



Manual of the

# Aid Fund for Syria

August 2025

## Acronyms

AAPCE	Accountability to Affected Populations and Community Engagement
AFS	Aid Fund for Syria
CBPF	Country-based Pooled Fund
CHS	Core Humanitarian Standards
DD	Due Diligence
DQA	Data Quality Assessment
CA	Capacity Assessment
CAS	Capacity Assessment Score
CPR	Capacity-Performance Rating
CPS	Capacity-Performance Score
CR	Capacity Rating
FMA	Fund Management Agent
GAL	Grant Award Letter
GESI	Gender Equality and Social Inclusion
GMS	Grant Management System
HDP	Humanitarian-Development-Peacebuilding (Nexus)
HNO	Humanitarian Needs Overview
HPC	Humanitarian Programme Cycle
HRP	Humanitarian Response Plan
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
INGO	International NGO
IP	Implementing Partner
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NNGO	National NGO
PSEAH	Prevention of Sexual Abuse and Harassment
PS	Performance Score
PSC	Programme Support Cost
RCMO	Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement Organisation
SB	Steering Board
TA	Technical Assistance
TEP	Technical Evaluation Panel
TOR	Terms of Reference
TPM	Third Party Monitoring

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# 1. Introduction

## Background

Evolving from the Aid Fund for Northern Syria (AFNS) into a nationwide mechanism, the Aid Fund for Syria (AFS) provides, flexible multi-donor humanitarian assistance that is designed to reduce the risk of discontinuity in a dynamic context, while contributing to collective outcomes across the Humanitarian-Development-Peace (HDP) Nexus approach.

AFS operates in alignment with the Syria Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO), and the Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP). Its governance and operating model ensure that aid is flexible, locally led, and strategically positioned to support early recovery, essential service restoration, and social cohesion—reflecting a high degree of inclusivity and transparency.

## Purpose of this Manual

This Manual is part of the policy and procedural framework of AFS, established under the Charter of AFS originally adopted by the Steering Board (SB) on 24<sup>th</sup> January 2023, amended on 5<sup>th</sup> June 2025, and amended again on 27<sup>th</sup> August 2025.

### ***Box 1: AFS policy and procedural framework***

**Handbook:** Summary of the overarching fund governance & management framework.

**Manual:** Detailed compendium of governance, administration & operating procedures.

The Handbook provides a high-level overview of the AFS's policy and procedural framework to assist the reader in understanding the key features and ways of working. This Manual includes detailed descriptions of administrative and operating procedures.

## 2. Vision, Mission, Principles and Objectives

### Vision

The AFS envisions a Syria where communities, civil society, local and technical national institutions lead recovery, restore the social fabric, and strengthen resilience after years of conflict. It strives for a future in which humanitarian needs are met effectively, recovery is inclusive and locally led, and assistance supports communities regain stability and self-reliance.

AFS is convinced that humanitarian assistance must not operate in isolation but help lay the groundwork for economic recovery, service restoration, and social cohesion. By enabling Syrian-led initiatives, supporting local actors, and advancing recovery-oriented humanitarian programming, AFS contributes to a more peaceful and self-reliant Syria. As a humanitarian fund designed to enable the Humanitarian-Development-Peacebuilding (HDP) Nexus, AFS ensures that relief efforts actively support collective outcomes and are aligned with Syria's transition.

### Mission

The AFS is an adaptive funding mechanism that channels principled humanitarian assistance to address basic needs, restore services, support recovery, and strengthen social cohesion across Syria. It empowers civil society, reinforces local systems, and supports communities to move from crisis to stability. By aligning humanitarian assistance with long-term priorities, and deepening local ownership, AFS lays the foundation for a more self-reliant and peaceful future. See the [AFS Strategy 2025-2030](#) published on the AFS website for more details.

### Principles

AFS builds on the successful model of the AFNS, expanding it nationwide, adapting to Syria's evolving political, social, and economic conditions. It channels principled humanitarian assistance and supports local recovery initiatives across Syria, aligning short-term relief with longer-term resilience and stabilisation in line with its **Adapt, Strengthen, Transition** approach. The key AFS principles are:

- (i) **Humanitarian principles and best practices** – All interventions comply with International Humanitarian Law, International Human Rights Law, the Core Humanitarian and Sphere Standards, ensuring that AFS remains firmly grounded within the humanitarian space while it enables linkages to longer term recovery and resilience.
- (ii) **Localisation and ownership** – Prioritise Syrian-led recovery by empowering civil society and local governance structures involved in essential service delivery, where such cooperation demonstrably addresses urgent humanitarian and basic needs.
- (iii) **Inclusivity and equity** – Commit to inclusive, locally led approaches that reduce exclusion and ensure meaningful participation of women-led, youth-led, and marginalised groups.
- (iv) **Adaptability and responsiveness** – Apply a phased approach (Adapt, Strengthen, Transition) to ensure flexibility, responsiveness, and the ability to adjust programming in line with Syria's evolving needs.
- (v) **Resilience and economic fairness** – Support economic revitalisation, sustainable livelihoods, and community-driven solutions that strengthen local resilience and reduce aid dependency.
- (vi) **Transparency, compliance, and accountability** – Uphold financial integrity, risk management, and accountability to affected populations, ensuring that assistance is not

diverted, complies with donor restrictions, adheres to sanctions frameworks, and that any cooperation with local and national technical institutions is carefully safeguarded and directly linked to humanitarian outcomes.

- (vii) **Innovation and public-private collaboration** – Improve the effectiveness and coherence of humanitarian funding by aligning with broader recovery frameworks, piloting scalable solutions, and promoting coordination across sectors and actors. Test alternative financing mechanisms and participatory governance approaches that reinforce humanitarian objectives and support recovery outcomes.
- (viii) **Reconciliation and social cohesion** – Support locally led initiatives that foster social cohesion and promote civic trust—ensuring that humanitarian assistance contributes to stability and inclusive recovery.
- (ix) **Conflict-sensitive and risk-informed programming** – Integrate robust risk management and conflict-sensitive approaches to ensure that interventions do not exacerbate tensions, generate grievances, or compromise humanitarian principles. This includes rigorous oversight of any engagement with governance actors to ensure principled essential service delivery.
- (x) **Environmental sustainability and climate resilience** – Promote sustainable resource management, climate adaptation, and disaster risk reduction as part of humanitarian programming that builds long-term community resilience and supports environmentally responsible recovery.

## Objectives

As reflected by the Results Framework of the AFS Strategy, the AFS has the following objectives:

- (i) **Strengthen local leadership and governance capacity** – Support Syrian civil society, and technical governance bodies to lead humanitarian and recovery-linked service delivery, strengthening local ownership and resilience through targeted capacity-strengthening support where this contributes to effective, inclusive, and accountable service provision in response to humanitarian and basic needs.
- (ii) **Bridge humanitarian response with recovery and resilience** – Ensure that humanitarian assistance contributes to shared outcomes by linking emergency relief with early recovery, service restoration, livelihoods, and community stabilisation.
- (iii) **Promote inclusive, community-driven solutions** – Empower women-led, youth-led, and marginalised groups to shape inclusive, locally led humanitarian and recovery-linked initiatives that reflect community priorities and reduce exclusion.
- (iv) **Improve aid effectiveness through coordination and innovation** – Improve the effectiveness and coherence of humanitarian funding by aligning with broader recovery frameworks, piloting innovative financing models, and promoting coordination across sectors and actors.
- (v) **Foster economic recovery and livelihoods** – Support livelihoods and local economic resilience through humanitarian programming that includes vocational training, small business support, and responsible engagement with the private sector to promote immediate income opportunities and reduce dependency.
- (vi) **Ensure principled, risk-managed funding** – Provide a transparent, accountable, and flexible humanitarian funding mechanism that is risk-managed, compliant with donor requirements, and capable of operating effectively in politically sensitive environments.

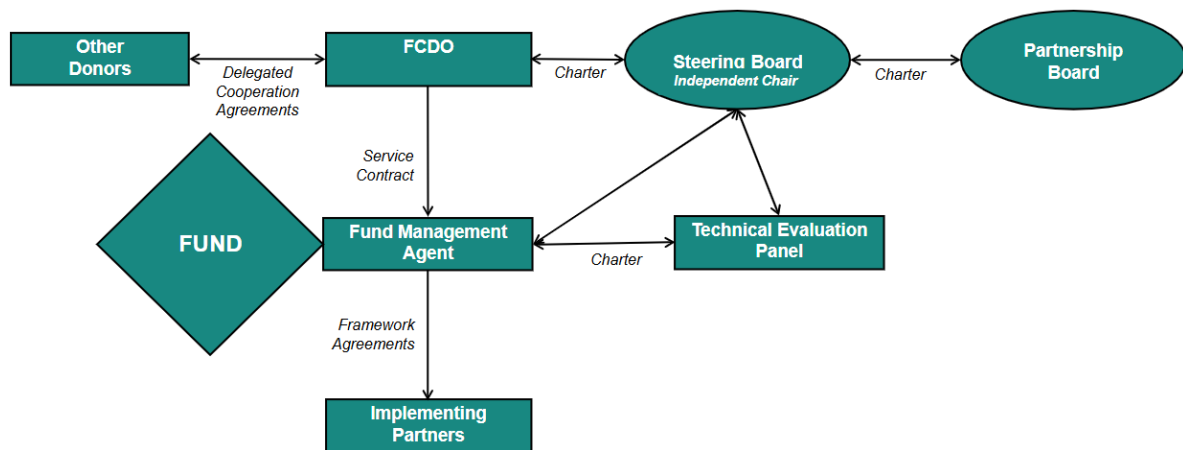
### 3. Governance

#### Structure

The governance of AFS is highly participatory, with decision-making authority vested in a SB comprising broad representation from donors, national NGOs, and Local NGOs/Community Based Organisations. International NGOs are included as observers. The SB includes an Independent Chair, a respected figure within the international humanitarian community with a remit to provide high-level representation for AFS and to foster consensus-based decision-making by the SB. The Partnership Board is in place solely to assist the SB in reaching consensus decisions on rare occasions when reaching consensus is not straightforward.

The governance structure includes a Technical Evaluation Panel (TEP), formed on ad hoc basis for each allocation, comprising experts from the FMA, and/or the community of practice engaged in humanitarian response in Syria. The TEP provides technical advice on Allocation Strategies and supports the FMA in evaluating project proposals submitted by AFS Implementing Partners (IPs).

**Figure 1: Governance structure**



The FMA is responsible for all secretariat and trustee functions. It provides administrative and operational support to the SB, the Independent Chair and the TEP and is responsible for managing donor funds in line with the AFS’s policy and procedural framework as adopted by the SB.

IPs are a critical component of the overall governance of AFS. The SB includes representation from IPs and potential IPs, giving them a voice in how AFS is governed. Furthermore, the FMA, is committed to being inclusive and transparent, coordinating and collaborating with others tackling the humanitarian crisis in Syria.

The SB reform process was finalised mid-August 2025 to ensure that AFS structures are inclusive, locally grounded, and aligned with the Fund’s mandate and values. It responds to the evolving context in Syria, AFS’s expanded national scope, and the Fund’s commitment to localisation.

- Ensure inclusive and representative decision-making: Reflect the diversity of Syrian civil society, including women-led, youth-led, and community-based organisations, and associations representing victims and survivors from all regions of Syria.

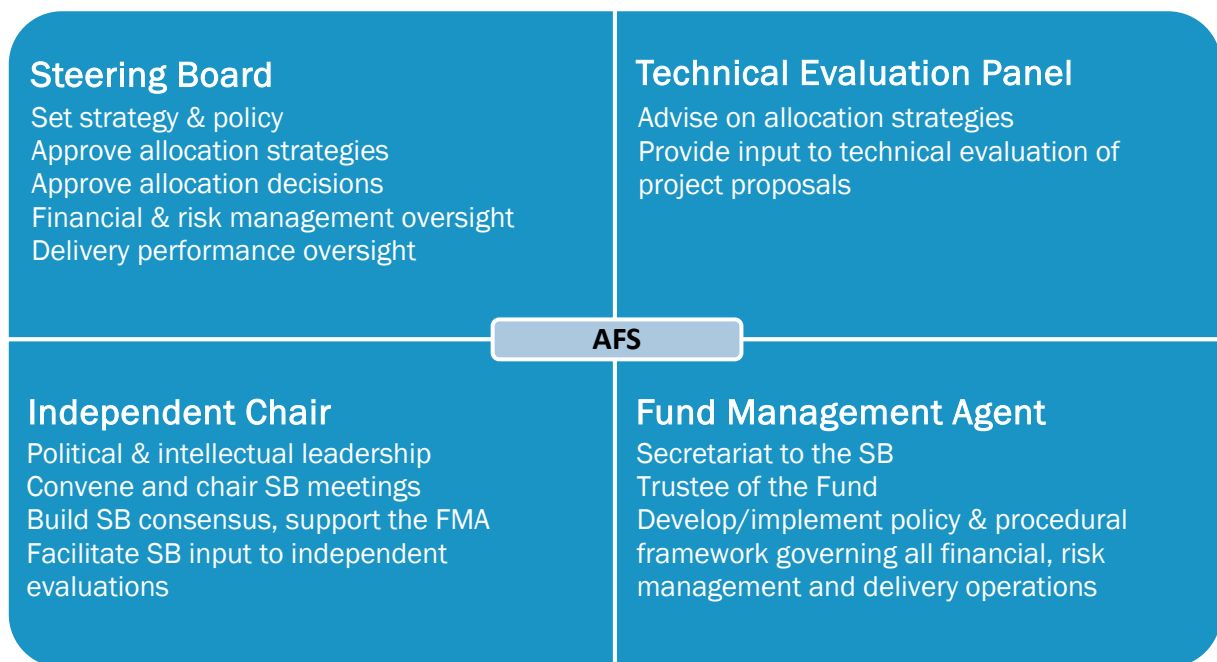
- Strengthen Syrian civil society leadership: Enable Syrian actors to play a meaningful role in strategic decision-making, beyond implementation.
- Align with Nexus positioning: Ensure local voices shape both humanitarian and recovery priorities, consistent with the HDP Nexus approach.
- Enhance legitimacy and national relevance: Build trust and ownership through credible, transparent, and accountable governance.
- Maintain functionality and donor confidence: Preserve the SB’s ability to operate efficiently, manage risk, and ensure compliance while localising its composition.

AFS donors have signed up to this participatory governance structure, with an Independent Chair at the helm of the SB, signalling AFS’s commitment to transparency and principled cooperation in the delivery of humanitarian assistance.

## Roles and Responsibilities

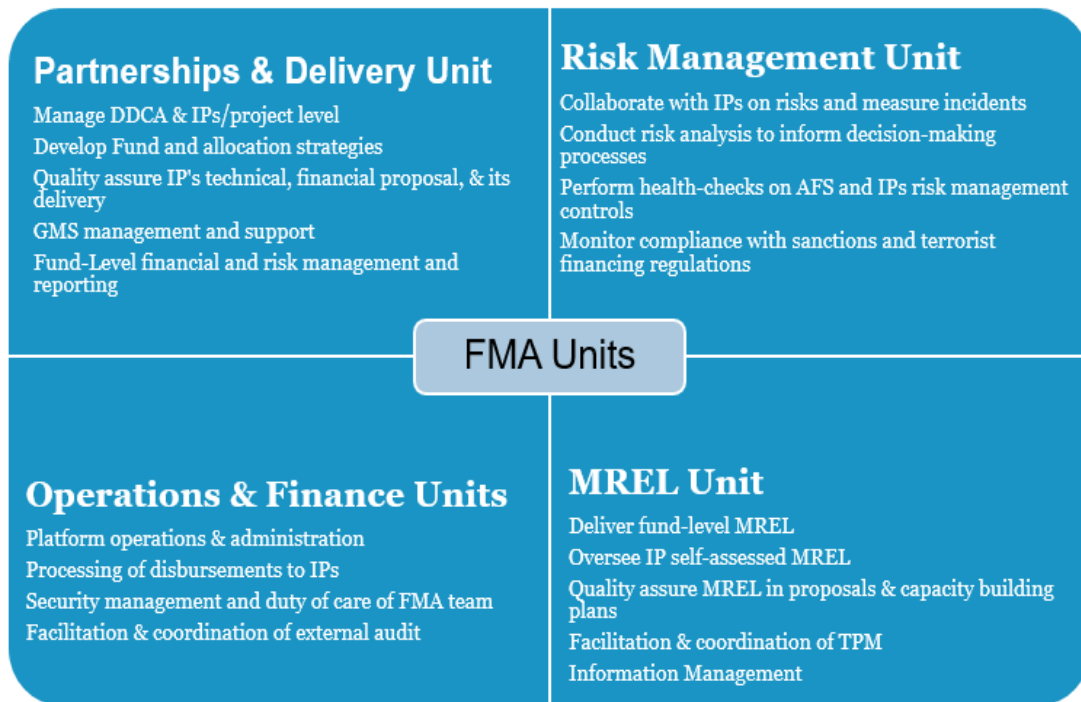
The roles and responsibilities of the SB, TEP, Independent Chair and the FMA are summarised in Figure 2 below.

**Figure 2: Roles and responsibilities overview**



The Charter places great emphasis on decision-making by consensus and fostering mutually supportive relationships between the different components of the governance structure. AFS’s success hinges on cohesion amongst these different components, with everyone working with common purpose, collective responsibility and mutual respect.

**Figure 3: Functional units of the FMA**



## 4. Allocation of Funds

### Allocation Approach

AFS receives funds from donors to be utilised to fund projects for the following categories of IPs:

- (i) National Non-Governmental NGOs (NNGOs)
- (ii) International Non-Governmental NGOs (INGOs)
- (iii) Red Cross / Red Crescent Movement Organisations (RCMOs)

Through its localisation agenda, and in practice through its Anchor organisation approach, AFS works with NNGOs, INGOs and RCMOs, to strengthen the engagement of local actors in the design and implementation of the activities it funds. “Local actors” encompasses a wide range of actors including individuals, grassroots associations, community-based organisations, representative organisations (e.g., women’s organisations, youth associations), non-governmental organisations (that are indigenous or locally founded), faith-based organisations, technical bodies/local directorates, academia, the private sector, the media, and local government.

AFS aims to shift power and funding to local actors so that assistance in Syria is locally led, people centred, and community driven—while also contributing to collective outcomes across the HDP Nexus. AFS's commitment to Accountability to Affected People and Community Engagement (AAPCE) is central to its humanitarian work and Nexus approach, operationalised through the "From Community to Impact" strategy. This commitment translates to prioritising community needs and perspectives in all stages of program design, implementation, and evaluation.

AFS allocates funds through two distinct processes:

- (i) **Regular Allocations (RA)** are rounds of grant funding for partners to deliver assistance in line with pre-defined procedures set out in the AFS policy and procedural framework. RAs can include modular approaches that integrate elements of both Regular and Special Allocations, ensuring adaptability to funding availability, evolving needs, and assessment data. AFS ensures that allocation decisions integrate risk management, conflict sensitivity, and financial due diligence, mitigating potential threats such as aid diversion, governance instability, and regulatory constraints.
- (ii) **Special Allocations (SA)** are funding rounds that serve two key functions: (a) responding to sudden shifts in context and (b) piloting innovative approaches. They enable AFS to rapidly adapt to emerging challenges, such as sudden-onset crises, access constraints, and unforeseen funding gaps. Additionally, SA facilitates the testing of high-impact solutions, innovative financing models, and adaptive programming approaches, supporting the development of scalable strategies for long-term recovery and resilience.

*Note: In line with the AFS Strategy 2025 – 2030 allocations may include or be accompanied by Technical Assistance (TA), where endorsed by the SB, to local and national institutions responsible for essential services where such cooperation demonstrably enhances humanitarian outcomes by unblocking access constraints and enabling a more effective response to urgent basic needs. The TA will be delivered through IPs and/ or the FMA.*

In deciding whether to apply for funding through these allocation processes, IPs and potential IPs should carefully consider:

- (i) The process for qualifying to become an IP which can receive AFS funding (see Section 5, new applicants only).
- (ii) The thresholds and limits in relation to project duration and value, which take into consideration risks associated with all ongoing and proposed AFS-funded projects for each implementing partner (see below).

## Allocation Criteria

### Thresholds and limits

AFS sets certain thresholds and limits on grant value and duration. Exceptions to these thresholds and limits may be made to satisfy compelling programme delivery needs, but all such exceptions must obtain ‘no objection’ from the SB.

For all AFS Allocations the minimum grant duration is 3 months, and the maximum duration is 24 months<sup>1</sup>. Allocation-specific grant value and duration limits are defined in each Allocation Strategy. Further IP-specific limits on grant value are set according to the capacity of the IP.

IP-specific grant value limits are determined for each IP based on its capacity-performance rating (CPR), which is determined by its capacity-performance score (CPS). The methodology for calculating the CPS is described in Section 8 of this Manual. For IPs who already have AFS-funded projects under implementation, there is also a ceiling on undisbursed grant value.

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<sup>1</sup> In exceptional circumstances, through a no-cost extension, a grant may be extended beyond the maximum limit by an additional 3 months to 27 months.

**Table 1.1: IP-specific grant value limits**

CPS			US\$		US\$
Lower	Upper	CPR	Maximum single grant value	Multiplier	Maximum undisbursed grant value
90.00	100.00	5	2,500,000	2	5,000,000
80.00	89.99	4	2,000,000	1.75	3,500,000
70.00	79.99	3	1,500,000	1.5	2,250,000
60.00	69.99	2	1,000,000	1.25	1,250,000
55.00	59.99	1b	700,000	1	700,000
50.00	54.99	1a	400,000	1	400,000
0.00	49.99	0	0	0	0

IPs must pay very careful attention to these limits when deciding whether to submit a proposal for an Allocation. Any proposal that would breach the allocation-specific or the IP-specific grant value limits will be considered ineligible.

### *Technology*

IPs must be able to engage with AFS through its Grant Management System (GMS). The GMS is a web-based platform through which AFS manages all applications for partnership and all applications for grants. This is mandatory to ensure effective risk management and accountability, as well as to comply with data privacy and data security standards. No exceptions are made unless agreed and approved by the FMA.

## Allocation Process

### *Regular Allocations*

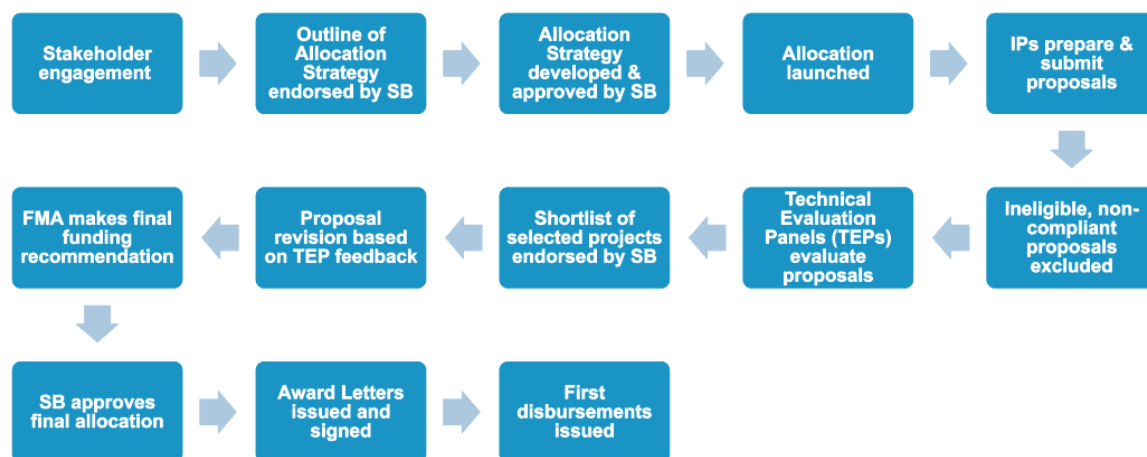
RAs typically channel the majority of AFS funds and, where feasible, are run at least annually. They will be timed to align, as far as possible, with other major mechanisms providing funding to address priorities in the HRP. The RA process typically takes 86 working days. Annex 1 sets out the indicative timeline for RAs. RAs are executed in accordance with an Allocation Strategy for each RA. The AFS SB approves all RA Strategies. In giving these approvals, the SB is advised by the Independent Chair and the FMA. Development of RA Strategies is coordinated by the FMA, with extensive consultations with relevant actors working directly on the humanitarian response in Syria and affected communities. RAs follow an open, transparent and competitive process through which **Qualified IPs** (see Section 5) may submit project proposals.

### *Special Allocations*

SAs are conducted on a more ad hoc basis through streamlined processes to allow flexible and rapid funding in special circumstances, including piloting scalable solutions or supporting context-specific Nexus priorities. For example, they may be launched to respond rapidly to unforeseen events, acute emergencies, and other significant contextual developments. The SA process typically takes 20 to 35 working days followed by 10 working days for the first disbursement. Annex 1 sets out the indicative timeline for SAs, though the timeframe will likely vary depending on the circumstances. SAs are executed based on a brief SA Strategy paper. SB approval for SAs (and the Strategy paper) is required, based on advice from the Independent Chair and the FMA. However, such approvals may be obtained remotely, with no requirement for a formal SB meeting.

Development of SA and the underlying SA Strategy is coordinated by the FMA, with extensive input from relevant stakeholders working directly on the humanitarian response in Syria. SAs follow a limited, closed, competitive process through which specific **Qualified IPs** are invited, in accordance with transparent and specific selection criteria, to submit proposals. This process will be defined in the SA Strategy paper approved by the SB.

**Figure 4: Allocation process flow**



## Allocation Strategies

Allocations begin with the development of an Allocation Strategy paper, led by the FMA and based on extensive consultations with relevant stakeholders including technical specialists coordinating and delivering humanitarian assistance and recovery-oriented interventions at the sector level. Allocations are publicly launched once the SB has approved an Allocation Strategy. Once the Allocation Strategy has been published along with specific Proposal Guidelines (where appropriate), qualified IPs are invited to submit grant applications.

## Grant Application

Only **Qualified IPs** may submit applications under AFS Allocations. Annex 1 describes the step-by-step process for AFS Allocations. All applications must follow the templates and guidance provided by AFS. If they do not, they will be excluded from the process at the pre-filtering stage (step 2.2).

This section provides guidance on the format and content of technical and financial proposals to be submitted in a grant application. However, in addition to this guidance, IPs are reminded to:

- (i) Follow carefully all Allocation-specific guidance provided in the Allocation Strategy shared by the FMA (step 1.5) to ensure alignment with the Fund’s objectives and processes for the Allocation
- (ii) Ensure that applications are submitted via the GMS by the specified deadline; to ensure fair and equal treatment no exceptions will be made to this rule and IPs are advised to submit their applications well in advance of the deadline to allow time to troubleshoot any technical issues (e.g., connectivity/browser issues, account/password issues, etc.)

### *Technical proposals*

As each Allocation Strategy is launched, technical proposal templates will be shared via the AFS Portal. Applicants must use the proposal templates provided and comply with the requirements described in the accompanying Proposal Guidelines. Proposals that do not meet these requirements will be excluded from the process at the pre-filtering state (step 2.2).

The FMA is committed to ensuring that it funds only activities that respect humanitarian principles, contribute to collective outcomes, and meet standards of best practice, including Core Humanitarian Standards and Sphere standards. Applicants are reminded of AFS's deep commitment to AAPCE, GESI, and localisation. Partners are urged to think carefully about AAPCE and GESI at every stage in the process of developing and implementing project proposals, recognising their importance for ensuring inclusive and locally led recovery efforts (see Annex 2). Accordingly, proposals must include an AAPCE plan and a GESI action plan using AFS templates provided. Failure to comply with these requirements may result in proposal exclusion during the pre-screening stage.

### *Budget proposals*

As each Allocation Strategy is launched, a budget proposal template will be provided. Applicants must use the template and adhere to the guidance specified in the template and adhere to the AFS Budgeting Guidance set out in Annex 3. Proposals that do not meet these requirements will be excluded from the process at the pre-filtering stage (step 2.2).

As trustee of AFS, the FMA is committed to the principles of economy, efficiency, effectiveness, transparency and accountability in the use of AFS funds are comprehensively and consistently adhered to. The FMA expects implementing partners to honour these principles, ensuring that project budget inputs are commensurate with the planned activities, the expected outputs, and AFS's focus on cost effective, locally led delivery. Accordingly, project budgets must be a fair, accurate and reasonable reflection of the cost of implementing the objectives and the activities reflected in the work plan.

## **Grant Application Evaluation**

As trustee of AFS, to safeguard the reputation of the Fund, the FMA is committed administering the grant application evaluation process to the highest standards of probity and best practice.

The FMA works closely with the relevant technical specialists to manage the evaluation process:

- (i) Forming TEPs: comprising technical experts from NGO and/or FMA staff; members must sign a code of conduct prior to joining a TEP.
- (ii) Designing scorecards: tailoring scorecards for each Allocation and sharing scorecard guidance with applicants.
- (iii) Managing evaluation: facilitating scoring of project proposals by the TEPs and holding moderation sessions to build consensus on scoring and shortlisting.

Once the evaluation is complete, the FMA prepares an Allocation Approval Paper that documents the results of the evaluation process, presenting the final short list of proposals aligned with AFS objectives. The Allocation Approval Paper is submitted to the SB for 'no objection' to proceed to the proposal revision stage, working with applicants to incorporate feedback from the TEPs.

## Grant Award

Once the short-listed proposals are finalised, incorporating the feedback from the TEPs, the FMA will submit an Allocation Approval Update, reflecting the final proposals agreed with the applicants. This will be shared with the SB for final endorsement, after which the successful applicants will receive Grant Award Letters (GAL), including any special terms and conditions applying to the specific grant being awarded and attaching, for the record, a version of the proposal.

The grant award is subject to final vetting checks of the IP by the FMA. Project expenditure is eligible only from the effective date shown in the GAL.

## Grant Extensions

All grant extensions must be cleared by the Executive Director and must be formalised through an amendment to the GAL.

Cost extensions are permitted under exceptional circumstances and must be approved by the SB.

No-cost extensions (NCEs) will be considered on a case-by-case basis, depending on the rationale and evidence of progress collected through narrative and financial reports and the likelihood of additional impact. Field monitoring visits and spot checks may also be used to inform decision-making. The maximum duration of a no-cost extended project is 27 months.

## Project Amendments

Project amendments may be required for various reasons, potentially changing one or more of the scope, duration and budget of a project, but must remain aligned with AFS's strategic objectives and humanitarian mandate. Amendments may also be required by the FMA, in consultation with the IP, based on lessons learned from, inter alia, monitoring activities. IPs must make a formal request for a project amendment using a Project Amendment Request Form (available from the FMA on request) sent to [pdu@aidfundforsyria.org](mailto:pdu@aidfundforsyria.org). It is the responsibility of the IP to consult with the FMA if there is any doubt as to whether a Project Amendment Request Form is required.

Project Amendment Request Forms should be submitted, along with all the required information and supporting evidence, as soon as the need for an amendment has been identified and never less than one month prior to the end of the project. Incomplete submissions or submissions received less than one month before the project end date shall be automatically rejected.

Project Amendment Requests are reviewed by the Project Amendments Committee, consisting of a multi-disciplinary team within the FMA. This committee, in consultation with relevant stakeholders, will assess the rationale and justification for the amendment and determine whether the proposed changes are acceptable, and whether an amendment to the GAL is required. Where the proposed changes represent a fundamental change in the project, and it is determined that the project cannot continue to deliver in-line with the originally agreed proposal, the FMA may determine that the only way forward is to terminate the project.

The following changes do not necessarily require an amendment to the GAL, provided they do not result a major deviation from the intended project area, activities or outcomes:

- (i) Change in project location
- (ii) Change in number of beneficiaries
- (iii) Change in a project activity

Where FMA approval is not required for an amendment change, the IP is required to document the changes through their routine narrative reporting.

Changes that do require an amendment to the GAL include but are not limited to:

- (i) Changes to the project budget exceeding the tolerance limits specified in the Budget Guidance (Annex 3)
- (ii) Addition of a new budget line item within a Budget Category breakdown
- (iii) Change in duration of the project
- (iv) Change of sub-grantees (addition or removal)

In certain cases, the FMA must seek a no-objection from the SB before approving a project amendment. These include:

- (i) Relocation of activities outside the scope of the approved Allocation Strategy, or major deviations from intended outcomes;
- (ii) Substantial budget changes (e.g. reallocating over 30% of funds, or shifting resources in ways that significantly alter project focus);
- (iii) Use of budget savings or reallocations to support emergency response;
- (iv) Major delivery chain changes, such as introducing new sub-partners not included in the approved proposal and expected to manage significant project components or budgets.

Final approval is granted only once the 'no-objection' is received from the SB.

## Project Closure

A grant will be considered closed when the following conditions are met:

- (i) Final narrative report received and cleared by the Fund Manager. IPs must submit the report within 2 months of the end date of the grant. These reports must address any recommendations or comments flagged through the TPM site visit or Data Quality Assessment reports in a satisfactory manner. The Fund Manager has up to 1 month from receipt to review and clear the report.
- (ii) Final financial report received and cleared by the Fund Manager. IPs must submit the report within 2 months of the end date of the grant (including an inventory of assets purchased under the grant with purchase value over \$500 per asset). The Fund Manager has up to 1 month from receipt to review and clear the report.
- (iii) Audit of the project, commissioned and financed by AFS, must be completed within 3 months of the date of clearance of the final financial report.
- (iv) Project formally cleared for closure by the Fund Manager, within 1 month of receipt of the project audit report.
- (v) Reimbursement of unspent or ineligible expenditures and interest income earned on project funds (which must be included in all financial reports related to the project). IPs have 1 month from the date of notification to refund the amounts due.

## Other Programmes

In addition to RAs and SAs, the AFS Charter permits allocation of resources from the pooled fund to the following programmes:

- (i) Steering Board: The SB may, from time to time, incur costs in discharging its duties.
- (ii) Fund Management Agent: The FMA incurs costs in the execution of its contractual responsibilities to administer and operate trust funds.
- (iii) Independent Audit and Evaluation: Provision is made for the conduct of independent audit and evaluation of trust funds established to deliver the mission and objectives of AFS.
- (iv) Research and Studies: The FMA may, from time to time, commission research and studies implemented by qualified IPs. These will normally be commissioned through a competitive procurement process.

## 5. Qualification for Funding

AFS funds projects implemented by:

- (i) National Non-Governmental NGOs (NNGOs)
- (ii) International Non-Governmental NGOs (INGOs)
- (iii) Red Cross / Red Crescent Movement Organisations (RCMOs)

To receive funding from AFS, organisations must be a Qualified Implementing Partner of AFS.

To apply to become an IP, organisations must first register on the AFS Grant Management System (GMS). (See 'How to apply' page at [www.aidfundforsyria.org](http://www.aidfundforsyria.org).)

The application process to become an IP has four stages:

- (i) Stage 1: Registration
- (ii) Stage 2: Eligibility
- (iii) Stage 3: Due diligence (DD)
- (iv) Stage 4: Capacity assessment (CA)
- (v) Stage 5: Framework agreement

### Stage 1: Registration

New applicants to become an IP must first register an account on the [AFS Opportunities Portal](#). Organisations should only create one account and are advised to link this to a general mailbox created specifically for the purpose (e.g., AFS-Opportunities@[your domain name]).

Once an account has been registered, the applicant should navigate to the 'OPEN OPPORTUNITIES' page and complete the 'Application for Partnership' form. When they have completed and submitted the form, applicants should notify the AFS team by email at [pdu@aidfundforsyria.org](mailto:pdu@aidfundforsyria.org).

## Stage 2: Eligibility

Eligibility to move forward with the application process is subject to the following criteria. The applicant should:

- (i) Be a legally registered non-profit organisation authorised to operate in Syria. *Organizations that are not yet formally registered but are authorized to operate in Syria and in the process of obtaining registration may also apply*
- (ii) Hold an Active Registration in any jurisdiction that permits engagement in international funding activities and is not subject to any local or international restrictions on such transactions.<sup>2</sup>
- (iii) Maintain an active bank account capable of receiving funds through compliant, regulated channels, with a mechanism to route transfers into Syria.<sup>3</sup>
- (iv) Demonstrate a physical presence in Syria with an operational office or premises.
- (v) Have been actively functional for at least the past three years.
- (vi) Have annual financial statements of the organisation regularly audited by a certified professional external auditor for the past three years.

Applicant organizations that meet the eligibility criteria, based on verifiable information provided, may move forward to the next stage. However, not all eligible organizations will necessarily proceed, as advancement also depends on the number of applicants and the Fund’s prioritization process.

*Given the high volume of requests to become an AFS qualified partner, the Fund recognises that it may not always be possible to conduct a full Due Diligence and Capacity Assessment process for all applicants. As such, AFS reserves the right to prioritise the assessment of eligible organisations that most closely align with its immediate strategic priorities.*

## Stage 3: Due Diligence

Applicants must complete the ‘Application for Partnership’ form comprehensively and precisely. Instructions on how to complete the form are included on the form itself. Failure to complete the form in accordance with the instructions will cause significant delays. All information provided will be reviewed by the FMA which will determine whether the DD requirements are met. As part of the DD process, applicant organisations and their senior leadership will be subject to vetting checks. The FMA uses Navex<sup>4</sup> to vet organisations and RDC<sup>5</sup> to vet individuals. All issues raised through the vetting process must be addressed before proceeding beyond the DD stage.

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<sup>2</sup> For organizations registered in Turkey that will eventually execute grants from their Turkey branch: current version of the Faaliyet Belgesi (please upload a new version demonstrating that your organization’s registration is still active).

<sup>3</sup> For organizations registered in Turkey that will eventually execute grants from their Turkey branch:

- Proof of an active bank account in Türkiye (the most recent bank statement or a recent confirmation letter from the bank)
- Proof of an active PTT account to make money transfers into NW Syria (a recent statement or a recent confirmation letter from PTT)

<sup>4</sup> NAVEX is a recognised leader in risk/compliance management software/services deployed by over 13,000 customers in more than 85 countries.

<sup>5</sup> The Regulatory Data Corp was established by 20 of the world’s largest financial institutions. RDC software and services help customers identify and manage risk arising from fraud, corruption, money laundering and terrorist financing as well as other risk-relevant activities.

The FMA also obtains references from donors and other stakeholders who have worked with the applicant in implementing assistance in the Syria humanitarian response. The FMA is required to follow-up rigorously in relation to any concerns flagged in these reference checks, working closely with the applicant to understand any underlying issues and risks and how these are mitigated.

In completing the 'Application for Partnership' form, the applicant is required to make a series of declaration in relation to:

- (i) Previous or pending legal processes or investigations
- (ii) Conflict of interest
- (iii) Non-support of sanctioned entities
- (iv) Recognition of compliance activity
- (v) Provision of accurate information
- (vi) Adherence to humanitarian principles
- (vii) Consent to vetting
- (viii) Compliance with local tax and labour laws

The FMA is required to validate the completeness and accuracy of these declarations. Applicants are advised to pay particular attention to ensuring full transparency in its declarations. Incomplete or inaccurate declaration will result in disqualification of the applicant.

Notwithstanding the need to meet all DD requirements, applicants should note the following fundamental requirement that they have capacity to:

- (i) Safely transfer funds into Syria through a compliant mechanism.
- (ii) Access to and implement projects in Syria.

When an applicant organisation **successfully** passes the DD process, it moves forward to the capacity assessment process.

## Stage 4: Capacity Assessment

The CA process assesses the institutional capacity and financial stability of the applicant. The FMA is required to make this assessment based. This involves:

- (i) Completion by the applicant of a capacity self-assessment (CSA) in the GMS: CSAs must be a realistic assessment of the applicant's capacity relative to the standards specified in the assessment form, supported by the required evidence.
- (ii) Completion by the FMA CA, based on the applicant's self-assessment and supporting evidence provided, validated through interviews with applicant staff members and any other key informants.

For less experienced applicants, or applicants where potential issues have been identified through, inter alia, vetting and reference checks, the FMA may conduct an initial, high-level governance CA. This step helps identify any fundamental capacity issues that need to be addressed to meet minimum standards prior to conducting a full CA.

The full CA process will comprise some or all of the following:

- (i) Desk-based review of information supplied by the applicant
- (ii) Interviews with applicant staff members
- (iii) Interviews with other key informants, including but not limited to:
  - a. donors who have funded the applicant
  - b. implementing partners who have worked with the applicant

- c. community representatives
- (iv) Visits to applicants' offices

Following completion of a full CA, the applicant will be assigned a capacity assessment score (CAS). The score is based on evidence gathered through the CA process using a 5-pillar scorecard.

**Table 2.1: Capacity assessment scorecard structure**

Pillar	Examples of aspects considered
1. Governance and management control	Effectiveness of the Board and senior leadership; management culture and conduct; general control environment; ICT governance and control
2. Compliance and risk management	Leadership engagement in risk management; resources dedicated to risk management; independence of risk management functions; quality of risk management tools deployed; effectiveness of response to incidents & issues
3. Financial management & control	Automation and design of financial management processes; quality of financial information used for decision-making; segregation of duties and other key controls; quality of response to internal and external audit findings
4. People management	Automation and design of HR management processes; compliance with HR policies and procedures; performance management mechanisms; training and development
5. Delivery	Project management capacity; MEL capacity effectiveness of policies, procedures and systems in relation to safeguarding, AAPCE, GESI and aid diversion; duty of care

The scorecard involves assessment of applicant capacity in relation to 110 capacity areas across the 5 pillars relative to AFS standards. The FMA uses a 4-point scale to assess the applicant's compliance with the standard (i.e., 4 = Fully meets, 3 = Mostly meets, 2 = Partially meets, 1= Does not meet). The average score across all 5 pillars and 110 capacity areas determines the applicant's CAS as a percentage – e.g., an average score of 2.4 yields a CAS of 60% (i.e., 2.4/4 x 100).

Applicant organisations must attain a CAS of 50% or more to pass the CA stage, whereupon it can move forward to the Framework Agreement stage. Applicants receiving a score below 50% may reapply 12 months after their previous CA, subject to a limit of 3 applications over a 3-year period.

Based on the CAS, the applicant will be assigned a capacity rating as indicated in Table 2.2.

**Table 2.2: Capacity rating (CR)**

CAS	Capacity rating
90 - 100	5
80 - 89.99	4
70 - 79.99	3
60 - 69.99	2
55 - 59.99	1b
50 - 54.99	1a
00 - 49.99	Not qualified

For the purposes of an IP's first grant award from AFS, the Capacity Rating (CR) shall be used to determine grant value ceilings in line with Table 1.1 (see Section 4). Over time, as the IP implements AFS grants, the quality of its performance will be factored-in to calculate a Capacity Performance Rating (CPR). The CPR will then determine the grant value ceilings for the IP for any future awards (see Section 8).

## Stage 5: Framework Agreement

The applicant must sign a standard framework agreement with Adam Smith International acting as the FMA for AFS. No amendments to the standard framework agreement are permitted.

Based on the FMA's findings at the CA stage, the framework agreement will include a set of Special Conditions highlighting areas where the IP should work to strengthen its capacity to improve its CAS and CPR over time. The FMA, in consultation with the IP, may allow some provision in individual grant budgets for activities to strengthen the IP's capacity

When an applicant organisation has signed a framework agreement, it becomes a **Qualified IP** and can apply for grant funding through AFS's Allocation process.

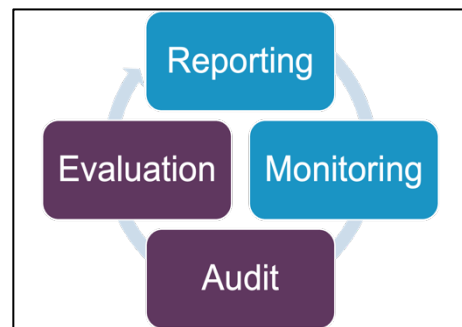
If a Qualified IP has not implemented any AFS-funded projects for a period of 18 months, it may be required, at the sole discretion of the FMA, to repeat the DD and CA process.

## 6. Accountability

Effective management of AFS to achieve its mission and objectives depends on a robust accountability framework. AFS's accountability framework is designed to ensure that:

- (i) The FMA manages AFS in strict adherence to its policy and procedural framework
- (ii) AFS's IPs are delivering results and impact in line with their Framework Agreements and GALs

**Figure 5: Accountability framework**



The FMA is responsible and accountable for:

- (i) Developing and executing high-quality Allocation Strategies adopting a consultative approach and in accordance with agreed timeframes
- (ii) Onboarding IPs, assessing their capacity and delivery performance on an ongoing basis and, where appropriate, supporting their capacity-strengthening
- (iii) Monitoring delivery of projects, verifying that the results reported by IPs are in line with their technical and financial proposals and ensuring that best practices are applied, with particular focus on AAPCE and GESI

The IPs are responsible and accountable for delivering:

- (i) Results and impact in line with their technical proposals
- (ii) Budget execution in line with their financial proposals
- (iii) Compliance with AFS's legally binding terms and conditions set out in the Partner Framework Agreement and GALs, as well as local laws and regulations
- (iv) Meaningful engagement with the recipients of aid at all stages of the programming cycle

The accountability framework comprises four elements, assessing AAPCE and GESI compliance throughout:

- (i) Reporting
- (ii) Monitoring
- (iii) Audit
- (iv) Evaluation

Reporting and monitoring are conducted by IPs and the FMA (except for TPM see below). Audits and evaluations are conducted by external, independent organisations.

### Reporting

#### *Implementing Partner Reporting*

AFS requires regular, standardised reporting to monitor project delivery and risk, as well as to ensure effective management of financial resources. Table 3.1 summarises standard reporting requirements. The frequency and content of reporting requirements may be adjusted based on, inter alia, the capacity of the IP, the grant value, and the nature and duration of project activities.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Additional financial reporting requirements may include provision of complete lists of bank transactions related to the project, detailed expenditure reports and payroll reports.

Reporting requirements for each project will be agreed by the FMA and the IP at the outset of the project and recorded in the GMS. Based on, inter alia, findings from monitoring activities, and changes in the operating context, the FMA reserves the right to modify the reporting requirements.

**Table 3.1: Standard reporting requirements**

Reporting area	Timing/frequency	Description	Template
Delivery and Risk	Inception	Brief narrative reporting (with high-level financial information) to foster collaboration between AFS and IPs to tackle any risks and challenges encountered during inception.	Annex 4: Delivery & Risk Reporting Template (Inception)
	Calendar quarterly	Comprehensive and detailed reporting of progress in project delivery, as of 31 March, 30 June, 30 September, and 31 December.	Annex 5: Delivery & Risk Reporting Template (Quarterly)
	Project closure	Final narrative report as of the end date of the project, to be submitted within two calendar months of the end date of the grant.	
Financial	AFS year end	Financial report as of 31 March for inclusion in the AFS Annual Report.	A Financial Reporting Template will be provided with each Allocation Strategy
	Pre-disbursement	Financial report as of the one month prior to each disbursement confirming the utilisation of at least 70% of the previous disbursement (except for initial disbursement).	
	Project closure	Final financial report as of the end date of the project, to be submitted within two calendar months of the end date of the grant.	

IP's must use the reporting templates specified in Table 3.1. Overall, the aim is to help IPs to consistently produce high-quality reports that effectively communicate the impact of the project and meet AFS's reporting requirements. This helps to ensure the quality of AFS's own reporting and hence contributes to the common goal of mobilising assistance for the humanitarian response.

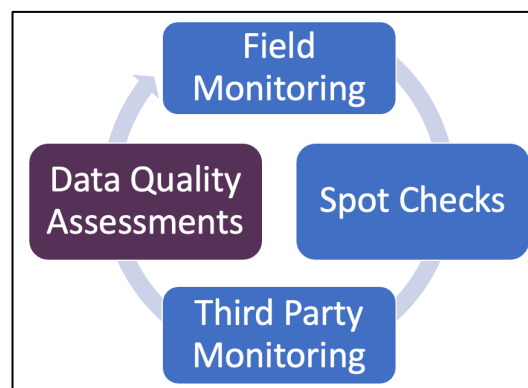
## Monitoring

Project monitoring is primarily the responsibility of IPs, giving assurance they are delivering contractually agreed results. Colleagues working for other agencies and entities at the sector level also play an important role through their input into technical reviews of project proposals, ensuring that they include sufficient monitoring and reporting (including accountability for affected populations and gender equality and social inclusion) arrangements.

The FMA engages in its own monitoring activities to verify IP's reported progress and performance against agreed targets, through four mechanisms:

- (i) Field Monitoring
- (ii) Spot Checks

**Figure 6: Monitoring mechanisms**



- (iii) TPM Checks
- (iv) Data Quality Assessment Checks

Each AFS-funded project has a tailored monitoring plan, taking into account specific risks associated with project activities, and graduated according to the IP’s Capacity Performance Rating (see Section 8). This plan is developed by the FMA, based on the **minimum** standard reporting requirements set out in Table 4.1 below.

**Table 4.1: Standard monitoring requirements (per annum)**

Capacity Performance Rating	FMA			TPM		Auditors
	Field Monitoring checks	Programmatic spot checks	Financial spot checks	Monitoring checks	Data Quality Assessment checks	Project Audit
5	2	1	0	1	0	Mandatory at the end of the project
4	2	1	1	1	0	
3	2	1	1	1	0	
2	2	2	2	1	0	
1b	2	2	2	2	1	
1a	4	2	2	2	1	
0	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Notes: Quantity of checks is per project for a 12-month grant and will be pro-rated based on actual grant duration.

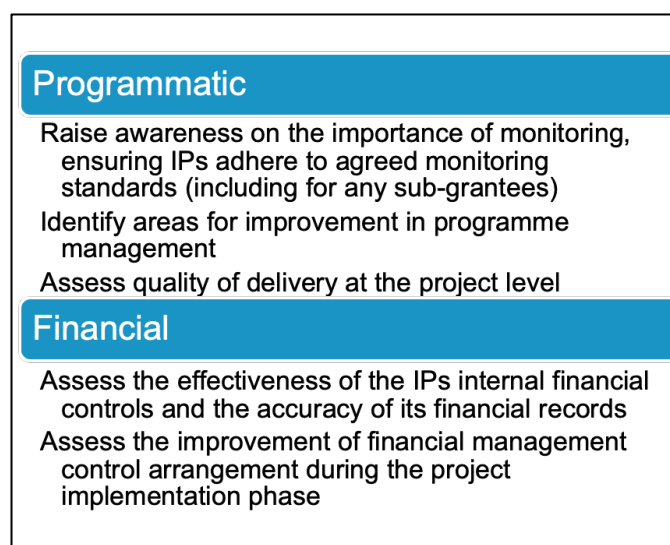
### Field Monitoring Checks

Field monitoring checks are conducted to gather relevant information on the humanitarian situation from various field locations to inform its assessment and planning. During field visits, teams verify the progress and the quality of the implementation of selected project activities against approved proposals and relevant humanitarian standards, using mobile data capture and standard checklists. They record observations, verified outputs and feedback from communities, note delays or risks. Field monitoring checks are primarily conducted by the FMA’s Impact and Quality Officers, and where required, can be conducted by other FMA staff (e.g., MREL, PDU, and members of the Executive Team), provided the approved process, tools and protocols are followed.

### Spot Checks

Routine programmatic and financial spot checks involve visits to IP’s offices. The frequency of spot checks is determined based on the standard requirements in Table 4.1. Additional *ad hoc* spot checks may be initiated when deemed necessary by the FMA to verify certain activities, triangulate information received or respond to specific concerns. All AFS IPs must facilitate and fully cooperate with spot checks conducted by the FMA. Failure to do so will impact their capacity-performance rating and may result in compliance measures by the FMA.

**Figure 7: Key objectives of spot checks**



### *Third Party Monitoring (TPM) Checks*

TPM is a key monitoring mechanism for AFS due to restrictions on physical access to project locations. It provides AFS with independently verified information on the results delivered by AFS-funded projects. TPM combines field visits and desk reviews of relevant project documentation (e.g., proposals and reports from IPs). An overview of TPM activities is included at Annex 7.

### *Data Quality Assessment (DQA) Checks*

DQAs are formal evaluations to verify accuracy, completeness, reliability, relevance, and timeliness of data reported by AFS IPs (see Annex 7). They thoroughly verify reported achievements. They can be commissioned by AFS to be conducted by the TPM provider, or they may, in some cases, be carried out directly by the AFS through its MREL Unit.

### *Peer Monitoring and Learning*

Though not part of its routine, formal monitoring framework, AFS may also, from time to time, and as appropriate, activate peer monitoring and learning mechanisms where such arrangements are likely to deliver added value.

## **Independent Audit**

### *Project Audit*

All IPs receiving funds from AFS are subject to external audit through project audits commissioned and financed by AFS. These external project audits give the FMA evidence-based assurance on the use of funds granted to IPs. They mitigate fiduciary risks, including the misuse and diversion of resources and fraud; identify weaknesses in financial and operational management and provide recommendations for improving the control environment; and identify ineligible expenditures. The IP is responsible for keeping proper financial records including, original supporting documents for all transactions related to the project and cooperate with external auditors.

External audit findings provide essential feedback to the IP, promoting continuous improvement of the IP's financial and operational management and performance, and enabling the FMA to make better-informed funding decisions. IPs are required to develop action plans to address audit findings and recommendations. Failure to do so in a timely manner may lead to the temporary or permanent suspension of the IP. When the audit shows critical findings, including non-compliance of the IP with the policies and procedures detailed in the AFS Manual as incorporated in the contractual agreement between the IP and FMA, or a violation of any other obligations under the contractual agreement with the FMA, the FMA will take corrective compliance actions.

Ad hoc external audits may be initiated by the FMA during project implementation to verify specific issues, as deemed necessary.

### *FMA Audit*

The FMA is subject to external audit, by a professional, independent audit service provider on an annual basis.

## Independent Evaluation

AFS is subject to independent evaluation by a professional, independent service provider. The scope and frequency of such evaluations is to be determined by the Independent Chair, with advice and support from the SB, and a ring-fenced budget shall be set aside to procure the evaluation services. The findings and recommendations of the evaluation shall be shared with the SB, donors, implementing partners and other stakeholders and published as deemed appropriate by the SB. The FMA shall prepare an action plan to address independent evaluation findings and recommendations, to be submitted to SB for ‘no objection’.

## 7. Workplace and Misuse Policies

### Commitment

AFS is committed to creating a safe, inclusive and positive working environment in which everyone is treated equally and fairly.<sup>7</sup> Donors contribute funds to AFS to deliver humanitarian assistance to Syrians in need and AFS is determined to prevent misuse, fraud and all forms diversion of aid away from the intended beneficiaries. In our due diligence and capacity assessment of our IPs, we expect to see the same commitment from them in their policies, procedures and controls, as well as in appropriate assurance structures and mechanisms, and clear evidence that these are applied in practice.

Workplace and aid misuse policies include, inter alia, policies on:

- (i) Code of Conduct
- (ii) Safeguarding, including PSEAH
- (iii) GESI
- (iv) Human Trafficking and Modern Slavery
- (v) Aid Diversion
- (vi) Conflict of Interest
- (vii) Complaints and Whistleblowing

### Compliance and Reporting

As part of the CA, the FMA reviews IPs’ equivalent workplace and misuse policies to assess whether they meet the standards and requirements of AFS’s policies. Where there is a need to improve their policies, the FMA provides IPs with advice and support to strengthen them.

The FMA also monitors the quality of implementation of workplace and misuse policies and procedures through the project lifecycle. Any instance of an IP’s failure to comply with workplace and misuse policies will be taken extremely seriously and will have a significant impact on their

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<sup>7</sup> The scope of workplace policies is very broad. “Workplace” includes everywhere we and IPs work, including in working with and supporting beneficiaries in the field.

performance score. IPs are encouraged to be proactive and timely in reporting breaches and in investigating, taking appropriate action and learning from them.

In accordance with the partner framework agreement IPs must report immediately, and in any event within 48 hours, any aid diversion or incident<sup>8</sup> involving breaches of its workplace and misuse policies as well as any breaches of the AFS applicable workplace and misuse policies, including SEAH, that may impact AFS-funded activities or personnel even if the events or their impact on AFS funded activities or personnel are not yet confirmed.

Negligence in failing to identify breaches and/or failure to report and investigate them thoroughly and/or failure to act on recommendations to strengthen procedures to reduce the risk of future breaches will result in compliance measures, potentially including temporary or permanent disqualification as an AFS partner.

AFS sets high standards for IPs' compliance with workplace and misuse policies. Similarly, the FMA is expected to demonstrate leadership in compliance with workplace and misuse policies that reflect current best practice. As soon as the FMA becomes aware of any internal breaches of its own workplace and misuse policies, these are reported immediately (within 48 hours) to the Chair of the SB even if the events or their impact on AFS funded activities or personnel are not yet confirmed. The Independent Chair is kept informed of the progress of investigations of such breaches. The Independent Chair will assess the quality of the FMA's investigations and its response to breaches and, if shortcomings in this response are identified, will decide on the appropriate measures.

## 8. Performance Management

AFS's approach to performance management encompasses the management of the performance of IPs delivering individual projects and the management of the performance of the Fund as a whole. AFS may decide to extend its approach to performance management to sub-grantees delivering individual projects in partnership with an IP. In this case, the performance of a sub-grantee may be factored into the sub-grantee's capacity score for example where the sub-grantee is a 'qualified' partner of the Fund and therefore eligible for funding through AFS allocations.

AFS's IPs and the FMA work closely together to optimise the performance of individual projects and thereby the performance of the Fund as a whole.

### Partner Performance Management

AFS's **standard approach** to partner performance management is to recognise and reward good performance of IPs in the delivery of projects, by giving high-performing IPs greater opportunity to access AFS-funding and to implement more ambitious projects.

On the other hand, weaker performance in project delivery reduces the IP's access to funding and, ultimately, may lead to disqualification for AFS-funding.

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<sup>8</sup> In this context, the term "incident" refers to potential violations to workplace and misuse policies, including safeguarding policies, when suspicions, concerns, or allegations of safeguarding breaches, including SEAH, are raised and brought to attention through the complaint mechanism of the parties.

AFS has strict policies and procedures in relation to the handling of instances where IP performance falls below certain minimum standards. In such cases, AFS activates its **exceptional approach** to IP performance management.

*Standard approach*

As the IP implements AFS grants, the quality of its performance is factored-in to calculate a CPR, based on the CAS achieved during the CA and adjusted by its Performance Score (PS). The CPR determines the grant value ceilings for the IP for any future awards according to Table 5.1 below.

**Table 5.1: Capacity-performance rating**

CPS	CPR	Maximum single grant value (annualised) (US\$)	Maximum undisbursed grant value (US\$)
90.00 - 100	5	2,500,000	5,000,000
80.00 - 89.99	4	2,000,000	3,500,000
70.00 - 79.99	3	1,500,000	2,250,000
60.00 - 69.99	2	1,000,000	1,250,000
55.00 - 59.99	1b	700,000	700,000
50.00 - 54.99	1a	400,000	400,000
00 - 49.99	Disqualified	Disqualified	Disqualified

As IPs implement AFS-funded projects they receive a PS for each project. The PS is determined with reference to areas of accountability for delivery of projects. Performance assessments, and hence updates of an IPs PS, are conducted regularly through the project lifecycle and, as such, IPs' CPR will change on a regular basis. This ensures that good performance in delivery is rewarded with higher grant value ceilings and risks associated with weak performance are actively mitigated.

The approach to deriving the PS is evidence-based, with inputs sourced primarily through Fund's reporting, monitoring and audit mechanisms under the AFS accountability framework described in Chapter 6. These inputs may be supplemented and triangulated with other information sources including, but not limited to, objective assessments of the IP's performance in relation to other projects in its portfolio. The approach to deriving the PS is summarised in Table 5.2 below.

**Table 5.2: Performance scoring approach**

Accountability area	Aspects of performance assessed
Reporting	Timeliness, accuracy and quality of narrative, financial and results reporting in line with the Fund's accountability framework
Monitoring	Findings from financial and programmatic spot checks; findings of TPM visits; quality of engagement with and follow-up on spot checks and TPM findings
Incidents	Timeliness, accuracy and quality of reporting and case management of serious incidents, particularly safeguarding and aid diversion
Results	Extent and quality of delivery against overall project results and financial targets agreed in the GAL
Amendments	Timeliness and quality of compliance with the Fund's project amendment request processes
Risk management	Quality of implementation of risk identification, risk monitoring and risk mitigation procedures
External factors	Project audit findings; donor feedback; financial stability of the IP; compliance with Special Conditions

The capacity-performance weighting table shown in Table 5.3 illustrates how the CAS (derived from the original capacity assessment) becomes less highly weighted relative to project performance as the Fund assesses the IP's performance in delivery. This enables high-performing IPs to improve their CPR and hence qualify for higher value grants. Box 2 illustrates how an IP's CPR is calculated and revised as performance in delivery of each project is assessed.

**Table 5.3: Capacity-performance weighting table**

Capacity-performance weighting		Number of projects implemented				
		1	2	3	4	5
		Weight				
Capacity Assessment Score	CAS	40%	20%	10%	0%	0%
Performance score (PS5 = most recent)	PS1	60%	30%	15%	10%	0%
	PS2		50%	25%	15%	10%
	PS3			50%	25%	15%
	PS4				50%	25%
	PS5					50%
		100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

**Box 2: Example calculation of capacity rating**

IP-X applies to AFS and receives a CAS of 58, meaning that it qualifies with a CR of 1b (see Table 5.1: Capacity rating) and its maximum grant value is \$700,000.

Having implemented its first project successfully, IP-X receives a performance score (PS1) of 75.

IP-X's CPS is calculated, according to the weighting table, as follows:

$$\text{CPS} = (40\% \times \text{CAS}) + (60\% \times \text{PS1}) = (40\% \times 58) + (60\% \times 75) = 68.2.$$

Accordingly, IP-X receives a cCPR of 2, increasing its maximum grant value to \$1m.

IP-X now completes its second AFS-funded project and receives a performance score (PS2) of 80. IP-X's CPS is now calculated as follows:

$$\text{CPS} = (20\% \times \text{CAS}) + (30\% \times \text{PS1}) + (50\% \times \text{PS2}) = (20\% \times 58) + (30\% \times 75) + (50\% \times 80) = 74.1$$

IP-X now receives a CPR of 3, increasing its maximum grant value to \$1.5m.

On the other hand, IPs receiving poor PSs may be downgraded to a lower CPR and, ultimately, they may be disqualified if their CPS falls below 50. In such cases, the IP may re-apply to become a Qualified IP as soon as 12 months after disqualification. However, the IP will be subject to the standard DD and CA processes and also be required to demonstrate that the issues driving previous underperformance have been sustainably addressed.

**Exceptional approach**

The FMA recognises that IPs operate in a challenging context in which breaches of the AFS policy and procedural framework will occur from time to time. We want to encourage openness and transparency in the handling of breaches. We take a zero-tolerance approach not to the breaches themselves per se, but rather to negligence and inaction in relation to breaches.

However, through its accountability mechanisms, the FMA must safeguard programmatic and financial management of the AFS. Accordingly, compliance measures are available to enable the FMA to address non-compliance with the AFS policy and procedural framework, Partner Framework Agreement, a GAL, or violations of any other obligations stemming from the IP’s contractual agreements with the FMA. Though amicable solutions will be pursued to the extent possible, the FMA will progressively take corrective actions which could ultimately lead termination of contracts, disqualification as a partner of the Fund and removal of the IP and/or its directors and/or employees from any role performed on behalf of the Fund.

Corrective actions are particularly likely to be taken in the following situations:

- (i) Misleading or untruthful information and declarations provided during the FMA’s due diligence and capacity assessment processes
- (ii) Violation of humanitarian principles, AFS’s Partner Code of Conduct and the AFS Joint Commitment on Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment
- (iii) Negligence or inaction in relation to breaches of AFS’s workplace and misuse policies
- (iv) Breach of the terms and conditions of the Partner Framework Agreement and/or GALs
- (v) Overdue financial and/or narrative reports
- (vi) Failure to cooperate with the FMA’s monitoring, audit and evaluation activities
- (vii) Critical findings from AFS’s monitoring activities, especially those which reveal negligence or inaction
- (viii) Serious project audit findings and/or a qualified project audit opinion (e.g., lack of critical internal controls or serious weaknesses in internal controls, such as lack of bank reconciliation, a functioning double-entry accounting system, lack of supporting
- (ix) Failure to reimburse AFS with unspent funds
- (x) Non-compliance with local laws and regulations (e.g., labour law, tax regulations)

## Fund Management Agent Performance

The approach to managing the performance of the FMA is rooted in the FMA’s role as defined in the AFS Charter.

### **Box 3: Extracts from the Section 5.5 of the AFS Charter**

The Fund Management Agent (FMA), contracted to perform its duties by the FCDO, provides administrative and operational support to deliver the mission of AFS. It is housed at the FMA’s office currently in Gaziantep (with planned transition to Damascus early 2026) and operates under the AFS policy and procedural framework as adopted by the Steering Board. The FMA constantly strives to ensure its work, its decisions and its recommendations: (a) are evidence-based; (b) demonstrate dedication to learning, adapting and knowledge-sharing; (c) fostering innovation; and (d) deliver value for money.

The FMA roles and responsibilities as a trustee are to: establish and administer trust funds in accordance with AFS policies and procedures and the terms of the contract entered into by the FMA and FCDO.

Accordingly, the FMA’s primary responsibility is to ensure that AFS operates in accordance with its policy and procedural framework as adopted by the SB. Secondly, it should always aim to ensure its work, its decisions and its recommendations:

- (i) are evidence-based
- (ii) demonstrate dedication to learning, adapting and knowledge-sharing
- (iii) foster innovation
- (iv) deliver value for money

### Compliance with policy and procedural framework

The Fund’s policy and procedural framework is grounded in its Mission, Principles and Objectives, as laid out in the Charter. The FMA has devised an operating model to ensure it manages the performance of the Fund to deliver on the Mission, Principles and Objectives at an acceptable level of risk.

There are four basic principles guiding the FMA’s operations. They commit the FMA to being inclusive, flexible, timely and efficient in managing AFS. These need, however, to be balanced with the prevailing requirement for effective risk management. For example,

too much flexibility or haste in operations can undermine governance and control. On the other hand, excessive emphasis on efficiency can undermine effectiveness. Trade-offs also exist between the four principles – e.g., inclusivity can slow processes down and increase costs. SAs are permitted within the AFS approach specifically to allow for some compromise on inclusivity in order to enable rapid emergency responses.

Through its normal operations, the FMA aspires to consistently strike a reasonable balance between observance of the operating principles and adherence to its risk management policies and procedures. However, the FMA will refer major strategic decisions to the SB using a risk management tool that ensures the SB can base its decision on a thorough assessment of the trade-offs.

**Figure 8: AFS operating model**



## 9. Risk Management

AFS’s approach to risk management encompasses all risks that are a threat to the achievement of AFS’s mission and objectives. This includes risk both at the overall Fund level, as well as risks at the individual project level. The SB, the Independent Chair, FMA and IPs, with support from the technical specialists working for other agencies and entities at the sectoral level, must work closely together to identify, monitor and manage risk. However, risk management is ultimately the responsibility of the FMA, with strategic input and guidance from the Steering Board.

### Project Risk Management

#### *Project Risk Management Approach*

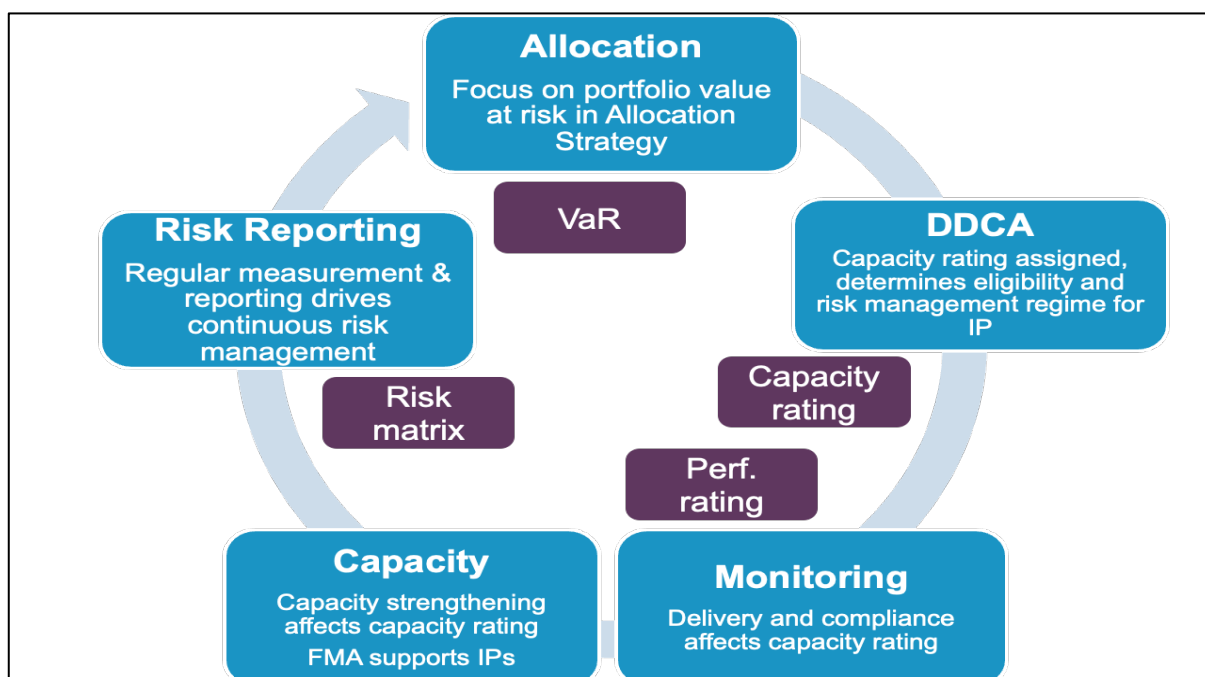
Risk management at the project level is primarily the responsibility of IPs. It is built into every stage of AFS’s operations, with a focus on capacity scores and other measures to drive effective risk management decisions. The AFS Manual sets out risk management policies, procedures and controls in detail. The main features are summarised as follows:

- (i) **Qualification for funding:** Applicants must meet certain eligibility criteria even before they are permitted to apply to become an IP. Eligible applicants are subject to rigorous due diligence and capacity assessment through which they are assigned a capacity rating. If the

capacity rating is insufficient, the IP will not qualify for funding. If the IP does qualify for funding, the capacity rating is factored into control measures applied to manage AFS's fiduciary risk including, but not limited to, limits on grant value and duration, disbursement rates, monitoring and reporting arrangements, and external audit arrangements.

- (ii) **Performance management:** All active IPs are assigned a performance score based on the performance in AFS-funded project delivery. IP capacity ratings are adjusted on an ongoing basis taking delivery performance into account which, in turn, affects their grant value ceilings and accountability arrangements.
- (iii) **Compliance:** The FMA take progressive action to address shortcomings in IP compliance with requirements stemming from agreed accountability arrangements, implementation of workplace policies, or any other contractually agreed terms. If an IP is proactive in identifying, reporting and addressing compliance issues, its capacity rating may not be negatively affected. Amicable solutions will always be pursued to the greatest extent possible. However, where the IP shows negligence and/or failure to respond appropriately and proportionately to breaches will result in adjustments to IP's capacity-performance rating which, in turn, will reduce the number, value and duration of grant awards they can receive. Ultimately, serious cases of non-compliance will lead to temporary or permanent disqualification of the IP.
- (iv) **Capacity strengthening:** As IPs demonstrate improvements in their capacity, with advice and support from the FMA, there is scope for their capacity-performance rating to improve. In turn, the number, value and duration of grant awards they can receive may increase, and the intensity of the accountability arrangements may be relaxed, in line with Table 5.2.
- (v) **Risk management and reporting:** All IPs are required to identify, analyse, evaluate, mitigate, monitor and report on risk. This is a continuous process, beginning at the proposal stage, through which IPs must present a credible approach to risk management and reporting, and through into implementation where IPs must regularly report on risk management and, where compliance issues arise, escalate these to the FMA. IP risk reporting centres around a standard Project Risk Register, regularly updated throughout project implementation.

**Figure 9: Risk measurement drives risk management**



### *Project Risk Reporting and IP Projects Risk Register*

IPs are required to submit a Project Risk Register at the outset of the project and to update it on a calendar quarterly basis and/or when required for the duration of the project. These are consolidated by the FMA into an IP Projects Risk Register. The consolidated AFS IP Projects Risk Register brings together the most frequently cited risks identified in IP proposals, reports, and the discussions held with AFS and among IPs during risk management forums. The register also compiles the mitigation measures proposed by IPs for use within their respective projects. AFS's role is to support this process by facilitating the exchange of good practices and providing guidance on effective mitigation approaches.

Once consolidated, the AFS IP Projects Risk Register is shared back with IPs. This allows partners to track these common risks across their projects, adjust and align their mitigation strategies, and report on progress as part of their regular risk management responsibilities.

## **Portfolio Risk Management**

### *Portfolio Risk Register*

Risk management at the portfolio level is primarily the responsibility of the FMA and centres around a Portfolio Risk Register, prepared by the FMA and then updated on a quarterly basis. The Portfolio Risk Register details the 15 most salient risks to the Fund, track changes in impact and likelihood, and document effectiveness of mitigation measures. This will facilitate trend analysis, development of early warning systems, and strategic decision-making.

### *Biannual Risk Report*

The FMA will submit a biannual Risk Report for the AFS SB summarising risk management activities, common risk trends, case management data, and implemented mitigation measures. The purpose of this report will be to inform the SB's decision-making and ensure effectiveness of the Fund's risk management arrangements.

## **10. Information, Contact and Feedback**

For more information about AFS, please visit: [www.aidfundforsyria.org](http://www.aidfundforsyria.org).

All general inquiries about AFS should be sent to the FMA at: [info@aidfundforsyria.org](mailto:info@aidfundforsyria.org).

For substantive issues regarding your partnership with AFS, please contact [PDU@aidfundforsyria.org](mailto:PDU@aidfundforsyria.org).

For feedback, please contact [feedback@aidfundforsyria.org](mailto:feedback@aidfundforsyria.org).

## 11. Annexes

- Annex 1: Allocation Process
- Annex 2: AAPCE Guidance
- Annex 3: Budget Guidance
- Annex 4: Delivery & Risk Reporting Template (Inception)
- Annex 5: Delivery & Risk Reporting Template (Quarterly)
- Annex 6: Logical Framework Reporting
- Annex 7: Third-Party Monitoring and Data Quality Assessment Guidance

## Annex 1: Allocation Process (including number of working days assigned for each step)

	Regular Allocation	86	Special Allocation	35
	<b>Step 1: Allocation strategy and launch</b>	<b>21</b>		<b>9</b>
1.1	Through extensive consultation with technical specialists coordinating and delivering humanitarian assistance at the sector level, the <b>FMA</b> develops an <b>Outline Allocation Strategy Paper</b> setting out recommended strategic priorities, resource envelopes per sector, decision-making criteria, processes and timeline.	10	Consultations may be restricted to a sub-set of sectors.	5
1.2	<b>SB</b> reviews <b>Outline Allocation Strategy Paper</b> and gives feedback to <b>FMA</b> .	3		1
1.3	<b>FMA</b> prepares the <b>Allocation Strategy</b> , incorporating feedback from the <b>SB</b> , working closely with technical specialists coordinating humanitarian assistance at the sector level.	5		1
1.4	<b>SB</b> approves <b>Allocation Strategy</b> .	2		1
1.5	<b>FMA</b> publicly launches the Allocation, sharing the approved <b>Allocation Strategy</b> .	1		1
	<b>Step 2: Submission of project proposals</b>	<b>23</b>		<b>9</b>
2.1	Eligible <b>IPs</b> prepare and submit proposals through the <b>GMS</b> .	20		7
2.2	Proposals vetted by <b>FMA</b> to filter ineligible <b>IPs</b> , non-compliant submissions, breaches of grant value limits, etc.	2	Not applicable.	0
2.3	<b>FMA</b> distributes proposals to <b>Technical Evaluation Panel (TEP)</b> members.	1		2
	<b>Step 3: Scoring and moderation</b>	<b>16</b>		<b>8</b>
3.1	<b>TEP</b> members score proposal and prepare written feedback on each proposal.	6		4
3.2	<b>FMA</b> hosts sector-based scoring moderation meetings to build consensus on scoring and feedback.	6		2
3.3	<b>FMA</b> prepares an <b>Allocation Approval Paper</b> for the <b>SB</b> , setting out the short list of higher-scoring proposals.	2		1
3.4	<b>SB</b> provides 'no objection' to <b>FMA</b> proceeding to enter the project revision stage.	2		1
	<b>Step 4: Project revision</b>	<b>10</b>		<b>5</b>
4.1	<b>FMA</b> shares <b>TEP</b> feedback on short listed proposals with <b>IPs</b> , working with them to agree required revisions.	7		3
4.2	<b>IPs</b> submit revised proposals.	3		2
	<b>Step 5: Final Steering Board approval</b>	<b>3</b>		<b>2</b>
5.1	<b>FMA</b> prepares an <b>Allocation Update Paper</b> reflecting the revised short-listed proposals.	1		1
5.2	<b>SB</b> reviews and endorses final allocation.	2		1
	<b>Step 6: Award of grants and disbursement</b>	<b>13</b>		<b>7</b>
7.1	<b>FMA</b> issues signed Award Letters, <u>subject to final IP vetting checks</u> , to <b>IPs</b> for co-signature.	3		2
7.2	<b>FMA</b> issues first disbursement.	10		5

Notes: Steps in Special Allocation process are identical unless indicated otherwise.

## Annex 2: AAPCE Guidance

In line with the *AFS Accountability to Affected Populations and Community Engagement (AAPCE) Strategy*, IPs must demonstrate how they will place communities at the centre of their projects. This goes beyond simply gathering feedback; it requires purposeful consultation and involvement of women, men, girls, boys, and marginalised groups in needs assessments, project design, implementation, and evaluation.

### Box 1: AFS AAPCE Proposal Criteria

All project proposals must include a dedicated AAPCE section that details how partners plan to meet accountability and quality standards for affected communities, including provision of safe feedback channels. In addition, an AAPCE Plan may be requested by AFS at the proposal submission stage or the inception phase, depending on the scope of the project. These mechanisms should allow for meaningful participation of all community members, especially marginalised and at-risk groups, and ensure concerns and suggestions are addressed transparently and responsibly.

### Key Requirements

#### 1. Comprehensive Consultation

- IPs must include evidence that the target communities’ preferences and priorities drive the planned activities. Ensuring that people’s capacities, rather than just their vulnerabilities, are recognised.
- Show how different community members (including those with disabilities or from marginalised backgrounds) will be given accessible channels to inform, influence, and review project decisions.

#### 2. Information Sharing and Transparency

- Provide clear, timely, and accessible information about rights, entitlements, and services offered, adapted to local languages and communication preferences.
- Explain how the project will ensure community members can easily and safely provide feedback or raise concerns at any stage of the project cycle.

#### 3. Feedback and Accountability Mechanisms

- Outline how the project will manage complaints, including safeguarding reports. Mechanisms must be responsive, confidential, and safe for all—particularly for sensitive issues like fraud or sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment (SEAH).
- Demonstrate how the IP will analyse feedback, adapt project activities, and close the loop with communities to build trust.

#### 4. Integration of AAPCE into Organisational Systems

- Present an internal or partner-specific plan (e.g., a dedicated AAPCE action plan) that shows how accountability and community engagement are mainstreamed, including resourcing for staff, training, and ongoing community consultations.
- Commit to measuring and reporting AAP-related indicators as part of routine monitoring, as set out in the AFS guidelines and the AAPCE Strategy.

### Alignment with the Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS)

AFS adopts the CHS principles, expecting partners to uphold all nine commitments—ranging from relevance and timeliness of assistance (Commitment 1 and 2) to managing resources responsibly (Commitment 9). Project proposals must demonstrate how these commitments will be met through participatory processes and community-led approaches.

By embedding AAPCE at every level, partners help to ensure humanitarian interventions are driven by those most affected, remain transparent and inclusive, and adapt as needs evolve.

## Annex 3: Budget Guidance

As trustee of AFS, the FMA is committed to ensure that the principles of economy, efficiency, effectiveness, transparency and accountability in the use of AFS funds are comprehensively and consistently adhered to across all its programmes.

In relation to its Regular and Special Allocation programmes, the FMA expects applicants for grants and implementing partners to honour these principles, ensuring that project budget inputs are commensurate with the planned activities and the expected outputs. The project budget must be a fair, accurate and reasonable reflection of the cost of implementing the objectives and the activities reflected in the work plan.

### 1. Budget Preparation and Review

In preparing project budgets applicants must:

- (i) Use the budget template and comply with the guidance provided by AFS for the classification and itemisation of planned costs including required BoQs
- (ii) Provide an accurate budget breakdown of planned costs necessary to implement activities and achieve the objectives of the project
- (iii) Provide a budget narrative (as an essential component of the budget) that clearly explains the purpose and the rationale of every budget line<sup>9</sup>
- (iv) Approved local standards to do costing and prepare their budgets.
- (v) Use a fair and reasonable methodology for calculating shared costs that is clearly and comprehensively described in the budget narrative
- (vi) Provide organisational chart and salary scales to support budgeted salary costs
- (vii) Provide the budget of any sub-grants, including shared cost allocation methodology, organogram, salary scale and assets list in relation to any sub-grants
- (viii) Ensure that budget of sub-grantees adhere to the principles of economy, efficiency, effectiveness and transparency, ensuring that project budget inputs are commensurate with the planned activities and the expected outputs

In reviewing project budgets, the role of the FMA is to:

- (i) Ensure cost estimates are reasonable in the local market context and that funding is being used efficiently
- (ii) Verify budget accuracy, checking coherence with the project narrative proposal
- (iii) Flag concerns and seek clarification on issues that may violate AFS or Cluster guidance on budgeting

### 2. Budget Cost Types

The AFS budget template includes two types of budget expenditure: direct costs and indirect costs. Sharing of direct costs across donors and projects is permitted, subject to certain rules.

#### *Direct costs*

Direct costs are clearly linked to the project activities described in the project proposal. They are defined as actual costs directly related to the implementation of the project to cover the costs of goods and services delivered to beneficiaries, and the costs related to the support activities required for the delivery of services and the achievement of the project objectives.

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<sup>9</sup> For example, shared costs, expensive assets, and costs/equipment to be used to support the general operations of the applicant will require a compelling budget narrative)

Direct costs include:

- (i) Programme staff and related personnel costs, including consultants and other personnel
- (ii) Supplies, commodities, materials
- (iii) Equipment
- (iv) Contractual services
- (v) Travel costs, including transportation, fuel, and daily subsistence allowances for staff, consultants and other personnel linked to the project
- (vi) Transfers and sub-grants
- (vii) General operating and other direct costs including safety and security expenses, duty of care for project staff, office stationery, and utilities such as telecommunications, internet, office rental and other direct costs, including expenses for monitoring, evaluation and reporting, related to the implementation of the project.

Implementing partners **may share certain direct local/country office costs** (including staff costs, office rent, utilities, and rented vehicles) subject to the following:

- (i) Costs must be directly and unequivocally linked to specific activities related to a project
- (ii) Costs must be itemised in the budget based on a reasonable and fair allocation methodology clearly and comprehensively described in the budget narrative

#### *Indirect costs*

Indirect costs, or Programme Support Costs (PSC) are all costs that are incurred by the implementing partner which cannot be directly and unequivocally linked to specific activities related to a project. These costs typically include corporate costs (i.e. HQ and statutory bodies, legal services, general procurement, and recruitment etc.) not related to a particular project.

PSC is charged at a maximum 7% of approved direct expenditures. Any PSC of sub-grantees engaged in the implementation of a project must be covered by the overall maximum of 7%. Partners must share the PSC equitably with sub-grantees in proportion to the project budget and activities allocated to each partner.

The PSC will generally be excluded from the scope of the external audit. However, the FMA reserves the right to include PSC expenditures in the audit when deemed necessary. Regardless of whether PSC is included or excluded from the audit scope, where a partner engages sub-grantees, the disbursement of the sub-grantee's allocated share of the PSC will always be subject to audit. This is to ensure that the budgeted and approved PSC portion for each sub-grantee has been fully and timely disbursed.

### **3. Eligible and Ineligible Costs**

AFS maintains a classification of eligible and ineligible costs based on best practices in pool-fund management. These must be identifiable in the implementing partner's accounting records and backed by original supporting evidence as incurred in accordance with the approved project proposal and period.

Eligible costs include:

- (i) All staff costs (including salaries, social security contributions, stop and stamp tax, medical insurance, hazard pay (when applicable)<sup>10</sup>
- (ii) Other staff costs included as part of the salary benefits package of the organisation, subject to explicit approval from the Fund Manager
- (iii) Other staff costs that are mandatory based on the local laws, provided these explicitly identified in the project budget

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<sup>10</sup> Salaries must be reasonable, taking into the range of average scales in the local market.

- (iv) Salaries and costs included in the budget may not exceed the costs actually borne by the implementing partner (after taking into account funding from other sources) and must be comparable to those charged to similar projects funded by other donors
- (v) Costs of consultancy, if directly related to project implementation
- (vi) Support staff costs at country-level, if directly related to project implementation
- (vii) Reasonable travel and subsistence costs for project staff, consultants, and other personnel, if directly linked to the project implementation
- (viii) Allowances and/or incentives to teachers and medical personnel that are not paid by government but are required to directly support project objectives
- (ix) A contribution to the partner's Country Office costs (shared costs), based on a reasonable allocation methodology and clearly itemised
- (x) A contribution to safety and security measures, including duty of care for project's staff
- (xi) The financial support to beneficiaries, including cash and voucher-based distribution
- (xii) Purchase costs for goods and services delivered to the beneficiaries of the project, including quality control, transport, storage and distribution costs
- (xiii) Costs related to assets – e.g., equipment, ICT equipment for registration and similar field activities, medical equipment, water pumps and generators
- (xiv) Expenditure related to awarding of contracts, such as expenses for the tendering process, if directly related to project implementation
- (xv) Costs incurred by sub-grantees, if directly linked to the project implementation
- (xvi) Costs of monitoring and reporting required under the AFS accountability framework
- (xvii) Cost of dissemination of information and translation thereof
- (xviii) Financial services costs, including bank transfer fees and insurance costs, if directly linked to the project implementation
- (xix) Duties, charges and taxes related to direct project expenses (e.g., value added tax) included on a gross basis in the relevant direct project expense line item
- (xx) If local legislation requires that the partner pays certain taxes, such taxes are eligible
- (xxi) Costs during the 60 days liquidation period after the project end date that are directly linked to project activities carried out during the project period and recorded in the partner's accounting system

Ineligible costs include:

- (i) Costs not included in the approved project budget
- (ii) Costs incurred outside the approved implementation period of the project
- (iii) Debts and provisions for possible future losses or debts
- (iv) Interest owed to any third party
- (v) Items already financed from other sources
- (vi) Purchases of land or buildings
- (vii) Currency exchange losses
- (viii) Cessions and rebates of declared costs for the project
- (ix) Government staff salaries or any other payment to government employees
- (x) Salaries, benefits, fees or other compensation paid to members of the IP's Board of Directors or Board of Trustees
- (xi) Hospitality expenses, refreshments for IP staff or Board members (except for water, hospitality for training, events or meetings, if directly related to project implementation).
- (xii) Incentives to staff
- (xiii) Gifts
- (xiv) Fines and penalties
- (xv) Duties, charges and taxes related to indirect project expenses, including VAT recoverable by the partner.
- (xvi) Global evaluation of programmes
- (xvii) Audit fees (project audits are commissioned and financed by AFS)

On a case-by-case basis and depending on the objectives of the Fund, the Fund Manager retains the flexibility to deem the following costs eligible:

- (i) Government staff training that contributes to the achievement of project objectives

- (ii) Visibility material of the partner directly related to projects funded by AFS
- (iii) International travel costs, if directly linked to the delivery of the project objectives<sup>11</sup>
- (iv) Vehicle purchase or rental
- (v) Depreciation costs for non-expendable/durable equipment used for the project and which was not funded by AFS
- (vi) Equipment for the regular operations of the partner
- (vii) Recurrent costs for the partner's ongoing operations

#### **4. Budget line itemisation and narrative**

Each budget line requires the following breakdown:

- (i) Itemise each national and international staff member, consultant, and other personnel by function, and provide unit quantity and unit cost (monthly or daily) for each position. The narrative for each budget line should include details such as the type of staff position (national or international), location, grade/level, and gross salary breakdown (to be provided either directly in the narrative or as an annex uploaded in GMS), functions to be carried out to contribute to the project implementation (Terms of References or Personal History Profiles should not be included in the narrative, but can be provided as an annex uploaded in GMS).
- (ii) Any budget line exceeding \$10,000 (as cumulative value) requires a clear justification in the budget narrative and, where this is the total cost of multiple items, a budget breakdown should be included in the budget proposal showing unit cost and quantity
- (iii) In the case of cash and voucher assistance, provide a budget narrative and budget breakdown to indicate the number of assisted people/ individual households, unit cost, areas/regions covered, etc
- (iv) Provide details in the budget narrative so that the objective of the budget line can be clearly identified.
- (v) Provide technical specifications for items whose unit cost is greater than \$10,000 ensuring adherence to SPHERE and/or any sectoral standards that apply
- (vi) Provide unit quantity and unit cost for commodities, supplies and materials. The budget narrative should indicate unit measures (length, volume, weight, area, etc.).
- (vii) Provide technical specifications for items whose unit costs can greatly vary based specifications (e.g., for generators, a reference to the possible range of power would be sufficient to properly evaluate the accuracy of the estimated cost)
- (viii) Itemise general operating costs (e.g., office rent, telecommunications, internet, utilities) for project implementation providing quantity and unit cost. A lump sum for operating costs is not acceptable.
- (ix) Travel costs can be estimated if the calculation modality is accurately described in the budget narrative (e.g., providing estimates on the number of trips and average duration in days, daily subsistence allowance rates, etc.)
- (x) Travel (domestic and international): estimate of number of trips and cost per trip.
- (xi) In the case of construction works exceeding \$10,000, only labour costs and essential materials may be budgeted and itemised, providing unit quantity and unit cost. The budget narrative should explain how construction costs have been estimated based on a standard prototype of building (e.g., latrine, health post or shelter), type of materials (e.g., wood, prefabricated or brick/cement/concrete) and the formula or rationale used to estimate construction cost (e.g. per square foot or meter or previous experiences)
- (xii) Sub-grantee budgets should be provided as a single line under the budget category 'Transfers and Grants to Counterparts'. The breakdown details are required by the FMA, at the same level of detail and format specified in the AFS budget proposal template. The implementing partner is responsible and accountable to provide the necessary detailed documentation to support the budget and expenditure incurred by the sub-grantee. The sub-partner's budget and expenditure details must be available, if

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<sup>11</sup> When international travel costs are requested to support additional activities outside those of the project, such costs can only be considered if they are well justified and, in the proportion, attributable to the project.

requested, at the same level of detail and format applicable to the main partner. These documents must remain available for at least a period of 5 years after the project termination. The partner must provide the name of the sub-partner before signing the Grant Agreement and ensure the sub-partner(s) budget(s) are commensurate with the planned activities and outputs and is reasonable in the specific country context.

## **5. Budget Amendments**

Budget amendments between and within Budget Categories are permitted as follows.

*a. Budget revision not exceeding 20% for any budget category:*

Revisions of existing budget lines that do not exceed 20% of any budget category do not require a GAL Amendment. Within this limit and with prior consultation with FMA, the partner has the flexibility to make adjustments as long as all budget lines continue to relate directly to the scope and objectives of the original project. However, variations of Category A exceeding \$10,000 must be approved by the Fund Manager.

*b. Budget revisions not exceeding 20% for any budget line:*

Revisions of existing budget lines that do not exceed 20% of any line within a category does not require GAL Amendment. Within this limit and with prior consultation with FMA, the partner has the flexibility to make adjustments as long as all budget lines continue to relate directly to the scope and objectives of the original project.

Budget revisions exceeding 20% for any budget category or budget line requires a GAL Amendment.

Implementing partners are solely responsible for applying these rules to sub-grantee budgets.

## **6. Accounting for assets**

The IP must not:

- (i) Use the AFS funds to buy an asset unless that asset is included in the approved project budget.
- (ii) For the duration of the Framework Agreement between the IP and AFS, dispose of or write-off assets purchased with the AFS funding except as approved by Fund Manager.

In addition, the IP must:

- (iii) Record and maintain an up-to-date asset register for all assets purchased with AFS funds.
- (iv) Use assets exclusively for the purposes of the approved project, unless otherwise authorized by the Fund Manager.
- (v) Ensure that assets are safeguarded, maintained in good working condition, and insured where appropriate.
- (vi) At project closure or termination, follow the Fund Manager's instructions on the handover, transfer, or disposal of assets.

## Annex 4: Delivery & Risk Reporting Template (Inception)

*Purpose: To provide a brief review of early progress in project set-up and implementation which can be used to enable the Partner and AFS to work collaboratively to tackle any emerging risks, issues and challenges with project implementation. The report should not be more than 3 pages.*

### **1. Context**

*Any significant changes in the context in which the project is being implemented.*

### **2. Progress**

*Progress made towards, completing activities in the work plan, achieving the objectives and outcomes of the project, including the milestones achieved, challenges encountered, and solutions implemented.*

### **3. Beneficiaries**

*Description of engagement with and impact on beneficiaries.*

### **4. Partnership and collaboration**

*Examples of collaboration between your organisation and other partners, including community groups, beneficiary representatives, local authorities, other NGOs and UN agencies.*

### **5. Financial update**

*Description of any key financial concerns, including any anticipated significant deviations from the budget.*

### **6. Risk update**

*Any significant changes in your assessment of risk and strategies for managing key project risks. (e.g., including HLP due diligence where applicable).*

### **7. Challenges**

*Challenges faced during the period, with recommendations for addressing these challenges and any support required from AFS and/or the broader donor community.*

### **8. Lessons Learnt**

*A brief summary of early lessons identified during the project inception phase that can inform future actions or improvements.*

### **9. Progress on meeting Special Conditions**

*Description of progress towards meeting Special Conditions in the Partner Framework Agreement and the GAL.*

### **10. Conclusion, future planning and action points**

*Your assessment of overall progress (e.g., on-track, ahead of or behind schedule) and highlighting any anticipated significant changes to the work plan and/or budget. A list of action points identified in this report (if any), indicating responsibilities and timeframe.*

# Annex 5: Delivery & Risk Reporting Template (Quarterly/Closure)

A Project details		
Organisation		
Project title		
Implementation location(s)		
AFS Project Code		
Start and end date of grant		
Budget		
Type of report	[Quarterly; Closure]	
Reporting period	[DD.MM.YYYY] – [DD.MM.YYYY]	
B Context:		
Please provide a summary of any significant changes in the project’s context, including external factors that may have impacted implementation. Explain how these changes were addressed and any adjustments made to the project in response.		
C Performance summary		
Provide an update on each activity, including explanations for any deviations of 10% or more from the milestones. Highlight any key successes, challenges, and reasons for these variations.		
Project activities		
Outcome 1		
Please add here the outcome as per proposal		
Output 1.1		
Please add here the output as per proposal		
<b>Output Update</b> Please provide a detailed account of how the output is being/was conducted, including specific dates and locations. Describe the main challenges encountered and how the organization addressed these issues. If delays occurred, please explain the reasons. Additionally, include links to pictures and Methods of Verification (MoVs) relevant to each activity in the appropriate sections.	<b>Achievement % based on the progress of your output</b>	<b>Output Status:</b> On track/delay duration
Output 1.2		
Please add here the output as per proposal		
<b>Output Update</b> Please provide a detailed account of how the output is being/was conducted, including specific dates and locations. Describe the main challenges encountered and how the organization addressed these	<b>Achievement % based on the progress of your output</b>	<b>Output Status:</b> On track/delay duration

issues. If delays occurred, please explain the reasons. Additionally, include links to pictures and Methods of Verification (MoVs) relevant to each activity in the appropriate sections.

**Please ensure inserting additional rows to include your grant outputs**

### D Reach

Provide a summary of the total number of beneficiaries reached/people assisted during the reporting period, including both unique and non-unique beneficiaries. Please follow the format and definitions provided in the tables below.

#### C.1 - Number of unique\* beneficiaries reached

Status/Gender/Age	Female					Male				
	0-5	6-17	18-59	60+	Total	0-5	6-17	18-59	60+	Total
Host Community										
IDP										
Returnee										
Refugee										
<b>Total</b>										

\*To estimate the number of unique beneficiaries, the IP (Implementing Partner) must be calculated by summing the number of beneficiaries assisted by sector at the community level (admin level 4), taking into account any overlap between sectors. Alternatively, the IP may provide the unique number of beneficiaries generated by their database, if every beneficiary is assigned a unique identifier.

#### C.2 - Number of actual (non-unique) ^ beneficiaries reached

Status/Gender/Age	Female					Male				
	0-5	6-17	18-59	60+	Total	0-5	6-17	18-59	60+	Total
Host Community										
IDP										
Returnee										
Refugee										
<b>Total</b>										

^The actual or non-unique number of beneficiaries is a sum of the number of people assisted by service within each sector, regardless of how many times they have received support from the organisation. For example, the same beneficiary could be counted twice if they have received assistance from the IP twice, once for Shelter and once for WASH, or twice for WASH. This method of counting beneficiaries does not consider the potential overlap or duplication of services provided to the same individual and therefore may result in a higher overall count than the number of unique individuals served by the project.

### E Requested changes to the project

Summarise any key changes to the results framework, budget or timeframe of the project, either agreed during the reporting period or requested as part of this report, as well as changes to the downstream partner list.

### F Finance narrative

Briefly explain the extent to which you are spending according to plan, overall plans until the end of the financial year, and justification of any variances. Detailed financial data should be provided in the workbook.

Category	Planned to date	Actual to date	Variance	Justification
A				
B				
C				
D				
E				
F				
G				
H				

### G Risk

Please provide further clarification on the top five risks included in your Project Risk Register, including details on the steps taken to mitigate severe risks. Additionally, please explain any modifications made to the risk levels and the reasons behind these changes.

- **Do not include any details of specific aid diversion or safeguarding cases in this report. It is sufficient to mention the number of cases in this section.**
- **Safeguarding: Any credible suspicion of or actual Safeguarding breach should be reported to AFS in line with its Safeguarding Policy.**
- **Aid diversion: Any credible suspicion of or actual fraud, bribery, corruption or any other form of diversion or financial irregularity or impropriety should be reported to AFS in line with its Aid Diversion Policy.**

## H Monitoring and Evaluation

Describe the active and proactive monitoring activities undertaken to track progress and any evaluations that have been planned or are currently underway. Provide specific examples of how sex, age, status, and disability-disaggregated data have been analysed and used to inform programming changes. Additionally, explain the role of project staff, technical leads (incl. M&E/MEAL teams), and partners in the data collection, review, and learning process.

## I Learning

Please include at least one key learning from the Monitoring and Evaluation processes and explain how your organisation has, or intends to, translate this learning into action.

## J Accountability

Detail how accountability to affected populations was ensured, including the Community Engagement, Participation, and mechanisms for feedback and complaints, how feedback was addressed, and how did they influence the project implementation and how information about the project/CFM was shared with beneficiaries.

Summarize the feedback and complaints received during the project, including how they were addressed and resolved. Please ensure sharing gender disaggregated data for the participants in any AAP activity (Information sharing participants, Feedback givers, etc). Please report your progress in reference to the AAPCE plan.

## K Update on actions/recommendations

Report any actions/recommendations agreed upon through AFS field monitoring visits, spot checks, M&E assessments, due diligence assessments, annual reviews, etc., and key actions you have taken to address them.

## L Other specific information requests

If you have agreed to provide AFS with reporting on additional topics, you may include your update below. However, consider the impact of doing this on the length of your report. For more extensive reporting on additional topics, please upload this as an annex to the report.

## M Feedback or requests to AFS

Please share any comments, requests, or feedback that your organisation would like to convey to AFS. While any provided feedback will be reviewed and considered by the fund, it may not necessarily translate into action.

## N Social Inclusion

Describe steps taken to ensure equal access to assistance and protection; meaningful participation in decision-making; and equitable outcomes for marginalised individuals amongst the target population. Please identify activities specifically intended to address the different needs of people with disabilities, older women and men, children, adolescents, people with diverse SOGIESC, and ethnic/religious minorities as well as measures to remove barriers to access and participation for these populations across the intervention.

	Achievements	Challenges	Plans for next quarter
Gender Equality			
Social Inclusion			

## O Delivery Chain

Explain the extent to which your planned delivery chain (downstream partners/suppliers receiving AFS funds and other organisations/actors which do not receive funds but are involved in project delivery e.g. local municipal offices/committees that deliver services to beneficiaries) has changed/been maintained and how this has impacted the project.

## P Quality Assurance

(a) Please describe your methodology for ensuring the precision and dependability of the data you provide to AFS. This should include an explanation of the error detection and prevention mechanisms that are in place across the entire data collection process, from beneficiaries to AFS, to mitigate any key risks of error. Whether the results data is collected by your organisation or downstream partners, please provide details

on the measures taken to ensure the integrity, validity, precision, reliability, and timeliness of the data.

(b) Describe any data quality limitations that the AFS should understand to be able to use the data appropriately. For example, for data collection reasons you may have more confidence in the geographic breakdown being accurate than the age disaggregation being accurate. For some indicators, there may also be a risk of double counting, over counting, undercounting or estimation when actual figures are not available.

## SECTIONS REQUIRED ONLY FOR FINAL PROJECT CLOSURE REPORTS

### Q Value for Money (VfM)

Describe the steps taken throughout the duration of the project to ensure VfM, including updates on key cost drivers, unit costs, and any significant achievements related to the four E's framework (economy, efficiency, effectiveness, and equity).

### R Gender Minimum Standards

Complete the below checklist indicating whether each of the five points have been met. Consider how gender intersects with age and disability wherever possible.

Question	Yes/No		MoVs
1. Is there a <b>gender analysis</b> to inform programming? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Does it identify barriers and enablers to women and men accessing project services/opportunities?</li> <li>- Does it identify risks of project activities making gender inequality worse and how to mitigate these?</li> </ul>		If yes, please list the barriers and risks.	
2. Can women and girls <b>participate meaningfully</b> in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the project?		If yes, please explain how you ensured their meaningful participation	
3. Does the project contribute to gender equality and women and girls' <b>longer-term empowerment</b> ?		If yes, please explain how the project contributed to the longer-term empowerment.	
4. Is there a plan for <b>building the capacity of local partners</b> on gender equality if needed?		If yes, please share further details about your plans, targeted audience, expected key outcomes, target, etc	
5. Does the <b>results framework</b> have: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- At least one specific gender outcome or output indicator</li> <li>- Gender targets for most indicators</li> </ul> Sex disaggregated data for most results?		If yes, please share the total number of Girls and Women, elderly, PWDs benefitted from the project. And explain how each group benefitted differently from the project.	

### S Theory of Change

Provide an update on the status of your Theory of Change, including how it aligns with the overall programme objectives and cross-cutting principles. Also, indicate whether any modifications to the project design are necessary, based on changes in evidence and implications for the project. Please ensure to upload the Theory of Change in GMS when submitting the first report.

## Annex 6: Logical Framework Reporting (via GMS)

IPs must report results data on the indicators listed in the project's Logical Framework, which provides an overview of the main performance metrics and partner activities. However, IPs are not limited to collecting data for reporting against the project's Logical Framework indicators and may collect additional data to inform learning. To report results, IPs must use the framework template pre-uploaded into the GMS by AFS, using the project's Logical Framework, the AFS list of mandatory, and the standard indicator profiles that have been pre-uploaded into GMS. Results should be incremental and cover only the corresponding reporting period.

### Disaggregation

Results should be disaggregated by the following essential variables, each with their respective categories: Geography, Demography. The table below provides an overview of the variables, categories, and their definitions.

Variable	Essential	Categories	Definition
Geography	Governorate	14 Syrian Governorates	Administrative divisions in Syria
	District	61 Syrian Districts	
	Sub-district	272 Syrian Sub-Districts	
Demography	Sex	Male	A male person
		Female	A female person
	Age group	0-5	A child under five years old
		6-17	A child between 6-17 years old
		18-59	An adult between 18-59 years old
		60+	An adult over 60 years old
		Men (18+)	A male adult
		Women (18+)	A female adult
		Boys (0-18)	A male between 0-18 years old
		Girls (0-18)	A female between 0-18 years old
	Disability	With Disabilities	A person with disabilities
		Without Disabilities	A person without disabilities
	Beneficiary group	IDP	Individuals who are displaced within Syria
		Host community	Individuals from a community hosting IDPs or refugees but have not been displaced and then returned to their original community during the past 3 months.
Refugees		Individuals that are registered as refugees	
Returns		Individuals that used to be Syrian refugees or IDPs, but have returned to their original community within the past 3 months	

**Disability Component:** IPs must report disability-disaggregated data using the WGS definition and data collection methodology. Syria's disability rate is much higher than the global average, making it vital that project performance with respect to people with disabilities is considered.

#### Box 1: Disability Measurement and Monitoring Using the WGS<sup>12</sup>

IPs must adopt the Washington Group definition when collecting and analysing disability data. This will enable meaningful comparisons between different population groups and facilitate the development of policies and programs that promote the inclusion and full participation of people with disabilities in society.

<sup>12</sup>

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/732254/Disability-Measurement-Monitoring-Washington-Group-Disability-Questions.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/732254/Disability-Measurement-Monitoring-Washington-Group-Disability-Questions.pdf)

**Indicator Disaggregation Exemptions:** For some indicators, disaggregating results might not be possible or appropriate. The GMS showcases the requirements and exemptions for every indicator. Failure to provide the required data disaggregation without the prior approval of the FMA will be considered as a failure to cooperate with the FMA’s monitoring, audit and evaluation activities and will be negatively reflected in the DQA report.

## Data Collection

IPs must ensure that their data collection tools, and staff capacity enable the collection of gender, age, status, and disability-disaggregated data using the (WGS) methodology. Additionally, they should prioritise the safe and secure collection of data by utilising Mobile Data Capture.

# Annex 7: Third Party Monitoring and Data Quality Assessment Guidance

This guidance explains how AFS conducts third-party monitoring visits and data quality assessments. It explains what IPs can expect and outlines key responsibilities. Please note that these are high-level procedures and that specific instructions will be shared for each visit or assessment.

## 1. Third Party Monitoring Checks

### 1.1 Overview

TPM field checks are conducted to verify and assess the progress, quality, and integrity of AFS-funded activities. These visits may cover multiple sectors (e.g., Health, Nutrition, WASH, Early Recovery, Cash, FSL, and Education) and can occur at any point during the project's lifecycle. Findings inform both IPs and the FMA of strengths, areas for improvement, and potential corrective actions.

### 1.2 Frequency and Selection of Visits

- **Project Selection:** The FMA will decide which IPs and projects will undergo TPM visits, typically guided by factors such as the project's risk level, duration, and your organisation's Capacity Performance Rating (CPR).
- **Potential for Multiple Visits:** While many projects may receive one or two site visits, the overall scheduling depends on the number of AFS-funded activities, IP performance, and context access constraints. The Fund reserves the right to schedule additional or fewer visits if circumstances require.

### 1.3 Process for Field Checks

Below is the general sequence when a project is selected for a TPM visit:

#### 1. Introduction Email

The FMA sends an email to the IP introducing the TPM team assigned to review or visit the project. The email serves as official notification and outlines expectations for cooperation.

#### 2. Kick-off Meeting

After the introduction, the TPM schedules an online meeting (also called an initiation or kick-off call) with the IP team. The purpose of these meetings is to present the scope of the visit, clarify timelines, and discuss any initial questions or concerns from the IP staff. The FMA may participate to reiterate expectations for a transparent process.

#### 3. Document Sharing

The TPM requests specific materials (e.g., proposals, narrative reports, work plans, beneficiary lists). The IP is expected to share these documents promptly, ensuring accuracy and completeness.

#### 4. Analytical Framework & Methodology

Prior to the site visit, the TPM prepares an analytical framework detailing focus areas (e.g., quality of services, beneficiary feedback, safeguarding, accountability). The TPM designs or adapts data collection tools (e.g., questionnaires, checklists). If clarifications or concerns arise, they should be raised before field activities begin.

## 5. Site Visit

The TPM conducts direct observations of project activities (e.g., distributions, trainings, or infrastructure works). Interviews or surveys may include staff, beneficiaries, and non-beneficiaries. If remote methods (phone or online) are required, the TPM provides details in advance and requests anonymised beneficiary contact information where relevant. The visit length varies but often spans one to several days, depending on the project's size and complexity.

## 6. Initial TPM Report

Finalised within 20–25 working days from the kick-off, the TPM shares an initial report (often around six pages) with the AFS; this report is not yet to be shared with the IP. Sections typically include:

- **Methodology** (data collection approach, sampling method)
- **Summary** (key findings, initial conclusions)
- **Findings** (observations on efficiency, timeliness, access, inclusion, accountability)
- **Challenges** (issues noted during data collection)

Following the FMA's review, the IP may receive follow-up questions or clarifications. Urgent findings, even if preliminary, will require the FMA to provide justifications in a timely manner or in some cases requesting the IP to pause all or certain activities until further notice by the AFS.

## 7. Learning and Reflection Session

The TPM organises an online session to present initial findings. The purpose of these sessions is to allow the IP to clarify data gaps, provide additional evidence, and discuss potential improvements. Attendees typically include the Project Manager, MEAL/Technical Leads, the TPM, and an FMA observer. Attendance of the IP Senior Management Team is positively perceived as it reflects additional commitment by the IP.

## 8. Conclusive (End) TPM Report

After the reflection session, the TPM finalises a more comprehensive conclusive report. This version includes final observations, outstanding challenges, and *actionable recommendations* for improvement. A **RAAG Rating** is assigned reflecting the overall assessment of the TPM field check(s):

- **Green (4):** Minor or no improvements needed
- **Amber/Green (3):** Some improvements needed
- **Amber/Red (2):** Many improvements needed
- **Red (1):** Major concerns requiring immediate corrective action

### 1.4 Responsibilities of IPs for Field Checks

- **Coordination:** Ensure timely access to relevant staff, documents, and sites.
- **Informed Consent:** Facilitate any remote phone surveys by confirming beneficiaries' willingness to share contact details.
- **Timely Feedback:** Engage proactively during the Learning and Reflection Session and promptly address any queries or clarifications.
- **Implementation of Recommendations:** Reflect actionable recommendations in ongoing or future project activities.
- **Phone (Outbound Calling) Surveys:** In cases where remote surveys (via telephone or online) are necessary, the IP must provide the TPM with an anonymised list of project beneficiaries in. The list will include the beneficiary code, location (at the sub-district level), general description of the received service, sex, and only the first three letters of the beneficiary's first name. The TPM will conduct the required sampling and highlight rows where the IP is expected to seek informed consent from the beneficiary before sharing their information with the TPM. The IP is required to share reasons why beneficiaries do not wish

to participate in the interview, if they have shared their reason with the IP, but without sharing the beneficiary's name or a combination of personally identifiable information that will reveal the identity of the data subject.

### 1.5 Feedback on the TPM Exercise

- After the TPM exercise concludes, AFS shares a short online survey with the IP to gather feedback on the TPM team's performance and the overall monitoring process. Input is used to enhance future monitoring efforts.

## 2. Data Quality Assessments (DQAs)

### 2.1 Overview

DQAs evaluate the accuracy, reliability, and integrity of data that an IP reports to AFS. These may be conducted by the TPM or the AFS MREL team. DQAs typically focus on a small selection (3–4) of key performance indicators within a project.

### 2.2 Timing of DQAs

- **Scheduled:** If an IP's Capacity Performance Rating (CPR) is in a lower category (e.g., 1a or 1b), a TPM+ DQA combined visit may be conducted.
- **Triggered:** AFS may initiate, without having to provide a justification to the IP, additional DQAs if:
  - Indicators are strategically significant or raise stakeholder concerns
  - Unusually high or low results are reported
  - Data reliability or integrity is questionable
  - The IP requests a DQA to address data quality concerns

### 2.3 Five Key Data Quality Attributes

1. **Validity:** Data clearly reflect intended results
2. **Integrity:** Data are protected from manipulation or bias
3. **Precision:** Data are sufficiently detailed for effective decision-making
4. **Reliability:** Collection methods are consistent across time and contexts
5. **Timeliness:** Data are produced frequently and quickly enough for project decisions

### 2.4 DQA Process

#### 1. Notification & Document Request

The IP is informed of a planned DQA, with details of requested documents (M&E plans, raw datasets, indicator definitions, etc.).

#### 2. Desk Review

The DQA team (TPM or AFS MREL) reviews documentation (proposal, M&E plan, reported data, etc.) to understand how each indicator is defined, collected, and reported.

#### 3. Virtual/Field Review

The DQA team may interview M&E staff (remotely or in-person) to clarify data flows, sample calculations, or source documents (e.g., sign-in sheets, attendance logs). If the DQA is combined with a TPM site visit, on-site checks may validate how data is recorded and stored.

#### 4. Initial DQA Report

A draft report is shared with the FMA, highlighting strengths and areas needing further discussion or improvement. A learning session may follow, enabling the IP to clarify data gaps or recommendations.

Following the FMA's review, the IP may receive follow-up questions or clarifications. Urgent findings, even if preliminary, will require the FMA to provide justifications in a timely manner or in some cases requesting the IP to pause all or certain activities until further notice by the AFS.

## 5. Conclusive DQA Report and RAAG Rating

The final report includes a RAAG rating:

- **Green (4):** Minor or no improvements needed
- **Amber/Green (3):** Some improvements needed
- **Amber/Red (2):** Many improvements needed
- **Red (1):** Major concerns requiring immediate corrective action

### 2.5 Responsibilities of IPs for DQAs

- **Data Access:** Provide all relevant data sources (e.g., spreadsheets, beneficiary records, raw forms).
- **Staff Availability:** Ensure M&E staff or technical leads can discuss data flow, sampling, and any potential issues.
- **Action Plan:** Develop and implement measures to address identified weaknesses in data handling.
- **Ongoing Monitoring:** Update AFS on progress made to improve data quality in subsequent reporting cycles.

## 3. Important Notes

- **Safeguarding:** Any safeguarding concerns identified during TPM or DQA activities by the TPM will be reported to the AFS immediately.
- **Non-Cooperation:** If an IP obstructs monitoring or DQA processes (e.g., withholding documents, refusing site access), these concerns may appear in the final report and negatively affect the RAAG rating and the possibly the overall performance rating of the IP.
- **Learning-Focused Approach:** Both TPM checks and DQAs aim to foster learning, enhance accountability, and improve programming. Any positive or challenging findings should be viewed as opportunities to strengthen future project delivery.
- **Concerns by IPs:** Concerns relating to the conduct of the TPM should be immediately communicated with the AFS team for follow up.

For further information or clarifications, IPs may contact the assigned AFS MREL focal point at [mrel@aidfundforsyria.org](mailto:mrel@aidfundforsyria.org).