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Report on the Evaluation of ICAO's Project Cycle Management

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Office of Internal Oversight

Prepared by:	Gugsa Yimer Farice, Evaluation Specialist
Reviewed and approved by:	Malika Mukhitdinova (Chief, OIO)
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ACRONYMS

ANB	Air Navigation Bureau
APAC	Asia and Pacific Region
ATB	Air Transport Bureau
A-WP	Assembly Working Paper
C-DEC	Council Decision
CDI	Capacity Development and Implementation Bureau
C-WP	Council Working Paper
CPMR	Corporate Performance and Monitoring and Reporting
HQ	Headquarters
GAT	Global Aviation Training
IATA	International Air Transport Association
ICAO	International Civil Aviation Organization
iPacks	Implementation Packages
ISG	Implementation Support Group
ISGP	Implementation Support Group Platform
ISPG	Implementation, Strategy and Planning Group
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OIO	Office of Internal Oversight
OSG	Office of the Secretary General
RO	Regional Office
TOR	Terms of Reference
UN	United Nations
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The 2025 Work Programme of the Office of Internal Oversight (OIO) includes the Evaluation of a Programme/Project. Following a preliminary assessment of the usefulness of the topic, potential objectives and scope—drawing on past oversight experience in evaluating programmes and projects—and in alignment with OIO's commitment to using its limited resources for high-impact and strategic topics, OIO decided to evaluate the organization-wide Project Cycle Management at the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO). The objective of the evaluation was to assess ICAO's management process and governance mechanisms of implementation support programmes and projects, from their initial design to their closure. The evaluation aims to identify good practices, extract lessons learned, and provide recommendations, as appropriate, to help ICAO enhance its project management culture and advance its processes toward greater maturity.

2. The evaluation focused on examining the different stages of the project cycle (design, approval, etc.) but did not delve into assessing the effectiveness or efficiency of individual projects themselves. This evaluation did not include projects related to operational efficiency and organizational enhancement.

3. The primary clients of the evaluation are the Office of the Secretary General (OSG), the Capacity Development and Implementation Bureau (CDI), the Air Navigation Bureau (ANB), the Air Transport Bureau (ATB), the Regional Offices and the ICAO Council. Other stakeholders, such as the Member States and ICAO partners, can also use the evaluation findings, as appropriate.

Key Findings and Conclusions

4. Project Cycle Manual and Framework: The evaluation found that some Bureaus have developed implementation support project management resources, notably the CDI Project Management Manual and the Implementation Support Group Platform (ISGP), to support the management of Implementation Support Projects. While these tools offer a general framework for project cycle management, their use remains largely limited to internal Bureau-level operations, and they do not fully address all aspects of the project cycle. Currently, ICAO lacks a comprehensive, organization-wide framework and manual for project cycle management that consolidates and harmonizes these resources to ensure consistent application across the organization.
5. While CDI has definitions of programmes and projects in its Project Management Manual, ICAO lacks an organization-wide standard for categorizing programmes, projects, and activities based on clear criteria and corresponding workflows. Without clear, consistent definitions and their strict application, some initiatives could face unnecessary procedures while others bypass essential controls, leaving complex projects unmonitored.
6. One-stop project management database: While individual Bureaus maintain their own repositories for implementation support project information, ICAO lacks a centralized, organization-wide system to ensure that all project-related documents and data are systematically managed. Absence of a centralized project repository leads to inconsistent records and limited visibility, undermining efficiency, oversight, and knowledge management.
7. Project management capacity: The evaluation revealed that some personnel across the organization lack a comprehensive understanding of the full project cycle. To address this gap and promote consistent application of a standardized project management framework across all Bureaus and

Regional Offices, it would be beneficial to develop role-based training programmes tailored to the specific responsibilities of stakeholders involved throughout the project cycle.

8. Governance of Project Cycle: The evaluation found that while several units are involved in the management processes of Implementation Support projects, ICAO lacks a corporate function responsible for governing the One-ICAO project cycle. Roles and responsibilities among stakeholders involved in project formulation, appraisal, implementation, monitoring, and closure of implementation support projects are not sufficiently clear, resulting in variations in project design and management practices across the organization. Consequently, capacity-building efforts and support to Bureaus and Regional Offices have been limited and fragmented.
9. Identification and Formulation of Implementation Support Projects: Overall, the guidelines currently employed by CDI and the ISGP provide adequate support for the Identification and Formulation phases of the project cycle. While relevant personnel with technical, legal, and financial expertise—including those from Regional Offices—are often engaged during these phases, their involvement in technical and operational quality assurance of implementation support projects tends to be informal and is not governed by a standardized framework. This lack of formalization can lead to inconsistencies, particularly in cases where the guidelines are not applied, as there is limited clarity on how such situations are managed.
10. Project Documents: The Project Documents developed through CDI and ISGP processes generally contain some essential elements needed for implementation. However, there are notable inconsistencies, as some documents lack specific components. A recurring gap is the absence of a Logical Framework, a key project management tool widely used across UN agencies to support Result-Based Management. Additionally, the level of detail in work plans with result-based budgets and risk-related information varies significantly among the reviewed documents, reflecting a lack of uniformity. Currently, there are no standardized Project Document templates that have been developed and adopted at the corporate level.
11. Project Appraisal and Approval: While CDI and ISGP have established mechanisms for project appraisal and approval, including quality assurance and financial oversight, the overall process remains fragmented due to limited formalization and inconsistent consultation with technical and operational units. Nonetheless, efforts to improve the quality assurance process are underway, including the consideration of a new cost recovery policy to address the gaps with budgeting in the involvement of Subject Matter Experts.
12. Project Risk Management: Project-specific risk management is generally satisfactory, with risks often identified using matrices in Project Documents. However, the level of detail within these matrices varies across the reviewed cases, and ongoing risk monitoring remains limited. If this process is enhanced based on the risk tolerance, the organization could significantly benefit from the risk-focused workflows, monitoring and exception reporting. The integration of project risks into the Enterprise Risk Management framework is a positive step forward for more systematic and coordinated risk oversight.
13. Project Monitoring and Evaluations: Many project documents include monitoring plans, and the ISGP provides an automated interface that prompts project managers to input results. However, monitoring remains largely self-assessed and activity-based, with limited use of results-based indicators, which weakens the ability to track progress against expected outcomes. Additionally, decentralized project

evaluations are rarely planned or conducted by ICAO, highlighting a gap in systematic performance assessment and overall organizational learning.

14. Project Reporting: Financial and programmatic reporting is generally well-documented and shared in line with donor agreement provisions. However, project financial reports tend to be detailed, focusing on individual transactions without comparing expenditures against the planned budget by outputs, activities, or expenditure accounts. There is no standardized project reporting format across the organization, and for those funded through Voluntary Funding, reporting is primarily shaped by donor requirements. In cases where donors do not specify reporting formats, it remains unclear how key elements—such as progress against plan, budget execution, and risk management—are consistently captured and documented.

15. Project Closure: CDI projects benefit from clearly defined procedures for operational, financial, and legal closure outlined in the CDI manual, ensuring structured and accountable project completion. While most Project Documents and agreements include handover provisions for transferring goods or services to recipients, phase-out or exit strategies are minimally integrated and often lack sufficient post-implementation results' sustainability planning. Some useful practices have been observed, such as stakeholder follow-up surveys and documentation of implementation challenges by CDI, which support reflection and enhance operational learning.

16. Environment, Gender and Disability: The process for mainstreaming crosscutting themes, such as gender, disability, and environment topics, into ICAO implementation support projects remains to be developed at the organizational level.

Recommendations

17. Based on the findings and conclusions, the evaluation outlined the following five recommendations:

- Designate a centralized unit with clear roles and responsibilities to oversee, govern, and coordinate one ICAO project cycle management across the organization, ensuring consistency, quality, accountability, and efficiency.
- Building on the existing manuals and frameworks, establish a unified project cycle management framework, with one-stop detailed operational manual and tools for each phase, aligned with results-based management, including results-based budgeting, logical frameworks, risk management, monitoring, and evaluation. The manuals should also integrate cross-cutting issues (e.g., gender, disability, environment) and align with the existing policies, systems, and guidelines, such as linkages with the Business Plan, Global Programmes, Corporate Performance and Monitoring Tool (CPMR) and the Evaluation Policy.
- Develop and use a centralized, user-friendly digital system (database with repository) that integrates information required for effective project management.
- Build the capacity of personnel involved in project formulation, appraisal, implementation and monitoring in line with the unified project cycle framework and manual to ensure effective application of project cycle practices.
- Design and implement a mechanism to ensure that project budgets consistently include costed provisions for technical backstopping, overhead, and indirect costs—such as shared support services and management time—so that all contributing units are adequately resourced and recognized for their roles in project delivery.

18. Management has agreed to the above recommendations and has been working on finalising their Management Action Plan (MAP). The completed MAP will be included in the Committee on Governance Working Paper for its February 2026 session[1].

[1] The Management Action Plan (MAP) was subsequently incorporated into the report following its presentation at the 237th Session of the Committee on Governance (COG)

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Introduction

19. The Annual Work Plan of the Office of Internal Oversight (OIO) for 2025 (C-WP/15634) includes a Programme/Project Evaluation. ICAO implements various types of implementation support projects to Member States and non-State entities that are involved in civil aviation or that are implementing projects in Contracting States. The oversight universe compiled by OIO indicates that the management and quality assurance of implementation support projects are one of the high-criticality areas. After preliminary assessment of the potential objectives and scope based on past oversight experience related to evaluations of programmes and projects, and to use OIO's limited resources for highly relevant and strategic topics, OIO decided to evaluate the theme of the organization-wide project cycle management for implementation support projects. This evaluation aims to assist ICAO with the identification of good practices, lessons learned, and a roadmap to advance its project management culture and processes to a higher level of maturity. The title, 'Evaluation of Programme/Project Cycle Management' has been added to clarify the objectives of this evaluation.

20. The evaluation examined ICAO's management process and governance of implementation support projects and programmes, from their initial design to their closure, ensuring a comprehensive review of the entire project cycle, and identified best practices and areas for improvement. All evaluation activities are adherent to the Norms and Standards for Evaluation in the United Nations System, as approved by the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG), and the ICAO Evaluation Policy. The evaluation is forward-looking and provides findings, lessons learned and recommendations for better decision-making, improved operational effectiveness and efficiency, and institutional enhancement and accountability at the regional and global levels. The recommendations aim to enhance ICAO's reputation as a reliable implementation partner for entrusted voluntary funds and increase its voluntary funding by delivering impactful and cost-effective projects.

Background

21. Project management and quality assurance are crucial for organizations to ensure that projects are well designed, relevant, effective and efficient, and lead to sustainable results. A framework of the Project Cycle clearly defines project governance, design, stakeholders' involvement, project implementation, risk management, monitoring, reporting and evaluation to achieve their goals. Following the project cycle supports the successful delivery of projects by providing systematic workflows and guidelines in each phase of the project cycle, from initiation to closing. This framework entails the use of tools such as a logical (result) framework and theories of change. There is a generally accepted Project Cycle management approach by many UN organizations to ensure that projects are effectively and efficiently designed, planned, implemented, and evaluated.

22. The 2024 Capacity Development and Implementation Programme reached about USD 77.5 million, with 99 per cent funding from recipient Governments and entities, one per cent from ICAO Voluntary Funds, Regular Budget and External Funding Sources. 112 projects and 11 Implementation Packages (iPacks) were implemented across 140 countries. A Resource Mobilization Implementation Plan was approved by the Secretary General with a fundraising goal of CAD 10.5 million for 2024 for Business Plan unfunded activities, transformational objectives and implementation support with Member State

voluntary contributions of CAD 13.4 million, and CAD 2.5 million from other sources (international financial institutions, private sector, UN agencies, international and regional organizations), and gratis personnel value of CAD 9.5 million.[2]

Figure 1: Summary of implementation support in 2024

Region	Technical Cooperation	Technical Assistance	iPacks	Total Implementation (in millions of USD)
Africa	27	8	4	3.1
Americas	40	4	3	63.1
Asia and Pacific	15	3	0	2.3
Europe	3	1	3	0.8
Middle East	10	1	1	8.2
Total	95	17	11	77.5

23. According to the Policy on Implementation Support Provided to States (C-WP/15925), ICAO uses the following definitions:

- Any assistance provided by ICAO to States that is funded by the Regular Budget and/or Voluntary Funds and implemented through any Bureau/Office is called Technical Assistance.
- Any project requested and funded by States and/or organizations and implemented through CDI on a cost-recovery basis, where all the direct and indirect costs related to the project are recovered, is called Technical Cooperation.
- 'Programme' is a 'group of projects managed in a coordinated way to realize benefits', and 'project' is a 'temporary endeavour to achieve one or more defined objectives (defined scope and duration)'.
- The term 'project' will be used to refer to programmes and projects in this report, unless otherwise stated.

24. There are also corporate projects focused on ICAO's operational efficiency and corporate enhancements funded mainly from regular budget or one-time contributions (ERP and other projects of Transformational Objective, etc.).

25. While OIO has not evaluated or audited the project cycle as a fully-fledged topic, OIO raised recommendations in several reviews in the past:

- For the purpose of effective implementation of projects under a uniform management approach across Bureaus, OIO's evaluation report on Technical Assistance to Member States (2020) recommended the Secretariat to finalize the Implementation Support Policy and develop and use clear guidelines for needs assessment, planning, monitoring, and reporting, all of which are the

[2] ICAO Annual Report of the Council to the Assembly

key phases of the project cycle of implementation support and Technical Assistance projects and activities.

- Furthermore, the internal audit of the management of voluntary funds by OIO recommended the establishment of a cross-bureau technical group to support the Project Review Committee for all ICAO Voluntary Funds in 2021.

26. Following these recommendations, the Policy on ICAO Implementation Support was approved by the Council at its 225th session (C-DEC 225/6). This policy aims to align Technical Cooperation and Technical Assistance projects with a more holistic concept for managing ICAO implementation support, following a One-ICAO approach. The policy states that ICAO implementation support shall be delivered through the application of recognized project management principles and methodologies. It also states that the results-based management framework will be applied to implementation support, and appropriate Key Performance Indicators in a performance monitoring framework will be adopted to facilitate monitoring and reporting on results (outputs and outcomes) and activities in line with the Business Plan and ICAO financial structure. Based on this policy, the Implementation Support Group (ISG) was established to periodically review the implementation of the policy, develop related recommendations, strategies and plans, and provide advice on ICAO implementation support operational issues.

EVALUATION PURPOSE AND METHODOLOGY

Evaluation Purpose & Scope

27. The purpose of this evaluation was to assess ICAO's project management process and governance of implementation support projects and programmes, from their initial design to their closure, ensuring a comprehensive review of the entire project cycle, and to identify best practices and areas for improvement. The evaluation focused on examining the different stages of the project cycle (e.g. initiation, design, planning, execution, monitoring, and closure) but did not delve into assessing the effectiveness or efficiency of individual projects themselves. The evaluation was conducted to improve the project cycle management of ICAO, including corporate project governance, risk management, guidance, processes, systems and tools. The evaluation aimed to add value to the corporate process rather than focusing on individual project management processes.

28. This evaluation did not include projects related to operational efficiency and organizational enhancement (e.g. ERP, ICT Digitalization projects, and other ongoing TO and corporate projects, etc.) as well as Global Aviation Training (GAT) projects.

29. The primary clients of the evaluation are OSG, CDI, ANB, ATB, and Regional Offices. Furthermore, the ICAO Council and Member States, Project Steering Committees, and other stakeholders would use, as appropriate, the evaluation findings and lessons learnt.

Evaluation Methodology

30. The evaluation employed a mixed-methods approach combining quantitative and qualitative research elements to triangulate findings and provide a comprehensive understanding of ICAO's project cycle management. Annex 2 provides a detailed description of the methodology.

31. The evaluation was guided by six questions based on the benchmarking exercise conducted by reviewing the internationally recognized project management frameworks and practices of other UN agencies.

32. The evaluation applied multiple data collection methods, which included desk review, interviews with internal and external stakeholders, and secondary data collection.

Data Collection

33. The evaluation employed the following data sources:

- **Desk review:** The evaluation team reviewed and analyzed various documents including guidelines, manuals, documents related to the sampled projects such as project documents, donor agreements, workplans, partnership cooperation agreements, progress reports, monitoring plans and reports, meeting summaries and project committees' minutes.
- In-depth interviews: The evaluation team interviewed 44 stakeholders through 30 semi-structured in-depth discussions, including ICAO personnel and external stakeholders. Annex 3 includes the list of stakeholders interviewed.

Benchmarking review

34. A benchmarking review was conducted to examine how projects are managed across several UN-system organizations. The purpose of this review was to identify the minimally essential components of the project cycle management that are consistently applied, regardless of organizational size or sector focus. While terminology and specific methodologies may vary, the review revealed a shared structure that underpins effective project management. This structure consists of six interrelated phases: Identification, Formulation/Design, Appraisal/Approval, Implementation/Monitoring, Reporting, and Evaluation/Closure. Each phase plays a distinct and critical role in ensuring that projects are strategically aligned, technically sound, efficiently executed, and capable of delivering sustainable results.

35. The Identification phase is the starting point of the project cycle. It involves recognizing a problem, opportunity, or need that warrants intervention. Organizations typically conduct situational analyses, stakeholder consultations, and needs identification to understand the context and define the rationale for a potential project. This phase is crucial for ensuring that the project idea is grounded in evidence and aligned with institutional priorities or broader development goals. The output of this phase is often a concept note or preliminary proposal that outlines issues to be addressed, the intended beneficiaries, and the potential scope of the implementation support.

36. Once a project idea has been identified, it moves into the Formulation/Design phase. This is where the concept is developed into a detailed and structured project document with a work plan and donor agreement. During this phase, organizations define the project's objectives, expected outcomes and specific outputs. They also design the activities required to achieve these results, establish timelines, and estimate the necessary resources. Tools such as logical frameworks, results chains, and theories of change are often used to articulate the causal pathways and assumptions underlying the project. Risk assessments, feasibility assessments, and stakeholder validation processes are also conducted to ensure that the project is technically, budgetary, financially, operationally and legally feasible, contextually appropriate, and socially inclusive. Project formulator consults with technical and operational subject matter experts to ensure feasibility. The result is a comprehensive CDIP project document that serves as the foundation for internal and external review.

• Contextual/Situational or problem analysis • Objectives • Strategies • Results (outcomes and activities) • Partners • Beneficiaries	• Logical framework • Work plan • Budget • Monitoring and evaluation plans • Risk management • Sustainability and exit strategy

Items typically included in a Project Document

37. The Appraisal/Approval phase serves as a formal quality assurance checkpoint. During appraisal, the proposed project is critically reviewed to assess its relevance, coherence, feasibility, cost-effectiveness, and potential impact. This may involve technical, financial, environmental, and social assessments, depending on the nature of the project. The appraisal process ensures that the project is robust and that risks are adequately identified and mitigated. This may involve a project review board and other internal governing structures. Once the appraisal is complete, the project is submitted for formal

approval by the appropriate authority, such as senior management (depending on the delegation of authority) and the donor (resource partner). Approval signifies institutional commitment and authorizes the receipt and allocation of resources for implementation. It also marks the transition from planning to implementation.

38. The Implementation phase is where the project plan is put into operation. This involves deploying teams, confirming the work plans and executing the planned activities, contracting suppliers and managing partnerships, which is defined as the inception of the Implementation phase. Effective implementation requires strong project management skills and practices, including coordination, communication, procurement, risk management and financial oversight. Organizations must also ensure compliance with internal policies, donor requirements, and legal regulations. Flexibility is essential during this phase, as projects often encounter unforeseen challenges that require adaptive management and problem-solving. Maintaining stakeholder engagement and ensuring that activities are delivered in a timely and efficient manner are key to achieving the desired results.

39. Closely linked to implementation is Monitoring, which ensures that project progress is systematically tracked and assessed by a function outside of the project team. Monitoring is a continuous process that involves collecting and validating data on milestones and targets, conducting reviews to confirm reported progress, and analyzing trends to inform decision-making. It helps project managers identify bottlenecks, assess the quality and value-for-money of outputs, and make timely adjustments to improve effectiveness. Monitoring systems may include field visits, beneficiary and partner feedback mechanisms, and data collection tools. This phase not only supports accountability but also provides the evidence base for reporting and evaluation.

40. The Reporting phase is essential for documenting and communicating the project's progress and performance. Organizations prepare periodic reports, such as quarterly, semi-annual, or annual reports, that summarize achievements, workplan and budget implementation status, challenges, and lessons learned. These reports are shared with donors, partners, and other stakeholders to ensure transparency and maintain trust. Reporting also supports internal learning by capturing insights that can inform future project design and implementation. In addition to narrative and financial reporting, organizations may produce knowledge products such as case studies to disseminate findings more broadly.

41. The Evaluation phase provides a structured and objective assessment of the project's performance, impact, and sustainability. Evaluations may be conducted at different stages: mid-term, final, or ex-post, and often involve independent evaluators to ensure impartiality, sometimes driven by donors. The evaluation process examines whether the project achieved its intended objectives, how efficiently resources were used, whether the implementation support was relevant to the context, and what long-term changes were generated, where applicable. Evaluation findings are used to improve future project design, enhance institutional learning, and demonstrate accountability to stakeholders and donors.

42. Finally, Closure marks the formal end of the project. This phase involves completing all remaining activities, finalizing deliverables and terminal reports, closing financial accounts, and ensuring that all contractual obligations are met. Closure also includes conducting exit meetings with stakeholders, documenting lessons learned, and archiving project records for future reference. A final report is typically prepared to summarize the project's achievements, challenges, and overall performance.

Sustainability or transition arrangements are finalized to ensure that the benefits of the project are maintained beyond its duration. Closure is not merely an administrative step. It is a critical opportunity to reflect on the entire project cycle, consolidate learning, and ensure that institutional memory is preserved.

Data Analysis and Quality Assurance

43. A checklist developed based on the benchmarking exercise was used for sampled projects to examine the components of project management, and the information was analyzed and triangulated by multiple methods, including desk reviews and interviews.

44. The information collected through primary and secondary sources was analyzed to develop the findings. Stakeholders were interviewed to verify information.

Ethical Considerations

45. The assessment abided by the UNEG Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation. Special care was given to the storage of documents, interview notes, and the confidentiality of the data collected for this evaluation. The identity of participants has been preserved in the presentation of findings, as only aggregate-level results are reported.

46. This evaluation was independently carried out by the OIO. All evaluation team members declared no conflict of interest.

Limitations

47. Due to the absence of a centralized repository of all projects undertaken by ICAO, the evaluation team was unable to establish a complete inventory of the organization's project portfolio. This significantly hindered the identification and selection of sample projects, and retrieving relevant documentation proved challenging because of the fragmented and inconsistent data storage systems. While efforts were made to include various project types, the sample may not fully represent the entire population of projects.

48. Furthermore, the lack of standardized categorization and documentation practices across the organization introduced additional complexity in comparing projects and assessing consistency in project management. Variations in terminology, reporting formats, and data availability made it difficult to apply uniform evaluation criteria.

49. These limitations may not affect the broader findings of the evaluation as OIO has covered a reasonably good number of projects from different categories in its sample for in-depth analysis.

FINDINGS

Systems, Tools and Guidelines

Finding 1: While some Bureaus such as CDI have established guidelines and manuals for managing projects within the Bureaus, there is currently no one-stop framework to consolidate guidelines, manuals or procedures for project cycle management and to ensure the consistent application across the organization.

50. The evaluation found that while some Bureaus have developed their own guidelines and manuals for managing implementation support projects, there is no standardized set of procedures for One-ICAO project cycle management that is consistently applied across the organization. This lack of uniformity has resulted in varied approaches to planning, implementation, monitoring, and reporting of projects. At the same time, OIO identified a series of good practices and tools, discussed below, which, after refinement, should be brought forward as a corporate mandatory framework with workflows and tools.

51. As part of the ongoing efforts to harmonize project management practices across the organization under the One-ICAO approach, the Implementation Support Group (ISG), which consists of all the Regional Directors and representatives from ANB, ATB, and CDI[3], has taken a leading role in developing a standardized and coherent process framework. This initiative aims to ensure consistency, transparency, and accountability in how projects are conceived, planned, implemented, and evaluated across the organization. Through this harmonization process, OIO was able to identify two key guidelines: Field Operations Project Management Handbook (FOP Handbook) of CDI and the ISGP. FOP Handbook intends to be an operational guide to help the CDI Field Operations Section to conduct its daily tasks more efficiently. ISGP is a digital system designed to streamline project management across the entire project cycle and to provide a set of guidelines, ensuring that projects are implemented in accordance with established project cycle workflows. These workflows represent a significant step forward in institutionalizing best practices and aligning project management processes with organizational goal of internal cohesion.

52. A notable feature of both the Field Operations Project Management Handbook of CDI and ISG workflows is their adoption of the gated process model. This model structures the project cycle into a series of clearly defined phases, each marked by a decision-making "gate". Each gate corresponds to a specific phase or phases in the project cycle. The gated approach ensures that projects meet specific criteria and receive formal endorsement before progressing to the next phase. This not only strengthens quality assurance and risk management but also promotes greater discipline in project planning and implementation. This is also in line with benchmarked processes in other UN organizations.

53. By embedding the gated process into the workflows, a mechanism that enhances both accountability and strategic alignment has been introduced. Each gate serves as a checkpoint where project teams are required to demonstrate readiness, validate assumptions, and secure the necessary approvals. This structured progression helps prevent the implementation of inadequately developed or unapproved

[3] TOR, Implementation Support Group (ISG), 19 November 2024

projects, ensuring cost-effectiveness and relevance of projects and facilitating the early identification of potential issues. Moreover, the use of standardized templates, review protocols, and decision criteria contributes to a more transparent and replicable project management process. Overall, the adoption of these workflows with gated process under the One-ICAO approach represents a significant institutional achievement. This approach not only improves project quality and performance but also fosters a culture of continuous learning and accountability across ICAO.

54. While these workflows introduced a unified approach to harmonizing project management across the organization, their application at the organizational level remains limited. FOP Handbook was largely developed for use in projects within the CDIP and is not intended for application beyond that context. Additionally, there are no clearly defined criteria governing the use of ISGP, resulting in its application being subject to individual discretion. Although the platform is used across Bureaus and Regional Offices, it tends to be utilized when projects require additional budgeting through resource mobilization efforts. Hence, the organization has not yet reached a stage where a unified governance framework consistently guides project management practices across all Bureaus and Regional Offices. It also needs to be enhanced through linkages with strategic and business planning processes. In the benchmarking review, it was found that in most similar organizations, there is a project cycle policy or framework, which contains definitions, roles, responsibilities, workflows, and approval checkpoints and is applied throughout the organizations. Other UN organizations have also detailed manual on each component of the project cycle with clear roles and responsibilities.

55. The absence of organization-wide framework with guidelines on project management appears to contribute to certain operational challenges. For instance, Regional Offices engage with multiple Bureaus depending on the technical scope of their projects or types of funding. In such cases, they confirmed that their personnel may encounter varying procedures, expectations and communication channels, which can make routine tasks more complex and time-consuming.

Finding 2: Although CDI has clear definitions of programmes and projects in its Project Management Manual, ICAO lacks an organization-wide standard for categorizing programmes, projects, and activities based on clear criteria and corresponding workflows. Without clear definitions, some initiatives face unnecessary procedures while others bypass essential controls, leaving complex projects unmonitored.

56. The CDI has clear definitions of programmes and projects in its Project Management Manual. However, ICAO does not have organization wide standard definition and related categorization of programmes, projects, and activities, based on their nature, risk, scale and budget, which leads to inconsistency regarding which workflows and procedures to follow. Currently, categorization practices vary across the organization, resulting in operational ambiguity, subjectivity and reduced coherence in designing and managing implementation support projects.

57. The evaluation also found that different types of initiatives would need different levels of project management rigour. For example, small-scale projects, generally referred to as activities, are often embedded within ongoing operational plans, and based on their risk and nature, may not require the full application of the project cycle. In contrast, larger or more complex projects typically require structured planning, monitoring, and reporting procedures. While the CDIP follows rigorous project

cycle processes and ISGP has a gated process, they do not define categories that should determine which workflows to be applied. In the benchmarking review for this evaluation, it was found that certain organizations have established clear definitions with ceilings and corresponding procedures that guide their actions based on those definitions and risk tolerance.

58. The desk review and interviews indicated that certain implementation support activities, although labeled as "projects," are perceived as part of the ongoing responsibilities of a Bureau or Office. These activities are often formulated, implemented and monitored through the regular work planning and are funded by Regular Budget or co-funded by Voluntary Funds. Although it was out of the scope of this evaluation to determine whether each such activity should be formally classified as projects requiring full project cycle management, in the absence of a well-defined standard, there is a risk that implementation support activities may either be subject to unnecessarily burdensome management procedures or, conversely, bypass essential processes required for effective oversight and accountability. Establishing clear, organization-wide criteria would help ensure appropriate planning, risk management, oversight, and accountability for all implementation support activities. Moreover, the evaluation found some complex projects and multi-donor multi-year programmes, which were not classified accordingly, thus not visible for the corporate oversight and monitoring.

Finding 3: While individual Bureaus maintain their own repositories for project information, ICAO lacks a centralized repository encompassing information on all projects managed across the organization. Absence of a centralized project repository leads to inconsistent records and limited visibility, which stakeholders say undermines efficiency, oversight, knowledge management, and business continuity.

59. A key limitation in the current project management environment is the lack of a single, organization-wide system for storing and managing project information. Instead of a centralized platform, departments rely on a variety of tools and practices, leading to a fragmented and inconsistent information landscape. In many cases, project data is organized and stored according to specific needs and conventions of a Bureau or a Regional Office. This approach, while adaptable, lacks standardization and makes it difficult to locate, monitor or share information.

60. At the same time, ICAO has been aiming to introduce the Programme Project Management Module (PPM) in its ERP Quantum, which was replaced with the JIRA system, used by the CDIP, but it remains unclear whether JIRA will evolve into an organization-wide project management solution. In parallel, a SharePoint project management system with a gated process was developed and used by the ISG, but this platform has not been designated as the mandatory corporate project repository. As some Bureaus have introduced their own digital project management tools, these efforts remain uncoordinated, lack interoperability, and operate without a common platform or integration strategy. As a result, ICAO does not yet have a single, validated source of project data, and compiling organization-wide information remain time-consuming and incomplete. Establishing a unified, mandatory one-stop project management and data repository system would significantly strengthen consistency, efficiency and oversight across the project cycle.

61. The continued absence of a unified repository can pose several strategic and operational risks to the organization. Without a centralized platform, there is no reliable mechanism to ensure data consistency,

completeness, or accessibility across Bureaus and Regional Offices. This increases the risk of duplicated efforts, misaligned investments, and inefficient resource allocation. Moreover, the lack of a single system can undermine institutional memory, as critical project data may be lost, inaccessible, or inconsistently archived, especially when project teams leave the organization. From a governance perspective, it also limits the organizational ability to monitor compliance with project management standards and to generate timely, evidence-based insights for decision-making. It could hinder broader organizational objectives such as transparency, accountability, and institutional learning.

62. This fragmentation had a direct impact on the conduct of this evaluation. The absence of a unified system made it difficult to scope the evaluation comprehensively and to select a representative sample of projects. Without a centralized overview, the evaluators faced challenges in identifying all relevant initiatives, understanding their interconnections, and ensuring balanced coverage across Bureaus and Regional Offices. Moreover, it has impacted the quality and completeness of the project documentation for OIO sampled projects, which significantly varied from project to project and from office to office.

Finding 4: Several stakeholders have raised concerns regarding the insufficiency of the current project management capacity building efforts for personnel involved in the project cycle across the organization. The trainings conducted so far were neither comprehensive nor structured enough to meet the demands of effective project implementation.

63. The evaluation found that outside CDIP, the current level of project management capacity building is perceived by several stakeholders as inadequate. Although some training initiatives are in place, their scope remains limited due to the absence of a comprehensive organizational framework or unified guidelines. This has led to uneven levels of project management proficiency across offices and teams. This inconsistency hinders the development of a shared understanding of project management principles and practices across the organization.

64. The limited and inconsistent training opportunities have implications for project formulation and implementation team performance and the quality of project delivery. Inadequate capacity building can result in gaps in planning, implementation, and monitoring, particularly among personnel who are new to project formulation and management roles or who transition between offices. These gaps may contribute to inefficiencies and reduce the effectiveness of organizational implementation support. A more coherent and consistent training approach under a unified project management framework and guidelines would not only enhance individual competencies but also contribute to greater organizational efficiency, accountability, and impact.

Governance

Finding 5: While there are several units working on different initiatives, there is currently no designated corporate function responsible for the overall governance, oversight, coordination and monitoring, limiting strategic alignment and performance tracking.

65. The evaluation observed that several offices and units within the organization are actively engaged in project-related initiatives, each applying their own methodologies and tools. While this reflects a

decentralized operational environment, it also raises concerns about the overall coherence of project management practices organization-wide. Notably, there is no designated corporate function responsible for developing, maintaining and overseeing the compliance with the project cycle management as a business process owner. Such as function would be expected to establish a unified framework, workflows and tools train ICAO personnel, and regularly monitor compliance, relevance, cost-effectiveness, and coherence throughout the project cycle, while helping avoid duplication of effort.

66. The lack of a corporate-level designated unit for the Project Cycle may contribute to gaps in quality assurance and accountability, as no one oversees compliance. While some units appear to follow structured processes, others may rely on informal or ad hoc methods. This could result in uneven application of key project management elements such as stakeholder engagement, risk assessment, compliance with donor requirements and post-project review.

67. A centralized function could potentially explore good practices across the organization and use them to support better alignment between the outcomes of the projects with global programmes and thematic organizational priorities. Such centralized unit can advise the Secretary-General and assist ICAO management and staff by providing advice on project planning, monitoring, resource allocation and implementation reporting. It can also ensure that project achievements are integrated into ICAO's organizational reports, clearly demonstrating their contribution to strategic goals and expected impact. While decentralization allows for tailored approaches, a more coordinated mechanism might enhance strategic coherence and facilitate portfolio-level oversight.

Project Management Principles and Result-Based Management

68. This section presents findings related to the existing guidelines, with a particular focus on the Project Management Manual of CDI and the ISGP process by the Implementation Support Group, as well as current practices informed by these frameworks. It is important to note that, as outlined in previous sections of this report, the organization lacks a unified set of guidelines applicable across all units and projects.

Identification

Finding 6: The identification phase is supported by adequate processes, including situational and problem analysis, where guidelines are available. The CDIP and ISGP employ a standardized template that captures all essential information required for the initiation of projects.

69. The evaluation found that the identification phase of the project cycle is supported by well-established processes for projects in the CDIP. These include situational and problem analyses that enable staff to assess needs, define objectives, and determine the relevance and feasibility of proposed initiatives. This foundational step contributes to the overall quality and strategic alignment of project proposals. The CDIP has a standardized template, referred to as Outline Business Case, and essential information is captured for initiating projects. This includes background, justification, contribution to ICAO's Strategic Objectives, project objectives, expected results, and resource needs.

70. The Outline Business Case template serves as a mechanism for ensuring that key elements of project design are systematically addressed. It facilitates internal review and decision-making by providing a concise and structured summary of proposed initiatives. The sample of projects reviewed showed that the Outline Business Case documents were properly documented, and they supported transparency and accountability by documenting the rationale and intended outcomes of each project.

71. The ISGP requires the submission of a proposal to initiate a project. Project managers enter necessary information into the system, including beneficiaries, problem/needs, link to Strategic Objectives, expected outcomes, expected results, and cost estimate. Approvals need to be provided by Deputy Regional Directors and subject matter expert at the Headquarters. Financial approval needs to be provided by the fund manager.

72. The Project Documents in the sample demonstrate problems or needs identified in most cases when following these procedures. Problems and needs are typically outlined within the context or background section of the documents for CDIP Projects. In certain cases, a separate section is specifically dedicated to the identification of problems, especially for the CDIP regional projects and the ISGP process.

Formulation

Finding 7: Individuals with technical, legal, and financial expertise are typically involved during project formulation phase. While CDI has established a process for such involvement, there is no overarching framework or standardized guidelines across the organization, resulting in ad hoc and inconsistent engagement.

73. The evaluation revealed a weakness in the current project formulation process regarding the integration of technical, legal, and financial expertise. While relevant personnel are often informally involved, their participation is not governed by a standardized or formalized framework in implementation support projects. This lack of structure may lead to inconsistencies in the quality and rigour of project appraisals, especially in complex or high-risk initiatives. The absence of clear guidelines or institutional mechanisms to ensure input from the subject matter experts to ensure the projects' technical and operational feasibility at the early stages of project development poses a risk to design quality, operational efficiency, and strategic alignment.

74. A useful benchmark can be found in the approach adopted by a UN organization, which requires the establishment of a Project Taskforce at the outset of projects. This taskforce typically includes three mandated representatives with expertise in programme management, resource mobilization and technical subject areas relevant to the project, and it closely consults with legal, finance and procurement offices. The taskforce is mandated to collaboratively review and refine project proposals before they proceed to the approval stage, ensuring that all critical dimensions are adequately addressed. This structured model promotes accountability, enhances quality assurance, and could serve as a valuable reference for strengthening project management practices.

Finding 8: The Project Documents produced by the CDIP and ISGP processes generally include the key elements required for effective implementation. However, some documents lack specific components, which vary from case to case. In most cases, the Project/Programme Documents do not incorporate the Logical Framework or Results and Resources Framework, which is a widely adopted project management tool among UN agencies as an essential element for Result-Based Management. There are currently no standardized Project Document templates that have been developed and adopted at the corporate level.

75. The evaluation found that Project Documents generally contain the key elements required for effective implementation in the CDIP and ISGP processes. These typically include objectives, implementation strategies, timelines and resource requirements, which collectively provide a sound basis for operational planning and implementation. Despite their overall adequacy, the evaluation identified inconsistencies in the completeness of these documents. Specific components are occasionally missing, and the nature of these omissions varies across cases. For instance, in approximately 70% of the sampled cases, work plans were either appended to the Project Documents or presented as standalone documents. The work plans reviewed generally cover the duration of the respective projects that they pertain to. Regional projects, which often last multiple years in multiple phases, typically develop their work plans annually and they cover the following year. Budget information was presented in 83% of the cases, while a risk management matrix or plan was also present in 72% of the reviewed documents. Roles and responsibilities of stakeholders are sufficiently described in the Project Documents (93%). A general framework for monitoring and reporting is included in most of the Project Documents reviewed. However, evaluation plans are not included in most of the projects reviewed.

76. It was also observed that the formats and level of detail provided in the work plans and risk-related information varied considerably across the reviewed documents. Although this variation can be partially attributed to differences in the years in which the respective documents were developed using different templates, the lack of uniformity can affect the clarity of project design and hinder the ability to apply consistent management practices across the organization.

77. The Logical Framework Approach (LFA) and the Results and Resources Framework (RRF) are commonly used planning tools for project management, and they are widely adopted among UN agencies. They are considered essential for articulating project implementation logic, defining intended results with measurable indicators, targets, milestones and baselines, and aligning resources with intended outcomes. The use of these structured frameworks presents a valuable opportunity to strengthen the application of Results-Based Management principles. These tools help establish clear linkages between activities, outputs, outcomes, and impact, helping enhance the quality of project performance monitoring and enabling the organization to demonstrate value for money in a systematic and transparent manner. When projects incorporate a defined results chain and performance indicators, they are better positioned to assess effectiveness, support accountability, and foster organizational learning and continuous improvement.

78. In most cases reviewed, Project Documents include tables that contain information on outcomes (often referred to as immediate objectives), corresponding performance indicators, outputs (often referred to as 'deliverables'), and activities. However, the format does not include some of the information that is

commonly found in the current LFA, such as baseline, target, milestones and source of data at the levels of output and outcome. This complicates regular monitoring and reporting after the project initiation, in particular, measuring the change and impact intended by a project.

79. The evaluation identified the absence of standardized Project Document templates developed and adopted at the corporate level. These templates can guide project formulators and ensure the presence of key provisions, consistency, compliance, and quality across all initiatives. In the absence of such standards at the organization level, project documentation risks becoming fragmented and misaligned with organizational expectations. The evaluation further noted that establishing a clear mechanism by which any modifications to standard provisions, initiated by donors or other external parties, should require consultation with designated process owners (e.g. LEB, FIN, and OIO) would significantly strengthen governance. Such a mechanism would not only ensure that deviations from corporate standards are deliberate, transparent, and appropriately endorsed and followed, but also help establish a consistent workflow and enhance the overall efficiency of the project formulation process.

Finding 9: The evaluation found that work plans consistently include timelines, which aid in planning and tracking progress. However, the absence of an approach that links resource allocation to results limits the ability to assess financial efficiency and align expenditures with scheduled activities, potentially affecting cost-effectiveness and comprehensive monitoring. In addition, current budgeting arrangements do not consistently cover the full costs associated with the technical work carried out by technical Bureaus and Regional Offices and indirect costs like shared support services and management time.

80. Work plans play a critical role in project management by translating objectives into actionable tasks, timelines, and resource allocations. They serve as operational tools that guide implementation, facilitate coordination among stakeholders, and support performance monitoring. By clearly outlining activities, responsible parties, expected outputs, and associated budgets, work plans enhance transparency and accountability. Moreover, they provide a structured basis for tracking progress, identifying challenges, managing risks and making informed adjustments throughout the project cycle, resulting in more effective and results-oriented project implementation.

81. The evaluation observed that the reviewed work plans consistently include timelines outlining the sequence and duration of project activities. These timelines serve as a foundational tool for planning and tracking progress. However, the integration of Results-Based Budgeting is lacking in the majority of the Work Plans reviewed. This omission limits the ability to assess resource allocation and financial adequacy and efficiency in relation to planned activities. The lack of Result-Based Budgeting in work plans suggests a disconnect between financial and programmatic/operational planning. Without integrated budget information, project teams may face challenges in aligning expenditures with activity timelines, potentially leading to misallocation, misuse of resources and/or inefficiencies. This separation also hinders comprehensive monitoring, reporting and evaluation of cost-effectiveness throughout project implementation.

82. On a positive note, the evaluation identified some noteworthy cases in which budgets are clearly linked to specific activities or objectives outlined in work plans for some projects, some of which were driven

by donors. In these instances, project monitoring is conducted using the work plans, enabling both programmatic and financial reports to transparently show how resources have been allocated and utilized for each activity/output.

83. It was also found that the current budgeting arrangements do not consistently cover the full costs associated with the technical work carried out by technical Bureaus and Regional Offices, and indirect costs like shared support services and management time. However, improvements are underway, including the consideration of a new cost recovery policy to address this gap. Establishing a unified framework for cost recovery would ensure that responsibility and resources are appropriately aligned and delegated to the relevant individuals, resulting in enhancement of project quality and ownership.

Appraisal/Approval

Finding 10: While the CDIP and ISGP have established mechanisms for project appraisal and approval, including quality assurance and financial oversight, the overall process remains fragmented due to limited formalization and inconsistent consultation with technical and operational units. Consolidating and documenting these practices into a standardized framework would help ensure comprehensive and consistent appraisals across legal, financial, technical, and operational dimensions.

84. While the CDIP and ISGP have established mechanisms and procedures for project appraisal and approval, including quality assurance and financial oversight, the overall process remains fragmented due to limited formalization and inconsistent consultation with technical and operational units. Despite the lack of consistent application of the process across the organization, several good practices have been identified. These include quality assurance checks, legal compliance reviews, and assessments on alignment with the procurement policies of the organization. However, these practices are often isolated within specific Bureaus and are not leveraged at the organizational level to improve overall project governance.

85. The CDIP has developed a structured process for project plan assessments, focusing on quality assurance, legal compliance, and alignment with procurement policies. A standardized template known as Project Endorsement Form is used to summarize assessments conducted by the relevant units within the Bureau and Procurement Section. This form records the endorsement of the Business Support Section (BSS), Field Operations Section (FOS), Field Personnel Section (FPS), Technical Support and Quality Assurance Section (TSQA), Global Aviation Training Section (GAT), and Procurement Section (PRO). This process contributes positively to the integrity of project planning. The CDIP process ensures that project proposals are reviewed by various units, helping to identify risks early and maintain consistency with legal and procurement frameworks. This approach also contributes to improved accountability and has supported the organization's efforts to maintain compliance with internal and external regulations. However, the form only records the assessments conducted within the Bureau and the Procurement Section, not including LEB, FIN, technical Bureaus or Regions.

86. According to CDI, technical feasibility for CDIP projects begins upon receiving a request from States or Organizations for a project. The request is assessed by the CDI Field Operations Section through the Outline Business Case (OBC) study to ensure it is aligned with ICAO's Strategic Objectives and CDI's mandate. After approval of the OBC and based on the different services requested in the project

(procurement, expertise, training), the CDI Field Operations Section develops the Project Document to detail the technical solution:

- When a project has a procurement component, its technical feasibility is assessed by the TSQA Section per its documented processes.
- When a project has a non-procurement component (deployment of expertise), its technical feasibility is assessed with internal resources (e.g., CDI staff, ICAO's roster of experts, Regional Offices) or in coordination with the technical Bureaus; and, when a project has training, its technical feasibility is assessed by the GAT Section per its documented processes.

87. While the approach for the non-procurement component ensures flexibility and access to expertise, the process lacks standardization in its application. This gap suggests the need for a more comprehensive and documented framework to guide feasibility and quality assurance assessments for the non-procurement component of projects. Once all assessments are completed, the Project Board, comprising the heads of units within CDI, the Deputy Director, and the Chief of the Procurement Section, approves projects based on the consolidated assessment and review of the relevant units.

88. Regional projects typically establish steering committees composed of representatives from participating Member States, Regional Offices, and other relevant stakeholders. These projects are typically multi-year programmes, for which the steering committees and technical advisory boards convene at least annually. Work plans for the subsequent period are typically prepared by technical project coordinators and submitted for approval to the steering committees. Technical and financial feasibility is generally assessed during this process. In most cases reviewed, the Steering Committees comprise members with relevant technical expertise, and financial feasibility is also discussed in coordination with representatives of Regional Offices, who are also the members of the committee. However, the evaluation faced limitations in assessing how appraisals and approvals were conducted for programmes initiated a considerable time ago.

89. Overall, while the process is in place, although fragmented, further formalization, streamlining and improved documentation would help more clearly demonstrate that the technical, financial and operational feasibility has been assessed and appraised. Moreover, there is no organization-wide framework or function to ensure its consistent application due to the lack of centralized project governance function and Project Cycle framework. In the benchmarking review, it was found that some organizations have a systematic mechanism applied throughout the organizations in which feasibility of the project is ensured by the technical and operational divisions where they are responsible for providing feedback to project formulator (technical, legal, operational, budgetary, finance, etc.).

Risk Management

Finding 11: Risks are identified and presented in the Project Documents for most projects, typically in the form of a risk matrix. When new risks arise during implementation, they are often presented in programmatic reports. However, there is no separate or systematic documentation process in place for updating and tracking risks over the course of the project; and escalating them when they are outside of the project manager's control.

90. Risk identification is a standard feature in most of the reviewed Project Documents, typically presented in the form of a risk matrix. These matrices serve as a foundational tool for anticipating potential challenges and planning mitigation strategies. However, the level of detail provided varies across projects. Some of the projects include only a list of identified risks, while others provide a more comprehensive matrix that includes likelihood, impact, and mitigation measures. This inconsistency suggests a lack of standardized guidance or oversight in risk documentation. Projects with more detailed matrices are generally better equipped to manage risks proactively.

91. As projects progress, some risks may materialize, or some mitigating actions may not be effective as planned and need to be adjusted. New risks might also emerge due to evolving operational contexts or unforeseen developments. These existing and emerging risks are typically presented in programmatic reports. While this indicates a degree of responsiveness, the reporting lacks consistency in format and follow-up. Once a project advances beyond the design phase, there is limited clarity on how the initial risk matrix is reviewed or updated. This results from the practice that risk management activities are not documented to ensure their visibility, further complicating the assessment of their use and relevance during project implementation.

Finding 12: Project risks have begun to be integrated into the organization-wide Enterprise Risk Management (ERM) framework, marking a positive step toward more systematic and coordinated risk oversight.

92. The organization has initiated the integration of project-level risks into its broader Enterprise Risk Management (ERM) framework. This marks a significant shift toward a more holistic and coordinated approach to risk oversight, aligning project risks with strategic and operational risk considerations at the corporate level. This integration reflects an emerging effort to systematize risk management across the organization. By linking project risks to the ERM framework, the organization is beginning to establish clearer lines of accountability and visibility, which can enhance decision-making and resource allocation. Incorporating the ERM framework into project risks, and further consolidation, escalation and reporting improves visibility for senior management and governance bodies. Risks that were previously confined to project-level documentation are now more likely to be escalated and monitored at the enterprise level, allowing for more timely and informed interventions. This development signals a maturing approach to risk management within the organization. By embedding project risks into the ERM framework, the organization is laying the groundwork for more robust learning, continuous improvement, and resilience in the face of uncertainty.

Implementation/Monitoring

Finding 13: Some Project Documents include detailed monitoring plans, specifying the frequency and scope of monitoring activities. In other cases, the overall monitoring framework is outlined in the Project Documents, and the detailed monitoring plans are developed at the inception of the Implementation phase. The ISGP features an automated monitoring interface that prompts project managers to input monitoring results.

93. The evaluation found that Project Documents include provisions for monitoring activities in approximately 80% of the cases reviewed. In particular, most CDIP regional projects feature detailed monitoring plans that specify the frequency, scope, and responsible party. In other cases, while the overall monitoring framework is outlined in the Project Documents, the development of more detailed monitoring plans is prepared at the inception of the Implementation phase. However, there were cases in which the records of monitoring activities were not available for review.

94. The evaluation noted that the ISGP system features an automated monitoring interface that prompts project managers to input monitoring results at regular intervals. This tool supports real-time data entry and helps standardize reporting practices across projects. It also facilitates the aggregation of monitoring data for organizational analysis and decision-making.

Finding 14: Projects frequently apply an activity-based monitoring approach, with limited integration of results-based indicators, which are core components of Results-Based Management, thereby reducing the effectiveness of progress tracking against expected results or outcomes.

95. The evaluation noted that the majority of the reviewed Project Documents included dedicated sections for the definition of performance indicators at the output level. However, in many cases, these indicators are better characterized as activity-based rather than results-based and do not mostly meet the SMART criteria: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound. As a result, monitoring is typically conducted using an activity-based approach, e.g. number of meetings, trainings and not what they resulted in. This method focuses on tracking the completion of predefined activities or deliverables at specific points in time. In certain cases, particularly for activities such as procurement, an activity-based approach may be more appropriate for monitoring progress due to the nature of the tasks involved. Activity-based monitoring does not provide sufficient insight into whether activities are contributing to intended results or achieving project objectives. Results-based monitoring is preferred over activity-based approaches as it emphasizes the assessment of progress toward desired outcomes and impact, thereby supporting informed decision-making, enhancing accountability, optimizing resource allocation, and improving overall effectiveness. In contrast, activity-based monitoring risks trapping the organization in a cycle of task implementation without adequately evaluating the actual changes and benefits achieved, limiting its strategic value.

96. Monitoring activities are generally aligned with the plans established during the project formation or early implementation phases. However, in practice, they often lack the analytical depth required to assess outcomes and performance unless SMART indicators are explicitly defined. Consequently, they do not effectively guide implementation or support meaningful result-based performance assessment.

The use of SMART indicators strengthens the application of Results-Based Management principles by providing clearly defined and measurable benchmarks for effective implementation. When projects incorporate such indicators, it becomes easier to assess progress toward intended outcomes, identify opportunities for improvement, and demonstrate accountability to stakeholders. The absence of robust performance indicators can also affect the quality of evaluation processes. Projects lacking well-defined results chains and measurable indicators may struggle to generate credible evidence of effectiveness.

97. On a positive note, there are several cases where indicators are defined and applied along with the use of baselines and targets, allowing for more structured and outcome-oriented monitoring, especially in more recently developed projects. These instances reflect a growing shift toward RBM, which emphasizes the measurement of results rather than just activities. The integration of SMART indicators in monitoring frameworks enhances the ability to assess effectiveness, inform decision-making, and promote accountability. This trend suggests that further institutionalization of RBM principles could strengthen monitoring practices across projects.

98. For instance, the evaluation identified some noteworthy practices. Some stakeholders indicated that they developed and used indicators that had not originally been specified in the Project Document to monitor the effectiveness of project objectives. In a case where training activities are implemented to enhance participants' capacity in specific operational areas, a method for measuring the effectiveness of the training was adopted. Metrics are developed to assess participants' knowledge, skills, and attitudes. To measure knowledge, knowledge-based tests are administered at the conclusion of the training sessions. The skills to be acquired are systematically mapped prior to the training. Following the training, supervisors complete surveys to evaluate changes in participants' skills and attitudes. This structured and well-defined follow-up methodology can serve as a reliable indicator for assessing the effectiveness of the training.

99. There are currently inadequate functional mechanisms for identifying and disseminating good practices related to the integration of RBM within the organizational context. Project cycle Management training initiatives should not only present RBM concepts at a high level but also include practical guidance on incorporating RBM components, such as SMART indicators, into an organization-specific context, including guidance on how to develop effective and practical SMART indicators. The use of indicators should be weighed against the cost of developing, collecting, and analyzing them when such cost might exceed their benefits. Once examples of the appropriate use of such indicators are established, they can potentially be adapted for use in other projects with similar content or objectives.

Reporting

Finding 15: Programmatic reporting is generally conducted in accordance with the reporting plans outlined in the Project Documents and donor agreements. However, there is no standardized format applied across projects. For projects funded through voluntary contributions, especially earmarked funds, reporting practices are largely shaped by donor requirements. It remains unclear how project results and budget are reported for accountability purposes when donor-specific reporting is not mandated.

100. The evaluation found that project and programmatic reporting is generally conducted in accordance with the reporting plans outlined in the Project Documents. This is particularly evident in CDI national and regional projects, where reporting timelines are clearly defined and followed throughout the implementation period. It is dominantly activity-based reporting, resulting from the pre-defined monitoring plan, as discussed earlier. The collective information on the achievements of projects is also reported to the Council by relevant committees such as ICAO's Technical Cooperation and Implementation Support Committee as part of Bureaus' or units' activity reports and to the Assembly as well.

101. For projects funded through voluntary contributions, programmatic reporting practices are largely shaped by donor-specific requirements. These requirements often dictate the frequency, format, and content of reports, which may differ from internal organizational standards. While this ensures compliance with donor expectations, it can lead to fragmentation in reporting practices and inefficiencies in collecting data for reporting, which sometimes needs to be compiled manually due to the absence of a corporate project management system. In cases where donor-specific reporting is not mandated, the evaluation observed that internal reporting and documentation practices are less clearly defined, which impacts the accountability for the value-for-money of those projects. It remains unclear how the achievement of expected results is internally captured and communicated, particularly for projects that do not fall under a structured donor reporting framework. This lack of clarity may affect the visibility of project progress within the organization.

102. The absence of standardized reporting formats and unclear internal documentation practices pose challenges for organizational oversight. Without a consistent structure, it becomes difficult to aggregate data, compare performance across projects, and ensure alignment with strategic objectives. This limits the organization's ability to conduct comprehensive reviews and make informed decisions.

103. The variability in reporting formats and documentation practices also affects knowledge management. Inconsistent reporting reduces the potential for institutional learning, as lessons and insights from one project may not be easily transferable or accessible to others. A standardized approach would facilitate better information sharing and support continuous improvement.

Finding 16: In general, financial reporting is properly documented and shared according to the provisions provided in donor agreements and/or Project Documents. However, financial reporting is generally conducted separately from programmatic reporting and does not provide a direct, one-to-one comparison between financial status and the specific activities for which the budget is expended (so-called results-based budgeting and financial reporting).

104. The evaluation found that financial reporting is conducted by provisions outlined in both the Project Documents and other types of donor agreements. These provisions establish the procedural framework for reporting financial data throughout the project cycle.

105. For CDIP regional projects, financial status is typically presented annually to the Steering Committee and shared with stakeholders. This practice ensures that financial performance is reviewed at regular intervals and supports oversight and transparency. In other projects, financial statements are appropriately documented and shared with relevant parties. These reports generally include summaries of expenditures and budget utilization at an aggregate level, contributing to financial accountability and enabling periodic review of resource management. However, financial reporting usually provides a detailed overview of individual transactions, in some cases, too detailed compared to other benchmarked organizations (payee and transaction level).

106. Despite the existence of financial reporting practices in line with provisions of agreements, the evaluation identified a structural limitation. Financial reporting is generally submitted separately from programmatic reporting. This separation results in a lack of integrated analysis that links financial data directly to project activities and outputs (result-based budgeting and financial reporting). The current reporting format does not provide a direct, one-to-one comparison between financial status and the specific activities and results for which the budget is expended. This limits the ability to assess whether financial resources are being used efficiently and in alignment with planned implementation efforts. The separation of financial and programmatic reporting reduces the effectiveness of performance monitoring. Without integrated reporting, it is difficult to evaluate cost-effectiveness, identify financial risks, or make informed decisions about resource reallocation and identify any operational redundancy. This gap also limits the organization's ability to apply Results-Based Management principles. Strengthening the linkage between financial data and implementation activities would improve transparency, support more informed decision-making, and enhance overall accountability.

107. It is worth noting that, in instances where work plans explicitly articulated the linkage between planned activities and corresponding budgets, this alignment was consistently reflected in reporting practices, demonstrating actual expenditures and implemented activities in relation to the planned budgets and activities.

108. The evaluation noted that in some cases, the funding partners might request non-standard financial reports and other requirements which might contradict the single audit principle. Additionally, such non-standard reporting requires additional time and resources to generate them, as the data are not always available in the requested format. If the organization develops result-focused financial reporting, the funding partners might accept it without additional requirements.

Evaluation and Closure

Finding 17: Project evaluations are not commonly planned or conducted across almost all projects. While formal evaluation is not generally conducted, some good practices exist for post-implementation reflection on operational effectiveness, such as identifying good practices and lessons learned.

109. The ICAO Evaluation Policy was adopted by the Council in 2021 and provides the framework for planning and conducting evaluations and the use of evaluations in ICAO. The policy states that decentralized evaluations are commissioned and conducted as per ICAO's guidelines for decentralized evaluations. The evaluation found, however, that decentralized project evaluations are not planned, budgeted, or conducted across most projects.

110. Even though decentralized project evaluations are not conducted, and lessons from evaluations are not used to improve future projects, ICAO is using other methods to incorporate lessons from past projects. These include follow-up surveys with relevant stakeholders and the identification and documentation of implementation challenges. Such practices contribute to post-implementation reflection and provide useful insights into operational effectiveness.

111. The evaluation also found that some of the projects document lessons learned, most notably in multi-phased regional programmes where lessons learned from previous phases are incorporated into subsequent Programme Documents. However, the identification of lessons learned is not systematically embedded in project processes. Additionally, there is no consistent mechanism in place for capturing, validating, and disseminating these insights across the organization. This limits the potential for institutional learning and improvement. Despite the available policy, the absence of structured decentralized evaluations and weak integration of lessons learned into project management processes pose challenges for monitoring and learning. Without systematic evaluation and knowledge sharing, the organization misses opportunities to replicate successful practices or avoid recurring challenges.

Finding 18: The procedures for operational, financial, and legal closure have been clearly established in the CDIP manual. However, in many instances, projects establish only minimal phase-out/exit strategies, often without adequate sustainability planning.

112. The evaluation found that CDIP projects have clearly established procedures for operational, financial, and legal closure in the CDIP manual. These procedures provide a comprehensive framework for formally concluding projects, ensuring that operational, financial, and legal obligations are fulfilled in a structured and accountable manner. However, these procedures focus primarily on compliance and finalization rather than on strategic transition or sustainability planning.

113. While these procedures support a clear operational conclusion, they do not necessarily address broader exit strategy considerations such as sustainability or capacity transfer. Unlike closure procedures, exit strategies are intended to guide the strategic conclusion of a project, including the transition of responsibilities and sustainability of results. The absence of such strategies can lead to uncertainty and missed opportunities for ensuring long-term impact. Almost all of the Project Documents and other agreements reviewed contain minimal exit strategies, such as handover provisions detailing the transfer of goods or services to recipient entities.

114. The evaluation found that, in some cases, activities aimed at ensuring the sustainability of project results are embedded within project designs, even when there are no clearly defined or independent provisions for sustainability in the Project Documents. For instance, projects that involve procurement of equipment provide training of personnel on its application for sustainable use. This indicates that while sustainability measures do exist, they are often not explicitly recognized or framed as such during the planning phase. Introducing a dedicated section on sustainability within the standard Project Document template would help raise awareness among project formulators, promote systematic planning for sustainability, and contribute to a more consistent and efficient workflow across the project portfolio.

Cross-Cutting Topics

Finding 19: The evaluation identified a consistent gap across most reviewed projects in the mainstreaming of cross-cutting issues of gender, disability and environment during the formulation phase, hence resulting in their limited consideration throughout subsequent phases.

115. The benchmarking among UN organizations showed that several of them have Environmental and Social Safeguards (ESS),[4] which provide for the mainstreaming of environmental sustainability, social and gender protection elements in all their interventions. These are standard requirements for several donors, including International Financial Institutions. ICAO's project cycle provisions do not include mainstreaming of ESS. The absent mainstreaming of gender, disability and environment suggests a systemic weakness in ensuring that these foundational programmatic principles are embedded from the outset of project design. The process for mainstreaming these cross-cutting themes into the management of aviation-related projects remains to be developed at the organizational level and should be part of the Project Cycle framework.

[4] Safeguards policies are essential tools to prevent and mitigate undue harm to people and their environment in the development process. When identifying and designing a project, safeguards should help assess the possible environmental and social risks and the impacts (positive or negative) associated with a development intervention. During project implementation, safeguards should help define measures and processes to effectively manage risks and enhance positive impacts. The process of applying safeguard policies can be an important opportunity for stakeholder engagement, enhancing the quality of project proposals and increasing ownership. [redacted]

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

116. Conclusion 1: Although some Bureaus have internal guidelines, the organisation lacks a unified framework for project cycle management, consistent definitions, and a centralized project information repository. This leads to fragmented practices, inconsistent project categorisation, and weak oversight of project management standards, undermining evidence-based decision-making, transparency, accountability, and organisational learning. (Linked to Findings 1, 2 and 3)

117. Conclusion 2: Although some governance bodies exist, ICAO lacks a designated centralized function for governance, oversight, or coordination of project cycle management across the organization. As a result, project management capacity-building and guidance to Bureaus and Regional Offices were very limited and fragmented. (Linked to All Findings)

118. Conclusion 3: Although the existing guidelines cover the Identification, Formulation, and Appraisal/Approval phases of project cycle management, certain aspects of these procedures remain insufficiently streamlined or lack formal documentation. As a result, they are inconsistently applied, and there is no standardized mechanism to ensure comprehensive appraisals from legal, financial, technical, and operational perspectives. (Linked to Findings 6, 7 and 10)

119. Conclusion 4: While CDIP and ISGP project documents generally include key elements for implementation, they often lack standardized components such as Logical Frameworks or Results and Resources Frameworks, which are essential tools for results-based monitoring and management. The absence of a corporate-level template leads to inconsistencies in document completeness and structure. (Linked to Finding 8)

120. Conclusion 5: Work plans consistently include timelines that support planning and progress tracking. However, the lack of complete budgetary information and RBB limits financial analysis, cost-effectiveness assessment, and alignment of expenditures with planned activities, hindering comprehensive monitoring and evaluation. (Linked to Findings 9 and 16)

121. Conclusion 6: Project-specific risk management is generally satisfactory, with risks often identified using matrices in Project Documents. The integration of project risks into the Enterprise Risk Management framework enhances corporate-level oversight. However, ongoing risk monitoring remains limited. (Linked to Findings 11 and 12)

122. Conclusion 7: Many project documents include detailed monitoring plans. However, monitoring remains largely activity-based, with limited use of results-based indicators—reducing effectiveness in tracking progress against expected outcomes. (Linked to Findings 13 and 14)

123. Conclusion 8: Financial and programmatic reporting is generally well-documented and aligned with donor agreements and project documents. However, the absence of organization-wide standardized formats and integration between financial and programmatic reporting limits accountability and results-based analysis. (Linked to Findings 15 and 16)

124. Conclusion 9: Decentralized evaluations are rarely conducted, even for large capacity-building projects, despite ICAO's Evaluation Policy and Guidelines. While post-implementation reflections and

stakeholders' surveys help capture lessons and good practices, the lack of formal evaluations limits systematic learning and accountability. (Linked to Findings 17 and 18)

125. Conclusion 10: Cross-cutting issues such as gender, disability, and environment are not systematically integrated during project formulation, resulting in limited consideration throughout the project cycle. The absence of a formal process for mainstreaming these themes into ICAO's project management framework hinders inclusive and sustainable project outcomes. (Linked to Finding 19)

Recommendations

126. Recommendation 1: Secretariat should designate a centralized function or unit for governance, oversight, and coordination of project cycle management (PC) across the organization with clear roles and responsibilities.

Priority	Time Implication	Resource Implication
High	June 2026	High

Closing criteria

- A centralized function or unit assigned for governance, oversight, and coordination of project cycle management across the organization with roles and responsibilities clearly defined and communicated across relevant units.

127. Recommendation 2: Building on the existing manuals and frameworks, the Secretariat should establish a unified project cycle management framework, with operational manuals and tools for each phase, aligned with results-based management, and ICAO cost recovery policy initiatives including budgeting, logical frameworks, risk management, result-focused monitoring, reporting and project evaluation, to enhance coherence, accountability, and alignment with corporate priorities. The manuals should explain how to integrate cross-cutting issues (e.g., gender, disability, environment) and align with the existing systems, policies, and guidelines, such as CPMR, the Evaluation Policy, and Decentralized Evaluation Guidelines, as applicable.

Priority	Time Implication	Resource Implication
High	December 2026	Medium

Closing criteria

- Development of a unified framework and accompanying manuals on the Project Cycle, which includes clear workflows and processes for each phase of the Project Cycle.

128. Recommendation 3: Building on the existing systems that are available with CDI and ISGP, the Secretariat should develop and use a centralized, user-friendly digital system that consolidates all project management documentation and data, enabling effective monitoring and organization-wide compliance with the ICAO Project Cycle.

Priority	Time Implication	Resource Implication
High	December 2026	Medium

Closing criteria

- A centralized digital repository.

129. Recommendation 4: The Secretariat should build the capacity of personnel involved in project formulation, implementation, monitoring and reporting in line with the unified project cycle management framework and the operational manuals to ensure effective application of project cycle management practices.

Priority	Time Implication	Resource Implication
High	June 2027	Medium

Closing criteria

- Targeted training programme on project cycle management, tailored to the organizational context.

130. Recommendation 5: The Secretariat should design and implement a mechanism to ensure that project budgets consistently include costed provisions for technical backstopping, overhead, and indirect costs—such as shared support services and management time—so that all contributing units, including technical, administrative, and evaluation functions, are adequately resourced and recognized for their roles in project delivery.

Priority	Time Implication	Resource Implication
Medium	December 2027	Medium

Closing criteria

- Mechanism in place to ensure that project budgets consistently include costed provisions for technical backstopping, overhead, and indirect costs.

ANNEX 1: MANAGEMENT ACTION PLAN

Ref	Recommendation	Priority Rating	Accepted (Y/N)	Management Comments	Agreed Actions	Office/ Section Responsible	Target Date
1.	Secretariat should designate a centralized function or unit for governance, oversight, and coordination of project cycle management across the organization with clear roles and responsibilities.	High	Y	A centralized function for project cycle management exists for Capacity Development and Implementation Programme (CDIP) projects. A new Strategic Portfolio Management Office (SPMO) has been established for all other ICAO projects. A possible future centralized function should account for the different types of projects, including those governed by Management Service Agreements.	Recognizing the different types of projects in the organization, this action will be taken in phases as follows: 1. Centralise the function for governance, oversight, and coordination of project cycle management for all projects across the organization, other than those in the CDIP, with clear roles and responsibilities. 2. Conduct a comprehensive review of all project types within ICAO, including those under Management Service Agreements, to identify governance and coordination requirements which may be required in addition to existing ones. 3. Develop a structure for a centralized PC management function that clearly defines roles, responsibilities, and processes, ensuring flexibility to accommodate different types of projects leveraging on SPMO policies and procedures where applicable.	SPMO and CDI	30 June 2026 31 December 2026 30 June 2027
2.	Building on the existing manuals and frameworks, the Secretariat should establish a unified project cycle management framework, with operational manuals and tools for each phase, aligned with results-based management, including budgeting, logical frameworks, risk management, result-focused monitoring, reporting	High	Y	This recommendation is closely linked to designating a centralized function for governance, oversight, and coordination of PC across the organization. To be effective, in establishing a unified project cycle management framework, it must take into account the diverse types of	SPMO and CDI to evolve the PPM tools and guidance, catering to all type of projects, as required.	SPMO and CDI	31 December 2026

Ref	Recommendation	Priority Rating	Accepted (Y/N)	Management Comments	Agreed Actions	Office/ Section Responsible	Target Date
	and project evaluation, to enhance coherence, accountability, and alignment with corporate priorities. The manuals should explain how to integrate cross-cutting issues (e.g., gender, disability, environment) and align with the existing systems, policies, and guidelines, such as CPMR, the Evaluation Policy, and Decentralized Evaluation Guidelines, as applicable.			projects within ICAO, including those governed by Management Service Agreements and other specialized arrangements. By aligning the centralized function with the unified framework and ensuring flexibility for different project categories, ICAO can enhance coherence, accountability, and operational effectiveness across all projects. The SPMO provides a Portfolio Project Management (PPM) function and includes the development and approval of PPM governance, tools and guidelines. SPMO will progressively evolve the tools and guidance, including if and when the CDIP projects are integrated.			
3.	Building on the existing systems that are available with CDI and ISGP, the Secretariat should develop and use a centralized, user-friendly digital system that consolidates all project management documentation and data, enabling effective monitoring and organization-wide compliance with the ICAO Project Cycle.	High	Y	CDI for its projects has implemented a PPM system, which is planned to be evolved to expand its use to the SPMO to provide a single institutional PPM solution. Any centralized system for project management documentation must be informed by the comprehensive review of all project types within ICAO, as a result of the actions associated with recommendation 1, to ensure it addresses the specific governance and coordination needs identified. Additionally, the system should incorporate safeguards to respect the confidentiality	Design a centralized system based on the comprehensive review of existing tools and all project types within ICAO, as outlined in Recommendation 1, to ensure it addresses the specific governance and coordination needs identified. This action is subject to the availability of the required resources.	CDI and SPMO	30 June 2027

Ref	Recommendation	Priority Rating	Accepted (Y/N)	Management Comments	Agreed Actions	Office/ Section Responsible	Target Date
				requirements associated with Management Service Agreements and other specialized arrangements.			
4.	The Secretariat should build the capacity of personnel involved in project formulation, implementation, monitoring and reporting in line with the unified project cycle management framework and the operational manuals to ensure effective application of project cycle management practices.	High	Y	ICAO currently provides Project Management certification for project managers involved in the CDIP. Only generic Project Management training is provided to all other personnel. Training needs to be enhanced, including customization for ICAO and the SPMO.	Establish and begin implementing a targeted training programme on project cycle management, tailored to the comprehensive review of all project types within ICAO. This action is subject to the availability of the required resources.	SPMO supported by CDI and ADB/HR/POD	31 December 2026
5.	The Secretariat should design and implement a mechanism to ensure that project budgets consistently include costed provisions for technical backstopping, overhead, and indirect costs—such as shared support services and management time—so that all contributing units, including technical, administrative, and evaluation functions, are adequately resourced and recognized for their roles in project delivery.	Medium	Y	The cost-recovery policy implementation is in progress.	1. Establish a mechanism to ensure that project budgets consistently include costed provisions for technical backstopping, overhead, and indirect costs, taking into consideration the comprehensive review of all project types within ICAO. 2. Implement the cost-recovery policy. This action is subject to the availability of the required resources.	SPMO and CDI FIN	31 December 2027