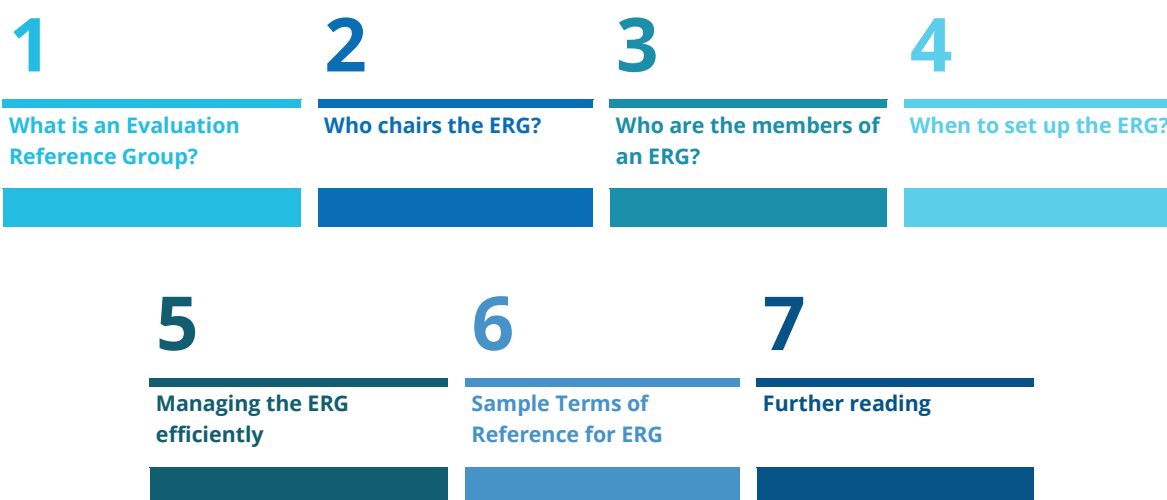




Technical Note

Evaluation Reference Group



1. What is an Evaluation Reference Group?

1. An Evaluation Reference Group (ERG) is a group of key internal and external evaluation stakeholders who review and comments on the draft Terms of Reference (TOR), Inception and Evaluation reports. The ERG members act as advisors during the evaluation process, are not taking key decisions about the evaluation.
2. Establishing an ERG is a good way to involve internal and external stakeholders. It contributes to the relevance, impartiality and credibility of the evaluation (see the [Technical Note on Independence and Impartiality](#)) by offering in an advisory capacity a range of viewpoints and ensuring a transparent process. The participation of primary stakeholders in the ERG can also contribute to enhance collaboration with the Government, other agencies, and donors as well as enhance evaluation culture and capacity among national partners.

2. Who chairs the ERG?

3. Steering the ERG requires strong leadership; hence, the Chair of the ERG is the Country Director (who may delegate this role to the Deputy Country Director)¹, or to the Evaluation Manager if the latter is senior enough to engage with external stakeholders.
4. To guarantee impartiality, the Chair of the ERG CANNOT be delegated to:
 - a. The Head of Programme, unless s/he is the Deputy Country Director;
 - b. The Programme officer directly in charge of the activities being evaluated.

¹ It may also be the RD for RB commissioned DEs or Director of Division for HQ commissioned DEs.

3. Who are the members of an ERG?

5. The members of the ERG are selected by the Evaluation Committee². The Evaluation Committee (EC) membership is a subset of the ERG membership, as such EC mandatory members should be included by default in the ERG. The EC Chair is responsible for approving the ERG composition.
6. The ERG is composed of key stakeholders who either i) have a key role in the intervention being evaluated; ii) are expert in the subject under evaluation; or iii) bring expertise in evaluation design and methods. The ERG should include both internal and external stakeholders (Government, UN and NGO partners, donors, academia). External membership increases the credibility of the evaluation and helps minimize bias. Within WFP, the participation of sub-office, country office and regional bureau staff is encouraged to represent a range of perspectives. In decentralized evaluations, some WFP headquarter divisions may be also represented.
7. The number of ERG members may vary depending on the scope and complexity of the evaluation; it should be large enough to provide a range of perspectives yet limited to be manageable and effective. Typically, the ERG would have between 8-12 members³. It is important to ensure that the reference group members have the required expertise and knowledge to add value to the evaluation. They should include the following groups:

Country Director or Deputy Country Director (chair), <i>mandatory</i> For HQ commissioned DEs, HQ Division Director or Deputy Director (chair)	Mandatory
Evaluation Manager (Secretary to the ERG)	Mandatory
Head of Programme or Programme officer(s) directly in charge of the subject(s) of evaluation	Mandatory
Country Office M&E Officer (if different from the Evaluation Manager)	Mandatory
Regional Evaluation Officer	Mandatory
Other relevant CO staff (e.g. Supply Chain, Gender, Nutrition, Resilience, School feeding, Partnership, Capacity Strengthening etc.)	Mandatory
Relevant CO Area/Field Office representative(s)	As relevant
Representatives from concerned ministries, donors, UN agencies and NGO/civil society partners (Mix of individuals directly involved in the activities evaluated and monitoring and evaluation experts)	Mandatory
WFP Regional Advisors (e.g. Senior Programme Advisor, Regional Monitoring Advisor, Regional VAM Advisor, Regional Advisors on Gender, Nutrition, Resilience, School feeding, Partnership, Capacity Strengthening etc (to be selected based on evaluation scope)	Mandatory
HQ Technical Unit representative(s)	As relevant
Representatives from Academia or well recognized independent experts on the evaluation subject and/or Think Tanks	Optional

8. Engaging national and regional counterparts in the ERG helps develop national evaluation capacity. These might be counterpart agency or line ministry M&E staff, local NGO M&E staff, or individuals from a national or regional voluntary organization for professional evaluators.
9. To ensure that Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (GEEW) dimensions are integrated in the evaluation, the CO gender focal point and/or the RB gender advisor should be members of the ERG. Gender balance should be sought in the ERG membership overall, and the Chair should ensure women and men contribute to conversation.
10. In case of a Joint Evaluation, all partner organization(s) should be included in the ERG. Further information is available in [TN on Joint Evaluations](#).

² For HQ commissioned DEs, the OEV help-desk (wfp.decentralizedevaluation@wfp.org) can be consulted for support.

³ For RB or HQ commissioned DEs, the membership should be tailored accordingly. Regional ERGs should include representatives for each country and if relevant an ERG sub-set at national level can also be established.

4. When to set up the ERG?

11. The ERG should be set up during the Preparation Phase in time to participate in discussions on the intended purpose and use of the evaluation, the approach to be taken, and the evaluation questions that will be addressed. Subsequently, the ERG will be expected to review and comment on the draft evaluation ToR. This is a key step for building ownership and buy-in. ERG members should commit to engage throughout the evaluation process from the Preparation Phase to the Dissemination and Follow-up Phase.
12. The Evaluation Manager is responsible for drafting a ToR for the ERG members, describing their expected contributions and the timelines within which they will be required to accomplish each task (see suggested ToR in box 1). The Chair of the ERG is responsible for final sign-off of the ERG ToR and initial communication with the ERG members.

5. Managing the ERG efficiently

13. Most ERG responsibilities can be accomplished remotely, but face-to-face group meetings can be more effective at key points in time, notably when discussing comments on the draft evaluation report (especially when they are divergent views). Consider when to plan face-to-face meetings and be sure to give ERG members plenty of notice.
14. Managing an ERG requires strong leadership to get adequate participation of stakeholders who may be too busy or not fully committed to support the evaluation. This may undermine the relevance or timeliness of their inputs and ultimately affect the evaluation process. You may also encounter situations where some ERG members are extremely keen to participate and attempt to exert undue influence. Both risks need to be carefully managed. Hence, the ERG Chair's leadership and engagement is essential to set the tone and expectations for WFP staff and other ERG members. Here below some useful tips for the evaluation manager:
 - a. **How to get buy-in from your senior management:**
 - Brief the EC Chair on the importance of the ERG to deliver a credible and useful evaluation and foster collaboration and partnerships beyond the evaluation. Convey messages succinctly and tailor them to spark interest and get buy-in (whether thematic, technical, or in terms of compliance and responsibility).
 - Communicate clearly expectations from the EC Chair, preparing a calendar of when the Chair will need to engage and estimated level of effort.
 - Invite relevant stakeholders that are key to the Chair to ensure he or she is committed from the outset.
 - EC Chair should always know what is happening with the evaluation. Include a regular agenda item in staff meetings to share updates on the evaluation process and findings. Provide weekly bullet point updates on evaluation progress.
 - b. **Keep the ERG engaged:**
 - Use the ERG to think through possible evaluation questions in the early stages. Where their questions are included in the evaluation, their interest in the results is naturally greater and their ownership is stronger.
 - Prepare and share a 2-pager brief summarizing the ToR.
 - ERG members can feel disconnected and become disengaged with the evaluation process. Consider holding meetings/ teleconferences to facilitate communication and make members feel more connected.
 - Circulate a monthly bullet point update on the evaluation process to the ERG.
 - Know which issues – including context issues – are of interest to the ERG members and be prepared to bring these to the table for open discussion.
 - Treat ERG members equitably and professionally, with advance notice of meetings and updates if timings change.
 - Engage ERG members in formulating/ discussing the evaluation recommendations ideally through a workshop with the evaluation team (or a teleconference). This will contribute to relevant and actionable recommendations and greater ownership of results. When a highly participatory design is used, ERG members are often very helpful.

c. Managing an efficient commenting process:

- Give ERG members notice of when they will receive drafts for review, and alert them of delays.
- Give them time for comments. Send kind reminders to inform them of the upcoming deadline.
- Record comments in a Comments Matrix: The evaluation team should complete the matrix with their responses. EM should share the matrix with the ERG, so they see how their comments have been addressed.
- Be prepared to push back on some of the requests/comments from the ERG members. For example, they may suggest evaluation questions that would detract the evaluation from its intended objective. Some of their comments on the draft evaluation reports may not be pertinent. The Evaluation Manager for the TOR and the Evaluation Team for the IR and ER have the possibility of not addressing some of the ERG comments as long as an adequate justification is provided in the comments matrix.

Learn more about evaluation manager's experience in engaging with the ERG and senior management:

- Sameera Ashraf (EM for the DE of WFP's Food Assistance to Temporarily Dislocated Persons in Pakistan) and Makhauta Mokhethi (Evaluation Manager for the DE of National School Feeding Programme in Lesotho), shared their reflections on how to ensure the evaluation process reflects the perspectives of the multiple stakeholders involved in evaluations during the Evaluation Learning Programme workshop in April 2018.
- Watch the video to learn more about it: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N1_YQuhPmE4&feature=youtu.be

6. Sample Terms of Reference for ERG

Box 1: TOR template for the ERG

Context: [Brief account of the evaluation to be undertaken, including subject, scope (activities, geographic and period covered) and estimated timelines].

Purpose: The overall purpose of the ERG is to support a credible, transparent, impartial and quality evaluation process in accordance with WFP Evaluation Policy 2016-2021 and UNEG norms and standards. ERG members review and comment on draft evaluation TOR, inception report, and evaluation report. ERG members act as advisors, while the responsibility to approve evaluation products rests with the Evaluation Committee Chair.

Composition of ERG [List selected 8-12 members to ensure sufficient base of expertise]:

- [Name] – Country Director or Deputy Country Director (Chair)
- [Name] – Evaluation Manager (Secretary or delegated chair as per para 4)
- [Name] – Monitoring and/or Evaluation Officer from Partner Organization/s
- [Name] – Country office M&E officer (if not the evaluation manager)
- [Name] – Head of Programme (if not the evaluation manager)
- [Names] – Country office/ RB Technical expert/s (not directly involved in design, decision-making or supervision of the subject of the evaluation, but with expert knowledge in the subject e.g. nutrition, resilience, gender, school feeding, supply chain management etc.)
- [Name] – Regional Evaluation Officer
- [Name] – Regional Monitoring Advisor
- [Name] - Area/Field Office Representative(s)
- [Names] – Government, NGOs and donor partner(s) (also not directly involved but with knowledge of the intervention and ideally with evaluation experience)
- [Names] – Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) officer from partner organizations or government partners directly involved in the activities evaluated

Tasks: [Set out the areas of engagement and responsibilities with which the ERG will be tasked throughout the evaluation process (as indicated in Table 1)]

Time commitment: [estimate number of days required by phase and main tasks and approximate time frame within which inputs will be required from start to finish of evaluation] This should be usefully summarized in a table:

ERG member tasks by Evaluation Phase	Estimated time	Approximate dates
<p>Preparation Phase</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review and comment on the draft ToR (see ToR report Template, Quality Checklist, and Comments Matrix). Ensure that the ToR will lead to a credible and useful evaluation and provide additional information to inform the finalization of the TOR. Where appropriate, provide input on the evaluation questions. Identify source documents useful to the evaluation team. Attend ERG meeting/conference call etc. 	1 day	Relevant weeks/months e.g. Oct/Nov 2018
<p>Inception Phase</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meet with evaluation team to discuss how the evaluation team can design a realistic/practical, relevant and useful evaluation. Identify and facilitate dialogues with key stakeholders for interviews, as required. Identify and access documents and data Help identify appropriate field sites according to selection criteria set up by the evaluation team in the inception report. Your role in this helps safeguard against bias. Review and comment on the draft Inception Report (see inception report Template, Quality Checklist, and Comments Matrix). 	1 day	Relevant weeks/months e.g. February 2019
<p>Data Collection Phase</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Act as a key informant: respond to interview questions Provide information sources and facilitate access to data Attend the evaluation team's end of field work debriefing 	1.5 days	Relevant weeks/months e.g. Mar/Apr 2019
<p>Data Analysis and Reporting Phase</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review and comment on the draft evaluation report (see evaluation report Template, Quality Checklist, and Comments Matrix), focusing on accuracy, quality and comprehensiveness of findings, and of links to conclusions and recommendations. The latter should be relevant, targeted, realistic and actionable. The ERG, being advisory, it must respect the decision of the independent evaluators about whether feedback is incorporated, as long as the process is transparent, including rationale for not incorporating feedback. 	2 days	Relevant weeks/months e.g. May/Jun 2019
<p>Dissemination and Follow-up Phase</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Disseminate final report internally and externally, as relevant; Share findings within units, organizations, networks and at events; Provide input to management response and its implementation (as appropriate). 	2 days	Post completion of report e.g. Jul/ Aug 2019

Procedures of engagement:

- The Chair of the Evaluation Committee will appoint the members of the ERG.
- The Evaluation manager will notify the ERG members the time, location and agenda of calls or meetings [indicate most appropriate notice time] and share any relevant background materials.
- ERG meetings will be held face-to-face and/or via electronic conference call/Skype – [specify as relevant or leave it open to be determined by the context].
- The ERG will meet at least [specify as relevant the frequency of meetings based on initial discussions].
- ERG members, representing their organizations, will be interviewed by the evaluation team as part of inception and data collection phases.
- ERG members will provide feedback electronically to the EM on the draft ToR, Inception Report and Evaluation Report. The EM will ensure that the evaluation team responds to comments, whether by incorporating them in the reports or providing rationale where feedback is not incorporated. Comments will be recorded in a [comments matrix](#) to help ensure a transparent and credible process.

7. Further reading

15. BetterEvaluation.com guidance on the uses and purposes of an evaluation advisory group: https://www.betterevaluation.org/en/evaluation-options/advisory_group
16. Baizerman, M. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention., Division of Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Obesity. A. (2011). Developing and using an evaluation consultation group. Retrieved from website at: <http://www.cdc.gov/obesity/downloads/EvaluationConsultationGroup.pdf>
17. Läubli Loud, M. and Mayne, J. (Eds) (2013). *Enhancing Evaluation Use: Insights from Internal Evaluation Units*. Sage Publications
18. VeLure Roholt, R., & Baizerman, M. L. American Evaluation Association, (2012). *Evaluation advisory groups*. Retrieved from website: <https://www.scribd.com/book/117582841/Evaluation-Advisory-Groups-New-Directions-for-Evaluation-Number-136>

For more information on Decentralised Evaluations visit our webpage <http://newgo.wfp.org/how-do-i/do-an-evaluation>

Or contact OEV Cap/Qual Unit at: wfp.decentralizedevaluation@wfp.org