



Mid Term Evaluation of the System for Transparent Allocation of Resources

Approach Paper

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GEF Evaluation Office
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The System for Transparent Allocation of Resources (STAR) is a framework adopted by the GEF for allocation of its GEF-5 replenishment resources to eligible countries to support activities to generate global environmental benefits in the biodiversity, climate change and land degradation focal areas. The implementation of STAR began in July 2010 and has now been under implementation for more than two years.

The GEF Council has requested that the Evaluation Office conduct a mid-term evaluation of STAR to provide feedback on its design and implementation. As a response to this request, the Office is undertaking an evaluation to assess the extent to which STAR has met its objectives. The evaluation will assess the quality of STAR's design and implementation, and its effects on the GEF portfolio. This document outlines the approach that would be followed for the evaluation.

Background

Development of STAR has its roots in the negotiations for the third replenishment of the GEF Trust Fund. The policy recommendations of the third replenishment identified the need for a system for allocating scarce GEF resources. It recommended that the GEF Secretariat work with the Council to establish “*a system for allocating scarce GEF resources within and among focal areas with a view towards maximizing the impact of these resources on global environmental improvements and promoting sound environmental policies and practices worldwide.*”² In its October 2002 meeting the GEF Council reviewed the “summary of negotiations” for the third replenishment (GEF/C.20/4) and asked the Secretariat to prepare an action plan to follow up on the policy recommendations of the replenishment group.

To follow up on the replenishment group's recommendation on establishment of a resource allocation framework, the Secretariat presented an ‘issues paper’ (GEF/C.21/8) in the June 2003 Council meeting. After reviewing the paper the Council asked the Secretariat to establish a working group to develop proposals on the resource allocation framework. In July 2003 the Secretariat established a working group – the group was later disbanded because of limited progress. From fall 2004 onwards the Secretariat led the process of development of proposals for the resource allocation framework (RAF-MTR, 2009).

In September 2005, following several iterations of draft proposals and meetings, the GEF Council agreed to implement “*a resource allocation framework based on an index of country's potential to generate global environmental benefits in the biodiversity and climate change focal areas and an index of performance*” for the GEF 4 replenishment period.³ The Technical Paper on the GEF Resource Allocation

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² Summary of Negotiations on the Third Replenishment of the GEF Trust Fund (GEF/C.20/4), Annex C, page 50, para 16.

³ Joint Summary of Chairs – Special Meetings of the Council, August 31 – September 1, 2005 (GEF/C.26/Joint Summary).

Framework (RAF) provides details on the framework that was to be implemented (GEF/C.26/2/Rev.1). Along with the decision to implement the resource allocation framework, the Council also requested the Independent Monitoring and Evaluation Unit of the GEF to undertake a review of RAF after two years of implementation.⁴

The GEF Evaluation Office conducted the mid-term review of the RAF and presented it in the November 2008 meeting of the Council. The review noted several concerns related to design and implementation of RAF. It found that: the RAF provided limited incentives for improved performance; the ceiling on the level of resource utilization by the mid-term of GEF-5 resulted in lower levels of resource utilization; unclear guidelines limited the access of the group allocation countries to GEF resources; rules for RAF's implementation were complex and did not encourage flexibility and dynamism; and, although RAF increased country ownership in countries with individual allocations it had negligible or negative effect on ownership in the countries with group allocations.

The mid-term review of RAF recommended: reallocation of unused funds during the last year of the GEF-4; the implementation of the resource allocation framework during remaining period of GEF-4 with full public disclosure, transparency, participation, and clear responsibilities; simplification of implementation rules; and, improvement in the design and indexes to be used for the period covered by the next replenishment.⁵ Other than the recommendation on simplification of implementation rules, the Council adopted all of the recommendations. While the Council discussed the recommendation on simplification of implementation rules it decided not to adopt it because of the risk that any change in implementation rules at that late stage in implementation of GEF-4 may not be practical. The Council asked the Secretariat to present steps to improve the design and indices for the climate change and biodiversity focal area for GEF-5 and scenarios for expansion of the framework to other focal areas in the June 2009 Council meeting.

The preliminary proposals for the revised resource allocation framework, now rechristened as STAR – the System for Transparent Allocation of Resources – were presented in the Council's meetings in June 2009.⁶ In its November 2009 meeting the Council reviewed the revised proposals and decided to extend the STAR to the land degradation focal area and adopted new design features that provided greater flexibility in utilization of allocated resources.⁷ In its June 2010 meeting the GEF Council reviewed the document on operational procedures for STAR (GEF/C.38/9/Rev.1). The document also provisioned for a mid-term evaluation of STAR in FY 2013 by the GEF Evaluation Office. The Council reviewed the document and requested implementation of STAR as per the procedures and timeline laid out in the document.⁸

⁴ The GEF Evaluation Office was established as an independent Office in 2003. Prior to 2005, it was called the GEF Office of Monitoring and Evaluation. In its November 2005 meeting the GEF Council decided to approve shift of the monitoring function to the GEF Secretariat and, consequently, the change of name to GEF Evaluation Office.

⁵ Mid Term Review of the Resource Allocation Framework, GEF EO. July 2009.

⁶ Joint Summary of Chairs – GEF Council Meeting, June 22-24, 2009. Document available at:

http://www.thegef.org/gef/sites/thegef.org/files/documents/Joint_Summary_of_the_Chairs_06.26.09_with_Council_Revisions_0.pdf

⁷ Joint Summary of Chairs – GEF Council Meeting, November 10-12, 2009. Available at:

http://www.thegef.org/gef/sites/thegef.org/files/documents/Joint%20Summary%20C.36_0.pdf

⁸ Joint Summary of Chairs – GEF Council Meeting, June 29-July 1st 2010, decision on agenda item 15.

<http://www.thegef.org/gef/sites/thegef.org/files/documents/Joint%20Summary%20of%20the%20Chair.FINAL%20June%202010.pdf>

Characteristics of STAR⁹

The objective of GEF's resource allocation framework is to function as "*...a system for allocating resources to countries in a transparent and consistent manner based on global environmental priorities and country capacities, policies and practices relevant to successful implementation of GEF projects*".¹⁰

As was the case with RAF, the STAR has been designed to fulfill this objective.

The STAR for GEF-5 covers the following GEF focal areas: biodiversity, climate change, and land degradation. A country eligible for GEF financing needs to meet following three conditions to receive a STAR allocation for these focal areas:

1. Be a party to the Convention relevant to respective focal areas covered by the STAR and meet the eligibility criteria decided by the Conference of Parties to that Convention
2. Not be a member of the European Union as of July 1st, 2010
3. Had at least one national (GEF-financed) project in the past five years

Under STAR, the procedure to determine a country's allocation for a focal area involves the following steps:

- Calculate the **country's score** for a given focal area using a composite formula that combines a focal area specific GEF Benefits Index (GBI), a GEF Performance Index (GPI), and a GDP-based Index.¹¹
- Calculate the **country's share** for each focal area by dividing the country's score for the focal area by the sum of the country scores for all countries eligible to receive STAR allocation for that focal area.
- Compute the **preliminary allocation** for the country for a given focal area by multiplying the country share with the total amount of GEF resources available for that focal area after deducting the set asides.
- Determine the **adjusted allocation** for the country after application of ceilings and floors.

Compared to RAF where a benefits index and a performance index had been used for calculation of a country score, under STAR, in addition to these indices, a GDP-based index with a preference for countries with lower per capita income is also part of the composite index. The benefits indices and the performance index under STAR are also different from those used under RAF in terms of the weights and indicators used for composing these indices. While the STAR's approach to calculating a country's share and preliminary allocation is identical to that used by RAF, the floors and ceilings have changed (see Table 1).¹²

⁹ Two documents - 'System for Transparent Allocation of Resources (STAR)' (PL/RA/01, September 2012) and 'GEF-5 Operational Procedures for the System For a Transparent Allocation of Resources (STAR)' (GEF/c.27/Inf.8/Rev.1, July, 2005) – provide details on the key features of STAR.

¹⁰ GEF/c.27/Inf.8/Rev.1, 2005; PL/RA/01, September 2012

¹¹ The document, "System for Transparent Allocation of Resources (STAR)" (PL/RA/01; 2012) provides details on calculation of these indices. The document is available online at:

http://www.thegef.org/gef/sites/thegef.org/files/documents/document/PL.RA_.01.System%20for%20Transparent%20Allocation%20of%20Resources.doc%20.pdf

¹² There has also been some change in the relative share of climate change and biodiversity focal areas.

Table 1: Floors and Ceilings under RAF and STAR

Constraint	RAF		STAR		
	Biodiversity	Climate Change	Biodiversity	Climate Change	Land Degradation
Minimum allocation (floor)	US \$ 1.0 m	US \$ 1.0 m	US \$ 1.5 m	US \$ 2.0 m	US \$ 0.5 m
Maximum allocation (ceiling)	10 % of total	15 % of total	10 % of total	11% of total	10 % of total

The mid-term review on RAF found that utilization of GEF resources among group allocation countries was lower than among countries with individual allocations. It also found that while RAF had increased country ownership in individual allocation countries, it had a negligible or detrimental effect in countries with a group allocation. As a response to these findings, group allocations were eliminated in the STAR's design – under STAR all eligible countries have an individual country allocation.

A major criticism of RAF was that it provided limited flexibility in the design of the allocation system.¹³ The STAR's design introduced greater flexibility in the usage of resources across focal areas. The countries with aggregate allocation of up to US \$ 7.0 million in the focal areas covered by STAR have flexibility to use their respective allocations for activities in other focal areas covered by STAR.¹⁴ Marginal adjustments across focal areas are also allowed for countries with higher aggregate allocations.¹⁵ The flexibility at the country level is to be applied along with meeting a global portfolio level constraint that at least 90 percent of the resources for biodiversity and for climate change focal areas will be used for activities within the given focal area.

Under RAF, the commitments to a country for the first half of the GEF-4 replenishment period could not exceed 50 percent of the allocation for the country's indicative allocation for a focal area. This created a barrier in terms of resource utilization at the global portfolio level, as many countries' commitments in the focal areas covered by RAF were significantly lower than 50 percent leading to a very low overall utilization at the global portfolio level. This limiting feature has not been retained in the design of STAR.

GEF-5 Replenishment and STAR

The total commitments made by the donor countries for the GEF-5 replenishment was \$ 4.34 billion.¹⁶ This is considerably higher than the \$ 3.14 billion¹⁷ replenishment for the GEF-4 period. Availability of higher levels of resources for the GEF-5 period led to an increase in the aggregate allocations for focal areas and to average country allocations under STAR.

¹³ Mid-Term Review of RAF, 2009, GEF EO

¹⁴ GEF/C.38/9/Rev.1, 2010

¹⁵ Marginal adjustments could be up to 0.2 million for countries with aggregate allocations in the range of US \$ 7.0 million to 20.0 million; up to 1.0 million for those with aggregate allocations of US \$ 20 million to 100 million; and up to 2.0 million for countries with aggregate allocations of more than US \$ 100 million.

¹⁶ This includes the unspent amount from the earlier replenishment periods. The actual materialization of the commitments for GEF-5 has been lower than the US \$ 4.34 billion. Nonetheless, the available amount for programming is still higher than that for GEF-4.

¹⁷ This includes the unspent amount from the earlier replenishment periods.

As of June 2012 (mid-way point of GEF-5), 47 percent of the total country allocations have been reserved (utilized) through approval of Project Identification Forms (PIFs) and project preparation grants (PPGs)¹⁸. Further, by mid-point of GEF-5 the utilization of resources under STAR for the countries that are SIDs and/or LDCs is 39 percent of their allocation compared to 50 percent for countries that are neither SIDs nor LDCs. These broad trends indicate improvement in the utilization of GEF resources under STAR as overall utilization in focal areas covered under RAF for the first two years of GEF-4 was considerably lower at 26 percent.

Key questions and the scope of the evaluation

The STAR Mid-Term Evaluation will be an input into the final report of the Fifth Overall Performance Study (OPS5) of the GEF. Although the STAR Mid-Term Evaluation will touch upon the role of the STAR in increasing the effectiveness of the GEF in meeting its mandate and strengthening country ownership, a fuller treatment of these issues will be possible in the final report of OPS5, when evidence from this evaluation can be contextualized in the light of emerging evidence from other evaluation streams and sub-studies of OPS5.

This mid-term evaluation will focus on the performance of STAR, to be assessed through determining the extent to which it is meeting its objectives. The evaluation will also assess STAR's performance using RAF as a benchmark. It will also appraise the extent Council decisions based on RAF-MTR experiences have been addressed in STAR. The mid-term evaluation aims to assess:

1. The extent to which the STAR's design facilitates allocation and utilization of scarce GEF resources to enhance global environmental benefits.
2. The extent to which the STAR promotes transparency and predictability in allocation of GEF resources and strengthens country-driven approaches.
3. The level of flexibility that has been provided by STAR in allocation and utilization of GEF resources.
4. The efficiency and effectiveness of the STAR implementation process.
5. The extent to which the RAF Mid-Term Review has been followed up on in STAR through relevant Council decisions and general lessons learned.

To what extent does the STAR's design facilitate allocation and utilization of scarce GEF resources to enhance global environmental benefits?

The mid-term evaluation of STAR will assess the design features of STAR. As part of the evaluation, the design of STAR will be compared with that of other resource allocation frameworks that are being used by multilateral organizations. The evaluation will assess the quality of design based on the relative importance given to benefits potential, past performance, socioeconomic factors, and technical merits

¹⁸ Data available for PMIS as on June 30th 2012.

of these within the framework of the composite index used for determining the unadjusted share in country allocations. It will also assess the merits of other design features such as floors, ceilings, set asides, etc. The evaluation will also explore ways in which the global benefits indices (GBIs) methodology used in STAR may be improved further. More specifically the evaluation will assess:

- **The appropriateness of indices used to determine benefit potential:** The evaluation will assess the scientific and technical validity of the global benefits indices (GBIs) of STAR. The extent to which chosen indicators are easy to understand and aligned with the GEF priorities for GEF-5 will be considered, along with the rationale for the choice of the indicators used in the indices and any trade-offs that may have been made. The evaluation will assess the nature of changes that have been made to these indices for the biodiversity and climate change focal area and its effects. It will also assess the technical merits of the benefits potential index for the land degradation focal area. It will also assess the extent indices of the covered focal areas may need to be updated in light of the increasing pool of scientific knowledge.
- **The appropriateness of the index used to determine the performance potential of countries:** The performance index is a key constituent of the composite formula for determining a country's focal area allocation. The evaluation will assess the manner and the extent to which the performance index actually influences resource flows and creates incentives for improved performance.
- **The appropriateness of the indices on socio-economic factors:** The evaluation will assess the extent to which the GDP-based index is technically sound and a good proxy for socio-economic conditions.
- **The appropriateness of the weights assigned to different components of the indices:** The evaluation will assess the extent to which weights assigned to different components of the indices are appropriate.
- **Merits of other design features that affect allocation:** In addition to the indices used to determine unadjusted country allocations, there are other design features such as set asides, floors and ceilings, that determine a country's share. The evaluation will assess the merits of these features in terms of their ability to generate global environmental benefits cost effectively while providing additional GEF resources to countries that require greater assistance.

To what extent does the STAR promote transparency and predictability in the allocation of GEF resources and strengthen country-driven approaches?

The GEF moved towards a resource allocation framework to promote country driven approaches, bring about greater transparency in the allocation of scarce resources, and provide greater predictability for recipient countries and other stakeholders within the GEF partnership. The evaluation will assess the extent to which STAR has been delivering on these fronts. More specifically, it will assess:

- **The extent to which the implementation of STAR is transparent:** The evaluation will address whether actual allocations are consistent with the indices for determination of country allocations and other design features such as set asides, floor and ceilings, that affect

allocations. It will also assess whether stakeholders perceive that STAR has promoted transparent utilization of GEF resources across and within countries.

- **The extent to which STAR has led to increased predictability in resources being received by recipient countries:** The evaluation will determine whether country stakeholders and agencies working in the countries perceive that STAR has increased the level of predictability in resources available to a country, and the extent to which this is corroborated by data on actual utilization.
- **The extent to which STAR has led to greater country ownership and has promoted country-driven approaches:** The evaluation will also assess the extent to which STAR is perceived to have led to greater country ownership and has promoted country-driven approaches. This assessment will cover government and non-government stakeholders within the country.

To what extent has STAR provided flexibility in allocation and utilization of GEF resources?

The Mid Term Review of RAF identified lack of flexibility as one of the key weaknesses of RAF. In response to the critique, several design features and procedures have been included in STAR to enhance the level of flexibility. The evaluation will assess the extent to which these additions have been successful at enhancing the level of flexibility offered to countries in the utilization of GEF resources across different periods within GEF-5, across focal areas, and across different groups of countries. It will also assess whether enhanced flexibility has resulted in improved management of resources at the global portfolio level, and has facilitated improved levels of utilization. At a global portfolio level, it will also assess how set asides have been utilized.

How efficient and effective has the process of STAR implementation been?

The RAF Mid-Term Review noted several weaknesses in the RAF implementation process. These include weaknesses related to communications from the GEF Secretariat and constraints faced by the countries in programming their allocations. The evaluation will assess the manner in which STAR has been implemented so far, whether operational constraints were encountered, and the effects of these constraints. It will assess how information related to STAR has been shared by the Secretariat with different partners. The efforts that the Secretariat and agencies have undertaken to facilitate better understanding of STAR and the results of these efforts will be assessed. The evaluation will also assess the role that complementary initiatives such as national portfolio exercises have played in facilitating implementation.

To what extent has the RAF Mid-Term Review been followed up on in STAR through relevant Council decisions and general lessons learned?

The Council decisions based on the mid-review of RAF were to be addressed in STAR design, procedures and implementation. The evaluation will track the extent to which these decisions are reflected in the design and implementation of STAR. Further, lessons gained through the RAF Mid-Term review also underscored the need to avoid the unintended negative consequences of RAF such as reduction in support for regional and global projects, and lower level of involvement of NGOs and private sector in GEF activities. The evaluation will assess the extent to which these lessons have been taken into account in the design and implementation of STAR, and what the effect has been.

Methodology

The evaluation team will draw upon a variety of methodological approaches to respond to the questions that the mid-term evaluation of STAR aims to answer. The team will use a mix of quantitative and qualitative tools and methods. These include:

- Desk review of the relevant documents
- Assessment of appropriateness, adequacy, and scientific validity of resource allocation indices by expert panel
- Portfolio review and statistical modeling to assess STAR's effect on the resource flows and the nature of the GEF portfolio
- Interviews with key stakeholders to share their perspective on STAR design and implementation
- Survey of the perspectives of a wider set of stakeholders on STAR design and implementation

Document review

The document review will help establish STAR objectives, its design, rules and procedures for implementation, and will help in gathering information on the process through which STAR was designed and is now being implemented. The review will cover relevant Council documents on STAR and GEF project cycle; Assembly documents; RAF Mid-Term Review report; various versions of the STAR proposals and comments received from stakeholders on these proposals; Secretariat circulars on implementation of STAR; and country portfolio evaluations undertaken in GEF-5. The evaluation will especially benefit from the ongoing work of the Evaluation Office's Country Portfolio Evaluation Team on synthesis of the findings of country portfolio evaluations on country ownership and factors that affect it.

Publications from other multilateral organizations will be utilized in the comparison of GEF's approach to resource allocation with those being implemented by other multilateral organizations. This would also cover independent evaluations of resource allocation frameworks implemented by other agencies and would help in drawing from other experiences.

Panel review of indices for resource allocation

For RAF Mid-Term Review three different panels of independent international experts on global biodiversity, climate change, and performance were used to assess the scientific and technical merits of GEF indices. The assessment was carried out using the Delphi approach. For the STAR mid-term evaluation, expert panels will be constituted to assess the technical and scientific merits of the resource allocation indices. Experts for these panels will be identified through consultations with GEF's Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel (STAP). For each of the three focal areas a panel will be constituted. In addition to dedicated panels, the Office will also explore the use of a web-based Delphi exercise for assessment of appropriateness and adequacy of indices. Since indices for the biodiversity and climate change focal areas and performance have already been assessed for RAF Mid-Term Review, for these focal areas the focus of the assessment will be on those elements of the indices that have changed. In

comparison, the assessment of appropriateness and adequacy of benefits index for the land degradation focal area will be more comprehensive.

Portfolio analysis and statistical modeling

A detailed analysis will be undertaken to shed more light on the patterns in resource utilization across the GEF portfolio covered through STAR. The analysis will provide information on the resource flow patterns during in GEF-5 for different country groups, focal areas, different sets of activities, agencies, and involvement of NGOs and private sector. It will compare the patterns of GEF-5 with those of GEF-4 and other preceding replenishment periods. It will also provide information on the extent to which resource allocation and utilization patterns in countries that undertook the national portfolio formulation exercises differ with those that did not. The PMIS database will be the main source of information for these analyses.

Statistical modeling will be undertaken to assess the effect of STAR. Comparisons will be made assuming a non-STAR scenario and applying RAF indices. Similarly, modeling will be used to assess the extent to which allocations through STAR have differed from what would have been the case if other proposals had been accepted. The evaluation will also replicate STAR GEF benefit indices to calculate allocation so that accuracy of calculations made by the Secretariat may be vetted.

Interviews with stakeholders

Key stakeholders include relevant staff at the Secretariat and the agencies; GEF operational focal points; private sector organizations; and members of the GEF NGO network. The focus of the interviews will be on gathering information on both design and implementation of STAR. A further aim will be to address the governance related concerns and identify the difficulties encountered in the implementation of STAR. Some of the interviews that will be undertaken, particularly those of the operational focal points, will be combined with interviews undertaken for the mid-term evaluation of the GEF's NPFE initiative. Staff from other multilateral agencies that use a resource allocation framework will be interviewed to understand their approaches better and to facilitate a more informed comparison among resource allocation frameworks.

Online survey

While interviews help in gathering detailed perspectives, time and cost considerations limit the extent they can be used. The evaluation team will undertake a targeted online survey to gather perspectives of a wider range of stakeholders. The focus will be on reaching out to stakeholders such as operational focal points, agency staff at the national level involved in project preparation and/or responsible for liaising with the respective GEF Operational Focal Point, government organizations, private sector organizations and NGOs.

Limitations and challenges

Much of the analysis on effects of STAR on actual allocations and project allocations will depend on the analysis of the information contained in the GEF PMIS. The extent to which this information is accurate

reflects on the quality of analysis that may be undertaken. Moreover, distinguishing the effects of the design of the framework from those due to efficiency and effectiveness of implementation will be challenging. On some of the issues such as influence on country ownership and transparency, much of the reporting will be based on synthesis of stakeholder perceptions.

Stakeholder consultations

The evaluation will benefit from stakeholder feedback including that from the GEF Secretariat, GEF agencies, NGO-Network, STAP, and operational focal points, at critical junctures during the evaluation. The Evaluation Office shared the draft of the approach paper with the stakeholders and has addressed their inputs in the revised version. It will also identify members for the expert panel in consultations with the STAP. The Office will share the emerging findings of the evaluation in the inter-agency meeting in summer of 2013. The draft report of the evaluation will also be shared with the key stakeholders to get their feedback before finalizing the report.

Evaluation Products

The evaluation will lead to several intermediate products that will be shared with the stakeholders. Some of these may also be made publically available.

The evaluation will lead to preparation of a series of technical papers. Each of these papers will summarize the information on an aspect of the evaluation. Topics may include:

- Comparison of STAR design with other resource allocation frameworks
- Scientific and technical merits of STAR
- Effect of STAR on resource flows and the nature of GEF portfolio
- Quality of implementation of STAR

The information gathered through various sources will be synthesized and reflected in the second report of OPS-5. The evaluation results will also be reported on in APR2013. Other products that are planned include fliers (Signposts) and power point presentations.

Schedule of Evaluation

The evaluation process started in September 2012 with preliminary work to prepare an approach paper for the evaluation. The data gathering phase of the evaluation will be implemented from February to June 2013. The preliminary findings of the evaluation will be shared through an interagency meeting. The draft reports of the evaluation will be shared within the GEF partnership to get feedback. The evaluation will be complete by the end of July 2013. The findings of the evaluation will be incorporated in the second report of the OPS-5 report and will also be reported on in APR 2013. Table 2 provides the details of the activity schedule for the review.

Table 2: Activity Schedule for STAR Mid-Term Review

Activities	Sept to Nov'12	Dec '12	Jan '13	Feb '13	Mar '13	Apr '13	May '13	Jun '13	July '13
Approach paper preparation									
Document review									
Comparison with other allocation frameworks									
Panel review of STAR indices									
Portfolio Analysis and Statistical Modeling									
Interviews with stakeholders									
Online survey & analysis									
Preparation of Eval Report									

Evaluation team

The evaluation team would be led by Neeraj Negi, the Team Leader of the Performance Evaluation team. Several senior experts and short-term consultants will be brought onboard to accomplish specific tasks.