

The *Reflect* Process: Adaptive Initiative Management

Guidance document

Abbreviations and Acronyms

AA – Action Area (CGIAR has three Action Areas see below)

CRP – CGIAR Research Programs

GI - Genetic Innovations, one of the three OneCGIAR Action Areas

PCU – Project Coordination Unit

PPU – Portfolio Performance Unit

PoRB - Plan of Results and Budget

RAFS - Resilient Agricultural Food Systems, one of the three OneCGIAR Action Areas

MD – Managing Director

SLT – Senior Leadership Team

ST - Systems Transformation, one of the three OneCGIAR Action Areas

TOC – Theory of Change

Context: The Report -> Reflect -> Re-Plan Process

This guidance document covers the *reflect* process, which forms one part of a broader *plan -> report -> reflect -> re-plan* process which has been adopted by the System Council as part of the [Technical Reporting Arrangements for CGIAR Initiatives](#). This page sketches out that broader process, for context. Separate guidance on the other components of the *plan -> report -> reflect -> re-plan* process is available on the '[planning](#)' page of the [Performance and Results hub](#).

In previous years, CGIAR Research Program (CRP) leaders found it difficult to adjust financial and staff plans in the year ahead in light of experience gained from the previous year. This was because processes for reporting and planning were out of sync, with financial planning for the year ahead happening months before results reporting was completed for the previous year. In addition, the processes for adjusting budgets in light of lessons learned were convoluted.

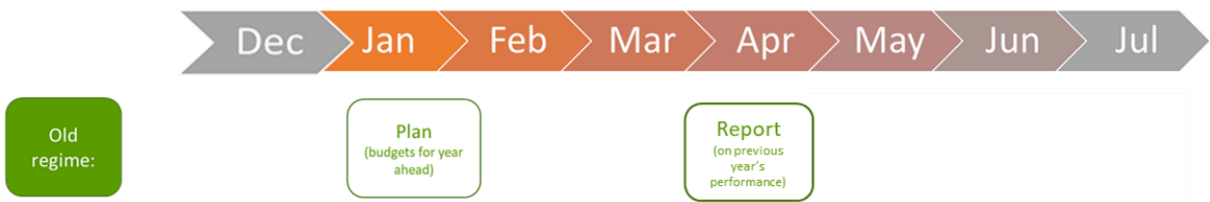


Fig 1: Planning and reporting timeline for the CGIAR Research Programs

The new Reporting Arrangements for One CGIAR Initiatives gives the opportunity to change this. The new sequence, set out in figure 2, will see Initiatives submit data on the previous year's results between September and late January. These will be quality assured by mid-**February**. There is then a **space for reflection** in February and through **March**, which can then inform an **update** to the Initiative's Plan of Results and Budget for the year , which will be updated between **April - June**. We are referring to this new sequence as an integrated *report -> reflect -> re-plan* process.

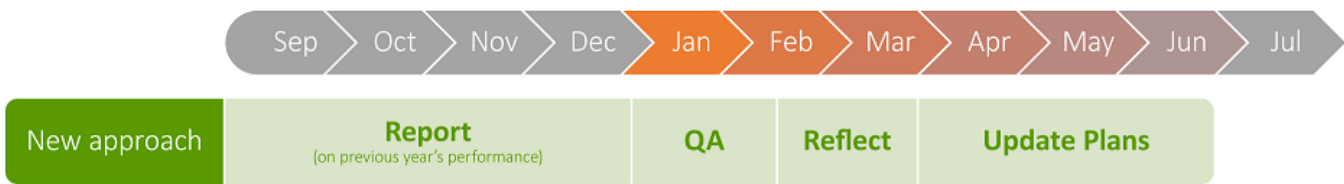


Fig 2: Reporting and Planning timeline for the CGIAR Initiatives

This guidance document sets out what is required from Initiatives and impact platforms on the *reflect* part of this process. It also describes the intended benefits of the *reflect* process – for Initiative leads, for Impact Platform Directors, for Managing Directors and their teams, and for partners and funders.

Summary: the Report -> Reflect -> Update Plan sequence is intended to:

- Give structured space for Initiative adaptive management and learning, to reflect on performance in the previous year, changes in context and outlook, and for these reflections to inform the Initiative's plans for the year ahead.
- Reduce burden on Initiatives by integrating reporting, program management and planning processes.
- Assure funders and partners that a strategic reflection, risk evaluation and adaptive management takes places annually.

The Intended Purposes of the *Reflect* Process

The **primary purpose** of the *reflect* process is to allow Initiatives a **formal mechanism by which they can adapt their plans in light of lessons learned**, so they might better contribute to impact:

- giving **Initiative leads** a process to recommend the reprioritization of work plans, activities and budgets within and between their Work Packages for the year ahead, which can then be incorporated into an update of their **Plan of Results and Budgets and People Re-plan**, in light of lessons learned in the year gone. (Adapt)
- giving **Initiative leads** a process to inform **risk management plans** for the year ahead, in light of lessons learned in the year gone. (Adapt)
- giving **Initiative leads and Managing Directors** the opportunity to discuss and document other recommended changes.

A **secondary purpose** of the *reflect* process is to provide **funders, partners and stakeholders** with evidence that Initiatives are learning during delivery, and using that learning to update plans:

- Initiative leaders may wish to involve key stakeholders in their *reflect* process. *[Note, whilst external participation in the process will be very valuable, Initiatives and MDs will need to carefully manage this to ensure it is proportionate, and so avoid overload].*
- The resulting one-page documentation of the recommendations, and supporting rationale, generated during the *reflect* process will be published as part of the Initiative's Annual Report.
- Official reporting on Initiatives risks will be required through a mandatory annual review. The initiatives should review and submit their Top 5 risks annually including adjustment to descriptions, likelihood and impact, actions to manage risk, and risk owners. Initiatives are encouraged to identify and **manage** risks as part of good project management daily activities, even if when official reporting on risks is not taking place and update their risk register.
- following guidance provided in the document: '[Risk management and reporting: Guidance for Initiative Teams](#)'.

An **additional purpose** of the *reflect* process is to provide **MDs** with a process to steer, review, and approve Initiative teams' key recommendations for change, which can help contribute to portfolio coherence:

- MDs may, before the process kicks off, choose to provide an initial steer to their Initiative teams to consider particular issues as part of their reflect process;
- MDs will review the write up of the recommendations and supporting rationale which Initiative teams generate, and may request revisions to these before granting approval for their inclusion in the Initiative's Type 1 Technical Report.

In addition, the *reflect* process offers some opportunity for other interested stakeholders and partners to actively engage with Initiative teams as they consider lessons and recommendations.

Summary:

- the *reflect* process is primarily intended to give Initiative leaders a clear, light touch process and mandate to recommend reallocation of resources between and within work packages for the year ahead, based on lessons learned, to maximize their contribution to impact.
- The *reflect* process also offers a number of other benefits to Initiative teams and other key stakeholders.

The Reflect Process in a Nutshell

Whilst reflective learning to inform planning can be done in many different ways, the process which is required of Initiatives is very simple. The required process is set out in fig. 3 below.

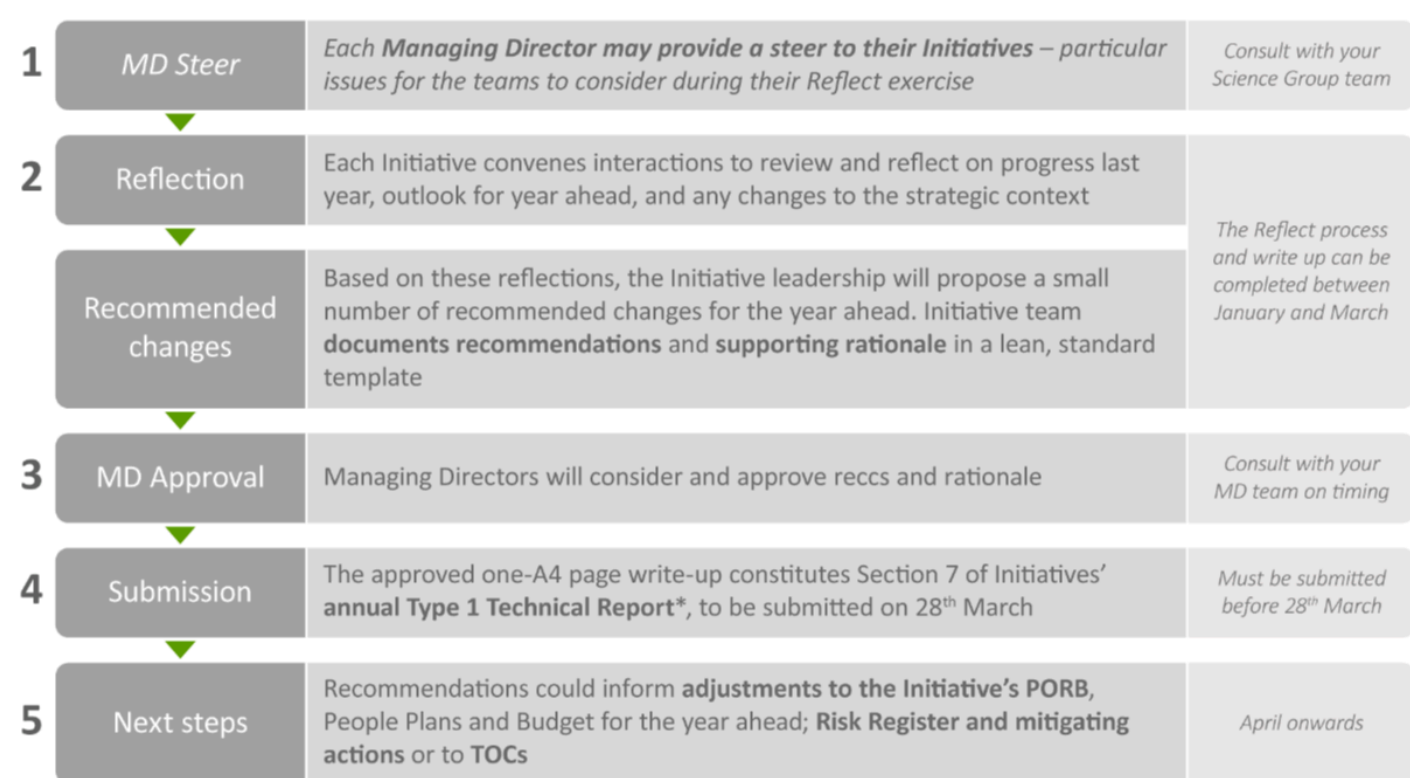


Fig 3: the steps which Initiatives are required to complete. *The Type 1 Technical Report template can be found [here](#).

Some parts of this process offer Initiatives a lot of flexibility in how they approach the task and allow Initiatives to be proportionate in how much time and resources they choose to invest in it. For instance:

- **Science Group Managing Director steers:** MDs may choose, before the *reflect* exercise begins, to provide a steer to an Initiative team – requesting that the team considers and feeds back on particular issues as part of the *reflect* process. This is at the discretion of MDs.
- **Reflection methods:** Initiative teams could choose to convene large participative workshops with internal and/or external partners, or run small, issue-specific meetings, or choose other approaches to reflect.
- **Timing:** Some Initiatives may already have continuous learning processes in place. Others may choose to undertake reflective learning activities at certain times of the year.

Other parts of this process have only limited flexibility. For instance:

- **Write-up for inclusion in annual reporting:** The write-up of the reflect process will be **no more than one A4 page**. This will set out the recommendations which have resulted from the reflect process, and supporting rationale. This is described in Section 7 of the [Initiative Type 1 Reporting Template](#). [Note: Initiatives are of course free to publish longer knowledge products based on their Reflect exercise, outside of the reporting process].
- **Approval:** The one A4 page write-up, containing the Initiative's recommendations and supporting rationale, must be reviewed and approved by the Initiative's Managing Director in advance of the overall Initiative-level annual report clearance and submission process. Initiatives should work with their **Science Group** teams to clarify the process and dates for review, potential iteration, and approval by their MD or delegate.
- **Submission:** Once approved by the Initiative's MD, the one-page write up must be included in the Initiative's Annual Technical Report. The Initiative's Type 1 Technical Report must be submitted to the Portfolio Performance Unit no later than 28th March, as set out in the Initiative Type 1 Reporting Guidance.

- **Next steps:** The next steps will depend on the recommendations which the Initiative identifies as part of their reflect process. These could include adjustments to the Initiative's Plan of Results and Budget (PoRB), Replan Budget , , Replan People plan, Risk Register, Theories of Change (TOC) or other actions. These are discussed in more detail in the sections below.

More Detail on Process Timing

Initiative teams can and no doubt will choose to undertake reflective learning at different times and in different ways, to best suit their particular circumstances and needs.

However, all Initiatives will need to submit their write-up of their reflect process and recommendations to MDs, to get MD approval before end-March 2024. The exact process and timing for MD review will be set by each MD.¹

The approved write-up will then be submitted to the Portfolio Performance Unit (PPU) on 28th March as part of each Initiative's Type 1 Annual Report. (for more details on Initiatives' annual performance and results reporting, see the [Type 1 Technical Reporting template](#), and the '[Reporting](#)' page of the Performance and Results knowledge hub).

Following submission, the Initiative can move to implement *reflect* recommendations in a number of ways, including:

- Between April - June 2024, Initiatives can adjust, if necessary, their 2024 Plans of Results and Budgets and their People Plan in Q2.
- Between April - June 2024, Initiative teams may make adjustments to TOC outputs, and update risk registers and associated actions, in response to the Reflect process.

Minor changes – for instance to TOC outputs, or to budgets and people plans which do not significantly affect Center budget allocations – can be completed by Initiative leads. More major changes to TOCs – for instance changes to targeted End-of-Initiative Outcomes, or which lead to changes in budget allocations between two or more Centers – can also be made, but will require additional approval processes as part of the April PORB forecast update process. This is described in more detail in the section below entitled 'Re-Plan: Protocol for changing TOC, Budget and Staff Allocations'.

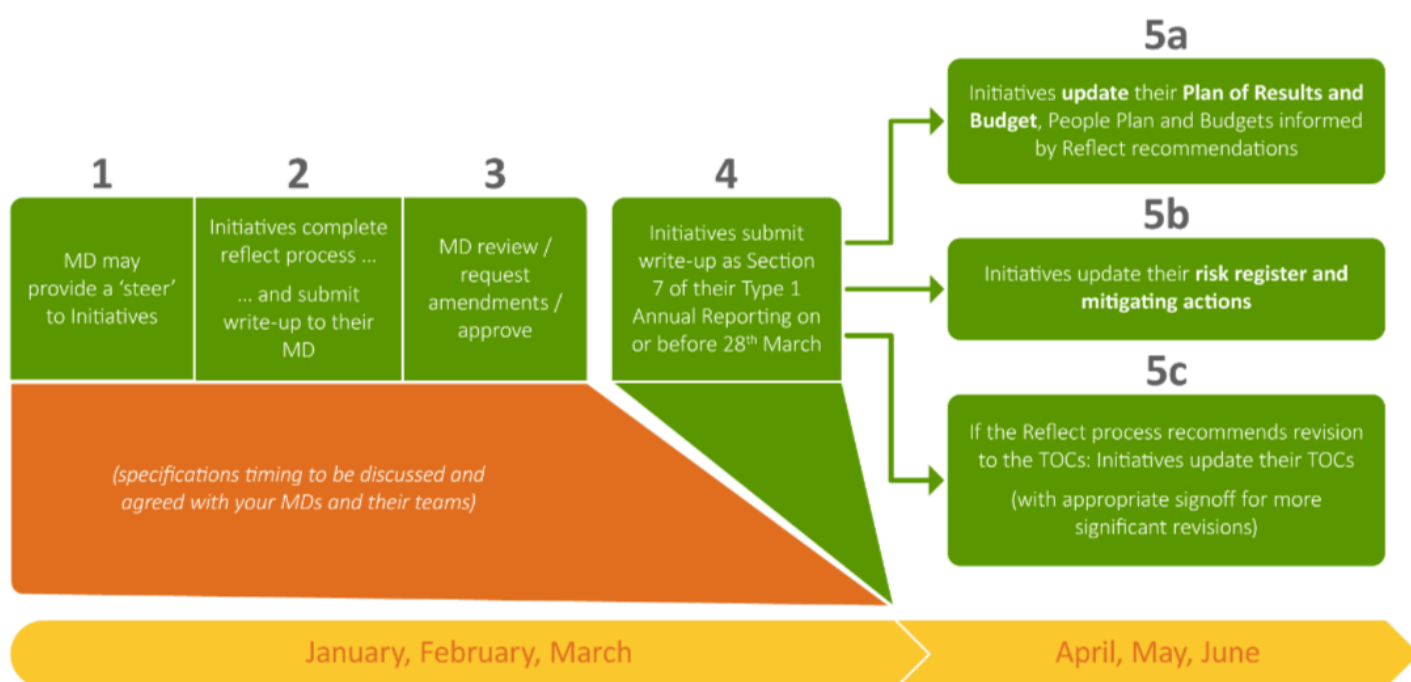


Fig 4: Process timing

¹ For example, your MD and their team may wish to bundle the review and approval of your Initiative's *reflect* recommendations and supporting rationale with its review and approval of your Initiative's broader Type 1 Annual Report. Or your MD and team may wish to engage more iteratively with you on your *reflect* process. Please discuss and agree timings for MD review and approval with your MD team.

Reflect processes over the Investment Cycle Period

Figure 5, below, sets out the three-year investment cycle. This guidance note covers the second *reflect* process, which will happen in Q1 2024. This Reflect process will inform not only the Initiative delivery in 2024, but also the process to develop a set of Proposals for the continuation of existing Initiatives, and additional new Initiatives, to cover the next investment cycle period 2025-27.

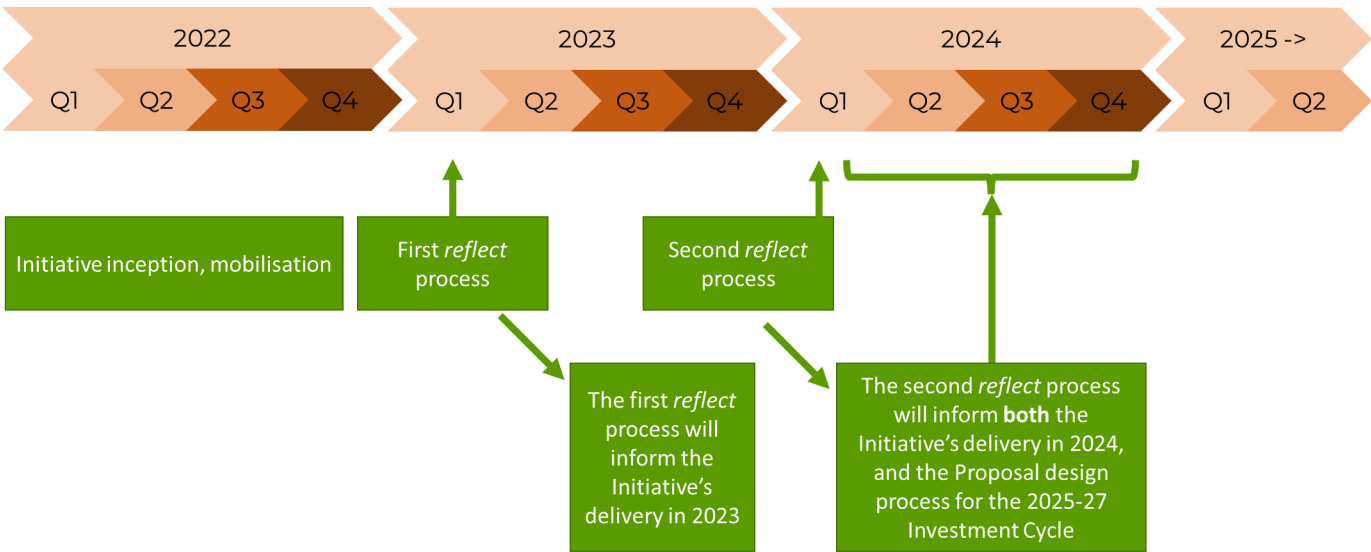
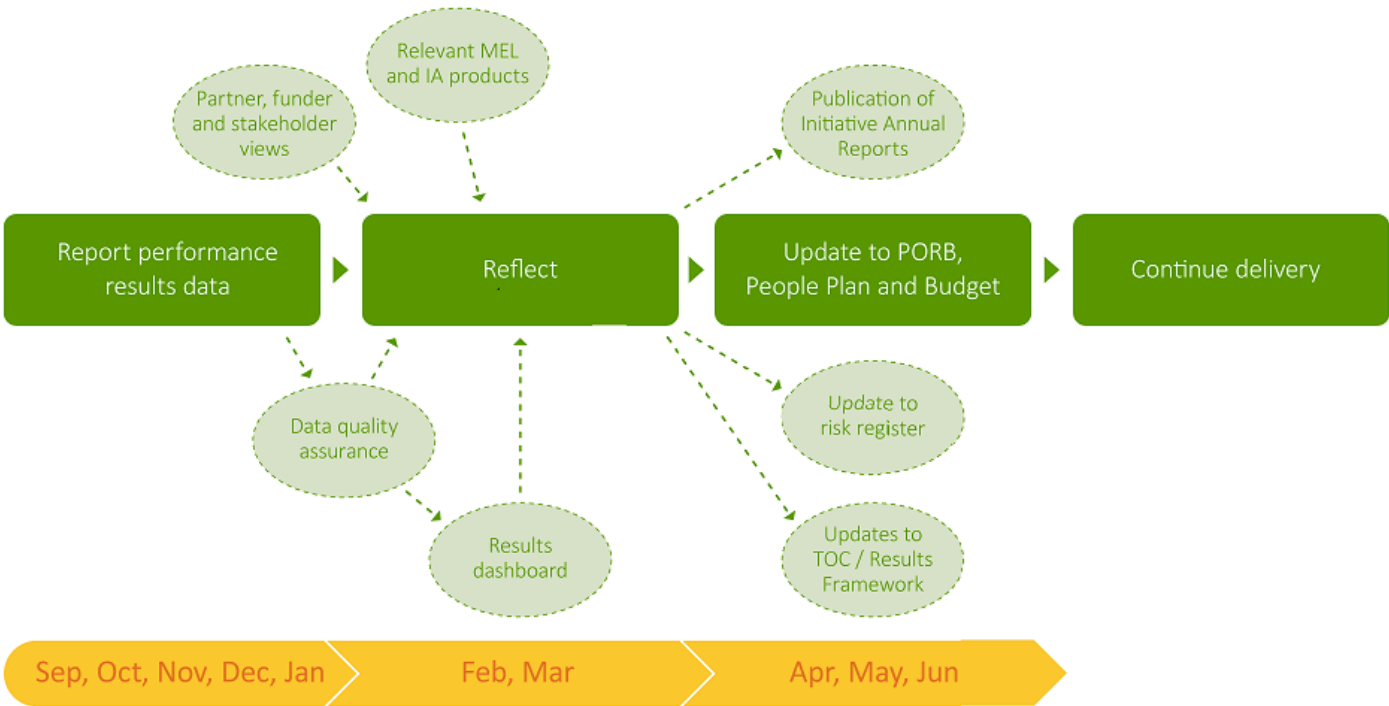


Figure 5: *reflect* processes over the Investment Cycle period

Connections with other processes

Figure 6, below, shows other CGIAR processes and stakeholders relevant to the *reflect* process. Please note that this is not an exhaustive list but is intended to help the reader place the *reflect* process in context.

Figure 6: Connections with other processes



Support and Additional Guidance

The Portfolio Performance Unit will provide additional support and guidance to Initiatives as they prepare for and work through their *reflect* process:

- Please reach out to Iddo Dror (i.dror@cgiar.org) for questions of clarification and to discuss your Initiative's plans and needs.
- A peer-to-peer discussion space on Teams was used last year to support Initiative team members preparing for their *reflect* exercise to share thoughts and plans, and will be available again this year.
- A 'refresher' on the *reflect* process will be held in January 2024, and the recording will be hosted on [performance and results hub](#).

Annex A: Template for Reflect Write-up, and Section 7 of Initiatives’ Annual Reporting Arrangements

The template for the *reflect* write-up is contained within the Type 1 Reporting Template available [here](#). Refer to Section 7. The template is reproduced below for readers convenience.

Note: Initiatives wishing to generate and publish longer knowledge products based on their Reflect exercise, outside of the reporting process, are of course free to do so.

Recommendation	Supporting Rationale

Guidance to fill out this template section (to be deleted and not included in the one A4 page count):

- The relative share of space for detailing recommendations vs detailing supporting rationale can be adjusted at the discretion of Initiative teams.
- The recommendations and supporting rationale should be clearly written in plain English, and to publishable standard. The intended audience is System Council funders, external partners and stakeholders. The page should be clear and make logical sense without the need to refer to embedded links.
- Initiatives and Science Global Directors may wish to include hyperlinks to supporting evidence, Monitoring, Evaluation, Learning or Impact Assessment products, or relevant documentation of participatory consultations. If they do so they must ensure the linked documents are publicly available without need to grant access to viewers.
- One row per recommendation. Add rows if you choose to profile more than three recommendations.