

OVE
COUNTRY
PRODUCT
PROTOCOL

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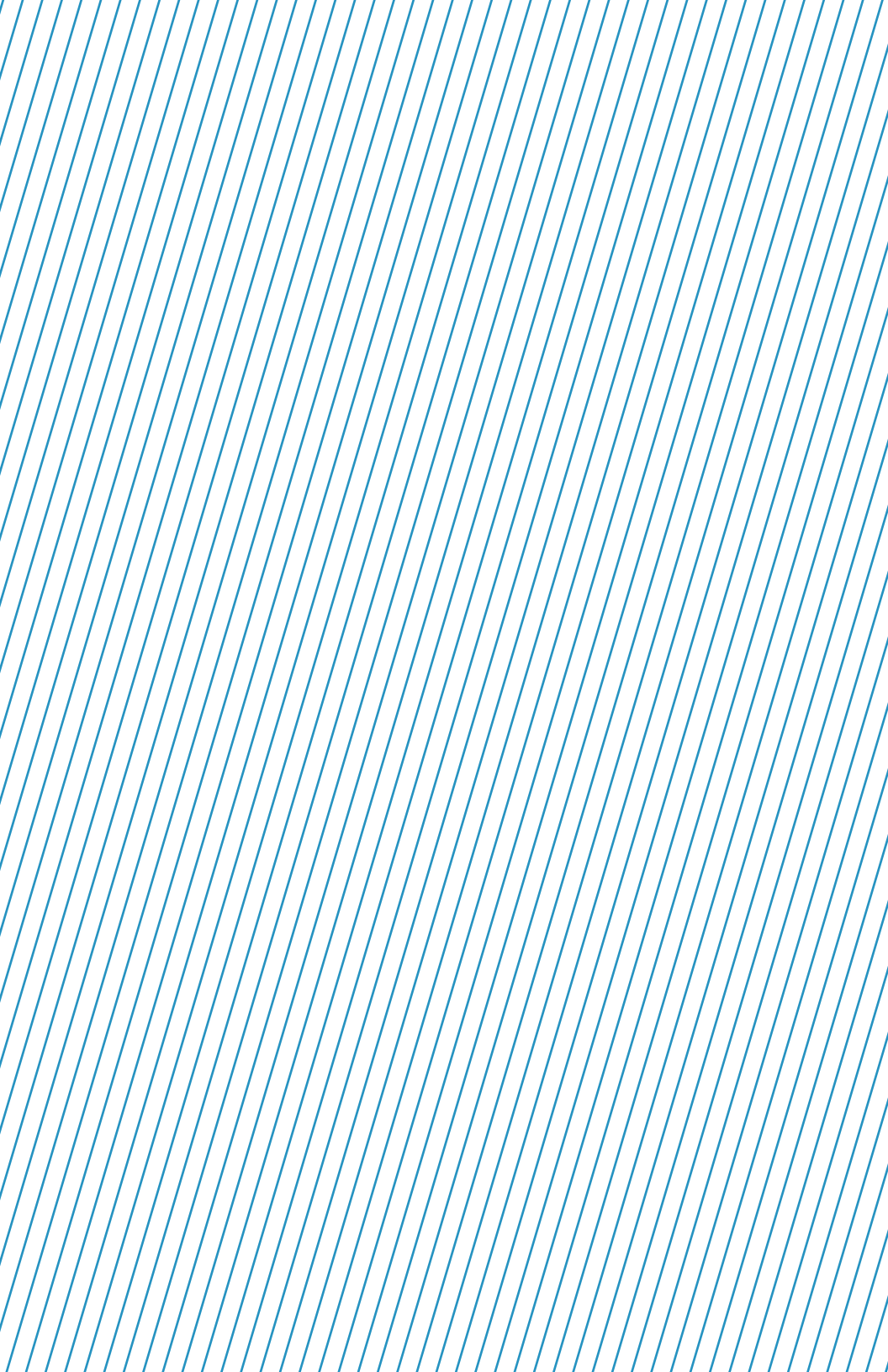
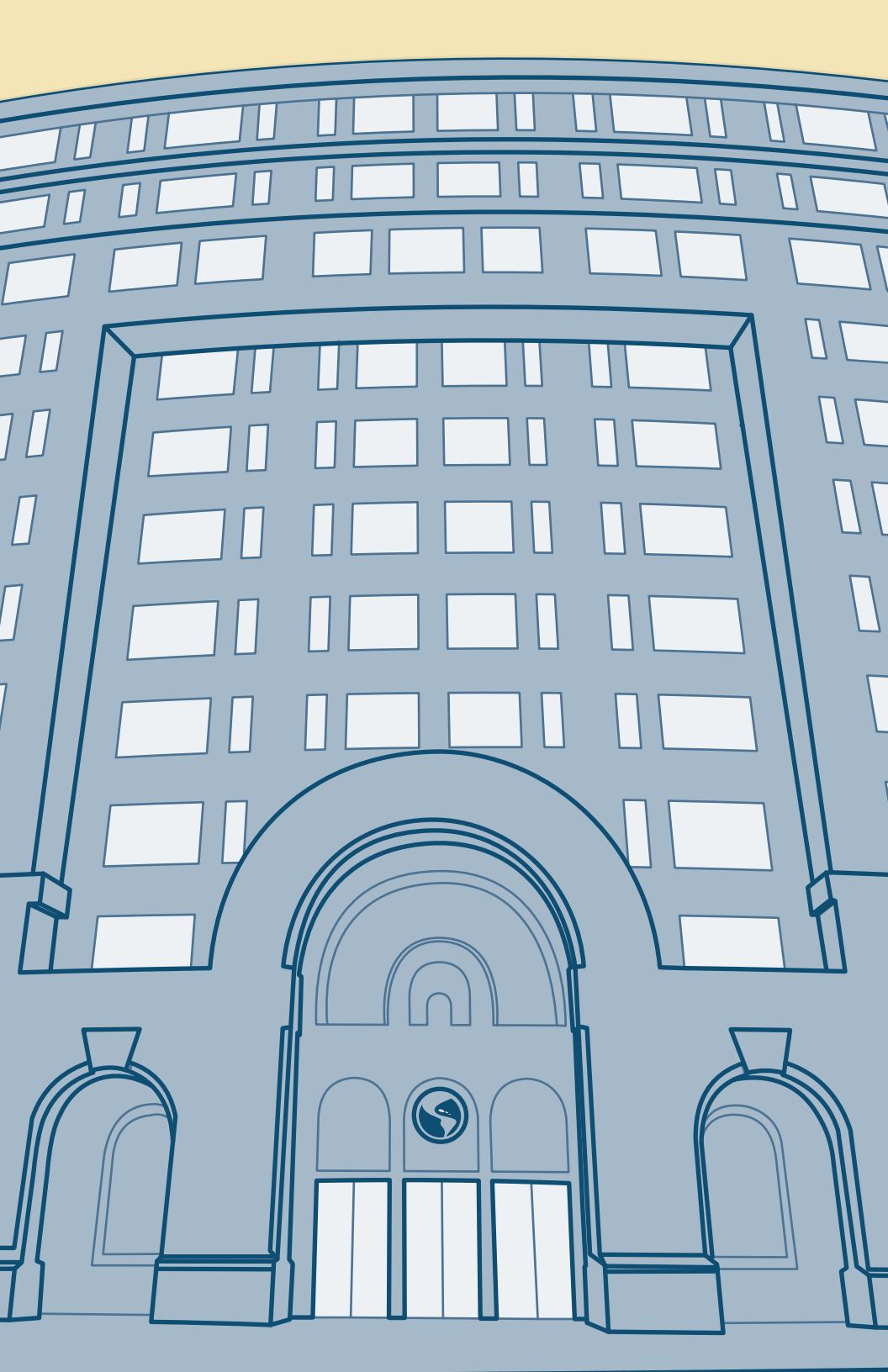


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Acronyms and Abbreviations

CP	Country program
CS	Country strategy
ICPR	Independent Country Program Review
IDB	Inter-American Development Bank
IIC	Inter-American Investment Corporation
OVE	Office of Evaluation and Oversight
XCPE	Extended Country Program Evaluation

Preface

OVE has been producing Country Program Evaluations (CPEs) under the guidance of a CPE Protocol that was last updated in 2009 (document [RE-348-3](#)). Since then, changes in how the IDB Group produces its country strategies (CS) have reduced the utility of CPEs. Furthermore, the requirement for OVE to produce these comprehensive evaluations for every strategic cycle in all countries has led to a large concentration of efforts in country products, thus limiting its ability to allocate resources to other strategic priorities of the Board.

In light of these concerns, OVE proposed a new approach to country products in 2020, which was piloted for four countries throughout 2020 and 2021. Based on lessons from the pilots, along with several rounds of feedback from the Board and Management, OVE then revised its initial proposal and submitted a new Country Product Protocol (hereafter, the Protocol) to the joint IDB Programming Committee and the Inter-American Investment Corporation (IIC) Committee of the Board of Executive Directors in 2022. The Board approved the new Protocol, thereby superseding the 2009 CPE Protocol. This new Protocol contributes to the strengthening of the IDB Group's evaluation system and introduces three noteworthy improvements:

First, the Protocol replaces CPEs with two distinct but complementary country products that better fit the needs of the Board and other IDB Group stakeholders: Extended Country Program Evaluations (XCPEs) and Independent Country Program Reviews (ICPRs). XCPEs are similar to prior CPEs but cover two CS periods; they help the Board and Management focus on learning over a longer-term period; ICPRs cover one CS period, and address the Board's information needs when CSs are presented for approval between XCPEs. In line with their more informative and descriptive nature, ICPRs have conclusions, but not recommendations.

Second, upon its approval, the Protocol is to be complemented by Implementation Guidelines, which describe OVE's approach in more detail. These complementary documents support OVE's efforts to increase consistency across country products. They also help align expectations with the Board and Management by enhancing clarity on the overall principles that country products will follow and on how they will be applied by OVE. By contrast, the prior CPE Protocol was mostly based on generic principles and was not complemented by operational guidance specific to IDB Group.

Third, the Protocol sets commitments regarding the delivery date of OVE country products, something that had caused issues in the past and was not regulated by the CPE Protocol. It also formalizes important process milestones to improve interactions with Management and country authorities during the preparation, review, and dissemination of OVE country products. Additionally, the Protocol promotes an early and ongoing engagement with IDB

Management and country authorities during the process and promotes the dissemination of findings from country products, as well as common findings across countries. Finally, it commits OVE to supporting Management with training on the evaluability of CSs and managing for results at the country level.

The Protocol will be applied for five years from its approval date in November 2022; a period which will approximately result in its application to all IDB Group borrowing member countries. After that, OVE will present a review of the application of the new Protocol to the Board, including any recommendations for amendments or updates. OVE may also adapt the Protocol at any time if changes take place in the way the IDB Group approaches its CSs or programs, to maintain its logic and principles, as approved by the Board.

Ivory Yong-Prötzel
Director



Introduction

The objective of this Protocol is to define the scope of the Office of Evaluation and Oversight's (OVE's) country products; the procedures regulating their planning, production, and dissemination; and the interactions with internal and external stakeholders that are particular to country products and need to be clarified beyond the standard procedures stipulated in the Inter-American Development Bank's (IDB's) Administrative Manual (particularly, in document [AM-140-1](#)).

This Protocol supersedes the 2009 CPE Protocol (document [RE-348-3](#)) and will guide OVE's future country product work. The Protocol will be complemented with Implementation Guidelines describing the approach to apply the principles approved in it. The Implementation Guidelines are the exclusive responsibility of OVE and may be adjusted from time to time. The Implementation Guidelines will be shared within the IDB Group and will be publicly available.

Should changes take place in the way the IDB Group approaches its country strategies or programs, OVE shall adapt this Protocol as needed to maintain its logic and principles, as approved by the Boards of Executive Directors of IDB and IDB Invest (hereafter, the Board). Five years from its approval date, OVE will produce a review of how this Protocol has been applied and will submit it for the consideration of the Board, together with any recommendation for amendments or updates.

OVE Country Products

A. Background

The IDB Group Evaluation Policy Framework (document [RE-538-2](#)) establishes three simultaneous objectives for the evaluation system: foster continuous learning to inform and improve current and future decisions; provide a basis for accountability to shareholders on the delivery of the development mandate; and contribute to transparency by appropriately disseminating the findings in accordance with the relevant access-to-information policy of the IDB and IDB Invest.

To contribute to these objectives, OVE produces two types of country products that are delivered to the Board prior to their consideration of new country strategies (CSs): Independent Country Program Reviews (ICPRs) and Extended Country Program Evaluations (XCPEs).

B. Two country products

ICPRs: ICPRs are independent reviews of the most recent IDB Group CS and the associated country program (CP). ICPRs assess the relevance of the CS and provide aggregate information on the CP's relevance and implementation. To the extent that the available information allows it, ICPRs also report on effectiveness. ICPRs focus mainly on accountability, and their purpose is to provide the Board with useful information to consider the next CS. In line with their main

focus, ICPRs do not provide recommendations, only conclusions.

XCPEs: XCPEs are independent evaluations of the last two CSs and the associated CP. XCPEs assess the relevance, effectiveness, and sustainability of the CSs and CP. XCPEs focus on both accountability and learning, and their purpose is to provide both the Board and Management of the IDB and IDB Invest with an evaluation of the performance of the IDB Group in the country and its CP. XCPEs provide recommendations that are expected to inform the next CS and CP.

Product sequence and complementarities: ICPRs and XCPEs are meant to be conducted in an alternating sequence for each borrowing country and are complementary in assessing the IDB Group's work in a country. In addition to providing timely information to the Board when considering a new CS, ICPRs help identify data sources, secure early access to key informants, and may encourage Management to fill gaps in the program's monitoring and evaluation before the next XCPE is conducted. The planning of each product for specific countries will be determined in OVE's Workplan and Budget, as approved by the Board.

C. Target audience

ICPRs: With a main focus on accountability, ICPRs' audience is the Board. However, it is expected that Management benefits from the process of elaboration and the findings and conclusions of an ICPR. It may also provide the country government and other external parties with an independent view on the implementation

of the IDB Group CS, supporting transparency.

XCPEs: With a dual focus on accountability and learning, XCPEs’ target audience is both the Board and Management. In addition, country authorities may learn from the process of elaboration and recommendations of an XCPE. Other external parties may benefit from an independent evaluation of the performance of the IDB Group CS, supporting transparency.

D. Country focus and selection

IDB Group’s program: Even though ICPRs and XCPEs are commonly referred to as “country” products, they only assess the IDB Group’s program, not the country’s government, its policies, or its performance. However, they may draw on different types of information on the country’s progress and challenges to assess the performance of the CP.

Full country coverage: All IDB Group borrowing member countries will be covered by an OVE country product upon the original expiration date of their CS—that is, without considering the one-year transition period following that expiration date. For each country, OVE will aim to alternate an ICPR and an XCPE in each successive CS cycle.

CS extensions and updates: CS extensions¹ will not trigger the requirement for a new OVE country product. CS updates² may trigger, at

1 CS extensions refer to “extensions of up to one year (in addition to the one year of the transition period),” which are granted by decision of the Vice Presidency for Countries and then communicated to the Board (document [GN-2468-9](#), paragraph 6.18).

2 CS updates refer to situations when “with the government’s

OVE's discretion, an update of the country product already delivered upon the original expiration of the CS.

Country product waiver: Occasionally, OVE may request from the Board a waiver not to produce a country product if it considers it either unfeasible or less useful for a specific country at that time.

E. Time coverage

Review period: The period covered by OVE country products is determined by the validity of the CS being reviewed. ICPRs cover one CS period, starting on the date on which the CS was approved by the Board. XCPEs cover two CS periods, starting on the date on which the first of the two CSs was approved. In both cases, OVE will determine the end of the period covered to be as close as possible to the original expiration date of the CS, or the end of the CS update in the case of OVE country product updates.

Ad hoc periods: Occasionally, OVE may select an ad hoc review period and clearly indicate the rationale for such selection for that specific country at that time.

F. Program coverage

Covered program: The program considered consists of the portfolio of all IDB and IDB Invest operations that meet any of the following criteria:

agreement, it is deemed necessary to add a new priority area not included in the original document, or when there is a justified need to change the CS strategic objectives," or when "the government and the Bank consider necessary to extend the period of the CS for more than two years, running from the expiration date of the document" (document [GN-2468-9](#)), paragraph 6.15).

- a. Period approvals:** Operations approved during the review period (as defined in paragraph 1.12 above) for the country or for counterparts in the country.
- b. Legacy operations:** Operations approved before the review period for the country or for counterparts in the country that either:
 - i) had any undisbursed balance at the beginning of the review period, or
 - ii) were both approved and fully disbursed between the end point of OVE's last country product and the beginning of the review period.
- c. Regional operations:** Operations clearly discernible as country-specific, approved under a regional or multicountry umbrella.
- d. IDB Invest operations reaching early operational maturity:** Operations for which Management has formally submitted or should have submitted an Expanded Supervision Report to OVE at any time during the review period.

IDB Lab operations: OVE country products will not cover IDB Lab operations as part of the portfolio.

G. Sources of information

ICPR sources: ICPRs' scope is limited and based on existing documents, information, and data in the IDB Group systems and from reliable public sources, as well as (mostly virtual) interviews with counterparts at the IDB Group and with a limited number of key informants in the country.

XCPE sources: In addition to the sources used by ICPRs, XCPEs include field missions and extensive

interviews with country counterparts and other stakeholders (such as clients, beneficiaries, and representatives of civil society and the private sector).

National and international data sources: Both country products will consider and use statistical and other types of data from national as well as international sources.

Approach

Collaborative approach: In line with the principles stated in the IDB Group Evaluation Policy Framework, a collaborative and constructive approach among evaluators and key stakeholders will be sought with a view to enhance ownership, the validity of findings, and the use of evaluative lessons.

Management involvement: Management shall play an important role during the elaboration of OVE country products, by facilitating meetings with in-country informants, supporting arrangements for country missions and access to beneficiaries, providing its views and evidence on achievements and challenges, and facilitating full and timely access to information and records of comprehensive discussions about the strategies and programs to be covered (such as portfolio reviews), among other activities.

Coordination: OVE will promote coordination with Management, by ensuring that information is requested in a timely manner and informing Management if any aspect of the elaboration of the ICPR or XCPE does not evolve as planned.

Country product principles: As is the practice in all OVE products, OVE will ensure that country products also meet the following principles:

- a. **Objectives-based:** ICPRs and XCPEs are objectives-based, meaning that the assessments will be made against the objectives approved in the CS (and any

subsequent and official update of those).³ This includes the chain of objectives sustaining the vertical logic; i.e., both the strategic objectives and the expected results (or outcomes) defined in the CS. OVE country products will also analyze, as relevant, how the IDB Group has progressed on other stated priorities such as cross-cutting themes or support to country systems.

- b. Data triangulation:** Information from various sources is cross-verified to ensure its validity, test the consistency of findings, deepen the understanding of observations, and ensure the consideration of multiple perspectives.
- c. Contribution, not attribution:** OVE country products assess the IDB Group CP's contribution to the defined CS objectives; they do not seek to demonstrate attribution of observed results to the IDB Group's CP.
- d. Focus on results:** While OVE country products report on outputs (in Spanish, *productos*), outcomes (*resultados*), and—when possible—impacts, the focus is on assessing and explaining outcomes by analyzing the CP's contribution to the CS objectives. This analysis will be based on the available evidence of the CP's contribution, and because ICPRs rely on more limited evidence and sources than XCPEs, such analysis will be more in-depth in XCPEs than in ICPRs.

ICPR and XCPE approaches: The approaches of ICPRs and XCPEs differ, notably, in their

³ For ICPRs, this refers to the CS under review, while for XCPEs it refers to the two subsequent CSs under evaluation.

characteristics, the depth of evidence used, the assessment criteria they cover, and how they apply them.

- a. ICPRs are more informative, descriptive, reviewing in **nature**; they mainly answer *what* questions. XCPEs are more explanatory, analytical, evaluative in nature; they answer *what, how, and why* questions.
- b. **Evidence** used by both products includes: IDB Group operational documents and data, reliable national and international sources, and interviews with IDB Group Management and with a limited selection of key informants in the country. In addition, evidence used in XCPEs includes in-depth analyses on key issues related to the objectives and sectors covered, and interviews with a larger selection of key informants in the country (government counterparts, IDB Invest clients, and other external actors such as beneficiaries and representatives of civil society and the private sector); it may also include other fieldwork with in-country informants during missions.
- c. Both products will present a description of the **program implemented** during the period and will analyze portfolio execution, project times and costs, instruments used, and the program's support to the country systems.
- d. Both products assess the **relevance** of the CS, including relevance of design, which comprises CS evaluability and focus or selectivity, among other dimensions. Compared to ICPRs, XCPEs will provide a more in-depth analysis on whether there

were key changes in country needs and priorities, as well as how that affected CS relevance and how the IDB Group adapted to those changes. This is especially important to address in XCPEs given the longer period they cover.

- e. Both products assess **effectiveness** but, while ICPRs are limited to mostly documentary sources, XCPEs will complement the information through field missions. This will enable XCPEs to also provide a more in-depth analysis of why results were or were not attained as expected.
- f. Only XCPEs assess **sustainability**, based on whether the results achieved by the CP are likely to remain over time. This includes an analysis of risks or threats to continuation of results and the adequacy of any mitigation mechanisms in place. Key environmental and social issues are also analyzed.
- g. Based on their findings and analyses, ICPRs will provide conclusions while XCPEs will provide both conclusions and recommendations.

Process

A. Planning

Country product timing: OVE will plan country products to start early enough to provide meaningful inputs to Management and the Board but sufficiently late in the CS cycle to capture most of the IDB Group work during the CS period. In practice, OVE will aim to present the ICPR or the XCPE to the Joint Committees of the Board between three to four months after the original expiration date of the CS under review—that is, without considering the one-year transition period. In the case of ICPR or XCPE updates, OVE will aim to present them between three to four months before the expiration of the CS update.

OVE Workplan: All OVE country products will be anticipated yearly in OVE’s Workplan and Budget based on the original expiration dates of the CS. In exceptional circumstances, Management may formally request OVE to add an unplanned country product. Such request shall be made to OVE sufficiently in advance of the desired date of presentation to the Board: 9 months for an ICPR and 15 months for an XCPE. The request shall be granted at OVE’s discretion in consultation with the Board.

B. Launching

Announcement: OVE will announce the launch of a country product to Management via email. This communication will include the initial composition of the team, estimated timeline, and a link to this Protocol for guidance on the general approach.

Management counterparts: Upon receipt of the announcement email, Management will inform OVE of the IDB Group parties that will act as counterparts to OVE during the elaboration of the country product. These counterparts will facilitate the interaction between Management and OVE and will support OVE's timely access to the requested documents and key informants.

Kickoff meeting and portfolio verification: OVE will organize a kickoff meeting with Management counterparts. No later than 5 working days before this kickoff meeting takes place, OVE will send to Management an initial country portfolio based on IDB Group data systems. No later than 10 working days after the kickoff meeting, Management will suggest any adjustments to the portfolio and send a written confirmation to OVE.

Engaging country authorities: No later than 5 working days after the kickoff meeting, OVE will send to Management for transmission to the country authorities an official communication addressed to the latter notifying them of the launching of the country product work and inviting them to participate in the country product process. No later than 10 working days after the kickoff meeting, Management will forward this communication to the relevant country authorities.

Approach Papers: No Approach Papers will be produced for ICPRs. For XCPEs, OVE will prepare Approach Papers defining the scope and methodology of the evaluation. Approach Papers will be sent to Management for comments and to the Board for information.

C. Reporting and consultation

Language of reports: OVE will provide Management and the country authorities with a draft final report for consultation. The report will be in the official language of the country, or in English for those countries whose official language is not an official language of the IDB Group.

Draft to Management: OVE will distribute a draft final report to Management with an invitation to provide written comments and attend a technical review meeting, chaired by OVE, in 10 working days. Management will prepare consolidated written comments and submit them to OVE at least 1 working day prior to the technical review meeting.

Draft to country authorities: OVE will send the draft report to the corresponding country authorities through the corresponding Country Representative, with copy to the respective Executive Director, inviting said authorities to provide comments within 10 working days for ICPRs or 20 working days for XCPEs. OVE will accompany the draft report by a cover letter addressed to the country authorities, which Management will attach in its forwarding of the draft report. OVE will ensure that all information considered confidential according to IDB Group policies relating to access to information is removed from the report shared with country authorities.

Final report: OVE will adjust the report as it deems appropriate and ensure timely distribution to the Board through the Office of the Secretary. Management will receive the final version of

the report at least 5 working days prior to submission to the Office of the Secretary for Board distribution.

Management response: Management will produce a response to the country product stating its views and, in the case of XCPEs, stating its position on each recommendation. The response will be disclosed jointly with the respective OVE country product.

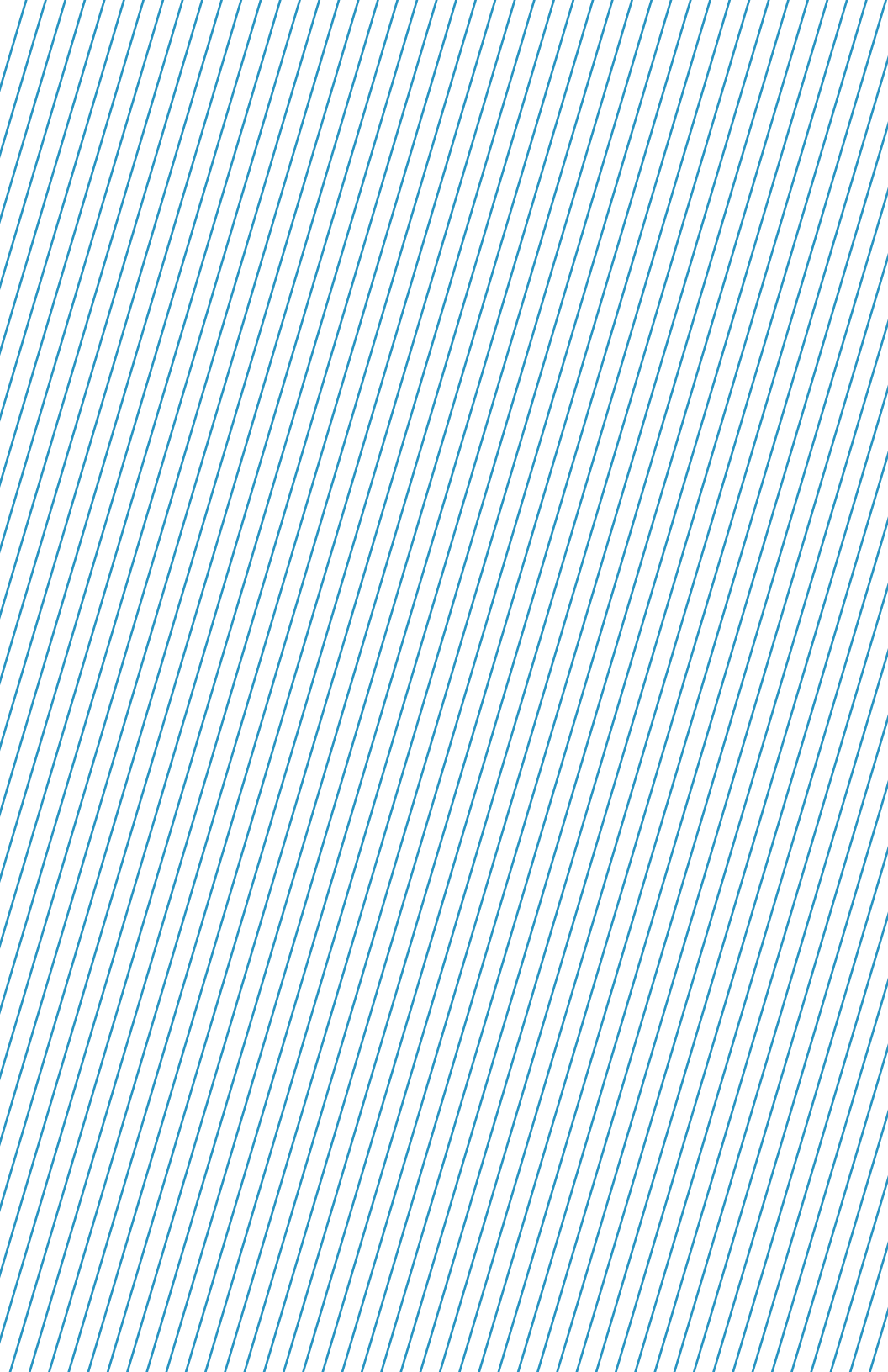
D. Follow-up, training, and dissemination

Follow-up: ICPRs have conclusions but not recommendations. Management is encouraged to describe the use of ICPR findings and conclusions whenever these have been useful for the upcoming CS document. After XCPEs are considered by the Board, Management shall take into account recommendations endorsed by the Board, and their implementation will be followed up in the Recommendation Tracking System. The upcoming CS will explicitly document how the recommendations were addressed, and future country products will systematically review the extent to which recommendations from previous XCPEs were addressed.

Training: OVE will facilitate training for the IDB Group on issues related to improving the evaluability of CSs and managing for results at the country level.

Dissemination: OVE country products will be disclosed to the public in line with the IDB Group Evaluation Policy Framework and the policies relating to access to information, as applicable and according to OVE's communication and dissemination plan.

Derivative knowledge products: OVE may use country products to highlight common themes across countries and disseminate this knowledge through outreach activities.



ABOUT THE OFFICE OF EVALUATION AND OVERSIGHT — OVE

Established in 1999 as an independent evaluation office, OVE evaluates the performance and development effectiveness of the activities of the Inter-American Development Bank Group (IDB Group). These evaluations seek to strengthen the IDB Group through learning, accountability and transparency.

OVE evaluations are disclosed to the public in accordance with IDB Group policies to share lessons learned with the region and the development community at large.

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