**A4. Appraise and Approve**

*Programming Authority and Accountability*

1. The UNDP Administrator is accountable to the [UNDP Executive Board](http://www.undp.org/execbrd/) for UNDP programming results, including those of associated funds and programmes, in line with the decisions of applicable governing bodies. In exercising accountability, the Administrator delegates authority to enter into an agreement with programme country governments through the Cooperation Framework once the Executive Board has approved the country programme.
2. The authority to approve projects and other delivery instruments at the country level is delegated to the Resident Representative as programme manager by the Director of the Regional Bureau when a country programme document has been approved by the Executive Board. The Resident Representative may delegate the role of programme manager to the Deputy Resident Representative or another appropriate staff member.
3. In exercising this authority, the programme manager/Resident Representative will be guided by the recommendation of the local project appraisal committee. The programme manager/Resident Representative is accountable to the Administrator through the Director of the Regional Bureau for the quality and sustainability of UNDP interventions, and for ensuring compliance with UNDP policies and procedures. Any divergence between the recommendations of the local project appraisal committee and decisions of the programme manager should be recorded on file.
4. **Exceptions**. The programme manager/Resident Representative does not have authority to approve a project document in the following cases, unless he/she has received specific authorization from the Regional Bureau Director:
5. When support to an infrastructure project is proposed (construction or other major infrastructure development; see related policy on [Construction Works](https://popp.undp.org/node/10536)); and
6. When the amount of core/TRAC funds to be spent on low-value grants would increase the overall amount spent on low-value grants beyond 10 percent of the country’s core allocation for the country programme period.
7. The authority to approve project documents that commit core resources may not exceed the funds released by headquarters for the given year(s). This also applies to cost-sharing funds when a standard cost-sharing agreement is used. For government cost-sharing, the standard project document with a payment schedule constitutes the legal basis for cost-sharing.
8. No UNDP official may sign a project document that singles out a private company or non-governmental organization to carry out activities and receive funds from UNDP unless a) a waiver of competitive bidding has first been obtained, b) a funding partner requires a specific private sector actor or non-governmental organization to serve as implementing partner or responsible party as a condition of the funding and has formally indicated this in writing, or c) the collaborative advantage selection method for non-governmental organizations has been used.
9. For projects funded with Environmental and Climate Vertical Fund resources (including GEF, GCF, AF, etc), the UNDP Nature, Climate and Energy Executive Coordinator shall operate as the primary focal point for UNDP towards the governing bodies of the vertical funds (notably GEF Council, GCF Board and AF Board). In that capacity, the UNDP Nature, Climate and Energy Executive Coordinator shall also have the delegated authority to sign the legal project level funding agreements with these vertical funds for and on behalf of UNDP.

The authority to sign a relevant vertical fund project document is further delegated to the Resident Representative through a project level delegation of authority agreement,, which shall be signed by (i) the UNDP Nature, Climate and Energy Executive Coordinator, (ii) the BPPS Assistant Adminstrator and Director, (iii) the Regional Bureau Director and (iv) the Resident Representative. By signing this Delegation of Authority for acceptance:

* + 1. the UNDP Resident Representative assumes full responsibility and accountability to ensure the timely implementation of the vertical fund supported project, as approved, and to ensure that the project complies with all vertical fund specific requirements and is implemented in accordance with the all terms and conditions set out in the governing legal agreements. The Resident Representative shall provide oversight and quality assurance of tasks undertaken by the Implementing Partner and/or Responsible Parties and assumes full accountability for ensuring that all requirements set out in UNDP’s policy framework (UNDP POPP), UNDP’s Financial Rules and Regulations and UNDP’s Internal Control Framework are applied to the project;
		2. the Regional Bureau, represented by the Regional Bureau Director, assumes full responsibility and accountability to provide oversight to the Country Office implementing the vertical fund supported project to ensure compliance with all UNDP rules and regulations.
		3. The UNDP Nature, Climate and Energy Executive Coordinator, through the UNDP Nature Climate and Energy Principal (PTA), Regional Technical Advisors (RTA) and Regional Team Leaders (RTL), shall be responsible to perform the technical oversight services and oversight required to ensure that the project complies with the vertical fund specific policy requirements and procedures. This shall include project management issues including project workplans, key management decisions, budget revisions, annual progress reports and project evaluations

*Purpose of Appraisal*

1. The purpose of appraisal is to review the quality and feasibility of the programme or project and advise on its readiness for approval.
2. Appraisal applies to UNDP programmes (country and regional) as well as all development projects. It does not apply to institutional effectiveness projects, development effectiveness projects, the engagement facility or development services. In emergency crisis situations, the requirement for an appraisal may be temporarily waived, but must be done as soon as conditions permit to advise on any needed changes to the programme or project.

*UNDP’s Role in the Appraisal and Approval of the Cooperation Framework*

1. Cooperation Framework quality needs to be assessed against criteria in the [Cooperation Framework Guidance](https://unsdg.un.org/sites/default/files/2019-10/UN-Cooperation-Framework-Internal-Guidance-Final-June-2019_1.pdf).
2. A self-assessment of the quality of the draft Cooperation Framework must be undertaken by the UN country team. This is to ensure ownership, high quality and the optimum strategic positioning of the UN system at country level. UNDP contributes to this self-assessment and is accountable for designing high-quality contributions to achieve Cooperation Framework outcomes. Further information on the appraisal and approval of Cooperation Framework can be found in the relevant Cooperation Framework Guidance.

*Programme Assessment and Appraisal (Cooperation Framework/Country or Regional Programme Document)*

1. All country programmes must be assessed early in the design process by the integrated programme assessment committee (IPAC), a standing corporate body appointed by the Associate Administrator. The assessment consists of a review of UNDP’s inputs to the Cooperation Framework/programme’s theory of change thorough review of UNDP’s comparative strengths in the country and UNDP’s general mandate and an articulation of how these are effectively integrated into the Cooperation framwork Theory of Change.
2. It is a mechanism to leverage global and cross-border learning for structured and expert inputs to inform the design of a new programme. The IPAC is held early enough to ensure it can contribute to identification of the Cooperation Framework/programme’s priorities and value proposition. It is convened by a senior manager of the Bureau responsible for the quality of the programme, typically the relevant Regional Bureau Director or Deputy Director.
3. The near-final draft of the Country Programme Document (CPD) will be appraised against the quality standards for programming by a programme appraisal committee convened by the respective Regional Bureau. An independent review of the quality of the CPD will be done by the BPPS Effectiveness Group and will be an input into the appraisal process. The purpose of this appraisal is to ensure the programme document meets UNDP’s quality standards for programming and to assess the capacities to implement the proposed programme. The quality assurance mechanism also ensures that the relevant lessons from past reviews and assessments are fed into the formulation of the new country programme design. The appraisal makes recommendations and provides support for addressing any capacity gaps.
4. Regional programmes are appraised by the Organizational Performance Group.
5. All final programme documents (i.e., CPDs, RPDs) are submitted to the Executive Board Secretariat by the Regional Bureau after receiving appropriate clearances.
6. Prior to appraisal, the programme manager (Resident Representative for country programmes, Regional Bureau Director for regional programmes or staff with delegated authority) must ensure that the programme document, including a costed evaluation plan, meets corporate quality standards and is reviewed by stakeholders including all relevant government and civil society entities, UN agencies, donors, and other multilateral and bilateral partners. This process includes assessing ownership, relevance and other quality considerations, and may encompass review by the programme board/national steering committee, as relevant.

*Programme Approval (Cooperation Framework/Country or Regional Programme Document)*

1. The Director of the Regional Bureau is accountable for the submission of high-quality draft country programme documents to the Associate Administrator for onward transmission to the Executive Board for review and approval. The programme country government endorses and signs the programme document (Cooperation Framework with legal annex attached or CPAP if there will be no Cooperation Framework) to establish national execution of the programme.
2. The Director of the Regional Bureau is accountable for the submission of a high-quality regional programme for Executive Board review and approval.

***Project Appraisal***

1. Project appraisal is a mandatory process for all UNDP development projects. A local project appraisal committee is convened to review the proposed project’s quality and the capacity of the implementing partner to deliver before project approval. When UNDP provides a service by implementing all or part of a partner’s project, the project appraisal and partner approval process serves in place of the local project appraisal committee process. For example, when UNDP is MA the project appraisal and partner approval will be done in line with the CBPF Operational Manual. An appraisal is not required for the engagement facility/initiation plans or development services.
2. UNDP convenes a local project appraisal committee in the unit responsible for project quality assurance and oversight. Its primary responsibility is to assess the quality of the proposed project against UNDP’s quality standards for programming.
3. The quality assurance assessor distributes the draft project document, the completed [Social and Environmental Screening Procedure](http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/operations1/undp-social-and-environmental-screening-procedure.html), and the project appraisal quality assurance report to the committee at least one week prior to the scheduled appraisal meeting. If conditions require a quicker appraisal, then all committee members must agree to a shorter review period.
4. The committee should involve a minimum of four individuals appointed by the UNDP programme manager/Resident Representative. It may include the quality assurance assessor as the chair or team member. It may be conducted in person or virtually. Membership comprises:
	1. Chair: A UNDP staff member delegated by the head of office/unit. The chair may be the senior manager in small country offices. A government partner may co-chair the committee. The chair is accountable for accurate, complete and objective information recorded in the project appraisal quality assurance report.
	2. Appraisal team members (at least three selected by the chair): appropriately qualified UNDP personnel, implementing partner officials and relevant government staff including from the government development coordination authority, as applicable. External representatives with relevant thematic, technical and country knowledge may be invited to participate, as appropriate, along with representatives from funding partners and targeted groups. Participation in the appraisal team will vary depending on the project size, complexity and implementation arrangements.
5. The Regional Bureau Director may decide that certain large volume, high-sensitivity, high-visibility or high-risk projects require UNDP representatives from the security office, regional service centres or headquarters.
6. Local project appraisal committee members are required to review documentation provided and recommend one of three possible decisions:
	1. Approve: The project design is of sufficient quality to move to the implementation stage. The SES criteria must be satisfactory or above for the project to be approved.
	2. Approve with qualifications: The project design requires some modifications, noted in the quality assurance summary and management actions, which must be addressed before the project moves to implementation.
	3. Disapprove: The project is not of sufficient quality to move to the implementation stage; it requires significant changes. If scores on the SES criteria are inadequate, the overall project rating is inadequate and the project is not approved.
7. Summary comments and recommendations from the LPAC as appropriate are recorded in the quality assurance report narrative, which is uploaded to the corporate planning system, along with a participation sheet to record committee membership.
8. The QA Assessor completes the quality assurance report based on the LPAC recommendations, and provides the report to the UNDP official with delegated authority to approve projects if the recommendation is for approval or rejection. If the recommendation is to approve with qualifications, the UNDP project developer will revise the project document and resubmit it to the chair of the committee for endorsement. The chair then forwards the revised document to the UNDP official with delegated approval authority.
9. If the final project quality assurance report reflects a rating of needs improvement or inadequate, it is not advisable to approve the project. If the benefits of approving a project outweigh the challenges, the project may be approved; however, a management plan must be drafted prior to approval outlining risk mitigation measures and steps to strengthen quality as soon as conditions permit. This is tracked in the risk log.
10. For joint programmes (either as a stand-alone project or as part of a UN multi-donor trust fund), a joint programme project document should be prepared and appraised in accordance with [UNSDG | Guidance Note on a New Generation of Joint Programmes](https://unsdg.un.org/resources/guidance-note-new-generation-joint-programmes). Before a joint programme has been formally appraised by partners, UNDP must do an internal review of the components for which it is responsible in line with its own project appraisal procedures, including the quality standards for programming. Decisions of this review should inform the appraisal of the overall joint programme. UNDP should only approve the joint programme if the final document satisfies corporate requirements. Approval and monitoring of the overall joint programme should be done jointly.
11. All requests for UNDP to act as an administrative agent for a joint programme need to be routed to the Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office before joint appraisal. See [Pass-through Management: UNDP as Administrative Agent](https://popp.undp.org/node/11221).

*Project Approval*

1. The project document constitutes a commitment to implement the project in line with UNDP’s mandate, policies, regulations and rules, and any other stipulated requirements. This covers development projects, the engagement facility and development services, which are all considered project instruments in accordance with the legal framework governing UNDP’s ability to provide assistance, the SBAA or equivalent.
2. UNDP is responsible for the final decision, whether the project is approved or not, and for any UNDP resource commitments. This responsibility rests with the UNDP staff member delegated with the authority to approve projects. The Resident Representative has the delegated authority to sign a project document. This may be further delegated to a Deputy Resident Representative or other staff members as appropriate. For GEF-funded projects, a Delegation of Authority agreement must be signed by the Resident Representative and Regional Bureau Director before the Project Document can be signed.
3. The project document must be signed by UNDP and the implementing partner. For country projects, the government development coordination authority must also agree to the project document, including for projects implemented by UNDP. This may be satisfied in one of four ways:
	1. Inclusion of the project’s output and partner in the Cooperation Framework joint results group workplans signed by the government development coordination authority, if the government has also signed a Cooperation Framework with legal annex that specifies that all forms of assistance provided by UNDP further to the Cooperation Framework will be covered by the SBAA (or predecessor agreement plus supplementary legal annex); or
	2. Another form of agreement or instruction issued by the programme government development coordination authority to UNDP stating that the SBAA (or predecessor agreement plus supplementary legal annex) applies to all of UNDP’s development assistance in the country without the need for the programme government to sign the project document; or
	3. Evidence of agreement by the government development coordination authority to individual development projects and development services through an exchange of letters or other method approving the outputs and selection of the partner, e.g. LPAC minutes. Evidence of government agreement can be waived at the discretion of the Regional Bureau Director in countries where direct execution of the programme (DEX) has been approved; or
	4. Signing of the project document for individual development projects and development services by the government’s development coordination authority.
4. While projects implemented by UNDP no longer require Regional Bureau clearance before the project is signed, the Regional Bureau may impose such a requirement on a country office as needed.

*Advance Authorization of Financial Resources*

1. Advance authorizations permit the implementing partner to enter into commitments and incur expenditures without delay, in line with a project document (or substantive revision document) that has been finalized but not yet been signed by all parties. This may be due to delays in securing such signatures. Advance authorizations may also be used in performance-based payments to contract the independent assessor to validate the theory of change before formal approval of the project.
2. An advance authorization is valid for 90 days only. It must be replaced with a fully signed project document (or substantive revision document) within 90 days.
3. The programme manager must be satisfied that the formulation and appraisal processes for the full project have been completed, and that all UNDP programme policies have been complied with before signing the advance authorization.
4. The UNDP country office must prepare the advance authorization cover page according to the required format set out in the procedures. The budget of the project document or revision document is attached to the cover page.
5. The programme manager signs the advance authorization after determining that the government development coordination authority and the implementing partner agree to it, as relevant.