclusion issues. This points to the potential value of further extending the GEDSI focus within the Content Fund, building on the basis established and lessons learned of this first phase.

IO 3: Pacific media produces and distributes quality public interest content that promotes gender equality, disability and social inclusion

Phase Four initiatives — particularly the Content Fund and MoJo training and equipment — have **strengthened the enabling conditions for locally driven public interest production.**

MoJo recipients consistently reported immediate applicability in **diversifying content to include rural and remote voices and stories**, with strong demand expressed for further rollout across additional contexts. To date, the MoJo activity has largely been enabled through bilateral investment rather than through the core regional budget.

The **Content Fund** provides financial resourcing, equipment and specialist mentoring to develop concepts into produced content, typically with a digital dimension. While still in pilot phase, stakeholder feedback indicates that this accompanied model **enables deeper investigative and socially sensitive storytelling, coupled with technical and editorial quality**, that would otherwise be difficult to pursue in resource-constrained newsrooms. One stakeholder described the initiative as creating conditions for Pacific “*story sovereignty*,” enabling content development defined by Pacific practitioners.

Two structural **strengths** of the Content Fund model were consistently identified. First, **ABCID’s ability to broker highly specialised, multi-skilled mentors**, carefully matched to the specific editorial, technical and organisational needs of each project, represents a distinctive comparative advantage. Mentors bring not only production expertise but also experience in editorial frameworks, digital strategy, audience engagement, risk management, enabling tailored accompaniment. Stakeholders also highlighted the importance of mentors’ professional maturity and cultural acumen, enabling them to navigate complex media development projects in a cross-cultural environment. Mentors described the PACMAS approach as grounded in “*flexibility*” and “*respect*”, setting mentors up well to navigate the cultural and political context and relationships, with good opportunities for debriefing. The effectiveness of this skilled and culturally attuned mentoring approach was echoed by grant recipients.

Second, the model combines **financial resourcing, appropriate equipment, on-the-job learning and idea development in a single, integrated package.** Rather than separating training from implementation, the

Content Fund **enables participants to apply skills immediately within real-world production processes.** This holistic approach effectively operationalises earlier capacity-building efforts, translating learning from programs such as FoJ, digital skills training and MoJo training into practice through supported experimentation and content creation.

Case illustration – Content Fund support for the Vanuatu’s *Sista Speaks Out* podcast series

Starting point: Sista is a Vanuatu-based feminist arts and media organisation that aims to empower women and girls through telling their stories, informing them, and raising awareness on issues affecting women and girls. A longstanding PACMAS partner, Sista reaches a mainstream audience through publishing in partnership with news outlet Vanuatu Daily Post.

The founder and Executive Director of Sista, Yasmine Covo, identified a desire to produce a podcast on contemporary social and political issues to engage a wide audience and showcase the abilities of women to lead public discussion outside of narrowly defined ‘women’s issues’. Sista approached PACMAS with the idea and were encouraged to apply through the Content Fund.

PACMAS contribution: Through the Content Fund, Sista received financial support, MoJo equipment, and specialist mentoring, with a suitable mentor matched by ABCID. The experienced content advisor has provided holistic support to the process, from refinement of podcast episode ideas, to video production guidance, interviewing techniques coaching, editorial framing, social media risk management, editing, and determination of team roles and responsibilities. Two Sista team members also participated in MoJo training in Australia, strengthening hands-on technical capability. PACMAS support, including of the mentor, was delivered flexibly and adapted as the project progressed. The mentor has spent intensive time in country with the Sista team as well as remote support.

Observed change: Sista’s previous experience with roundtable podcasting was resource intensive and difficult to sustain alongside other organisational priorities, even without the additional demands of video production.

Sista was also keenly aware of potential for social backlash. As a feminist organisation producing a podcast intended to reach broad audiences, and the Executive Director as a public figure leading interviews, the project carried reputational and personal risks. Yasmine noted that Sista would not have pursued the podcast idea without PACMAS support and mentoring, citing limited technical capacity, appropriate equipment, time constraints within a busy, resource-constrained organisation, and concerns about the potential toll of potential backlash on social media:

“[Without PACMAS] I probably wouldn’t have done it ... I want to be very intentional about who I work with and PACMAS is really a part of that. PACMAS is great on risk, we have a strategy and risk matrix ... I already know I’m going to get criticism ...; the ABC is aware of all of that, they are prepared to help my team monitor all of that stuff.”

With PACMAS and content advisor support, the podcast series has moved from concept to production. Sista is producing an eight-episode series on diverse public interest topics, with the first episode focused on the music industry and social media culture, and the second on the judicial system holding parliamentarians to account. These first two episodes have been filmed and edited with a multiplatform distribution plan (YouTube and social media).

The Sista Executive Director and the content advisor both noted a real sense of achievement from the Sista team upon completion of the first two episodes. Team members demonstrated increased confidence in their roles and skills, including in audience awareness and interview techniques. The process also supported the team to consider how to balance audience engagement with safe online spaces including for their staff and participants, leading to the development of social media moderation framework. This has strengthened the Sista team’s confidence in creating innovative content with a feminist framing while managing the risks of negative feedback and backlash. The experience also has provided a practical opportunity to explore editorial frameworks and how to make media content *“compelling for audiences”*, as the content advisor explained.

Key lessons learned: This example illustrates the value of combining funding, equipment, and carefully matched specialist mentoring to support the production of innovative public interest content generated by organisations demonstrating readiness and creativity. Flexibility in implementation and trust-based partnership with PACMAS and the content advisor enabled collaborative workshopping and hands-on learning around emerging editorial and risk management challenges. The case also highlights the intensity of support required to enable production of high-quality, inclusive digital content, and the importance of adequate lead-in time, clear communication and realistic expectations for small organisations balancing pushing the boundaries with safety and sustainability.

Several stakeholders noted limited lead-in time, clarity and understanding of the Content Fund parameters, which constrained their ability to apply, and a lapse in communications following successful application. This indicates **opportunities to strengthen communication, pacing and transparency** in future rounds. ABCID staff also reflected that the pilot generated a **higher level of governance, administrative and risk-management demand** than initially anticipated, given the intensity of mentoring, procurement, funds disbursement and quality assurance processes required.

In turn, these pressures **may have constrained the ideation and incubation phase of projects**. With compressed timelines and significant compliance requirements, opportunities for deeper editorial exploration, including around complex gender equality and disability equity themes, may have been reduced and have been managed mostly by the (highly skilled) mentors.

While examples of explicitly GEDSI-focused projects are present, and there **is credible evidence that the diversity of voices, topics and representation has broadened across supported content**, the **stronger ambition of systematically advancing gender equality and disability equity cannot yet be determined**. Overall, content emerging through PACMAS-4 appears more inclusive and diverse than prior baselines suggest, providing a constructive foundation to build upon.

Looking ahead, it may be appropriate to **retain a broad diversity, equity and inclusion framing for the Content Fund to enable editorial independence and Pacific-led story sovereignty, while introducing a more intentional, tiered approach to deeper GEDSI investment**. Under such a model, a proportion of funding could explicitly support projects with clear, transformative gender equality and disability equity objectives for outlets that show interest and readiness, accompanied by targeted mentoring and specialist expertise. In addition, **strengthening journalist capability** in this area, for example, through a follow-on or complementary GEDSI-focused course or set of modules building on FoJ, may support more confident and analytically robust integration of equity principles into mainstream reporting.

Given the pilot nature of the Content Fund, **prioritising MEL follow-through will also be important**. Consolidated case studies, documentation of governance and implementation lessons, and clearer articulation of editorial and audience outcomes will be critical to informing decisions about scale, sequencing and investment in future phases.

Overall, there has been meaningful progress on IO 3 in **supporting incubation, expansion, diversity, and quality of Pacific-led public interest content**. The Content Fund shows promise. PACMAS's other **foundational capacity development and relationships investments have laid a strong foundation for this strategy**, illustrating the interconnected nature of causal pathways across the program design. Audience engagement and long-term equity outcomes remain in development, given the current roll-out of the Content Fund. To strengthen these early gains in any future rounds, it will be important to clarify the focus on diversity, equity and quality expectations, monitor the fund and document lessons learned, and increase investment to enable a greater transformative GEDSI focus.

EOPO 3: Enabling environment for professional, independent and inclusive Pacific media is improved

EOPO 3 **demonstrates credible early progress**, and in some contexts (including Fiji, Samoa, the Solomon Islands, Tonga, and the Marshall Islands), it is **significant**. Institutional strengthening of media associations, including the revitalisation of governance structures and the emergence of women's professional networks, has contributed to improvements in sector coordination, advocacy, peer support, internal sector equity, and the development of gender equality-aligned content. While the effects on the broader environment vary by context, there is evidence that PACMAS-4 has strengthened foundational conditions. These include advocacy for professional independence, policy development, gains in inclusion and equality inclusion, and shared solidarity within the media sector, both within countries and across the region.

In addition to the activities aligned with the IOs below, PACMAS-4 has recently launched a leadership program to strengthen media executive and newsroom leadership capacity. This aligns well with stakeholders' evaluation feedback on the need for stronger editorial leadership, reinforcement of professional standards, and institutional sustainability. Early indications suggest this may represent a valuable complement to association strengthening and WiM networks by investing directly in workforce leadership within the enabling environment.

IO 4: Media associations more effectively protect and promote independent, professional and inclusive media

After a slow start, there is **strong evidence of growing institutional momentum among media associations** across participating contexts. Pacific stakeholders consistently affirmed that PACMAS-4 has played an important role in **revitalising volunteer-led associations** that previously lacked consistent governance structures, administrative capacity and operational continuity.

All associations receiving grants have now held Annual General Meetings (AGMs), **re-engaging membership, re-establishing governance legitimacy, and gaining strategic direction**. Associations such as the Fijian Media Association and the Pacific Media Institute (Marshall Islands) have undertaken member consultations and developed multi-year strategic plans. PACMAS support has included funding operational staff, assisting with basic infrastructure in some contexts, and providing guidance for strengthened financial accountability systems, revitalised boards and constitutions, and structured planning processes.

Importantly, funded administrative positions also appear to be playing a **catalytic role in longer-term sustainability** in some locations. Stakeholders reported that having dedicated staff has enabled associations not only to “*get the house in order*” in terms of governance and compliance, but also to pursue **diversified funding opportunities** beyond PACMAS. This emerging ability to secure alternative resources strengthens institutional resilience and reduces sole dependence on donor funding. This represents a critical step in sustaining an independent enabling environment.

Stakeholders emphasised that PACMAS-4's **model of association support has been largely well-received and effective in revitalising and professionalising associations**. Building on PACMAS's long-term relationships with associations, the model has combined practical resourcing with structured governance expectations and guidance (expected to be in place prior to receiving grants). As one association representative reflected, prior to PACMAS support, the organisation struggled to move beyond informal engagement:

We were just trying to organise ourselves ... just a bunch of stressed journalists ... PACMAS has helped us to become serious as an association ... We've become a lot more organised.

With support, it has become more organised, strengthened internal governance and engaged more systematically with its members. The sequencing of governance expectations prior to receiving grant funding has received a positive reception.

Some revitalised associations are **beginning to exercise advocacy and collective voice to protect media freedom**, in support of an enabling environment for quality journalism. In Fiji, following broader political and legislative changes in 2023, the media association has increased member consultation and policy dialogue. In November 2025, JAWS publicly reaffirmed constitutional protections for freedom of

expression in response to a media access issue. While broader regulatory and political environments remain context-dependent and influenced by multiple factors beyond PACMAS, these actions suggest **increased organisational confidence and willingness by associations to engage publicly on issues** affecting media independence and professional standards.

Stakeholders, including DFAT Posts, emphasised the **long-term importance of investing in volunteer-run associations** as anchors of sector resilience and professional norms. However, **sustainability remains contingent on leadership continuity, diversified funding and ongoing consolidation of governance systems**. ABCID's own lesson learning further highlights that strengthening voluntary associations is not a linear process or a one-size-fits-all approach. Institutional momentum can be impeded where leadership turnover occurs, voluntary capacity is stretched, or political pressures intensify. Sustained progress therefore requires ongoing accompaniment and adaptive support. Each association has its own starting points and challenges that require tailored support. Tailoring has been supported by PACMAS's baseline stocktake of media association needs and capabilities.

Early evidence from PACMAS's support to media associations **signals early activation of the EOPO 3 causal pathway** and provides evidence that PACMAS-4's causal assumptions are warranted. By supporting the reestablishment of governance structures and processes, member engagement, and operational capacity, PACMAS-supported associations are better positioned to articulate collective priorities, coordinate sector dialogue, diversify funding, reinforce professional standards, set sectoral policy standards and undertake advocacy to protect and enhance media freedom.

IO 5: Women in media networks are empowered to promote women's equal participation in the media industry

Performance against IO 5 is **assessed as good**. PACMAS support has contributed to the **consolidation, momentum, and leadership of the WiM network in Fiji, as well as to emerging momentum in other contexts**. In Fiji, the network (established in 2022) demonstrates increasing organisational maturity, diversified funding, growing sectoral legitimacy, and regional leadership in advancing gender equality within the media sector. In the Solomon Islands and Tonga, women's networks remain at earlier stages of development, with positive momentum but uneven institutional support.

With PACMAS support, WiM Fiji's initiative to host a Pacific Women in Media conference in 2025 **has sparked interest in gender equality and women's leadership, sectoral discussion, and networks in other contexts across the region**. Progress under IO 5 therefore reflects strong performance in Fiji and emerging, context-dependent progress elsewhere.

Across the networks and in the context of the conference, participants described WiM as providing **necessary, valuable safe spaces of solidarity, professional support and collective learning**. WiM provides a forum for women journalists and media practitioners to share experiences and strategies for navigating and challenging gender inequality and patriarchal norms in their workplaces, the sector, home and communities. Participants highlighted challenges, including unequal unpaid care responsibilities alongside demanding careers, experiences of gender-based violence and sexual harassment, burnout, challenging gendered stereotypes of women's capabilities that impede leadership confidence and opportunities, and the need for high-quality, sensitive reporting on gender-based violence and gender equality.

WiM network members described **a range of outcomes**. These include increased morale and wellbeing, greater conscientisation regarding gender inequality, strengthened confidence and leadership aspiration, leadership advancement and improved professional standing, and new lines of content development focused on gender equality. Participants also highlighted the importance of peer support networks to providing solidarity and psychological safety, as well as positive spillover effects for employer organisations through increased wellbeing, confidence, skills and professional capacity. WiM networks are also showing potential to reinforce and support revitalised associations. In Fiji, for example, the Fijian Media Association is driving sectoral policy change, in part catalysed by the momentum and membership of the aligned Women in Media network.

Case study 2 – Fiji Women in Media network initiative

Starting point: Women in Media (WiM) was established in Fiji shortly prior to the 2022 election, in a context of rapid political change and an opening of media space. The network was founded by three senior female journalists who identified a need for a dedicated platform through which women in the sector could share challenges, build mutual support and strengthen professional voice. One founder expressed that

“I’ve been in the industry since 2004; we didn’t have anything like this to lean on. As a woman journalist in the field, you’d like to have fellow women journalists to learn from and having our journalist hats on while acknowledging our different roles including motherhood and being sole breadwinners. It’s a different experience to men, so there’s a disconnect there; we need people who’ve lived the same experience and the same challenges we’ve faced and how to navigate them. With that understanding I thought to myself... my younger colleagues are probably struggling with the same challenges and I would like to be the kind of person they can look up to and seek advice from.”

Founders described persistent structural pressures facing women journalists, including workplace norms misaligned with care responsibilities, exposure to harassment and online abuse, and limited representation in senior editorial leadership. Importantly, male leaders within media outlets and the Fijian Media Association were broadly supportive, recognising WiM as a constructive mechanism for sector improvement rather than a confrontational initiative.

WiM was conceived not only as a peer support platform but as a vehicle to amplify women’s voices within the industry and contribute to safer and more equitable professional environments.

PACMAS contribution: PACMAS has provided targeted support, including funding for a part-time coordinator role in Fiji (held by one of the network’s co-founders), small grants for network activities, support for work planning, and facilitation of leadership linkages such as ABC placements under the Emerging Women Leaders initiative. PACMAS also supported the inaugural Pacific Women in Media regional conference in 2025, strengthening regional connectivity. Organisers described how PACMAS investment also keeps them motivated and accountable, supporting momentum.

“PACMAS has been massive ... We wouldn’t be where we are without their support.”

Observed change: Three years post-establishment, WiM Fiji demonstrates increasing maturity and momentum. The network has diversified funding beyond PACMAS and, in June 2025, successfully convened the inaugural Pacific Women in Media regional conference, attracting participants from across the region. WiM Fiji holds regular member meetings amongst its 77 current members and discussions on issues such as financial literacy, leadership, online safety, gender-based violence, and wellbeing. It has supported women’s participation in leadership symposia and placements and engaged actively in sector-wide dialogue. Founders described the network as providing female journalists support with *“everything outside of the craft”*. Network leaders identified the regional conference as a significant milestone, strengthening cross-country collaboration and visibility for women journalists, particularly those working in smaller and more isolated Pacific Island states. The network has begun to challenge underrepresentation of women in media leadership and prevailing workplace norms that contribute to burnout and attrition. They are also actively pursuing opportunities to provide wellbeing supports to members through access to a counsellor.

Key lessons learned: WiM Fiji’s effectiveness to date reflects committed Pacific leadership, a clearly articulated purpose, a supportive enabling environment, and PACMAS investment. The initiative was locally conceived and driven by senior Fijian journalists who identified structural barriers facing women in the sector and mobilised around a shared reform agenda. PACMAS’ contribution has been catalytic rather than directive, providing targeted resourcing and connection points that have enabled the network to consolidate, professionalise and expand its influence.

Attachment to a functioning media association, a clear division of role scope (with associations supporting technical craft), and the presence of male allies within sector leadership have further contributed to legitimacy and traction. However, this association-attached model is not readily replicable in all contexts. In countries where media associations are weaker or where predominantly male leadership resists

collective organising, establishing and sustaining women's networks is more challenging. In several countries, women who attended the regional conference expressed interest in establishing national networks but reported limited institutional backing. In a small number of instances, evaluators heard views that WiM did not constitute a sector priority. These dynamics underscore the importance of context-sensitive approaches to expansion and careful attention to safety, sustainability and strategic positioning. They also reinforce that IO 5 progress is contingent not only on program inputs but on broader sector governance and power dynamics.

Outside of Fiji, stakeholder views reflect some level of contestation of and resistance to WiM and women's organising as a priority sectoral need. In several countries, women who attended the regional conference expressed strong interest in establishing national networks but reported limited institutional backing from their media associations. In a small number of instances, including in Tonga, where a WiM network has been established, evaluators heard views from people outside the networks that WiM did not constitute a sector priority. While not widespread, these perspectives indicate that enabling conditions for women's collective organising remain uneven across contexts. There is clear interest in regional connections from current network members and women who do not yet have a country network to engage in.

This resistance **highlights the importance of careful attention to the safety, sustainability and strategic positioning of WiM initiatives as they expand across the region.** Stakeholders identified opportunities to strengthen IO 5 through a more structured leadership development and mentoring model, potentially incorporating selective male engagement to build allies for change and mitigate resistance. Comparable leadership approaches exist within DFAT-funded programs and ABCID's own experience and could be adapted to Pacific journalism contexts.

Networks also expressed interest in more specialised technical support, including deeper engagement with gender-sensitive reporting and gender-based violence reporting. In 2024, the Solomon Islands Women in News network received PACMAS training to support election coverage, which provides a useful model for this tailored training support to networks. Such capacity-building may further strengthen both the credibility and influence of women's networks within national media ecosystems. Founders and members also expressed significant interest in more ongoing leadership training and mentoring opportunities.

2.3. Equity and inclusion

2.3.1. KEQ4. *Is PACMAS-4 effectively promoting gender equality, disability, and broader social inclusion?*

Gender Equality: Achieving

Disability Inclusion & Social Inclusion: Developing

Finding: PACMAS-4's performance against the criterion of equity and inclusion is assessed as **Achieving for gender equality**, and **Developing for disability inclusion and other forms of social inclusion** at this stage of implementation.

The program has made meaningful progress in advancing women's leadership and gender equity within Pacific media systems, most visibly through standalone investment in Women in Media (WiM) networks grounded in local leadership. Gender equality has received sustained focus across both targeted and mainstreaming strategies, though mainstreaming efforts show more mixed evidence of translation into journalism practice.

By contrast, disability inclusion did not receive the same level of explicit focus, structural embedding and resourcing in the original design. Gender equality was prioritised, reflecting DFAT policy expectations at the time and resource constraints. As a result, disability inclusion has lacked equivalent pathways, partnerships, dedicated expertise and delivery mechanism, and efforts have remained more limited in scope. While this reflects prioritisation and resourcing decisions embedded in the Phase Four design, it nonetheless shapes the program's overall performance against the equity and inclusion criterion, including

progress in accessibility of media content, audience reach, production of inclusive and non-discriminatory content, and a media sector that is inclusive of people with disabilities.

Stakeholders, including the implementing agency, demonstrate genuine interest in strengthening disability inclusion moving forward. Looking toward the next program phase, there is significant opportunity to develop a more explicit, intersectional and sufficiently resourced Pasifika-led GEDSI strategy that consolidates gains in gender equality while addressing structural gaps in disability and broader social inclusion.

Strength of evidence: Good. The evaluation team collected significant primary qualitative data on equity and inclusion, recurring themes were surfaced through diverse stakeholders' feedback, and these key themes were triangulated with program documentation. Further, the evaluation team brought subject matter and lived experience GEDSI insights to their analysis.

How has GEDSI been integrated across PACMAS-4, and to what effect? What have been the strengths and limitations of the GEDSI approach in Phase Four?

PACMAS-4 was intended to address gender equality, disability and social inclusion through a twin track approach, combining targeted initiatives with mainstreaming across program activities. In practice, gender equality was prioritised in the design, reflecting both DFAT policy expectations and program resourcing decisions, as well as clearer alignment with locally-articulated priorities. Disability inclusion has received more limited operational focus, and social inclusion has been an emergent area of interest rather than explicitly designed for. As a result, integration and outcomes of GEDSI efforts across PACMAS-4 have been uneven.

Gender equality

Gender equality has received the **most consistent strategic and operational focus**. PACMAS-4 efforts have been actioned through four primary strategies, reflecting both targeted initiatives and mainstreaming:

- Standalone investment in Women in Media (WiM) networks in Fiji, Tonga and Solomon Islands, including the 2025 regional conference;
- Leadership and skills development opportunities for women journalists, including Australia-based exchanges and placements and leveraging windows of opportunities for bespoke training (such as provision of support to hold a series of gender-focused election reporting workshops to support provincial women's voices during the 2024 general election in Solomon Islands)
- Mainstreaming gender considerations within selected training packages and media association policy engagement
- Content Fund intent to support GEDSI-aligned content

The evaluation found strong evidence that **WiM demonstrates significant Pasifika-led leadership, legitimacy and momentum**. In Fiji in particular, the network shows increasing organisational maturity, diversified funding, regular member engagement and regional leadership. Leadership and participants described the networks and regional conference as providing safe spaces for solidarity and professional support, fostering confidence to pursue leadership roles and challenge workplace norms contributing to burnout and attrition. While causal attribution requires further testing, WiM Fiji has identified eight members who secured more senior roles in the past 12 months and credit the network as influential in their progression.

WiM's traction appears **linked not only to demand but to delivery architecture**. The initiative benefited from named Pacific leadership, a funded coordinator role, institutional anchoring within the media sector, supportive male allies, particularly in Fiji, and targeted PACMAS resourcing. PACMAS's role was therefore catalytic rather than directive, providing funding and connection points that enabled consolidation and expansion. Progress under IO 5 therefore reflects both contextual readiness and the presence of identifiable leadership, resourcing and sector entry points, as well as focused PACMAS investment. WiM has also provided a basis upon which to support other gender equality activities with Pacific legitimacy, including regional networking, training, placements, and media association organising around wellbeing, burnout, safety, and gender-based violence.

As noted in the previous section, some level of resistance to WiM is emerging in contexts outside of Fiji, mostly from male voices within the sector. This will require careful navigation moving forward, with attendance to **backlash risk** and supporting safe conditions for women to continue to organise. This should include facilitating ongoing regional connections to other women. Women in those contexts where there is contestation and resistance are expressing demand and need for safe spaces of empowerment and equity.

Gender mainstreaming efforts show more mixed evidence of translation into journalism practice. While gender consideration has been incorporated into selected training (for example, trauma-sensitive reporting of gender-based violence, online safety), there is limited evidence that this has consistently shaped editorial decision-making or content production. The current round of the Content Fund generated some story development focused on women and gender equality, and the majority of early outputs across the Content Fund projects have been assessed by the implementing agency as amplifying diverse voices and perspectives, including women's.

As heard directly through the evaluation and validated through program documentation, in several instances, discussions around gender equality, disability equity, social inclusion and do-no-harm principles were initiated at the project level within the Content Fund. These have been fruitful opportunities for learning and content quality improvement. However, they also suggest that GEDSI mainstreaming within the Content Fund is currently overly reliant on the individual initiative and expertise of content advisors, operating within broad principles, rather than consistently embedded through structured program guidance and detailed expectations.

This also highlights the importance of recognising GEDSI alignment within media content can occur along a spectrum – from amplifying diverse voices and perspectives, through to journalism that explicitly interrogates gender inequality in access to resources, harmful norms, discriminatory practices and formal policy. Greater clarity about how these different forms of GEDSI contribution are recognised, supported and assessed could strengthen future monitoring and learning within the Content Fund.

At the same time, outside of the context of the Content Fund, several interviewed female journalists expressed strong interest in further training and guidance support for journalism that challenges gender stereotypes and supports sensitive reporting on gender-based violence, articulating that they are often the first point of contact in such cases. These reflections suggest that PACMAS-4's training and support have been useful and are showing gains, the content quality strategies are not yet sufficient to build leadership support and practical capability, and additional support may be required to build sustained leadership backing and practical capability for producing journalism that avoids reinforcing harmful norms and supports responsible, high-quality reporting on gendered social issues. WiM networks and the Content Fund may provide useful mechanisms for anchoring training to content development and supporting more consistent integration of GEDSI principles into journalism practice.

Evidence of **intersectional practice** – for example, consideration of disability or sexual orientation and gender identity diversity within WiM as the focused gender initiative – remains limited. While WiM has strengthened women's leadership, there has been little explicit attention to the participation or representation of women with disabilities or careful exploration of moving beyond gender binaries.

Disability equity, rights and inclusion

Strategic efforts to advance disability inclusion have been comparatively limited, reflecting resourcing constraints and prioritisation of gender equality in investment design. While the FoJ course includes a module on inclusive language and engagement with people with disabilities, only one interviewed stakeholder recalled this unprompted and linked it to changes in practice. A PACMAS-commissioned 2023 *Disability Inclusion in the Media Study* usefully underscored the norm-setting role of media in representing people with disabilities and highlighted the need for more inclusive recruitment, workplace practices and editorial policies. However, evidence of systematic follow-through on these recommendations has been limited. Attempts to collect disability-disaggregated data using the Washington Group Short Questions have faced implementation challenges and under-disclosure. Expectations that the Content Fund would prompt deep-dive stories on disability rights, equity and inclusion have so far been less evident. However, two projects have emerged in which disability inclusion has become a significant consideration.

In interviews, disability inclusion was rarely raised unprompted by Pacific stakeholders. When prompted, **stakeholders consistently identified it as a significant gap and expressed interest in doing more**, but also expressed uncertainty about how to proceed. One stakeholder described an attempt to produce a story involving young women with disabilities that revealed overlooked accessibility barriers to participation, including physical access and sign language support, resulting in a potentially disempowering experience. This illustrates both the willingness of local partners and the need for structured guidance, expertise and resourcing.

Limited evidence was found of an intersectional approach linking gender, disability and other forms of marginalisation. For example, WiM leaders were not aware of members identifying as having disabilities, which may reflect broader structural barriers to participation in journalism and media employment or the networks themselves, or a lack of awareness of members' needs. Without intentional intersectional design, the risk remains that inclusion efforts operate in parallel rather than reinforcing one another.

Unlike gender equality, **disability inclusion has not benefited from upfront investment prioritisation**, equivalent structural embedding in program design, named leadership, clearly identifiable Pacific-led demand within the sector, sustained partnerships (including with organisations of persons with disabilities), or dedicated resourcing. Donor decisions early on led to deprioritisation relative to gender equality. In practice, disability inclusion has been addressed cautiously, reflecting both limited delivery architecture and concerns about undertaking the work without adequate expertise and appropriate investment. The divergence in outcomes between gender equality and disability inclusion therefore reflects differences in design emphasis, resourcing, operationalisation and institutional anchoring.

Without a clear and adequately resourced focus on disability equity, rights and inclusion, progress towards accessible, non-harmful and rights-based content is likely to remain limited, and people with disabilities may continue to face exclusion and discrimination within the media sector. Conversely, significant opportunities exist in terms of drawing alignment with Australia's renewed policy commitments articulated in the 2025 International Disability Equity and Rights Strategy⁸, including partnerships with OPDs and addressing pre-conditions for inclusion. Leverage points for disability inclusion, equity and rights exist within the existing PACMAS architecture, including in terms of support for editorial content, considering accessibility alongside digital transitions, and generating association and leadership capability for inclusive sectoral and workplace practices.

Social inclusion

Social inclusion – more broadly defined as other forms of diversity and exclusions – has generated some level of traction through the Content Fund and MoJo equipment and training as mechanisms that Pacific media stakeholders have leveraged to reach beyond capitals to other communities and profile more diverse stories and voices. The Content Fund has supported stories centring Indigenous peoples and rural and remote communities. MoJo kits and associated training were commonly cited as enabling more inclusive coverage of rural and remote voices. However, rights-focused, positive media content development on people of diverse sexual orientations, gender identities, expressions and sex characteristics continues to be challenging within many Pacific contexts. These challenges reflect both prevailing social norms and evolving policy and legislative environments.

What are the opportunities for strengthening GEDSI moving forward?

PACMAS-4 has established important foundations for gender equality and generated genuine interest in broader inclusion across the region. However, uneven operationalisation across GEDSI areas indicates opportunity for consolidation and deeper structural embedding. This unevenness reflects both the relative prioritisation of gender equality within the Phase Four investment design and the relatively modest level of resources allocated to GEDSI overall. At present, GEDSI represents a relatively small proportion of overall program resourcing (at approximately 7% of the overall budget). Increased, sustained investment will be

⁸ <https://www.dfat.gov.au/publications/australias-international-disability-equity-and-rights-strategy-advancing-equity-transform-lives>

required to achieve comparable traction across gender equality, disability inclusion and other forms of social inclusion.

Strengthening GEDSI into a potential Phase Five may require:

- **DFAT prioritisation in Phase Five design**, with equal weighting of gender equality and disability inclusion;
- **Increased resourcing for GEDSI implementation**, particularly to support structural embedding of disability inclusion, sustained partnerships (for example with organisations of persons with disabilities), identifiable leadership pathways, and access to specialist regional expertise;
- **A refreshed, consultative and contextually grounded GEDSI strategy** that clarifies delivery architecture, accountability and resourcing across tracks, incorporates explicit intersectional framing, and aligns more clearly with DFAT's GEDSI policies, the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent⁹ regional policy architecture, and relevant national gender equality and disability inclusion frameworks;
- **Building on existing GEDSI criteria, clearer practical guidance and editorial support frameworks** within the Content Fund and other capacity building strategies aimed at strengthening how GEDSI considerations are translated into journalism practice and content production; and
- **Expanded, technically grounded GEDSI-focused training and mentoring** to support safe, rights-aligned and high-quality reporting on gender equality, disability equity, rights and inclusion, and other forms of inclusion and equity.

Advancing this work will require careful navigation of cross-cultural and political sensitivities across diverse Pacific contexts. Greater alignment with regional and national policy frameworks, alongside strengthened Pacific-based gender equality and disability expertise and adequate resourcing, would support legitimacy, coherence and sustainability. A more explicit, sufficiently resourced and Pacific-led GEDSI approach would consolidate gains in gender equality while addressing structural gaps in disability inclusion and strengthening intersectional inclusion across identities and contexts.

2.4. Sustainability

2.4.1. KEQ5. To what extent are PACMAS-4 benefits likely to endure?

Overall assessment: Achieving

Finding: The performance assessment of the **sustainability of PACMAS-4 benefits** is rated as **Achieving**. A review of program documentation, alongside stakeholder interviews, indicates the relatively limited maturity of several new or refined Phase Four initiatives, many of which remain in early to mid-stages of consolidation, in an increasingly complex media and geopolitical environment. At the same time, PACMAS-4 has established valuable systems reform foundations, drawing on ABCID's longstanding relationships, trust, and experience, which provide a strong platform for longer-term change.

Assessment of sustainability has been calibrated to the program's stage of implementation and to the baseline realities of sectoral and institutional capacity across the Pacific, which is variable and often is very low, particularly for voluntary associations. Pacific media systems operate within small and fragmented markets, face attrition and sometimes migration of practitioners, and are exposed to rapid global platform change and shifting audience demand away from traditional media.

Within these structural constraints, PACMAS-4 performance is generally strong, fit-for-purpose and provides a strong basis for further gains. However, the PACMAS-4 key strategies will require sustained time, consolidation and appropriately scaled investment to support enduring progress towards a more resilient and equitable Pacific media system.

⁹ <https://forumsec.org/2050>

Strength of evidence: Good. Recurrent themes were evident across stakeholder consultations and were triangulated with program documentation.

What has been the impact of a shift in strategic direction from Phases 3 to 4, if any? Is there evidence of consolidation across PACMAS phases?

PACMAS-4 marked a significant strategic shift, moving away from a primary focus on training and development-aligned content support towards a stronger emphasis on systems strengthening, including institutional capacity, digital transition and enabling environments. New training streams, including FoJ, digital skills and MoJo, have been developed. A number of core initiatives (digital transitions, WiM, media association core support, the Content Fund, WiM support, and leadership development) are still maturing and require additional time and refinement to become fully embedded. At this point in implementation, less than halfway through the originally anticipated five-year term of Phase Four, realised outcomes are primarily at the immediate- to mid-term levels, as is expected and appropriate. Further time will be required to assess the realisation of longer-term outcomes reflected in the overall program goals and end-of-program outcomes.

Evidence suggests **strong uptake of Phase Four investments in the Pacific media sector and early gains**. Key new or revised strategies and initiatives have been well-received and have gained traction with stakeholders. Importantly, there is clear indication that **streams of work build upon and mutually reinforce one another**, particularly in contexts where participants have access to more than one stream of programming. For instance, participants in digital skills training may express enthusiasm and readiness for deeper institutional engagement in digital transitions, which has led, in some instances, to institutional digital strategies and longer-term projects with concrete outcomes. The ToT program for FoJ has supported sectoral leaders and associations in revitalising not only personal skills and capacity but also sectoral leadership. In Fiji, the leadership of the WiM network and engagement with FoJ training content have spurred the media association to develop sectoral policies on gender-based violence and other issues to support greater equity and wellbeing within the sector, as well as trauma-informed, inclusive reporting practices. The Content Fund builds upon a training and relationship base with practitioners, outlets and associations, providing a resourced opportunity for deep, on-the-job learning with tangible content results.

Existing PACMAS and ABC reputation, experience and partnerships, together with DFAT support, have aided a relatively smooth shift in strategic direction and uptake of new initiatives. Not only do Phase Four initiatives reinforce one another, but they are also built upon PACMAS's and ABCID's longstanding relationships, trust and consistency of implementing arrangements and transitional planning and consultation in the process of redesign from Phase Three to Four. ABCID's longstanding regional presence, statutory positioning as a public broadcaster, and peer-to-peer delivery model have reinforced trust and reduced transition risks across phases. In a politically sensitive and relational operating environment, continuity of institutional knowledge, partnerships and regional credibility has supported reform momentum and reduced transaction costs associated with strategic shifts. The PACMAS model of working via associations has been further extended in this phase with direct investment in associations themselves. Most stakeholders described longstanding relationships, histories, and value in ABCID's training and partnership over time, extending back further than Phase Four. Stability in institutional relationships and ways of working has been a contributing factor in consolidating gains to date. This has been further enhanced through the engagement of Pacific staff.

It is also important to note that Phase Four's strategic ambition, particularly its shift towards systems strengthening across diverse Pacific contexts, has been **pursued within a relatively modest resourcing envelope**. The breadth of geographic coverage, together with the introduction of multiple new and more intensive streams (digital transitions, core association support, leadership development and the Content Fund), has required careful prioritisation and, at times, trade-offs between reach and depth. In several smaller and secondary contexts, lighter-touch engagement reflects these constraints. While Phase Four has demonstrated that meaningful institutional foundations can be laid within these parameters, deeper consolidation and more consistent systems-level reinforcement will likely require increased, appropriately scaled investment over a longer time horizon.

Taken together, the **strategic redirection in Phase Four has strengthened systems and institutional foundations for sustainability**, even where full system-level durability is not yet observable. **No significant negative or unintended impacts of this strategic shift** were identified, other than demand and interest of partners outstripping resources. Lessons have been learned regarding **the level of investment, pacing and accompaniment** required to pilot and roll out new initiatives effectively.

To what extent is there evidence of growing local leadership, institutional capacity, and a more enabling environment to enhance outcomes sustainability?

Phase Four reflects **deliberate investment in a set of strategic levers** intended to strengthen systems sustainability and contribute to the revitalisation of professional journalism across Pacific contexts.

Investment in local leadership, including through Pacific staffing, co-delivery of training, emerging leadership initiatives, and WiM networks, has supported senior practitioners and association representatives to assume more **sustained sectoral roles** (including in capacity building) and support direction and delivery of PACMAS. Stakeholders described increased confidence in leading training, mentoring peers and contributing to policy dialogue. Beyond supporting individual women journalists, WiM has contributed to revitalising professional identity, strengthening peer solidarity and increasing the visibility of women's leadership within media associations and newsrooms. In contexts where women have historically been underrepresented in leadership roles, these networks are beginning to shift norms and embed more inclusive leadership practices. These developments contribute to both **equity outcomes and workforce retention and sector resilience**.

Second, **direct institutional support to media associations represents a central sustainability lever**. Most associations operate in voluntary, low-resource environments with limited administrative infrastructure and minimal financial reserves. Relative to these baseline conditions, funded coordination and governance roles have supported improved organisational continuity, clearer governance processes and strengthened advocacy positioning. Where associations have stabilised governance and re-engaged members, they have strengthened the enabling environment for independent, professional media and enhanced the sector's capacity to respond collectively to political and regulatory pressures.

Third, **hands-on project-based learning (including through digital transitions and the Content Fund) have functioned not only as skills development initiatives but as opportunities for institutional revitalisation**. In several contexts, digital mentoring paired with equipment support (including MoJo dissemination) has enabled outlets to modernise production practices, diversify content and increase relevance within shifting media landscapes. The Content Fund has provided structured, resourced opportunities for applied learning, linking training to tangible journalism outputs. While digital uplift alone has not consistently translated into financial sustainability, nor was it expected to, it has strengthened the foundations of organisational capability and audience engagement.

At the same time, **stakeholders consistently cautioned that significant and persistent structural challenges remain**. **Institutional financial sustainability** is fragile in many contexts. Small domestic markets, limited advertising bases and constrained public funding restrict opportunities for revenue growth. Low and inconsistent salary levels and political, community and workload pressures contribute to **workforce attrition**, undermining retention of skilled practitioners. Workforce pipeline fragility, including limited tertiary journalism pathways and few structured entry routes into the profession, further constrains sector resilience. These dynamics are **longstanding ecosystem challenges that sit in large part beyond PACMAS-4's direct mandate and resourcing envelope**. Assessment under this sub-question has therefore focused primarily on institutional and systems-level strengthening within scope.

Sustainability is more challenged in secondary PACMAS-4 countries

Sustainability prospects are strongest where leadership development, association strengthening, digital transition and growing regional connections intersect and reinforce one another. Where engagement has been lighter-touch or confined to discrete activities, particularly in smaller, secondary contexts, sustainability prospects are correspondingly more limited. A number of stakeholders in smaller and secondary states expressed a desire for PACMAS to be more active in their contexts and linked in with initiatives such as digital transitions projects, the Content Fund, MoJo equipment dissemination and

training, and the WiM. Several of these stakeholders also noted a desire for WiM to be extended beyond a focus on active country networks, allowing for more ongoing regional membership and connections, including the possibility of members being seconded to work in media outlets in smaller nation contexts where workforce capacity is a critical issue.

In secondary countries, due to design constraints including funding envelopes, PACMAS has focused on filling critical gaps and responding to opportunities, often through short-term or one-off activities, with some support from DFAT Post, or by facilitating limited participation by representatives in regional training. With some notable exceptions, such as the roll-out of the FoJ training in Palau and support for the Pacific Media Institute in the Marshall Islands, investment has primarily been in short-term activities such as training, which are well received but, on their own, are unlikely to deliver sustained benefits or significant contributions to sector-level resilience. Smaller Pacific Island states arguably face exacerbated challenges to the sustainability of Pacific media, including limited outlets, the absence of media associations and news outlets in some instances, a very limited workforce pipeline into the sector, limited opportunities for capacity development, and a ‘brain drain’ of experienced practitioners to other Pacific states.

A common pattern noticed among stakeholders in these countries, including both local partners and DFAT Posts, is a **sense of isolation from the broader program and limited knowledge of and input into strategic objectives and key initiatives**. One stakeholder expressed uncertainty about whether it is worthwhile to continue PACMAS into the future without greater clarity on the long-term vision and the strategic nature of investment to support media sector sustainability. Overall, **stakeholder feedback from these countries indicates that a fundamental rethink of investment prioritisation and strategy for smaller states is required**.

Access to independent, quality journalism remains a critical need and right for communities in these contexts. PACMAS-4 has worked hard to be open and responsive to smaller and secondary contexts within significant resource constraints. Withdrawing PACMAS support would likely leave already small and under-resourced media sectors more vulnerable and isolated, particularly in the absence of alternative credible regional support. Investment is likely to need to increase, and country-level strategies should be tailored to the specific needs, opportunities and relationships in each context. Fostering and enhancing regional connections among media practitioners and institutions, and building a strong, Pacific-based PACMAS team with a regional outlook (that is, extending the focus beyond individual countries), are Phase Four levers that can be further developed to support small states. Further engagement of DFAT Posts in developing such a strategic rethink would also be valuable, in advance of Phase Five.

Phase Four demonstrates **credible progress in strengthening local leadership, institutional capacity and enabling environments as strategic foundations** for the revitalisation of quality journalism and media development valued by Pacific audiences. However, significant contextual challenges remain, and continued, multiyear investment and strategic consolidation will be required to deepen and embed these gains. Moving forward, PACMAS would also benefit from clear communications about the program strategy and any scoping constraints, and a tailored, resourced small states strategy.

What is most important to carry forward or change from Phase Four to enhance sustainability of outcomes?

Evidence from Phase Four indicates that enhancing sustainability will depend less on introducing new initiatives and **more on consolidating and appropriately resourcing the strategic levers already underway**, while addressing persistent structural constraints identified by stakeholders that are within reasonable scope. Resourcing fragility, significant need and dependence on PACMAS and other Australian Government investments persist within the Pacific media system. While current PACMAS strategies are supportive and foundational, a greater degree of investment and longer time horizon are necessary.

Continued and strengthened institutional support to media associations remains critical. Media associations operate within constrained revenue environments and often rely on minimal administrative infrastructure. Funded governance and coordination roles have strengthened organisational continuity and advocacy capacity. Consolidation of this support, including continued funding for core positions, will

be central to sustaining these gains and reinforcing associations' role in protecting media freedom, professional standards and collective sector voice. As one stakeholder in a smaller context observed:

There are models for possibly looking at more sustainable long-term strategy ... but in the meantime to be able to fund staff and projects more directly; that really helps media out here.

Commensurately, **continued investment in enabling Pacific leadership for media freedom and rigour remains important.** Stakeholders consistently underscored the importance of strong media associations and confident editorial leadership in navigating increasingly complex political, legislative and safety contexts. While PACMAS-4 has laid important foundations, voluntary associations and individual practitioners remain exposed to political pressure and legal risk in some environments. Sustained support for collective advocacy, strategic engagement with governments on media regulation and journalist safety and strengthened investigative journalism capability will reinforce sector resilience.

Digital transition and content development support should be retained, sensibly scaled and paired more explicitly with institutional transformation and business capability development. Media outlets continue to face significant constraints in revenue, funding and specialised infrastructure. Phase Four digital and content initiatives have strengthened production practices and institutional relevance. However, many stakeholders noted that deeper organisational sustainability and business viability remain challenging. Many outlets continue to operate with legacy structures and infrastructure in a greatly changed media and audience environment. Greater focus on business planning, audience development strategies and diversification of funding will strengthen prospects for institutional sustainability. Digital uplift and audience attraction through quality, relevant content are a necessary foundation, but unlikely to secure viability without complementary management and revenue development capabilities.

Workforce sustainability is being supported through PACMAS-4's investment in training, leadership development and WiM networks, and should be treated as a deliberate and explicit priority. In small and fragile media environments, sustainability depends not only on institutional structures and skills development, but also on retaining experienced practitioners, reinforcing a shared sense of professional identity and purpose, and fostering an inclusive sector. Phase Four's investments in training, applied mentoring, leadership development, WiM networks and practitioner wellbeing have contributed to stabilising and professionalising a workforce under pressure. These initiatives support leadership continuity, peer solidarity and confidence in navigating politically sensitive environments. Given persistent salary constraints, burnout risks and outward migration, strengthening leadership pathways, wellbeing supports, commitment to a shared vocation, and professional recognition mechanisms will remain central to sustaining the workforce.

Equity and inclusion investments are gaining momentum and require continued investment and deeper support. While WiM has generated visible momentum and strengthened women's leadership and retention, some degree of sectoral resistance to gender equality and SOGIESC rights persists. Disability inclusion has received limited focus and precluded distribution of equitable benefits to persons with disabilities as part of the media sector and as audiences. Progress will require increased prioritisation, a clearer strategy, greater resourcing, and stronger Pacific-led advisory capacity to ensure inclusion is embedded across PACMAS moving forward.

In addition, **greater and more deliberately structured investment in smaller and secondary states will be important to enhance sustainability across the region.** In the context of significant design and resourcing constraints, Phase Four has maintained valuable engagement in these contexts. However, lighter-touch and episodic support have limited the consolidation of institutional and systems-level gains. Smaller media markets often face heightened fragility, including limited workforce depth, absence or weakness of associations and restricted revenue bases. Where durable impact is expected, resourcing will need to be aligned to that ambition. A clearer and appropriately funded small states strategy, balancing regional connectivity with deeper in-country engagement where feasible, will strengthen sustainability and reduce unevenness across the region.

Finally, **sustainability expectations must remain calibrated to Pacific contextual and global media realities.** Small domestic markets, limited advertising revenue and structural funding constraints mean that full commercial self-sufficiency for many outlets is unlikely in the medium term. PACMAS-4 has strengthened

institutional capabilities and enabling environments. However, deeper, more consistent investment across the region will be required to consolidate and embed reform momentum. This should include scope for tailored strategies for different contexts.

Overall, Phase Four has established credible foundations for sustainability. Key priorities for Phase Five are consolidation, strategic depth and appropriately scaled investment to reinforce institutional capacity, workforce stability and enabling environments already strengthened through this phase.

3. LESSONS AND REGIONAL INSIGHTS

3.1. Phase Four Lessons Learned

1. Systems reform is long-term and requires greater resourcing, calibrated expectations, proximate indicators and realistic baselines

PACMAS-4's systems reform approach reflects an ambition to strengthen institutional ecosystems and enabling environments over time, reinforced with investments in workforce equity, knowledge, capacity and leadership. At this mid-term stage, progress is most visible in foundational consolidation, including association strengthening, leadership pathways, network formation and pilot initiatives, rather than in fully realised sector-wide transformation. Baselines have been developed during this phase. Variability across contexts and low starting points underscore the importance of a Phase Five design that is realistic in ambition, includes proximate indicators of success, and allows for context-specific tailoring and expectations rather than uniform end-of-program outcomes. Investment also needs to match ambition and, ideally, be consolidated into a contractual package that supports efficiency, alignment, and clarity.

2. Deeper investments require deliberate trade-offs between depth and reach and greater resourcing

Standing up, piloting and sustaining more intensive initiatives, such as the Content Fund, digital transition support and WiM networks, requires significant relational, technical, governance and MEL effort. These investments cannot be easily scaled across all contexts simultaneously. Program choices about where to concentrate depth while maintaining regional responsiveness and lighter-touch engagement reflect strategic trade-offs shaped by resourcing, institutional readiness and anticipated sustainability.

Consolidating and documenting practice lessons towards the end of the phase will be important to inform future design. The evaluation finds that, for Pacific media systems reform, PACMAS-5 should be better enabled to maintain both geographic breadth and investment depth.

3. The relational model supports success and aligns with Pacific expectations but places pressure on communication capacity

PACMAS-4 operates through a relational, partnership-based model that aligns with strong expectations for transparency, dialogue, and self-determination, reflecting both development localisation trajectories and a sector rooted in principles of independence and accountability. However, the breadth of stakeholder engagement, including with DFAT Posts, relative to staffing levels and finite resourcing, has constrained sustained communication in some contexts and initiatives. Moreover, there is an opportunity for stakeholders to be clearer about PACMAS's scope and strategies. Greater staff resourcing and more focus on communication strategies may strengthen continuity and progress across diverse country settings.

4. Pacific leadership and regional exchange are central to legitimacy and sustainability and are mutually reinforcing with GEDSI objectives

Reform initiatives anchored in credible Pacific leadership demonstrate stronger uptake, ownership and sector legitimacy. Investment in Pacific-led networks, structured peer exchange and support for Pacific staff and sector leaders strengthens sustainability and sector cohesion across diverse contexts and could be further reinforced. A leadership-oriented framing through WiM has proven to be an effective entry point for advancing aspects of GEDSI, particularly gender equality, and could be further leveraged.

However, while the program has appropriately prioritised initiatives grounded in Pacific leadership and sector demand, advancing disability equity may require a slightly different approach. Unlike gender-focused organising, a disability-focused initiative may not derive organically within media industry structures, despite expressed interest from stakeholders to improve journalistic practice in this area.

Progress on disability rights, equity and inclusion may therefore require more deliberate facilitation, partnerships with OPDs, and targeted technical support, alongside continued emphasis on Pacific ownership and appropriate resourcing.

5. Testing causal pathways requires stronger audience-level evidence

While early outcomes and institutional shifts are visible, evidence on audience reception remains limited, even before determining whether audience growth enables greater institutional sustainability. Systematic audience metrics are often unavailable, or access is constrained by ethics considerations in small and fragile media markets. Creative and context-sensitive methods, including planned case studies, qualitative audience engagement approaches, and targeted learning exercises, may be required to more robustly test causal assumptions about growing Pacific audience engagement with Pacific media in the remaining program period.

3.2. Regional Insights

The evaluation observed variation across priority and secondary PACMAS-4 country contexts. These reflect differences in program investment and intensity, institutional maturity, and operating conditions (including political and market environments). Given the evaluation scope and investment-level focus, these observations are indicative rather than comparative performance assessment.

3.2.1. Priority country contexts demonstrate expected deeper gains, with variation shaped by institutional and political conditions

In Fiji, Samoa, the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu, PACMAS-4 has achieved relatively strong consolidation of initiatives, supported by sustained, multi-stream engagement, sectoral breadth and maturity, greater investment, including bilateral support, revitalised sector structures, and PACMAS staffing. Samoa's trajectory reflects a more complex political environment; however, evidence indicates that PACMAS support has enabled the media association to navigate it. In Tonga, progress has been more variable. This variation appears to be shaped by leadership dynamics, association capacity and relational challenges. In Kiribati, the newest priority country, contextual constraints, including travel restrictions and the absence of a formal media association, have limited the depth of implementation in the first part of Phase Four.

3.2.2. Secondary country contexts experience lighter-touch engagement, with strengths in relationship building but limits in depth of investment

In Tuvalu, Nauru, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, Niue, and Palau, PACMAS-4 has sustained relationships and responsiveness and provided valued inputs, including regional convenings, tailored training, access to broader Pacific networks, and support for a media association and media council. Stakeholders in these contexts expressed strong appreciation for engagement and support during this phase. However, engagement has necessarily been more limited in depth and resourcing, reflecting the program design parameters and limits on resourcing. An increase in regional investment and a more tailored small-state strategy, with calibrated country-level investment and differentiated support models, may be required to strengthen sustainability and reduce perceptions of isolation in these contexts.

4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This evaluation finds that PACMAS-4 represents a **strategically critical and valuable investment, well aligned with Pacific media sector needs and Australia's policy objectives**. Phase Four has marked a deliberate and **largely successful shift toward a systems-strengthening approach**, laying important foundations for more resilient, coordinated and adaptive media ecosystems across the Pacific. **Early progress is evident across key outcome areas**, reflecting the long-term nature of media systems reform.

Outcomes are **strongest where investments operate in reinforcing and coordinated ways**, particularly in priority contexts. Consolidating and extending these gains will require continued strategic refinement, strengthened focus on equity and inclusion, sustained Pacific leadership, and further investment in smaller states.

Phase Four has also demonstrated both the **value and complexity of maintaining regional reach alongside pursuing deeper reform investments**. While the implementing agency has delivered strong results within modest resourcing, **the investment design parameters and scale of investment has constrained the full realisation of a ‘wide and deep’ systems strategy**. To maintain systems foundations and progress toward longer-term outcomes, a materially increased level of investment is likely to be required. While detailed costing is beyond the scope of this evaluation, the scale of ambition, geographic reach and relational delivery model suggest that a substantial uplift in investment would be necessary to sustain and deepen reform gains in a future phase.

The recommendations that follow are intended to inform preparation for a potential Phase Five program. Their feasibility and impact will be closely linked to the scale and configuration of future investment. If an increase in resourcing is not forthcoming, the design process will need to carefully consider the scale of ambitions for a Phase Five. It is likely that some challenging strategic choices will be required. However, reducing the program’s geographic reach or pulling back on the depth of some activities all come with significant risks to the survival and strength of Pacific media systems.

4.1. Recommendations

Below is a summary set of recommendations with delineated responsibilities. A full rationale and further details for these recommendations are available in Annex 1.

Strategic considerations for Phase Five design, procurement and investment

Recommendation	Linked criteria	Primary responsibility
1. Retain PACMAS as a flagship regional media investment and progress to a Phase Five. Phase Five should: - run for a minimum of five years, - include increased and appropriately scaled resourcing, and - maintain continuity of implementing arrangements to preserve institutional knowledge and partnerships, consolidate gains, and sustain system reform momentum.	All (overall program value)	DFAT
2. Phase Five should retain PACMAS’s geographic reach and systems reform approach. Investment should be more deliberately consolidated and aligned to enable coherent, multi-stream engagement in priority countries and a tailored strategy for small states. Future design should strengthen upfront coordination across PACMAS funding streams, including bilateral investments drawn under the head contract where feasible. It should also enhance coherence with other Australian media sector investments in the region.	All	DFAT
3. Phase Five should adopt a more focused and realistic Theory of Change, supported by a streamlined MEL framework. The design should differentiate between country contexts and calibrate ambitions (including regarding audience engagement and business viability) to reflect Pacific market realities.	Effectiveness; All	DFAT and implementing agency / design team
4. Clarify and strengthen engagement in secondary and small Pacific states through explicit strategy that can be tailored to each context and supported with appropriate resourcing.	Relevance; Sustainability	DFAT and implementing agency

Implementation approach

Recommendation	Linked criteria	Primary responsibility
5. Deepen localisation while strengthening Pacific regional leadership, delivery partnerships, and regional connections. Phase Five should increase Pacific staffing and leadership responsibilities, strengthen Pacific-based partnerships outside of the media sector, and continue to invest in stronger Pacific-to-Pacific regional exchanges and connections.	All	ABCID and DFAT
6. Increase communications, MEL and GEDSI staffing resourcing to ensure consistency and clarity in stakeholder communications, further development of outcomes-focused MEL, and greater gains in GEDSI objectives (see also Recommendation 7).	All	DFAT and ABCID

Key initiatives and areas of focus

Recommendation	Linked criteria	Primary responsibility
7. Further strengthen and resource a Pacific-led, intersectional GEDSI strategy for Phase Five. The strategy should build on existing gender equality gains, be grounded in consultation and co-design, supported by Pacific-based advisory capacity, adopt a twin-track approach, and pay particular attention to disability equity and inclusion.	Equity and inclusion; Effectiveness and efficiency; Sustainability	ABCID and DFAT
8. Continue institutional support to media associations as central systems enablers of sector resilience, professional standards, advocacy and sustainability.	Effectiveness and efficiency; Sustainability.	ABCID and DFAT
9. Continue and strategically scale integrated digital transition and institutional sustainability support , recognising digital uplift as an ongoing priority and pairing it (in select outlets) with investment in strengthened business capability.	All	ABCID and DFAT
10. Strengthen workforce capability, leadership and wellbeing through an integrated professional development model , building on Phase Four's innovative, valued program of training, applied mentoring including through digital projects and the Content Fund, exchanges and emerging leadership initiatives.	All	ABCID and DFAT



Annex 1 – Recommendations with rationale

Strategic considerations for Phase Five design, procurement and investment

No.	Recommendation	Rationale and detail	Linked criteria	Primary responsibility
1.	Retain PACMAS as a flagship regional media investment and progress to a Phase Five. Phase Five should: - run for a minimum of five years, - include increased and appropriately scaled resourcing, and - maintain continuity of implementing arrangements to preserve institutional knowledge and partnerships, consolidate gains, and sustain system reform momentum.	The evaluation finds PACMAS-4 to be a relevant, effective and strategically important investment. It has delivered strong early progress toward systems reform, particularly given its modest budget and the breadth of contexts covered. Phase Four was shorter than originally planned (three years rather than five). It was designed to mature over a longer time horizon. Several core initiatives introduced in Phase Four remain in early to mid-program stages. A longer Phase Five is required to consolidate early systems gains, realise longer-term reform outcomes, and further test causal pathways related to audience engagement and organisational viability. A substantially increased level of investment is also required. Increased resourcing would enable PACMAS to maintain regional reach while deepening engagement. Increased investment would also accelerate progress toward localisation and strengthen program quality and inclusion and equity focus. It would also enable the continued roll-out and selective scaling of key Phase Four pilot initiatives that have demonstrated promise for institutional sustainability, workforce development, and revitalised journalism content. If an increase in resourcing is not forthcoming, the design process will need to carefully consider the scale of ambitions for a Phase Five. It is likely that some challenging strategic choices will be required. However, reducing the program's geographic reach or pulling back on the depth of some activities all come with significant risks to the survival and strength of Pacific media systems. The ABC's position as a national public broadcaster with strong Pacific presence and relationships and a statutory media institution provides distinctive strengths for this investment. ABCID brings technical experience in journalism, broadcasting, content production, media governance and digitisation, alongside established regional networks and credibility with Pacific partners and development experience. Its implementation model including peer-to-peer relationships and efficiencies drawn from organisational capabilities enables engagement that differs from traditional delivery approaches. These attributes have	All (overall program value)	DFAT



No.	Recommendation	Rationale and detail	Linked criteria	Primary responsibility
		been supportive of PACMAS-4's successes. Maintaining continuity of implementing arrangements would allow these institutional partnership advantages to support maintenance of gains and sustained systems reform momentum.		
2.	Phase Five should retain PACMAS's geographic reach and systems reform approach. Investment should be more deliberately consolidated and aligned to enable coherent, multi-stream engagement in priority countries and a tailored strategy for small states. Future design should strengthen upfront coordination across PACMAS funding streams, including bilateral investments drawn under the head contract where feasible. It should also enhance coherence with other Australian media sector investments in the region.	PACMAS-4's greatest value lies in its multi-level approach. It links investments in individual capacity, organisational strengthening, sectoral institutions and enabling environments. Evidence from Phase Four indicates that outcomes are strongest when there is sustained, multi-stream engagement within a country context, enhanced by regional connections. This concentrated, multi-stream engagement reinforces reform feedback loops. It also strengthens relationships and supports sustainability. PACMAS funding is currently delivered through multiple mechanisms including the core regional contract, and bilateral extensions. Some bilateral investment intended to align with PACMAS has run in parallel with the PACMAS investment. Separate regional mechanisms such as the Regional Media Support Fund can also intersect with PACMAS activities. This includes creating confusion with equipment investment. These arrangements are intended to be complementary and mutually reinforcing. However, parallel funding streams have at points created complexity. They have diluted coherence and clarity of the PACMAS investment and created management inefficiencies. They have also generated communication or coordination challenges, particularly with Pacific stakeholders, with reputational implications for PACMAS. A more integrated investment architecture under Phase Five would address these issues. Increased regional investment, including a dedicated pool for deeper engagement with small states, would enable greater coherence and sufficient scale. Upfront integration of bilateral investments under the core contract, and clearer alignment with related regional mechanisms (including equipment support), would reduce duplication and coordination risks. Early joint planning between DFAT and the implementing partner will be critical to ensuring that funding streams are consolidated and aligned from the outset. Together, these measures would support sustained, systems-level reform in priority countries and strengthen clarity in Australia's overall media support across the region.	All	DFAT



No.	Recommendation	Rationale and detail	Linked criteria	Primary responsibility
3.	Phase Five should refine and focus the Theory of Change, supported by a streamlined MEL framework. The design should differentiate between country contexts and calibrate ambitions (including regarding audience engagement and business viability) to reflect Pacific market realities.	The PACMAS-4 Theory of Change sets out ambitious long-term goals, including Pacific audiences valuing their media and stronger business viability. Evidence across the evaluation suggests that these outcomes sit beyond the direct influence of a systems-strengthening initiative operating through a consultative, partner-led and increasingly localised approach. PACMAS's most demonstrable and consistent contribution is at the level of sustaining and strengthening media systems rather than directly influencing audience behaviour or business viability. It builds institutional capacity, professional standards and sector resilience. While this work supports the foundations for improved audience engagement and financial sustainability, these outcomes are also shaped by wider political, economic and technological factors beyond the program's control. PACMAS supports the foundations for change, but it cannot drive these outcomes on its own. A refreshed design should recalibrate toward centring systems strengthening initiatives, including supporting the conditions that enable production of diverse, high-quality content. Experience from Phase Four (and previous phases) also shows the need to reflect differences across countries more clearly in the design. Pacific media systems vary greatly in size, maturity and constraint. In some places, the focus is on protecting gains in independence and quality journalism. In others, the priority is basic survival and gradual improvement. Expectations around audience growth and commercial viability should reflect these realities. Phase Five should therefore set out clearer and more differentiated reform pathways. It should define realistic short- to medium-term outcomes that focus on strengthening institutions, professional practice, sector coordination and inclusion and equity outcomes. The MEL framework should align with this clearer logic with more realistic short- and intermediate outcomes. The developmental, learning-partner and baselining approach used by the MEL personnel in Phase Four has worked well during a critical piloting and innovation stage. It has supported set up and adaptation of new initiatives. Phase Five marks a shift toward more sustained implementation. Several initiatives now need clearer performance expectations, stronger quality assurance and consolidation of lessons learned to support this transition.	Effectiveness; All	DFAT and implementing agency / design team



No.	Recommendation	Rationale and detail	Linked criteria	Primary responsibility
4.	Clarify and strengthen engagement in secondary and small Pacific states through an explicit strategy that can be tailored to each context and supported with appropriate resourcing.	In several secondary and small state contexts, PACMAS engagement has been light-touch and more ad hoc. This has reflected the design parameters and level of investment in these countries, and in some instances, other external constraints. PACMAS-4 has been valuable in keeping open partnerships and responsively supporting identified needs. However, a lower level of investment and on-the-ground footprint in these often more fragile contexts has limited systems-level outcomes and sustainability. Some stakeholders reported uncertainty about long-term intent and limited connection to the broader program. A more explicit small states strategy would improve relevance, strengthen sustainability and support more equitable participation across the region. Phase Five should articulate clearer objectives for engagement in small and secondary states. It should define the intended depth of engagement and align resourcing accordingly. Where durable impact is expected, investment should reflect that ambition. Investment is best pooled in a regional fund that can be used flexibly. Stronger regional linkages, including structured Pacific-to-Pacific exchange, can also mitigate isolation and reinforce professional norms.	Relevance; Sustainability	DFAT and implementing agency

Implementation approach

No.	Recommendation	Rationale and detail	Linked criteria	Primary responsibility
5.	Deepen localisation while strengthening Pacific regional leadership, delivery partnerships, and regional connections. Phase Five should increase Pacific staffing and leadership responsibilities,	Phase Four has made meaningful progress toward localisation. Increased Pacific staffing has strengthened contextual responsiveness and credibility. It has supported partnerships with media associations and co-led training models that have been well received. Regional meet-ups and exchanges have reinforced sector-wide learning and solidarity and have visibly valued Pacific expertise. Phase Five provides an opportunity to consolidate and elevate these elements as explicit design priorities. The Pacific media ecosystem is interconnected. Regional relationships reinforce professional norms, collective advocacy and shared resilience. Making Pacific-to-Pacific collaboration more structured, resourced and visible would strengthen system-level	All	DFAT and ABCID



No.	Recommendation	Rationale and detail	Linked criteria	Primary responsibility
	strengthen Pacific-based partnerships outside of the media sector, and continue to invest in stronger Pacific-to-Pacific regional exchanges and connections.	reform and deepen stakeholder confidence. This approach is consistent with the region's own policy architecture, including the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent, which emphasises Pacific-led cooperation and regional solidarity. Deepening Pacific leadership at both national and regional levels should be a deliberate focus of Phase Five. This includes creating clearer pathways for Pacific staff to participate in strategic decision-making, including design processes. It also includes expanding opportunities for collaboration between Pacific and Australian staff in ways that build shared ownership rather than parallel roles. Consideration should also be given to strengthening Pacific-based advisory capacity. This may include additional Pacific positions in gender equality, disability equity and inclusion, and MEL or communications. These roles would support implementation quality and reinforce Pacific leadership across all program streams. While PACMAS already works extensively with Pacific media stakeholders, Phase Five provides an opportunity to broaden and diversify partnerships. This includes stronger engagement with OPDs and women's rights and gender equality organisations, in line with the GEDSI recommendation (7).		
6.	Increase communications, MEL and GEDSI staffing resourcing to ensure consistency and clarity in stakeholder communications, further development of outcomes-focused MEL, and greater gains in GEDSI objectives (see also Recommendation 7).	PACMAS-4 operates across diverse Pacific contexts through a relational, partnership-based model, with high expectations for transparent communication, systems reform and inclusive practice. Evidence from stakeholder interviews and program implementation experience indicates that the breadth of engagement across countries and initiatives has stretched available communications, MEL and GEDSI capacity. The breadth of stakeholder engagement relative to staffing levels has constrained sustained communications, outcomes-focused MEL development and the embedding of GEDSI objectives beyond discrete initiatives. As the program deepens systems-oriented approaches and seeks stronger evidence of impact, additional resourcing in communications, MEL and GEDSI functions would strengthen consistency, analytical rigour and sector-facing clarity, and support more sustainable reform gains.	All	DFAT and ABCID


Key initiatives and areas of focus

No.	Recommendation	Rationale and detail	Linked criteria	Primary responsibility
7.	Further strengthen and resource a Pacific-led, intersectional GEDSI strategy for Phase Five. The strategy should build on existing gender equality gains, be grounded in consultation and co-design, supported by Pacific-based advisory capacity, adopt a twin-track approach, and pay particular attention to disability equity and inclusion.	The evaluation finds that PACMAS-4 performance on equity and inclusion has been mixed. Gender equality has received the most strategic attention. The Women in Media initiative has generated strong early momentum and sectoral value. It should be further supported in Phase Five, including attention to backlash and to contexts where women lack national networks or institutional support. Gender mainstreaming across other program streams has been uneven. Disability equity and broader social inclusion have received limited and inconsistent focus, partly due to resourcing constraints. Phase Five would benefit from a clearer and more explicit GEDSI strategy, supported by increased resourcing. The strategy should be intersectional, Pacific-led and grounded in structured consultation and co-design. Engagement should include OPDs, gender equality, feminist and women's rights organisations, LGBTIQ+/SOGIESC rights organisations, and Indigenous organisations, as well as the media sector. A part-time Australia-based GEDSI advisor has provided important support during Phase Four. However, GEDSI integration in Pacific media systems is complex and context-specific. Issues of gender equality, disability inclusion and broader social equity are often politically and culturally sensitive and require careful framing and trusted relationships. Strengthening Pacific-based advisory capacity and partnerships with OPDs and women's rights organisations would support contextually tailored strategy and implementation as Phase Five deepens a focus on disability inclusion, mainstreaming and builds on Women in Media. Pacific advisors are well placed to navigate cultural nuance, engage representative organisations and support co-design grounded in lived experience. Embedding this expertise with the Pacific team would strengthen consistency and accountability across program streams. It is recommended that two positions are recruited to ensure specialist strengths: disability equity and inclusion, and gender equality. The GEDSI strategy should align with DFAT policy settings while being shaped and authorised through Pacific leadership and lived experience.	Equity and inclusion; Effectiveness and efficiency; Sustainability	ABCID and DFAT
8.	Continue institutional support to media	Core support to media associations has been a critical success in Phase Four's support for the Pacific media system's sustainability. It has revitalised governance, supporting re-engaging	Effectiveness and	ABCID and DFAT



No.	Recommendation	Rationale and detail	Linked criteria	Primary responsibility
	associations as central systems enablers of sector resilience, professional standards, advocacy and sustainability.	members and strengthened professional norms, and policies standards. Where associations are functioning well, they amplify the credibility and impact of PACMAS's other initiatives, including training and WiM networks. As noted in key instances during Phase Four, active associations also play a critical role in protecting media freedom in the face of political pressure. As an essential ingredient for long-term systems durability, Phase Five should consolidate and continue institutional support to strengthen governance, advocacy capacity, and business viability of associations. This should include continuing to fund positions which support governance, administration and financial management.	efficiency; Sustainability.	
9.	Continue and strategically scale integrated digital transition and institutional sustainability support, recognising digital uplift as an ongoing priority and pairing it (in select outlets) with investment in strengthened business capability.	Digital transition projects, digital training, and MoJo equipment and training have been central to PACMAS-4's success. Together with the Content Fund, these initiatives have supported modernisation production practices, strengthened investigative journalism, diversified stories being told including from remote communities, and expanded platform use. These investments have brought Pacific journalism further into the contemporary digital environment. This is not a one-off transition but an ongoing process of adaptation. Continued digital capability development will remain essential as platforms, technologies and audience behaviours evolve. Lessons from Phase Four indicate that institutional digital transformation is resource-intensive. Meaningful change requires sustained mentoring, equipment, training and follow-up support. This has implications for scale and prioritisation across the region. Experience also suggests that digital uplift alone does not always secure financial sustainability via increased audience engagement. Improved production and platform capability often need to be paired with stronger business planning, marketing and revenue diversification strategies. Phase Five should therefore maintain broad digital and content support, paired with equipment investment, while adopting tiered models that allow deeper institutional transformation and business capability strengthening in selected contexts. Prioritisation will help manage the balance between reach and depth.	All	ABCID and DFAT



No.	Recommendation	Rationale and detail	Linked criteria	Primary responsibility
		Aligned with a more realistic theory of change, sustainability expectations should reflect market realities. In many Pacific contexts, particularly smaller markets, full commercial self-sufficiency for independent outlets may not be achievable. State broadcasters are also likely to require ongoing support. As with media associations, outlet sustainability may depend on mixed revenue models and continued sector-level investment in public-interest journalism, at least in the medium term.		
10.	Strengthen workforce capability, leadership and wellbeing through an integrated professional development model, building on Phase Four's innovative, valued program of training, applied mentoring including through digital projects and the Content Fund, exchanges and emerging leadership initiatives.	PACMAS plays a distinctive and highly valued role in professional development across the Pacific media sector, as affirmed by stakeholders. The Foundations of Journalism course, bespoke thematic training, digital and MoJo training, and regional and Australia-based exchanges have strengthened skills, peer networks and professional standards across the region. The Content Fund has added a valuable layer of applied, project-based mentoring, linking capability development and investment to concrete journalism outcomes. A second phase of the Content Fund is warranted. Phase Five should adopt a tiered model, maintaining broad participation while enabling more intensive support for selected outlets. Intensive support could focus on a GEDSI stream. This could be reinforced through a structured GEDSI follow-on to Foundations of Journalism focused on practical tools and applied learning, including editorial decision-making, trauma-informed journalism, ethical storytelling, and reporting on gender-based violence, equality and disability rights and inclusion. Adapted application of proven approaches to support gender equality, such as the 50/50 model used by the ABC in Australia, could support sustained organisational change to underpin quality GEDSI content. Phase Five should also build on early leadership initiatives now underway. Leadership development supports more than technical capability. It contributes to a sense of journalism as a valued and viable profession, with visible career pathways and opportunities for progression. In fragile and politically complex environments, leadership skills are critical for navigating pressure, upholding ethical standards and supporting courageous public-interest journalism. Leadership development is closely linked to equity and inclusion outcomes. Strengthening leadership capability, including among women and people with disabilities,	All	ABCID and DFAT



No.	Recommendation	Rationale and detail	Linked criteria	Primary responsibility
		can support more inclusive content, workforce participation and more diverse decision-making. Attention to practitioner wellbeing should also remain part of the professional development architecture. Journalists in the Pacific often operate in small teams, under political pressure and with limited institutional support, and are increasingly subject to online threats. Addressing burnout, trauma exposure and professional isolation will strengthen retention and long-term sector resilience. Sustained investment in workforce capability supports not only quality journalism but also solidarity within a small and often under-recognised profession. Media associations play a key brokerage role in convening practitioners and delivering training, and continued institutional support will reinforce this function.		



Annex 2 – Evaluation Questions

The Key Evaluation Questions (KEQs) and subsidiary lines of inquiry were a refinement of the original evaluation questions proposed in the ToR and collaboratively refined through review by ABCID and DFAT.

The KEQs are categorised by evaluation criteria which have been in part informed by the OECD-DAC Evaluation Criteria.¹⁰ Lines of inquiry are indicative to support comprehensive examination of the KEQs; there was scope to iteratively evolve across the evaluation.

KEQs 1-4 were deemed priority questions.

Evaluation criteria	Key evaluation questions (KEQs)	Lines of inquiry
Relevance	1. To what extent is PACMAS-4 meeting the needs of key participants and stakeholders?	1.1 To what extent is PACMAS-4 meeting the diverse learning needs and interests of journalists, at different points of career development? 1.2 To what extent is PACMAS-4 meeting the needs of media outlets to develop greater readiness and/or skills and infrastructure to engage with digital media? 1.3 To what extent is the support provided meeting the organisational capacity development needs of regional and national media associations? 1.4 To what extent is the support provided meeting the needs of the WiM networks and members? 1.5 To what extent is PACMAS-4 aligned with the current policy settings of the Australian Government, including strategic priorities for the Pacific region? 1.6 How relevant is the program's strategic shift from Phase 3 (focused on development issue reporting) to Phase 4 (media sector strengthening) to current and emerging challenges in the Pacific? 1.7 In the context of PACMAS-4, to what extent is there alignment or tension between Pacific needs and Australia's strategic interests in the region?
Effectiveness and efficiency	2. To what degree has PACMAS-4 been implemented as intended, including an effective and efficient modality and approach?	2.1 To what extent are program activities and outputs in line with annual workplans, and/or proactively adapted to meet challenges or contextual shifts? 2.2 To what extent are program resources being efficiently utilised and tracked? 2.3 To what extent are the relative partnership strengths of the delivery and funding agencies recognised and leveraged strategically to support outcomes?

¹⁰ <https://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/daccriteriaforevaluatingdevelopmentassistance.htm>



Evaluation criteria	Key evaluation questions (KEQs)	Lines of inquiry
		2.4 To what extent are the intended practice principles observable in the program's documentation and reflected in program experience of participants and stakeholders? (flexible, needs-responsive, trusted local partnership approach; progressing localisation; evidence-based, adaptive approach) 2.5 What are the strengths, weakness, and context-specific insights about what works (or doesn't) and why in terms of assistance for development of Pacific media?
Effectiveness and efficiency	3 To what extent is PACMAS-4 progressing towards producing valuable outcomes?	3.1 To what extent are journalists experiencing skills development through PACMAS-4 learning opportunities that is relevant, multi-dimensional, and appropriate for different career development stages? 3.2 To what extent are journalists enabled and / or demonstrating application of PACMAS-learned skills in their everyday work? 3.3 To what extent are PACMAS-trained journalists / journalists engaged in the Content Development Fund experiencing an increased sense of understanding, confidence and empowerment in developing content with consideration to quality principles? 3.4 To what extent are PACMAS-training journalists / journalists engaged in the Content Development Fund showing interest and growth in the production of content that promotes GEDSI? 3.5 To what extent have supported media outlets produced strategies or identified new approaches to engage in digital media and experience an increased sense of readiness for digital media engagement? 3.6 To what extent have supported media outlets implemented their digital media strategies or approaches? 3.7 To what extent and in what ways have media associations experienced PACMAS's organisational capacity support as useful? 3.8 Has PACMAS's organisational capacity support enabled / encouraged media associations to better engage with members and/or undertake other strategic initiatives to support the media sector? 3.9 To what extent has PACMAS's WiM support been experienced as useful to building and sustaining the networks, and in which ways? 3.10 To what extent has PACMAS's support enabled the reach and strength of network connections across the region and in country? 3.11 To what extent are WiMs enabling growing career confidence, ambition and growth for individual members, and in what ways? <i>Across all outcomes / other</i>



Evaluation criteria	Key evaluation questions (KEQs)	Lines of inquiry
		3.12 To what degree were the benefits of PACMAS-4 available to all intended stakeholders? 3.13 What factors contributed to or hindered achievements? 3.14 What has been PACMAS-4's contribution to any evidenced achievements? 3.15 Have there been any unintended outcomes (positive or negative) emerging from PACMAS-4?
Equity and inclusion	4 Is PACMAS-4 effectively promoting gender equality, disability and broader social inclusion?	4.1 What have been the strengths and limitations of the GEDSI approach in Phase 4? 4.2 How has GEDSI been integrated across program components, and to what effect? 4.3 What are the opportunities for strengthening GEDSI in the remainder of Phase 4 / potential Phase 5?
Sustainability	5 To what extent are PACMAS-4 benefits likely to endure?	5.1 Is there evidence of consolidation of outcomes across PACMAS phases? 5.2 What has been the impact of a shift in strategic direction from Phases 3 to 4 upon sustainability, if any? 5.3 To what extent is there evidence of growing local leadership, institutional capacity, and a more enabling environment to promote enhance outcomes sustainability? 5.4 What is most important to carry forward or change from Phase 4 to enhance sustainability of outcomes?



Annex 3 – Evaluation Framework

Evaluation Criteria	Evaluation Question	Data sources (Primary / Secondary)	Data collection method	Analysis method (with rubric synthesis for each)
Relevance	1. How relevant is PACMAS-4 in meeting the needs of key participants and stakeholders?	<u>Primary:</u> Interview / consultation transcripts <u>Secondary:</u> - Policy (for example the Indo Pacific Broadcasting Strategy) - Program and other research (e.g. State of the Pacific Media)	Interviews Focus Group Discussions Doc review	Qualitative analysis and evidence triangulation
Effectiveness	2. To what degree has PACMAS-4 been implemented as intended, including an effective and efficient modality and approach?	<u>Primary:</u> Interview / consultation transcripts <u>Secondary:</u> - Program design and implementation plans - Progress reports - Other program and MEL documentation	Interviews Focus Group Discussions Doc review	Qualitative analysis and evidence triangulation
Effectiveness	3. To what extent is PACMAS-4 progressing towards producing valuable outcomes?	<u>Primary:</u> Interview / consultation transcripts <u>Secondary:</u> - Progress reports - MEL data and documentation - Other program documents	Interviews Focus Group Discussions Doc review	Qualitative analysis and evidence triangulation Case studies
Equity and inclusion	4. Is PACMAS-4 effectively promoting gender equality, disability inclusion and social inclusion?	<u>Primary:</u> Interview / consultation transcripts <u>Secondary:</u> - MEL documentation - Other program documents	Interviews Focus Group Discussions Doc review	Qualitative analysis and evidence triangulation Case studies
Sustainability	5. To what extent are the PACMAS-4 benefits likely to endure?	<u>Primary:</u> Interview / consultation transcripts <u>Secondary:</u>	Interviews	Qualitative analysis and evidence triangulation



Evaluation Criteria	Evaluation Question	Data sources (Primary / Secondary)	Data collection method	Analysis method (with rubric synthesis for each)
		• MEL documentation • Other program documents • Program research	Focus Group Discussions Doc review	



Annex 4 – Rubric

Performance assessment at a glance

Table 4 – Rubric Table

Criterion	Performance level	Performance level	Performance level	Performance level	Performance level
(intentionally blank)	Very limited	Developing	Achieving	Strong	Excellent
Relevance	nil	nil	nil	Yes	nil
Effectiveness and Efficiency	nil	nil	nil	Yes	nil
Gender Equality	nil	nil	Yes	nil	nil
Disability and Social Inclusion	nil	Yes	nil	nil	nil
Sustainability	nil	nil	Yes	nil	nil



More detailed assessment

Criteria	KEQ	Sub-dimensions / criteria	Performance level	Performance level	Performance level	Performance level	Performance level	Criterion-level assessment
(intentionally blank)	(intentionally blank)	(intentionally blank)	Very limited <i>Performance is weak or highly uneven, with significant gaps or weaknesses</i>	Developing <i>Some positive elements are evident, but important gaps or inconsistencies remain</i>	Achieving <i>Performance is generally strong and fit-for-purpose, with manageable gaps or areas for improvement</i>	Strong <i>Performance is inconsistently strong, with only minor weaknesses.</i>	Excellent <i>Performance reflects best practice or exceptional outcomes, with clear, consistent evidence and no critical weaknesses.</i>	(intentionally blank)
Relevance	1. How relevant is PACMAS-4 in meeting the needs of key participants and stakeholders?	Journalists	nil	nil	nil	Yes	nil	Strong
Relevance	1. How relevant is PACMAS-4 in meeting the needs of key participants and stakeholders?	Media outlets	nil	nil	nil	Yes	nil	Strong
Relevance	1. How relevant is PACMAS-4 in meeting the needs of key participants and stakeholders?	Media associations	nil	nil	nil	Yes	nil	Strong



Criteria	KEQ	Sub-dimensions / criteria	Performance level	Performance level	Performance level	Performance level	Performance level	Criterion-level assessment
(intentionally blank)	(intentionally blank)	(intentionally blank)	Very limited <i>Performance is weak or highly uneven, with significant gaps or weaknesses</i>	Developing <i>Some positive elements are evident, but important gaps or inconsistencies remain</i>	Achieving <i>Performance is generally strong and fit-for-purpose, with manageable gaps or areas for improvement</i>	Strong <i>Performance is inconsistently strong, with only minor weaknesses.</i>	Excellent <i>Performance reflects best practice or exceptional outcomes, with clear, consistent evidence and no critical weaknesses.</i>	(intentionally blank)
Relevance	1. How relevant is PACMAS-4 in meeting the needs of key participants and stakeholders?	WiM	nil	nil	nil	Yes	nil	Strong
Relevance	1. How relevant is PACMAS-4 in meeting the needs of key participants and stakeholders?	Australian Government	nil	nil	nil	Yes	nil	Strong
Effectiveness and efficiency	2. To what degree has PACMAS-4 been implemented as intended, including an effective and efficient modality and approach?	Activity and output realisation	nil	nil	nil	Yes	nil	Strong



Criteria	KEQ	Sub-dimensions / criteria	Performance level	Performance level	Performance level	Performance level	Performance level	Criterion-level assessment
(intentionally blank)	(intentionally blank)	(intentionally blank)	Very limited <i>Performance is weak or highly uneven, with significant gaps or weaknesses</i>	Developing <i>Some positive elements are evident, but important gaps or inconsistencies remain</i>	Achieving <i>Performance is generally strong and fit-for-purpose, with manageable gaps or areas for improvement</i>	Strong <i>Performance is inconsistently strong, with only minor weaknesses.</i>	Excellent <i>Performance reflects best practice or exceptional outcomes, with clear, consistent evidence and no critical weaknesses.</i>	(intentionally blank)
Effectiveness and efficiency	2. To what degree has PACMAS-4 been implemented as intended, including an effective and efficient modality and approach?	Resource utilisation and value for money	nil	nil	nil	Yes	nil	Strong
Effectiveness and efficiency	2. To what degree has PACMAS-4 been implemented as intended, including an effective and efficient modality and approach?	Leveraging combined partnership strengths of ABC and DFAT	nil	nil	Yes	nil	nil	Strong
Effectiveness and efficiency	2. To what degree has PACMAS-4 been implemented as intended,	Aligned with intended practice principles.	nil	nil	nil	nil	Yes	Strong



Criteria	KEQ	Sub-dimensions / criteria	Performance level	Performance level	Performance level	Performance level	Performance level	Criterion-level assessment
(intentionally blank)	(intentionally blank)	(intentionally blank)	Very limited <i>Performance is weak or highly uneven, with significant gaps or weaknesses</i>	Developing <i>Some positive elements are evident, but important gaps or inconsistencies remain</i>	Achieving <i>Performance is generally strong and fit-for-purpose, with manageable gaps or areas for improvement</i>	Strong <i>Performance is inconsistently strong, with only minor weaknesses.</i>	Excellent <i>Performance reflects best practice or exceptional outcomes, with clear, consistent evidence and no critical weaknesses.</i>	(intentionally blank)
	including an effective and efficient modality and approach?							
Effectiveness and efficiency	3. To what extent is PACMAS-4 progressing towards producing valuable outcomes?	IO 1: Journalists produce public interest content that meets quality standards	nil	nil	Yes	nil	nil	Strong
Effectiveness and efficiency	3. To what extent is PACMAS-4 progressing towards producing valuable outcomes?	IO 2: Media outlets have strengthened digital business models, plans, and products	nil	nil	Yes	nil	nil	Strong
Effectiveness and efficiency	3. To what extent is PACMAS-4 progressing towards	IO 3: Pacific media produces and distributes public interest	nil	nil	Yes	nil	nil	Strong



Criteria	KEQ	Sub-dimensions / criteria	Performance level	Performance level	Performance level	Performance level	Performance level	Criterion-level assessment
(intentionally blank)	(intentionally blank)	(intentionally blank)	Very limited <i>Performance is weak or highly uneven, with significant gaps or weaknesses</i>	Developing <i>Some positive elements are evident, but important gaps or inconsistencies remain</i>	Achieving <i>Performance is generally strong and fit-for-purpose, with manageable gaps or areas for improvement</i>	Strong <i>Performance is inconsistently strong, with only minor weaknesses.</i>	Excellent <i>Performance reflects best practice or exceptional outcomes, with clear, consistent evidence and no critical weaknesses.</i>	(intentionally blank)
	producing valuable outcomes?	content that promotes GEDSI						
Effectiveness and efficiency	3. To what extent is PACMAS-4 progressing towards producing valuable outcomes?	IO 4: Media associations more effectively protect and promote independent, professional and inclusive media	nil	nil	nil	Yes	nil	Strong
Effectiveness and efficiency	3. To what extent is PACMAS-4 progressing towards producing valuable outcomes?	IO 5: Women in media networks empowered to promote women's equal participation in the media industry	nil	nil	nil	Yes	nil	Strong
Equity and inclusion	4. Is PACMAS-4 effectively promoting gender equality, disability	Gender equality	nil	nil	Yes	nil	nil	A determination was made that it was unhelpful to aggregate for this criterion.



Criteria	KEQ	Sub-dimensions / criteria	Performance level	Performance level	Performance level	Performance level	Performance level	Criterion-level assessment
(intentionally blank)	(intentionally blank)	(intentionally blank)	Very limited <i>Performance is weak or highly uneven, with significant gaps or weaknesses</i>	Developing <i>Some positive elements are evident, but important gaps or inconsistencies remain</i>	Achieving <i>Performance is generally strong and fit-for-purpose, with manageable gaps or areas for improvement</i>	Strong <i>Performance is inconsistently strong, with only minor weaknesses.</i>	Excellent <i>Performance reflects best practice or exceptional outcomes, with clear, consistent evidence and no critical weaknesses.</i>	(intentionally blank)
	inclusion and social inclusion?							
Equity and inclusion	4. Is PACMAS-4 effectively promoting gender equality, disability inclusion and social inclusion?	Disability and social inclusion	nil	Yes	nil	nil	nil	nil
Sustainability	5. To what extent are the PACMAS-4 benefits likely to endure?	- Dependence on program - Maturity and nascency of different program components - Local ownership - Institutional capacity-Enabling environment	nil	nil	Yes	nil	nil	Achieving

Annex 5 – Stakeholder Consultations

Pacific media outlets, associations, networks and practitioners

No.	Organisation	Country	Name	Position
1	Fiji Live	Fiji	Reginald Chandar	Head of News
2	Mai TV	Fiji	Stanley Simpson	Director
3	Fiji Times	Fiji	Fred Wesley	Editor
4	Communications Fiji Limited	Fiji	Vijay Narayan	News Director
5	Fijian Media Association	Fiji	Elenoa Baselala	Coordinator
6	Women in Media Fiji and Fiji Sun	Fiji	Rosi Doviverata	WiM Fiji President and Acting Publisher and CEO Fiji Sun
7	Women in Media Fiji	Fiji	Lavenia Lativerata-Vuadreu	Coordinator
8	Vanuatu Broadcasting and Television Corporation	Vanuatu	Lilon Francis	International Relations Manager
9	Sista	Vanuatu	Yasmine Covo	Executive Director
10	Pacific Islands News Association (PINA)	Tonga	Kalafi Moala	President
11	Media Association of Tonga	Tonga	William Falekaono	Vice-President
12	Media Association of Tonga / formerly PACMAS	Tonga	Talita Kefu	Member / former PACMAS Tonga Coordinator
13	Talamua News / Journalists Association of (Western) Samoa (JAWS)	Samoa	Lance Polu	Editor / former JAWS President
14	Radio 2AP	Samoa	Misa Vicky Lepou	Manager
15	Radio 2AP	Samoa	Dawn Momomausu Failoa	Announcer / programmer
16	In-Depth Solomon Islands / Media Association of Solomon Islands	Solomon Islands	Ofani Eremae	Editor / President
17	Tavuli News	Solomon Islands	Elizabeth Osifelo	Executive
18	Island Sun	Solomon Islands	Irwin Angiki	

No.	Organisation	Country	Name	Position
19	Freelance	Solomon Islands	Mannar Levo	Freelance
20	Broadcasting and Publications Authority (BPA) Radio	Kiribati	Timoa Tokataam	CEO
21	Tuvalu Broadcasting Corporation	Tuvalu	Yvette Isaac	CEO
22	College of Micronesia	Federates States of Micronesia	Nelchor Permitez	Professor, telecommunications and electronics
23	Broadcasting Corporation of Niue	Niue	Jale Lomaloma	Manager of technical services
24	Broadcasting Corporation of Niue	Niue	Esther Pavihi	Head of news
25	Palau Media Council	Palau	Leilani Ngirturong-Reklai	President
26	Tia Belau	Palau	Ongerung Kambes Kesoli	Editor
27	Radio Nauru, FM105	Nauru	Dominic Appi	Manager
28	Pacific Media Institute	Republic of the Marshall Islands	Giff Johnson	Founder
29	Pacific Media Institute	Republic of the Marshall Islands	Jack Niedanthal	Coordinator

ABC/ID and PACMAS-contracted specialists

No.	Organisation	Country	Name	Position
30	PACMAS, ABCID	Australia	Kate Seymour	Director
31	Research and MEL unit, ABCID	Australia	Prashanth Pillay	Manager
32	Research and MEL unit, ABCID	Australia	Lachlan Leeds	Research Analyst
33	ABC	Australia	Grant Sherlock	Managing Editor National Commissioning
34	ABC	Australia	James Maasdorp	PACMAS Digital Training Lead
35	Formerly PACMAS	Papua New Guinea	Alexander Rheeney	Former PACMAS Team Leader
36	PACMAS	Fiji	Rita Narayan	Acting Team Leader
37	Formerly PACMAS	Kiribati	Rooti Terubea	Former PACMAS Country Coordinator

No.	Organisation	Country	Name	Position
38	PACMAS	Tonga	Taina Kaima Enoka	PACMAS Country Coordinator
39	PACMAS	Samoa	Gardenia Elisaia	PACMAS Country Coordinator
40	Freelance	Australia	Laura McAuliffe	Content Fund advisor
41	Freelance	Australia	Jackie Turnure	Content Fund advisor

DFAT

No.	Organisation	Country	Name	Position
42	DFAT Canberra	Australia	Neroli Santleben	Activity Manager, Pacific Media and Broadcasting Branch, Office of the Pacific
43	DFAT Canberra	Australia	Andrew Abel	Acting Director, Pacific Economic and Infrastructure Division, Office of the Pacific
44	DFAT Post	Samoa	James Lyon	Second Secretary, Political
45	DFAT Post	Federated States of Micronesia	Josh Critchley-Evans	Second Secretary and Consul
46	DFAT Post	Tonga	Kelepi Baba	Second Secretary

Annex 6 – Reviewed Documents

Design

1. Investment Design Document – PACMAS Phase 4
2. PACMAS Monitoring Evaluation Framework (MEF)

Plans, reports and budgets

3. PACMAS Workplan Narrative 2023-24
4. PACMAS Workplan Narrative 2023-24
5. PACMAS Workplan Narrative 2023-24
6. PACMAS Phase 4 Transition Report
7. PACMAS Progress Report – July 2023 to Feb 2024
8. PACMAS Progress Report – Mar to Dec 2024
9. PACMAS Progress Report – Jan – Dec 2025 (Excerpts)
10. DFAT Quarterly Update Mar 2025
11. DFAT Quarterly Update Jul 2025
12. DFAT Quarterly Update Nov 2025
13. Annual Investment Monitoring Report 2024
14. Annual Investment Monitoring Report 2025
15. Finance Report FY2024-25
16. Parallel bilateral contracts – Tonga and Solomon Islands

Program research and MEL

17. PACMAS Phase 3 evaluation (2021)
18. Implementation Overview and Learning Brief – PACMAS Phase 4 (2025)
19. Disability Inclusion in the Media Sector study (2023)
20. State of the Media: Pacific study (2025)
21. Content Fund Tracker
22. Findings Report – PACMAS career mapping working
23. PACMAS Content Quality Tool
24. PACMAS training guidance – researching and creating case studies
25. PACMAS 3rd Reflection Session Summary

Initiative/program documentation

26. PACMAS website
27. Women in Media End of Phase 3 Report
28. Women in Media End of Phase 3 Roadmap
29. WiM Fiji Conference event coordinator report
30. Foundations of Journalism – Course Outline and Partner FAQs
31. Foundations of Journalism – modules overview
32. ABCID Media Executive Leadership Program 2026
33. ABCID Newsroom Leadership Program overview
34. Newsroom Leaders Training Solomon Islands Feb 2026 Activity Brief pilot
35. Newsroom Leadership – Program modules
36. Content Fund selection criteria rubric

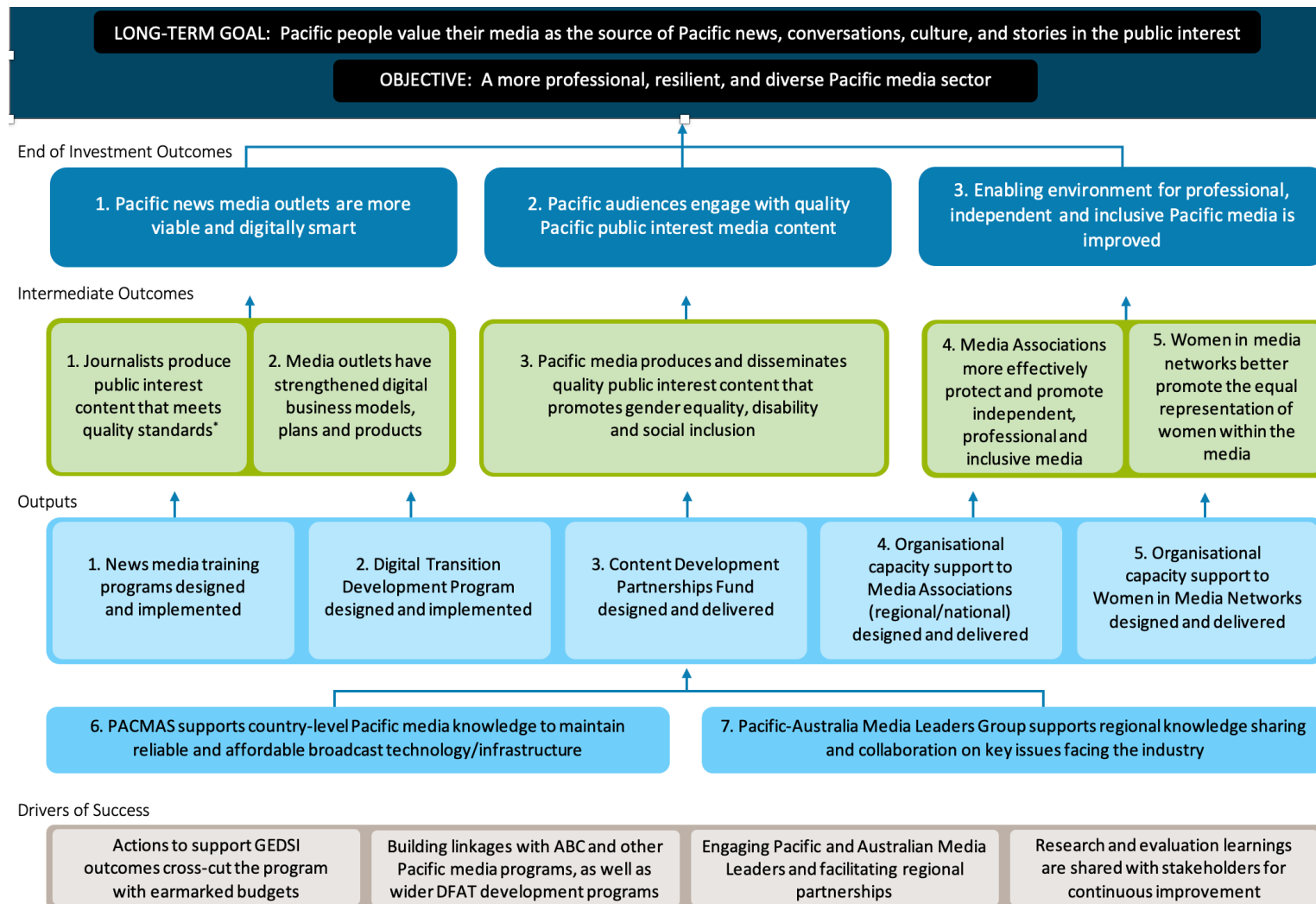
Other

37. Written feedback from select DFAT Posts on Aide Memoire
38. Monitoring data and MEL information provision upon request from ABCID



Annex 7 – PACMAS-4 Theory of Change

Drawn from the Investment Design.





PACMAS-4 Theory of Change – Accessible version of Theory of Change Diagram:

Long-term goal: Pacific people value their media as the source of Pacific news, conversations, culture, and stories in the public interest

Objective: A more professional, resilient, and diverse Pacific media sector

End of Investment Outcomes:

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

Intermediate Outcomes

1. Journalists produce public interest content that meets quality standards
2. Media outlets have strengthened digital business models, plans and products
3. Pacific media produces and disseminates quality public interest content that promotes gender equality, disability and social inclusion

Outputs

1. News media training programs designed and implemented
2. Digital Transition Development Program designed and implemented
3. Content Development Partnerships Fund designed and delivered
4. Organisational capacity support to Media Associations (regional/national) designed and delivered
5. Organisational capacity support to Women in Media Networks designed and delivered
6. PACMAS supports country-level Pacific media knowledge to maintain reliable and affordable broadcast technology/infrastructure
7. Pacific-Australia Media Leaders Group supports regional knowledge sharing and collaboration on key issues facing the industry.

Drivers of Success

- Actions to support GEDSI outcomes cross-cut the program with earmarked budgets



- Building linkages with ABC and other Pacific media programs, as well as wider DFAT development programs
- Engaging Pacific and Australian Media Leaders and facilitating regional partnerships
- Research and evaluation learnings are shared with stakeholders for continuous improvement



Annex 8 – Threats, Challenges and Needs

Key threats, challenges and limits to a vibrant, viable, valued Pacific media ecosystem	Related needs	Primary target stakeholders
1. Rapidly increasing availability of and access to other digital avenues of content (e.g. social media and streaming services), competing with demand for locally-produced and traditional media, and threatening the viability of local news media production (often produced by small businesses or state agencies with limited revenue/funding)	- Digital strategies for media outlets to support transition to digital media, including understanding of audiences and business revenue planning - Skills and technological infrastructure to produce digital and multimedia content	- Journalist practitioners - Media outlets - Media associations
2. Limitations to journalist practitioner and broadcasting technician knowledge skillsets , particularly digital / multimedia readiness, use and maintenance of new technologies, and the consistent application of GEDSI principles in journalism practice, content development, and workplace and sectoral environments. These gaps constrain content quality, audience reach and relevance, positive norms influence, workplace safety, inclusive and equity, and the ability of media institutions to adapt to a rapidly changing environment.	- Journalist capabilities – sustaining a skilled workforce, across experience levels and with an increased focus on digital skills and gender equity, disability and social inclusion - Broadcasting technician capabilities, with a focus on the use and maintenance of newer technologies - Supporting the development of Pasifika trainers to directly provide journalist and broadcasting technician training	- Journalist practitioners - Broadcasting technicians - Media outlets - Media associations
3. Political and social threats to independent journalism and professional safety , including government pressure and restrictive legislative and regulatory frameworks; growing geopolitical influence and competing ideological narratives; community and social pressures; increased social media backlash and the proximity and intensity of audience feedback, and gender-based violence (including sexual harassment) affecting journalists in both their personal and professional lives	- Support regional and national media associations to regenerate and shore up organisational capacity - Once media associations build core capacity and revitalise membership engagement, this enables them to support the media sector with policy development, sectoral representation, and advocating for journalistic independence and a supportive enabling environment - Journalists and media associations to be supported with skills and policy development promoting journalist safety, wellbeing, equity and inclusion	- Media associations - Media outlets - Journalist practitioners - DFAT and Posts
4. Journalistic quality standards under threat from combination of limited knowledge and skills of	Support foundational knowledge and skills of journalists through comprehensive training	- Journalist practitioners - Media associations



Key threats, challenges and limits to a vibrant, viable, valued Pacific media ecosystem	Related needs	Primary target stakeholders
standards particularly in younger workforce, changing audience expectations influenced by social media, and use of artificial intelligence (in combination with threats to independent journalism)	- Support the development of Pasifika trainers to directly provide journalist training - Support reviving media associations to provide ongoing support to members on journalism quality standards, including Pasifika visions for journalism quality standards	Media outlets
5. Loss of relevance and credibility with Pacific audiences , including limited diversity of representation, accessibility barriers, and insufficient production of inclusive and equity-supportive content.	- Supporting content that is driven locally, is disability-accessible, locally relevant, safe, inclusive and equity-supportive, tailored to diverse needs of local communities, including women and girls, people with disability, people experiencing gendered violence, and in local language, and which meets quality standards - Supporting journalists and media practitioners to build the knowledge, skills and confidence to workshop ideas and development quality content that is aligned with self-determined ideas and is inclusive and equity-promoting - Funding, mentoring and technological infrastructure support to ensure the time, space and resources to produce content - Regular training which underlines quality standards and inclusion and equity principles - Supporting the career development and safe spaces for women in media, with the view of long-term diversification of content production	- Media outlets - Journalist practitioners - Women in Media networks and their individual (journalist and media sector) participants - Media associations
6. Gendered barriers (sectoral and social) experienced by women to commencing, maintaining and growing careers within the Pacific media sector. Challenges include gendered workplace norms, unequal access to opportunities and leadership, unpaid care burdens, burn-out, gender-based violence (including sexual	- Establishing and supporting Women in Media (WiM) networks as safe, Pacific-led spaces for peer support, leadership development, and collective voice - Supporting female journalists' professional development, confidence, and retention through training, mentoring, and networking opportunities	- Women in Media networks and their individual (journalist and media sector) participants - Media associations - Media outlets



Key threats, challenges and limits to a vibrant, viable, valued Pacific media ecosystem	Related needs	Primary target stakeholders
harassment) and vicarious trauma, community backlash, and limited safe professional support spaces.	• Working with media associations to address gender equity within sector governance, policies, and professional standards • Strengthening awareness of gender equality, safety, and wellbeing within media institutions and associations • Creating pathways for women's leadership and participation in decision-making at newsroom, association, and sector levels	
7. Growing external geopolitical influence in the Pacific creating pressures competing with Australia's values and policy priorities, intensified by social media, access to international media, and rapid spread of mis- and disinformation. Challenges include exposure to foreign media influence, erosion of trust in local journalism, and pressures on independent journalism.	• Resourcing the sector to reduce dependency on seeking investment from non-credible actors • Supporting independent, professional Pacific media institutions and practitioners to produce high-quality, trusted local content • Strengthening journalists' skills in ethical reporting, verification, and navigating mis- and disinformation, including in digital environments • Supporting media associations to advocate for press freedom, ethical standards, and an enabling regulatory environment • Reinforcing Pacific-led media values and standards through training, peer learning, and association-defined professional norms • Supporting timely, responsive journalism capacity (e.g. election reporting support) to strengthen democratic processes and public trust	• DFAT Posts • Media outlets • Media associations • Practitioners