PUM.

# Questions and answers

*(grouped and anonymized)*

# Request for proposals mid-term evaluation PUM programme

**4 June 2025**

## A. Proposal requirements

1. Are there any specific requirements for the technical and financial proposals (e.g., page limits, fonts, allowable annexes, separate submissions, PDFs, specific file names, max file size)?
2. Is there an expectation around the number of pages of the proposal?
3. Is there a page limit for the technical proposal, or any guidance on preferred length?
4. Is there a page limit for the technical proposal?

**Answer Q. 1 – Q. 4: We expect a maximum number of 10 pages for proposal and budget (excluding CVs, sample work, and references), in PDF format.**

5. The references, should these be descriptions (with contact details) or should these also be signed by the clients?

**Answer Q. 5: Descriptions of references with contact details are sufficient.**

## B. Scope of the evaluation

1. Is there an expectation to include Dutch companies involved in PUM projects when assessing alignment with the new MoFA policy?
**Answer Q.1: PUM is currently actively exploring opportunities to accelerate the partnering with NL companies. Since this is still in an early phase, the evaluation team is not expected to include an assessment of PUM's current collaboration with Dutch companies, only to assess future opportunities.**

2. As the Theory of Change and M&E framework will be updated by summer 2025, should the midterm evaluation be based on the original version or the updated one?
3. Will the evaluation team be expected to facilitate or contribute to the revision of the Theory of Change and M&E framework, or is the focus solely on assessing against the relevant TOC?
4. Can PUM please confirm that the theory-based evaluation approach you reference is to investigate the programme's progress to date against the current theory of change provided in Annex II?
5. The RfP mentions that the Results framework will be updated in summer 2025 - will this be completed before the consultant starts? If not, will the consultant be needed for inputting on this?
**Answer Q.2 – Q.5: The midterm evaluation should take the updated Theory of Change and results framework into account, which will be made available when the inception period starts. At the same time, there is room to suggest adaptations in the Theory of Change and results framework.**

6. The RFP provides the total number of paid staff, voluntary staff, representatives, countries, and experts. Can PUM provide the total number of SMEs currently supported?
**Answer Q. 6: PUM directly supported 799 SMEs in 2024 and 810 SMEs in 2023. PUM also supports business support organisations (BSOs) directly, see Q.8.**

7. Can PUM also clarify who the 160 representatives (noted in the introduction) are and their role?
   **Answer Q. 7: Representatives are based in the countries and are responsible for the acquisition and assessment of clients, partnering with stakeholders, and supporting clients and the experts to prepare and facilitate projects.**
   **On our website you can find the names of all representatives per country.**

8. Can PUM clarify who the supporting organisations in the definition of business ecosystem (provided in Section 2 of the RFP) are and their role?
   **Answer Q.8: Supporting organisations can be associations and other membership organisations representing SMEs, producers or employers, as well as other support organisations, like educational institutions or incubators. Their role is to provide support to SMEs or to contribute to improvements in the business ecosystem, such as social dialogue. PUM directly supported 183 organisations in 2024 and 142 organisations in 2023.**

9. It is noted that the desk research part of the evaluation can analyse the interventions in all countries of implementation; does PUM expect the final report to contain a national level review of implementation in each country, or will the core focus of the review and final report be on the primary data collection in selected 2-3 countries?
   **Answer Q.9: The final report does not need to contain a national-level review of implementation in each country; a general review would be sufficient, with a more in-depth review of the selected countries and cases.**

## C. Evaluation questions

1. With respect to the questions related to efficiency - what parameters or benchmarks (if any) does PUM expect to be applied in assessing cost-effectiveness and efficiency, especially in the context of voluntary expert-driven models?
2. Can PUM confirm if they prefer a specific cost-effectiveness methodology to answer question 4a (of the ToR)?
   **Answer Q.1 and Q.2: for the efficiency question, we propose to look at two types of efficiency: cost-effectiveness (comparing outputs to the costs of inputs/resources) and timeliness (efficiency of processes). Of course, any additional parameters or benchmarks to measure efficiency are welcomed.**

3. With respect to the expectation that going forward, benefits will accrue to Dutch companies, should the evaluation assess the extent to which past work has positioned PUM to deliver on this? The one question posed under the section for "coherence and additionality" focuses on the possibilities for PUM to strengthen its collaboration with Dutch companies, and what is needed" but doesn't include a strong retrospective view in terms of how, and the extent to which past work has effectively laid the groundwork for this pivot. It would be helpful to know how systematically this should be assessed as part of the evaluation.
   **Answer Q.3: Since this is a new policy of the Dutch MoFA, and since working with Dutch companies is in an exploration phase, this question will not include an assessment of past work to deliver on this.**

4. Does the evaluation scope include the exploration of unintended outcomes, whether positive or negative, that may have resulted from the intervention?
   **Answer Q.4: Yes, exploring unintended outcomes, whether positive or negative, is included in the scope and in evaluation question 2f.**

PUM.

5. The RFP says suggestions for adjustments to the evaluation questions are welcome. Can PUM please indicate which questions are of greatest priority, perhaps by providing weighting for the questions provided in Section 4?
   **Answer Q.5: We would like to leave this at the discretion of the evaluation team.**

6. Does PUM expect the evaluation to answer all evaluation questions for all PUM countries or are a sub-set of questions to be answered for the case study countries only?
   **Answer Q.6: We expect that some questions will be answered for the overall PUM programme, and other questions only for the case study countries.**

## D. Selection of countries and cases

1. Please could PUM clarify on what it is looking for in relation to the type and scope of case study sought? Specifically, are these anticipated to be country case studies looking at all of PUM's work in that country, or is it expected that there would be several (smaller) case studies from each of the 2-3 countries selected, focussed on specific themes, sectors, and/or interventions?
   **Answer Q.1: For the selected countries, it is expected that a selection of business ecosystems and clients will be made in each country.**

2. More precisely, the TOR states Geographic coverage as worldwide (all PUM countries), and by region, as well as country-specific. Considering the limited number of case studies, we would want to select case countries that remain part of PUM's operations and future strategy. Based on that, we would like to understand: Are there any specific regions and/or countries that would be preferred for conducting field visits? The answer to this question will allow us to choose the right candidates, based on geolocation and past experiences in those countries and regions.
3. It would be good to know in which countries the programme is implemented, since potentially the geographic focus will depend on my consultants prior knowledge and experience in these regions.
4. The ToR refers to ‘case studies in two or three countries’ or ‘two or three countries, clients and business ecosystems’. To be able to assess the scope of the case studies, kindly could you indicate:
   - how many clients/projects are there in a country (a range)?
   - how does ‘business ecosystems’ correspond to clients/projects?
   - excluding countries that have been receiving evaluation missions more recently, would that exclude countries that have been evaluated by in past evaluations?
5. Have any countries already been evaluated in previous external evaluations that we should avoid duplicating?
6. Are there any specific regions and/or countries that would be preferred for conducting field visits?
7. The link to the countries and sectors in which PUM is active and the criteria for client selection is not accessible on page 3. Can PUM please provide the link to the best place to read about the country programmes so the offerors can consider case study countries based on the criteria presented on page 8?
8. Should the proposed country and case study selections include specific names at the proposal stage, or should we present criteria and propose options for discussion with PUM during inception before finalizing Are there any pre-identified countries PUM is particularly interested in prioritizing or excluding?
9. Could PUM give any further information/clarification on the potential countries for case studies, especially for selection criteria for which the answer is already known but not necessarily clear from the website (e.g. countries with more than 50% of funding from MoFA, countries not selected in previous evaluations)?

10. While it is noted that there are an anticipated 2-3 countries selected for case studies, alongside some criteria for country selection, the number of countries covered by PUM programming is vast. Is there any preference for specific countries or regions to be selected for the case studies, and would it be only these 2-3 countries where field visits will be held?
11. Could you please confirm if there are any specific countries or sectors you would prefer us to prioritise or exclude during fieldwork?
12. For the country case studies - can you confirm that the decision around case studies will be made in collaboration during the inception phase, based on proposals from the consultant? Will PUM provide guidance on country selection criteria, beyond what is in the RFP, during the inception phase?
13. Are there any shortlisted, preferred, or excluded countries for the field study portion of the evaluation, in addition to the selection information provided in the RfP

    **Answer Q. 2 – Q 13: Our annual report 2024, page 18, gives an overview of the countries in which the programme is implemented, and the number of projects per country.**

    **The 'bigger' countries, with more than 25 projects in 2024 are: Benin, Ghana, South Africa, Ethiopia, Tanzania, Uganda, Zimbabwe, Lebanon, Tunesia, Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Vietnam, Colombia.**

    **'Growing' countries in 2025 are: Egypt, Jordan and Côte d'Ivoire.**

    **Countries with more than 25 projects in 2024 that should not be included in the evaluation are the exit countries (Zambia, Nepal, Philippines, Sri Lanka) and the countries with more than 50% funding from other donors (Peru, Bolivia).**

    **Countries to exclude because they have been included in at least two former evaluations are Kenya, Uganda, India and Indonesia.**

    **The final selection of countries and cases will be made during the inception phase. The selection of cases consists of a sample of SMEs and organisations supported by PUM, as well as one or more business ecosystems in any phase of development in the selected countries.**

    **The selected business ecosystems will include conducting case studies with SMEs and organisations, with an additional focus on their involvement in the business ecosystem.**

14. How does PUM define a "mature" business ecosystem (for sampling purposes)?
15. On p.8 of the RfP - For the selection of countries and case studies, we should select one country with a 'mature' business ecosystem programme. When is a business ecosystem programme mature enough?
16. Are there any newly developed or piloted business ecosystems that you recommend we include for case study learning purposes?
17. Could you share a list or summary of existing business ecosystems by country, sector, and maturity stage?

    **Answer Q. 14 – Q.17: A 'mature' business ecosystem refers to a collaboration between multiple SMEs and one or more supporting organisations, that already exists for a few years, addressing multiple system challenges. The annual report 2024, pages 23 – 30, shows examples of business ecosystems that could be included as case studies.**

18. The Approach and Methodology section says the inception phase should produce: A proposal for the sample of two or three countries, clients and business ecosystems AND a proposal for in-depth case studies and possible field visits. Is it expected that the sample of two to three countries are the same countries in which the evaluator would conduct the in-depth case studies and possible field visits?

19. On p.8 of the RfP you mention: 'A proposal for the sample of two or three countries, clients and business ecosystems.' and 'A proposal for in-depth case studies and possible field visits' Is it correct that these should be seen as 2 separate things?
    **Answer Q. 18 and Q. 19: The first proposal should describe how to select the countries, and the client and ecosystem cases within the respective countries. The second proposal is about the methodology to be applied in the case studies. The in-depth case studies and field visits are to be conducted in the selected countries.**

20. Respondent Selection: Generally, what is the size of PUM's professional workforce at headquarters and in country?
    **Answer Q.20: PUM has 39 paid staff, 84 voluntary staff (79 at headquarters, 5 in-country) and 164 representatives (in-country).**

## E. Data and methodology

1. On p.9 of the RfP you mention: Primary data will be made available, including PRIME and WISE survey data. In what format will they be made available: raw data or summary reports? Are there any other data limitations that the evaluators should be aware of?
2. Will we have full access to the CRM system and relevant programme documentation, including project reports, sector plans, and monitoring data (PRIME and WISE)?
3. Are there any known limitations or biases in the existing datasets or program implementation that the evaluation should explicitly address or control for in the analysis?
   **Answer Q.1, Q2. and Q.3: The data from the PRIME and WISE survey can be made available as raw data (excel files). You will also have access to the CRM system and relevant documentation and reports.**
   **Limitation to be aware of:**
   - **The response rate of WISE surveys is slightly lower compared to last year's PRIME survey (30% for SMEs and 38% for organisations), and they are still considered reasonably strong response rates for surveys. However, it also means that we don't have all data (e.g. on revenue and number of employees) for all supported SMEs, and no current data from SMEs that ceased their operations.**
   - **Information on the satisfaction with the project and the implementation of the recommendations is collected with the evaluation surveys among clients, experts and representatives after project completion. This provides useful insights, but is based on self-reporting, and the response rate to this survey is 46% for clients.**
   - **Since the implementation of business ecosystem programmes is still in an early phase, the available data concerning the business ecosystem programmes is currently still limited but grows in the meantime.**

4. PRIME and WISE Datasets:
   a. What is the completeness and reliability of the PRIME and WISE datasets? How representative are the results to the overall PUM client population?
   b. What level of data disaggregation (e.g., by gender, age, sector, region) is available in the PRIME and WISE datasets, and are there any priority groups for analysis?
   c. Are there existing data quality assurance protocols for the PRIME and WISE datasets, and will the evaluation team be expected to conduct an independent data quality assessment as part of the methodology?
   d. Are there any known discrepancies or alignment issues between indicators tracked in PRIME, WISE, and the M&E framework that the evaluation should address?
   **Answer Q.4: Please find more information about the WISE data set in the 2024 report, page 33 – 44.**

**Disaggregation is difficult because the sample size of these sub-groups is too small. There is quality assurance on the PRIME and WISE datasets. The evaluation team is not expected to conduct a data quality assessment of the PRIME or WISE data as part of the methodology.**
**There are no known discrepancies between the indicators of PRIME, WISE and the M&E framework. The PRIME/WISE surveys were developed in line with the M&E framework; conversely, in 2025, the M&E framework was refined and updated based on the WISE data.**

5. Is the consultant required to collect and analyse data for any of the ToC KPIs or will this be done internally by PUM and shared with the consultant? If the data and results will be made available, to what extent would the consultant be expected to verify / quality check the data?
   **Answer Q.5: the KPI data are collected by PUM and reported in the annual reports (page 45 and 46 2024 report). The evaluation team is not expected to conduct a quality check of the KPI data.**

6. With regard to the available documents for desk review, what are the Monitoring, Evaluation, and KPI documents/materials available? For example, how many surveys have been conducted? Does the Business Ecosystems CRM (noted to be in development phase) already have some data collected?
   **Answer Q.6: The PRIME and WISE surveys have been conducted annually since 2017. The KPIs are externally reported in the annual reports and internally on a quarterly basis via the Balanced Score Card. There is no systematic data collection on Business Ecosystems yet in the CRM.**

7. Has PUM already administered the WISE survey this year? If not and if it is administered during the evaluation period, can the successful offeror propose additional questions to the questionnaire?
   **Answer Q.7: The WISE survey will be administered in September or October this year. Suggestions for additional questions to the WISE survey could be discussed.**

8. The RfP mentions the availability of existing quantitative data (e.g. WISE and PRIME surveys, KPIs), but does not specify if we need to collect (primary) quantitative data as part of the evaluation. Could you clarify whether PUM expects any analysis or reporting of quantitative indicators, or whether we need to collect primary quantitative data from select countries as well?
9. Do you expect us to conduct surveys (WISE/PRIME) or will primary data collection be entirely qualitative?
   **Answer Q.8 and Q.9: We don't expect the evaluation team to conduct surveys among a broad range of SMEs or organisations, but some quantitative data collection as part of the case studies, in addition to qualitative data collection, would be recommended.**

10. Can we access baseline data from SEO's 2023 evaluation and any Theory of Change workshops or materials from 2023–2025?
    **Answer Q.10: During the inception phase all relevant and available materials will be shared, in addition to the documents that have been published as annex to the RfP.**

11. Are there longitudinal data available for clients or businesses that have participated in PUM programs, and if so, what is the typical duration and completeness of these records?
    **Answer Q.11: Unfortunately, for most clients there is no longitudinal data available. The WISE survey does collect the revenue data for two years.**

12. Are there any mandatory indicators or evaluation tools you would like us to apply, or should we develop all tools from scratch based on the ToC?
**Answer Q. 12: The indicators and evaluation tools to be applied should be defined based on the evaluation questions, and existing indicators and information should be used as much as possible.**

13. Are there any language or cultural accessibility considerations we should account for in the data collection process (e.g., translation, community engagement protocols)?
**Answer Q. 13: Depending on the selected countries there might be some specific considerations for translation (limited to French and Spanish). In terms of protocols, the consultants should keep in mind cultural differences, hierarchies, and implicit power dynamics when it comes to data collection in Global South countries – alongside standard research ethics.**

14. Are there any preferred or required digital tools or platforms for data collection, management, or analysis (e.g., KoboToolbox, Survey CTO, NVivo), or is the choice left to the evaluation team?
**Answer Q. 14: The selection of digital tools for data collection is left to the evaluation team.**

**F. Financial/budget**

1. To develop a detailed financial budget that includes field visits, and given that the selection of two or three countries, clients, business ecosystems, and in-depth case studies will be jointly defined with PUM during the inception phase, we would appreciate your confirmation on whether there will be flexibility to revisit and potentially renegotiate the proposed budget based on the agreements reached at that stage.
Additionally, could you please share any relevant or additional guidelines that may apply in this regard?
2. If the proposed methodology or sampling requires adjustments after inception, is there flexibility to reallocate budget lines (within the ceiling) with PUM approval?
**Answer Q.1. and Q.2.: Yes, the budget may be amended by mutual agreement upon a justified request, within the ceiling of the total approved budget.**
**Please find additional guidance in the answers to the questions below.**

3. For costs that are not VAT-exempt, how should VAT be treated in the financial proposal. Can it be added to the €130,000 budget ceiling?
**Answer Q.3.: Bidders must comply with Dutch tax regulations and ensure that VAT is correctly accounted for in the proposed budget. Bidders must specify whether all quoted prices are inclusive or exclusive of VAT.**

4. What kind of contract will be issued for the evaluation? Fixed Price? Cost reimbursable?
5. Could PUM provide more information on how the contract will be paid? Will it be a deliverable-based payment plan or cost reimbursable?
**Answer Q.4. and Q.5: It will be a fixed price contract.**
**The proposed payment plan: 10% after contracting; 30% after approval of inception report; 30% after submission of draft report; 30% after approval of final report.**

6. Does PUM have a maximum daily rate for proposed consultants?
**Answer Q.6.: No**

7. The evaluation criteria for the financial proposal includes a contingency budget. Does PUM have guidelines for the type of costs that are eligible under the contingency budget, and a suggested % of the budget that should be allocated to contingency?
   **Answer Q.7.: Suggested maximum of contingency budget is 10%, for instance for additional data collection or travel costs, and should be specified in the financial report.**

**G. Practical/operational**

1. Can the job be done remotely by an organization if eventually our proposal is accepted?
   **Answer Q.1: Our preference would be a consultancy firm that would be able to have at least two in-person meetings in the Netherlands, one in the inception phase and one in the draft report phase. Also, it would include interviews with paid and voluntary staff that are based in the Netherlands. This could be done remotely, but some in-person interviews would contribute to a better understanding of PUM's way of working.**

2. With respect to engaging stakeholders for input - will PUM facilitate introductions and consent for interviews with SMEs, BSOs/BMOs, and local partners, or is the consultant expected to independently establish contact?
   **Answer Q.2: Yes, PUM will facilitate the introductions for the interviews.**

3. Can you facilitate introductions to key stakeholders, such as Dutch embassies, business support organisations, and relevant PSD partners (e.g. CNV, RVO)?
   **Answer Q.3: Yes**

4. Will the evaluation team have direct access to PUM clients and beneficiaries for primary data collection, or will all contact be mediated by PUM staff?
   **Answer Q.4: PUM will introduce the evaluation team to the clients. After that, arrangements for data collection can be made directly.**

5. Are you open to us proposing a hybrid fieldwork model (e.g., 2 in-country visits + 1 remote study) for cost-efficiency and access purposes?
   **Answer Q.5: Yes**

6. Will the internal and external reference groups provide feedback on the inception report, case selection, and draft tools before implementation?
   **Answer Q.6: Yes**

7. The period to cover ('mid/end 2025'), could you please indicate a more precise end (cut-off) date?
   **Answer Q. 7: The cut-off date depends on the start of the data collection in the countries.**

8. Access for fieldwork: Will PUM support country access, permissions, or in-country logistics for field visits?
   **Answer Q.8: Country access, permissions and logistics should be arranged by the evaluation team.**

9. Roles of internal vs. external reference groups: What level of involvement will each group have in the evaluation, especially during inception, fieldwork, or analysis phases?
10. Is the presentation of the findings is expected to be online (e.g. via Teams) or in person?
    **Answer Q. 9 and Q.10: The external reference group will provide feedback on the inception report and the draft final report. The internal reference group will provide**

**input for the selection of cases and data collection. There will be limited direct involvement of both groups with the evaluation team.**
**A joint in-person meeting with both groups and the evaluation team will be held to present and discuss the findings of the draft evaluation report.**

11. Feedback timeline: What is the expected turnaround time for PUM's review of deliverables (e.g., inception or draft reports)?
12. How many rounds of feedback do you foresee for the inception and final report? And how much time will PUM need to review the documents?
**Answer Q. 11 and Q. 12: we aim at a maximum of 15 working days for the review of the deliverables. In principle, we expect one round of feedback for the inception and two rounds of feedback for the final report, unless the quality of the reports requires an additional round of feedback.**

**H. Evaluation team**

1. Does PUM have a preference on the number of person days to be assigned to each country case study field visit?
**Answer Q.1: We would like to leave this to the discretion of the evaluation team.**

2. Are there any minimum academic or experience qualifications required or preferred for the team leader and key team members, besides the experience already mentioned?
**Answer Q.2: No**

3. With regard to the teaming, could you please clarify if you have a team size or composition in mind (for example, if you expect a multidisciplinary team with clearly defined roles (e.g., evaluation lead, sector expert, qualitative researcher, data analyst))? Or is it upto the bidder?
**Answer Q.3: We would like to leave this to the discretion of the evaluation team.**

4. May offerors propose two co-team leaders with complementary MEL (experience leading similar evaluations) and technical experience (knowledge in private sector development)? If so, can two CVs for co-team leaders be presented to be evaluated together?
**Answer Q. 4: Yes, this is possible.**

**I. Requirements final report**

1. Are there any formatting or language preferences for the final report and PowerPoint presentation (e.g., specific templates, terminology, visuals)?
**Answer Q.1: The final report should be in English. There are no specific preferences for the formatting.**

2. The RFP identifies a PowerPoint presentation as one of the deliverables. Should we plan for one or more live presentation sessions with stakeholders as part of the evaluation process, or is the deliverable limited to the preparation of the slide deck?
**Answer Q.2: Yes, at least one live presentation session should be part of the process.**

**J. Scoring proposals**

1. Would a tenderer proposing two country case studies receive the same or fewer marks as a tenderer proposing three country case studies (all other aspects being equal)?
**Answer Q.1: The scoring would depend on the overall proposal.**

2. What is the scoring methodology/matrix for the financial proposals?

3. Will the total budget (or elements of it such as fee rates) also be weighed in the score?
   **Answer Q.2 and Q.3: The financial proposal will be weighed with 10% of the total score.**
   **The score will be based on an assessment of the detailed budget (cost per deliverable, travel expenses, contingency budget), the total amount of the offer, and the elaboration of working days, the rate per expert mobilized, transport and mission expenses.**

4. The proposal requirements include an overview of the organisation/team, including track record and expertise. However, organisation/team experience is not included in evaluation criteria, only experience and knowledge of team leader and experience of team members. Under which criterion will organisational experience be evaluated?
   **Answer Q.4: Organisation/team experience will be evaluated under composition of the team**