

EVALUATION RESOURCE

USAID EVALUATIONS: STATEMENT OF DIFFERENCES QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Each USAID evaluation report should include any statement of differences as an annex regarding any significant unresolved differences of opinion on the part of funders, implementers and/or members of the evaluation team.

Who may write a statement of differences?

At minimum, the following may write a statement of differences and have it included as an annex to the evaluation report.

1. Members of the Evaluation Team.
2. Funders of the Evaluation (including the USAID Operating Unit funding the evaluation and/or other organizations funding the evaluation).
3. Funders of the project or activity being evaluated (including the USAID Operating Unit funding the project or activity and/or other organizations funding the project or activity).
4. The organization implementing the project or activity that is being evaluated.

The evaluation COR/Manager or the operating unit leadership may determine if other stakeholders are relevant and should have the opportunity to write a statement of differences

When should the opportunity to prepare a statement of differences be provided?

In order to ensure that these organizations and individuals have an opportunity to review the report and prepare a statement of differences, it is appropriate to provide them with a final draft of the evaluation report. There is no set amount of time, during which a statement of differences must be received, but providing one or two weeks following the receipt of the report is a reasonable time frame.¹ Evaluation CORs/Managers should ensure that adequate time has been budgeted to allow for appropriate stakeholders to prepare a statement of differences and for the evaluation team to prepare a response, if needed.

What should USAID missions tell the relevant stakeholders about writing a statement of differences?

There are a few points evaluation managers may note to those potentially writing a statement of differences to help keep the process manageable:

- The draft report that is the basis for a statement of differences is subject to change at the discretion of the authors. Those organizations who have received a draft report should not share or distribute the draft outside their organization.
- Writing a statement of differences is optional and no individual or organization is required to provide one.
- The statement of differences should be made in writing, signed, and submitted electronically.
- The statement of differences is a one-time only opportunity. Statements from a single funder or implementer should be a single, corporate response. Letters from individuals, other than evaluation team members, or additional statements at a later stage in the evaluation process will not be accepted.

¹ For comparison, GAO generally gives an agency from 7 to 30 calendar days to comment on a draft report.

EVALUATION RESOURCE

- The statement of differences should focus on errors of fact and differences regarding the findings, conclusions, and recommendations stated in the evaluation report. The basis for any differences with the evaluation report should be described.
- The statement of differences will be included as an annex to the report.
- The statement of differences should be limited in length. A 10 page limit should be sufficient in most cases.

Should the evaluation team respond to the statement(s) of differences?

Evaluation teams are not *required* to respond to any statement of difference that have been received. However, the evaluation team should be given the opportunity to revise the evaluation report and/or respond to the statement(s) of differences in the evaluation report, if they so choose. Ideally, the evaluation workplan will include time to review and respond to any statement of differences submitted to the evaluation team. After the evaluator responds to the statement(s) of differences, the statement of differences process stops. Only the original Statement of Differences and the response from the evaluator should be included in the evaluation report annexes.

If factual errors have been noted in a statement of differences and the facts are acknowledged as true, it is reasonable to ask the evaluator team to correct them in the main body of the report before submitting the final version. In these cases, the evaluator's response to the statement(s) of differences should then note that steps were taken to correct the factual errors. However, if the factual errors are disputed by the evaluator or there is a difference of interpretation about facts, findings, conclusions, or recommendations, the evaluator should be given the liberty to decide if they consider it appropriate to change the report or not.

EVALUATION RESOURCE

Sample Letter

USAID Mission

Date

Dear [.....],

We are pleased to provide you with a final draft of the Evaluation report titled [.....]. As a [funder of the project being evaluated/funder of the evaluation/implementer of the project being evaluated], we are providing this review copy of the evaluation prior to its completion and dissemination. Please do not share or distribute this draft outside your organization.

If, upon reviewing this evaluation report, you find errors of fact or you have differences of opinion regarding findings, conclusions, and recommendations, you may write a *Statement of Differences* that will be appended to the final report.

In completing a Statement of Differences, please be aware of the following.

- This draft report is not completely final and is therefore subject to change at the discretion of the authors.
- Writing a statement of differences is optional and no individual or organization is required to provide one.
- The statement of differences should be made in writing, signed, and submitted to USAID electronically.
- The statement of differences is a one-time only opportunity. Statements provided after the deadline listed below or additional statements will not be accepted.
- Statements of differences should be a single, corporate response. Letters from individuals will not be accepted.
- The statement of differences should focus on errors of fact and differences regarding the findings, conclusions, and recommendations stated in the evaluation report. The basis for any differences with the evaluation report should be described.
- The statement of differences should be no more than 10 pages in length.

Statements of differences will be accepted until [Date]. Any statements provided after that date will not be accepted.