

# Evaluation of the Global Fund Funding Request and Grant-making Stages of the Funding Cycle

18 March 2028

*This document contains the original text for the Terms of Reference of this evaluation as approved by the Independent Evaluation Panel (IEP). The document has been reformatted so it may be published to the Global Fund website.*

# Terms of Reference (ToR)

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# 1. Introduction

1. The Global Fund is commissioning an independent evaluation to assess the first two stages of the Global Fund grant lifecycle: the funding request and grant making process for the 2023-2025 Funding Cycle – Grant Cycle 7 (GC7). The evaluation will be managed by the Evaluation and Learning Office (ELO) of the Global Fund under the oversight of the Global Fund Independent Evaluation Panel (IEP). The findings and recommendations from this evaluation will inform preparations of Grant Cycle 8 (GC8) with the objective of making improvements to these critical stages of the grant lifecycle to enhance delivery of the Global Fund Strategy.

## 2. Background

2. The Global Fund is a worldwide partnership to defeat HIV, TB and malaria and ensure a healthier, safer, more equitable future for all. The Global Fund raises and invests more than US\$5 billion a year to fight the deadliest infectious diseases, challenge the injustice that fuels them, and strengthen health systems and pandemic preparedness in more than 100 of the hardest hit countries. Since 2002, the Global Fund partnership has saved 59 million lives.
3. Every three years the Global Fund undertakes a replenishment of resources to deliver its Strategy, and eligible countries who receive an allocation, are invited to develop a funding request based upon their national strategies and the latest scientific evidence and technical partner guidance. This critical first stage of the Global Fund grant lifecycle is designed to ensure Global Fund investments are aligned with the Global Fund Strategy, used/continue to be used to accelerate progress toward ambitious national and global goals and programmed in close coordination with domestic and other donor resources.
4. Following the recommendation of a funding request by an independent Technical Review Panel (TRP), the stage of grant-making follows which is the process of translating a funding request into one or more grants. The goal of grant-making is to negotiate the grant details (including detailed budgets, workplans and performance frameworks), to ensure grants are disbursement-ready by the time they are submitted for review and approval and that activities can begin on the first day of the implementation period.
5. Both the Funding Request and Grant-making process are broken down by a series of process steps and expected deliverables. These steps include mechanisms and tools (often referred to as "levers") used by the Global Fund to drive and shape investments and progress in key areas of the Strategy.
6. A summary of the Funding Request and Grant-making process is described in the annex. A detailed description of the Funding Request and Grant-making process steps and key deliverables can be found [here](#) in the Operational Policy Manual<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> The Applicant Handbook can be found on the Global Fund website [here](#)

7. For each new grant cycle, preparations for rolling out the Funding Request and Grant-making process begin early with efforts to adapt and improve for each new cycle. Each cycle is also informed by learning from evaluations, audits and other feedback surveys that have been conducted during the previous cycle. The Funding Request and Grant-making process represents an intensive period for the Global Fund Secretariat and country level stakeholders, including Country Coordinating Mechanism stakeholders, civil society actors, and development and technical partners, and requires extensive stakeholder engagement throughout the process. It is also conducted at the same time as ongoing grant implementation from the previous grant cycle.
8. The GC7 Cycle commenced with the start of the Global Fund 2023-2028 Strategy 'Fighting Pandemics and Building a Healthier and More Equitable World'<sup>2</sup>. Whilst the Global Fund allocation-based funding model remained largely unchanged for the GC7 Funding Cycle, efforts to improve the process, as well as refinements to drive and strengthen focus areas of the new Strategy were reflected throughout the Funding Request and Grant-making process. This included updates to Global Fund application materials, including application forms, required annexes, information notes, and other applicant guidance documents.
9. Recognizing the criticality of the first two stages of the grant life-cycle, an independent evaluation on the Funding Request and Grant-making process was included in the Board approved Multi-year Evaluation Calendar embedded as part of the M&E Framework for the 2023-2028 Strategy.
10. Conducting an evaluation close to when these processes are ending<sup>3</sup> was considered paramount for capturing learning as close to real-time as possible as well as ensuring that findings and recommendations will be ready in time to contribute to preparations for GC8 (which will begin in mid-2024).

### 3. Purpose and Objectives

11. The overall purpose of the evaluation is to assess the design, operationalization and implementation of the GC7 Funding Request and Grant-making process and the degree to which this led to the finalization of quality grants aligned with the 2023-2028 Global Fund Strategy.
12. Evidence generated by this evaluation is expected to support identification of strengths and weaknesses in the Funding Request and Grant-making process and generate organizational level learning to improve this process for GC8.
13. The main users of the evaluation findings and recommendations will be the Global Fund Secretariat teams that design the different processes. In addition, Governance Bodies and Technical Partners are key audiences for this evaluation as implications of the recommendations may go beyond Secretariat accountability and require different ways of working across the Global Fund partnership during this stage of the life-cycle. Lessons

<sup>2</sup>The current Global Fund Strategy can be found here <https://www.theglobalfund.org/en/strategy/>

<sup>3</sup> At the end of 2023 approximately 70 per cent of the total GC7 allocation is expected to be signed into grants.

learned and good practices emanating from the evaluation findings may also apply to Country level stakeholders.

14. The evaluation will focus on how various steps, sub-processes and levers applied for GC7, individually and collectively may have supported the translation of the Global Fund Strategy into action at country level and will identify successes and challenges. It is important to emphasize that the implementation of grants and their outcomes or impact is not within scope of this evaluation.
15. To meet the purpose of the evaluation, two objectives will guide the evaluation process:
  1. Effectiveness: Does the GC7 Funding Request and Grant-Making processes (occurring in different epidemiological, political and economic context) lead to quality grants that are aligned with the national priorities and support the delivery of the Global Fund Strategy?
  2. Efficiency: To what extent are the procedures of the GC7 Funding Request and Grant-making process fit for purpose and achieve their intended or intended objectives? What are the opportunities for improvement, rationalization and simplification in the process?
16. Key themes and evaluation questions, aligned to the evaluation objectives that have emerged as key areas of focus during the scoping phase for this evaluation are outlined in the table below. These themes represent an initial mix of sub-processes and levers within the overall Funding Request and Grant-Making process. The degree to which it would add value to look at other sub-processes and levers as part of this evaluation should be assessed as part of the inception phase.
17. Final evaluation questions will also be informed and guided by observations from the Technical Review Panel (TRP) reports, findings from recent Global Fund evaluations including the review of the previous Strategy (SR2023), the evaluation of the Global Fund Allocation Methodology, previous reports by the Technical Evaluation Reference Group and relevant audit/advisory reports from the Office of the Inspector General (OIG).

## 4. Themes and Questions

18. Potential evaluation themes and evaluation questions have been identified in the table below, they are not exhaustive and during the inception phase the questions will be refined if necessary and finalized as part of the inception report. There are also a series of cross-cutting issues to be considered within each theme. These are included after the following table.

Theme	Evaluation Questions
Differentiated Application Approaches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Is the Funding Request and Grant-Making process sufficiently differentiated to accommodate diverse</li></ul>

	<p>portfolios and support continuation of programs from one cycle to the next?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How has the differentiation been utilized and has it led to the intended streamlined and simplified procedures?</li> </ul>
Technical Assistance (TA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To what extent does the modality and the role of TA, effectively contribute to the development of high-quality and country context-specific funding request ensuring country ownership and serving the intended purpose?</li> </ul>
Country Dialogue and Prioritization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How effective is the Country Dialogue process in ensuring its objectives of transparency and inclusivity; country ownership; alignment with programmatic gaps; national prioritization; confirming the program split and introduce innovation?</li> <li>• Were Country Coordinating Mechanisms (CCMs) and Regional Coordinating Mechanisms (RCMs) able to facilitate and ensure meaningful participation of specific constituencies, including civil society<sup>4</sup>; communities of key and vulnerable populations; gender and human rights advocates, health planning and systems specialists; and private sector?</li> <li>• To what extent have the NSPs influenced the strategic positioning and prioritization for the Funding Requests?</li> <li>• How have new “levers” designed for GC7 such as for example, the new Global Fund Program Essentials, Gender Equality Marker and new FR annexes (RSSH gap analysis, Civil Society priorities, etc.) perform in facilitating stronger funding requests</li> </ul>
Review bodies: Technical Review Panel (TRP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To what extent have the TRP reviews and recommendations supported and enabled strategic focusing of grants, especially with regard to assuring technical soundness, prioritization and potential for impact? How is this balanced with other priorities such as fiduciary risk management?</li> </ul>

<sup>4</sup> “Civil society” is the term the Global Fund uses to designate all those stakeholders who are neither government bodies nor private sector enterprises – groups such as international and national nongovernmental organizations, advocacy groups, faith-based organizations, networks of people living with the diseases. For more information see <https://www.theglobalfund.org/en/civil-society/>

Grants Approval Committee (GAC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To what extent does the GAC review process, including engagement with Partners, operate effectively for final determination that grants are designed for maximum impact as well as implementation readiness?</li> </ul>
Grant Negotiation (during Grant-Making)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To what extent were country stakeholders and key partners during Grant Negotiations able to perform their roles and responsibilities?</li> <li>To what extent does this stage facilitate the transparent development of final implementation ready grants? What are the enabling and/or hindering factors?</li> <li>To what degree is there consistency between the recommended funding request by TRP and the final content of the approved grant?</li> </ul>
Materials, resources and tools including new guidance for GC7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To what extent are the guidance materials from the Secretariat (Allocation Letter, Information Notes, Technical Briefs, Applicant Handbooks, e-learning, webinars, etc.) user-friendly and accessible?</li> <li>Do they provide the necessary support and steer to intended audiences?</li> </ul>

## 19. Cross Cutting Issues

Across all these themes in the table above it will be important to consider issues that are relevant to different extents. Issues include (but not limited to) the following:

- Are processes working more or less effectively depending on the particular disease or RSSH focus?
- How do processes facilitate or hinder coherence and long-term planning at national level?
- How do processes facilitate decisions to be guided by value for money considerations?
- How the “power dynamics” and relationships between the key stakeholders, incl. CT, CCM and PR at different stages of the process may have affected the process (positively and negatively). What is the complementarity between sub-processes, is time and effort well balanced across each?
- How did the design and modifications to the processes in GC7 respond and build on lessons from previous reviews and evaluations?

## 5. Methodological Considerations

20. The degree to which it would add value to look in detail at the different steps, sub-process and levers within the Funding Request and Grant-making process, will be further assessed as part of the inception phase and detailed in the inception report.
21. During the inception phase the evaluators will be expected to consult with the Secretariat on a sample of country stakeholders and conduct a desk review of critical documents, reports and evaluations to identify the critical areas for which to focus evaluation questions as they move into the data collection and analysis stage.
22. The evaluation design is expected to adopt a mixed-methods approach combining qualitative and quantitative methods. It is expected that the following will be considered:
  - Soliciting the views of multiple stakeholders (balance will depend on selected themes):
    - Process users/clients – Country stakeholders including CCMs, community and civil society representatives and PRs. Also, Global Fund country teams
    - Process owners/stewards in the Global Fund Secretariat (Access to Funding (A2F), Grants Management Division (GMD)) as well as relevant Secretariat teams.
    - Members of review panels/committees (TRP, GAC, Board)
    - Technical assistance providers including consultants.
  - Assessing a sample of Funding Requests and approved and signed GC7 grants for quality and alignment with the GF Strategy (sampling approach and size of sample will be determined during the inception phase).
  - Extensive desk review of related funding request and grant making guidance and application materials as well as other documents including TRP review and recommendations reports, relevant past evaluations, and OIG reports.
  - Analyzing available process/performance metrics related to GC7.
  - By the end of 2023 over 130 Funding Requests have been recommended for grant making translating to a large number of grants. Evaluators will be expected to design a methodology that will be able to assess different types of grants. Based on this it is anticipated that consultations with stakeholders will be conducted virtually. Data will be triangulated to ensure robust and comprehensive evaluation findings and recommendations. The specific data collection and analysis tools will be confirmed during the inception phase of the evaluation.

## 6. Evaluation Phases

23. The Evaluation is expected to be conducted over 6-7 months and is divided into 3 broad phases:



#### a. Inception Phase/ 4-6 weeks

Following the contracting of the service provider to undertake this evaluation (which is anticipated in end of February), ELO will provide the service provider with key background documents including any relevant evaluations and audits some of which are indicated in Annex 2 of this TOR.

In the first few weeks of this phase, the Evaluation Team Lead and several members of the evaluation team will receive a virtual comprehensive onboarding to the Global Fund Funding Request and Grant Making Process. During this time the evaluation team will consult with key Secretariat staff as well as a limited number of country stakeholders. The evaluators will also be introduced to members of the IEP. If feasible, the Team lead might travel to Geneva during this time.

Following the orientation, the service provider will refine and adapt their initial technical proposal to finalize the evaluation design, modify evaluation questions if needed, outline the methodology in an evaluation framework against the evaluation objectives and questions, and define the data and information needs. The Service provider will submit an inception report guided by an inception report template provided by ELO. ELO will facilitate access to requested Global Fund data and information.

#### b. Data Collection and Analysis Phase/ 10-12 weeks

Evaluators proceed with the independent collection and analysis of data and information as described in the Inception Report. Regular (likely weekly) meetings will be held between the Evaluation Team Lead and ELO.

In addition, this phase will include learning and validation touchpoints between evaluators and key stakeholders to review and discuss preliminary findings.

#### c. Reporting Phase/ 4-6 weeks

Evaluators will submit a draft report at the start of this phase and a workshop/meeting will be organized by ELO (co-chaired by ELO and IEP) for the evaluators to discuss the final findings and evaluation recommendations with key stakeholders during a workshop. It is expected that the Evaluation Team Lead and some members will come to the Global Fund Secretariat to participate in person in this event.

## 7. Expected Deliverables and Approximate Timeline<sup>5</sup>

Deliverable	Due Date
Final Inception Report	Early March 2024

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<sup>5</sup> It is expected that the full evaluation team will be available at the start of the contract

Preliminary Findings Meeting (Presentation)	End-May 2024
Draft Final Evaluation Report	End -June 2024
Final Evaluation Report	Early August 2024

## 8. Skills and Experience Required from the Evaluation Consultants

24. The evaluation team will comprise a mix of experts with a balance of relevant expertise and knowledge in the following areas. In the technical proposal the evaluation team description should also include level of effort allocated to each team member.

Essential:

- Advanced knowledge of and experience with complex public health organizations and programs.
- Experience in evaluation/assessment/advisory on organizational change, quality management and process design and implementation
- Extensive experience with appropriate evaluation design and methods, both quantitative and qualitative including relevant research analysis skills, handling large data sets and triangulating and synthesizing diverse information.
- In-country experience of public health programs (design and /or evaluation) and multi-stakeholder country processes
- Appropriate, responsive and timely administrative support to the evaluation process.

Highly desirable:

- Familiarity with the Global Fund at Secretariat level and with grant design and implementation at country level.
- Full language proficiency in English and French. Other language proficiency in the team.

## 9. Annexes

### **Annex A: What is the Funding Request and Grant-making Process<sup>6</sup>?**

25. The Global Fund allocates funding to countries to support HIV, TB and malaria programs and to build resilient and sustainable systems for health. These allocations are made every three years at the beginning of a new allocation period. The Global Fund requires governments, civil society, people affected by the diseases, technical partners, the private sector and other partners to come together to decide how to best use the funding to meet the needs of people and communities. This is usually done through inclusive consultations called 'country dialogues'. Country dialogues are organized by Country Coordinating Mechanisms (CCMs) or by Regional Coordinating Mechanisms (RCMs) in the case of a multi-country program. Using the outcomes of the country dialogue and a nationally-developed plan for combating one of the diseases, such as a National Strategic Plan, a CCM will then develop a funding request. The funding request outlines the plan that explains how the applicant would use Global Fund allocated funds if approved.
26. CCMs submit their funding requests for review by the Global Fund's Technical Review Panel (TRP), a group of independent experts, to make sure that the proposed programs are aligned with the latest technical guidance and will help eliminate the three diseases as public health threats. As a part of their review, the panel may make recommendations for improvement. Once recommended by the TRP, the funding request is turned into one or more grants through a process called grant-making.
27. The CCM and the Global Fund work to prepare the grant with a Principal Recipient (PR), the partner who was nominated to implement the grant. The grant-making process sets out how and when activities will be implemented and evaluated. The Grant Approvals Committee (GAC) - which is made up of senior management at the Global Fund and representatives of technical, bilateral and multilateral partners, as well as civil society - reviews the final version of the grant.
28. Once the grants are implementation ready the GAC recommends them to the Board of the Global Fund for approval. Following Board approval, the first grant disbursement is made.

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<sup>6</sup>Taken from: [https://www.theglobalfund.org/media/4755/fundingmodel\\_applicanthandbook\\_guide\\_en.pdf](https://www.theglobalfund.org/media/4755/fundingmodel_applicanthandbook_guide_en.pdf)

## Annex B: Preliminary list of relevant previous evaluations and audits

1. Evolving the Technical Review Panel, Advisory Review, Office of the Inspector General, November 2021 [https://www.theglobalfund.org/media/11474/oig\\_gf-oig-21-014\\_report\\_en.pdf](https://www.theglobalfund.org/media/11474/oig_gf-oig-21-014_report_en.pdf)
2. Global Fund Strategy Review 2023<sup>7</sup>
3. Evaluation of the Global Fund Allocation methodology<sup>8</sup>
4. Global Fund Prospective Country Evaluation 2018 Synthesis Report: [https://archive.theglobalfund.org/media/11084/archive\\_terg-2018-pce-synthesis\\_report\\_en.pdf](https://archive.theglobalfund.org/media/11084/archive_terg-2018-pce-synthesis_report_en.pdf)
5. Global Fund Prospective Country Evaluation 2018 Synthesis Report: [https://archive.theglobalfund.org/media/11081/archive\\_terg-2021-pce-synthesis\\_report\\_en.pdf](https://archive.theglobalfund.org/media/11081/archive_terg-2021-pce-synthesis_report_en.pdf)
6. Global Fund Office of Inspector General Strategy 2023 – 2028 Implementation Readiness Report<sup>9</sup>
7. Evaluation of the operationalization of Gavi's strategy through Gavi's policies, programmatic guidance, and use of funding levers: <https://www.gavi.org/sites/default/files/programmes-impact/evaluations/Evaluation-operationalisationFinal-report.pdf>

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<sup>7</sup> Evaluation still in progress. To be provided to evaluators during the inception phase

<sup>8</sup> Evaluation still in progress. To be provided to evaluators during the inception phase

<sup>9</sup> To be provided during the inception phase