



**MINISTRY OF FINANCE AND
ECONOMIC MANAGEMENT**
GOVERNMENT OF THE COOK ISLANDS

**COUNSELLING AND ADVICE
PRACTICES**

1. INTRODUCTION

This document describes the practices that will be used by the Ministry of Economic Finance and Economic Management (MFEM), to assess the need of project and program beneficiaries for counselling and advice, in order to implement the required support activities related to a Grant Award. It has been developed as part of strengthening the MFEM capabilities, in the management of funds administered by the MFEM, across different climate financing mechanisms, and other development partners.

2. SCOPE OF APPLICATION

These practices have been developed in the framework of setting up a counselling and advice mechanism for the MFEM. This document will be used as the main reference in the review of project projects and programs funded via the MFEM, and the identification of support, counselling and advice needs of its beneficiaries and partners.

The MFEM shall use these practices, in the execution of its duties as a National Implementing Entity or Accreditation Entity, of climate funds (Adaptation Funds or Green Climate Funds), as well as in the management of funds received from other funds/financial partners.

3. CONTENT

3.1. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES (WHO)

Each Program Development Manager shall be in charge of coordinating the counselling and advice activities, needed to ensure the achievement of the project objectives and results. This includes the mobilisation of the expertise required, to conduct the assessment, identification and implementation of support activities. Expertise to be mobilised may include:

- The project implementation unit and technical expertise
- The Director of the National Environment Services
- The MFEM financial management team
- External consultants recruited to conduct specific tasks.

3.2 INTERVENTION TIMELINE (WHEN AND HOW)

Counselling and advice activities shall be conducted in parallel with the project interventions and constitute an integral part of the project implementation cycle.

Identification and implementation of the advice and support activities, will be triggered either during project preparation phase, during project supervision, or when receiving a specific request from the project beneficiaries or implementing agency.

PROJECT PREPARATION PHASE

The MFEM advice and support activities addressed to the implementing agencies, shall be initiated at the project preparation phase (concept stage). The MFEM (in particular the Development Project Manager), shall be responsible to provide the needed support and advice, in order that the implementing agency may fulfil the requirements of being a Grant Award Recipient.

PROJECT SUPERVISION

Where launching meeting/workshops are required, the MFEM shall review the needs of the implementing entity related to the elaboration and validation of a project implementation or other relevant documents, as well as the definition of the Project Management Unit and related tasks.

The development program manager, shall provide the appropriate clarifications and advice required for the achievement of launching the meeting/workshop objectives. The MFEM Project Manager, will agree with the implementing agency on the capacity training needs or other needs of the implementing agency.

The launching meeting/workshops report shall clearly indicate the support activities provided during the meeting and the planning for the specific advice or training to be conducted.

REGULAR SUPERVISION OR ACTIVITIES REPORTING

Depending on the project specificities and scope, the Development Program Manager, shall plan, in advance the frequency and scope of its supervision (including on-site visits), and activities reporting. The evaluation criteria must be covered in the activities reporting.

These processes allow the MFEM to track the progress towards the achievement of the project objectives and assist the implementing agency in improving project implementation. Monitoring and reporting will allow the identification of weaknesses related to project management and collect needs for implementing agency support and capacity building. The MFEM shall then propose a Plan to conduct support activities, based on the input of the Development Program Manager.

MID TERM REVIEW

The MFEM shall contract an external evaluator or evaluation team to review both the technical and financial, and administrative elements of the project. The mid-term review, shall provide the Project Management Unit of the project the sufficient information to make an informed decision about the project.

Upon receiving the mid-term review, the MFEM, shall review the findings and work with the implementing agency to make the relevant changes.

CLOSEOUT REVIEW

After the implementation of project activities, the MFEM shall contract an external evaluator or evaluation team, to conduct the final evaluation of the project. The evaluation shall cover the technical and financial elements of the project. The close-out evaluation must provide a comprehensive and systematic account of the performance of the completed project by assessing the design phase, process of implementation, achievement of objectives and expected results, including any changes in the project implementation.

The MFEM shall review the outcomes of the closeout evaluation report to document, both the best practices, lessons learned and weaknesses related to the project management and implementation that will be used to strengthen the counselling and advice practices of the MFEM.

RESPONSES TO THE SPECIFIC REQUEST FROM THE IMPLEMENTING ENTITIES

In addition to the implementation of the support activities identified during the various monitoring stages of the project, the MFEM (via the Development Program Manager) shall also process the specific request for support submitted by the implementing agency, during project implementation.

To this end, the MFEM will shall make all the necessary arrangements to ensure that implementing entities have the continuous access to support and advice resources and are able to submit requests at any time, as the need arises, and that these are addressed through the relevant avenues.