Evaluation of EvalPartners
The Global Movement to Strengthen National Evaluation Capacities

Prepared for EvalPartners by Attuned Research and Evaluation and Basi Consulting Group Inc.

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List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

AEA American Evaluation Association
AfrEA African Evaluation Association
CES Canadian Evaluation Society
CSO Civil Society Organization
ESC Evaluation Steering Committee
EES European Evaluation Society
EP EvalPartners
EPMG EvalPartners Management Group
EvalMENA Middle East and North Africa Evaluators’ Network
EvalYear International Year of Evaluation (2015)
ExCom Executive Committee of EPMG
IAG International Advisory Group
IOCE International Organisation for Cooperation in Evaluation
IPDET International Program for Development Evaluation Training
IPEN International Program Evaluation Network (former Soviet Union)
KII Key Informant Interview
M&E Monitoring and Evaluation
MandENews The name of a listserv (Monitoring and Evaluation News)
NEC National Evaluation Capacities
OECD-DAC Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development’s Development Assistance Committee
P2P Peer-to-Peer (EP small grants programme)
PDF Portable Document Format
ReLAC Latin American and Caribbean Network for Monitoring, Evaluation and Systematization
SQEP Société québécoise d’évaluation de programme
TESA Teaching Evaluation in South Asia
UN United Nations
UN Women United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
UNDP United Nations Development Programme
UNEG United Nations Evaluation Group
UNICEF United Nations Children’s Fund
VOPE Voluntary Organizations for Professional Evaluations
XCeval International and Cross-Cultural Evaluation Topical Interest Group of the American Evaluation Association
Executive Summary

Purpose of the Evaluation

EvalPartners, the Global Movement to Strengthen National Evaluation Capacities, began in 2012. This is the first external evaluation of EvalPartners, and it is intended as a reflective stocktaking at a critical juncture in the initiative’s history. This evaluation provides a broad snapshot of what EvalPartners is, does, and signifies amongst the key constituents with whom it engages. This feedback is further intended to help inform and shape decisions about what EvalPartners could be and achieve in the future, beyond 2015, the International Year of Evaluation.

Methodology

This evaluation has used a developmental approach, taking place over the period from June 2014 to January 2015. It has been overseen by a six-member Evaluation Steering Committee (ESC), and conducted by a two-person external evaluation team. The evaluation covers a three-year period, from the inception of EvalPartners in 2012 to the present.

Data collection methods employed in this evaluation include: document review, online survey of professional evaluators, key informant interviews with key stakeholders, email survey of representatives of national VOPEs, email survey of round one P2P grantees, EPMG self-assessment questionnaire, task force member questionnaire, participant observation at the EPMG meeting in Dublin in October, and at EvalPartners related sessions at the adjacent EES conference in October 2014.

Findings

This evaluation responds to five questions, organized under three key issues:

I. EvalPartners’ role in the international evaluation landscape;
II. EvalPartners’ efforts and effects on capacity building at multiple levels; and
III. Governance structure, decision-making, and implementation processes.

The findings are presented in relation to each of these three issues.

I. EvalPartners’ Role in the International Evaluation Landscape

EvalPartners was jointly founded by the IOCE and UNICEF in 2012. It emerged from, and into, a global context characterized by rapidly increasing numbers of VOPEs. Because it was founded by a number of institutional and individual champions with long histories of engaged action and strong networks, it came into being as a brand that was immediately and effectively linked to the legitimacy and activity of its founders and associates. These two factors help to explain how it has achieved so much in such a short amount of time: it resonated with a clear need and built on existing momentum.
Three main trends within international evaluation, as explored in the practitioner survey, include:

- Increased awareness and/or appreciation of evaluation in one or more areas
- New or improved public policies regarding the use of evaluation for publicly-funded programs
- Changes or improvements in professional evaluation standards

For each of these trends, evaluators across the world responding to the survey noted a wide range of changes occurring. Governments, donors, and the lobbying efforts of VOPEs were all seen as major forces behind these changes, and the changes were seen as largely, but not uniformly, positive.

These findings confirm the relevance of EvalPartners and its overall theory-of-change and strategy (please see the box on the right for a brief explanation of these). They also suggest that EvalPartners’ partners may wish to explore ways of advancing worldwide conversations on professional standards.

As part of the analysis of EvalPartners’ role in the international landscape, the evaluation team explored what EvalPartners means to different stakeholders. These findings are organized under EvalPartners’ key constituents – evaluation practitioners, regional and national VOPEs of varying sizes, and non-VOPE CSOs and summarized below.

**Evaluation practitioners in general**

Based on survey results, 58% of evaluation practitioners have heard of EvalPartners. Their understandings of EvalPartners largely fits with what EvalPartners is and does, with the most common description of EvalPartners being a ‘network of networks’. It is also well known for its e-learning materials, and through its online presence through listserv communications and emails.

**VOPEs**

Regional and larger national VOPEs have direct representation on IOCE’s Board, and hence, on the EvalPartners’ Management Group. Amongst this group, there is wide appreciation for EvalPartners’ role, especially for its promotion of EvalYear and its P2P programme. Some key informants from North-based VOPEs suggested that members sometimes find EvalPartners’ strong focus on development issues less relevant to them.

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**EvalPartners’ Theory-of-Change**

National evaluation capacity can be understood in terms of two variables: demand (evaluation use) and supply (quality of evaluation).

EvalPartners aims to support its partners to achieve high capacity in both supply and demand, focused at the national level.

It focuses on supporting three levels of capacity-building: 1) the enabling environment (nationally and internationally), 2) institutional, and 3) individual, plus 4) cross-cutting support on equity-focused, gender responsive evaluation.
Smaller national VOPEs do not have a direct role in EvalPartners’ governance. Many of them would like to see this, or at least would like to understand EvalPartners’ organizational and governance structure, which is not clear from the outside. They see EvalPartners as highly relevant to them, and the majority is aware of the P2P grant programme, as well as EvalPartners’ email communications.

Non-VOPE Civil Society Organizations: The relationship between EvalPartners and non-VOPE civil society organizations has been fairly weak so far. Key informants are split in their opinions as to whether EvalPartners should directly engage with a wide range of interested stakeholders, or focus directly on VOPEs as its ‘core constituency’. This is something that will need to be clarified going forward.

II. EvalPartners’ Efforts and Effects on Capacity building at Multiple Levels

EvalPartners' capacity building efforts focus on three levels: enabling environment, institutional, and individual. In addition, EvalPartners focuses explicitly on the goal of supporting equity-focused, gender responsive evaluation. Key findings of EvalPartners’ achievements in each of these areas are summarized as follows:

1. Enabling Environment:
   EvalPartners’ decision to declare 2015 as the International Year of Evaluation (EvalYear) has already proven to be a powerful platform for bringing a broad range of stakeholders together and to catalyze a range of advocacy and communicative actions on the part of VOPEs and other evaluation-interested institutions. It inspired UNEG to spearhead the passing of a UN Resolution committing member nations to building their national evaluation capacities.\(^1\)
   The Parliamentarians’ Initiative was not part of EvalPartners’ initial plan, but has also managed to mobilize a large number of actors and engage parliamentarians on evaluation issues in South Asia, Africa and beyond, demonstrating how an idea can be brought to action and replicated to form a movement.
   The Innovation Challenge and Peer-to-Peer grants have also encouraged and allowed VOPEs to work on issues related to the enabling environment, which is a topic of high interest to many VOPEs. P2P grants have also helped many VOPEs to increase their own profiles and legitimacy within their countries, and to engage with national policymakers, in direct support of the enabling environment for evaluation.

2. Institutional Capacity Development:

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\(^1\) This resolution was passed on December 19, 2014. The resolution is posted on the UN’s website at: http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=a/res/69/237
The VOPE institutional capacity toolkit and the Peer-to-Peer grants have been EvalPartners’ main initiatives directed at increasing institutional capacity of VOPEs. While it is still early to judge the usefulness of the toolkit, initial feedback has been very positive. Over two rounds, Peer-to-Peer grants have leveraged a wide variety of benefits to VOPEs, including the capacity to manage grant funds, to develop formal policies in some cases, to learn from each other, and most commonly, to develop relationships with each other that increase individual and institutional capacity through knowledge exchange, and the potential for future joint action. Most of these activities have led to sustainable changes, although VOPEs remain challenged by limited resources and the insecurity of depending heavily on volunteer efforts.

3. **Individual Capacity-Building:**
   Some Peer-to-Peer grants received by VOPEs have been specifically used for building the capacity of members, or other evaluation stakeholders. In addition, significant e-learning resources have been created and made available on the My M&E website, most significantly through a partnership between Claremont University and EvalPartners, which has allowed evaluators to sign up for free e-learning seminars. Claremont welcomed 1300 students over the course of this initiative, and around 20,000 people in 172 countries had participated in courses offered on the My M&E website by September 2014. As a result, many evaluators know EvalPartners because of its e-learning resources.

4. **Equity-Focused, Gender-Responsive Evaluation**
   Activities under this domain include an Innovation Challenge to VOPEs funding four winners to undertake projects to promote equity-focused, gender-responsive evaluation, and creating a webinar series on the subject, hosted on the My M&E website. Numerous key informants noted that EvalPartners’ emphasis on equity-focused, gender-responsive evaluation, to the exclusion of other goals and social goods that evaluation could aid, seems out of step with its otherwise open-ended, partner-driven approach. Many people suggest broadening EvalPartners’ potential aims to addressing any issue that appears of social importance, such as, for example, climate change.

III. **Governance Structure, Decision-Making and Implementation Processes**

The evaluation evidence demonstrates that there is an established governance structure in place consisting of both strategic level bodies (the IAG, EPMG, and ExCom) and implementation bodies at the operational management level - the task forces. Coupled with this established strategic and operational governance structure, are a stated set of principles (strategic partnership, innovation, inclusion, and a focus on human rights, gender equality, and social equity) and core values that guide EvalPartners in implementing its activities globally. While EvalPartners has an established governance structure in place, evidence suggests that
improvements are needed that can be traced to gaps in the governance structure and the administrative and communications processes underlying it. Establishing shared norms and procedures will help fill these gaps while improving the decision-making, communication, and volunteer capacity of the partnership.

One of the hallmarks of EvalPartners’ success as a partnership is in having garnered the sector-wide support of key and influential partners and the appearance of a network firmly established in itself and the broader evaluation community. Two factors underpin this success – EvalPartners’ networked structure (role as catalyzer and convener) and its shared impassioned leadership with champions dedicated to its cause. While EvalPartners’ credibility has been clearly established as evidenced by interviewee perceptions and the breadth of products developed to support VOPEs and individual capacity building, seven areas for future consideration around effective governance and decision-making were identified. These considerations recognize the strengths of EvalPartners networked model and focus on areas of improvement that will enhance the network in its communication, management, administrative, and stakeholder relation capacities. These considerations are:

1. Articulate partner roles and expectations
2. Review and formalize management processes and procedures
3. Clarify administrative procedures and lines of communication
4. Formalize organization of the task forces and allocate some activities to structures other than task forces
5. Clarify the role of the international advisory group (IAG)
6. Articulate the network’s value proposition (added value) and strategic directions
7. Address the need for sustained funding

EvalPartners has achieved a great deal in a short amount of time. Its successes appear to share four characteristics: 1) resonance and relevance to the broader evaluation community; 2) a focus on building and leveraging relationships between and across evaluation actors; 3) flexibility and openness, and 4) boldness of imagination.

**Recommendations**

Based on the findings, this evaluation has identified recommendations in relation to nine key issues, as listed below.

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<th>Key Issues</th>
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<td>1. Relevance</td>
<td>1. EvalPartners remains highly relevant, and therefore should continue beyond 2015.</td>
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<td>2. Representation</td>
<td>2a. Clarify the role of partners beyond VOPEs in relation to IOCE and EvalPartners.</td>
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<td>2b. Clarify definition of and expectations around partnership.</td>
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3. Communication
   3a. Create a user-friendly single-window website dedicated to EvalPartners.
   3b. Hire a dedicated Executive Director, with oversight for communications coordination.

4. Engagement
   4. Create thematic platforms for organizations (including, but not exclusive to VOPEs) to participate in as they choose.

5. Effectiveness (of Capacity-Building Actions)
   5a. Recognize and foster the characteristics that lead to success.
   5b. Continue the commitment to including capacity-building for VOPEs within processes as much as possible.
   5c. Revisit and revise the EvalPartners’ logic model so that it is a better match to open-ended capacity-building for evaluation.

6. Structures for implementation
   6a. Formalize structure and membership processes for task forces.
   6b. Document processes of decision-making, communication and engagement for task forces.

7. Feedback & Learning
   7. Continue to monitor specific EvalPartners’ initiatives, including the use of resources such as toolkits. Make results publicly available when possible.

8. Formalization & clarification
   8a. Review and formalize management processes and procedures.
   8b. Clarify administrative procedures and lines of communication.
   8c. Clarify the relationship between IOCE, the UN and EvalPartners. The existing relationship has largely worked well, but there are some associated uncertainties.

9. Funding
   9. Develop a funding strategy for the post-2015 period, tied to decisions about EvalPartners’ longer term institutional home and reflecting consideration for EvalPartners global (North-South, North-North, and South-South) role.
1 Introduction

This document reports the findings and analysis from the evaluation of the EvalPartners initiative. The period for this evaluation is from July to December of 2014. The scope of the evaluation is the period from EvalPartners’ inception in 2012 until December 2014. This is the first evaluation of the EvalPartners’ Initiative and provides a stock-taking and reflective exercise at a critical point in its history.

This evaluation is intended to play the function of a reflective checkpoint and stock-taking for EvalPartners’ stakeholders, and particularly its management. This evaluation aims to capture and feedback a broad snapshot of what EvalPartners is, does, and signifies amongst the key constituents with whom it engages. This feedback is further intended to help to inform and shape decisions about what EvalPartners could be and achieve in the future, beyond 2015.²

The approach to this evaluation has been developmental, and the Evaluation Steering Committee (ESC) has played a key role. Regular Skype meetings and feedback with the ESC have helped to guide the evaluation, and adjustments in approach have been made based on the ability of different stakeholders to respond and engage. This process is more clearly outlined in the methodology section.

This is the final version of this report, having gone through an initial review by the ESC and EPMG, and a series of revisions. The intention is that this report is to be shared broadly with the stakeholders of EvalPartners and the broader global evaluation community. True to the essence of EvalPartners, it is expected that the evaluation findings will be used as a basis to engage the broader global evaluation community to deliberate on future areas of partnered action.

1.1 An introduction to EvalPartners

EvalPartners is a global initiative that began in early 2012. Its full title is “International Evaluation Partnership Initiative to Promote Civil Society Evaluation Capacities.” Its main aim is to support the growth and capacity-development of civil society organizations, and particularly Voluntary Organizations for Professional Evaluation (VOPEs),³ so that they in turn can strengthen the practice and use of evaluation at national, regional and international levels. It has also strengthened peer linkages, peer learning, especially amongst Southern VOPEs, and regional networks.

The IOCE and UNICEF were the key founding partners. UN Women has since replaced UNICEF as one of the leading partners, in collaboration with IOCE. USAID and the Ministry of

² Most of these comments are based on ideas expressed during the kickoff meeting between the Evaluation Steering Committee and the Evaluation Team on July 30, 2014.
³ VOPEs refer to formal evaluation associations/societies as well as informal networks and communities of practice, at sub-national, national, regional and international levels.
Foreign Affairs of the Government of Finland have provided funding for EvalPartners. Part of EvalPartners’ budget has been managed by IOCE, and part by UN Women. For 2014, the annual budget for EvalPartners was $657,500. This relatively modest sum is bolstered by a large volunteer effort and partner activity/support. EvalPartners’ administration is shared with IOCE, through the IOCE Secretariat managed through a contract with Megram, and it has one full time and one part time coordinator. Besides this, it is managed entirely by a volunteer board (EPMG), executive (ExCom) and various taskforces.

EvalPartners has 15 core partners, including ten regional evaluation networks and large national evaluation societies and five UN agencies. EvalPartners has an additional 36 partners, which include donors, foundations, universities, VOPEs and international NGOs. Their logos are displayed on the www.MyMandE.org/EvalPartners website.

Additional to these organizations that are identified as formal partners, there are other organizations engaged in evaluation on an international level which EvalPartners seeks to collaborate and/or coordinate with. These include: the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC), World Bank, and the International Development Evaluation Association (IDEAS).

EvalPartners’ less direct stakeholders include those on the demand side of evaluation, including public policymakers (including parliamentarians) and broader civil society in countries where EvalPartners-affiliated VOPEs are present, and those on the supply side of evaluation - meaning any individual or institution fulfilling an evaluation function, which do not have a direct engagement with EvalPartners.

1.2 Evaluation Issues and Questions

The initial terms-of-reference for this evaluation set forth five questions (and a number of related sub-questions) that the evaluation should answer. These questions relate to three key issues:

I. EvalPartners’ role in the international evaluation landscape;
II. EvalPartners’ efforts and effects on capacity building at multiple levels; and
III. Governance structure, decision-making, and implementation processes.

These three themes and associated questions are elaborated in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Evaluation Issues and Questions

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<td>EvalPartners’ role in the international evaluation landscape;</td>
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<tr>
<td>II.</td>
<td>EvalPartners’ efforts and effects on capacity building at multiple levels; and</td>
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<tr>
<td>III.</td>
<td>Governance structure, decision-making, and implementation processes.</td>
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</table>
1. What role has EvalPartners played in the international evaluation landscape?

Specifically:

a) What is EvalPartners to different stakeholders? What are the emerging perceptions of EvalPartners within the global evaluation community and outside it?

b) What implicit or explicit added value has it brought and is it bringing to the international evaluation movement?

c) What processes have EvalPartners catalyzed at national, regional and international levels?

d) Are there any successes and failures that should be noted and learned from? What factors seem to contribute to success and failure of the processes catalyzed by EvalPartners support?

II. Efforts and Effects on Capacity Building at Multiple Levels

2. What contributions has EvalPartners made to developing evaluation capacity in civil society at country, regional, and international levels?

Specifically:

a) What has been achieved through the P2P and Innovation Challenge small grant programs, as well as other programs organized by the various taskforces and regional VOPEs?

b) What adjustments are necessary to ensure equitable use of these programs and resources?

3. What specific outcomes can be identified that are associated with the influence of EvalPartners in the following areas:

a) Strengthening of institutional capacities of VOPEs?

b) Strengthening of capacities of members of VOPEs?

c) VOPE involvement and influence on national level policies and systems?

d) Fostering collaboration amongst VOPEs at the sub-regional, regional and international levels?

e) Equity focused and gender responsive evaluation systems?

4. What evidence is there of influences EvalPartners’ activities have had on national VOPEs, regional VOPEs, bilateral donors, the international community, international NGOs, national governments, and the IOCE?

III. Governance Structure, Decision-Making and Implementation Processes
5. What works well in the existing EvalPartners institutional and governance structure, and what needs to be reconsidered if EvalPartners is to sustain its achievements beyond 2015?

From the outset, the evaluation team recognized that there was likely to be an ongoing reframing of efforts within the context of these broad questions, which were seen as a launching pad. In practice, the team found that there was substantive overlap amongst the themes emerging from the findings under each of the questions, and we took a systems approach in considering the way that EvalPartners’ role within the evaluation community, its functions and structure supported and shaped each other. We hope this comes out in this report.

Some aspects of the theory-of-change are not explicitly challenged or tested in the evaluation questions, and so were beyond the scope of this evaluation. Nonetheless, the evaluation has been able to comment on the validity of the theory-of-change and on the framing of aspects of the logic model, within the first two findings sections.

1.3 EvalPartners’ Theory-of-Change and Logic Model

EvalPartners’ theory-of-change and high-level logic model are both described in a book entitled “Evaluation and Civil Society”, which has inputs from many of those involved in founding EvalPartners. The theory-of-change is the underlying theory about how EvalPartners expects its actions should contribute towards the resulting situation that it intends. The logic model is a graphic depiction of this theory (reproduced in Figure 1).

The logic model was made quite early on in EvalPartners’ history, and does not fully capture the activities it has undertaken as it has developed. It also places a high emphasis on ‘equity and gender equality’ which is not fully explicated in the theory-of-change. The theory-of-change is focused primarily on increasing evaluation capacity at the national level. The logic model depicts an overarching high level goal of ‘equity and gender equality in all countries’. While the idea is that evaluation can play a role in achieving such a goal, this part of the theory appears somewhat undeveloped.

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5 Reproduced from p.45 of Ibid.
The theory-of-change underlying this logic model, as described in the same publication, consists of two key elements: the first is a theory about the contextual dynamics, and the second is a theory about how to positively influence these dynamics. Both of these focus on evaluation at the national level, with the goal of building overall national evaluation capacity.

1.3.1 Contextual Dynamics as Described by the Theory-of-Change:

National evaluation capacity has both a demand element and a supply element. On the demand side, government officials and other key actors delivering programs should ideally appreciate and demand evaluation, and beyond this, the public plays an active role within democracy to demand transparency and hold their office bearers to account. On the other hand, the supply
side means that those providing an evaluation function can produce relevant, high-quality evaluations. A country can be in one of four categories, as shown in Figure 2. The objective of increasing the quality and trustworthiness of the evidence, coupled with an enabling policy environment, is expected to result in state in which both demand and supply capacity provide the foundation for the virtuous circle.

Figure 2: Capacity Development Framework - Demand as well as the Supply Side

1.3.2 Action Component of the Theory-of-Change:

This component focuses on how EvalPartners is intended to influence the national dynamic, both directly through advocacy and expanding the knowledge base, and indirectly through its engagement with VOPEs and other boundary actors. The theory-of-change posits that strengthening the use of evaluation must happen at three levels: enabling environment, institutional and individual. The logic model provides a depiction of the action component of the theory-of-change. Although EvalPartners’ activities expanded beyond those mentioned in

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6 Reproduced from p.32, Ibid.
the logic model, the three-level capacity building model still encapsulates these expanded activities. Figure 3 below provides an alternative visualization of this model, including this broader categorization plus the acknowledgement that EvalPartners explicitly focuses on supporting equity-focused and gender-responsive evaluation. The other difference in this depiction is that the ultimate goal is to support countries to arrive at the ‘virtuous circle’ category, rather than to support equity and gender equality in all countries as per the logic model. This alternative depiction is included here as this was the way the evaluation team most clearly understood the program logic in action during the evaluation – a working model. It is not posited as a permanent alternative to the logic model, as updating the logic model is an exercise best undertaken by EvalPartners themselves, as an internal exercise.

Figure 3 Alternative Depiction of EvalPartners’ Logic of Action

1.4 Evaluation Approach and Methodology

1.4.1 Characteristics of the Approach:

**Developmental:** This evaluation used a developmental approach, meaning that it aimed to immediately feed back to EvalPartners’ management, through the ESC, and to itself, so that the initial conceptualization and assumptions could be queried as new themes and narratives emerged from the findings.

**Three-Phased Approach:** This evaluation consisted of three main phases: design, implementation, and integration/reporting. These phases overlapped, and specific methods were adjusted based on preliminary findings, and in engagement with the ESC. This flexibility was an intended feature of the evaluation design.
1.4.2 Methods of Data Collection

The implementation phase, driven by the evaluation plan, focused on collecting data through multiple lines of evidence, and then triangulating these to generate and validate findings. The formulation of the lines of evidence adjusted through conversations with the ESC and initial piloting, and considerable adjustments were made. The initially planned and final data collection methods, and the reasons for adjustment, are described below.

**Document review:** A review of pertinent secondary data from EvalPartners and other sources was reviewed to provide an overall understanding of EvalPartners, and as a source of evidence responding to the evaluation questions. A full list of documents reviewed is found in the annexes. These were particularly pertinent to the evaluation questions regarding EvalPartners’ capacity-building activities and outcomes.

**On-line survey:** The initial work plan called for a possible survey of VOPEs, depending on the assessed need, following a review of existing documentary evidence. This evidence was judged to be largely sufficient. Instead, the team opted to introduce a survey of individual evaluators, which contributed most importantly to questions about broader perceptions of EvalPartners, and of broader trends in evaluation internationally and regionally. A full description of the survey, how it was conducted, and its findings can be found in the annexes. Relevant findings are included in the body of this report.

**Key Informant Interviews:** Key informant interviews were targeted to ensure full representation of stakeholder views in the evaluation data, with sufficient information to respond to each of the evaluation questions. As such, the sampling strategy, further described below, was purposive. Ten interviews were conducted face-to-face during the EPMG meeting and EES conference in Dublin, and the remainder were conducted via Skype.

**Email survey with smaller national VOPEs:** To supplement the key informant interviews and ensure the perspectives of VOPEs without representation on the EPMG, a random selection of smaller national VOPE’s were also surveyed. A short email questionnaire was sent to representatives from 35 VOPEs, with 11 responses received. For a full description of findings from this survey, please see the annexes.

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7 This survey was initially created in English on September 12, 2014 using the online survey software ‘Fluidsurveys’. It was piloted and tested, adjusted and then launched through three LinkedIn groups several days later. By September 26, it had 47 responses. At the end of the first week of October, plans to share the survey more broadly and share Spanish and French versions were made. It was shared on several popular M&E listservs, including mymande, pelikan and XCeval. Those completing the survey were also asked to share it amongst their networks, which many did. It was shared with EvalMENA and AfREAlistservs by members of the ESC. The number of responses quickly increased at this point. A link to the survey was also shared on the Canadian Evaluation Society’s website and through the Réseau Francophone de l’Evaluation.
**Self evaluations:** Self evaluations (including within-group interviews and discussions) to be carried out by the taskforces and EP/IOCE leadership were initially planned as a major input to the evaluation. However, a pilot test of the self-evaluations found that it was difficult to get volunteers to coordinate and complete these activities, with the exception of a short survey. Only one pair of invited participants (out of three) managed to coordinate their time and complete the self-assessment activities in the pilot phase. This commented that the exercise was useful for them, but because of the low rate of engagement, the self evaluations were dropped from this evaluation. In the meantime, broader questions about the role and structuring of the task forces were raised during the EPMG meeting in Dublin. For both these reasons, the evaluation team put this activity on hold, and recognized that it was unlikely to feed into this evaluation in a timely manner. It may, in its existing or a modified form, be a useful follow-through tool in further assessing task forces before making further adjustments.

**P2P Case Studies:** The evaluation team reviewed existing documentation on the P2Ps and considered the need for further case research, including KIIIs and self-assessment exercises for the participating VOPEs. In practice, P2P and Innovation Challenge activities were well documented, and there were several sessions at the EES that facilitated assessment of P2P by the VOPE grantees. These were supplemented with an email survey of first-round P2P participants, which received 18 responses (out of 38 contacted). For a full description of the findings from this survey, please see the annexes.

**EPMG Self-Assessment Questionnaire:** An anonymous self-assessment was undertaken with the EvalPartners Management Group in order to ascertain how EPMG members perceive success in their experience on the EPMG, how collaboration is experienced, decision-making features, communication and dissemination, and other aspects about governance structure, effectiveness, and efficiency. The self-assessment was based upon an existing pre-tested tool used to assess the health of Boards of Directors, and adapted to the EPMG context. Thirteen self-assessments were completed out of a possible 25 (the total number of EPMG members). This tool can provide a useful ‘check in’ going forward for the EPMG to periodically self-assess against, particularly now that a baseline is established.

**Task force member survey:** Initially planned as a subcomponent of the self-assessment, the task force member survey was designed to assess the motivation for engagement and level of engagement and communication of members within their task forces. Thirty people completed the survey. This information was assessed as part of the review of governance.
**Participant observation:** The evaluators attended as observers at the EPMG meeting in Dublin, Ireland held September 29-30, 2014. This particularly informed the section on EvalPartners’ governance structure and decision-making processes.

### 1.4.3 Sampling Strategy

This evaluation aimed to engage the following stakeholder groups, as outlined in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stakeholder Category</th>
<th>Stakeholders:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EvalPartners leadership</td>
<td>IOCE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>UNICEF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>UN Women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>EP International Advisory Group (IAG)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>EPMG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Executive Committee (ExCom) of EPMG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EvalPartners taskforces</td>
<td>Enabling Environment TF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>P2P TF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Institutional Capacity Toolkit TF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Equity-Focused Gender-Responsive TF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Knowledge management &amp; communications TF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donors</td>
<td>Gov't of Finland (donor)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>USAID (donor)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VOPEs</td>
<td>These are categorized primarily into two groups: regional VOPEs with direct</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>representation on the EPMG, and national VOPEs without direct representation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>on the EPMG.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-VOPE EP members</td>
<td>International NGOs, Donors, UN agencies, Universities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National level Policymakers</td>
<td>National level gov’t officials in countries with active VOPEs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Parliamentarians in countries with active forums</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Other international evaluation actors: OECD-DAC; IDEAS; World Bank

The table below shows how different stakeholder groups are engaged in this evaluation, both through various data collection methods. The initial target numbers are shown in brackets.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stakeholder Category</th>
<th>Evaluators’ Survey</th>
<th>P2P Grantee Survey</th>
<th>National VOPEs’ Survey</th>
<th>EPMG survey</th>
<th>Taskforce survey</th>
<th>Key informant interviews</th>
<th>Other engagement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EvalPartners Leadership</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6 (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EvalPartners Taskforces</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EvalPartners IAG</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>12 (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donors</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2 (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VOPEs(^9)</td>
<td>18 (0)</td>
<td>11 (0)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>17 (15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-VOPE EP members</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>16 (8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National level Policymakers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3 (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other international evaluation actors</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>14 (6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual evaluators</td>
<td>494</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total #s:</td>
<td>494</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>37(^{10})</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^8\) Other engagement primarily included ESC meetings, observation and informal interaction at the EPMG meeting in Dublin and the subsequent EES conference.

\(^9\) IOCE keeps track of VOPEs that are registered as members. It currently has 118 members. See [www.IOCE.net](http://www.IOCE.net).

\(^{10}\) Many interviewees fell into multiple categories.
One significant change in the sampling was the discovery that many individuals fit within multiple categories. For example, IOCE Board members who are also members of the EPMG represent regional VOPEs. Some are also leaders of their national VOPEs. It was not clear what additional information would be gained by interviewing people from the same VOPEs, with less connection. A total of 37 people were interviewed. The existing sampling is judged sufficient to answer the evaluation questions and provide the level and degree of feedback required.

1.4.4 Limitations to the Methodology and Mitigation Response

The biggest limitations to the evaluation methodology were the limited time availability of people for interviews, and for participating in the in-depth component taskforce self-evaluation. Mitigation for the former issue was extending the period of time during which interviews were conducted, conducting as many face-to-face interviews as possible during the EPMG meeting and EES conference in Dublin, and shortening interviews where necessary. For the latter issue, mitigation has been based on drawing on other lines of evidence, and especially the key informant interviews and to some extent the EPMG self-assessment. As many task force members are also in the EPMG, a large number of task force members and co-chairs have been included within interviews.

A second potential limitation was in the observation that while many interviewees could speak to many roles, they were also ‘insiders’ to EvalPartners, whereas the ESC had expressed their desire to have a fresh, outside perspective, rather than just hearing from the ‘usual suspects’. This was mitigated through triangulation, through interviews with less closely engaged people, especially those in the IAG, and also through the decision to conduct a survey of professional evaluators - a good proportion of which were entirely unaffiliated to VOPEs, and were not necessarily aware of EvalPartners. Due to its anonymity and scaled response style, the EPMG self-assessment also provided a means to assess trends and anomalies in member perceptions regarding management, leadership, communication, and participation issues.

Multiple methods, triangulation, and the existence of extensive documentation of EvalPartners’ activities in most domains has also alleviated the risks, so that the evaluation team is sufficiently confident in the robustness of the findings arising from this evaluation. We would also like to acknowledge the central advisory role of the ESC, which has helped to alert the evaluation team to possible risks, and direct them towards resources.

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11 The task force self assessment included planned in-depth pair interviews and group discussions, along with a brief online survey. The latter was completed by 30 members of various task forces, and the results are referred to in the governance section.
2 Findings Overview

The findings to this evaluation are presented in the following three sections, according to the three focal areas of this evaluation.

As shown in Figure 1, these three focal areas overlap significantly. For this reason, there are common threads and themes that come up throughout. Key themes related to the findings and associated recommendations for future action are revisited in the Conclusions and Recommendations section, following the findings.

Figure 4: Three Focal Areas

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12 Specifically, the perspectives, capacities and needs of other actors within the international evaluation landscape shapes their desire for representation in EvalPartners and the appropriate form of governance, as well as being the principle focus of EvalPartners’ capacity building activities. The latter are shaped by the governance and implementation structure, and in turn, aim to impact on the overall international evaluation landscape.
3 Findings I: EvalPartners’ Role in the International Evaluation Landscape

This first findings section primarily answers the first of the five questions set forth for this evaluation: “What role has EvalPartners played in the international evaluation landscape?” To do this, it draws on four sources of evidence: the evaluator practitioner survey, the national VOPE survey, key informant interviews, and document review. It is structured in three subsections:

I. EvalPartners in the international evaluation landscape: This part explains the landscape that EvalPartners entered into in early 2012, and the specific relationship that EvalPartners has had to this broader context over its nearly three year existence.

II. Trends within the International Evaluation Landscape and EvalPartners’ Role within these Trends: This section draws primarily on the practitioner survey to analyse perceptions of major trends internationally and regional differences amongst trends. It then considers evidence from all sources to identify EvalPartners’ role in further catalysing these trends.

III. What EvalPartners means to different stakeholders: This part explains the general level of awareness and ideas about EvalPartners as reported from the practitioners’ survey, and then explains EvalPartners’ significance and relationship to VOPEs and other CSOs, based on the VOPE survey and relevant key informant interviews.

In answering the first evaluation question, this section also provides the “Big Picture” overview of how EvalPartners fits in to the global evaluation landscape, and where it may be going. Themes raised in this section will be further explored in the two subsequent sections, which delve into more detail on the activities and functioning of EvalPartners, as pertains to its capacity-building activities and its overall governance.

EvalPartners began in early 2012, essentially as a joint vision of IOCE board members and Marco Segone of UNICEF, at an IOCE meeting in Accra. Segone was able to secure some funding through UNICEF, and the group began to plan a more formal consultation process, that ended with a planning forum in Chiang Mai at the end of the same year. The scene that EvalPartners emerged into, and quickly became an integral part of, has been particularly dynamic. One of EvalPartners’ first activities was a mapping of VOPEs around the world. The mapping documented the rapid growth of VOPEs over a very short period of time.13

The earliest VOPEs date back to the late 1970s (the Evaluation Research Society of the USA, which later merged with the Evaluation Network to become the American Evaluation Association in 1986) and the early 1980s (the Canadian Evaluation Society was started in 1981). But even by the 1995, there were still only a handful of VOPEs around the world...less than ten

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according to the mapping exercise. However, from about 1998, the upward trend has been consistent, and really began to take off in the late 1990s, reaching over 80 VOPEs by the time the initial mapping was done in 2012.\(^{14}\)

The International Development Evaluation Association (IDEAS) was formed in 2001, largely to provide an associational ‘home’ for individual members who did not have a home country VOPE, with a focus on including evaluators from developing countries.\(^{15}\) The International Organization for Cooperation in Evaluation (IOCE) was formed in 2003 as more of an umbrella organization for VOPEs. Its mission has been, “To help legitimate evaluation and support evaluation societies, associations and networks so that they can better contribute to good governance, effective decision making and strengthen the role of civil society.”\(^{16}\)

In parallel to the emergence of VOPEs and their associated organizations, there has been a trend of increasing recognition of the potential role of evaluation within governments, and within non-governmental development actors, including the UN, OECD-DAC, the World Bank, and non-governmental organizations, both those focused on development (such as Oxfam, CARE, etc.), and those focused on transparency and good governance (such as Transparency International). Several of these developmental actors, including UNICEF and IDRC, have directly supported the creation and strengthening of VOPEs in developing countries and regions.\(^{17}\) In addition, there have been individual champions within and across these organizations who have also been active supporters of VOPEs and the IOCE. Even as they have changed institutional roles from time to time, they have created informal networks in support of evaluation.

While it is beyond the scope of this evaluation to give an exhaustive accounting of evaluation actors, it is worth mapping the main actors and landscape as it exists. A mapping of main actors and actor groups is shown in Figure 2. The relationship between these actors is only implied in this map, and would be hard to fully do justice to in a graphic format. In this graphic, IOCE and UN Women are shown as key representatives or mediators of their respective domains (civil society/VOPEs, and UN agencies/development agencies) respectively, with respect to EvalPartners, as they are the two implementing partners.

EvalPartners emerged out of the broader momentum within the evaluation movement. In some sense, then, it could almost be seen as inevitable. But at the same time, it was created because of some specific circumstances and personalities. In brief, IOCE and UNICEF decided in early 2012 to take the lead in establishing EvalPartners. When Marco Segone, one of the key champions

\(^{14}\) By April 2014, the total number of VOPEs verified by IOCE was 149; this includes 112 national VOPEs, 7 sub-national VOPEs, 17 regional VOPEs, and 13 international evaluation-related organizations, with a total combined membership of 43,633. Ibid.

\(^{15}\) See www.ideas-int.org, accessed November 17. Also based on KII information.


\(^{17}\) Based on KII information.
responsible for envisioning and founding EvalPartners, moved from UNICEF to UN Women, UN Women took over the role of lead partner from UNICEF, while IOCE remains as the key implementing partner. The current institutional arrangements and governance model are described in more detail in the section on governance (see Section 5.1).

Figure 5: Map of the Evaluation Landscape

3.1 Trends within the International Evaluation Landscape

Section II - Findings on EvalPartners’ Capacity Building Efforts, will delve into what EvalPartners has accomplished and what outcomes and broader influences are likely attributable to their efforts. In this section, we cover overall trends in evaluation, drawn largely from the evaluation practitioners’ survey and then consider in broad terms how EvalPartners’ efforts fit into these trends. This is particularly relevant to EvalPartners in considering the appropriateness of its theory-of-change (especially the contextual component described in Figure 2) and the overall relevance of its intended activities.
In the practitioner survey, respondents were asked a series of questions about changes and trends that they had noted. Specifically, they were asked to rate the degree to which they had seen changes in each of the following areas, what changes (if any) they had observed, and to what they attributed these changes:  

1. Increased awareness and/or appreciation of evaluation in one or more areas  
2. New or improved public policies regarding the use of evaluation for publicly-funded programs  
3. Changes or improvements in professional evaluation standards

### 3.1.1 Increased Awareness and/or Appreciation of Evaluation

Most survey respondents noted a significant increase in awareness or appreciation of evaluation in one or more sectors in the regions where they worked over the last five years. On a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 signified no change, and 10 signified a very strong change, the median response was 7.05. The distribution of responses (from a total of 471) is shown in the bar graph in Figure 3.

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18 Respondents were also given an open question to note ‘any other changes.’ However, most respondents did not opt to answer this, or gave additional responses that could be fit into one of these three existing categories.
The consensus amongst most people across the globe is that awareness of evaluation is increasing. Specific changes that people have noted include:

- Increased demand/requirement on the part of governments, linked to an increasing public discourse around evidence-based decision-making and an overall increase towards a culture of evaluation
- Increased donor demands to be shown the evidence that programmes are successful
- Increasing integration of evaluation into project and programme management
- In some places, a specific emphasis on results-based management
- Evaluation is becoming more familiar, less “scary” and more likely to be seen as a tool for organizational learning amongst potential users of evaluation.
- Increased involvement of stakeholders in evaluation increases their understanding of, and demand for, evaluations
- Potential users of evaluation are becoming more sophisticated in some places

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19 A number of statistical tests were run to see if there was any relationship between the respondents’ region of residence, association to a VOPE, or knowledge of EvalPartners, and their perception of a change in awareness, but none of these relationships were found to be statistically significant relationship. This means that, while a minority of people had observed little or no change, this was not because they lived in a specific region where less change was observed.
• Specific sectors, such as health and human rights, are seeing an increased demand for evaluation
• Regional or national political changes and openings. For example, increased demand for transparency in some countries following the “Arab Spring”
• Improved evaluation capacity has led to improved demand
• There are more meetings and conferences on evaluation
• There is more online discussion of evaluation

Some people also ring a cautionary note to say that the rhetorical use of evaluation terms sometimes belies practice, or that defensive politicians or actors may be resistant to evaluation. Nonetheless, the overall trends appear to be strongly positive. Evaluative culture is on the rise globally.

What is driving these changes? People point to both an overall momentum within the shift, and to specific, directed lobbying and awareness-raising activities, particularly on the part of VOPEs. Both of these vindicate EvalPartners’ overall theory-of-change and strategy. For example, several people note that the increased involvement of stakeholders in evaluation helps to improve their understanding of evaluation and they are more likely to demand and value it. Likewise, as evaluation capacity increases, and people see that evaluation can serve a useful function, demand and awareness increases. Several survey respondents noted that equity-focused and gender-responsive evaluation in particular is advocated for by the UN and EvalPartners, which has helped to increase awareness on this issue. One person noted that a good relationship between VOPEs and governments in some countries has contributed to these changes. Increased donor interest is a major influence on other actors, including recipient governments. Increasing international connectivity due to the increased use of the internet has also supported the spread of these changes.

While EvalPartners is only explicitly mentioned by a small number of respondents, they are clearly supporting the types of actions that are observed to lead to change. Supporting the capacity development of VOPEs, EvalYear, and other active advocacy efforts are clearly relevant and well aligned with these broader trends. The specific activities that EvalPartners has undertaken and the outcomes of these activities will be discussed in Findings Section Part II.

3.1.2 New or Improved Public Policies Regarding the Use of Evaluation

The practitioners’ survey asked respondents to rate the degree to which they had observed new or improved public policies regarding the use of evaluation over the last five years. A total of 440 people responded to this question, giving a median value of 5.1, where “0” would mean they had observed no change and “10” meant they had seen a strong change. The distribution of responses is shown in the bar chart below. Compared to the previous question, people were much more cautious in attributing a very strong change in this area, although most people had seen some movement. Qualitative responses suggest that the caution arises from respondents’
awareness that the existence of a policy does not mean that it will have an impact, or may indicate the slow nature of policy change.

Figure 7: Survey response rating the degree to which there are new or improved public policies regarding the use of evaluation.

There was a statistically significant relationship between the region of the world in which respondents resided and the degree to which they had noted improved public policies regarding the use of evaluation. This makes sense, since public policy is usually set at a national level. However, somewhat surprisingly, the differences observed between the regions are only slight. Zero represents no change observed, and 10 represents the most strongly observed change. In all regions, the changes observed averaged in the mid-range, although respondents in Africa reported having observed stronger changes in the policy environment for evaluation, and respondents in the Middle East and North Africa region reporting slightly more moderate changes.

While the survey imperfectly captures people’s perceptions and knowledge of policy changes, a more systematic mapping of the status of national evaluation policy in 115 countries was commissioned by EvalPartners and carried out in 2013. As Barbara Rosenstein, who conducted the study, notes in her report, the existence of a national evaluation policy turns out to be more than a simple yes/no question. She also notes that a formal policy may be legislated, directed, or implicit, and that it is arguable whether the existence of a formal evaluation policy is as
important as factors such as evaluation readiness and evaluation culture.\textsuperscript{20} Some countries, such as the UK, have developed detailed guidelines and routinely conduct evaluations without having a formal policy in place. \textsuperscript{21}

Both the survey and Rosenstein’s mapping show again that this is clearly a dynamic area. For example, the mapping exercise shows that, out of the 115 countries surveyed, about 16 were in the process of creating an evaluation policy at the time.

In terms of policy formulation, the period of EvalPartners’ existence is too brief for us to expect that it would have had a major impact, since policy change usually takes years. Nonetheless, we can see that it is clearly playing a role. The Parliamentarian’s Forum, which is discussed in more detail in the following section, is the initiative most obviously tied to this. This initiative was in fact responsible for Rosenstein’s study, which she presented in September 2013 and published in December 2013, and now publicly available on the Internet. In itself, this mapping and sharing of information is an act of advocacy and awareness-raising that we might expect to contribute to the already evident international trend to formalizing evaluation policies.

3.1.3 Changes or Improvements in Evaluation Capacities and Standards

On the practitioners’ survey, 431 people responded to the question asking them to rate the degree to which they had observed changes or improvements in evaluation capacities and standards. The median response was 5.6, although we can see a fair proportion of respondents (13%) had observed no or little change.

People from different regions share similar perspectives on the degree of change taking place (which they largely feel is substantial, with room for improvement).\textsuperscript{22}

Increased opportunities for training, increased awareness and demand, and the increasing number and quality of VOPEs were all factors widely identified as leading to increases in standards. Improved regulation by public bodies such as CONEVAL in Mexico were further noted by some respondents to be improving evaluation quality.\textsuperscript{23}


\textsuperscript{21} This may be the case given that in some countries, public policy is informed by evidence through actors other than evaluators, because many other actors use evaluative methods—e.g. government agencies themselves, accreditation bodies, regulatory bodies, national academies of science, and other such bodies.

\textsuperscript{22} There was no statistically significant relationship between the rating people gave on this question and region of residence, membership in a VOPE or knowledge of EvalPartners. This also means that those who are less engaged with VOPEs, and who have not heard of EvalPartners, nonetheless share similar observations regarding the overall improvement in standards.

\textsuperscript{23} Analysis focused on three groups of responses: those that rated high change, moderate change and low change. Those who noted high or moderate change (the majority of respondents) commonly listed these explanatory factors.
Those who gave more moderate ratings noted factors that limit improvements in evaluation standards. These include: a lack of consensus on methods within evaluation, and numerous unqualified people filling roles as evaluators or managing evaluation. Without clear professional standards, anyone can call themselves an evaluator. As demand for evaluation increases, some note that the risk for unqualified people entering, and undermining, the profession, may also be on the rise. This concern was clearly articulated across languages and regions, and again points to the need for professionalization.

While the rise of VOPEs predates EvalPartners, the latter’s focus on capacity building of VOPEs is closely tied to their ability to discuss, set, and advocate for professional standards, all activities that are widely agreed to be the domain of VOPEs. In addition, survey respondents positively associate the increased prevalence of training, including online training, and of meetings discussing standards, with improved standards. These are all areas where EvalPartners is active, and is seen as active by the respondents.

At the 2014 annual meeting of the EvalPartners Management Group in Dublin, professional standards and credentialing came up as a major issue for the global agenda for evaluation moving forward. This clearly resonates with the concern and preoccupation shown by survey respondents. Answers to this question showed concern with risks associated with a lack of standards that could undermine evaluation, and the mixed progress that is at play. The discussion at the Dublin meeting also touched on the role that EvalPartners might play in
setting of professional standards, as did a number of interviews. Consensus appears that this is not a task that EvalPartners can or should take on directly, but that it has an important role as a convener and supporter of VOPEs and other key stakeholders for this purpose, which will need coordination if they are to be effective in professionalizing evaluation. Consideration for the IOCE to play a role in professional standard setting also figures in to this discussion.

3.1.4 What is EvalPartners to different stakeholders?

EvalPartners created a new platform and brand fuelled by the same personalities and culture that permeated many VOPEs and other organisations supporting evaluation. It was able to ‘hit the ground running’ because it was, in many senses, not new at all, but a continuation of decades of hard work and relationships, under the leadership of a core group of people who were themselves well recognised and respected in the evaluation community.

Two of the sub-questions to the first evaluation question are, “What is EvalPartners to different stakeholders?” and “What are the emerging perceptions of EvalPartners within the global evaluation community and outside it?”

This section answers this question drawing primarily on the practitioner survey and key informant interviews with people with a broad range of institutional affiliations. Specifically, it considers the perspectives of evaluation practitioners, based largely on the practitioner survey, the perspectives of VOPEs, based on KIIs and the VOPE survey, and the perspectives of civil society organizations, based on KIIs.

The perspectives of IOCE and UN representatives regarding EvalPartners, and the relationship between EvalPartners and these two institutions are included under Findings Section III on Governance, as both IOCE and the UN (initially UNICEF, and then UN Women) have been the founding partners and lead implementers of EvalPartners. In addition, UNEG has been closely involved with EvalPartners, most recently in championing the call for a UN Resolution regarding the importance of evaluation. The UN Women representative, Marco Segone, who was instrumental in founding EvalPartners, is also UNEG Vice-Chair.

3.1.5 Evaluation practitioners in general

The evaluation practitioners’ survey asked respondents24, “Have you heard of EvalPartners?”

The results are shown in Figure 6.

“Have you heard of EvalPartners?”

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24 It was shared on several popular M&E listserves, including mymande, pelikan and XCeval. Those completing the survey were also asked to share it amongst their networks, which many did. It was shared with EvalMENA and AfrEA listserves by members of the ESC. The number of responses quickly increased at this point. It was also shared through the CES through a website announcement and through the Réseau Francophone de l’Evaluation. For a full description of this survey, its methodology and results, please see the annexes.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Chart</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>57.8%</td>
<td>285</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>![No Chart]</td>
<td>42.2%</td>
<td>208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Responses</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>57.8%</strong></td>
<td><strong>285</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 9 Survey Response to "Have you heard of EvalPartners?"

Extrapolating these figures to the general population must be done with some caution, as this was not a formal random sample. However, we can get a better sense of the degree to which less ‘plugged in’ people have heard of EvalPartners by comparing the responses between those who belong to VOPEs, and those who do not. As might be expected, those who belong to evaluation associations are more likely to have heard of EvalPartners – this was found to be statistically significant.25

An average of 58% of respondents had heard of EvalPartners, and even amongst those who were unaffiliated with a VOPE, 42% had heard of EvalPartners. Given that EvalPartners has been around for such a short time, this is impressive brand recognition. Key stakeholders who were interviewed also noted the remarkably short period of time in which this recognition arose on the global evaluation landscape and the associated high degree of credibility accompanying its rise.

What do people know EvalPartners for?

Asked to briefly describe what they knew of it, respondents gave a wide variety of answers. While a few didn’t know much other than the name, and a few were somewhat off the mark (for example, describing EvalPartners as an international evaluation consulting group), the majority of 267 people who answered this question gave responses that were consistent with the way that EvalPartners sees itself. Sometimes they mentioned how they had heard of it, how they interacted with it, or what they liked most about it. Figure 7 is a word cloud showing the most prevalent answers, across the three languages in which people responded (English, Spanish and French).

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25 63% of respondents with an association to a VOPE had heard of EvalPartners, compared to 42% of respondents with no association to a VOPE.
The notion of EvalPartners as a ‘network of networks’ is most prevalent here, as is its core focus of building (or strengthening) both individual and institutional capacity. It was also frequently described as an initiative, and, to a lesser extent, as a ‘global platform’. It is interesting that the term ‘VOPE’, which was coined by EvalPartners, has been taken up by the broader evaluation community to the point that it appeared as one of the most prevalent terms mentioned. This is an indicator of how effective EvalPartners’ communications have been (directly or indirectly) in introducing the term ‘VOPE’ to the global evaluation community and getting significant traction on its recognition and use worldwide.

Figure 10: Word Cloud Showing Most Prevalent Responses to “How would you describe EvalPartners”?

The word ‘professional’ is also noteworthy, as the professionalization of evaluation is a key concern amongst many evaluators, and EvalPartners is seen to have a role in this regard. Its advocacy, sharing, and educational activities are also fairly well known. In both English and Spanish we can see that the website, online courses, and communication via email and through listservs are all important components of EvalPartners’ broader presence. This is how most of the respondents have primarily interacted with EvalPartners, although a few respondents mentioned having had direct engagement on EvalPartners management group, or in another capacity.

26 Jim Rugh, EvalPartners Coordinator, deserves the credit for being the person who originally coined the acronym.
27 French was a minority language amongst respondents. Therefore, no French terms are part of the word cloud, although a separate word cloud in French reveals similar themes.
3.1.6 Voluntary Organizations for Professional Evaluation (VOPEs)

Results from the practitioners’ survey suggest that VOPEs have broad reach to the community of practitioners. Of those surveyed, just over 74% reported belonging to at least one VOPE and many respondents belong to multiple VOPEs. The survey found statistically significant regional variations in membership, as shown in Figure 8. Nonetheless, even in Europe, where membership rates were the lowest, close to 60% of respondents belong to a VOPE.

![Figure 11 Regional distribution of respondents to the question, “Do you belong to a professional evaluation society, association, or related group?”](image)

The survey also shows that most VOPE members are active, with 57% of VOPE members reported having volunteered. This level of engagement suggests that VOPEs appear to be good vehicles for representing evaluators.

**What does EvalPartners mean to the VOPEs?**

It is worth distinguishing between two main groups of VOPEs:

1. Regional VOPEs (such as ReLAC and AfrEA), and larger national VOPEs (such as AEA and CES) have direct representation on the IOCE Board. IOCE Board members,

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28 This is likely a slight overestimation with regards to the full population of evaluation practitioners, since the survey was voluntary and was spread via various listservs, including some associated with VOPEs. Nonetheless, membership rates are high.
in turn, are automatically members of the EvalPartners’ Management Group (EPMG).  

2. Smaller national VOPEs do not have any direct formal role in EvalPartners’ governance, although many are indirectly represented by a regional VOPE. For these, their main contact with EvalPartners tend to be through its external communications (on websites and through listservs) and through the P2P and Innovation Challenge grant programmes.

The key informant interviews for this evaluation were almost exclusively with people who represented regional or larger VOPEs, although many of these key informants also have extensive experience with smaller national VOPEs as well. In addition, an email survey specifically targeted representatives of the second group of VOPEs: smaller national VOPEs without direct IOCE/EP representation. The findings in this section draw from both sources.

Both sources show that EvalPartners is widely welcomed and seen by most VOPEs as highly relevant. This is especially the case for smaller VOPEs, who are particularly in need of resource and informational support and networking opportunities. Some key informants from North-based VOPEs suggested that members sometimes find EvalPartners’ strong focus on development issues less relevant to them. However, the focus on increasing the enabling environment for evaluation is seen as widely relevant, as is the focus on VOPE capacity building. Most VOPEs in the survey remain principally concerned with organizational issues such as fundraising and developing organizational structures, as well as with creating broader national awareness of, and demand for, evaluation.

Some aspects of EvalPartners, including its relationship to the IOCE and its governance structure, are not readily apparent to those who are not directly engaged. This issue was clearly identified both within the interviews and in the survey. This issue is further discussed in the governance section. In the survey, particularly, VOPE representatives wanted to see more transparency in EvalPartners’ governance and operational structures, and they wanted to know how they could engage. Even those who said they had a strong interest in EvalPartners and had followed its work noted that its organizational structure remained a mystery for them. A few survey respondents noted that EvalPartners appears too strongly based on informal personal networks. This also came up as a minority theme in the key informant interviews.

Four survey respondents (out of 11) specified they would like to see direct representation of national VOPEs within EvalPartners. A related point coming out of the survey, and to a lesser

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29 See the governance section for a fuller description and analysis of this representative mechanism.
30 Please see the methodology section for a full description of the survey, and see Annex E for a full summary of the survey results.
31 EvalPartners’ emphasis on equity focused gender responsive policy as the overarching goal of evaluation outcomes is one example of this that was raised by several respondents, discussed further in the following section. As one interviewee noted, evaluation can be applied to anything, and perhaps it is in the North where it is as likely to be applied to an analysis of urban traffic patterns, or some other issue that is less obviously ‘developmental’.
extent, the interviews, is that the links between regional VOPEs and national VOPEs can sometimes be weak, and that national VOPEs can be hard to mobilize.

While EvalPartners is seen as highly relevant, some VOPEs also noted that its resources were modest, whereas it is one of the few means of support available to VOPEs, so they would like to see its capacity and resources expand. Another area where people would like to see changes is in expansion of EvalPartners’ communications into French and Spanish in a more systematic, ongoing way. There are significant subcommunities of evaluators in both of these languages who find it difficult to engage with English.32

3.1.7 Civil Society (Other than VOPEs)

Thus far, the level of engagement between EvalPartners and civil society organizations other than VOPEs has been limited, based on comments from key informant interviews. For some key informants, this is a missed opportunity. Development-oriented NGOs such as Oxfam have developed a level of expertise in evaluation, and there are also national research organizations and think tanks that have compatible missions of promoting evidence-based policymaking. Academia is another area where more formal links had initially been planned (through the knowledge generation task force), but did not materialize. Some NGOs, and Claremont University, are EvalPartners’ partners, and some are represented on the IAG.

A contrary perspective within key informant interviews sees VOPEs as EvalPartners’ key constituents and its clear role is focused on their capacity building. If it goes beyond this, it risks duplicating roles.

Yet another perspective voiced is that EvalPartners is and has been open to various actors to engage as they choose, and this is part of its identity and strength.33 This is why, for example, EvalPartners has been able to support a Parliamentarians’ Initiative to advocate for evaluation, even though parliamentarians are not obvious primary stakeholders.

These different perspectives have implications for the governance structure of EvalPartners, and indeed, for its identity. At the moment, it has some chameleon characteristics – at some points seeming to be almost synonymous with IOCE and its VOPE membership, and at some points, clearly seeming to represent something beyond that. Its informality, combined with being in a formation mode in its inception year has allowed it to exist within this ambiguity, and even benefit from it. However, post-2015, if EvalPartners is to persist as something other than a project (which appears to be the consensus), it will need to formalize itself at least a little more. This is, again, something we will return to in the governance section.

32 EvalPartners and its partners in regional or national VOPEs have worked on language translation issues, but survey respondents seemed to suggesting a broader ongoing presence and interactive communication on all EvalPartners’ matters in these languages.

33 Indeed, the EP leadership prefers to refer to it as a “movement.”
3.2 Section Conclusion

What these findings strongly show is a clear and strong resonance between EvalPartners and the broader evaluation community. This may not be surprising, given that EvalPartners is so clearly part of the evaluation community, and emerged from it. Nonetheless, it is an important confirmation for EvalPartners leadership, since at various points during this evaluation, EvalPartners “insiders” have expressed concern that the core group of most dedicated people might be too insular, ‘talking to themselves’ and excluding large, unknown swathes of the evaluation community. These findings suggest that such a possibility, while it cannot be entirely eliminated, is highly unlikely.

What is true is that, while there is a wide appreciation of EvalPartners and its action, there is also some confusion, especially amongst national VOPEs, as to how EvalPartners is structured and how to engage. VOPEs without direct representation on the EPMG, especially, would like a clearer sense of how they get involved, and also a clearer understanding of how EvalPartners is governed.

Nonetheless, the composition of the EPMG means that EvalPartners’ leadership is, for the most part, actively engaged in different regional or national VOPEs, thereby acting as representatives of these VOPEs. This helps EvalPartners’ culture and values resonate with that of its constituents, as was evident from the overall concurrence of viewpoints and priorities across different sources. EvalPartners is clearly playing a catalytic role at a particularly formative time in the history of evaluation as an emerging practice and profession.

These findings also vindicate EvalPartners’ overall strategy and theory-of-change, as described in Section 1.3. Survey respondents’ observations of international trends showed that both the supply and demand of evaluation are interlinked and increasing, although unevenly, around the world.

We now move to Part 2 of the Findings, which addresses EvalPartners’ core capacity-building function. This examines what EvalPartners has actually done, within the context of the broader role and trends described here.

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34 This is because IOCE Board Members, who are regional (and large national) VOPE representatives, are also jointly appointed to the EPMG.
4 Findings II: Efforts and Effects on Capacity Building at Multiple Levels

EvalPartners’ capacity-building model is articulated in its theory-of-change (as described in Section 1.3). It focuses on building supply and demand at three levels: the enabling environment, institutional, and individual. In addition, promoting equity-focused, gender-responsive evaluations (leading to equity-focused, gender responsive policies) has been an overarching goal of EvalPartners according to its logic model, and can be understood as an implicit cross-cutting concern within its theory-of-change, applicable at all levels and on both the supply and demand side.

In this section, we consider findings as they relate to the outcomes and broader influences related to EvalPartners’ activities within each of the three levels of the capacity-building model.

The first part of this section provides a brief overview to the main EvalPartners’ activities as they tie into these levels. The other four parts focus on the outcomes and broader influences associated with each of the three levels plus the cross-cutting issue of equity-focused, gender-responsive evaluation. This section then finishes with discussion of what has worked best in EvalPartners’ existing approach and recommendations for building on this in the future.

The data sources for this section include EvalPartners documentation, progress reports to donors, and reports on specific initiatives. There have also been some initial studies and analysis done that are included here: for example, a user survey of the My M&E website, and a document analysis of the P2P and Innovation Challenge Grants up until March 2014. Responses to a brief email questionnaire from 18 VOPE representatives who had received first round P2P grants are also considered here. Key informant interviews with task force co-chairs and members, the EPMG and outside observers each include some reflections on the greatest strengths and accomplishments of EvalPartners. Finally, the EPMG meeting in Dublin in 2014 included presentations and discussion on the work of the task forces and other EvalPartners’ accomplishments, and the subsequent EES Conference included a several sessions tied to EvalPartners’ work, which the evaluation team was able to participate in.

EvalPartners has only been active for a relatively short time, since 2012. In particular, its task forces, responsible for the bulk of its activities, were formed at the Chiang Mai workshop in December 2012. Advocating for changes in enabling environment and building institutional capacity are often seen as long term endeavours. Thus, in interpreting outcomes and influences, we must consider the likely trajectory of existing efforts, and we can also view the experience of EvalPartners to-date as a quasi-experiment. Some of the initial ideas that were discussed very

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35 This included a session aimed at evaluating the P2P program from the perspective of grant participants, facilitated by Barbara Rosenstein, which included the participation of 12 P2P grant recipients as panelists, both EvalPartners coordinators, and several other VOPE members. A second EES session titled “Developing VOPEs: Learning from Each Other” also served as a source of information on experiences with the P2P. Another session focused on one of the Innovation Challenge grantees, the project on “Evaluations that Make a Difference.”
early on have taken root very quickly, and others have not. In reviewing what EvalPartners has accomplished, it is not so much in terms of weighing out the progress but in terms of using these accomplishments, and the way they have unfolded, to revisit the broader vision, strategy and role of EvalPartners going forward: what is their niche in terms of strategy and influence? What seems to work well for them and differentiate them? And this will then help us to shape the discussion on governance and next steps as we look beyond 2015.

4.1 Overview of Activities Undertaken

EvalPartners has organized most of its activities through the formation of ad hoc task forces. Each taskforce has two co-chairs, at least one of whom is a member of the EPMG. The structure and functioning of these taskforces in practice is discussed in greater length in the section on governance. In this section, we focus on the outputs and outcomes of these task forces, and of other activities and outcomes emerging from the EvalPartners’ partnership, and consider the broader leveraging and influence that these have had.

EvalPartners has five active task forces, all of which were initiated in Chiang Mai, at a three-day forum attended by 80 evaluators in December 2012. In addition, a few activities have been undertaken by EvalPartners’ partners, coordinators, and leadership, under the banner of EvalPartners. This includes many of the learning materials prepared for and hosted on the My M&E website. The main initiatives undertaken by EvalPartners are summarized in the table below, according to the three level capacity-building model that EvalPartners has articulated.

Table 2: Main activities undertaken by EvalPartners

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Levels:</th>
<th>Key Actors</th>
<th>Key initiatives:</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Enabling Environment</td>
<td>Enabling Environment Task Force</td>
<td>Advocacy Strategy</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>EP Coordinators</td>
<td>Advocacy Toolkit</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Knowledge Management &amp; Communications Task Force (also cross-cutting)</td>
<td>Promotion of 2015 as EvalYear</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Parliamentarians’ Initiative</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mapping of National Evaluation Policies</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>P2P Grants Related to Advocacy</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Innovation Challenge Grants Related to Advocacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutional Capacity</td>
<td>EP Coordinators</td>
<td>VOPE Mapping Exercise and VOPE case studies</td>
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<tr>
<td>Development</td>
<td>Institutional Toolkit Task Force</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>P2P Task Force</td>
<td>Institutional Capacity Toolkit</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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36 EvalPartners International Forum on Civil Society’s Evaluation capacities Chiang Mai, Thailand 3-6 December, 2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Individual Capacity Development</th>
<th>EvalPartners’ leadership Claremont University P2P Task force</th>
<th>Webinars and E-learning Resources on My M&amp;E website P2P Grants Focused on Individual Capacity Building</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Equity-focused, gender-responsive</td>
<td>Equity-focused, Gender Responsive Task force (also cross-cutting)</td>
<td>Webinar series on Gender-Responsive Evaluation Gender review of EvalPartners materials Innovation Challenge grants on gender-related evaluation approaches</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 4.2 Enabling environment

#### 4.2.1 Advocacy Strategy

EvalPartners’ activities related to the enabling environment have primarily been led by the Enabling Environment Taskforce, which has taken the lead on developing an EvalPartners’ Advocacy Strategy, including the promotion of 2015 as the International Year of Evaluation (EvalYear), developing an advocacy toolkit, and providing some input into the Parliamentarian’s Initiative.

In January 2013, a meeting was held in New York to develop an advocacy strategy for EvalPartners, the main task with which the Enabling Environment Taskforce had been charged. This meeting was not exclusively members of the taskforce, but also included members of the International Advisory Group with expertise in advocacy. An initial advocacy strategy was drafted based on the meeting. This advocacy strategy largely reconfirmed decisions made in Chiang Mai: particularly the decision to focus advocacy around EvalYear and to develop an advocacy toolkit for VOPEs. The resultant document itself describes some tools and approaches to advocacy, and is itself more of a resource/thinkpiece than a specific time-bound strategy.

#### 4.2.2 Advocacy Toolkit

A toolkit, available as an online text or PDF guide, provides a resource to VOPEs, or other interested stakeholders, on “to plan, design, implement, monitor and evaluate advocacy strategies to promote national evaluation policies and systems that are equity-focused and gender-responsive.” It is available online at [http://www.mymande.org/evalpartners/advocacytoolkit](http://www.mymande.org/evalpartners/advocacytoolkit).

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The toolkit was the basis of a workshop on advocacy for evaluation for VOPEs that was delivered in Yaoundé, Cameroon in March 2014 to a group of 30 VOPE leaders—15 Anglophone and 15 Francophone. Participants shared how much they appreciated having the tools, and being able to discuss and exchange ideas about their advocacy efforts.

The toolkit itself was developed by one of the task force co-chairs in collaboration with a consultant, incorporating the experiences shared during the workshop. The full toolkit, in PDF format, is currently available in English, and a synthesis of the toolkit is available in several other languages, including French, Spanish and Russian.

4.2.3 The International Year of Evaluation

The idea of promoting 2015 as the International Year of Evaluation came up early on in the conceptualization of EvalPartners, and was first discussed at the Chiang Mai Forum in 2012. EvalYear was formally announced at the UNDP & Brazilian Ministry of Social Development & EP-led National Evaluation Capacities (NEC) in Sao Paulo, Brazil, which was held from September 29 to October 2, 2013.39

The simplicity of the EvalYear message, and the creation of an EvalYear logo that partners have been encouraged to place onto their websites and into their email signatures has proven a great success. Because there are, indeed, many people who would like evaluation to enjoy a higher profile, the campaign has many champions. Regional, national and international conferences and other gatherings organized by VOPEs and other EvalPartners partners provide obvious platforms for further promoting EvalYear, which in turn provides a common symbol to rally behind.

EvalYear 2015 has been a central focal point for EvalPartners as a whole, playing a key role in its justification, as shown in progress reports. Advocacy support to VOPEs provides EvalYear as a shared goal and platform that can help them to focus their efforts and give a clear timeline. This has been a great success, as demonstrated by the strong response to EvalYear. As of October 2014, the EvalYear logo had been produced in 23 languages, and EvalYear had been recognized by 32 VOPEs, UNEG, OECD-DAC EvalNet, and Parliamentarian Forums in Asia and Africa.

Beyond endorsing EvalYear itself, UNEG, under the leadership of Deborah Rugg, has undertaken to have the international year of evaluation officially recognised through a UN resolution. Beyond the year itself, this resolution, which passed unanimously at Committee level, having been tabled by 48 countries, shows a major commitment and endorsement of evaluation on the part of UN member states. It was passed on December 19, 2014. The efforts to bring this effort to the attention of member states and have them endorse it has meant that national VOPEs have needed to lobby their national UN country mission representatives for

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38 Available at http://www.mymande.org/evalpartners/advocacytoolkit.
that purpose. Lobbying and advocacy is not necessarily a skill set that comes naturally to evaluators, but this goal has provided an excellent opportunity and motivation to develop it. Thus, the very process of organizing and advocating for EvalYear is building advocacy skills amongst VOPEs and strengthening relations between VOPEs and governments.40

4.2.4 Innovation Challenge (Round 1, Focused on Enabling Environment)

The initial purpose of the Innovation Challenge grants was to support VOPEs, or partnerships of VOPEs, to innovate alternative models for building their own institutional capacities.41 However, as excitement over the potential of promoting EvalYear grew, EvalPartners’ leadership decided to change the focus to calling for innovative approaches to building the enabling environment for evaluation.

Five proposals won a grant of $15,000 each, involving a total of 30 national and 6 regional VOPEs from different regions around the world. Each proposal takes a different approach to the strategy of building an enabling environment, already well documented by EvalPartners. At the time of this evaluation, these projects were in their end phases, but final reports at not yet been submitted.42 Nonetheless, we can already see that the process itself has generated a lot of activity and engagement from the VOPEs. Several VOPEs had to open up bank accounts in order to receive funds, suggesting that the process both stretched and strengthened their institutional capacities. In one case, VOPEs that had submitted similarly themed proposals were asked by the selection committee to work together, and resubmitted a joint proposal that was then accepted.

Evaluators are able to present and discuss the process and findings from these projects at national and regional evaluation conferences. For example, one of the winning proposals, titled “Evaluations That Make a Difference”, was the subject of a well-attended panel presentation and discussion at the European Evaluation Society’s 2014 conference, held in October. This particular project focused on capturing stories about evaluations that have made a positive social difference. This was done, again, through a competitive process by which evaluators were asked to submit examples of their evaluations, and explain how they have made a difference.

In this and other Innovation Challenge grantee projects, what is noteworthy is the degree to which these projects are able to leverage attention amongst evaluation stakeholders. Already,

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40 Information in this paragraph is based on the discussion and presentations at the Dublin EPMG meeting, and from key informant interviews.
41 EvalPartners Innovation Challenge Concept Note (Draft 1), 2013.
42 Narrative Progress Report: 1st Iteration of the Peer-to-Peer (P2P) & Innovation Challenge Small Grant Programs, 2014.
the attention and resulting discussions appear to have a value, and interest in the topics is readily evident amongst evaluators.

4.2.5 The Parliamentarians’ Initiative

The Parliamentarians’ Initiative was not part of the initial plan for EvalPartners, but fits well with the Advocacy Strategy and its emphasis on engaging new partners in alliances. This initiative also fits well with the aim of building the demand-side for evaluation, particularly at the national level.

Now under the auspices of the Enabling Environment task force, the Parliamentarians’ Initiative began through the efforts of two people: Asela Kalugampitiya and Kabir Hashim. Kalugampitiya had already done some volunteer work for EvalPartners and knew members of the EvalPartners Executive Committee. Kabir Hashim is a long-standing Member of the Sri Lankan Parliament, as well as an experienced evaluator. They were both interested in the potential of engaging parliamentarians as champions of evaluation on the demand side. The EvalPartners Executive Committee was enthusiastic about this idea and originally supported the initiative through funds in P2P and Innovation Challenge awards.

In partnership with national and regional VOPEs, UN agencies and development banks, the initiative was able to mobilize parliamentarians within seven countries in South Asia within a very short period of time. Based on this initial success, EvalPartners built on this and initiated parliamentarians’ groups in Africa (in March 2014), and within the North Africa and Middle East region (in May 2014). In October 2014, an ‘International Parliamentarians Day’ event was held during the European Evaluation Society Conference in Dublin.

In one and a half years, the Parliamentarian’s Initiative has made immense progress, managing to have parliamentarians on panels in almost every international conference on evaluation, and also encouraging parliamentarians to learn about how the evaluation systems in their own countries work. They have seen an enthusiastic response. Indeed, while they have encountered some resistance, it tends to more from the civil servants rather than the parliamentarians, as the latter can see evaluation as a tool for empowerment.

Those leading on this initiative applied for funds from the Innovation Challenge programme. These were used to develop a website for the Parliamentarians’ Forum for Development Evaluation (PFDE) (www.pfde.net), to support the group’s work to promote the creation of national evaluation policies within six countries within South Asia, to develop comparative case studies on the development of nation evaluation policies in six countries, and to support the

43 Kabir Hashim, Presentation to the EPMG, Dublin, September 2014.
44 Ibid.
gathering of parliamentarians at several international evaluation conferences.\textsuperscript{45} An additional $5000 allocated by EvalPartners was used to commission a study mapping which countries in the world have national evaluation policies, and released publicly.\textsuperscript{46} As part of EvalYear, they plan to launch the Global Parliamentarian’s Forum on Development Evaluation.

Those championing this initiative have found EvalPartners to be a receptive and supportive group which has recognized, legitimized and amplified their innovation. They’ve mutually energized each other and accomplished a great deal in a short period of time, in part because they themselves are deeply enthusiastic about the potential of parliamentarians as champions for evaluation use, and in part because of the previous work and relationships that they were able to draw upon.

One challenge facing the initiative is the need to formalize as it grows, and if it wants to continue.\textsuperscript{47} Kalugampitiya’s increased engagement in voluntary work on the Parliamentarians’ Initiative led to him being hired by EvalPartners as a fulltime coordinator, devoting himself fulltime to EvalPartners’ preparatory activities for EvalYear, including the Initiative. While EvalPartners is directly supporting the Parliamentarians’ Initiative through this coordinator position in the short-term, there is a question as to how this can be sustained going forward, and whether VOPEs have the capacity to work with Parliamentarians to achieve common goals.

\subsection*{4.2.6 Peer-to-Peer Grants related to Advocacy}

In the first round of P2P grants, some grantees explicitly focused on advocacy efforts, although these were a minority. In the survey with 19 first-round P2P respondents, there are 12 mentions of outcomes associated with improving the enabling environment, or increasing advocacy capacity of VOPEs. These include: increasing the visibility and legitimacy of the VOPE within the country, increased awareness of evaluation within the country, increased connections

\begin{table}
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\begin{tabular}{|l|}
\hline
\textbf{Advocacy Projects Funded Under P2P2:} \\
Monitoring and Evaluation for Effective and Efficient Service Delivery (Kenya)  \\
M&E for Improved Local Governance System in Armenia  \\
Supporting 2015 as the International Evaluation Year (EvalYear): achievements and challenges of evaluation in Argentina  \\
Media Promoting Evaluation Culture in MENA  \\
Public sector monitoring and evaluation training provided to the Somali government employees and carrying out media campaigns to increase the demand for evaluation in the Somalia  \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{table}

\textsuperscript{47} Kabir Hashim, Presentation to the EPMG, Dublin, September 2014.
between the VOPE and the government, and in a few instances, movement towards national evaluation policies, and training provided to government officials.48

The second round of peer-to-peer grants, in 2014, included a category specifically for advocacy projects aimed at creating an enabling environment for evaluation. Unlike the regular category of peer-to-peer grants, these could be awarded to a single VOPE.

Five of the 16 projects awarded funds through this round of P2Ps were categorized within the advocacy category. At the time of this evaluation, these projects are still near the beginning, so it is too early to speak about outcomes.

4.2.7 Knowledge Management and Communications Task Force

The knowledge management and communications task force came about based on a revised vision of the Knowledge Generation Task Force, one of the task forces initially established in Chiang Mai. This task force’s original objective was to “develop even further knowledge about VOPEs, as well as VOPE’s capacity to develop sustainable strategies for learning.”49 However, the task force members did not share a clear vision on what this meant, and the task force never developed an action plan. Instead, in the late spring of 2013, one of the task force co-chairs, in collaboration with one of the members, came up with a concept note for a Knowledge Management task force, which would develop some practical external communications tools for EvalPartners. This new vision shifted the task force towards a more crosscutting theme of documenting good or better practices and improving external communication about EvalPartners, largely through the internet and social media. They initiated the idea of a newsletter, which was eventually taken up by the EPMG as a task for the coordinators.

This task force has in practice therefore been more of a support to other task forces, perhaps most strongly the Enabling Environment task force. It has aided in the promotion of EvalYear, documenting and sharing P2P experiences through different channels, and creating spaces for discussion of EvalPartners, including the global agenda after 2015. They have used a blog, a LinkedIn group dedicated to EvalPartners, and using VOPE channels and global networks (e.g. IPDET, XCEval and MandENews) to disseminate information.

4.3 Institutional Capacity Development

4.3.1 VOPE Mapping Project

The VOPE mapping project, and subsequent publication of a book of case studies documenting the experiences of VOPE development, was one of EvalPartners’ formative actions, and one that

48 See Annex F for a full summary of the P2P Survey results.
has contributed to a growing sense of self-awareness, empowerment and a shared sense of identity and purpose amongst VOPEs, and amongst evaluation practitioners.\footnote{50}

It is not possible, drawing on the evidence available to this evaluation, to tease out precisely what EvalPartners has contributed to the broad awareness of the evaluation sector. EvalPartners’ activities have been mixed in with a broader trend of exchange and demand which, as the mapping itself shows, predates the formation of EvalPartners. However, the spontaneous use of the term ‘VOPE’ by a number of survey respondents is a remarkable indirect indication of the broad reach of EvalPartners, given that the latter coined the term. This uptake of the term was also noted in a discussion session at the EES conference.

4.3.2 Institutional Capacity Toolkit

The institutional capacity toolkit for VOPEs was developed under the management of the Institutional Capacity Toolkit task force. It was intended to fill a perceived gap in materials focusing on possible terms of reference of VOPEs, and what it might take to perform well as a VOPE. Most of the work was completed by a consultant, beginning in October 2013.

The toolkit aims to provide guidance and tools to VOPEs, or the would-be founders of VOPEs, under three broad categories:

1. Founding and governing a VOPE
2. Institutionalizing the VOPE
3. Carrying out the business of a VOPE

The documents and other files were initially housed on a publicly accessible Dropbox folder, and then, by June 2014, were moved to a website hosted by WordPress (http://vopetoolkit.wordpress.com). It was also distributed on CD at the AfrEA workshop in March, 2014, which also served as a means to get feedback from potential users. As noted in a progress report from May 2014:

Comments from participants indicated that the resources are particularly useful, and that they found the opportunity to discuss these resources with other VOPEs useful. Comments from workshop participants have been incorporated and a number of the workshop participants agreed to continue to be involved with the promotion of use of the toolkit.\footnote{51}

\footnote{50} The book is available at http://mymande.org/evalpartners/selected_books. The VOPE database itself is constantly updated on the www.IOCE.org website.

A social media awareness campaign was launched on September 5, 2014, and this led to a spike in site visits and downloads. By September 11, 2014, there had been a total of 824 visits. Those downloading the toolkit and providing feedback identified themselves as VOPE volunteers, primarily (at that point in time), from Africa.

Initially, the resources were only available in English. However, there were plans to translate resources to French with the assistance of the Réseau Francophone de l’Evaluation.

While initial feedback from VOPEs was positive, it is rather early to talk about outcomes of the VOPE toolkit.

### 4.3.3 Peer-to-Peer Grants

The Peer-to-Peer Grant program is a cornerstone of EvalPartners’ activities, and has been very popular amongst VOPEs. The VOPE survey found a high awareness of the P2P programme, with 9 of the 11 respondents having heard of it, with some having applied.

The P2P grant mechanism allows any VOPE that has been recognised by IOCE (by completing a survey questionnaire) to apply. Most categories of application require VOPEs to submit joint applications with at least one other VOPE, to stimulate peer learning from amongst the VOPEs.

In the initial call for proposals, 25 proposals were received, and all of them were positively judged through a peer review process, and successfully awarded the grant. According to the final reports submitted by the grantees, almost all the recipients were fully successful in meeting their intended outcomes, and in some cases, surpassed them. The proposals engaged a total of 32 national and 6 regional VOPEs from all regions of the world.52

Some of the P2P projects have explicit objectives to develop the institutional capacity of a VOPE. Others are rather focused on advocacy (see Section 4.2.6 above), relationship building or

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creating resources or standards to support the capacity development of their members. However, even in these cases, it is almost inevitable that some aspect of the work will develop institutional capacity in the VOPE. The P2P survey found that respondents rated the P2P programme an average of 4.2 out of 5 in terms of effectiveness in building VOPE capacity. Further, the P2P process is itself intended to develop the capacity of the VOPEs and their leaders. For smaller VOPEs, this was often the first time they received a grant, and it gave them a chance to prove themselves and develop a track record that could make it easier to meet donor requirements in the future.

It is important to remember that the grants were quite modest: just $5000 per project. This was the main limitation noted by respondents to the P2P survey. While this obviously limited what could be achieved with the grants, it also made the entry and reporting requirements quite light. At the P2P Assessment session at the EES, grantees discussed the idea that the small amount could be used in whole or part to pilot an initiative or develop a more extensive proposal with which to attract larger grants. As with the other categories of P2P grants, grantees were able to leverage very wide ranging results through considerable in-kind contribution in the form of what one P2P grantee reports as “massive amounts” of volunteer effort. In addition, participants at the EES session on P2P self-evaluation reported that some of their VOPEs had added some funds in to help complete the work.

A common observation is that the exchanges were mutually valuable for the VOPEs involved. For example, participants in P2P#3 had initially set up the Israel VOPE as the ‘donor’ of knowledge, or experts, because it had a document laying out ethics of practice in place, and the Romania VOPE as the ‘recipient’, because they wanted to develop such standards. This classification was according to their interpretation of the way P2P was structured. However, they rejected this structure in favour of a more egalitarian exchange, recognizing that both partners could learn and improve. While Israel’s VOPE had guidelines for ethical practice of evaluation in place, they realised that they were not necessarily using them optimally. The exchange allowed both VOPEs the opportunity to reflect.

The two most important capacity changes that VOPEs gained through participating in the P2P grant programme were reported as ‘professional networking and knowledge sharing’ and ‘improved potential for future collaboration between VOPEs’, as reported by P2P survey respondents. Thus, the P2P has effectively met its aim of, not just building isolated VOPE capacities, but contributing to the creation of effective networks. The final reports of the first round of P2P projects and the comments of grantees during the EES P2P “live evaluation” session both reinforce this finding that one of the biggest benefits of the P2P grants was in relationship building amongst the VOPEs. As one participant noted, even though the VOPEs in

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53 It is not apparent to the evaluation team that the notion of one VOPE as ‘expert’ and another VOPE as ‘recipient’ was the intention of those setting up the P2P program, but perhaps this was embedded in some language unintentionally.
Europe tend to be small and so are already somewhat familiar with each other, the P2P grant provided them an opportunity to deepen the relationship by working on something together. By far the most common activity undertaken with P2P grant funds was organizing workshops or other face-to-face meetings, undertaken by 24 of the 25 projects.54

These relationships have both immediate benefits, in terms of mutual inspiration and learning exchanges, and future potential, as VOPEs can more readily engage each other as future ideas and opportunities may arise. In this sense, the P2P programme is itself contributing to the creation of an international evaluation movement. Findings from the P2P survey suggest that the VOPEs’ capacity changes are sustainable. Of the 18 P2P respondents, 11 (61%) said they were able to sustain or build on the capacity changes they had achieved through their first round grant, and 4 (22%) had partially been able to do so.

Based on the way the grants were used, feedback from the P2P survey and the discussion amongst grantees at the EES session, there are a number of ways that the P2P grants might be further leveraged in the future. A number of these suggestions were already incorporated into the second round of grants, including recognizing the high costs of travel meant slightly larger grants, based on the number of institutions participating, would not penalize larger consortiums and would provide more possibility for travel.

Other suggestions for further leveraging the learning amongst P2P participants include:

- Seeing the P2P projects as pilots or experiments that may be of value to the broader evaluation community, where relevant, and creating more channels and a more visible/consolidated platform for sharing these broadly.
- Having open reflective sessions at professional evaluation conferences as a regular occurrence is one possibility.
- Some outputs from P2Ps could be gathered and perhaps included in the institutional toolkit as examples – for example, ethical and professional standards for conduct. Even proceedings from workshops discussing these issues might provide a useful resource for VOPEs thinking through similar issues.
- A few people mentioned that the Wikispace being used to host all P2P related documentation was not very ‘social’ – it was not possible for them to know whether other VOPEs had downloaded their proposals and progress reports, or what they thought about them, if they had.
- Providing support to VOPEs to use online tools for learning exchanges. This could encourage more cross-regional collaborations and linkages. AfrEA and ReLAC experimented with such approaches, with reported success, but most VOPEs have not done so.

54 Narrative Progress Report: 1st Iteration of the Peer-to-Peer (P2P) & Innovation Challenge Small Grant Programs, 2014.
• VOPE members talked about the need to continue on with processes that had been started through the P2P grants. Some had managed to “chain” the first grant to a second one through the next round, and suggested this should be a more explicit policy. VOPEs also wanted more information and support around the potential for leveraging a P2P grant to apply for a larger grant or to find matching funding.

• Survey respondents mentioned a similar need for more learning and sharing across P2P grantees, and also amongst grantees and non-grantee VOPEs.

• Some survey respondents pointed to a need for more transparent and formal enforcement of selection criteria, especially in the second round.

• The most common suggestion amongst survey respondents was that the grant amounts should be increased.

A few people, both in the EES discussion session, and in responding to the survey, spoke of the need to develop a more formal, or more clearly articulated approach for building VOPE capacity in smaller VOPEs. The initial pilot of the P2P project was carried out as a partnership between SQEP, CES, and AfrEA, focused on strengthening the institutional capacities of several African VOPEs and establishing a mentorship program by connected volunteer VOPE leaders in well-established VOPEs with those in newly formed VOPEs. However, in practice, this aspect of the project was judged to have been quite limited by its organizers, due largely to the limited time availability of the volunteers.55 Discussions amongst VOPE members at EES suggested that people found a co-learning approach amongst peers more fruitful, suggesting that P2P has evolved well and the lack of prescribed approach is appreciated by the VOPEs.

4.3.4 Process-Related Capacity-Building

While the P2P process itself has clearly resulted in capacity-building for the VOPEs, process-related capacity gains are also reported amongst other institutions. Most noteworthy is the IOCE. EvalPartners has given it a unique opportunity to become a grant-receiving agency, requiring it to step up to the task by formalizing its management and processes.\(^\text{56}\) This greatly improves the chances that the Government of Finland, or another donor, will agree to give it direct funds in the future, and opens the possibility that IOCE, if appropriate, could become the sole administrator of EvalPartners.

Key informants commented that, even within UN agencies, the existence of EvalPartners and the symbolic value of the Chiang Mai Declaration and having a clearly identified ‘global community’ has helped evaluation units within the UN lobby for greater recognition. It makes all evaluators stronger by association and has a legitimizing effect.

4.4 Individual Capacity Building

4.4.1 Supporting the Capacity-Building of Individual VOPE Members via P2P

In addition to advocacy and institutional capacity building, the peer-to-peer grant programme has also allowed VOPEs to pursue initiatives related to the individual capacity building of their members.

Of the first round P2P projects, seven of the 25 (as listed in the text box below) can be categorized as being wholly or in part focused on developing the capacity of individual members. In the case of P2P#14 and P2P#23, this was indirect, with the goal of developing

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\(^{56}\) The relationship between EvalPartners and IOCE has clearly been mutually beneficial, as without IOCE, EvalPartners would not exist!

First Round P2P Projects Related to Individual Capacity-Building

- Development of Guidelines for Ethical Practice in Evaluation in Romania (P2P#3, Romania, Israel)
- Creating a formal training program for evaluators (P2P#4, Romania, Slovenia)
- Training to Cambodia VOPE members (P2P#5, Cambodia, Malaysia)
- Framing a voluntary peer review system for professional certification in Europe (P2P#8, UK, EES)
- Mutual Learning between AfrEA and ReLAC – including developing partnerships between VOPEs and academia (P2P#14, AfrEA, ReLAC)
- Building the Pakistan Evaluation Network’s capacity for training and knowledge dissemination (P2P#23, Malaysia, Pakistan)
- Developing Thailand’s Certification of Professional Evaluators Programme (P2P#25, Thailand, Canada)
institutional capacities within the VOPEs that would then allow them to provide services to members.

These seven grantees all reported that they were able to complete their activities successfully. A member of the EES from the Ukraine notes that the P2P grant paid for travel to the workshop on framing a voluntary peer review system (P2P#8), but the event also required some in-kind and financial support from VOPEs. The main outcome of this was a shared understanding of what evaluation standards are, and a chance to compare different national experiences.

In P2P#14 grant, ReLAC was interested in learning from the experience of AfrEA, which has a longer history. According to participants, about half of the P2P grant was focused on guidelines for evaluation, which AfrEA had already established. This interest was piqued due to AfrEA’s earlier contribution to the VOPE case study book. Because the regions are so far from each other, the funds were mainly spent on a single plane ticket. The value came from volunteer work and the use of online exchanges.

A representative of the Swiss Evaluation Society reported receiving money through a P2P grant, and using most of it for the revision of their standards. It is a luxury for VOPEs to have funds with which to pay someone to take on such a task.

The second round of P2P grants introduced a new category that allowed VOPEs to pair with academic institutions, specifically to focus on individual capacity building. Only one grantee fell into this category: the Malaysian Evaluation Society, in partnership with the Malaysia University of Science and Technology. The grant is for teaching evaluation to public officials, not necessarily members of the VOPE.

4.4.2 E-learning Resources on the My M&E Website

While we can see from the professional evaluators’ survey that e-learning available to individuals is a well known element of what EvalPartners does, most of the e-learning material currently falls outside the purview of any of the taskforces.

The My M&E website predates EvalPartners, but like EvalPartners, it was also created in partnership between UNICEF and IOCE. It provides a variety of online resources for evaluators, and communities of practice which anyone can join. A number of these resources have been provided through EvalPartners, the most significant of which have been free e-learning seminars, made available in partnership with Claremont University with funding support from 57

57 This was reported in the P2P Self-Evaluation session at the 2014 EES Conference in Dublin.
the Rockefeller Foundation. In EvalPartners’ 2013 budget, for example, $77,500 was allocated to the website (12% of the total).

The association of EvalPartners with the My M&E website appears to have been of benefit to both the website, in terms of traffic, and to EvalPartners, in terms of brand recognition. There was an immense jump in traffic to the website between 2011 and 2012, when EvalPartners launched, at the same time as the e-learning programme on development evaluation on My M&E.

The e-learning programme was launched in June 2012 and started accepting registrants for its new e-learning course. It had 1,300 registrants within its first 48 hours, and by the time the course started in September 2012, it had 4,500 registrants from over 117 countries, largely from the global South.

Through contacts with EvalPartners regional VOPEs (including AfrEA, IPEN, EvalMENA, ReLAC, and Teaching Evaluation in South Africa TESA – a project of IDRC), EvalPartners was able to develop regionally relevant content in a number of languages. By 2014, there were e-learning courses on a variety of evaluation topics available in English, French, Spanish, Arabic and Russian, all free of charge. By September 2014, the total number of people who had participated in these courses was 20,000, from 178 countries. This is an incredible global reach. Many of the people in the online evaluators’ survey who had heard of EvalPartners knew of them because of their e-learning programme.

58 Through the financial support of the Rockefeller Foundation, coupled with financial support from Claremont University, EvalPartners entered into this collaboration to offer scholarships to support evaluators working in, or originally from, non-EU countries to attend the on-line Professional Development Workshop Series on Evaluation and Applied Research Methods. Now offered for two consecutive years, more than 1300 scholars have already gone through the workshops in 2013 and 2014, which are a cost-effective and highly accessible means to develop knowledge within the broader evaluation practitioner community amongst non-EU regions.

59 Based on information in the monthly progress reports at http://www.mymande.org/evalpartners/highlights_on_key_progress_with_evalpartners, accessed on November 2, 2014.

In July 2013, a survey of visitors to the My M&E website was conducted. It noted overall positive user experiences, with the most common suggestions being to improve the user interface, which some users noted as confusing, to improve the registration system for classes, to increase the number of languages in which materials were available, and to allow webinars to be downloaded, and the slides for webinars to be downloaded separately from the audio. Some of these changes have since been made, particularly with respect to the increased variety of languages available.

**4.5 Promoting Equity-Focused, Gender-Responsive Evaluation**

Most of the activities related to equity-focused, gender-responsive evaluation have been coordinated through the task force of the same name. The accomplishments of this task force, as presented at the 2014 EPMG meeting in Dublin, are as follows:

- A webinar series focused on promoting equity-focused, gender-responsive evaluation, with three webinars held between August 2013 and September 2014;
- Supporting four projects to promote equity-focused, gender-responsive evaluation, awarded through the Innovation Challenge framework. These focused mainly on creating guidelines and frameworks for including gender components in evaluations.

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• Working with other task forces to ensure that gender and equity issues are included (within the Advocacy Toolkit, e-learning modules on My M&E, gender and equity parameters included in assessments and reporting of peer-to-peer and innovation challenge grants)
• EvalPartners participated in UN Women’s Joint Systematic Review of Gender Results in Development

Discussions in Dublin showed that the efforts to incorporate gender-responsive perspectives within the P2P grant process had seen limited effect. One of the leads in managing the P2P process observed, “My impression is that people pay lip service to that in the proposal, and they ignore it in the reports.” This suggests that this focus does not resonate strongly with existing VOPE priorities and capacities. Two key points emerged from the resulting discussion. First was that there was a need to support gender-responsive evaluations through dedicated projects focusing on this (such as the Innovation Challenge round focused on gender-responsive evaluation). Second, there is a need to distinguish between country-led (or VOPE-led) processes, where the grantees are free to determine their own priorities, and advocacy efforts, where EvalPartners may choose to promote a specific agenda, such as gender equity. The latter should not be pursued at the expense of the former, and indeed, there can be room within EvalPartners for both sorts of strategies.

Comments from a number of key informants received that there are divergent views on the way the gender and equity agenda is being framed and pursued by EvalPartners. One observer noted that the gender agenda seemed to have a different flavour from other EvalPartners’ undertakings, being rather focused on content. He noted that there are many potential priority areas that public policy, programming, and the evaluation informing it, may grapple with. It is not clear that, in every instance, gender and equity would top the list of priorities requiring special and explicit attention for inclusion in an evaluation. Why not prioritize and pursue other pressing issues, such as climate change, biodiversity, child health and so forth? Another informant critiqued the way the issue had been formulated within EvalPartners, suggesting that it was somewhat superficial and risked being tokenistic, “The way they say ‘gender and equity’, it is like it is all one word.” She noted that equity issues were much more complex and nuanced, that the focus on equity had been somewhat overshadowed by the focus on gender, and again, that they needed to be framed by circumstances.

This sort of discussion may be helpful in terms of reflecting on what EvalPartners is, what it is not, and how this may further take shape in the future. Feedback from the task force members suggest that those with a commitment to promoting gender equity in evaluation find it useful and assuring to have a broader community that they can connect to and work with. There are organizations, specific units within organizations, and individual consultants with a focus on gender-focused evaluations. The challenge they face is in knowing how to link to and communicate with the task force more broadly. To date, the opportunities for inclusion and
exchange have reportedly been limited.\textsuperscript{63} The other side of this is that task force co-chairs can find it challenging to engage task force members, who are all voluntary and may not respond to emails and requests for input – a challenge that is also common to other task forces.

During the Dublin EPMG meeting, it was suggested that several task forces, including the Gender and Equity Task Force, might operate more effectively in another form, as a network of stakeholders, both VOPEs and other organizations, with a specific interest in gender and evaluation. While this leads to questions about the type of support that would work to sustain such a network, the findings from this evaluation support such a view: the gender and equity agenda should not be a ‘push’ onto VOPEs which may be struggling with other priorities, but should be a means of support and exchange amongst those with some commitment or at least expressed interest on the issue.

Perhaps a model such as the AEA’s thematic interest groups is worth considering, but at an international level (and the issue of individual engagement or institutional representative engagement would also need to be addressed). EvalPartners can provide a potential platform and coming together for any issue deemed to be important to the international evaluation community. Nobody questioned the importance of gender and equity as a worthwhile agenda – what was more in question was why only this to the exclusion of other pressing social issues, and why this framed in such a particular way?

4.6 Section Conclusion: Building on EvalPartners’ Achievements

4.6.1 Learning from Success: What is Going Right and Why?

Having completed an overview of EvalPartners’ activities and related outcomes with respect to capacity building, we must first be impressed by the sheer breadth and depth of their accomplishments.

In interviews with key informants, both closely and more distantly linked to EvalPartners, two actions stand out as EvalPartners’ greatest successes to-date. These are the EvalYear advocacy campaign, and the design and execution of the Peer-to-Peer Grant Programme.\textsuperscript{64} The Parliamentarian’s Initiative also stands out as a widely hailed success.

Four key factors characterize these three initiatives:

1. **Resonance and relevance**: Because these three initiatives fit felt needs and desires within the evaluation community, people are, not just willing, but excited, to rally behind them, join in, and support them. While a fairly small number of champions have been behind the

\textsuperscript{63} More recently a new EvalGender+ network has been established, with many initial partners. This will provide an alternative network for those with particular EFGR interest, allowing EvalPartners to play a larger role of “network of networks.”

\textsuperscript{64} The collection of this information predated the successful passing of the UN Resolution supporting the importance of evaluation, and including action points for countries, which greatly increases the potential leverage of EvalYear as an advocacy tool for evaluators.
initial ideas and actions, they also have been able to find sympathetic and strong support, and to bring on new champions.

2. **Relationships**: Each of these actions has helped to form and develop relationships and networks across a broad range of evaluation stakeholders internationally. This essentially creates potential for future action, as these stakeholders know each other, and can more easily rally behind each others’ initiatives.

3. **Flexibility/openness**: VOPEs and other partners can choose how to relate to EvalPartners, and through EvalPartners, to each other. There are some minimum resources and support provided, but the general culture promotes a do-it-yourself approach. This has been partially based on necessity (i.e. limited funds), but also helps to stretch the imagination and mean that people only take on actions that they care about. The P2P programme shows this, as most VOPEs ended up putting in a large amount of volunteer time to their initiatives, and some also put in additional funds. What was achieved out of $5000 grants is really impressive.\(^{65}\)

4. **Boldness of imagination**: EvalYear, and particularly the move to pass a UN Resolution challenging each country to take action to promote the use of evaluation and report back, is an incredibly bold and courageous move. Because it resonates with so many evaluation stakeholders, it also excites and challenges their imaginations, and helps to create a culture of innovation and risk-taking. The Parliamentarian’s Initiative is another example of something that went beyond the initial imaginations of the EvalPartners’ founders, but was able to find support from them.

### 4.6.2 Building on Success: Focal Areas for Amplifying EvalPartners’ Existing Strengths

There are three major focal areas where EvalPartners can make adjustments or expend more effort and resources to amplify their existing strengths:

1. **Locating sufficient resources for larger projects**: The process of creating the VOPE toolkit is an example that highlights some of the strengths and limitations of the EvalPartners’ task force approach. The task force leadership notes that having a paid consultant able to focus on the task was key, while there are questions about what will happen in terms of maintaining the resource once her contribution is complete. Many key informants also questioned how much they could realistically expect voluntary contributions to effectively support translation and management efforts. This suggests that EvalPartners will need to identify and effectively allocate resources for larger and more concrete projects. So far, it has done well with what it has. However, and not surprisingly, many VOPEs would like to see the amount of resources available to support them increase.

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\(^{65}\) See Annex F for a more detailed summary of findings from the P2P email survey.
2. **Communications**: While the Enabling Environment Task Force and Knowledge Management Task Force have both done well, and the latter with fairly limited resources, external communications was widely reported as an area where EvalPartners could usefully put further resources and attention. Specific challenges include language differences in different countries and regions that can make truly global communication more difficult. Coordination between regional VOPEs can help in this regard, and has been used, although the degree of voluntary effort required can be a challenge.

3. **Engaging and coordinating more broadly**: While EvalPartners has managed to fill a role as a convener, there is room to increase this by making it even easier for people to engage. There is a clear appetite for such engagement, as shown by the response to EvalYear. One member of the EPMG meeting recalled that numerous individuals had stopped him at a recent conference when they saw he was wearing an ‘EvalYear’ pin, because they wanted to know how to get involved. He explained, “People involved in evaluation need a sense of belonging...It’s not about advocating, it is just about letting them get involved.” In the evaluation survey, VOPE members expressed that sometimes they don’t know how to get involved with EvalPartners initiatives, although they would like to do so. This theme was echoed by some key informants, who noted it can be hard to understand EvalPartners’ structure and know how to engage it.

Clarifying processes, making them as transparent and public as possible, and communicating as clearly as possible everything that EvalPartners and its collective networks are doing are actions that are all hugely empowering and are likely to have catalytic effect, mirroring the strength of the evaluation community back to itself.

More specific recommendations for future actions are included at the end of this report.

**4.6.3 Reviewing EvalPartners’ Theory-of-Change and Logic Model Against its Achievements**

In the previous section, we saw that EvalPartners’ theory-of-change was broadly validated by the evaluators’ survey. Having examined EvalPartners’ activities in this section, we can confirm that the theory-of-change is an appropriate model for guiding EvalPartners’ actions. Two further characteristics of EvalPartners’ efforts, which can both be understood in relation to its theory-of-change, are worth highlighting: first, the results of EvalPartners’ efforts tend to be synergistic and catalytic; second, the processes which EvalPartners catalyzes cannot be understood in separation from the results it achieves.

In contrast to the broader theory-of-change, the EvalPartners’ logic model, as a specific depiction of this theory, does not entirely manage to capture the full range and nature of what EvalPartners has achieved. This is because it focuses on VOPE development and the

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66 Based on Key Informant Interviews, the VOPE survey, and discussions at the EPMG meeting in Dublin in October 2014.
strengthening of evaluation specifically to be equity-focused, gender-responsive, and country-led, with the ultimate outcome stated as equity and gender equality in all countries. But, as described earlier, this is only one of many important policy goals that evaluation can aid and contribute to. The value aspect of evaluation must surely come out of a process of public deliberation. While there are specific organizations and groups that are committed very specifically to this goal, others are committed to goals such as addressing climate change, or evaluation may be applied to solving arguably more mundane but important issues such as traffic flow in a city, urban livability and so forth. Given the networked nature of EvalPartners, a logic model with such specific ends is probably not necessary: the evaluation movement will mature, and different actors will have different needs to meet, and different goals to pursue. While EvalPartners can be a platform for elaborating shared goals, its own goals should be open rather than closed, and emergent rather than deterministic.

We now turn to the third, and final, findings section, on governance, decision-making and implementation.
5 Findings III: Governance, Decision-Making & Implementation

5.1 EvalPartners’ Governance Model

As noted earlier in this report, EvalPartners was founded by two organizations: IOCE and UNICEF. IOCE was originally conceived as an umbrella group for all VOPes (although the term was not yet coined when it began) and established primarily as a virtual forum for VOPEs to learn from and support each other in their common cause of advancing evaluation. IOCE’s stated mission is: “to legitimate and strengthen evaluation societies, associations, or networks so that they can better contribute to good governance and strengthen civil society. It will build evaluation capacity, develop evaluation principles and procedures, encourage the development of new evaluation societies and associations or networks, undertake educational activities that will increase public awareness of evaluation, and seek to secure resources for co-operative activity. It will be a forum for the exchange of useful and high quality methods, theories, and effective practice in evaluation.”

IOCE was funded by membership fees, with members being a collection of regional and larger national VOPEs. However, this was not a very effective funding source, as many VOPEs had extremely limited budgets. While they had no problem in articulating a common agenda, it was difficult for them to advance that agenda without dedicated paid staff or any real funds.

In January 2012, at an IOCE meeting in Accra, in January 2012, Marco Segone of UNICEF proposed a joint project between the two organizations. Segone had been a champion of evaluation within UNICEF, which itself had promoted the idea of building national evaluation capacity. Segone saw the potential of IOCE’s role in strengthening the capacity of national evaluation associations. UNICEF, and particularly Segone, played a key role in securing funding and convincing key actors that such a venture was viable.

The start of EvalPartners and its early history is filled with a number of evaluation champions: individuals who held a passion for evaluation as a potential means for furthering positive social change, and who were able to convince others. Many of these individuals had been active evaluators for years, and were also able to leverage the support of their respective institutions. Within the VOPEs, people were immediately enthusiastic about the potential of EvalPartners. There was a broadly felt need for such an initiative. We can see that the current characteristics of EvalPartners are rooted in the way that it was created. It was able to move so quickly in part

69 A forthcoming article by Tessie Catsambas, to be published in the AEA Journal, documents this history of EvalPartners and some of its early milestones.
because of its informality, and because it could draw on institutions, activities and personalities already deeply connected and embedded in evaluation; it wasn’t starting from scratch.

**EvalPartners’ Governance in Theory and Practice**

As an independent and entirely voluntary network (with the exception of the two paid coordinator positions (one full time and one part-time) and a Secretariat run through a contract with an Association Management firm), EvalPartners is governed by the executive committee of the management group, many of whom are also IOCE board members. The IOCE Board does not include UN representation which is included as part of the oversight function of EP. IOCE has an Executive Committee (consisting of a President, Secretary, Vice-President, and Treasurer), and a Board of Trustees (consisting of representatives of regional VOPEs). The Corporate Secretariat through Megram International manages the day-to-day work of EvalPartners, alongside the two co-ordinators. A strategic planning and implementation body (the EvalPartners Management Group) and by extension, its Executive Committee, represent the key decision-making bodies of EvalPartners. Since the beginning of EvalPartners, all IOCE Board members are automatically also on the EPMG, and all IOCE officers (the IOCE Executive Committee) are automatically also a part of the EvalPartners ExCom. In theory, decision-making is predicated on a three-step process in which the MG first develops proposals that the International Advisory Group then reviews and makes recommendations to the EC. In practice, the decision-making process unfolds somewhat differently than in theory, as elaborated further below. The EC is responsible for taking final decisions through consensus and overseeing the implementation of actions relating to those decisions. The International Advisory Group (IAG) is composed of a group of ‘core partners’ termed ‘institutional members, plus selected influential evaluators who provide overall guidance and recommendations on the conceptualization, strategies, and implementation of the initiative, including proposals developed by the MG.”

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70 Megram Consulting Services Ltd is the Association Management firm providing Secretariat services to EvalPartners and in parallel serves as the IOCE Secretariat.

71 The Executive Committee (EC) of the Management Group is the ultimate body responsible and accountable to ensure that EvalPartners activities are aligned and consistent with EvalPartners vision and objectives. The EC takes decisions (by consensus) on funding, major activities and any major related issues dealing with the direction of EvalPartners. EC takes decisions taking into account the advice provided by the IAG on MG proposals. In the case of funds transferred to UNICEF, UNICEF’s financial and administrative rules and regulations will apply. The EC is composed of representatives of the Founder Partners. With the understanding that the IOCE represents VOPEs worldwide, and with the intent to strengthen IOCE role, the EC is composed of: IOCE President; IOCE Vice President; IOCE Secretary; IOCE Treasurer; UN Women; and the EvalPartners Coordinator. As referenced from the document titled ‘EvalPartners Governance v10’ and updated for accuracy.

72 Institutional Members are Presidents of Regional and major VOPEs that joined EvalPartners, including: AEA, AES, APEA, AfrEA, CES, CoE, EES, EvalMENA, IFEN, ReLAC, UNICEF: Director, Evaluation Office, UNDP: Director and Deputy Director, Evaluation Office, UNEG: Chair, UN Women: Chief of Evaluation, IDRC: Director, Evaluation Office, African Development Bank: Director, Evaluation Office, Government of Finland: Senior Evaluation Officer, Government of Spain: Director, Evaluation Office, Government of Switzerland: Director, SCD Evaluation Office, Government of US: Director, USAID/PPL/GER, Rockefeller Foundation: Director of Evaluation and Senior Evaluation Officer, Claremont Graduate University: Dean & Chair of Psychology
results according to its own rules and regulations\(^7\), a Management Group composed of representatives from IOCE and selected stakeholders ensures implementation proceeds according to the plans.\(^7\) Figure 1 below demonstrates relationship amongst EvalPartners key governance bodies, specifying the role that each of these bodies is expected to play within that structure.

As the graphic illustrates, four distinct bodies are devoted to advisory, leadership, fundraising, and management coordination functions, with a Secretariat and two coordinator positions devoted to maintaining administrative, communication, and coordination functions. Missing from this typology are the task forces, whose primary function is to execute the strategic plans of the MG.

Figure 13: EvalPartners Governance Model

(and Evaluation), PACT: director – results and measurement, UNEDAP: Co-Chair, Preval: Executive Director, AGDEN: Chair and Deputy Chair, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies: Head, Planning and Evaluation.

\(^7\) With the exception of P2P funds being managed by IOCE.

\(^7\) UNICEF initially played the role that UN Women currently holds.
Missing from the above illustration are the task forces who implement the projects and activities of EvalPartners.

**EvalPartners in Practice**

As a network and a global movement, EvalPartners is governed by the above structure, characterized by strategic management bodies that provide expert advice, fundraise, set direction, facilitate coordination, and undertake decisions. At the operational or project management level, task forces (presently there are five) act as idea generators and implementers, where the majority of EvalPartners’ output is produced. It was in Chiang Mai that the MG decided to conduct the EP’s work through these task forces. The MG is also responsible for creating ad-hoc task forces to address specific initiatives and manage their activities. In addition, other relevant experts can be invited to contribute as warranted. The EPMG can create ad-hoc taskforces to take action on specific initiatives. At present, there are five such taskforces, which were described earlier in the capacity building section of this report (enabling environment, P2P, institutional capacity toolkit, equity-focused, gender-responsive, and knowledge management and communication). As further discussed in the sections that follow, there are significant challenges to volunteerism and areas of improvement cited for decision-making processes – which together can explain the relative disengagement of some task force members in equitably contributing to task force activities. A discussion of the strengths and areas of improvements participants cited regarding their experience with task forces follows; this is likewise discussed for participant experiences with the EPMG. Both reviews are telling of potential actions that can be taken to fill the gap between governance processes in theory and in practice.

**EvalPartners Movement Defined**

As we have seen above by the governance infrastructure guiding EvalPartners, it operates as an international partnership. As evidenced by most internal documentation and the consensus among interviewees, is that EvalPartners is seen as a networked movement or partnership, which includes the major stakeholders engaged in strengthening civil society capacities for country-led evaluations. Using EvalPartners’ own “Three models of Partnerships” framework from the Advocacy Toolkit, EvalPartners consider themselves a partnership coalition advancing systems-level actions at three levels: enabling environment, institutional capacities, and individual capacities underpinned by two drivers – demand and supply, tailored to the specific country, regional, or organizational context. These areas of focus are the basis for EvalPartners’ theory of change, which was elaborated in Section 1.3 above. Because

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involvement in EvalPartners is fluid and unrestrictive by way of criteria for membership or participation, partners enter into cooperation and exit the partnership freely. As such, the governance structure for EvalPartners is intended to ensure that an effective and collaborative decision-making system is in place, predicated on inclusiveness and providing space for partner creativity and synergy worldwide.

Therefore, as a collaborative partnered network, EvalPartners is both an independent network of partner institutions, and it is institutionally supported by external donors through the auspices of the IOCE. This networked governance model thus creates an institutional space for orchestrating different kinds of transactions necessary for rapid and effective response. As evidenced by both the interview and documentary evidence, this space has been clearly fostered by EvalPartners, having hit the ground running because their founding partners were already so active in their own rights.

5.2 What works well?

The section in the evaluation answers the question, “What works well in the existing EvalPartners institutional and governance structure, and what needs to be reconsidered if EvalPartners is to sustain its achievements beyond 2015?

There is consensus among interviewees that EvalPartners has played a catalyzing role in mobilizing both financial resources and volunteers to support its mission and has done so at an impressive pace. Two features in particular stand out as enablers of success for EvalPartners which are summarized below.

EvalPartners’ networked structure as a catalyster and convener: The networked structure and in particular the small size of its implementation levers – the task forces, allow EvalPartners to be flexible, adaptable, nimble, and accessible in connecting various associations and giving profile to evaluation. Although some challenges with task force structure and governance are further described below, it remains that they have achieved a significant number and quality of outputs supporting VOPE capacity building. This loose structure of EvalPartners allows for inclusion and innovation to flourish amongst a motivated cadre of partners. Many agree that the current governance structure - characterized by the integrity of established personal relationships and an open system of engagement, have served to respect the voices of different participants equitably, most notably amongst participants of the EPMG. The result has been a space for realizing a shared purpose and belonging in which no one person or organization

“If this is what EvalPartners can do with voluntary contributions, just think what it could do with an Executive Director and staff.”

~ EvalPartners Management Group Member

76 Ibid.
dominates and there is an equitable balance among stakeholders and perspectives. Some interviewees did, however, point to a dynamic that they perceive is not fully inclusive because a few voices dominate over the collective. While this was an outlying view, it nonetheless points to the lack of consensus on this point as being noteworthy for further deliberation on potential improvements to inclusivity with and across these coalitions.

At its essence, EvalPartners is indeed a partnership; other adjectives used to describe it include “leadership group,” “entrepreneurial,” and “creative.” EvalPartners has established in itself a visible ‘brand’ that has created a forum for communication and networking through which individuals and institutions who wish to strengthen evaluation capacity can freely do so. The absence of an institutionalized or bureaucratic arrangement has served as an asset to EvalPartners, particularly in its first three years. The literature on approaches to assessing the success of networked governance aligns well with EvalPartners’ current state and future directions as it seeks to entrench and strengthen international partnerships as its key lever to achieving its mission.

The concept of collective impact has grown out of the recognition that large-scale social change demands coordination across a broad range of sectors, involving multiple partners. The old-fashioned approach where individual social sector organizations focused on their own isolated interventions is now understood to be inadequate to the needs of the poor and vulnerable in our modern society. What is needed is “the commitment of a group of important actors from different sectors to a common agenda for solving a specific social problem.” Collective impact requires collaboration, system integration and inter-professional practice. It is widely agreed that there are five defining conditions, which underlie a successful collective impact initiative: a common agenda; shared measurement systems; mutually reinforcing activities; continuous communication; and, backbone support. Many of these elements can be identified in EvalPartners activities, and are embedded in EvalPartners logic model and theory of change.

Applying the conditions of the Collective Impact (CI) approach, which are elaborated in Table 2 below, we have a useful framework that is relevant for monitoring the health of the partnership and a basis to gauge EvalPartners’ current alignment with the conditions for collective impact success. Five conditions of CI are identified thorough this approach, which EvalPartners may consider going forward in assessing its future sustained success. Two columns have been added to the right of the Table: the first column summarizes what the interview, task force survey, and MG self-assessment combined reveal about each area of Evalparters’ CI success. The second column makes suggestions for how EvalPartners can further reinforce its alignment with the five conditions for collective impact success.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Five Conditions</th>
<th>General Definition</th>
<th>How is EvalPartners Already Aligned with These Conditions(^a)</th>
<th>How Alignment with these conditions can be reinforced</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Backbone Support | Creating and managing collective impact requires a separate organization(s) with staff and a specific set of skills to serve as the backbone for the entire initiative and coordinate participating organizations and agencies. | EvalPartners forms a backbone body that provides a platform for collaboration and coordination and leverages resources through the commitment of partner time, expertise and financial investment. EvalPartners benefits from the financial support of UN Women and the Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as well as the governance infrastructure of IOCE, a Secretariat, an Executive Committee, Management Group, dedicated coordinator roles, and an International Advisory Group. The relationship between IOCE and EvalPartners is described as a mutually reinforcing ‘symbiosis’ that supports objective achievement. Reviewing role definitions as EvalPartners enters its next phase can | • Diversify funding sources  
• Reaffirm the institutionalized relationship between IOCE and EP, and its associated support structure  
• Hire an Executive Director to provide a focal point and liaison of EP to IOCE and to centralize management functions |

\(^a\) Drawn from document review, interviews, task force survey, and MG self-assessment.
<table>
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<tr>
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</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **A Common Agenda**    | All participants have a shared vision for change including a common understanding of the problem and a joint approach to solving it through agreed upon actions. | This is unanimously agreed to be in place. EvalPartners was established to implement a common agenda developed through the input of international stakeholders, which articulates a shared vision for building evaluation capacity of VOPEs worldwide. Stakeholders recommend orienting around a strategic discussion as part of orienting for the forthcoming 2016-2020 period and pursuing activities that demonstrate strategic alignment with this common agenda. | - Undertake a strategic visioning and planning exercise for the 2016-2020 period to restate the shared vision and establish common understanding of priorities  
- Develop and implement agreed internal communication, review, and approval protocols |
| **Shared Measurement Systems** | Collecting data and measuring results consistently across all participants ensures efforts remain aligned and participants hold each other accountable. | There is no evidence of a shared measurement system in place. However, components of a measurement system exist, such as EvalPartners logic model, which provide a starting point for developing a performance measurement framework. The logic model and various reports completed to-date provide a basis upon which a shared measurement framework can be developed to identify aspects of enabling environments, institutional capacities, and individual capacities that can be measured to define performance | - Establish consistent expectations about how success is measured and monitored  
- As part of its strategic planning exercise, develop a performance measurement framework  
- Align the Theory of Change, Logic Model/Theory of Action with the performance measurement framework |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Five Conditions</th>
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<th>How Alignment with these conditions can be reinforced</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Mutually Reinforcing Activities | Participant activities must be differentiated while still being coordinated through a mutually reinforcing plan of action. | Evaluators observe that the objectives of EvalPartners include: focusing on advocacy, knowledge building, and capacity building and pursuing synergies by funding projects and initiatives that advance the aforementioned objectives, often through co-funding partnerships with other like-minded bodies. | - Undertake an outcome mapping exercise to delineate spheres of direct and indirect influence and how to measure  
- Establish a reporting frequency and products for sharing progress with internal and external partners.  
- Delineate clearly the distinct ‘value proposition’ of EvalPartners vis-à-vis its partners  
- Undertake a mapping exercise to identify how EvalPartners strategic priorities align with those of its partners across its three key areas of influence.  
- Demonstrate the added value for partner participation to demonstrate mutually reinforcing plans of action. |
| Continuous Communication | Consistent and open communication is needed across the | EvalPartners is committed to building VOPE capacities by creating sub-networks through its task forces, through knowledge development platforms, and through the provision of tools and publications that | - Develop a communication and stakeholder engagement strategy |

\(^7\) EvalPartners is committed to building VOPE capacities by creating sub-networks through its task forces, through knowledge development platforms, and through the provision of tools and publications that
<table>
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<th>Five Conditions</th>
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<th>How Alignment with these conditions can be reinforced</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>many players to build trust, assure mutual objectives, and create common motivation.</td>
<td>help build capacity. Feedback is mixed about communication effectiveness within and across task forces. Task force members suggested that communication across task forces could be improved, and an understanding of how task force activities fit in the bigger EvalPartners picture could be further articulated. Openness, trust, and inclusiveness are considered key features of EvalPartners governance structure and value system.</td>
<td>that aligns with the reaffirmed vision and mission Establish a plan for engaging the wider evaluation community in the strategic discussion about reinforcing the common agenda beyond EvalYear 2015, and communicate that plan to partners and stakeholders.</td>
</tr>
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</table>
It is agreed by most interviewees that EvalPartners’ networked status has served as an enabler in providing an innovative shared platform unrestricted by a bureaucratic structure. EvalPartners’ informality may also be a double-edged sword in this respect, given some of the variance observed in the way communication and decision-making are experienced within the network (this is discussed further in the next section). As one interviewee expressed, “innovation does not necessarily have a structure during what can be considered an entrepreneurial phase of development, in which shared ideas and momentum can build and flourish.” That said, this can also be considered a period of greater risk and one that EvalPartners is now ready to emerge out of and into planning its second strategic phase of development. EvalPartners has also enjoyed a stable leadership and membership and widespread partner support through its first three years, which has also served as a key enabler for objective achievement.

**IOCE’s and EvalPartners’ Relationship in Advancing Goal Achievement**

There is broad recognition amongst nearly all interviewees that the relationship between the IOCE and EvalPartners is characterized by dedicated and consistent leadership, which has served to nurture both IOCE and EvalPartners. EvalPartners was seen by many interviewees as having added even greater legitimacy to IOCE, by serving as the vehicle to secure funding for evaluation capacity development. This strengthened IOCE through the concrete objectives EvalPartners identified then successfully implemented. Most interviewees asserted that EvalPartners has concretized the work of the IOCE, in effect operationalizing its objectives to strengthen organizational capacity (e.g. VOPEs), and indirectly, serving constituents of those institutions (evaluators). EvalPartners has therefore strengthened the IOCE through its directed projects, fuelling its legitimacy and preparing the way for the IOCE to directly manage funding support, departing from the previous practice of funneling funding through a third party (e.g. UN Women/UNICEF). Many interviewees identified this as a signal of EvalPartners’ success and credibility.

> “The failure or success of governance networks depends on their institutional capacity, their ability to motivate and activate the actors to participate in the processes, solve the possible conflicts, coordinate the actors, and create a shared understanding.”
> ~ Laia Martinez, Governance Networks as Collaborative Platforms for Innovation in the Public Sector
Prior to this, as several interviewees assert, IOCE was generally considered less active, although it was clearly filling a niche at the global level, as the only entity in existence bringing together evaluation associations and networks at regional and national levels. In the words of one interviewee, “IOCE was strengthened because now with EP, IOCE has concrete objectives to achieve. Before it was just a gathering space once every two years. Before EP, IOCE was a loose network. Now with EP, IOCE has something more concrete to do.” As another interviewee notes, “In a way, EvalPartners’ purpose was to pursue an agenda and bring in potential resources – one of the things that IOCE lacked was a solid funding base.” IOCE was set up with a specific purpose, which was to encourage development of national and regional evaluation organizations globally, when the demand for evaluation was increasing and the demand was clear – to serve as an ‘umbrella’ organization to support coordination and collaboration. This role is related to but different from EvalPartners’ networked orientation, whose thrust is to action strategic objectives that constitute a support system for creating and strengthening national evaluation networks and associations. In the words of one interviewee, it is a ‘symbiosis’ – with EvalPartners as the promoter of evaluation worldwide, with IOCE serving as an institutionalized Secretariat promoting a mutually reinforcing common vision. A few interviewees recognized as a factor distinguishing EvalPartners from IOCE, its extension beyond VOPEs to engaging all stakeholders in promoting its cause.

Strategic engagement is one of EvalPartners’ stated core values, and there is consensus amongst interviewees that this has been impressively accomplished by the network’s impassioned leadership. The early success of EvalPartners rings true the statement, ‘it all starts with an idea,’ and this is evidenced by the array of partners assembled under the EvalPartners banner. Clearly, what has worked well for EvalPartners is its networked orientation. As a loose and nimble network, it has not been bogged down in bureaucratic structure. The dedicated commitment of a number of core volunteers who advanced EvalPartners presence and activities, have made it a success. What has emerged in the interviews is a common perception that the networked structure generally works well, and going forward, can benefit from a strategic discussion about how EvalPartners’ activities complement and reinforce one another in contributing to broader strategic goals.

Shared impassioned leadership, widespread engagement, and the role of “champions”: All interviewees are unanimous in their recognition that EvalPartners’ success was driven by the charismatic and impassioned personal commitment, thought leadership, and focused action of its incepting leaders and volunteers, along with the engaged championing of its partners and supporters. The leadership role in negotiating the participation of credible international institutional actors in evaluation was catalyzing in having created a networked platform for coalescing around the ‘power and usefulness of evaluation to create transparency and influence

“Basically, [EvalPartners] is a mechanism that allows people to collaborate together – it is a coalition of the willing.”

~ EvalPartners IAG Member
policy in the area of human rights’. This common platform served both a legitimizing function for the budding network – having assembled a like-minded international community of reputable organizations, while creating the opportunity to join forces for this noble international cause among both VOPEs and CSOs.

As evidenced by the interview and documentary data, activities that have gained the most momentum have had ‘champions’ attached to their cause, coupled with the visible support of EvalPartners. The Parliamentarians’ Forum is a case in point, backed by the unanimous support by EP Executive Committee and Management Committee. The role of collective support by EP leadership gives both credibility and authority to individual champions to further their cause. This is perhaps most notable with the significant profile that Parliamentary engagement received at the October 2014 European Evaluation Society conference, in which a forum was held drawing international Parliamentarians together, along with EvalPartners’ leadership and supporters, to deliberate on Parliamentary advocacy successes to date and future directions. This observation reinforces the crucial role that champions have played in EvalPartners success in achieving its mandate, and going forward, embedding this concept as an implementation strategy. This may include making explicit reference to the role of champions in the EvalPartners’ strategic plan, defining the qualities of the champion role, and formalizing that role through, for example, its task forces, specifying core functions and responsibilities, and linking these to a performance measurement framework. Interviews consistently pointed to the importance of global thought leadership and the champion role in sustaining EvalPartners. The champion function is clearly part of the success formula for EvalPartners. Reflecting on the role of the champion for EvalPartners and its proposed ‘sub-networks’ can be a useful exercise going forward and can be linked to supporting three of the five conditions for Collective Impact success – backbone support (because the champion helps secure support), the shared vision (because champions as thought leaders endorse the common vision, and mutually reinforcing activities (champions consistently identify and nurture these amongst current and potential partners).

5.3 What needs to be Reconsidered Going Forward?

The following constitutes seven considerations going forward that are intended to help orient EvalPartners to 2015 and beyond based on a summary and assessment of the evidence (interviews, task force survey, and MG self-assessment) regarding EvalPartners’ governance, decision-making, and implementation.

**Consideration One: Review and Formalize Management Processes and Procedures:** At the level of management process and procedural effectiveness, interviewees’ and management group self-assessed perceptions are mixed. Most expressed the view that effective dissemination of meeting materials to enable participation, discussion, and decision-making in advance of meetings could be improved. Despite this recognition, nearly all respondents agree that participation at MG meetings contributes to the MG achieving its goals and there is
consensus that participation is inclusive and collaborative in an environment where both creative ideas and differences of opinion can be safely voiced. Some MG members felt that opportunities could be created to go into greater depth on critical issues (e.g. retreats or ‘deep dives’) from time to time, however most agreed that on balance, the MG allocates its time effectively between important issues and those of lesser importance. As illustrated by Figure 14 below, nearly all MG members either agree or strongly agree that participation levels are high and contribute to the MG achieving its goals. Interview evidence corroborates this finding, with nearly all interviewees praising the inclusivity and partnership ethic that defines the inner workings of EP. Given the raison d’être of EvalPartners, it is encouraging that the networked structure that facilitates mandate achievement is considered effective, inclusive, and engaging and consistent with EvalPartners characterization as a ‘partnership among equals’ - both within its ranks and amongst external stakeholders.’ The EPMG self-assessment and interviews with EPMG members affirm the generally positive orientation and commitment of the group, noting several process and procedural strengths as well as suggestions for improvement, which are summarized in Table 3 below.

**Table 4: Management process/procedures strengths and limitations**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Management process/procedure strengths</th>
<th>Suggestions for improvement</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Trust, Inclusiveness and equality</td>
<td>- Time for Deep dives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Meaningful participation enables goal achievement</td>
<td>- Timely dissemination of documentation before meetings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Quality of the MG (size and constitution)</td>
<td>- Clarity on role definition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Goal agreement</td>
<td>- Administrative challenges (focal points for contact)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Internal leadership</td>
<td>- Performance monitoring and evaluation strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Balance of time spent on issues management</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Strategic foundation</td>
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</table>

The MG self-assessment also revealed strong agreement that meeting participation is a key enabler to goal achievement, as illustrated by Figure 14 below.
Consideration Two: Clarify administrative procedures and lines of communication

Administrative challenges emerged as a common line of discussion among stakeholders interviewed, noting that expectations were not always clear, and that oftentimes multiple emails would be received from different points of contact, rather than from a single point of contact. To that point, some interviewees observed that these administrative challenges are underpinned by the unclear relationship of IOCE to EvalPartners. For example, the challenge of filing EvalPartners versus IOCE material, and navigating documents via an intuitive shared filing structure that enables the easy identification of key documents (e.g. Management Group documents, EvalPartners’ Strategic Plan, etc.), were highlighted as expressive of the broader consideration of role clarity amongst IOCE and EvalPartners. In addition, while there is some mandate distinction amongst IOCE and EvalPartners, there is an arrangement in which the IOCE Board President is automatically appointed to the EP Executive Committee. The way in which those procedures translate with EvalPartners is not clear and warrants consideration, particularly as concerns the appointment and selection of new members to EvalPartners (as an automatic event) and the lack of process around appointing advisors to the IAG. Establishing clear procedures is especially important as the group undergoes a refresh of its incepting members. EvalPartners can maximize on this opportunity to formalize its procedures by engaging its core stakeholders and its International Advisory Group, then communicating its engagement process to the wider evaluation community – be they current partners, or those who aspire to join the EvalPartners cause as individuals or institutions - so that the path for doing so is obvious and commonly understood. EvalPartners has articulated its change theory, its logic in how to achieve that change, and at the same time can benefit from articulating its governance theory and processes supporting outcome achievement.
Consideration Three: Formalize organization of the Task Forces and allocate some activities to structures other than taskforces: The task forces have produced significant output resulting in value-add to both individual evaluators and VOPEs as discussed in the first section of this report. Several findings emerged about the constitution and orientation of the task forces. Interviewees consider the task forces to be a concrete means for interested individuals to gather around projects, where real collaboration and exchange of ideas takes shape. Of note here is that in task forces, members are volunteers and not representatives of organizations per se. This differs from the EPMG, which is more formalized and representative.

As illustrated by Figure 15 below, MG members were asked about their perceptions of task force effectiveness, and the majority of members (59%) perceive that only some of the task forces are effective.

Figure 15: EPMG Perceptions of Task Force Effectiveness

As illustrated by Figure 16 below, some members of the MG think that task forces meetings involving EPMG members and advisors have mixed effectiveness. The subsequent chart demonstrates that communication within and across taskforces could be improved. Many respondents do not believe that communication is effective, are neutral, or feel they have insufficient knowledge, resulting in an overall mixed picture in which sometimes communication is deemed to work well, and at times not. Communication is deemed to work well according to only 31% of respondents, with 23% disagreeing on this point. This is clearly
an area of greater focus in determining why communication is failing in some cases and succeeding in others, and on the whole, how communication can be improved.

**Figure 16: Task Force meeting participation effectiveness**

Understanding why only some taskforces are deemed effective while others are not, requires further analysis. Interview evidence suggests that challenges in communication – which may contribute to some task forces being more or less effective than others, may be due to sparse and untimely communications, the absence of a mentoring or support function for task force members, and lack of clarity about roles amongst task force members.
Some interviewees noted that task forces with consultancy support are more effective in delivering substantial products and tools than those without. One interviewee was concerned about what would happen after consultants complete their work and how that might affect task force longevity.

An area of future focus for EvalPartners is to explore how the task forces can be maximized as thematic, geographic, and strategic global ‘sub-networks’ who advance EvalPartners’ capacity building, policy influencing mandate, and to what extent they can serve as networking and engagement platforms across issues, themes and regions. This can be assessed while exploring ways to maintain the extensive level of output that EvalPartners has maintained to-date and in conjunction with exploring the role of champions in this formula. The concept of ‘sub-networks’ is further discussed below.

Membership on task forces

While the task forces welcome membership openly, this may be a factor in the lack of engagement of task force members. Interviewees commonly described participation levels amongst task force members as uneven, with the bulk of work being undertaken by the same volunteers (mainly co-chairs of Task Forces) rather than spread evenly amongst all Task Force members. In the words of one interviewee, “I think if there was a mechanism that was a little more structured around the task forces, about how the task forces can co-opt more members from outside the group, if that was more structured and better communicated, I believe that the activation factor would increase significantly.” There is a lack of documentary evidence to draw on which can explain the internal and external engagement process of the task forces, the manner in which members are selected, and expected roles of members, thus reinforcing the importance of establishing shared norms and processes guiding the work of these important vehicles for implementing the EvalPartners mandate. That said, the task force survey, EPMG self-assessment, and interviews filled that gap and provided an understanding of how the governance structure operates in practice.

In addition to the challenge of sustaining volunteerism on task forces, weak and uneven participation of members may be exacerbated by a lack of clear role definitions – for both the task forces and their members. There is a lack of systematic documentation regarding participation and a central repository for such documentation, thus adding to some confusion about roles (e.g. there are no terms of reference for task forces or on-boarding documentation to help orient new task force members to the purpose and reporting structure of Task Forces). This will change with the drafting of guidelines for task forces currently under review by MG members. As a result, the accountability relationship between EvalPartners and its task forces is unclear. Table 4 below summarizes the key features identified by interviewees regarding what works well in the task forces and potential areas of improvement.
Table 5: Strengths and Limitations of Task Forces

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Works well in Task Forces</th>
<th>Participants Questioned/ Limitations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| • Inclusiveness and equality  
• Meaningful Participation  
• High quality of members and evaluation expertise  
• Shared vision  
• Appropriate in number  
• MG respects TF work  
• Leadership of co-chairs  
• Strong communication with VOPE’s | • Uneven support/ voluntarism  
• Sustainability after consultants complete tasks  
• Role definitions/ understandings of organizational structure  
• Communication across Task Forces  
• How success is measured  
• Accommodating linguistic diversity  
• Funds for translation  
• Timely engagement on products – short review/ input time  |

Turning to the MG self-assessment, of the thirteen respondents, about one-third (31%) either agreed or strongly agreed that task force meetings involving MG members and advisors are constructive, and there is open communication, meaningful participation, critical questioning, and timely resolution of issues. Notably, 31% of respondents reported that they had insufficient knowledge to respond to this question. These findings are displayed in Figure 17 below, and suggest that although the MG is considered to be an inclusive and participatory forum, there is room for improvement in the way that members within the task forces and the MG engage and participate. Some interview evidence corroborates this finding, with the observation that there is opportunity to improve inclusiveness of linguistic diversity (e.g. including this as part and parcel of work plans) and the MG self-assessment points to greater inclusiveness in decision-making as an area of increased focus.
Interview evidence suggests that communication and visibility of products developed across task forces is lacking, with no mechanism for sharing products as they are being developed or gathering feedback during the development process. The lack of voluntary capacity, combined with an ad hoc process for product development, contributes to an uneven distribution of effort and delays in meeting product milestones. By extension, these voluntarism and communications challenges may affect the extent to which task force products effectively reach their intended audiences, create widespread engagement, and subsequently build VOPE capacity. Some interviewees noted that the task forces are an appropriate platform for developing specific, time-bound products (e.g. institutional Toolkit; P2P grant calls for proposal); however, the activity of creating enabling environments, for example, is a much
broader endeavour in which there is a transition out of product-driven coalescing, to exploring comprehensive initiatives that facilitate EvalPartners’ broader objectives. This was also discussed extensively at the MG meeting in Dublin, in which an evolving concept of task forces was deliberated which act as ‘sub-networks’ of EvalPartners and take on a broader agenda of topical or functional support areas (e.g. EvalGender, EvalMentors).

Some of the limitations noted in Table 4 above may not be surprising, considering that on average, task force members engage for only 1-2 hours per month on task force activities. Figure 18 summarizes the range of hours spent on task force work, with most task force members spending anywhere between 0 and 10 hours per month on task force activities, with the largest proportion (53%) concentrated in the 0-2 hour range.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Chart</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td>16.7%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2</td>
<td></td>
<td>36.7%</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-5</td>
<td></td>
<td>23.3%</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-10</td>
<td></td>
<td>20.0%</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-20</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.3%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 20</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Responses</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>30</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 18 Average number of monthly task force volunteer hours**

Figure 19 shows that on average, communications from task force coordinators varies, with the majority of task force members receiving communications from the coordinator once every three months.

**Question: How often do you receive communications from the taskforce coordinator?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Chart</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td></td>
<td>10.3%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than once every 6 months</td>
<td></td>
<td>13.8%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between once every 6 months and once every 3 months</td>
<td></td>
<td>13.8%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between once every 3 months and once a month</td>
<td></td>
<td>31.0%</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Between once a month and once a week 
More than once a week 

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between once a month and once a week</td>
<td>20.7%</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than once a week</td>
<td>10.3%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total Responses** 29

**Figure 19 Communication within Task Force**

The distribution above reveals the uneven nature of communication amongst task force members, ranging from never (10%), to more than once a week (10%). The majority of task force members range from receiving communications between once every 3 months and once a month, to once a month and once weekly.

Figure 20, drawn from the task force survey, demonstrates the generally mixed views on the effectiveness of communications, with half of respondents citing communications as varying between being good to moderate, and just under one third of respondents considering communication effectiveness to be poor.

**Figure 20: Extent of effective communication within the task force**
As a whole, we can see that there is room for improvement in task force communications and that given the already inclusive and participatory platform provided through the MG, much can be explored in the way of building on EvalPartners' noted engagement strengths by establishing common understandings and norms around communications.

**Consideration Four: Articulate Partner Roles and Expectations**

The MG self-assessment\(^{80}\) showed strong agreement that MG members actively engage in networking to promote the work of EvalPartners and the priorities of the MG. It also showed that EvalPartners' objectives are strongly aligned to member organization priorities and goals that are widely understood and supported among partners. There was variance in this view among those interviewed on the IAG, with some members expressing the importance of further articulating how EvalPartners role both complements and fits with partner organizational priorities – particularly in capacity building.

While EvalPartners' governance and management structure is clearly articulated, a risk noted amongst a number of interviewees was the lack of clarity around what 'partnership' specifically entails and how that may influence partner understanding of mutual expectations. For example, partnership might consist of a functional relationship (e.g. the provision of funds, in-kind support) or it may consist of an organizational relationship in which partners are expected to take on a specific support role. Being clear about whether one or both forms of partnership exist will assist in clarifying partner roles, expectations, and categories of participation. In the case of an organizational partner relationship, some partners are affiliated as advisors or members of the Management Group, thus recognized as legitimizers of the work, yet may not have control over the work of EvalPartners. That can create a sense of risk, unless there are shared understandings and common standards according to which all partners commit.

The evidence in the MG self-assessment shows that members generally agree or strongly agree that MG goals are widely understood and supported among partners (see Figure 21 below) and 85% of MG members agree or strongly agree that the MG is inclusive of views and priorities of the people/organizations affected by the MG's work.

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\(^{80}\) An EvalPartners Management Group Self-Assessment was circulated to Management Group members prior to their meeting in Tallaght, Ireland, held September 29-30, 2014. The self-assessment was undertaken to support evidence collected for the discussion of governance and decision-making effectiveness. The complete self-assessment report is an Annex to this evaluation.
Likewise, as illustrated by Figure 22, members either agree or strongly agree that the MG is able to clearly communicate in the broader community how EP activities address issues that are important to them.

Therefore while the majority of MG members self-assess partnerships and stakeholder relations communications to be effective, there is a need for shared understanding of stakeholder roles. Evidence from the interviews suggests that within the ranks of the MG, new members could especially benefit from a clearer picture of expected roles, responsibilities, and communication protocols, particularly around decision-making.
Consideration Five: Clarify roles of the IAG

In keeping with the above theme and warranting closer attention, the interview evidence suggests that most stakeholders can benefit from clarification of their expected roles on the IAG. Involvement of the IAG is generally sparse and can benefit from clarity about how to engage in the work productively and constructively. The interview evidence shows that along with this sporadic involvement of the IAG, there is limited communication and understandings of the role and expectations of the IAG. One reason alluded to in the interviews explaining the sparse involvement of the IAG is the absence of a shared understanding about levels of independence and involvement through established norms and protocols of the network. For example, norms and protocols established through such documents as terms of reference for the International Advisory Group, along with an understanding of expectations regarding specifically what the advisory role entails, from expected level and frequency of participation, type of participation, and relationship with the organizations members represent. This absence of shared norms and standards may create a situation in which
the EvalPartners’ cause is neither well-understood, nor is buy-in and promotion advanced throughout fellow partner institutions evenly. Also, the IAG is large. One interviewee suggested that reducing its size may enable its increased profile and participation as an advisory body – both in name and in practice. Some interview evidence also suggested that when IAG members are involved in the work of EvalPartners, timeframes for feedback are short, and communications generally consist of receiving emails from time to time updating on activities. Lastly, some interviewees outside the IAG questioned the process for appointing IAG members, recommending greater clarification around that process and potentially opening it to broader engagement within EvalPartners’ ranks.

Specific areas where EvalPartners could take action include crafting an IAG terms of reference, identifying expected levels of participation of IAG members, establishing protocols for feedback on key products, and improving communication and engaging the IAG on tactical and strategic directions and deliberations. What is striking is the high caliber representation amongst IAG members, and the enormous talent pool that is at EvalPartners’ fingertips to tap into as it embarks on its ‘2.0’ activities. EvalPartners can articulate how the IAG can be best engaged going forward to maximize upon their strategic and technical expertise and globally networked status. The notion of champions is one that could be further explored with the IAG – both in defining the function and considering a possible role for IAG members.

While having certain norms in place to solidify understandings of roles amongst stakeholders is desirable, it is precisely this networked organization that the majority of interviewees recognized as an asset to mission achievement. That EvalPartners did not get mired in bureaucracy has served as a clear advantage for network building and for EvalPartners in accomplishing its early objectives. Therefore, a worthwhile goal ahead is in striking a balance between this networked structure and having in place the appropriate communication tools to benefit the partnership going forward by communicating governance and decision-making roles and expectations – both to existing and incoming members and partners. The self-assessment tool used as part of the evaluation can provide an ongoing point of self-monitoring and assessment going forward.81 Based on the completed MG self-assessment (the self-assessment

81 The self-assessment instrument circulated before the MG meeting was adapted from a pre-tested management self-assessment instrument. Using a pre-tested Board of Director governance assessment tool and adapting to the MG’s context and core issues, a self-assessment instrument was devised to assist MG members in self-assessing perceptions of success in their experience on the MG, how collaborative the MG is, decision-making features, communication and dissemination, and other aspects that about governance structure,
questionnaire can be found in Appendix E), it appears to be a useful means for engaging members about their perceptions regarding features of decision-making, and validated its usefulness as an input into this evaluation and as a launching pad for future discussions amongst the MG about perceptions of success amongst members of the MG. Going forward, the tool can be adapted and used with the partnership assessment tool referenced earlier in this section, and aligned with the five conditions for collective impact success to serve as a single tool for ongoing monitoring.

**Consideration Six: Clearly articulate EvalPartners value proposition and strategic directions:**

Most stakeholders interviewed outside of the MG, felt that the raison d’être of EvalPartners in terms of their value proposition – the statement that summarizes why a stakeholder should participate or become involved in EvalPartners – could be better conveyed. This entails being very specific about the strategic linkages of EvalPartners’ work in the short, medium, and long term amongst the broader global evaluation community and its incoming partners, CSO’s. The EvalPartners’ website – (although presently located as a section on the “myMandE” website rather than their own dedicated website), is the introduction to the practitioner and institutional community. The website is an excellent entrée to reaching out to existing and new partners to encourage their participation in advancing the EvalPartners mandate. It can likewise explain how partners themselves can ‘reach in’ to support or participate in EvalPartners activities, including task forces and other initiatives supporting their cause. An application to join at the individual and institutional level, or suggestion boxes for participants to share ideas about areas of focus, can further serve to increase the ‘pull’ factor in engaging partners, alongside the ‘push’ that EvalPartners does so well.

Interviewees from both the IAG and MG praised EvalPartners for accomplishing a wide array of activities and emphasized the need to connect that work strategically to the network’s medium and longer-term goals, identifying what makes EvalPartners distinct in its offerings. In the words of one interviewee, without a clear articulation of the added value, there is a risk that “the movement can be hijacked, diverted to purposes that may not be entirely appropriate...we may see this in NGO’s where they become more politicized than they should be and lose their original purpose.” Averting this risk can be accomplished by clearly and visibly articulating one or more value propositions and firmly establishing its institutional support base, so as to prevent any usurping down the road. This brings us to the backbone support condition of Collective Impact success and orients EvalPartners to sustain that support as a key emphasis going forward. Government interviewees echoed this sentiment, conveying a wish effectiveness, and efficiency. See National Collaborating Centers on Methods and Tools http://www.nccmt.ca/registry/view/eng/10.html. A complementary self-assessment tool that can be used going forward referring specifically to partnership effectiveness can be found at http://www.nccmt.ca/uploads/registry/PSA%20Tool%20Questionnaire.pdf
for EP to be very clear about its value proposition. This means in practice that EvalPartners needs to clearly convey what distinguishes it and connects it strategically to other evaluation units, departments, or organizations. As one interviewee put it “If I can convince my management team as to why we should be connected to EP, that is my entrée to participating.” In this case, EvalPartners linked clearly to the capacity building aspect of that organization’s strategic plan, thereby providing a rationale and entrée for involvement. Related to this point, and a worthwhile exercise for EvalPartners to undertake, is to scan the strategic plans of its partners and demonstrate alignment - on their partners’ behalves - as part of EvalPartners own strategic planning and stakeholder engagement strategy. This may be especially important as EvalPartners delves further into CSOs as its next wave of establishing its global presence to engage their participation - and other societies and associations advancing (social) development causes. This approach does the ‘leg work’ for these organizations and demonstrates the added value for their participation, while articulating the strategic linkages to EvalPartners’ work, and vice versa. Such an exercise can also serve as an onboarding tool for new EvalPartners members and partners, as well as an ongoing monitoring and validation tool for the network.

Most interviewees agree that the stated mission of EvalPartners has been quite clear and EvalPartners has been effective at creating the conditions for partnership. However, they also agree that its evolving mission – to move beyond VOPEs to engage all of civil society in a global movement, necessitates an associated statement of purpose within a strategic framework. The scope of EvalPartners objectives can thereby be articulated, and how their work complements that of stakeholders throughout the international evaluation community to clarify the relationship of EvalPartners vis-à-vis these voluntary organizations, and vice versa. In the words of one interviewee, there is a need to address EvalPartners’ strategic direction and identify the capacity building role that it plays in the developed world, as much as it does in the developing world – where evaluation capacity building is also needed, stating: “Their role is very important in having an impact in connecting various associations and giving profile to evaluation. On the governance side, my feeling is that it is overly focused on development and there is a lesser effort to give the same weight to countries. Capacity building is also a priority in developed countries...we need a strategy to promote the sector...it is time to expand the model’s scope.” Undertaking some of the strategic positioning exercises recommended above can serve the dual purpose of clarifying EvalPartners’ value proposition while delineating how EvalPartners addresses and links its north-south priorities in the context of VOPE capacity building worldwide.

An interesting example offered by the same interviewee giving meaning to how the EvalPartners’ scope could be expanded, is in referring to another global initiative – Transparency International (TI). TI similarly operates on decentralized model and is deemed successful due to having country chapters, each of whom endorse and promote the common message. This concept sees EvalPartners establishing country ‘chapters’ backed by a common agenda and supportive technology and networked infrastructure. If this model is deliberated,
careful consideration would need to be given to how such a model complements rather than duplicates regional VOPEs. Such an approach would serve as an umbrella body linking VOPEs and other CSO’s under the EvalPartners banner, in the spirit of EvalPartners networking and partnership building role. This is similar to the regional concept of EvalPartners, and offers the opportunity to define a strategy that extends beyond evaluators and expands to represent the interests of other professions who support evaluation. In essence, EvalPartners is already moving beyond associations into all of civil society – and this concept suggests broadening the vision through intellectual leadership and engagement to demonstrate the added value amongst other professions who undertake evaluation.

Returning to the relationship between IOCE and EvalPartners, establishing two separate yet complementary strategic plans – one for IOCE and one for EvalPartners, may further help distinguish and reinforce EvalPartners’ value proposition and the mutually supportive roles these bodies play. As one interviewee has posited, EvalPartners can be considered a major business line of the IOCE. Garnering consensus around this notion – or otherwise should this not be the case, and articulating their joint strategic directions will serve EvalPartners well in communicating its distinct value proposition going forward.

When asked where they see EvalPartners in the next five to ten years, most interviewees see a definite future role for EvalPartners, with a minority of interviewees expressing concern about its continued role after EvalYear 2015. EvalPartners is seen by most interviewees as playing an enabling function amongst a network of global partnerships as an ‘umbrella’ to bring together VOPEs and CSO’s to increase the profile and credibility of the evaluation function. Some envision that EvalPartners will become a global facilitator for evaluation knowledge and practice. Indeed, we can see by the results reported in this evaluation that this is already the case. With EvalPartners’ role in promoting knowledge sharing through scholarships, supporting and delivering e-learning to practitioners worldwide, and contributing to improving practice through tools and partnerships. There was broad consensus from interviewees and the document review, that this global convenor role is a needed niche that EvalPartners can and should continue to fill.

This next phase of EvalPartners’ development warrants a review and articulation to its stakeholders of its governance structure, mission, vision, and strategic priorities. Doing so will help retain the resonance that it has created amongst the global evaluation community while reaffirming its anticipated role for the 2016-2020 period and beyond.

**Consideration Seven: Address the Need for Sustained Funding**

EvalPartners has accomplished a remarkable amount with little human and financial resources. However, the uncertainty of securing sustained funding is a leading risk factor, which limits the breadth and depth of EvalPartners’ reach. Several suggestions were made for alleviating this risk:
• One interviewee suggested establishing a position for a dedicated Executive Director, who would have authority and overall responsibility for the management of EvalPartners, rather than relying exclusively on the EPMG. Because it is voluntary and its members rotate, relying on the latter exclusively creates a risk for EvalPartners.

• Several interviewees suggested diversifying the funding base so as to reduce the reliance on a single or dual funders while increasing the possibility for sustainability.

• One interviewee suggested implementing several simple yet complementary steps and products going forward to support internal coherence in decision-making processes and external expectations in mission management (e.g. strategic plan, stakeholder engagement and communication strategy, etc.)

• One interviewee suggested that EvalPartners should consider garnering support across the public, private, and not-for-profit sectors and expanding its reach to other professions who undertake evaluative work to increase its value and reach in the global evaluation community.

• Another noted risk is that donor funding is targeted only for developing countries and as such, may be a limiting factor in supporting EvalPartners global mandate.

In determining which is the right model for EvalPartners, the question is whether change is necessitated in the governance model (the evidence suggests that it is), and likewise whether change is necessitated in the processes underlying the model (the evidence also suggests that improvements are needed to organization, process, and communication that can be traced to gaps in the governance structure and process of ExCom, EPMG, and the task forces).

Suggestions have been made above that together point to the need for a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis as part of the review of governance and process effectiveness. Capacity and volunteerism have repeatedly been cited as limiting factors, and can also be addressed through the SWOT analysis.

As EvalPartners enters a new phase in its life cycle and undergoing a transition of its core membership, considering which governance model is best suited to position it for success going forward warrants a first order of business. This is an integral part of the strategic planning exercise, the results of which can reaffirm EvalPartners vision and the role of its partners in fulfilling that vision. The strength of EvalPartners is that its MG maintains confidence in its members and leadership, as does the international community of partners and supporters, putting EvalPartners in an already favourable position from which to secure backbone support.

In addition to the above suggestions, focusing on a 2016-2020 strategy to articulate the ultimate aims of the partnership, being as specific as possible about what capacity building of VOPEs entails and how it links strategically to funders and partners, can allay risk while serving as a basis to engaging the international VOPE community. Such a strategy also brings internal coherence to the network by ensuring a shared understanding of focus and the key principles and prioritization process leading there. Annual reports can further assist as a means for maintaining this shared understanding and communicating results to global stakeholders.
Moving forward with a common strategy and associated results and monitoring framework into what some have coined ‘EvalPartners 2.0’ will position the network well in conveying its role, continuously testing the vision and strategies for achieving its goals.

One element of sustainability to consider going forward is the capacity to service the network in such a way that partners are kept in touch in a centralized and efficient manner – such as through a Secretariat function. Some interviewees felt that institutionalizing support, rather than resting this responsibility on one or two individuals, is essential and otherwise not sustainable. Other risks identified relating to sustainability include potential volunteer burnout due both to the dual role that IOCE Board members play as members of the EvalPartners Management Group, and taking on task force leadership roles, which as discussed earlier, concentrate the work in the hands of a few. Without terms of reference to guide the task force work, there is a risk of domination by a few, mitigated only by the collegiality and shared values of the group. EvalPartners can reduce this risk through formalizing its decision-making and accountability processes to both protect and nurture this collegiality, establishing platforms for systematic communication and shared standards, practices, and norms particularly as membership may rotate.

One of the notable ‘huge’ strengths of EvalPartners is that it does not ‘belong’ to one organization – as a dynamic network, it brings together different sectors and categories of organizations (academia, UN, CSO, governments), cutting across artificial institutional boundaries. Several international models of such bodies point to the effectiveness of this interagency model, such as that of the Active Learning Network for Accountability and Policy (ALNAP), which is similarly a system-wide network governed by a Steering Committee, comprised of members and serviced by a small secretariat hosted by the Overseas Development Institute in London.

The disadvantage of its presently non-institutionalized model, is that it may leave EvalPartners vulnerable between all of these funded institutions in the sense of not having a dedicated funding base. As such, one option is to identify an institutional base such as an international CSO with convening power, with the caution that the appropriate location and institutional base be considered. Moreover, if there is a way for EvalPartners to be a fundraising mechanism that can be used to build the whole network of IOCE and help stabilize VOPEs, particularly those in start-up stages, is an important consideration for EvalPartners going forward. Clearly, this is precisely the role that EvalPartners is filling, the results of which have brought crucial benefit to IOCE and the global evaluation community at large. Considering options for institutionalized funding can help establish a base level of funding for organizations to help VOPE’s meet demand for evaluation, rather than EvalPartners focusing on projects to build

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82 This would consist, for example, of a single document that accompanies a strategic plan that contains the vision, mission, objectives, and functions of EvalPartners and an articulation of how it expects to achieve its theory of change, with associated expected outcomes, success indicators, actions, action owners, and targets.
organizational capacity. In fact the notion of ‘sub-networks’ that EvalPartners is currently exploring, speaks to this concept and may well provide an avenue into supporting medium and longer term intended outcomes of the partnership while beginning the movement from ‘projects’ to a program with supporting activities.

5.4 Section Conclusion: Governance, Decision-Making, and Implementation Effectiveness

Overall, evidence suggests that EvalPartners is well managed, has an established institutional backing through the IOCE, and the governance structure of EP is considered supportive for decision-making and implementation (International Advisory Group, EvalPartners Management Group, and Executive Committee). Further, the implementation levers through EvalPartners’ task forces have served as successful mechanisms for implementing an impressive breadth of knowledge building and capacity building products. There is consensus amongst the EvalPartners Management Group that as an inclusive, participatory body, the MG is well-positioned to action EP’s strategies, and that the backbone of a supportive infrastructure is in place to enable EvalPartners in mission achievement – which is to improve the use of evaluations in decision-making to impact upon building national evaluation systems that are equity-focused and include civil society influence.

EvalPartners orientation toward the public good of better serving the needs of vulnerable and underserved people is the rallying cause that EvalPartners represents and endorses through its networked governance structure. Notable areas of future focus in enabling supportive governance, decision-making, and implementation emerged primarily from the interviews and focus on seven areas around effective governance and decision-making. These considerations recognize the strengths of EvalPartners networked model and focus on areas of improvement that will serve to enhance the network in its communication, management, administrative, and stakeholder relation capacities. These considerations are:

1. Articulate partner roles and expectations
2. Review and formalize management processes and procedures
3. Clarify administrative procedures and lines of communication
4. Formalize organization of the task forces and allocate some activities to structures other than task forces
5. Clarify roles of the IAG
6. Articulate the network’s value proposition and strategic directions
7. Address the need for sustained funding

In addition, as a leader of evaluation worldwide, EvalPartners is in the unique position of supporting the budding area of network evaluation as an international network itself. Applying the Collective Impact (CI) approach to assessing its own effectiveness and testing its theory of change, including paying particular attention to the conditions that facilitate collective impact success, can be an area of interesting focus going forward and an exciting opportunity
for EvalPartners to contribute to the body of knowledge on the effectiveness of networked governance models.
6 Conclusion and Recommendations

We have now completed our review of EvalPartners’ role in the international evaluation landscape, accomplishments in capacity-building, and its governance, decision-making and implementation structures. Based on this, we now draw some overarching conclusions regarding EvalPartners’ strengths and areas for improvement in each of these areas, and provide recommendations to EvalPartners’ leadership.

These conclusions and recommendations span across the three focal areas, and are organized under ten headings, as shown in Figure 19. In this section, we seek to understand and highlight why EvalPartners has succeeded so well so far, not simply for the sake of congratulating those who have worked hard to make it happen, but most especially because it is now at a stage where some level of formalization and expansion is warranted. In such a transition, it is important to be mindful of what aspects of EvalPartners’ work, and how they are likely to work in translation to a new structure.
Conclusions & Recommendations in the Context of the three Focal Areas

1  Relevance
As was true when EvalPartners formed, and is still true, the time is ripe for this type of initiative in the global evaluation community. Evaluators are often passionate about their profession, and recognise that there is room for improvement on both the supply and demand side. To achieve such changes requires coordinated action. There is an immense demand for this type of initiative from evaluators, and they want to use EvalPartners as a tool and resource.

Recommendation 1: EvalPartners should continue beyond 2015.

2  Representation
EvalPartners works well because it is quite open and embraces any organization with a stake or interest in evaluation. Having said that, some key informants from different organizations, and respondents from national VOPES, expressed uncertainty about the governance structure of EvalPartners and the process for decision-making. On the other hand, there has been discussion as to whether EvalPartners should seek to do more to embrace non-VOPE CSOs. There are mixed views on this, with some key informants expressing the view that this would weaken EvalPartners’ focus and effectiveness, and others believing that it would complement and strengthen it. This is an issue that requires some further reflection and clarification.

Recommendation 2a: Clarify the role of partners beyond VOPEs in relation to IOCE and EvalPartners.

Recommendation 2b: Clarify definition of and expectations around partnership.

3  Communication
EvalPartners, at its best, it is a resource that can be drawn on, symbolically as well as practically. As such, its ability to create a clear, legitimate brand and image for evaluation, one that is tied to values such as gender and equity, has aided those working in evaluation. They can draw on this symbol to increase the visibility of their own work within the units they work in, whether in donor agencies, the UN, a government agency, or other. EvalPartners, and especially EvalYear, have been rallying points for VOPEs, and for evaluators in any organization.

While EvalPartners’ networked nature supports communication, there have been limited budgetary and staff resources to a formal EvalPartners’ communication and engagement strategy. As discussed at the 2014 EPMG Meeting, and confirmed in key informant interviews, this is widely perceived as an opportunity for EvalPartners to do more, especially as expectations and activities intensify around EvalYear.

Recommendation 3a: Create a user-friendly single website dedicated to EvalPartners. At present, EvalPartners’ related materials are spread across mymande.org, the IOCE website, a
Wikispaces page with downloadable P2P files, and, in the case of the VOPE institutional toolkit, a separate Wordpress site. Finding materials and getting a sense of the whole of what EvalPartners is and does is hindered by this situation. This does not preclude sharing EvalPartners’ information and resources on partner websites, but would make EvalPartners, as an initiative, easier for people to comprehend and engage with.

**Recommendation 3b: Hire a dedicated Executive Director, with oversight for communications coordination.** The Enabling Environment Task Force has done impressively with volunteer efforts, as has the more recently articulated Knowledge Management Task Force. Advocacy and communication are not noted to be strengths of the profession, whilst some of these activities require more time and sustained coordination than can be expected of volunteers. Hiring a dedicated Executive Director with oversight for communication coordinator, among other leadership functions, will be a key enabling feature for EvalPartners management. Specifically to work on communicating to stakeholders and making it clear for them how they can engage with EvalPartners and what actions that they can take to further a shared evaluation agenda would make sense.

### 4 Engagement

EvalPartners has clearly filled a felt need within the evaluation community and played a catalytic role within a broader dynamic: EvalPartners helps evaluators to mass together, to deliberately, reflectively shape a shared identity, and to pool their enthusiasms and resources. This synergy has many knock-on positive effects, as described in Findings II. More broadly, it has an amplifying effect as VOPE leaders can simply find energy and inspiration in each other. In addition to improving EvalPartners’ communication strategy and the clarity of structures, thematic platforms can provide another option for further strengthening engagement across institutions.

**Recommendation 4:*** Create thematic platforms for organizations (including, but not exclusive to VOPEs) to participate in as they choose. The following are three examples, based on issues that EvalPartners has already identified as high priority:

a) **Gender and equity:** The potential of changing this to a network of committed organizations (EvalGender+), rather than a task force, was discussed at the last EPMG meeting, and has since been approved. This may help to draw out the enthusiasm within the evaluation community, rather than including it as a ‘checkmark’ requirement in P2P grants, for example.

b) **Professionalization/standards/certification:** This is a major issue that is frequently discussed within the evaluation community. EvalPartners has a role to play as convenor, but not as a direct participant.

c) **National evaluation policies/advocacy on the demand side:** EvalPartners has already done a great deal on this, and it is another area where there are VOPEs and other institutional actors engaged, and which could benefit from a platform.
5  Effectiveness (of Capacity-Building Actions)

Overall, EvalPartners has been extremely effective in its activities to date. As described in the capacity-building section, its greatest successes share four characteristics: 1) resonance and relevance to the broader evaluation community; 2) a focus on building and leveraging relationships between and across evaluation actors; 3) flexibility and openness, and 4) boldness of imagination.

**Recommendation 5a:** Recognize and foster the characteristics that lead to success. One is that the processes themselves are often an integral part of the value of what happens, and there is a self-reinforcing dynamic, a ‘virtuous circle.’ The process of engaging VOPEs as peer reviewers in the P2P process, and of providing support during proposal stages in the Innovation Challenge both speak to this dynamic, and seem to work well.

**Recommendation 5b:** Continue the commitment to including capacity-building for VOPEs within processes as much as possible, as has been done in P2P. This can also be amplified by including a cross-learning and sharing element within these processes:

- Encouraging VOPEs to include a strategy for sharing and dissemination of their findings and outputs within their proposals
- Providing venues for the same: There is the potential for a ‘tradition’ of shared learning sessions amongst VOPEs at evaluation conferences, which may need to be well advertised to gain critical mass
- Online homes for outputs and reflections could also be improved: Some P2P grantees found the Wikispaces solution a little difficult to navigate, and worried its visibility was too limited.

**Recommendation 5c:** Revisit and revise the EvalPartners’ logic model so that it is a better match to open-ended capacity-building for evaluation.

6  Structures for Implementation

Task forces have, to date, been the key means of implementing EvalPartners’ activities. Task force membership is currently entirely open, but not structured, and it is not clear how people join, what they would do, and how much time they should be prepared to give. EvalPartners certainly does not harbour any deliberate culture of exclusiveness – quite the opposite. However, the informal aspect combined with close links between some of the core people, can effectively exclude smaller organizations or those without such relationships, who simply do not know how to connect.

**Recommendation 6a:** Formalize structure and membership processes for task forces, so that it is clearer to existing and prospective members how they can engage and what is expected.
**Recommendation 6b:** As some additional structures may be introduced for implementing EvalPartners’ activities, processes of decision-making, communication and engagement should likewise be documented and made available to all current and prospective members.

7  **Feedback and Learning**

As EvalPartners’ initiatives remain new, it is too soon to know exactly how effective some of them (such as the toolkit resources) will turn out to be. Keeping a focus on feedback and learning will remain important. So far, EvalPartners has done a good job of documenting its activities, and sharing progress at the annual EPMG meetings.

**Recommendation 7:** Continue to monitor specific EvalPartners’ initiatives, including the use of resources such as toolkits. Commit to a schedule for compiling results from the same and making them publicly available.

8  **Formalization & Clarification**

As EvalPartners evolves, and is now moving past its formative stages, there is a clear need for formalization and clarification of structures. EvalPartners’ culture of openness and sense of shared purpose, together with a willingness to innovate and take risks, are amongst its greatest strengths. Formalizing its structures should be done in a way that builds on and preserves that culture and maintains EvalPartners’ flexibility, making it easier for people to understand what it is and how it makes decisions. Formalizing and documenting these processes also contributes to institutional stability as members leave and join the EPMG.

**Recommendation 8a:** Review and formalize management processes and procedures.

**Recommendation 8b:** Clarify administrative procedures and lines of communication.

**Recommendation 8c:** Clarify the relationship between IOCE, the UN and EvalPartners. The existing relationship has largely worked well, but there are some associated uncertainties.

9  **Funding**

EvalPartners’ early success and increasing visibility increases expectations and dreams. It has done incredibly well with a modest budget, unleashing enthusiasm and leveraging huge in-kind contributions in volunteerism from the leadership throughout all of EvalPartners’ partners. Maintaining and strengthening EvalPartners will require continued, and ideally, increased, amounts of funding. IOCE has increased its capacity to manage funds through EvalPartners, and this may be leveraged in the future.

**Recommendation 9:** Develop a funding strategy for the post-2015 period, tied to decisions about EvalPartners’ longer term institutional home and reflecting consideration for EvalPartners global (North-South, North-North, and South-South) role.
References


EvalPartners Innovation Challenge Concept Note (Draft 1), 2013.


Narrative Progress Report: 1st Iteration of the Peer-to-Peer (P2P) & Innovation Challenge Small Grant Programs, 2014.


