



ADAPTATION FUND

AFB/PPRC.30/55
03 October 2022

Project and Programme Review Committee
Thirtieth Meeting
Bonn, Germany, 11-12 October 2022

Agenda item 14)

OPTIONS FOR FURTHER SUPPORTING THE WORK OF THE PROJECT AND PROGRAMME REVIEW COMMITTEE

I. Introduction

1. At the thirty-fourth meeting of the Adaptation Fund Board (the Board), having considered document AFB/B.34/10, the Board decided to:

- (a) *Request the Project and Programme Review Committee (PPRC) to pilot discussing technically-recommended pre-concepts, concepts and fully-developed project proposals for concrete adaptation projects only, with the understanding that the Board members may request discussion at the PPRC meeting on any proposal that has not been technically recommended;*
- (b) *Request the PPRC to continue discussing innovation grants, project scale-up grants and learning grants, and other proposals from any new funding windows; and*
- (c) *Request the secretariat to prepare a document which contains options for further supporting the work of the PPRC and present it to the twenty-seventh meeting of the PPRC for consideration.*

(Decision B.34/50)

2. At the thirty-eighth meeting of the Board, having considered the recommendation of the Project and Programme Review Committee, the Adaptation Fund Board decided:

- (a) *To defer consideration of document AFB/PPRC.29/48 by the Project and Programme Review Committee until after further discussion of staffing of the secretariat project review team by the Board;*
- (b) *To request the secretariat to prepare an updated document, to be considered intersessionally, as needed, taking into account the outcome of the discussion in the subparagraph (a), above.*

(Decision B.38/44)

3. This document presents the options for further supporting the work of the PPRC pursuant to Decision B.38/44, subparagraph (b) above.

II. Background

4. The Board revisited the terms of reference of the PPRC and the Ethics and Finance Committee (EFC) at its twenty-sixth meeting under agenda item "Other matters", and decided to amend them, through decision B.26/42, so that the issue of monitoring and evaluation would be divided between the two committees. The PPRC would monitor and evaluate the progress of the projects and programmes and the EFC would continue to monitor and evaluate issues at the Fund level, such as the annual performance reports.

5. The terms of reference for the PPRC states that "[t]he Project and Programme Review Committee (PPRC) shall be responsible for assisting the Board in tasks related to project/programme review in accordance with the Provisional Operational Policies and Guidelines for Parties to access resources of the Adaptation Fund (the Operational Policies and Guidelines),

and for providing recommendations and advice to the Board thereon. In this regard, the PPRC shall:

- a) Consider and review projects and programmes submitted to the Board by eligible Parties in accordance with the Operational Policies and Guidelines;
- b) Address issues arising from projects and programmes submitted to the Board, including outstanding policy issues;
- c) Review the project and programme reports submitted by National Implementing Entities (NIEs) and Multilateral Implementing Entities (MIEs) in accordance with paragraph 46 of the Operational Policies and Guidelines, with the support of the Secretariat; Report and make recommendations to the Board on project and programme approval, cancellation, termination, suspension and on any other matter under its consideration; and
- d) Consider any other matter the Board deems appropriate.”

6. The PPRC reviewed its first projects at its first meeting in conjunction with the 10th meeting of the Board. The meeting took place in one day, ahead of the two days of meetings of the Board, and the PPRC work was organized on the basis of an agenda which contained 7 items, as well as 11 documents in total. Over time, as the number of project submissions grew, the work of the PPRC has grown also. Information on the number of documents per each PPRC meeting is presented in Figure 1 below. (For comparison, number of documents for each of EFC and Board are included as well.)

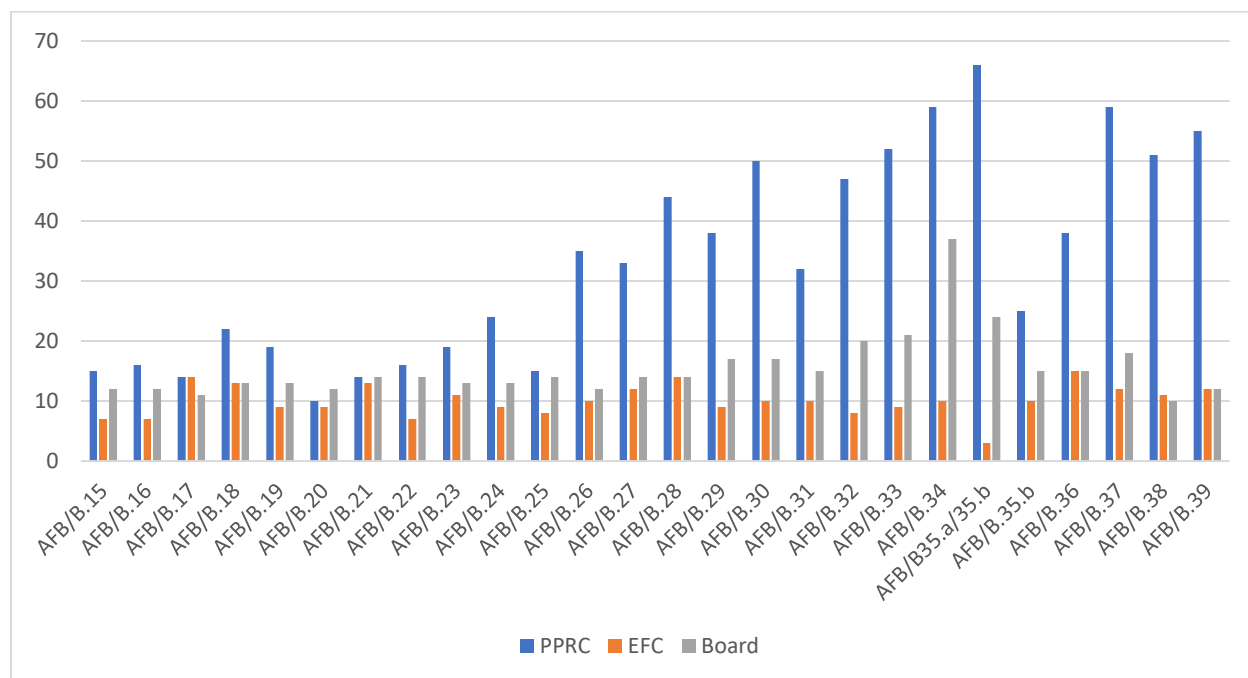


Figure 1. Number of documents prepared for Board and committee meetings (AFB.10 to-date)

7. In addition to the growth in the number of proposals, the PPRC work has expanded also due to the development of supporting policies and their continuous updates and improvements. Over the period of the first Medium-term Strategy (MTS) 2018-2022, the PPRC has also supported the work related to the establishment of new funding windows, which increased substantially the workload further, and which was followed by additional proposals and policy development in support of the new funding windows. This has led to substantially expanded agendas for the PPRC meetings, accompanied by a substantial increase in volume of supporting documents.

8. Following particularly heavy agendas of the 23rd and especially 24th meetings of the PPRC, which the committee could not go through in entirety, an agenda item was added to agenda item 8 of the 33rd meeting of the Board, under "Other matters", c) *The time allowed for the meeting of the PPRC and the management of its agenda.*

9. Moreover, having considered the recommendation of the Project and Programme Review Committee, the Adaptation Fund Board (the Board) decided to:

(a) Request the secretariat to undertake a review of the project and programme review process, with the consideration of the Operational Policies and Guidelines for Parties to Access Resources from the Adaptation Fund, and present it at the thirty-fourth meeting of the Board.

(Decision B.33/10)

10. Lastly, the Board decided, via Decision B.33/53, to hold the next Board meeting over five days, instead of four, allowing the PPRC an extra day for its work.

11. At the 34th meeting, the Board considered document AFB/B.34/10, "Review of the Project and Programme Review Process", which presented a number of key considerations and questions when assessing possible options for improvement of the review process, as well as four options. The four options, in summary were:

- a) Option 1: Increase the PPRC review window by one week (two weeks total)
- b) Option 2: Increase the Implementing Entity (IE) revision window by one week (two weeks total)
- c) Option 3: Allow rolling-basis submissions
- d) Option 4: Increase the efficiency of PPRC meetings

12. Option 4 was proposed with the backdrop of the growing number of proposals submitted to the PPRC in the recent years, through an expanding range of modalities, accompanied with a concomitant increase in policy papers, the workload of the PPRC has grown rapidly and this has already shown efficacy and resource implications, leading to the inability to go through the entire agenda due to insufficient time at the 24th meeting.

13. Having considered document AFB/B.34/10, the Adaptation Fund Board decided to adopt Decision B.34/50 as introduced in paragraph 1 above.

14. It is worth noting that subparagraphs (a) and (b) have been implemented since the Decision B.34/50 was taken. In addition, it has been the practice that all new proposals are added to the agenda to discussion (as per *pro forma* request by the PPRC Chair), as to allow them to be considered later in an intersessional review cycle (as per Decision B.25/2, which requires all first-time submissions to be considered in regular meetings of the PPRC¹). Following the onset of the Covid-19 global pandemic, which led to the temporary reorganization of Board and committee meetings as the work shifted to a virtual mode, further work on the document referenced in subparagraph (c) was put on hold.

15. The PPRC resumed its work in a combined in-person and virtual (i.e., hybrid) mode at its 29th meeting. In its 38th meeting, the Board discussed the issue again and decided:

- (a) *To defer consideration of document AFB/PPRC.29/48 by the Project and Programme Review Committee until after further discussion of staffing of the secretariat project review team by the Board;*
- (b) *To request the secretariat to prepare an updated document, to be considered intersessionally, as needed, taking into account the outcome of the discussion in the subparagraph (a), above.*

(Decision B.38/44)

16. This paper presents updated options for organizing the work of the PPRC following Board Decision B.38/44.

III. Challenges and Options

17. As presented in the Table 1 above, the number of documents prepared and discussed at the Board and committee meetings has grown, reflecting an increase in work that the Board, as well as the secretariat, have had to undertake. The increase in PPRC work has been especially disproportionate. During the past five years, a steady increase could be observed, following which the upper limits were more or less maintained, with an upward trend being interrupted temporarily at the time of the pandemic. It is worth noting that no downward trends can be observed; the upward trends are punctuated with occasional “dips”, before appearing to recover and continue.

18. The number of proposals submitted to the 39th Board meeting signals a potential continuous increase in the future, particularly taking into consideration the evolving climate finance landscape with an increased interest in funding of adaptation.

19. The preparation of the PPRC meeting is undertaken by a small team at the secretariat, which had not grown in terms of staff positions for several years until decisions taken at the thirty-eighth meeting of the Board, despite the change in the workload. Instead, the secretariat had undertaken several process-improvement exercises which embedded quality assurance and improvement protocols, in a systematized way, and relied increasingly on short-term consultant services even for recurring and ongoing tasks over the recent years. At the thirty-eighth meeting, as part of its consideration of the administrative budget for fiscal year 2023, the Board approved

¹ However, following the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, in spring 2020, the exception was made on an *Ad Interim* basis to allow first-time submissions to be processed using an intersessional process.

two new full-time positions for programming and one new full-time position for innovation and endorsed the recruitment of an externally funded junior professional officer.

20. The systematization of the project and programme review work led to efficiencies and possibility to absorb the additional workload. In the short term, and under the very challenging situation caused by the Covid-19 pandemic and its implications on the Fund's work, beginning with the spring of year 2020, this approach was sufficiently robust to accommodate the necessary policy and operational adjustments without any significant delays to the processing of the received and incoming proposals.

21. However, increasing reliance on this approach seems to be giving diminishing returns, suggesting that the efforts to increase efficiency are coming up against their limits, and alone are not sufficient to sustain quality delivery for the trends being observed. The high number of proposals received for this cycle has confirmed the limitation of this approach.

22. Currently, a review cycle is an effort-intensive and strictly time-bound endeavor, during which, proposals are submitted and processed all at once, and must undergo a rigorous review before being posted by the pre-determined deadline for the PPRC. A high (and growing) number of proposals would potentially impact the quality of the reviews as the pool of reviewers have more proposals to review in a limited time and would therefore dedicate less time per proposal, given the fixed deadlines. Additional reviewers and co-reviewers (for first time submissions) would be increasingly needed, putting an increased burden on the secretariat to recruit, contract, train, supervise, and manage additional human resources. A high number of proposals also pushes up against the constraints and bottlenecks and increases the risk of logjams in the review process, in case of any complications during the coordination, quality control and clearance of reviews and document preparation by the secretariat, therefore increasing the risk of mistakes and delays in delivery.

23. In addition, it is worth noting that, over the years, it has often been highlighted by the Implementing Entities (IEs) that one week is not enough to address the Clarification Requests (CRs) and Corrective Action Requests (CARs) in the initial technical review². During the latest review cycle alone, several IEs have requested extra time to resubmit the proposal, while others decided to withdraw the proposal to better address the requests. In order to better understand the view of the IEs, the secretariat carried out a survey in August 2022, which is discussed in section IV below, and which shows that three weeks seems to be the optimal period of time for proposal revision.

24. Furthermore, PPRC members have previously indicated their preference for having more time to review proposals before a Board meeting (currently one week, as per OPG p.47 (d)). Having such additional time for review may become increasingly important to the PPRC given the consistent upward trends seen with the number of proposals and policy documents.

25. It is also worth noting that the consideration of options for further improving the work of the PPRC is linked to the overall effort to increase effectiveness and efficiency and make the needed adjustments and innovations to the process, as the Fund transitions into the next Medium-Term Strategic phase (2023-2027). Critical decisions concerning the review process may have

² The original intention with a one-week turnaround time between the initial and final reviews was to be able to clarify relatively minor matters identified during the initial review of proposals. However, it is practically not possible to distinguish which matters are minor and which are not, and as a result the clarifications sought and given are often related to more substantial matters in the proposals.

downstream implications on other matters, including launch of new activities, such as future funding opportunities and design and development of a new IT submission platform.

26. Having had the benefit of experience following the adoption and subsequent implementation of subparagraphs (a) and (b) of Decision B.34/50, there are a number of options that could be currently considered to further improve the work of the PPRC. Their advantages and disadvantages are examined below.

27. The secretariat has consulted with the IEs of the Fund via a survey undertaken in August 2022, and which attempted to assess the views of the IEs with regard to the current review cycle process as well as their preferences with regard to a number of variables in order to inform the options presented in this paper. In particular, the IEs were asked about their preference on changing to a rolling-basis submission, the length of the period needed for the IE to revise a proposal following an initial technical review, and address their preferences to either continue the review process with an intersessional cycle or the possibility to submit on a rolling basis.

28. It is important to note that all options presented below maintain the key principles under which the Adaptation Fund has been operating, namely, the authority of the Board, the important role of the PPRC, transparency, predictability, and quick turnaround in providing technical reviews to the IEs.

Option 1: Keeping the current submission model and allocating more time to PPRC meetings (not recommended option)

29. This option would continue with the current submission system described in the Operational Policies and Guidelines (OPG) of the Fund, where project/programme proposals are submitted at least 9 (nine) weeks before each regular Board meeting in order to be considered by the Board at its next regular meeting and during the intersessional review cycle. The current submission model is schematized in figure 2 below. It would also take up the practice employed at the Board's thirty-fourth meeting, where 3 days were exceptionally allocated for the PPRC in order to manage covering the entire agenda. This could allow for more time to cover the future agendas without having to make more drastic adjustments to the agenda. It should be emphasized that, without making drastic adjustments, namely reducing the categories of proposals and/or reports that would be discussed by the PPRC, it is unlikely that the PPRC would be able to reliably go through the agenda of items that are due to be discussed within two days alone. This option will also involve recruiting additional reviewers (short term consultants) to manage the increase in proposal submissions.

30. *Pros:* Allowing adequate time to discuss agenda items is very important for ensuring full PPRC and, by extension, Board involvement in the direction of Fund matters. However, in absence of sufficient time, the PPRC is sometimes unable to discuss important agenda items, postponing them to subsequent meetings, sometimes repeatedly. This creates an additional strain on the secretariat, which must periodically update or entirely rework documents that did not get to be discussed at the originally appointed meeting. Ensuring there is adequate time to go through the entire agenda would prevent this type of outcome.

31. *Cons:* Additional time requires additional resources, in terms of PPRC member time, including more time spent on mission trip, when traveling, more days working, and the associated opportunity costs. Having a highly unequal distribution of amount of work between EFC and PPRC members is an undesirable situation. By not adhering to the principle that the work of a committee should fit into the time that is allocated to it, the preparation workload of the PPRC members and

secretariat can be expected to continue to increase even further, and this too has resource implications. The Board, as the decision-making body with the responsibility to allocate resources to PPRC work, as well as PPRC members individually, who participate in the PPRC meetings, would have to ensure the additional resources would be available to support this option. Lastly, additional time for PPRC meetings while keeping the status quo of the current submission model would not solve the issues raised in paragraphs 22-24 above, namely bottlenecks in the clearance process, increased risk of errors, additional review time for the IEs, and the need for more time for PPRC members to review the proposals before the Board meeting. Absent major efficiency considerations this option is not necessarily a guarantee of a better-quality outcome. This option is not recommended.

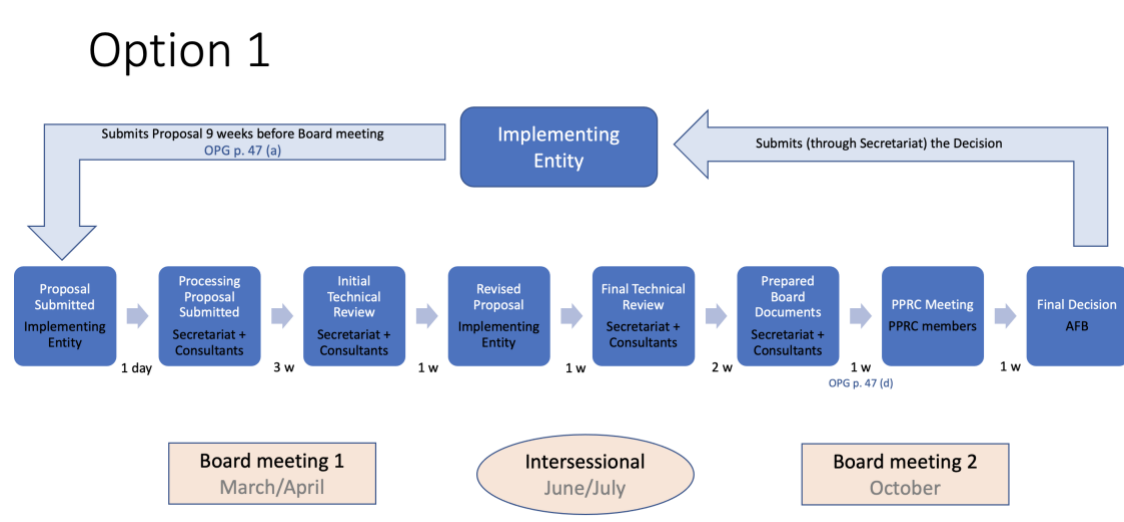


Figure 2. Schematic representation of Option 1- current review cycle as described in the OPG.

Option 2: Considering rolling submissions and eliminating the intersessional cycle

32. This option builds upon the relatively recently-adopted process of presenting proposals that are technically recommended, following the technical review of the secretariat. The PPRC currently does not discuss proposals that are not technically recommended (unless they are new submissions or specifically requested to be discussed by members, or submissions for innovation, enhanced direct access and small grant funding windows.)

33. Under this option, proposals would be accepted by the secretariat year-round and reviewed on a rolling basis, until a “cut-off” deadline, whereby all the proposals that have reached the technically recommended stage would be prepared for the PPRC’s consideration and subsequently discussed. Additionally, **first submissions that have gone through a minimum of 2 rounds of technical review** (in keeping with the current practice) in time for the PPRC meeting would be presented to the PPRC, even if they would not be technically recommended.

34. In line with the Board decision B.34/50, and specifically “*the understanding that the Board members may request discussion at the PPRC meeting on any proposal that has not been*

technically recommended", the Secretariat will also prepare and post the documents of the proposals that have undergone at least two rounds of technical review even if not technically recommended. Consistent with the above-mentioned decision, the PPRC and Board members will retain the option to request adding any such proposal to the agenda for discussion.

35. To maintain the Adaptation Fund's comparative advantages, the secretariat is committed to respecting a short timeline for business standards (i.e., keeping with the practice of delivering a first technical review within three (3) weeks of receiving a proposal), except if a proposal is submitted during a "no submission period" ahead of the Board meeting, during the week of the Board meeting and the week following the Board meeting).

This option also provides more time (up to three (3) weeks) to the IEs to resubmit a revised proposal after having received a technical review (with the possibility to request an extension if needed). The period of three (3) weeks is proposed to maintain a short review cycle and encourage a swift treatment of proposals. The survey with the Fund's accredited IEs confirms that three (3) weeks is a suitable period. PPRC members would also have three (3) weeks to review the proposals ahead of the Board meeting.

36. Under this option, the intersessional cycle is eliminated, given that IEs can resubmit as many times as needed until the proposal reaches the technically recommended stage to be considered at a Board meeting. The survey also confirms that the IEs are in favor of eliminating the intersessional cycle if they can submit proposals on a rolling basis.

37. To maintain the current levels of transparency, the Secretariat would continue to post each received proposal on the Fund's website and implement a notification system to the Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and to the Board members that alerts them to the submission or resubmission of proposals so that they can provide their comments.

Option 2

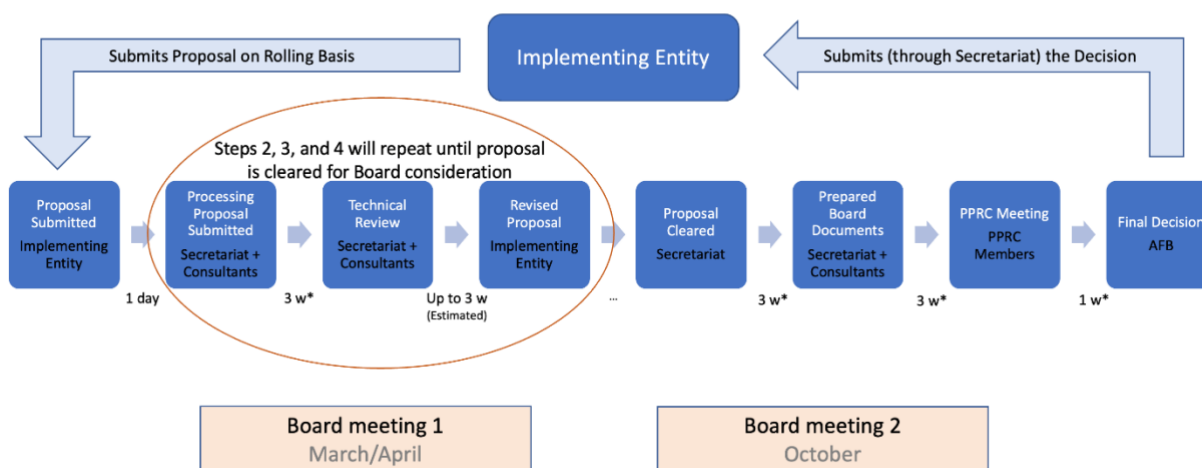


Figure 3. Schematic representation of Option 2.

* Business standards (i.e., no. of weeks indicated above) are provisional and proposed based on Secretariat experience. They can be confirmed or adjusted if needed or desired by the PPRC.

38. Pros: The main advantage of this option is that IEs can submit proposals year around, so they can prepare and submit better quality proposals without rushing them to meet a deadline, especially when the IE is working with multiple proposals or has a reduced number of staff. Having a rolling-basis submission process would help distribute the workload more evenly throughout the year, avoiding bottlenecks. This approach would furthermore have the advantage of allowing a larger number of reviews throughout the year. This option also removes the current limitation of the one-week turnaround time that the IEs get under the current review cycle, and lead to the shortening of the number of resubmissions needed for a proposal to reach the technically recommended stage.

39. Cons: This approach would be a significant departure from the current process. It would require a number of adjustments and there is a risk that there are drawbacks to this approach that would become apparent only later. The adjustments would also need to cover aspects such as implications of the rolling-basis submission process on the public review process as well as upstream inputs from the PPRC or indeed Board members, who would wish to provide them. The process would also need to pay particular attention to ensuring transparency.

Option 3: Piloting Option 2 for specific funding windows

40. This option would entail piloting Option 2 (submission on a rolling-basis) only for the project types that currently cannot be considered in an intersessional cycle: the small grants, large innovation projects, and EDA; while leaving the regular project/programme proposals under the status quo of submissions received 9 weeks before the Board meeting and with an intersessional cycle (Option 1). Depending on the reception and success of this option after a trial period, the appropriate process could be adopted uniformly across all the funding windows.

41. Pros: Limiting the pilot to specific windows could help test it and reveal potential unforeseen issues and help manage any potential implications from risks mentioned in option 2 above.

42. Cons: Running two different submission processes could be confusing to the IEs and can create extra strain on the secretariat during the trial period, particularly if the number of current submissions continues to rise, and if the trial period is too long.

Option 4: Submissions on a rolling-basis- with intersessional cycle (not recommended option)

43. Option 4 would be similar to option 2 in that IEs could submit proposals year-round (except during the weeks of “no submission period” defined above) and these would be reviewed on a rolling-basis, until a “cut-off” deadline, whereby all the proposals that have reached the technically recommended stage and first-time submissions that have gone through a minimum of two technical reviews would be prepared for the PPRC’s consideration and subsequently discussed. However, under this option, the intersessional cycle remains, and the resubmissions of regular projects/programmes are presented for consideration intersessionally. Proposals under the innovation, EDA and learning grants windows would not be considered intersessionally (as per current practice).

44. Pros: This option keeps with the current practice of having Board Decisions on projects three times per year.

45. **Cons:** The intersessional period would add an additional “no submission period” where the secretariat needs to focus on producing the documents for the intersessional cycle, which would not leave much additional time for submissions and reviews on a rolling basis and might reduce the benefits of this practice. This option is not recommended.

Option 5: Longer regular cycles -without intersessional cycle (not recommended option)

46. This option would keep with the current submission system, where project/programme proposals are submitted a particular number of weeks before each regular Board meeting. However, to enable the time necessary to review and process the higher number of proposals, to provide more time for the IEs to resubmit a revised proposal and more time for the PPRC members to review proposals ahead of the Board meetings, it is proposed that IEs submit the proposals fifteen (15) weeks in advance of a Board meeting. This also allows granting the IEs up to three (3) weeks to resubmit a revised proposal after a technical review (no extension to submit after three (3) weeks is possible under this option). The PPRC members will also have three (3) weeks to review projects before meetings.

47. Given that the length of the project review cycle is extended from the current nine (9) weeks to fifteen (15) weeks, it is not possible to have an intersessional cycle under this option.

48. **Pros:** This option keeps familiarity with the current review cycle modalities, but only changes the length of the cycle and certain steps.

49. **Cons:** This option does not necessarily resolve the issues related to the strains of the secretariat and potential bottlenecks in case of high number of proposals, given that all proposals would be submitted by the same deadline. This option is not recommended.

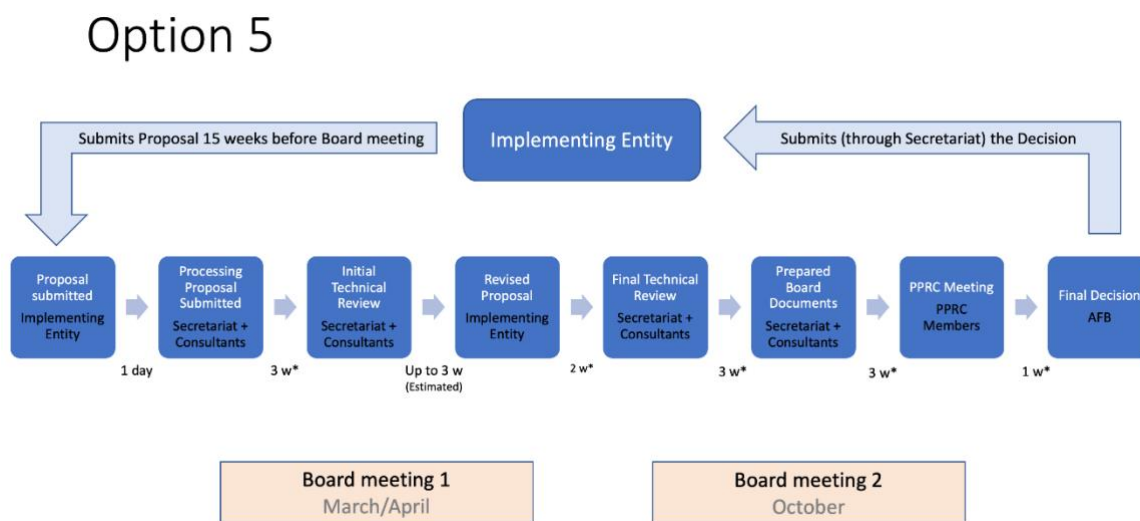


Figure 4. Schematic representation of Option 5.

** Business standards (i.e., no. of weeks indicated above) are provisional and proposed based on secretariat experience. They can be confirmed or adjusted if needed or desired by the PPRC.*

IV. Summary of Consultation with Implementing Entities via Survey

50. The secretariat has also carried out a survey sent to all the IEs accredited with the Fund to seek their views on the project review process and the options described above. The details of the survey and its results are presented in Annex 1.

The survey shows that the large majority of the IEs (80%) would prefer to submit proposals on a rolling-basis (Figure 5 below).

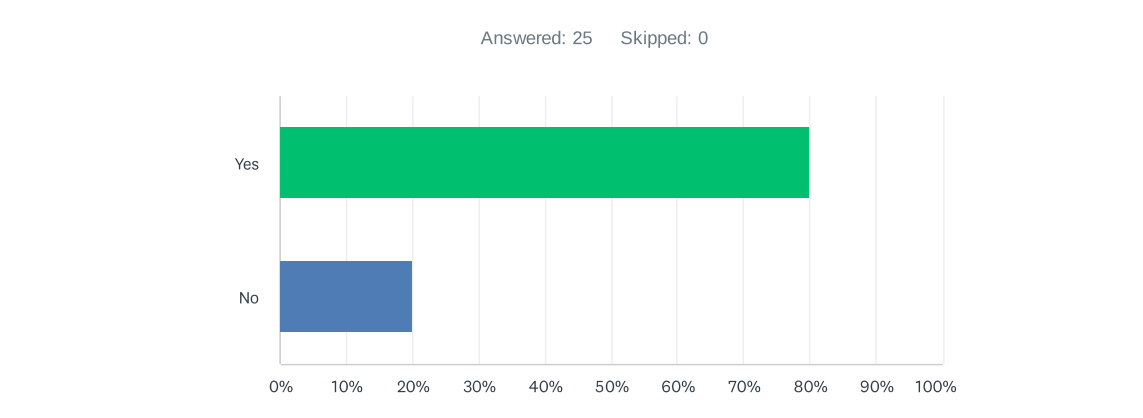


Figure 5. IEs responses to the question “Would you rather have the possibility to submit proposals year-round for technical review?”.

51. The survey results also highlight the need to provide IEs with more time after receiving the initial technical review to enable addressing all the Clarification Requests (CRs) and Corrective Action Requests (CARs) raised in the review. Ninety-two percent (92%) of the respondents supported this approach. As expressed by different respondents, this would result in a higher quality of the revised proposal to be resubmitted. Another benefit to this approach is particularly to IEs that submit more than one proposal per cycle as the current one-week turnaround stretches their personnel capacity. Specifically, National Implementing Entities (NIEs) with a smaller staff see a clear benefit of providing the IEs with longer periods to revise the proposals.

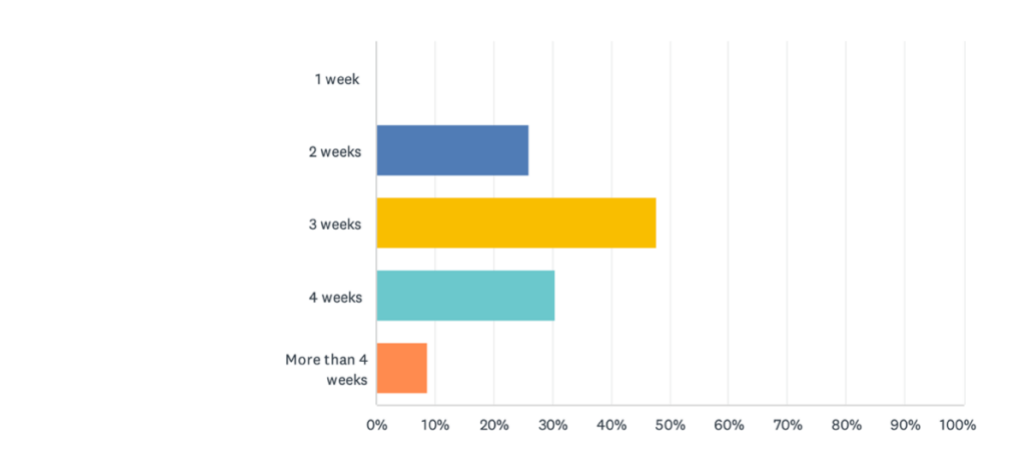


Figure 6. Optimal number of weeks that the IE would need to complete revising a proposal after receiving the initial technical review. (*Please note that some implementing entities provided more than 1 option).

52. The survey shows that 48% of the IEs that responded believe that three weeks is an optimum length to be given to revise the proposal and address all the requested clarifications and corrective action requests from the secretariat, while 26% believe that it should be two weeks (see Figure 6 below). The suggested length of three (3) weeks therefore responds to the needs of 74% of the IEs that responded.

53. The potential changes to the review process arrangement will also align with the online submission platform that would be available to IEs for the Fiscal year 2024. The platform would allow IEs to submit all documents online and provide an overview of the next steps, deadlines, and current status of the proposal. The review shows a preference of the IEs to move towards the online submission system (60% of the respondents).

54. Finally, the survey sought to understand the IEs' perspective on intersessional cycles. Sixty percent (60%) of the respondents were inclined to rescind the intersessional cycle with the benefit of having a year-round submission process. This, together with their above preference to rolling submissions, presents a new set of opportunities to enhance the current review process allowing additional time to submit revised proposals and a higher chance to getting the proposals approved within a shorter time.

55. Based on the results of the survey, it is evident that the IEs' preferences align best with the Option 2 presented above.

V. Recommendations

56. The PPRC may wish, having considered document AFB/PPRC.30/55, to recommend to the Board to:

- (a) [Invite the implementing entities of the Fund to submit, on a rolling basis as described under option 3, proposals for projects or programmes under the innovation, enhanced direct access, learning and scale-up grants funding windows, on a pilot basis; and
- (b) Requests the Secretariat to prepare a report on the pilot phase, with a view to considering changes to the OPG, as appropriate, and taking into consideration the developments related to the new Medium-Term Strategy (2023-2027), as well as any other relevant developments, and present it at the thirty-first meeting of the PPRC];

or

- (a bis) [Alternative 1 (status quo): Maintain the current review cycle as described in the OPG and consider the need to allocate more time to PPRC meetings];

or

(a *tris*) [Alternative 2 (full implementation, skip pilot): Invite the implementing entities of the Fund to submit, on a rolling basis as described under option 2 for project submissions under all funding windows];

ANNEX 1

Detailed of the consultation survey with the Adaptation Fund's accredited Implementing Entities (IEs) on the review process.
August 2022.

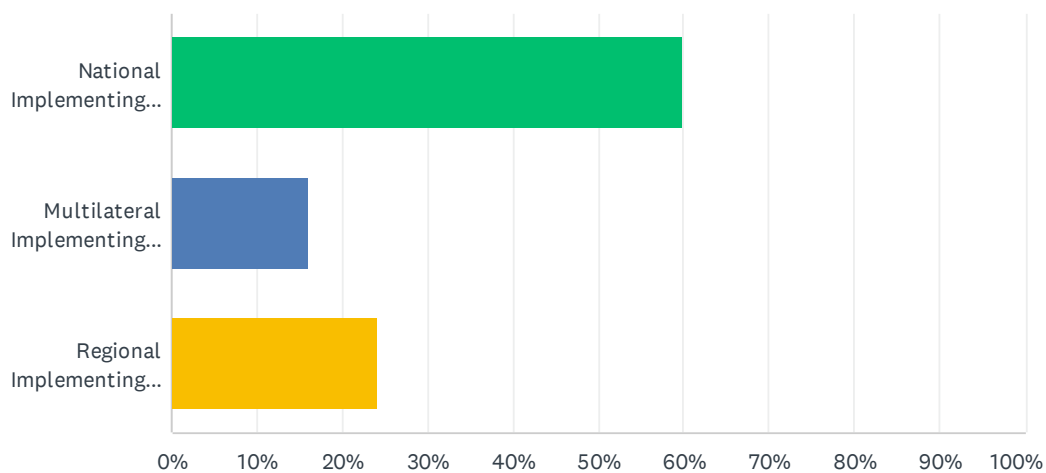
Q1 Background information

Answered: 25 Skipped: 0

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Name	100.00%	25
IE Name	100.00%	25
Email contact	100.00%	25
Country	100.00%	25

Q2 Please select the type of implementing entity that applies

Answered: 25 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
National Implementing Entity (NIE)	60.00%	15
Multilateral Implementing Entity (MIE)	16.00%	4
Regional Implementing Entity (RIE)	24.00%	6
TOTAL		25

Q3. Based on your experience with the Fund, what do you see as the biggest obstacle/challenge during the review cycle? Answered: 25 Skipped: 0

1. Exchanging documents with the potential EEs. Our NIE had to constantly check if the EE had accessed to the right link and downloaded the correct templates to be filled out. Much better to consider an online platform with a final approval/submission by the NIE. This will facilitate the AF updates and there won't be space to submit wrong templates. Even instructions can be available on the same platform under each section.
2. Time and review process may be more than one cycle.
3. Time it takes to be re-accredited is an obstacle.
4. Deadlines for submission. [Les délais de soumission.]
5. During the review cycle, the time given to entities to provide key informations or revert back on panel questioning is quite limited and can even hinder quality of informations provided.
6. Timeliness in responding appropriately to questions from the Secretariat.
7. The reviewers change and new comments are made on a design that has already been reviewed.
8. Data gathering from countries/partners that don't have the means to collect/obtain them.
9. The March Board submissions are in early Jan, this means that IEs are rushing over the Xmas break to submit projects to governments and have them appropriately validated, which is very difficult considering government DA's and their teams have other obligations and holidays over the break. If the deadlines were pushed to end of January (and board moved by 2 weeks or so) the quality at entry would be higher which would make the review process easier.
10. One week to respond to AF Secretariat comments is too short, especially when we submit more than one concept note/proposal.
11. Formulating regional projects with endorsements of national focal points remain challenging due to lack of understanding of regional fund window mechanism and geo-political reality in the region, such as Hindu Kush Himalaya.
12. No obstacle during the revision of two concept notes of FNEC.
13. The 1 week response time is really not enough for NIE's, especially the smaller ones with fewer staff, to turn around coherent responses especially when we often rely on others (in government, communities, plenty of stakeholders) to give us info to provide for our proposal.
14. Submitting proposals exclusively in English is detrimental to French-speaking countries. (2) The concept of indigenous populations does not apply systematically to all countries.

15. The change of team at each Concept Note review and not having a focal point with whom to follow up the communication. [El cambio de equipo en cada revision de NC y no tener a un referente con quien seguir la comunicacion.]
16. The lack of experience and knowledge within the reviewers of the SIDS, their issues; politics, governance and important cultural systems; geographical aspects etc. These are all important into how a project is shaped and why it has been developed in the way it has. The lack of knowledge leads to review comments which therefore require additional evidence or explanations which can take time - difficult to achieve within the short turnaround times.
17. Not understanding the comments received from the secretariat.
18. No experience yet.
19. Limited time granted for the resubmission of the comments raised by the AF Board, sometimes accompanied with the Letter of Endorsement from the NDAs.
20. If comments from the AF on proposals require engagement at the community level, this can be problematic as it takes time to coordinate and facilitate this interaction.
21. The main challenge encountered during the review period was the short time given to the implementing entity to answer the evaluators' questions (1 week), which in most cases required consultations with the project's stakeholders, who are sometimes numerous, especially in the case of regional projects.
22. Review response period: The short period of time responding to PPRC comments is challenging. The AF gives seven days (including weekends), for IEs to address comments. A longer period would allow for more in-depth consultations between IEs and EEs and thus improve quality. Additionally, it would be very helpful for internal coordination and planning to know when the comments from the review will be received. Reviewer consistency: We understand that it is very difficult to achieve complete consistency between reviewers as ultimately reviews depend on human judgment, but the difference between reviews is vast. There is a difference in tone (most comments are very constructive and the willingness of reviewers to improve the project shines through, but there are also other experiences) and a difference in approach/judgement (some reviewers accept that over a four year project period uncertainties are inevitable and some flexibility is acceptable if a due process is in place, others do not). This discrepancy issue could partially be addressed by clearer, more precise, and transparent standards against which reviewers assess projects and clearer and more explicit comments and recommendations from reviewers that explain why a comment has been raised. In some cases, for example, certain activities have been classified as 'unidentified sub-project' (and therefore ineligible for funding by the AF), but the reviewer has been unable to explain what steps are necessary to make the activity 'identified'. While we always try to be as explicit as possible, there will always be uncertainties in project design, and some level of uncertainty needs to be tolerated. Flexibility during design and implementation: The lengthy project conceptualization, development, and inception process inevitably means that conditions on the ground can change between conceptualization and implementation. It is common for projects to take 4 years to undergo this process. Over such a period needs on the ground can change (especially in rapidly growing urban areas) and flexibility is required. However, the AF allows very little flexibility to IEs to implement adaptive management in response to changes on the ground. Instead, if changes are necessary, IEs need to submit project revisions that have to go through Secretariat and AF Board review (with no guarantee

of acceptance). Some greater leeway for IEs to implement adaptive management in response to changing circumstances on the ground would be helpful.

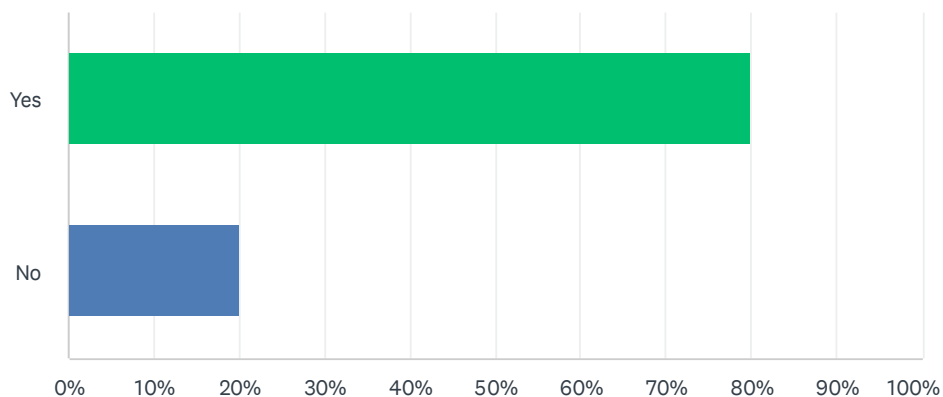
23. Meeting ESG requirements.

24. Although EPIU hasn't faced any difficulties during its project submissions, less sophisticated process will serve as a solid basis for more efficient review cycle. If the time limit for several procedures is removed, the process will become more facilitated and interactive.

25. The submission deadlines could be communicated well in advance. Though, the Fund sets the submission deadline around 9 weeks prior to the Board Meeting, the exact date of the deadline is communicated a few weeks in advance, usually less than a month. At least 2 months (or up to 3 months) would be helpful, to coordinate internally, and communicate an exact timeline to the project teams. Further, we did not receive a notification for early review of the ELs (starting from June) for the most recent review round.

Q4 Currently, IEs can submit proposals during a one-week window, 3 times a year, including for an intersessional review. Would you rather have the possibility to submit proposals year-round for technical review? (You would still receive the technical review within a few weeks from the date of your submission.)

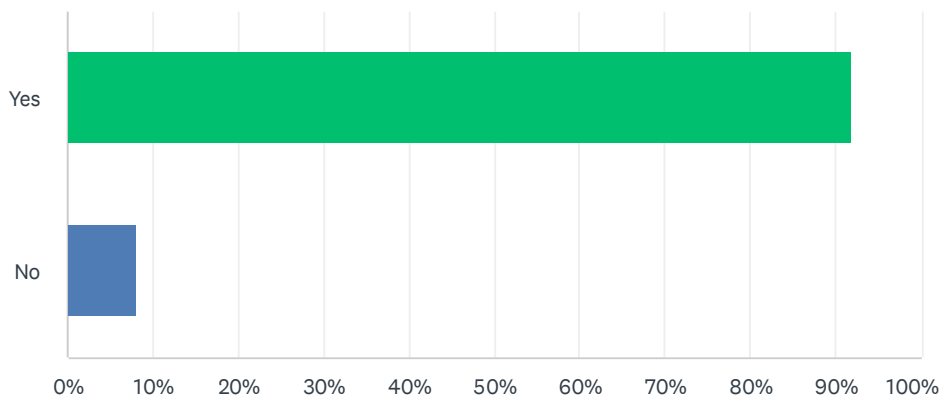
Answered: 25 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Yes	80.00% 20
No	20.00% 5
Total Respondents: 25	

Q5 Currently, within a review cycle, IEs get one week to revise the project proposal after the initial technical review. Would you like to have the option to have more time for revision of the proposal after receiving a technical review?

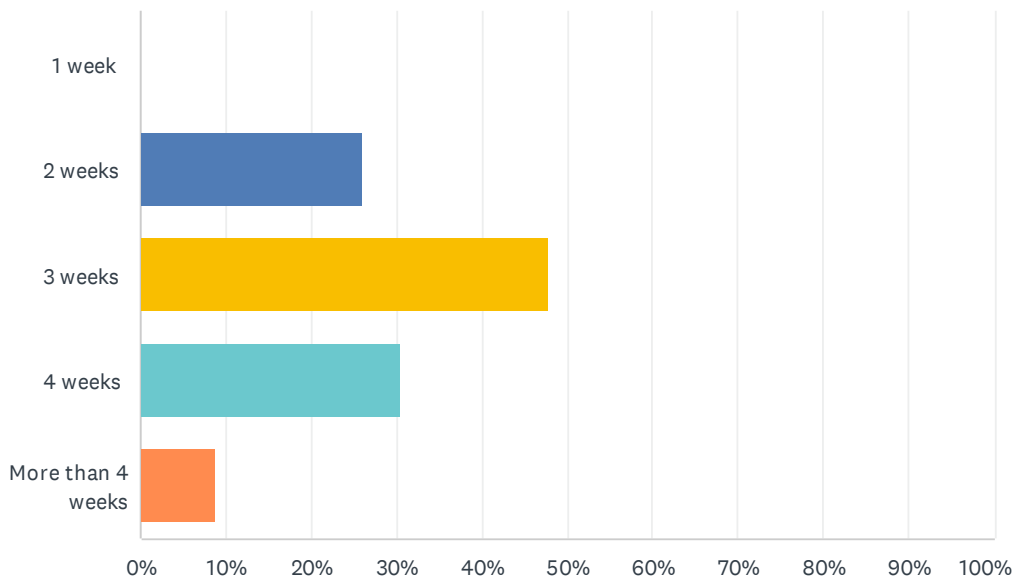
Answered: 25 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	92.00%	23
No	8.00%	2
Total Respondents: 25		

Q6 If yes, what would be the optimal number of weeks that the IE would need to complete a revision?

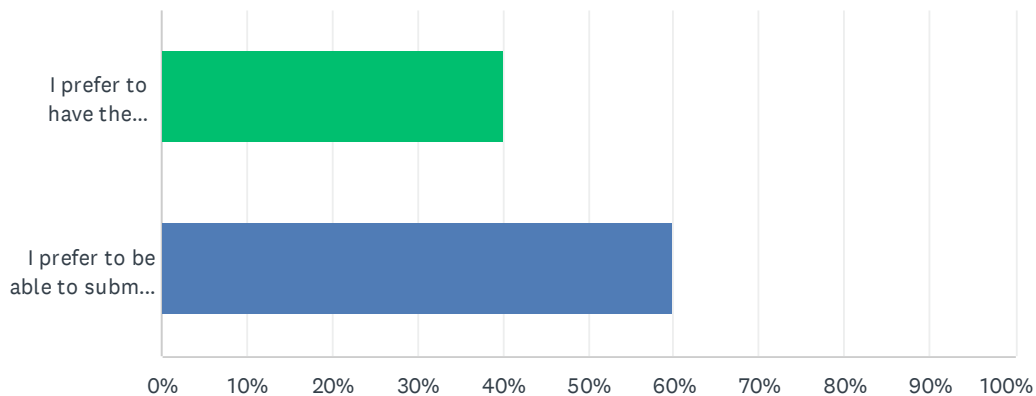
Answered: 23 Skipped: 2



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
1 week	0.00%	0
2 weeks	26.09%	6
3 weeks	47.83%	11
4 weeks	30.43%	7
More than 4 weeks	8.70%	2
Total Respondents: 23		

Q7 Currently, IEs can receive Board decisions on their submissions up to 3 times a year, including at the end of an intersessional review cycle. The possibility to submit, review, revise, and resubmit proposals year-round AND having an intersessional cycle may present some challenges. Would you rather have the possibility to get intersessional approval by the Board or the possibility of submission/review/revision and resubmission year-round?

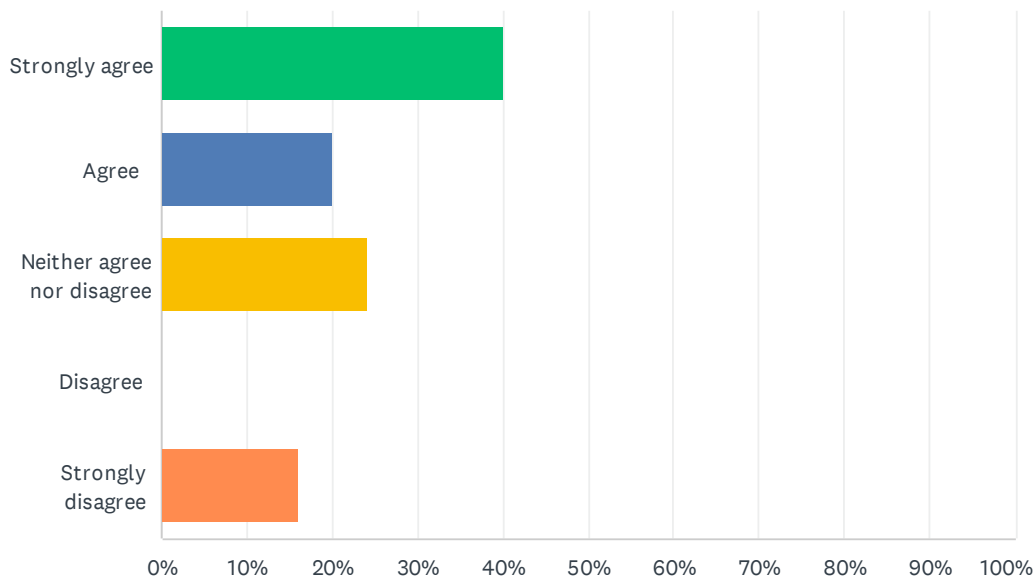
Answered: 25 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
I prefer to have the possibility to get approval by the Board three times a year, I am fine with the project cycle as is.	40.00%	10
I prefer to be able to submit proposals year-round and have more than one week to revise the resubmission, even if it means that it would be possible to get a decision from the Board only two, not three times a year.	60.00%	15
TOTAL		25

Q8 In the context of improving the efficiency of the review cycle, do you think moving to an online submission system would facilitate the process?

Answered: 25 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Strongly agree	40.00%	10
Agree	20.00%	5
Neither agree nor disagree	24.00%	6
Disagree	0.00%	0
Strongly disagree	16.00%	4
TOTAL		25

Q9. Do you have any additional comments or suggestions to improve the proposal submission and review process? Answered: 20 Skipped: 5

1. Our NIE submitted LOEs signed electronically by the NDA and after a week, the Fund got back warning us that they only received documents with wet signatures and gave us less than 48 hours to resubmit the documents with the correct type of signature. Our country is almost done implementing an E-Government Policy and no longer documents will be available to be signed in wet signature. Additionally, the Grant Agreement is signed by the parties on DocuSign platform, so we did not understand why an LOE had to be wet- signed to be fully processed.
2. A submitted projected should not be rejected before getting the explanation/comments of the IEs.
3. Should be an agenda item at the annual NIE meetings.
4. Receive information emails relating to the opening of a submission cycle in the same way as readiness.
5. Moving the submission system online would definately facilitate the process but only if the submission process is simple enough and not as complex as that of other entities.
6. No.
7. N/A.
8. It would be more convenient to take into consideration the needs of the partners/countries that lack data gathering capacity for climate rational project justification.
9. GCF online system is a lot less efficient for the I/AE than the AF review process. Of the three climate Funds (AF, GCF and GEF) AF review cycle is the most efficient and streamlined. The CAR vs CR system is efficient and much appreciated by the IE's. Also the fact that review is transparent and no additional ad-hoc comments come through by email outside of the system is hugely appreciated from the IE side.
10. Facilitation role of Adaptation Fund on receiving endorsement letter from DAs would be appreciated.
11. Even if we have 3 weeks to resubmit, if there is no specific study or investigation to be done to complete the responses to the comments, we can do it in one week.
12. Nothing to note.
13. A person from the technical team who is a focal point to follow-up, but with their respective name and surname. [Una persona del equipo tecnico que sea referente para seguimiento pero con nombre y apellido.]
14. In reference to Q7 - my preference would be to submit all year round for the technical review, however, approval decisions still to be linked to the Board three times a year. The ability to submit all year round for technical review would relieve the pressure we have from countries who want projects developed in short time spans to meet the Board dates. The ability to submit all-year round for review would be well met by countries.

15. No.
16. No comment.
17. Submission of proposals three times a year will increase effectiveness in project funding, provided the Board increase on the time taken to resubmit the responses to comments raised.
18. Not at this time.
19. The guidance and review received from the Project Review Committee differ from the regulations and policies set in place. If the goalpost for approval moves, the policies and regulations need to be updated. The standard for the review should be based on approved policies, regulations, and decisions by the board, not the other way around nor established by reviewers. For example: - The AF Results-framework includes "Risk and vulnerability assessments conducted and updated" under Output 1.1, but it is expected that such vulnerability assessments are conducted during full proposal development. Suggestions to include vulnerability and risk assessments into the project results framework have been rejected. - The AF Results-framework allows "Number of beneficiaries (direct and indirect)" as indicator for increased adaptive capacity of communities to respond to the impacts of climate change, but the Project Review Committee asks MIEs to measure against the indicator of "increased income, or avoided decrease in income" to verify increased livelihood opportunities have been achieved.
20. Year round submission of proposals for technical review and three times of board's approval would be ideal.