

MA Cheat Sheets: MA Structure and Performance Review



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UNDP issued the [UNDP Guidelines for Engagement with NGOs under Country Based Pooled Funds](#) in late 2016 and rolled these out in 2017. This was part of an effort to harmonize implementation approaches with those of the OCHA Operational Handbook.

To complement the Guidelines, UNDP has developed MA Cheat Sheets to provide additional practical information on selected subject matters. There are 9 available Cheat Sheets on the following topics: MA Structure and Performance Review * Capacity Development * Results Logic and ATLAS Architecture * MA and ATLAS * HACT * Quality Assurance * NEX Advance * Asset Management * Fraud. These can be found [here](#)

The Structure of the Managing Agent Unit (MAU)

Based on best practices and lessons learned, this Cheat Sheet is providing the approaches on how to set up a Managing Agent Unit that have been the most successful to date. It further fleshes out the guidance provided in the [UNDP Guidelines for Engagement with NGOs under Country Based Pooled Funds \(from here on "MA guidelines"\)](#)

The importance of the structure of the MAU boils down to ensuring that it does not only allow it to undertake the many functions it has been attributed such as the relationship with the Fund Manager. This will be of specific importance for MAU teams that work with humanitarian Fund Managers. It will also address the all-important need to foster strong and lasting relationships with the myriad of NGO partners it is engaging with.

Relevant Policy Documents:

- [UNDP Guidelines for Engagement with NGOs under Country Based Pooled Funds](#): Chapter 2 section B
- Template ToR for MAU Team Leader can be found [here](#)

Best practices and lessons learned with regards to MA set up and structure:

MAU STRUCTURE

- Experience has shown that where there are specific MA Focal Points appointed for NGO partners, this has enabled the strengthening and nurturing of relationships with these. As NGO partners interact with the same MAU colleagues regarding the project cycle, this facilitates information sharing, follow up and better understanding of the NGO partner altogether.
- A document clarifying the roles and responsibilities of each of the MAU team members has proven to strengthen the awareness and understanding of the division of labour within the MAU, to the Fund Manager, the NGO partners as well as to the wider UNDP Country Office. This is a different document that each MA has been advised to draw up as team members were not always clear of their own roles and responsibilities. This is complementary to the Fund Manager/ MAU division of labour that is traditionally included in the OMs.

MAU CAPACITIES

- It is of great importance for the MAU to be fully conversant in HACT procedures and guidelines as these govern the full array of its activities. Since 2015, the HACT framework has been rolled out as the project management methodology for UNDP. With regards to the MA, this has a large impact with regards to its monitoring, financial management and capacity building responsibilities. All relevant policies are listed in the [Applicable HACT Policies Cheat Sheet](#)

THE MAU IN THE COUNTRY OFFICE

- The MAU is a unit that delivers a wide range of services to various clients. Where the MAU Team Leader has been able to infuse a firm grasp of the tenants of a client-oriented approach across his/her MAU, this has strengthened the effectiveness and efficiency of the Unit and the partnership with other CO business units, the Fund Manager and the NGO partner.
- Active supervision by UNDP Senior Management is of essence to ensure that the MA function is exercised in line with the established agreements and in line with corporate guidance. Best practices show that direct supervision and day-to-day involvement of the DCD/P or DCD/O can help facilitate bottlenecks with other CO business units but also help clarify the role of the MAU. Another best practice has been to have regular meetings with the CD to ensure he/she is aware of the strategic issues with regards to the MA.
- The MAU is encouraged to work very closely with the PMSU in its CO. Where the PMSU often leads on the quality assurance portfolios, it can provide a great deal of assistance and support to the MAU. The PMSU also often acts as HACT Focal Point for the CO and will be able to provide guidance on the latest policy and practice developments under this framework.
- It is advised to have an MA Focal Point in the Finance Unit who is well informed about the specificities of the MA function. This will support the expedition of payments and help with problem-solving.
- Lastly, the MA is encouraged to reach out to the MA Focal Points in HQ for support in any aspect of the MA.

RELATIONSHIP WITH THE FUND MANAGER

- Establishing a good working relationship with the Fund Manager will be of essence for a successful MA. Foundations for this will be to ensure frequent communication and exchange of information on the status of the various MA projects as well as perceived challenges. A few ways that have proven to strengthen the relationship between the MA and the Fund Manager are:
 1. Regular meeting between the Fund Manager and MA teams to take stock of the status of MA projects
 2. Quarterly meeting between the UNDP senior management team and the one from the Fund Manager
 3. Strong tracking systems on the MA side to be able to easily provide data and updates on the MA projects
 4. In some cases, co-location has proven to be very effective in the day-to-day management
 5. Joint trainings can ensure that there is increased understanding of the applicable rules and regulations of both MA and Fund Manager

MAU BUDGET

- Each MAU should establish an Annual Workplan and accompanying budget to ensure that the MAU and the CO is fully able to plan for the costs involved in executing all MAU responsibilities. The MAU Team Leader should be the budget holder for this budget to ensure swift turn-around of requirements.

OPERATIONAL MANUAL FOR THE FUND

- The MA function needs to be clearly articulated in the Operational Manual of the Fund throughout the text as well in a specific Annex defining the ToR of the MAU
- The Operational Manual should also clearly articulate the division of labour between the Fund Manager and the MA
- The draft of the Operational Manual when developed and reviewed has to be sent to the MA Focal Points in Headquarters for review and clearance before they can be signed off by UNDP CO senior management. A special Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) has been developed for this. You can find it [here](#).

PERFORMANCE REVIEW OF THE MAU

- The MAU needs to establish a monitoring mechanism to track its performance according to the indicators provided in the MA Guidelines (Chapter VI section A). This has two main purposes: 1) This will help UNDP establish its value added to the CBPF, its Fund Manager and its Advisory Board through clear data analysis and the provision of problem-solving options where relevant and 2) This will help the MAU identify where challenges occur in the services it provides and provide the opportunity to address these.
- Annual Client Surveys have proven to be a good indicator of MAU performance. It is therefore encouraged that, where these are not already administered, this should be established. A summary report of the Client Survey would indicate areas where the MAU will need to strengthen its performance and where it has applied practices that can be shared as best practices.
- Where the Fund Manager administers a Client Survey for the CBPF, this should also include review of the performance of the MAU in line with the indicators of performance provided in page.
- Where the Fund Manager is OCHA, the MAU can use the data of the Grant Managing System (GMS) to make a partial analysis.



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