United Nations Development Programme

Final Evaluation of the project
Civil Service Training for the 21st Century in the Republic of Serbia

EVALUATION REPORT

December 2023

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Project information	
Project/outcome title	Civil Service Training for the 21st Century in the Republic of Serbia
UNDP Award ID	SRB10 / 00122702
UNDCS Outcome and CPD Output (2016-2020)	Intended Outcome as stated in the UNDAF/Country Programme Results and Resource Framework: By 2025, public sector institutions are more accountable and responsive to change in creating an enabling environment for further socio-economic development and for addressing the needs of women and men Outcome indicators as stated in the Country Programme Results and Resources Framework, including baseline and targets: Indicator: Government Effectiveness Percentile rank Baseline (2018):56.7 Target (2025):62 Applicable Output from the UNDP Strategic Plan: 2.2.1 Use of digital technologies and big data enabled for improved public services and other government functions CPD Output 1.1: National and local mechanisms and capacities for good governance improved indicator 1.1.5: Number of civil servants trained in line with National Academy for Public Administration training and work plan (gender disaggregated) Baseline: 14,000 (2021) 2022: 12,000 (min 40% women) 2023: 12,000 (min 40% women) 2024: 12,000 (min 40% women) 2025: 12,000 (min 40% women)
Country	Serbia
Region	RBEC
Date Project document signed	08.06.2020

Project Dates	**Start**	**Planned End Date**
	July 2020	December 2023

Total Budget	$ 2.432,390.00
Funding Source	Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA)
Implementing Party	National Academy for Public Administration - https://www.napa.gov.rs/
Evaluation Information	
Evaluation type	Project Evaluation
Final/midterm review/	Final Evaluation

Period under evaluation	**Start**	**End**
	July 2020	**December 2023**

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	November 2023	December 2023

Executive summary

PROJECT DETAILS

The "Civil Service Training for the 21st Century in the Republic of Serbia" Project (NAPA Project), aimed at advancing Serbia's civil service for the 21st century, was structured to develop a professional and efficient civil service capable of addressing the contemporary challenges of knowledge and career management within the public sector. It sought to elevate the National Academy for Public Administration (NAPA) by reinforcing internal capabilities, enhancing staff and trainer capacities, and improving institutional structures. The Project emphasised creating dynamic training programs and e-learning platforms to prepare civil servants for the demands of the modern public sector and the fourth industrial revolution.

To sustain these improvements, the project underlined the need for continuous innovation in curricula and pedagogy, incorporating international best practices and fostering international academic and research collaborations to augment NAPA's global standing. This project built upon previous EU and UK-funded initiatives, furthering the development of NAPA's institutional framework and expanding its training and policy support capabilities.

EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

The evaluation approach and methodology for the NAPA Project involved a comprehensive framework set in Terms of Reference, incorporating OECD/DAC Evaluation Criteria (relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability) and adherence to UNEG Norms and Standards, with a focus on human rights and gender equality. The Evaluation Consultant (EC) applied a theory-based approach using a reconstructed Theory of Change (ToC) for the NAPA Project, emphasising accountability and continuous learning. This approach allowed for systematic assessment and comparison with actual achievements, identifying critical components and variables influencing outcomes.

Contribution analysis examined connections between Project initiatives and outcomes, considering external factors and the political, economic, and social landscape. This method helped in understanding the mechanisms behind the changes observed, attributing them convincingly to the Project while acknowledging the role of context. The EC also used systems thinking to understand broader interactions within the governance and public administration reform ecosystem, focusing on root causes and foundational dynamics.

The ToC provided a strategic framework, assuming specific prerequisites like political stability, commitment to reforms, and alignment with strategic priorities. The ToC outlined activities and outputs leading to significant functional and institutional advancements for NAPA, culminating in a more robust national public administration and civil service system.

Data collection methods included a mixed-methods paradigm, combining qualitative and quantitative techniques. Participatory methods validated program authority, with gender-sensitive and feminist approaches ensuring inclusive stakeholder participation. Primary data collection involved purposive sampling with key informant interviews and focus groups, capturing insights from various stakeholders. Data analysis used qualitative data analysis software MAXQDA, employing cross-validation and triangulation of sources for internal validity.

Ethical considerations were paramount, following OECD DAC and United Nations guidelines. Informed consent was obtained from stakeholders, ensuring confidentiality and privacy. The evaluation team pledged impartiality, credibility, and accountability throughout the process.

Relevance:

The NAPA Project emerged as a strategic and transformative initiative, addressing critical challenges in modernising and professionalising public administration in Serbia. It focused on building NAPA's institutional capacity, enhancing its role in transparent and merit-based recruitment, expanding its training portfolio, and ensuring financial stability. The Project strategically responded to these needs by integrating advanced e-learning platforms, strengthening research capabilities, and improving service quality. These efforts positioned NAPA as the leading institution in supporting human resources development in public institutions, aligning it with global standards and practices.

A notable aspect of the NAPA Project was its flexibility and swift adaptation to the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. The Project successfully transitioned to digital platforms for training delivery, reallocating funds towards strengthening digital infrastructure. This adaptability was crucial in maintaining the Project's relevance and effectiveness amidst the changing operational environment. While online training provided cost benefits and accessibility, the Project recognised the unique value of traditional in-person training for engagement and networking.

An important aspect was that the Project remained well-aligned with the evolving public administration needs and strategic priorities throughout its implementation. The 2023 EU Progress Report on Serbia highlighted the intensified efforts in professional development for civil servants and the need for better linkage between human resource management and organisational performance. Despite transparent and accountable governance challenges, the NAPA Project significantly contributed to bridging skills gaps and improving public administration performance. It recognised the importance of NAPA's role in policy planning and capacity development in critical sectors, reaffirming its relevance and impact in Serbia's broader reform agenda.

Coherence

The NAPA Project was internally coherent and aligned with UNDP strategic priorities, while externally, it aligned with national public administration reform objectives, contributing to SDGs and addressing critical areas of governance, institutional capacity, and digital transformation in Serbia's public administration.

The Project demonstrated strong internal coherence, effectively aligning its objectives, activities, and expected outcomes. It aligned with the UNDP corporate strategic efforts and the UNDP Country Programme Document for Serbia (2021-2025). It strengthened governance, improved public sector efficiency, and supported the UNDP Strategic Plan 2022-2025. This included focusing on effective governance, institutional capacity building, and public administration reform, resonating with NAPA's emphasis on modernising public administration and developing digital tools. The Project also supported human rights-based approaches and empowered marginalised groups, aligning with the United Nations Sustainable Development Framework (2021–2025) by building trust and mutual accountability.

Concerning its external coherence, the Project aligned with national public administration reform priorities. It supported the Government of Serbia's modernisation and reform efforts in public administration, which are essential for economic reforms and international competitiveness. The Project aligned with the Public Administration Reform Strategy 2021-2030, focusing on policy development, coordination mechanisms, and digital transformation. The NAPA Project supported specific objectives of the strategy, including attracting and retaining competent civil servants and developing a functional system for professional development and state exams. The Project aligned with the global sustainable development agenda, contributing to specific SDGs. Under SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions), the Project promoted good governance and public administration reform. It also supported SDG 5 (Gender Equality) by prioritising women's participation in governance and developing a gender-sensitive public management system.

Effectiveness:

The NAPA Project effectively enhanced operational systems, developed innovative learning tools, and established a Centre of Excellence. It successfully integrated gender considerations and responded adaptively to unforeseen challenges, contributing to modernising public administration training and policy development in Serbia.

The Project met its targets for enhancing NAPA's operational systems and functional processes. It made progress in developing NAPA's capacities, particularly in implementing a Document Management System (DMS) and standard operating procedures (SOPs) aligned with electronic processes. These developments marked a substantial leap in automating business operations, positioning NAPA at the forefront of innovative public administration practices. Gender considerations were incorporated into the DMS and SOPs, ensuring inclusivity in organisational aspects such as staffing and training. The Project also established a roster of experts with gender-balanced representation, enhancing NAPA's educational offerings and internal training capabilities.

In addition, the Project advanced NAPA's efforts in developing innovative learning tools, including an upgraded Learning Management System and a new mobile learning application. These technological enhancements

facilitated a shift towards flexible, accessible, and contemporary learning modes. The operational Centre of Excellence for public sector and human resource development became a significant element of NAPA's operations. The Project supported the establishment of the Research Centre as one of the critical pillars under the framework of research and policy development in public administration.

In addition, the Project encountered several unforeseen outcomes, both positive and negative. The shift to online learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic led to a technological leap, enhancing NAPA's interactive and dynamic learning experience and increasing course participation rates. However, this rapid digital transformation also introduced challenges, such as difficulties in adapting to new technologies and potential overreliance on digital platforms. Despite challenges, including the COVID-19 pandemic and entrenched political and bureaucratic difficulties in Serbia, the Project maintained momentum and relevance.

Gender Mainstreaming and Leave No One Behind Principles

The NAPA Project aimed to promote equality in public administration but initially needed explicit gender-sensitive analysis and clear strategies for gender-sensitive and LNOB approaches. Despite this, its implementation showed a commitment to gender equality and human rights. This was evident in the equal participation of men and women in all activities and in tracking gender indicators in surveys. Training programs focused on gender sensitivity and awareness, aligning with international human rights principles.

Throughout its implementation, the Project integrated gender mainstreaming in various aspects of public administration, including gender-neutral language in the Document Management System, balanced gender representation in the expert roster, and gender sensitivity training for trainers. Staff training initiatives also demonstrated a gender-sensitive approach, with significant female participation. Additionally, the Learning Management System incorporated gender-disaggregated data, and training needs assessment involved diverse stakeholders, although it didn't specifically identify gender-related challenges in public administration roles.

Efficiency

The NAPA Project was marked by efficient execution and strategic resource allocation. Despite the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Project was extended to ensure completion of all activities. The Project established effective management and operational systems. Financial management was effective, with funds utilised towards project objectives and operational costs kept low. Annual and monthly work plans were results-oriented, ensuring effective scheduling and resource allocation. The monitoring system was based on NAPA's logical matrix, connecting objectives, activities, and outcomes. However, challenges were identified in defining targets and measuring progress at the outcome level.

The UNDP NAPA Project Team was focused and dedicated, with experienced professionals ensuring efficient implementation. The Project benefited from UNDP's technical, administrative, and communication support. The management model, characterised by excellent collaboration and strategic alignment, was recommended for future initiatives. The Project Steering Committee ensured transparent coordination and alignment with national PAR efforts and SDGs. In addition, the Project was well-coordinated with other initiatives, enhancing coherence and synergies. For instance, it aligned with initiatives on gender-based violence prevention and digital transformation under the PAR framework.

Sustainability

The NAPA Project demonstrated potential for scalability and replication, offering valuable insights for future public administration reform initiatives. Its emphasis on technological innovation, inclusivity, and global benchmarking positions it as a model for modernising public administration systems. The Project's initiatives have enhanced Serbia's civil service capabilities and offer a replicable standard for public administration excellence. The Project's alignment with strategic priorities, adaptability, and comprehensive training framework establish NAPA as a key institution in public administration reform and capacity building.

The Project supported operational improvements and institutional functioning of NAPA, laying a strong foundation for future development. However, its long-term success depends on continued leadership commitment, government support, and active global participation. Expanding NAPA's international presence and continuously adapting to changing public administration needs are crucial for sustainability. In parallel, the Project's focus on innovative learning tools and methodologies needs ongoing investment and adaptation to

global best practices. The sustainability of staff capacity enhancements and the Center of Excellence established by the Project also hinge on strategic use of these capacities and adaptation to changing needs.

NAPA's commitment to technological advancements, particularly e-learning platforms, was a significant achievement supported by the Project. However, the shift towards prioritising online learning over traditional in-person methods, although justified during the COVID-19 pandemic, poses challenges for holistic professional development, showing the need for a balanced approach to learning methods. More generally, the sustainability of established capacities in civil service and public administration is linked to effectively implementing a professional development management system. There is a need for clear linkages between training programs and career progression, addressing staff turnover in ministries, and fostering a culture of continuous learning and development.

Impact

The Project's potential impact is noticeable, with expectations of reshaping NAPA's structure and offerings, streamlining administrative processes, and improving service delivery. The establishment of the Center of Excellence within NAPA is projected to be a key driver in policy development and innovation in public sector management. On a more technical level, NAPA training programs have been instrumental in improving the performance and efficiency of participants: the increase in training activities and participant numbers indicates the growing impact of NAPA's training initiatives. However, feedback suggests a strong preference for a blend of in-person and online training to maximise effectiveness.

In addition, the evaluation revealed that training content was highly relevant to job requirements, with successful implementation and long-term benefits. However, there is room for improvement in training effectiveness and impact on workplace productivity. Therefore, the Project outlined strategies for enhancing training effectiveness, including customising content, employing innovative methods, and utilising modern online platforms.

CONCLUSIONS AND LESSONS:

The NAPA Project's comprehensive evaluation revealed its significant impact on modernising and professionalising public administration in Serbia, underpinned by its demand-driven nature and adaptability, which was especially evident during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Project's relevance was marked by its focus on strengthening NAPA's institutional capacity and enhancing technical capabilities, aligning its processes with global best practices. However, the Project also highlighted the need for a balanced approach to training, combining the benefits of online and traditional in-person methods to optimise learning experiences.

In terms of coherence, the Project aligned seamlessly with Serbia's national reform objectives and the strategic framework set by the UN/UNDP. This alignment was crucial in maintaining the Project's internal coherence and ensuring its effectiveness in meeting the strategic goals for public administration reform. The effectiveness of the Project was further demonstrated through the development of key operational systems, such as the Document Management System and the enhancement of staff capacities, which contributed significantly to NAPA's role in the public sector.

The Project's approach to gender equality and inclusivity evolved, initially lacking specific gender-sensitive strategies but later effectively incorporating these principles. This evolution is reflected in the Project's training programs and overall quality assurance system, indicating a growing commitment to gender equality and human rights. In terms of efficiency, the Project demonstrated strategic resource use, effective management, and adaptability despite the challenges posed by an extended implementation period. Lastly, the sustainability of the Project's outcomes hinges on continuous evolution, leadership commitment, government support, and active global engagement. Despite challenges like the disconnect between training delivery and career integration, the Project showed strong country ownership and capacity strengthening. The potential for scalability and replication of the Project's achievements sets a new standard for civil service training, with a focus on gender mainstreaming, international collaboration, and research enhancement.

The lessons learned from the NAPA Project emphasise the importance of stakeholder engagement, adaptability, balance in training methods, data-driven decision-making, sustained support, and effective communication for future initiatives in public administration reform.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The comprehensive evaluation of the NAPA Project has culminated in targeted recommendations to enhance PAR efforts in Serbia. The EC recommends a strategic shift towards a partnership approach to drive impactful and long-term change, fostering collaboration among stakeholders, including NAPA, MPLASG, GoS, UNDP and SIDA. This shift should encapsulate the creation of larger-scale initiatives that align with Serbia's Public Administration Reform (PAR) Strategy, ensuring that future actions resonate with overarching strategic reform priorities and contribute substantively to long-term national goals.

On the operational front, there is a call to refine capacity-building efforts specifically for local government employees. This would involve conducting targeted research to understand unique local challenges, developing specialised training programs informed by this research, and incorporating diverse and practical training methods to cater to different learning styles. The EC recommends a balanced training approach, including integrating online and in-person learning to create comprehensive educational experiences, thus maximising participant engagement and interaction.

Technological advancements within NAPA are given priority, focusing on the continuous development of e-learning platforms, incorporating user feedback for improvement, and ensuring accessibility for all. The importance of international collaborations is recognized as a means to enhance global academic and research partnerships, using successful project approaches for broader application and promoting continuous learning through international experiences.

Lastly, a robust commitment to gender equality is critical, with recommendations for comprehensive gender analysis, research for targeted interventions, and the development of gender-inclusive training programs. This commitment is further extended to monitoring and evaluation frameworks, where developing comprehensive systems for assessing the impact and effectiveness of activities is paramount. Data from these evaluations should inform strategic decisions and ensure the sustained benefits of training programs, ultimately contributing to the improved quality of public administration services.

List of abbreviations

CA	Contribution Analysis
CPD	UNDP Country Programme Document
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DAC	Development Assistance Committee of the OECD
DMS	Document Management System
EC	Evaluation Consultant
ER	Evaluation Report
EU	European Union
FE	Final Evaluation
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GoS	Government of Serbia
GRES	UNDP Gender Results Effectiveness Framework
HRBA	Human Rights-Based Approach
IR	Inception report
KII	Key Informants Interviews
LNOB	Leave No One Behind
MPALSG	Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self Governments
NAPA	National Academy for Public Administration
NAPA Project	Civil Service Training for the 21st Century in the Republic of Serbia
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
OSCE	Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe
OVI	Objectively Verifiable Indicator
PAR	Public Administration Reform
PCA	Project Cooperation Agreement
PM	Project Manager
PMF	Performance Measurement Framework
Prodoc	Project document
PSC	Project Steering Committee
PT	Project Team
SMART	Specific Measurable Accepted Realistic Timely
SOP	Standard Operating Procedures
SoV	Sources of Verification
TOC	Theory of Change
TOR	Terms of Reference
UN	United Nations
UNCT	United Nations Country Team
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
WGI	World-wide Governance Indicators

Introduction

This Final Evaluation Report of the "Civil Service Training for the 21st Century" in the Republic of Serbia (NAPA Project) thoroughly examines the Project's relevance, performance, and objectives in the context of public administration reform in Serbia.

The report begins with a contextual review, offering insights into Serbia's political, governance, social, and economic dynamics that influenced the Project's formulation and implementation. It then moves on to articulate the purpose and objectives of the evaluation. In the conceptual approaches section, the report explores the methodologies used in the evaluation, analysing the approach and key questions, and includes an evaluability analysis to assess the feasibility of the evaluation approach. This is complemented by a detailed account of the integration of cross-cutting issues, such as the human rights-based approach and gender equality, throughout the evaluation process.

The central part of the report is focused on the findings organized around the key evaluation questions that correspond to the criteria of relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability. The analysis of gender equality and the 'leave no one behind' principle is woven throughout all these components, ensuring a holistic and inclusive evaluation. The report culminates in a set of conclusions and lessons learned, which are generated from the evaluation process, providing insightful reflections and understandings derived from the Project.

Finally, the evaluation report offers a series of actionable recommendations. These recommendations are designed to be practical and applicable, enhancing the effectiveness and impact of future initiatives in line with the findings and lessons learned from the NAPA Project. This approach ensures that the evaluation assesses past performance and contributes constructively to planning future initiatives concerning public administration reforms in Serbia.

1   Context and background

1.1   *Political and Socioeconomic Context*

The purpose of political and socio-economic analysis and background information is to confirm the understanding of the context in which the Evaluation Consultant (EC) will implement this evaluation.

Over the past decade, Serbia has been at the crossroads of profound socio-economic, political, and institutional transformations. The Serbian Government has kept steady on EU integration, as EU candidate status has been a high priority for all governments that have led Serbia in the 21st Century. Accession negotiations started back in January 2014. Serbia has maintained its macroeconomic stability since 2014, when it fell into recession for the third time in six years. Over the last two years, Serbia's economy has been growing and was relatively resilient against the consequences of the Covid 19 crisis. A new fiscal stimulus package further stimulated growth in 2021 and 2022. Going forward, consumption is expected to remain the main driver of GDP growth over the medium term. If this trend is maintained, the prospect for macroeconomic stability in the future is good, and on that basis, the socio-economic development already initiated will continue.

From a governance perspective, Serbia is committed to amplifying its administrative efficacy. The nation aspires to streamlined, accountable, and technologically-driven public service delivery. These reforms facilitate the EU integration process and steer Serbia towards growth.

The **Public Administration Reform Strategy 2021-2030**[1] (PAR Strategy) represents the central pillar of sector reform, aiming to further modernise and streamline public administration in line with European Union standards. It addressed key challenges and set ambitious goals to transform public administration into a more efficient, transparent, and service-oriented entity. Central to the PAR Strategy is enhancing administrative capacities to

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[1] Ref to https://mduls.gov.rs/wp-content/uploads/PAR-Strategy-in-the-Republic-of-Serbia-for-the-period-2021%E2%88%922030.pdf

effectively implement EU accession reforms and promote a professional civil service. The Strategy envisaged continuous professional development of civil servants, focusing on a competency-based approach to human resource management, ensuring their skills and knowledge contribute effectively to public administration.

Figure 1 Overview of the Worldwide Governance Indicators for Serbia, 2010-2021
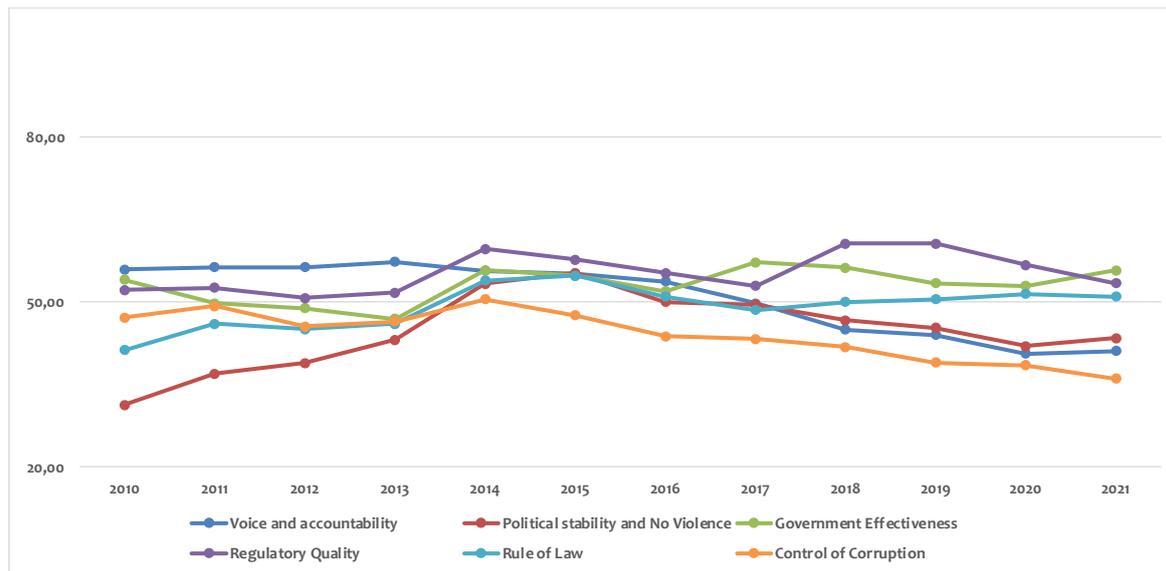
source: WGI World Bank

The country illustrates a mixed bag of governance performances over the years. While there were periods of notable achievements, especially in political stability and regulatory quality, there were evident challenges. For example, The Rule of Law indicator shows a certain degree of legal adherence interrupted by some challenges. It commenced at 41.23 (2013) and underwent several fluctuations. There was a noticeable peak at 54.81, suggesting a period where adherence to the law was considerably high. However, it stabilized around the 50-mark towards 2021. The control of corruption is one of the more concerning indicators as it shows a declining trend. This index started at 47.14 (2013) but ended on a declining note at 36.06. This analysis hints at increasing challenges in curbing corruption over the years. Serbia recorded A similar, concerning trend is recorded under voice and accountability.

To facilitate this process of civil service development, the Serbian government has introduced several laws to embed the competence system into all aspects of human resource management. Particular emphasis has been on transparent and merit-based recruitment and staff retention, fostering an environment conducive to personal and professional development. In this context, the Strategy for Professional Development of Civil Servants and the Strategy for Professional Development of Employees in Local Government Units in Serbia have been relevant. These strategies aim to establish uniform standards and criteria for professional development, ensuring equitable access and quality training for all public administration employees. The PAR strategy emphasised the need for more robust policy development, coordination mechanisms, and a digital transformation in public services. It also highlighted the aspects of refining administrative procedures to ensure compliance with good governance principles and increasing public engagement and access to information regarding public administration and finances

A notable outcome of these reforms is the establishment of **the National Academy of Public Administration-NAPA**[2] (established in 2018 under the Law on the National Academy for Public Administration[3]). NAPA is an independent legal entity overseen by the Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self Governments. The SIGMA Monitoring Report for Serbia recognised the establishment of the NAPA as the main PAR institutional change during the previous period. The report further concludes that the NAPA has gradually started to carry out its responsibilities and that a set of secondary and tertiary legislation was passed by the Government or the Director of NAPA. The Report emphasised that the NAPA team is committed to building a genuinely modern institution for professional development and training, adding that the process will take some time, but the goodwill and commitment are clearly visible. NAPA's responsibilities include data collection and processing, developing training methodologies and instruments, accrediting training programs and providers, implementing training programs, providing professional assistance, and collaborating with various institutions.

Despite these achievements, the recent EU Progress Report for Serbia[4] stated, "the strategic framework for PAR has seen varied levels of implementation across different areas, with a lack of consolidated reporting and limited political support". In the realm of civil servants and human resources management, current legislation supports merit-based recruitment and dismissal. Still, it allows excessive discretion in forming selection committees and defers mandatory competition procedures for recruiting temporary staff. Additionally, inflated performance appraisals and a high rate of annulled disciplinary decisions indicate areas needing improvement. Professional development efforts, led by the National Academy for Public Administration, have intensified, focusing on expanding training coverage through online courses and comprehensive programs for senior civil servants. However, the public administration structure requires significant streamlining, with current issues including blurred lines of accountability, overlapping functions, and a predominantly bureaucratic approach in various institutions. Financial sustainability remains a concern, heavily reliant on donor funding. In terms of policy development and coordination, while institutions for central government policymaking are in place, the application of the planning system law could be more consistent, and progress in sectoral planning optimisation could be faster.

1.2 Project "Civil Service Training for the 21st Century in the Republic of Serbia"

The "Civil Service Training for the 21st Century in the Republic of Serbia" (NAPA Project or the Project) has been designed to support the development of an effective and professional civil service. These efforts aimed to address challenges caused by the need for a well-rounded knowledge management cycle and career management system. In this context, the focus was on enhancing the capacities and skills of future management staff and other civil servants in public institutions and organising their continuous training as a critical condition for modernising public administration and implementing administrative, economic, and social reforms. Operationally, the Project chain of results included two outcomes and several outputs.

Outcome 1: Institutional capacity building by establishing systems, processes and tools

- Output 1.1: Developing the capacities of the NAPA for effective coordination and implementation of the professional development management system.

- Output 1.2: Strengthening staff capacities to support the further development of the institution.

Outcome 2: Development of innovative learning tools and a centre of excellence for public sector and human resource development

- Output 2.1: Introducing new training methods and establishing a training quality assurance system.

- Output 2.2: Establishing a centre for research and policy advice for public sector and human resource management and development.

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[2] https://www.napa.gov.rs/tekst/en/115/about-us.php

[3] Law on the National Academy of Public Administration ("Official Gazette of the RS", No 94/2017 as of 19th October 2017) and it started working in January 2018.

[4] https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2023-11/SWD_2023_695_Serbia.pdf

- Output 2.3: Ensuring media outreach and visibility of the NAPA and the Kingdom of Sweden as a leading donor in the public sector management reform

Thus, this initiative aimed to substantially bolster the NAPA by enhancing its internal capabilities across various levels, including staff, trainers, and institutional structures. It focused on developing new and dynamic training programs tailored to meet the evolving needs of the public sector and to align with the advancements of the 4th industrial revolution. Additionally, the Project strived to implement modern e-learning platforms utilising efficient electronic multimedia educational technologies. It aimed to amplify NAPA's international presence through collaborative academic and research initiatives and outreach activities to augment its visibility and impact.

Future development plans for NAPA encompassed introducing new curricula that reflected international standards and current public administration challenges. The strategy included leveraging leading pedagogical techniques, ICT, and innovative technologies. It also envisaged engaging esteemed professors from global universities, executing collaborative programs with international think tanks and universities, and conducting in-depth studies on global best practices in public sector management. These results and activities provided strategic recommendations for further refining the public administration system in Serbia.

This current Project considered, built and expanded the results that the previous development endeavours achieved. For example, the EU-funded "Support to Establishment of the National Academy for Public Administration" ensured assistance during the NAPA's initial stages in 2018. The main results included drafting the Act on internal organisation and systematisation of working posts, the development of internal procedures, directives and acts, and supporting the preparation of by-laws (1 decree and 2 Rulebooks) based on the Law on NAPA and corresponding laws (Law on Changes and Amendments to the Law on Civil Servants and Law on Changes). These efforts included assisting in developing the strategy for introducing and developing financial management and control within the NAPA and preparing a Programme Budget for 2019, including a mid-term budget plan (2019-2021). In addition, the United Kingdom's Good Governance Fund funded the project "Support to the NAPA in Professional Development of Public Administration". The Project supported NAPA in conducting a training needs analysis, upgrading its professional development programmes and developing and evaluating online courses for priority topics.

2   Evaluation Purpose, Objectives and Scope

2.1   Purpose of the final evaluation

The purpose has been to provide information about the results of implementing the "Civil Service Training for the 21st Century in the Republic of Serbia" project (NAPA Project).

2.2   Specific objectives of the final evaluation

The objective has been to assess whether and how the Project achieved its outputs and progressed towards outcomes, the efficiency with which the outputs are delivered and contribute to achieving outcomes, relevance for the national strategic framework and the UNDP Country Programme outcome and sustainability of the results.

The EC summarised findings, presenting data-driven facts from their comprehensive analysis. In the conclusions section, the EC provided substantiated, balanced statements that address the Project's strengths, weaknesses, and outcomes, ensuring a logical link to the findings and reflecting on issues crucial to the beneficiaries. In addition, the EC assessed the extent to which the Project considered social and gender inclusion, equality and empowerment and applied these principles, also analysing UNDP's commitment to rights-based approaches and gender mainstreaming[5]. The EC prepared actionable recommendations and tailored them to guide the evaluation's users in future plans.

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[5] More details are provided in the Section 5 Cross-cutting and Section 6 Evaluation methodology and approach

The report also encapsulated lessons learned, detailing effective and ineffective practices and offering valuable insights for other UNDP initiatives.

Good practices in Project design and implementation have been highlighted, and a particular emphasis had been placed on gender-related results throughout the conclusions, recommendations, and lessons learned.

2.3 Scope of the final evaluation

The final Project's evaluation scope covered its entire duration (from July 2020 until December 2023), ensuring a comprehensive perspective on its various components.

The final evaluation of the NAPA Project encompassed an exhaustive review of its deliverables to ensure a thorough understanding of its multifaceted elements.

2.4 Target groups and beneficiaries

The ET ensured inclusive participation from stakeholders, including both men and women. The evaluation benefited the National Academy for Public Administration and UNDP, providing a detailed analysis of the project's impact and effectiveness. The Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Governments (MPALSG) and the Government of Serbia (GoS) have also gain valuable insights to inform future policy and strategic direction. The civil service and the broader public administration framework have been set to benefit from identifying new opportunities for enhancement and development, ensuring that the findings support the ongoing improvement of public administration in Serbia.

3 Evaluation Criteria and Questions

The EC focused on ToR's relevance, coherence, efficiency, effectiveness, impact, and sustainability criteria.

3.1 Evaluation Criteria

The EC thoroughly assessed the NAPA Project, focusing on its relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, and impact. Also, the evaluation considered additional cross-cutting criteria, gender mainstreaming and leave no one behind.

Relevance Assessment: The EC evaluated the Project's relevance by analysing its alignment with Serbia's national development priorities and strategies. This assessment included determining the Project's fit with the country program's expected outcomes, the UN Development Cooperation Framework, strategic plans, and relevant Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The Project's responsiveness to potential political, legal, economic, and institutional changes in Serbia was also scrutinised. Adaptations were made throughout the Project's implementation to maintain its effectiveness in the evolving national context.

Coherence Assessment: The EC reviewed how the Project aligned and interacted with existing national and international initiatives. This involved examining how the Project's activities synchronised with, complemented, and potentially enhanced other efforts in public administration reform (PAR) in Serbia. The evaluation explored synergistic or conflicting elements to ensure that the Project contributed to a harmonious and collective response to PAR.

Effectiveness Evaluation: The EC examined the Project's efforts in delivering results and contributing to the national legal and strategic framework for public administration reform. The success of Project results was measured, identifying factors influencing their effectiveness and the reasons behind the most prominent results. NAPA's and end beneficiaries' satisfaction with the Project's results was also analysed, including the integration of cross-cutting themes such as gender equality and the leave no-one behind (LNOB) principle under the human rights-based approach.

Efficiency Assessment: This part of the evaluation measured how effectively the NAPA Project delivered results considering the economic use of resources. The evaluation also examined the Project's adaptability to external factors, effectiveness of risk mitigation approaches, management practices, and efficacy of monitoring and evaluation systems in ensuring efficient Project management.

Sustainability Assessment: The EC focused on national ownership and the readiness and willingness of national partners and stakeholders to continue the services and activities initiated by the Project. The potential for scaling up the Project, particularly in the context of policy and regulatory frameworks, was explored. The commitment of partners to provide ongoing support and the long-term benefits of the project interventions for target groups were critical factors in this sustainability analysis.

Impact Evaluation: The impact evaluation centered on determining if the Project contributed to the organizational and functional advancement of NAPA, and whether these efforts contributed to progress in human resource management and the education of civil servants.

Cross-Cutting Issues Assessment: A comprehensive assessment was conducted on how the program's design, implementation, and monitoring integrated critical cross-cutting issues, as detailed in Section 5.

Overall, this evaluation offered a multi-faceted view of the NAPA Project, providing insights into its achievements, challenges, and long-term effects on Serbia's public administration landscape.

3.2   *Key Evaluation Questions*

The TOR provided the basis for the evaluation questions that the final evaluation consultant analyzed and proposed seven key evaluation questions, also using opportunities to introduce other sub-questions to ensure that all areas indicated under the TOR have been considered and covered. The FE report answered these questions using specific, objectively verifiable indicators (OVI) to assess the status or progress.

Table 1: Presentation of the key evaluation questions

Key Evaluation Questions (KQ)	Relevance	Coherence	Effectiveness	Efficiency	Sustainability	Impact	Cross-cutting
Key Question 1: Has the NAPA Project been relevant in responding to the needs of NAPA, other national institutions and beneficiaries?	X	X				X	X
Key Question 2: Has the NAPA Project aligned its intervention with the priorities for the achievement of PAR priorities, and development goals of the Republic of Serbia?	X	X					
Key question 3: Have the NAPA Project and its approaches and activities delivered its outputs and contributed to the attainment of the expected outcomes?			X		X	X	X
Key question 4: Have the implementation of the NAPA Project been efficient concerning adherence to the work plans (timely implementation), flexibility and responsiveness?				X		X	X
Key Question 5: Has the NAPA Project contributed to partnerships, polices and capacities of stakeholders to ensure ownership and sustainability of achieved results?				X	X	X	X
Key question 6 Has the Project contributed to Serbia's broader progress in the reform of public administration and development of civil service in the country?					X	X	X
Key Question 7: Has the NAPA Project considered gender equality, and followed the principle of LNOB during its design and implementation?	X					X	X

X- main evaluation criteria; **X**- additional evaluation criteria

These evaluation questions, judgement criteria, indicators and evidence, following all the provisions from the ToR have been presented in the evaluation matrix (Annex 3)

Each evaluation criterion should be scored using the evaluation rating scale: Highly Satisfactory (HS), Satisfactory (S), Moderately Satisfactory (MS), Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU), Unsatisfactory (U) and Highly Unsatisfactory (HU), - more details in Annex 3.

3.3   Cross-cutting issues

The EC implemented a multifaceted approach to undertake a comprehensive and in-depth analysis of cross-cutting issues throughout the evaluation, ensuring a deep integration of gender considerations and incorporating diverse stakeholder perspectives at every evaluation phase. Specifically, the EC examined the extent to which human rights considerations have been embedded in the Project's activities, also focusing on the benefits to vulnerable groups. For gender equality, the evaluation assessed how the NAPA Project considered gender equality and LNOB principles at the design stage and implemented this approach throughout the lifecycle. The EC also reflected on the Project's overall contribution to gender equality, human rights, and human development.

Table 2: Overview of Gender-responsive Evaluation

Gender-responsive evaluation[6] is an approach that assesses the impact of interventions on gender and power relationships, including structural causes that lead to inequalities and discrimination. It is guided by principles of accountability to international commitments on gender equality, human rights, and women's empowerment. Gender-based analysis will be used to understand the differential effects of interventions on women and men, and the knowledge-based approach will promote gender equality and social change.

Methodological approach to evaluation	Implications for the methodology
- National ownership and leadership - Engagement of rights holders and duty bearers to ensure inclusion and contribute to social cohesion and empowerment. - Planning and implementation of evaluation based on an analysis of power and gender relations, and differential impact analysis. - Highlight innovative approaches to gender equality and empowerment. - Independence, transparency and impartiality of the process - Quality and credibility through application of sound methods. - Utilization focused to ensure knowledge is applied - Ethics to ensure that the rights of individuals involved in the evaluation are respected.	- Data collection has been based on the inputs of the national stakeholders- rights holders and duty bearers - The relevance evaluation criterion assessed the Project's alignment with international norms concerning gender equality - The evaluation questions focused on the empowerment of women; data analysis assessed changes in the relative power between women and men. - Evaluation questions specifically looked to identify innovative approaches to gender equality and empowerment of women. - Gender sensitive language and gender sensitive questions have been employed. - Evaluation report has been utilization focused, seeking to enhance learning among all stakeholders

Central to this approach has been the adherence to gender-responsive evaluation, an analytic method that scrutinises the influence of interventions on gender equality and power dynamics.

The EC used the UNDP Gender Results Effectiveness Framework (GRES) to capture variation in the type of gender results with five categories, namely, Gender Negative, Gender Neutral, Gender Positive, Gender Responsive and Gender Transformative. These categories helped the EC assess and interpret the gender-sensitive aspects of the NAPA. Harnessing a combination of quantitative and qualitative data sources, the EC

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[6] How to Manage Gender Responsive Evaluation. Evaluation Handbook: www.unwomen.org/en/digital- library/publications/2015/4/un-women-evaluation-handbook-how-to-manage-gender-responsive- evaluation (p. 2-4)

created a rounded portrayal of the project's results. This integrative and participatory approach to evaluating cross-cutting issues has been reflective and inclusive, valuing a broad spectrum of insights and experiences and striving to illuminate the complex web of factors that influenced the Project.

4 Evaluation approach and methodology

4.1 Specific approach to this evaluation

The framework for the ex-post evaluation had been set in the Terms of Reference (ToR), and following its provisions, the Evaluation Consultant (EC) developed a tailor-made methodology. The main reference for the evaluation methodology remained the OECD/DAC Evaluation Criteria[7]. The ET adhered to the UN Evaluation Group (UNEG) Norms and Standards and the UNEG Guidance on Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluation[8]..

Expanding on this foundation, the EC applied a theory-based evaluation approach[9] using the reconstructed Theory of Change (ToC); moreover, the evaluation included contribution analysis and system thinking, also reflecting gender-responsive principles and following a human-rights-based approach. The subsequent paragraphs outlined how a unique methodology combining these approaches had emerged for the Project's evaluation.

Theory-based evaluation[10] was grounded in a reconstructed ToC for the NAPA Project, providing a comprehensive and dynamic evaluation approach, emphasizing accountability and continuous learning. It provided a structured framework, considering the ToC as a roadmap outlining the intended sequence of events and causal pathways leading to the desired outcome. This clear articulation of assumptions and expected outcomes allowed the EC to systematically assess whether and how the NAPA Project activities led to the planned outputs and desired outcomes. This approach was instrumental in the context of the NAPA Project, as it facilitated the identification of critical components and variables to measure and analyze, particularly vital as multiple, interrelated factors contributed to the outcomes. The EC promoted theory-based evaluation for its adaptability and learning potential, enabling a comparison between the actual achievements of outputs and outcomes with those presented in the reconstructed ToC. This comparison could reveal discrepancies, shedding light on aspects of the Project that might not have worked as expected. Furthermore, this iterative process of testing the ToC fostered a deeper understanding of the underlying mechanisms and contextual factors that influenced the delivery of outputs and progress towards outcomes. However, this theory-based approach was complemented by contribution analysis and systems thinking.

Contribution analysis[11] served as a robust evaluation tool, mainly used to complement the methodology for complex interventions like the NAPA Project. This method focused on disentangling and examining the plausible connections between the Project's initiatives and the observed outcomes, striving to understand the mechanisms and reasons behind the changes observed. It began with establishing a causal chain or ToC, detailing the expected sequence of events from the project's activities to its ultimate impacts. This set a blueprint of how the Project's designers envisioned the intervention's success. Following this, the analysis involved collecting evidence to validate each chain step. For the NAPA evaluation, this meant verifying whether the planned activities were executed and whether they led to immediate results, culminating in the project's overarching goals.

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[7] Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development / Development Assistance Committee (OECD/DAC), Network on Development Evaluation, Better Criteria for Better Evaluation Revised Evaluation Criteria Definitions and Principles for Use, 2019, available at: https://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/revised-evaluation-criteria-dec-2019.pdf

[8] http://www.uneval.org/document/download/1294

[9] Centre of Excellence for Evaluation (2012). Theory-Based Approaches to Evaluation: Concepts and Practices. Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat.

[10] https://www.evalcommunity.com/career-center/theory-based-evaluation-approach/ and https://www.canada.ca/en/treasury-board-secretariat/services/audit-evaluation/evaluation-government-canada/theory-based-approaches-evaluation-concepts-practices.html

[11] https://www.betterevaluation.org/methods-approaches/approaches/contribution-analysis

The strength of contribution analysis lies in its comprehensive consideration of alternate explanations for the observed outcomes. The evaluation scrutinised external influences or other interventions that might have impacted the NAPA, public administration reform (PAR), and civil service support implementation. By excluding or integrating these other factors, the evaluation could more convincingly attribute the observed changes to the Project. Additionally, contribution analysis acknowledged the critical role of context, especially relevant for the NAPA Project in Serbia, where the political, economic, and social landscape and the EU accession process significantly shaped the backdrop for public administration reform and the development of human resources capacities. The evaluation was, therefore, adaptive, continuously refining the causal chain based on emerging evidence, ensuring that the understanding of the Project's impacts remained relevant and accurate in light of new findings. Contribution analysis provided a robust and flexible framework for a nuanced understanding of the Project's effects. It went beyond documenting changes to unpacking the intricate web of causality, helping stakeholders understand the Project's successes and challenges, and informing future plans and strategies.

The EC benefited from **systems thinking[12]**,, with its holistic emphasis on understanding interactions and relationships within a system. This approach enabled a grasp of the broader interplay within the good governance and PAR ecosystem, allowing the EC to delve into the root causes behind observed outputs (and outcomes) and ensuring that recommendations were grounded in the foundational dynamics of the system. Moreover, systems thinking introduced adaptive feedback loops, ensuring the evaluation remained agile and responsive to emerging findings and changing circumstances. The intricate web of NAPA-related stakeholders and their relationships could be mapped and analysed more clearly, revealing power dynamics and potential synergy or conflict areas. This "systems thinking" approach was particularly useful when assessing sustainability, highlighting possible PAR system advantages and vulnerabilities and suggesting measures to bolster NAPA's ability to address these challenges.

4.2 Reconstructing the Theory of Change

The NAPA Project sought to establish national ownership of transformative initiatives, demonstrating the power of international cooperation in effecting significant changes. Its embedded "Theory of Change" (ToC) provided a strategic framework that outlined critical pathways for Serbia's ongoing public administration reform and civil service development efforts. This ToC served as the intellectual foundation of the project, guiding its objectives and methodologies to ensure alignment with Serbia's broader developmental goals.

The NAPA project hinged on certain contextual prerequisites: the continuity of political stability in Serbia, an unwavering commitment to reforms and the EU accession process, the Serbian government's dedication to public administration reform, and the ambition to meet EU standards in this domain. With financial support from the Swedish International Development Agency and human resources consisting of national and international experts, as well as the commitment of key Serbian institutions, the project was set for implementation. Provided these contextual prerequisites and conditions were maintained and inputs assured, the project's activities, spanning from July 2020 to December 2023, were expected to be effectively implemented.

Following this logic, the ToC envisaged that if the projected activities were successfully implemented—including the development of a comprehensive Document Management System, updating standard operating procedures, and enhancing the NAPA legal framework—and if a robust network of experts was established with insights from EU best practices, along with advanced professional training for NAPA staff, this would lead to progress. Furthermore, if training needs assessments led to cutting-edge curricula, the trainer network was strengthened, and support was provided to commercialise training and exposure to international practices, it would culminate in significant functional and institutional advancements for NAPA. These efforts might encompass creating a flagship course for decision-makers, the development of an e-learning platform, and enhancing media presence and research capabilities. These activities rested on critical assumptions: alignment with NAPA's strategic priorities, adopting new operational modalities, responsiveness to civil servants' needs, and timely delivery with designated funding. Should these assumptions have held, the project was to yield key outputs like an improved professional development management system, enhanced staff capabilities, new

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[12] Richard Hummelbrunner (2011). Keynote Address "Systems Thinking and Evaluation". Conference "Systemic Approaches in Evaluation; and Bowman K. et al. (2015). Systems Thinking: An introduction for Oxfam Project Staff

training methodologies, a quality assurance system, and an established research centre, all contributing to Serbia's broader public administration reform.

If the intended outputs of the NAPA Project were realised, and the assumptions of continued political stability, commitment to reforms and EU accession, and favourable conditions for public administration enhancement in Serbia were met, then the project could mark a progression toward significant outcomes. Specifically, NAPA would emerge as a robust, well-operational institution, and civil servants would benefit from innovative learning tools and institutional support, including a centre of excellence. This progress was expected to contribute to a larger impact: creating an inclusive and prosperous society in Serbia, underpinned by a strengthened national public administration and civil service system in line with European standards.

During the data collection phase, the EC focused on the TOC (as indicated in the previous paragraphs, under the Theory-based evaluation), and considered the two key questions:

Has the ToC been valid and credible?

The EC assessed the validity and credibility of the ToC by analysing the intervention logic, including the hierarchy of objectives, potential gaps in the logic, and the sufficiency of preconditions to reach specific and overall objectives.

Has the ToC been realistic and achievable?

The EC analysed if the NAPA Project could achieve its outputs and progress towards outcomes. The EC analysed whether the partners, primarily the NAPA and critical national institutions, had enough capacity and resources to implement the planned activities and continue using established capacities or require additional support.

INPUTS

- **Financial:**
  Budget: USD 2,153,498.02
  Contribution: Swedish International Development
- **Human:**
  National Agency for Public Administration (NAPA), UNDP, Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self Governments (MPALSG), Government of Serbia; Independent and regulatory bodies; local self-government units.
- **Political:**
  EU and Serbia political dialogue, commitments of the GoS
- **Technical:**
  National and international expertise and resources
- **Time:**
  July 2020- December 2023

ACTIVITIES

1.1.1. Development of a full Document Management System for electronic business operations

1.1.2. Development of standard operating procedures in line with the electronic processes, especially in the area of financial management and control

1.1.3. Assessment and updating of the NAPA legal framework

1.2.1 Development and maintenance of a roster of experts, both domestic and international

1.2.2. Assessment of the EU best practices in the area of internships for civil servants

1.2.3. Professional training provided to NAPA staff in order to enhance internal capacities

2.1.1. Conduct a training needs assessment aiming to propose new curricula to address current challenges for the public administration

2.1.1 Strengthening and improving the network of trainers\

2.2.1. Support to preparation and implementation of commercial training

2.2.2. Exposure of NAPA staff to international best practices and ToT for further development of curricula

2.2.3. Establishment of the NAPA flagship course on professional public sector management for decision-makers

2.2.4 Development of NAPA's e-learning platform, with online modules using the latest e-learning techniques

2.3.1 Support for media coverage, organisation of public events and preparation of communication plan

2.3.2 Support for establishing a library, publishing and research activity

OUTPUTS

Output 1.1: Developing the capacities of the NAPA for effective coordination and implementation of the professional development management system.

Output 1.2: Strengthening staff capacities to support the further development of the institution..

Output 2.1. NAPA has introduced new training methods

Output 2.2. NAPA has established a training quality assurance system.

Output 2.3: The Centre for Research and Policy Advice for Public Sector and Human Resource Management and Development was established.

Output 2.4: Media outreach and visibility of the NAPA and the reform of PAR ensured

OUTCOMES

Outcome 1: NAPA is a well-established and operational institution capable of delivering high-quality services

Outcome 2: Civil servants have enhanced capacities through innovative learning tools and institutional support (a center of excellence for the public sector and human resource development)

IMPACT

- Improved inclusive and prosperous society in Serbia through strengthened national public administration and civil service systems, aligned with European standards

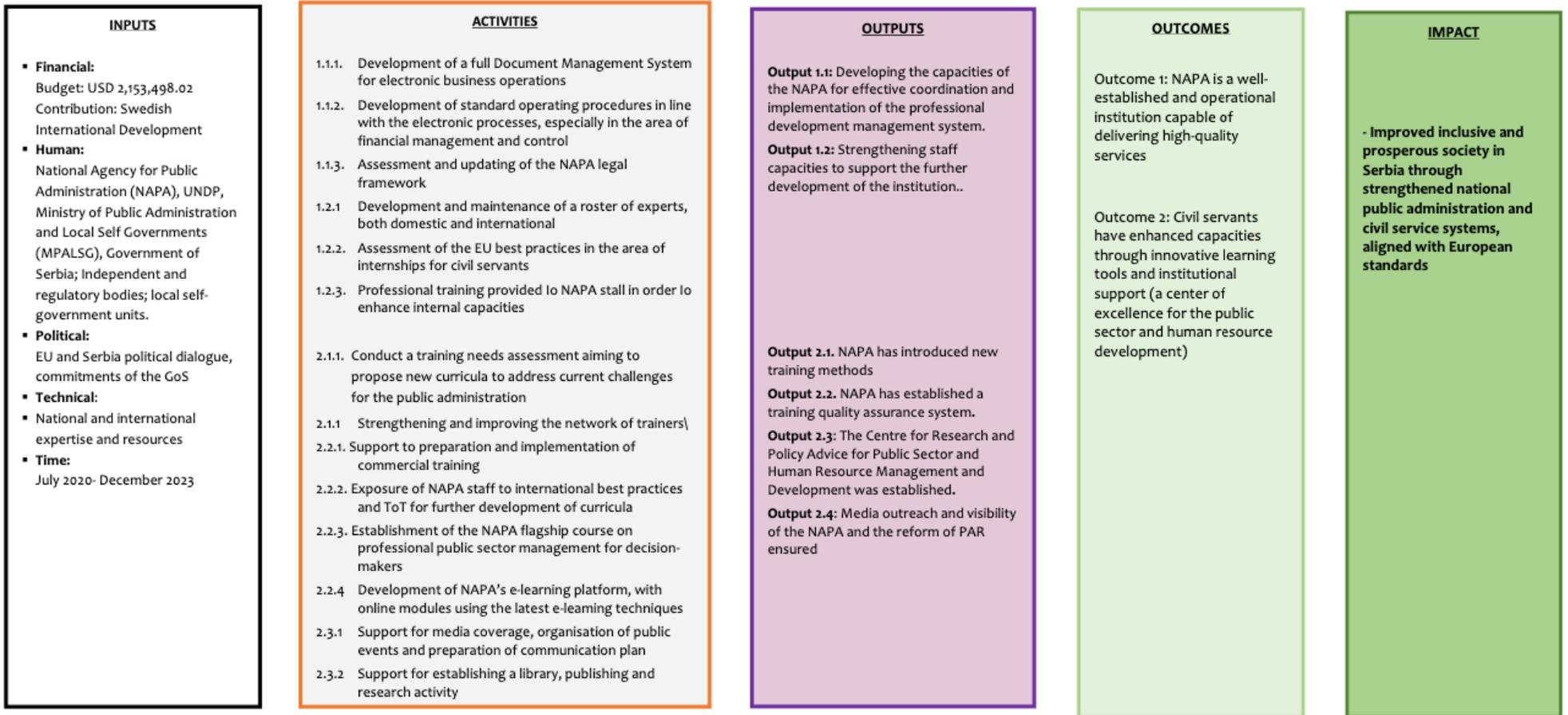**Contextual factors:**

Political stability continues, and dedication to reforms and the EU accession process remain priorities

The commitment of the Government of Serbia and other governance actors to reform public administration and improve human resources management in the civil service

The willingness of the authorities in Serbia to implement EU standards in public administration

ASSUMPTIONS

- Activities are consistent with the NAPA's needs and strategic priorities.
- The National Academy for Public Administration adopts the operational modality and tools developed and tested.
- The assistance available through the project responded to the needs of the final beneficiaries/ civil servants.
- New training programs and modalities responded to the needs of civil servants.
- The NAPA Project and all activities aligned with the organisational capacities with a high level of ownership
- Procedures allow for the timely delivery of activities; Funding is spent how it is designated.

ASSUMPTIONS

- Continued political stability and Government commitment towards reforms and EU accession continues.
- Conditions in Serbia favourable for improvement of the public administration and development of capacities of civil servants in Serbia
- NAPA remains the central institution for the professionalisation of civil service

4.3 Data collection methods and instruments and data analysis

The NAPA Project culminated in a final evaluation encompassing both summative and formative methodologies. The summative component aimed to encapsulate and critically evaluate the lessons learned, pinpointing the realisation of discernible results at both output and outcome levels. The formative aspect looked ahead, pondering the adaptability of these results for future phases and possible expansions of the NAPA Project. The evaluation used various information sources and benefited from different data-gathering tools, enabling a comprehensive understanding of the Project's roll-out and influence in Serbia.

The methodology for this evaluation reflected the ToC model and employed a mixed-methods paradigm that synergised qualitative and quantitative data collection and interpretative techniques. Qualitative data methods, including key informant interviews, group discussions, and reflective sessions, dominated the landscape, while quantitative data from entities like the NAPA, the Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-governments, and other institutions complemented the findings.

Participatory data-gathering methods were the cornerstone, validating the authority and prowess of program affiliates, especially from diverse sectors of Serbian society. The EC, aware of inherent biases in research, pledged complete immersion and ongoing self-reflection on potential power disparities vis-a-vis the evaluation subjects, ensuring data triangulation and harvesting insights from various sources to authenticate findings and spotlight consensus and variance points. This evaluation methodology and its well-elaborated approach based on the EC's experience from similar settings enabled the NAPA Project evaluation to stand robust in its relevance, applicability, and integrity within the context of Serbia's public administration and civil service reform.

4.3.1 Analysis of Project records and secondary literature

The evaluative process began with thoroughly examining the NAPA Project, its inputs, and deliverables while reviewing national and sector-specific strategic documents. It included an assessment of national regulations, PAR-related reports, and strategic directives related to the Project. These sources provided insights into Serbia's governance context during the Project's implementation. The EC also explored external factors influencing public administration reform and human resource development, situating the NAPA Project's operational context. The desk audit integrated national report insights, aligning evaluation queries with the mission's objectives. This methodology created a narrative linking the Project's goals with the evaluation approach. In subsequent stages, the EC revisited documents and engaged with key institutions, using a standardized analytical tool to systematize findings to comprehensively understand the Project.

4.3.2 Primary data collection

This evaluation followed gender-sensitive and feminist approaches that ensure stakeholders' participation in interviews and focus groups, including men and women from the national institutions (e.g., the NAPA, the MPALSG, governmental entities and the independent and regulatory bodies, CSOs, etc). These methods have been further enriched through a human rights-based approach (HRBA) reflecting the principles of transparency, equality, and non-discrimination.

For evaluating the Project, the EC employed a purposive sampling technique- focusing on the key informants' selection influenced by their level and nature of engagement ("purpose"), encompassing areas such as formulation, decision-making, implementation, monitoring, and benefiting. The EC organised in-person and online semi-structured interviews (Annex 2 Interview Guides) with them to extract in-depth insights from stakeholders integrally involved in varying stages of the NAPA Project, ensuring a multi-faceted perspective on its accomplishments and challenges. This process involved a total of 20 key informants (16 women and 4 men- Annex 1)

Semi-structured interviews and group discussions emerged as the most practical methods, considering the NAPA Project's scope and the time limits of the evaluation. The semi-structured interview approach ensured consistent data collection on predetermined themes and offered the latitude to delve into spontaneously emerging insights, challenges, and success narratives.

The EC conducted two focus groups. The first included representatives from local self-governments and public administration structures who participated in the training, gathering their insights on the program's impact and practical application. The second group involved trainers and experts who contributed to the Project, focusing on their experiences and observations regarding the training's effectiveness and participant engagement. These focus groups provided valuable feedback to assess the NAPA Project's overall effects and identify areas for improvement.

4.4 Data analysis

The EC analysed data to facilitate the preparation of the evaluation report, using the qualitative data analysis software MAXQDA to upload completed data collection instruments[13].

Figure 2 MAXQDA features for data analysis
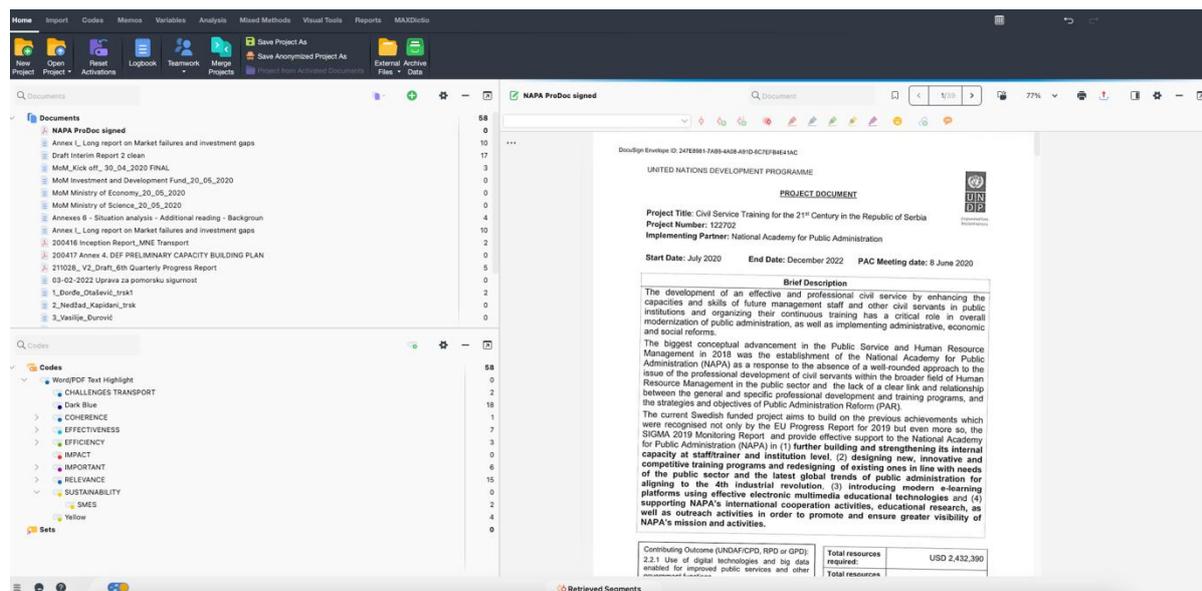
The EC prepared codes and classifications based on the evaluation matrix and its elements - the sub-questions, judgment criteria, and indicators. In parallel, the EC added classifications or other attributes (such as duty bearer, rightsholder, and implementation strategy) to facilitate data analysis that was tailored to the evaluation purpose.

The responses were grouped according to the evaluation matrix and respondent categories (UNDP NAPA Project team, national authorities/partners, UN officials, institutional duty bearers, and rights holders). Interview notes were coded against the evaluation matrix for alignment with its judgment criteria and indicators.

The content analysis involved the following methodologies:

Cross-Validation[14]: The EC applied a cross-validation approach, validating information from different methods to ensure the accuracy of findings. By comparing data from interview responses, group discussions, project documents, and secondary data, the EC verified findings against established benchmarks, such as international standards or results from similar capacity development/ organizational strengthening initiatives.

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[13] Such instruments include document review templates, semi-structured interview guides (individual and group), and discussion or reflection guides.

[14] Morras-Imas and Rist define triangulation of methods as "Collection of the same information using different methods in order to increase the accuracy of data", p. 300. Morra **Imas**, L. G., & **Rist**, R. C. (2009). The Road to Results: Designing and Conducting Effective Development Evaluations. Washington, D.C., World Bank.

Triangulation of Sources: To ensure the internal validity of findings, the EC examined multiple sources. This triangulation, involving various sources, ensured the confirmation and cross-checking of major trends. For example, data from UNDP and NAPA, government institutions, rights holders, and external experts were cross-checked to identify and confirm significant trends. This approach assured the establishment of a pattern by converging data from different sources[15].

4.5   *Ethical Considerations*

Generally, the EC is aware of the OECD DAC ethical considerations for development evaluations[16] and United Nations Ethical Guidelines[17]. The evaluation team will follow ethical considerations in selecting interviewees, interacting with them, and respecting their personal and institutional rights.

The EC requested informed consent from stakeholders before asking questions about the NAPA Project evaluation. To obtain consent, the EC briefly explained the evaluation's reasons and objectives and the questions' scope. Stakeholders had the right to refuse or to withdraw at any time. The EC also ensured respondent privacy and confidentiality, as disclosing confidential information may seriously jeopardise the efficiency and credibility of the evaluation process. Therefore, the EC was responsible for exercising discretion in all matters of the final NAPA Project evaluation, not divulging confidential information without authorisation. The EC respected informants' right to provide information confidently and ensure that sensitive information cannot be traced to its source to protect the key informants from reprisals. Original data, including interview records and notes from interviews, are retained in confidential files until the completion of the evaluation. The EC is fully independent and unaware of any conflicts of interest for this work and during the evaluation process, the EC followed the principles of impartiality, credibility, and accountability.

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[15]Morras- Imas and Rist, p. 376.

[16] https://www.oecd.org/development/evaluation/qualitystandards.pdf

[17] United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG), UNEG Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation- UNEGFN/CoC , 2020. Ref to
http://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/2866

5   Presentation of findings

The final evaluation has presented the following findings, responding directly to the evaluation criteria and questions detailed in the scope and objectives section of the report and are based on evidence derived from data collection and analysis methods[18].

5.1   *Relevance*

In evaluating the relevance of the NAPA Project, the EC considered several critical aspects. Initially, the EC assessed the extent to which the project addressed the needs of the stakeholders, encompassing an evaluation of the project's relevance to the needs of its partners and beneficiaries and the degree of partner involvement in the project's design and implementation. The EC also examined the relevance of the Project's intervention area, analysing the need for revision and changes in the implementation framework.

F1. The NAPA Project is a strategic and transformative initiative addressing critical challenges in modernising and professionalising public administration employees in Serbia.

The analysis of the situation concerning the NAPA and the overall system of capacity development in public administration highlighted the need for "building NAPA's institutional capacity, particularly enhancing administrative efficiency and operational frameworks to establish it as a leading public administration training institution[19]". Specifically, the analysis highlighted the need to strengthen NAPA's role in advocating and implementing specialised activities for transparent and merit-based recruitment in Serbia's civil service. There was a need to expand NAPA's training portfolio, including technical areas and the overall training cycle quality, as prerequisites to meet the evolving challenges of public administration. In addition, the financial aspects of NAPA's long-term stability required attention, including funding diversification. Finally, the need for a more systematic NAPA's role in coordinating capacity development and training activities at the national and local levels has been emphasised. The EC finds that this systemic and substantive problem analysis set the framework for the NAPA Project; it adopted a multifaced approach, responding to the specific needs for NAPA's institutional development, technical and research capacities enhancement, and quality of services improvement. These organisational development efforts strived to enable NAPA to become pivotal in supporting human resources development in public institutions and among civil servants, aligning it with global best practices and standards.

The Project adopted the idea that "enhancing technical capacities is imperative in the rapidly evolving landscape of public administration[20]" and supported NAPA to integrate state-of-the-art e-learning platforms and multimedia educational technologies into its framework. The EC finds that such an approach positioned NAPA at the forefront of public administration training, equipped to handle current administrative challenges while remaining agile for future technological shifts.

Recognising that solid research and policy insights underpin robust training programs[21], the Project also responded to the need to strengthen NAPA's research capabilities through the assistance of its Research Center. The EC finds that the Project's approach was critical in ensuring that NAPA's adopted and followed the paradigm that "training and development of civil servants' capacities should be informed by empirical research and aligned with the latest trends in public sector management[22]". Supporting the Research Center in becoming functional in providing evidence-based policy advice and conducting (advanced) research has contributed to refining NAPA's training programs, ensuring that these programs more relevant and impactful[23]". Moreover, the Project addressed the NAPA's need for quality services as a critical demand for

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[18] The methodology section of the report provided details

[19] Reference to the problem analysis from the project design, and the NAPA's strategic priorities and the assessment of public administration in Serbia

[20] https://mpra.ub.uni-muenchen.de/69148/1/MPRA_paper_69148.pdf

[21] A Users' Guide to Measuring Public Administration Performance, UNDP Oslo Governance Centre, 2009 https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/publications/Measuring%20Public%20administration.pdf

[22] Ibidem, A Users' Guide to Measuring Public Administration Performance

[23] KII notes

elevating the training and development services standard. The introduction of innovative training methods and the development of a comprehensive quality assurance system ensured that NAPA's offerings were high in quality and tailored to civil servants' specific developmental needs. The continuous assessment of program effectiveness and the accreditation of training programs and providers reinforced NAPA's core functions for civil service training.

The EC finds that the NAPA Project's holistic and strategically nuanced approach addressed its core areas while supporting the modernisation of Serbia's public management and civil service. The NAPA's representatives stated that the Project's support of institutional development and technical enhancement, research capability, and quality improvements played a crucial role in transforming NAPA into a leading regional capacity development institution[24]. At the country level, "this transformation is important in moving Serbia's public administration reform agenda, ensuring it is well-equipped to handle present challenges and adapt to future dynamics[25]".

More generally, the EC finds that the NAPA Project responded to Serbia's needs and objectives of administrative, economic, and social reforms. For example, the Project supported NAPA in bringing to the broader attention the lack of a cohesive knowledge management cycle and a comprehensive career management system, an evident gap in the Serbian civil service[26]. At the same time, the Project's focus on enhancing the capacities and skills of civil servants, particularly management staff, reflected the understanding of their critical role in driving reforms and effectively implementing policies. Therefore, these efforts for national-level strategic alignment concerning human resources in public administration and the development of capacities could ensure that modernised and professionalised public administration that is integrated into larger development and reform processes.

F2. The NAPA Project's flexible approach, characterised by its swift adaptation to digital methods, strategic budget reallocations, the extension of its timeline, and a heightened focus on digitalisation, was critical to its ability to navigate the challenges of the pandemic effectively. This adaptability ensured that the Project remained on course to achieve its goals and provided valuable support to NAPA and its beneficiaries in a rapidly evolving landscape.

The ET finds that this adaptability was crucial for the Project to meet its beneficiaries' evolving needs and optimise its resources effectively under rapidly changing circumstances. While preserving its relevance, the Project displayed a high degree of flexibility that contributed to delivering results, particularly in the face of the unexpected challenges that the COVID-19 pandemic posed. The pandemic brought about the shifting operational environment, which rendered traditional, in-person training methods inoperable, necessitating a swift pivot to alternative, digital means of delivering training and development programs. Thus, the Project demonstrated adaptability and quickly transitioned many of its activities to digital platforms, ensuring the continuity of training programs. At the same time, the figures indicate increased demand for digital solutions and remote learning among beneficiaries (hence, NAPA continued its functions without interruption.

In addition, the NAPA management, through the Project Steering Committee- proposed reallocating the Project's funds from activities that the developments in the external environment affected (such as international consultancy and physical events) towards strengthening digital infrastructure and remote engagement methods. This focus on digitalisation was pivotal in ensuring that NAPA's core functions could adapt to and thrive in a predominantly digital working environment.

The ET finds that digitalisation and online training delivery have been required and well justified during the pandemic. This online training delivery continued to be prioritised even after removing the imposed measures, while traditional in-person was less evident. The informants recognised that "online training offered significant cost benefits and flexibility, being particularly effective for providing asynchronous, self-paced educational experiences, making it accessible to a broader audience with varying schedules and learning preferences. The experts praised the Project's flexibility in support of online learning opportunities;

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[24] KII notes

[25] KII notes

[26] https://www.sigmaweb.org/publications/Monitoring-Report-2021-Serbia.pdf

still, they recognised that traditional in-person training options hold a unique value that online platforms struggle to replicate, especially in fostering engagement, peer-to-peer networking and real-time interaction[27].

F3. The Project remained well-aligned with institutional needs and public administration-related strategic priorities during its implementation.

The analysis of the changes on the demand side[28] shows that the Project's areas of intervention remained relevant throughout its implementation. The ET finds that NAPA is becoming a genuinely modern institution for professional development and training[29], from data collection and processing, developing training methodologies and instruments, accrediting training programs and providers, implementing training programs, providing professional assistance, and collaborating with various institutions. The recent EU Progress Report for Serbia[30] stated that professional development efforts have intensified concerning civil servants and human resources management. However, the report highlighted a need to establish links between human resource management planning and development and organisational and individual performance.

The analysis indicated that public administration institutions face challenges concerning capacities for transparent and accountable governance and public management, endangering long-term development efforts in Serbia. In recent years, various commonly accepted indicators of the quality of a country's institutions[31] have shown that Serbia remains below the levels obtained in the EU countries[32]. The country needs to bridge skills gaps, and improve the performance of public structures, including civil service and expedite reforms. These benchmarks highlight the importance of the NAPA's capacities to support human resource development in public administration.

In addition, the EU progress report recognised that policy-making institutions are in place, noting that applying the planning system law remains challenging. In this context, the stakeholders emphasised the need to consider NAPA as the partner in the policy planning process[33] and remain active concerning capacity development in critical sectors.

5.2   Coherence and responsiveness

When assessing the coherence of the NAPA Project, the EC scrutinised its internal consistency, evaluating the logical connection between its objectives and the overall UNDP strategic priorities for Serbia. In addition, the EC assessed the Project's external coherence by examining how well it aligned national policies, strategies, and other good governance and public administration reform initiatives. In parallel, the EC explored the extent to which the Project built on the previous results of development partners and coordinated with other interventions addressing sector reforms in Serbia and whether it established synergies and collaboration with these initiatives.

F4. The Project has ensured strong internal coherence - the objectives, activities, and expected outcomes of the NAPA project are logically connected and consistent with each other

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[27] The experts believe that physical presence in a learning environment can create a stimulating and interactive experience, allowing for immediate feedback, adaptation to learners' needs, and a dynamic exchange of ideas; all these factors are crucial for effective learning and professional development

[28] The ET assessed if the external developments required response and if the Project adjusted and fine-tuned its intervention as set out in the ToC and its intervention logic. The evaluation has focused on whether the overall objective and outcomes, as the main references under the intervention logic, remained valid and achievable or whether there was a case for revision to take account of changes in the external environment, demand, or speed of delivery.

[29] KII notes and SIGMA report

[30] https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2023-11/SWD_2023_695_Serbia.pdf

[31] Including World-wide governance indicators, the Corruption Perceptions Index, but also the World Economic Forum's Competitiveness Index

[32] For example, World Wide Governance Indicators for Serbia, https://info.worldbank.org/governance/wgi/

[33] For example, training on implementation of the planning system law, including examples and case studies

The internal coherence of the NAPA's Project has been ensured through strategic alignment within its framework to create a strong connection between its objectives, activities, and anticipated outcomes. This intervention is intended to facilitate capacity development through a sustainable mechanism (embodied in operational and functional NAPA) for a transformative impact on Serbia's public administration to meet international standards and incorporate the advancements of the 4th industrial revolution[34]. Critical areas of the Project's efforts embodied NAPA's institutional and functional progress, among others, by introducing innovative learning tools and establishing a centre for excellence in the public sector. These efforts for enhancing the capacities and skills of management staff and civil servants through continuous training remained central to modernising public administration.

The EC finds that the strategic framework of the Project was robust, based on a formal Theory of Change as the primary problem analysis tool that facilitated and maintained its internal coherence. The EC finds that expanded activities on e-learning and online opportunities have been well-integrated for more effective training delivery. The EC finds that a deep understanding of the context from the design stage has led to well-elaborated components. The ToC served as a roadmap for project implementation, outlining the interconnections between elements and their hierarchical importance. This approach highlighted areas of synergy, ensuring greater internal coherence and effective resource allocation. Consequently, this internal coherence enhanced the overall efficacy of the Project, providing a well-balanced combination of components for achieving the overarching goal of modernising and professionalising public administration in Serbia.

F5. The NAPA Project aligned with the UNDP corporate strategic efforts and integrated the priorities delineated in the UNDP Country Programme Document for Serbia (2021-2025)

The EC finds that the NAPA Project contributed to the broader objectives of strengthening governance and improving public sector efficiency as outlined in the UNDP Strategic Plan 2022-2025[35]. Specifically, the NAPA Project contributed to key areas such as effective governance, institutional capacity building, and public administration reform. The UNDP Strategic Plan emphasised the importance of structural transformation, inclusivity, resilience, and leveraging digital transformation—all resonating with NAPA's focus on modernising public administration, developing digital and innovative learning tools, and enhancing institutional capacities. The Project indirectly addressed the Plan's priority for human rights-based approaches and empowering marginalised groups, supporting citizens-focused services and enhancing institutional transparency.

The Project aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Framework (2021–2025)[36], contributing to Strategic Priority 3 by building trust and mutual accountability through the rule of law, rights and duties agenda. These efforts involved strengthening public sector governance and enhancing civil servants' capacities to benefit from civic participation in policymaking. Moreover, the efforts within the UNCT Result Group for Strategic Priority 3 and interaction with various UN agencies provided that the NAPA Project aligned its efforts with other UN results (including deliverables like policy analyses, reports, and manuals) that aided the Government's accession process and were instrumental in contributing to progress with the country's public administration reform.

Another aspect of the Project's internal coherence is its multifaceted alignment with the UNDP Country Programme Document for Serbia (CPD) 2021-2025[37] and its broad objective to foster democratic governance and strengthen accountability and oversight functions in Serbia. The Project aligned with the CPD's commitment to more responsive institutions and empowered citizens, building on the Government's efforts for more efficient public administration. Its focus on modernising public administration through digital transformation, particularly through e-learning, dovetails with the CPD's digitalisation goals. Additionally,

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[34] Reference to the Project document

[35] https://www.undp.org/publications/undp-strategic-plan-2022-2025

[36] https://serbia.un.org/en/resources/publications

[37] https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2022-06/CPD%20Serbia.pdf

the Project's efforts in developing public administration capacities reflect the CPD's commitment to enhancing civil service capabilities, including implementing gender policy priorities.

The NAPA Project, a key initiative under the Rule of Law and Public Administration Reform portfolio, aligns closely with the Good Governance Cluster of UNDP Serbia. This Project synergised with the Cluster's concerted effort to foster accountable institutions and develop governance mechanisms that are effective, agile, and transparent, addressing the complex demands of contemporary governance and democracy[38].

F6. The NAPA Project showed strong external coherence, fully aligning with national public administration reform priorities

The NAPA Project aligned with the Government of Serbia's broader priorities, emphasising the modernisation and reform of public administration as vital for successfully implementing economic reforms and maintaining a nation's competitive edge internationally. In addition, the GoS programme recognised that the capabilities of civil servants are fundamental to successfully implementing reforms targeting socio-economic development and reform in the country[39]. Also, the Project aligns with the GoS efforts to institutionalise the NAPA[40] as the central institution of the professional training system in the public administration of the Republic of Serbia, with the status of a publicly recognized organizer of non-formal adult education activities.

The Project aligned seamlessly with the Public Administration Reform Strategy 2021-2030[41], underscoring the necessity for more efficient policy development, coordination mechanisms, and digital transformation in public services. It also accentuated the importance of refining administrative procedures to align with good governance principles and bolstering public involvement, accountability and transparency. As the PAR Strategy outlined, the primary goal has been to enhance public administration operations and the quality of public policy formulation following the European Principles of Public Administration. These efforts have been planned to deliver services to citizens and businesses and foster a professional public administration, contributing to economic stability and an improved standard of living. In this context, the PAR Strategy recognised NAPA as a critical institution ensuring equal access to and quality professional development for all public administration employees. Human resource management has been a distinct PAR strategy goal, encompassing efforts to attract and recruit staff with the requisite competencies (Specific Objective 2) and encourage and retain skilled and motivated staff in a supportive environment (Specific Objective 3). In addition, the Strategy strived to innovate the system for professional development and exams in public administration based on needs analysis for competency, knowledge, skill, and ability enhancement (Specific Objective 4).

The Project primarily supported Specific Objective 3, envisioning NAPA as a pivotal change agent. Under this objective, by 2030, the focus was on attracting and retaining competent civil servants through career development opportunities, innovation, stronger motivation, and increased mobility. Additionally, the Project contributed to the Action Plan for implementing the PAR Strategy. Moreover, it contributed to the results reported under the second Annual Report on the Public Administration Reform Strategy Action Plan for 2021 (pending approval by the PAR Council). Progress included improvement in recruitment processes and efficient career management systems; the Project effects have been particularly important for developing a functional and innovative system for professional development and state exams in public administration.

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[38] Central to its mission is bolstering fundamental areas crucial for institutional reform and strengthening, such as public financial management, parliamentary oversight, and the broad spectrum of public administration reform https://www.undp.org/serbia/good-governance-0

[39] https://media.srbija.gov.rs/medsrp/dokumenti/ana-brnabic-ekspoze-1022_cyr.pdf

[40] It was established by the Law on the National Academy for Public Administration ("Official Gazette of the RS", No. 94/2017 of 19 October 2017) and began its work in January 2018. The work of the National Academy for Public Administration is supervised by the Ministry of State Administration and Local Self-Government

[41] The Strategy for Public Administration Reform in the Republic of Serbia for the period 2021–2030- available at https://mduls.gov.rs/wp-content/uploads/PAR-Strategy-in-the-Republic-of-Serbia-for-the-period-2021%E2%88%922030.pdf

In addition, the NAPA has contributed to implementing several laws to facilitate civil service development, integrating a competence system into all human resource management aspects. It has been instrumental in fostering an environment conducive to personal and professional growth, reflecting the Strategy for Professional Development of Civil Servants and the Strategy for Professional Development of Employees in Local Government Units in Serbia. These strategies aim to establish uniform standards and criteria for professional development, ensuring equitable access and quality training for all public administration employees.

During its implementation, the NAPA Project contributed to the priorities outlined in several recent strategic documents. Its alignment with the E-Government Development Programme 2023-2025 and its Action Plan mirrors the Project's commitment to digital transformation in public administration. Also, the amendments to the Decree for Internal Organization and Systematization of Workplaces underscore the Project's focus on enhancing the structure and efficiency of public service. Moreover, NAPA's initiatives resonated with the PFM Reform Programme and the Programme for Local Self-Government Reform, emphasising its role in broader administrative reforms and capacity building within public service.

> **F7. The NAPA Project aligned with the global sustainable development agenda, contributing to specific Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions).**

Under SDG 16, which focuses on Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions, mainly targeting 16.6 and 16.7, the NAPA Project actively promoted good governance and public administration reform. It focused on developing efficient, accountable, and transparent institutions and supported the professional development of public officials. It also encouraged responsive, inclusive, participatory, and representative decision-making at all levels within Serbia's public sector.

The Project has also been relevant for SDG 5 on gender equality. The main reference is 5.5, as the Project prioritised women and girls competent and active participation in the governance structures, while promoting equal opportunities at every level in the public administration system. Furthermore, it underscored the importance of incorporating gender perspectives into training programs and activities, contributing to a gender-sensitive public management system. In connection to this, the Project contributed significantly to SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities), explicitly targeting 10.2., by advocating for the inclusion of all individuals from civil service and public administration structures and developing their decision-making capacities, regardless of their age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion, economic, or other status.

The Project promoted global citizenship education within the public administration, aligning with SDG 4 (Quality Education) and mainly target 4.7 by conducting legal reviews and encouraging best practices in training initiatives and institutional reforms for enhanced capacities and accountability within public institutions.

5.3 Effectiveness

In evaluating the effectiveness of the NAPA Project, the focus was on the extent to which the Project met its targets and achieved its intended outputs[42]. This process included evaluating NAPA's capacity development for effective management, including progress in implementing a document management system, introducing new training methods and quality assurance systems, and completing training plans. This part of the assessment of NAPA's operational and functional capacities, the development and use of innovative learning tools, and the operational status of a Centre of Excellence for public sector and human resource development.

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[42] The analysis of the NAPA Project's effectiveness focused on strategic achievements concerning the achievements of targets and progress under respective Outputs; however, a detailed overview of results and annexes are available in annual project reports

The EC explored the Project's unforeseen results, both positive and negative, and their impact on various stakeholders. It was critical to understand how multiple constraints affected the Project's implementation and to learn about the mitigation strategies.

> **F8. The Project has adopted and followed a strategic and effective approach to establishing and strengthening NAPA's foundational elements- such as operational systems, functional processes, and tools.**

The EC finds that the Project met its targets for *Output 1.1*, progressing in developing the capacities of the NAPA for effective coordination and implementation of the professional development management system.

The NAPA confirmed that the Document Management System (DMS), a cornerstone of the organisation's strategy for digital transformation, has been developed and operationalised. The NAPA stated that the complete development of this system represented a leap forward in automating and streamlining electronic business operations, positioning NAPA at the forefront of innovative public administration practices. In addition to the DMS, the Project has achieved its goal of developing standard operating procedures (SOPs) that align with electronic processes, especially in the financial management and control domain. These tools contributed to a comprehensive management and oversight of NAPA's diverse portfolio and exemplify the Project's dedication to enhancing operational efficiency and modernising internal processes.

The EC finds that the DMS uses gender-neutral language, ensuring inclusivity throughout all templates and the system. The SOPs also reflected gender considerations in organisational aspects such as equality in staffing and training. SOP promotes regular gender-sensitivity training for the NAPA employees and provides for gender-balanced formations in its performance. These initiatives represent a significant step towards integrating gender sensitivity into NAPA's framework, enhancing inclusivity and equality in public administration education and practices.

The EC finds that these achievements reflect the fulfilment of the Project's indicators and suggest a strategic consolidation of NAPA's capacity to effectively coordinate and implement professional development management systems, underscoring "the advancements in digital infrastructure and procedural standardisation as pillars of its organisational development".

Concerning *Output 1.2,* the Project has ensured technical support to the NAPA, contributing to its commendable progress in "bolstering staff capacities, a key element in its institutional development strategy[43]". The EC finds that the Project has achieved the target of creating a roster of experts with established cooperation that enriched NAPA's educational offerings. The EC finds that the roster followed gender-sensitive considerations, including balanced and equal representation of genders among the trainers, providing gender sensitivity training to all trainers, and equipping them with the skills and knowledge to handle gender-related topics and create an inclusive learning environment[44]. This achievement showed that NAPA enhanced its ability to provide civil servants with diverse, high-level training experiences. In addition, the Project enabled NAPA to "make important strides in delivering professional training to its staff to enhance internal capacities". The target to train at least 30 staff members has seen substantial progress, with training provided to 27 staff (20 females and seven males). The training initiatives covered a broad spectrum of competencies, equipping the NAPA staff with the skills needed to navigate the complexities of public administration in an increasingly digital and interconnected world.

The Project has also prepared the assessment of the EU's best practices in the realm of internships for civil servants, considering also gender-sensitive aspects. Operationally, the stakeholders reported that "this Project's effort has resulted in the internship program that allowed selected young professionals to engage intensely with NAPA's work". The selection process ensured equitable access and opportunities for all genders, following an inclusive recruitment strategy that actively encourages applications from

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[43] KII national partners

[44] Additionally, the NAPA reported they actively sought trainers with expertise in gender issues, ensuring that gender perspectives were well-represented in their training programs.

underrepresented genders[45]. The NAPA representatives stated that the best of these young professionals who displayed outstanding performance have been allowed to continue their professional development through more in-depth engagement.

> **F9. The Project has markedly advanced NAPA's efforts to develop innovative learning tools. The upgraded Learning Management System and the new mobile learning application have advanced the learning experience for civil servants, reflecting the Project's dedication to digital options and improvements in education. The operational Centre of Excellence for public sector and human resource development is becoming an important element of the NAPA's operations.**

Under Output 2.1[46], the EC finds that the Project supported NAPA in introducing new training methods and establishing a quality assurance system for training.

The Project assisted in conducting a training needs assessment (TNA), informing the development of new curricula that respond to the current challenges within the public administration. The TNA reflected some aspects of gender mainstreaming, collecting and analysing gender-disaggregated data and involving diverse stakeholders, including representatives of all genders, in the assessment process to gather varied perspectives. However, this assessment did not work to identify gender-specific challenges and barriers in public administration roles.

Figure 3 Number of participants by thematic areas in classical classrooms, 2022.
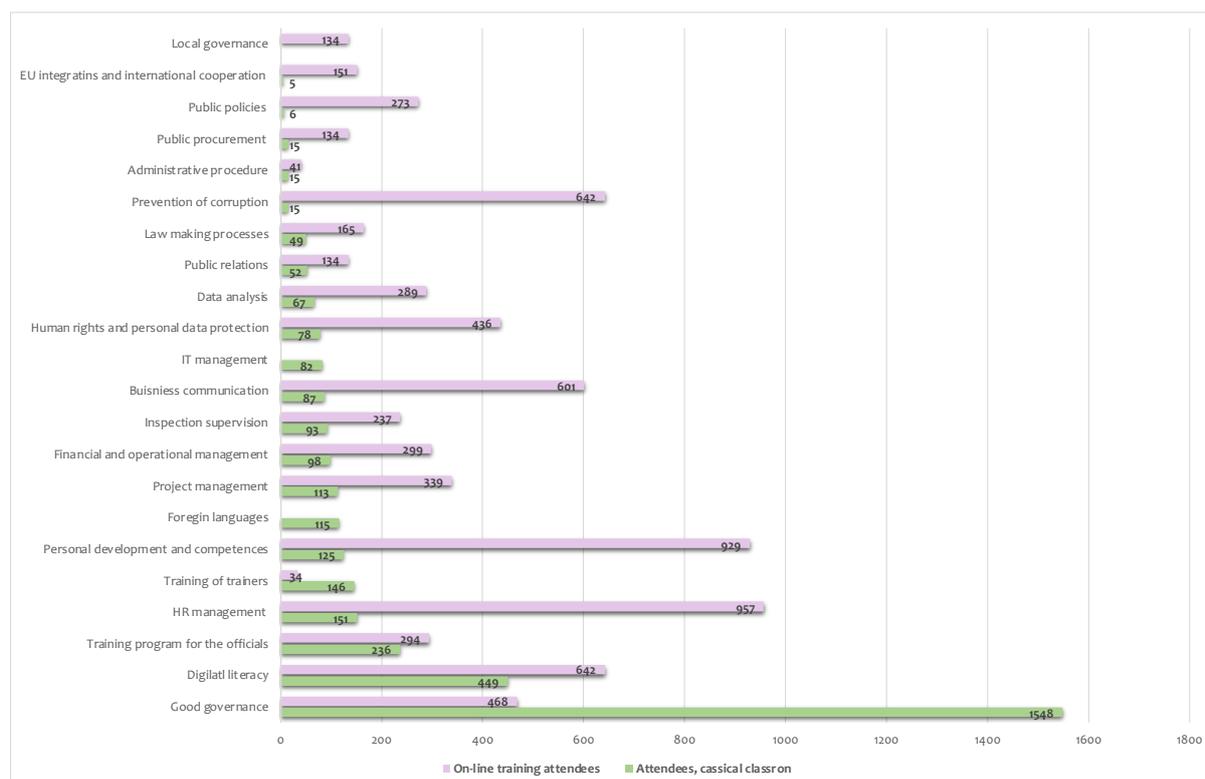
Source: Report on the evaluation of the impact and quality of training programs in public administration

The TNA included analytical studies on the experience and outcomes of relevant national and international institutions, focusing on areas such as Good Governance (including Public Finances), e-government and Digitalization; it also focused on the Training of Trainers. The EC finds that these studies provided a benchmark for NAPA, allowing it to calibrate its programs against internationally recognized standards and practices. Moreover, the Project has supported NAPA to strengthen the network of trainers. In this context,

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[45] KII notes

[46] Output 2.1: Introducing new training methods and establishing a training quality assurance system

the evidence is conducted training in six key areas[47] demonstrating progress in capacity building and professional development. The participants recognised that the topics covered in these training sessions were necessary for aligning with the latest global trends in public administration. They included employee motivation, public and media appearance, modern presentation styles, agile methods in training program development, graphic design, and new technologies in education.

Additionally, the orientation program for senior officials and decision-makers in local self-government units was a critical initiative, ensuring that newly elected officials could effectively integrate into their roles. The training, a mix of on-site and online sessions, covered a comprehensive range of topics crucial for efficient local governance.

The Project progressed under Output 2.2[48]., by supporting NAPA's efforts to establish a centre for research and policy advice for public sector and human resource management and development. This success is underpinned by the Academy's deliberate and strategic actions, as evidenced by the completion of its set indicators.

The Project has made commendable strides in meeting Output 2.2 specific targets illustrating NAPA's comprehensive approach to capacity building and institutional development.

Exposure to International Best Practices: the EC finds that the NAPA's management engagement in international events could be a proxy for organisational commitment to global excellence; the Project has been instrumental in providing assistance to expose NAPA to international best practices. The Project's support of staff's exposure to these practices represented an active effort to import cutting-edge ideas and methodologies into the NAPA and the national framework of public administration. At the same time, this support enabled NAPA to present its services and achievements broadly. This strategic engagement with international standards has been a remarkable achievement for benchmarking NAPA's practices, ensuring that the NAPA's efforts contribute to the regional and global arena of human resource development in public administration.

Introduction of Flagship Course: the development of a flagship course for decision-makers underscores NAPA's role in shaping the competencies of senior leaders within the public sector. The baseline study for curriculum development suggested a thorough approach to educational design to equip senior decision-makers with the tools and insights to navigate and drive innovation within the public sector. The participants recognised that the topics it covered[49], like strategic management and leadership, European Commission project management methodologies, and specific management standards in the public sector, have met their needs, being essential to grasp new duties[50].

The EC finds that the flagship course mainstreamed gender cross-cuttingly, , highlighting the legal provisions for equality and providing practical examples and case studies from gender mainstreaming in the specific context. The course offered both online and in-person mentorship, engaging national experts. Conducted at NAPA with flexible scheduling options, it concluded with issuing performance certificates, marking an important step in enhancing the strategic capabilities of Serbia's senior civil servants.

E-Learning Platform Enhancement: the upgrade of NAPA's LMS and the launch of new online courses reflect an adaptive strategy for educational delivery. This enhancement is a technological improvement for a "paradigm shift towards flexible, accessible, and contemporary learning modes[51]".

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[47] It was reported that , with 248 participants (187 females, 61 males)

[48] Output 2.2: Establishing a centre for research and policy advice for public sector and human resource management and development.

[49] The topics included: Strategic leadership for quality in the public sector; Project management in the public sector according to the methodology of the European Commission; Quality management in the public sector; Management of changes and innovations in the public sector; Specifics of quality management in local governments; Cost-benefit analysis; Application of management system standards in the public sector; Strategic management in the public sector with an emphasis on policy

[50] KII notes

[51] The upgraded platform was released in June 2021 and the number of active users increased by 15% in the first month (July 2021) of usage of the new system. From June 2021 to July 2023 number of active users of NAPA LMS increased by 90 %. The

The EC finds that the Project followed gender-sensitive strategies in enhancing NAPA's e-learning platform, ensuring their digital educational resources were widely accessible. For example, the LMS disaggregates data by gender, enabling NAPA to tailor its e-learning offerings and ensure that they are equitable and responsive to the needs of all genders, thus promoting inclusivity in professional development. The beneficiaries stated that introducing mobile learning software is particularly notable, highlighting an understanding of the evolving learning preferences and the importance of on-the-go access to educational content. NAPA adopted a holistic understanding of human resource development modernisation that encompasses technological advancement, pedagogical innovation, and social inclusivity.

Training Management Quality Assurance System Development: The EC finds that the Project supported NAPA in reviewing its quality assurance system; the desk review and primary data analysis showed that this system reflected gender-sensitive elements, involving a holistic approach encompassing inclusive curriculum content, gender-disaggregated data collection, and targeted outreach to achieve gender balance among participants. It also includes accessible training delivery methods that accommodate diverse needs alongside providing gender-specific support and resources. Also, the evaluation of training programs (as one carried out recently[52]) included gender-sensitive considerations.

In this context, preparing and adopting the annual NAPA Training Development Plan demonstrated NAPA's determination to uphold and continually improve the quality of its training programs. This commitment to quality is essential for maintaining the credibility and effectiveness of NAPA's training initiatives.

External Evaluation of NAPA's Work: the assessment of the status and external evaluation of NAPA has been supported as an impartial appraisal of NAPA's role and effectiveness. This assessment provided a view of NAPA's operational impact and strategic direction in the context of its mission and the needs of public administration. The evaluation report emphasised NAPA's leading role in public administration education, confirming its readiness to continue working on "enhancing management systems, aiming to comply with the SRPS ISO 9001:2015 standard". Integrating the existing DMS and SOP with new quality system documentation is recommended to maintain good practices and a commitment to stakeholders' needs. Concerning this, user surveys informed NAPA's training programs, which were developed in collaboration with relevant authorities and adopted through government procedures.

The NAPA stakeholders stated that the Project's support to this external evaluation served as an impartial appraisal of NAPA's role and effectiveness, providing a perspective of NAPA's operational impact and strategic development.

Research and Development Center Establishment: The Project's support for establishing a research and development centre (in December 2022) marks a significant expansion of NAPA's capabilities. This centre[53], still at the early stage of development, will strategically foster research to inform policy development and advance public administration practices. The informants stated that the centre "already contributes to position NAPA as the opinion leader in the human resource development and public management discourse[54]. It represents a forward-thinking approach to understanding and solving public administration challenges through research and evidence-based policy advice.

The EC finds that some of the initial research the centre coordinated has been highly relevant, providing the basis for follow-up activities and policy development. For example, in partnership with the College of Social Work, NAPA researched the mental health of public employees[55]—a pressing concern exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, economic challenges, and global political tensions. The topic aligns with the TNA findings, highlighting the necessity for mental well-being training. This initial research provided

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total number of attended courses is around 77,000 and is constantly growing. This system is available to all civil servants on https://lms.napa.gov.rs/

[52] Report on the evaluation of the impact and quality of training programs in public administration- https://www.napa.gov.rs/tekst/487/izvestaji-i-evaluacija.php

[53] "Development of research and analytical work and cooperation with scientific organizations within the National Academy for Public Administration, Prepared by: prof. Dr. Dobrosav Milovanović and Blaženka Stojanović, November 2021

[54] KII notes

[55] Mental well-being of public employees- report on research results, Visoka Skola Socijalnog Rada, December 2022

comprehensive guidelines for training in this area. In addition, the Project supported NAPA to enhance its analytical and research capabilities through a partnership with the Institute of Economic Sciences[56], focusing on evaluating training effectiveness and another from the Association for Political Sciences of Serbia aimed at developing tools to assess user satisfaction with public administration services to inform professional development priorities.

The EC finds progression under the indicators for NAPA's Output 2.3[57], which focuses on ensuring media outreach and visibility of the NAPA and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) in the context of public administration reform.

The redesign and adoption of the NAPA Communication Strategy 2021-2022 and the development of a Project Communication Plan covering activities until 2023 reflect a strategic approach to enhancing NAPA's visibility and engagement with its stakeholders. This Strategy focused on continuous, planned, and strategic two-way communication, aiming to build and maintain trust with target audiences internally and externally. It also underscored the Project's dedication to ensuring an understanding of NAPA's role and fostering solid relationships with its audiences and demonstrated a structured approach to enhancing NAPA's public image.

Part of the communication efforts included developing and deploying the NAPA e-Library software (NAJU Infoteka), which provided user-friendly access to various educational materials[58], covering topics like gender equality, stress management, personal data protection, and public policies. The e-Library's interactive nature facilitates communication between users and trainers, enhances the learning experience and promotes knowledge sharing and collaboration.

The Project supported NAPA's media coverage and organisation of critical events. For example, the Project supported the hybrid conference "Modernized Public Administration to Benefit Citizens and Society" and the "Regional Conference on Modernization of Public Administration" using a custom-designed virtual 3D platform. These events provided platforms for exchanging best practices, supporting women leaders in Serbia, and introducing innovative approaches in public administration. Moreover, additional events, such as the "NAPA - Platform for Public Administration Modernisation", DISPA meetings, and the celebration of NAPA's fifth anniversary, further extended NAPA's reach and visibility. These efforts highlighted the Project's impact and demonstrated NAPA's commitment to engaging a broad audience, including international experts and local leaders, in discussions on public administration modernisation.

> **F10. The NAPA Project has generated several unforeseen positive outcomes during its implementation, demonstrating adaptability, influence, and a capacity for innovation. Its adaptability to complex public administration reform and civil service development landscapes, especially in the face of global challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic, allowed activities to continue without interruption.**

The EC finds several positive and negative unexpected changes that the stakeholders and beneficiaries perceived as results of the NAPA Project's implementation. On the positive side, the shift to online learning, expedited by the COVID-19 pandemic, resulted in an unforeseen technological leap for NAPA. This transition catalysed the creation of already elaborated advanced e-learning platforms, and an e-library. These tools and systems collectively enhanced the interactive and dynamic nature of the learning experience. Additionally, these digital initiatives increased accessibility, leading to a notable rise in course participation rates and broadening the reach of NAPA's programs.

Table 3: Number of training programs and number of NAPA training participants, 2018-2022

year	Nr of training programs	Nr attendees
2022	737	25.678

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[56] https://www.napa.gov.rs/tekst/487/izvestaji-i-evaluacija.php

[57] Output 2.3: Ensuring media outreach and visibility of the NAPA and the Kingdom of Sweden as a leading donor in the public sector management reform

[58] The library included 67 new and 70 redesigned educational videos

2021	364	16.568
2020	269	12.559
2019	359	6.365
2018	205	4.081

Source: NAPA

Another unexpected yet beneficial outcome was the international recognition and collaboration opportunities that the Project garnered, expanding NAPA's influence and network far beyond its initial expectations. NAPA staff participated in various international events to exchange best practices and strengthen partnerships. These included meetings and conferences across Europe, focusing on topics like crisis management, public-private sector cooperation, and public administration resilience. NAPA also hosted the NISPAcee Annual Conference. These interactions provided valuable insights into public administration and human resource management.

Conversely, this rapid digital transformation also introduced some challenges. Some stakeholders encountered difficulties adapting to new technologies, underscoring the need for more comprehensive digital literacy training- the figures on training program attendees showed a rather high interest in courses about digital literacy. Still, a potential overreliance on digital platforms for learning raised concerns about the long-term effectiveness of training, particularly the lack of in-person interactions in digital learning environments and its impact on skill development.

These varied changes, both anticipated and unforeseen, underscore the dynamic impact of the NAPA Project. The positive developments have significantly propelled the Project's objectives forward, while the challenges present valuable lessons and opportunities for further refinement. This balanced perspective is crucial for evolving strategies to ensure a comprehensive approach to strengthening human resources in public administration.

> **F11. The positive factors of the NAPA Project include the synchronisation of national commitment, networking, persistent action for the capacity development of civil servants, alignment with the reform priorities, agility in the face of global crises, and influential policy shaping. The Project has been instrumental in enhancing the NAPA's capacities to develop and conduct modern training programmes and monitor the results it has achieved.**

While forging ahead with its mission, the NAPA Project encountered complex challenges, significantly marked by the COVID-19 pandemic; hence, the EC already elaborated on a rapid shift to digital platforms, maintaining the Project's momentum.

Additionally, the public administration and the overall governance system in Serbia faced entrenched political and bureaucratic challenges, including executive domina over the legislative branch, institutional weakening and a decline in good governance practices (as all reliable governance indicators indicated). These external developments affect the NAPA functioning: sustaining and enhancing political will towards advancing capacities of civil servants and implementing public administration towards de-politicisation and professionalisation remain declared priorities, but the external environment necessitates continuous efforts to keep these priorities at the forefront of the policy planning. Such issues underscored the Project's need to balance its modernisation efforts with the evolving political landscape. On the organisational development level, the NAPA has effectively engaged diverse stakeholders with the Project's support, utilising various training methodologies and focusing on sustainable capacity building. This multi-faceted strategy aimed to ensure the Project's relevance, efficacy, and resilience in the face of changing political dynamics and weakening good governance in Serbia.

5.4   *Gender mainstreaming and Leave No One Behind principles*

The EC assessed the NAPA Project's gender considerations and the 'leave no one behind' principle by examining the extent of partners' capacity to implement human rights and gender equality and the Project's effectiveness in mainstreaming these principles. Practically, the EC collected evidence and opinions to

determine the integration and mainstreaming of gender in the Project's design, implementation, and monitoring and its contribution to enhancing stakeholder capacities in these areas.

> **F12. The NAPA Project has been designed to support the implementation of broader frameworks for promoting equality in public administration, showing commitment to intertwining gender and human rights. However, the Project document did not explicitly reference any gender-sensitive analysis nor define clear and robust strategies to implement gender sensitive or leave no one behind approaches.**

While designed to support broader frameworks promoting equality in public administration, the NAPA Project initially lacked explicit references to gender-sensitive analysis or well-defined strategies for implementing gender-sensitive and Leave No One Behind (LNOB) approaches. The Project's foundational problem analysis in public administration did not explicitly demonstrate a gender-sensitive or LNOB focus. This absence in the early stages of the Project design led to a lack of clearly defined gender and LNOB-sensitive result areas or activities. However, the Project document generically emphasised refining and developing curricula to sensitise trainees, focusing on engaging with citizens and ensuring inclusivity in development efforts. It also mentioned gender mainstreaming in policies and budgets, applying a human rights-based approach, and a general anti-discrimination policy.

Despite these initial shortcomings, the Project's execution demonstrated a commitment to continuous education and professional development to empower women politically and socially and promote gender equality. This commitment was reflected in the stated need for equal participation of men and women in all activities and the tracking and analysis of gender indicators in all project surveys.

Throughout its implementation, the NAPA Project's strategies to mainstream gender and equality principles in its training programs aligned with international principles and commitments, such as those in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. By focusing on enhancing gender sensitivity and awareness in the development and delivery of its training programs, the Project fostered an environment where equality and human rights became central to public administration practices in Serbia. This approach harmonised with the standards set by the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, reflecting the Project's dedication to upholding human rights principles.

> **F13 The NAPA Project integrated gender mainstreaming throughout its implementation, encompassing various aspects of public administration.**

This approach was evident in using gender-neutral language in the Document Management System and gender considerations in Standard Operating Procedures, particularly in staffing and training. The EC finds that the Project's focus on gender equality was further reinforced in the balanced representation of genders in its expert roster and the provision of gender sensitivity training to all trainers, fostering an inclusive learning environment.

Staff training initiatives within the Project also demonstrated a gender-sensitive approach, with female staff members participating, thereby addressing gender balance in capacity building. The internship program was another notable area where gender mainstreaming was evident, with an inclusive selection process ensuring equitable access and opportunities for all genders.

Moreover, the enhancement of the Learning Management System (LMS) included features like gender-disaggregated data collection, aligning e-learning offerings to cater equitably to the needs of different genders. The Project's adherence to an evidence-centric and human rights-based approach was evident in the training needs assessment (TNA) of all civil servants, including women and girls and those from marginalised groups, through empirical research. This method was important in fostering an environment where the rights and needs of all civil servants, irrespective of gender, were prioritised. Partners recognised the NAPA Project's efforts to align its operational and functional aspects with internationally established norms and benchmarks in civil service and public administration, particularly in considering the needs of the most vulnerable groups within the civil service. This approach confirmed the Project's explicit understanding and implementation of a Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA).

Although the TNA involved diverse stakeholders and collected gender-disaggregated data, it fell short of identifying gender-specific challenges in public administration roles.

The quality assurance system in training also incorporated gender-sensitive elements, demonstrating a commitment to inclusivity in curriculum content and participation. The flagship course designed under the Project highlighted legal provisions for equality and provided case studies on gender mainstreaming, further emphasizing the Project's focus on gender sensitivity.

Additionally, the establishment of the Research and Development Center, with its initial research focusing on the mental health of public employees, acknowledged the intersection of gender and mental health, particularly in the context of increased stressors due to external crises like the COVID-19 pandemic.

5.5   Efficiency

The evaluation of efficiency focused on two primary dimensions. Initially, the EC assessed the strategic allocation of resources, encompassing financial, human, and technical support, to ascertain their effectiveness in realising the Project's outcomes. This process aimed to determine if the Project channelled resources in the most impactful manner to maximise the desired results. Following that, the EC delved into the Project's management structure, analysing the effectiveness of operational and administration roles, understanding how these roles contributed to the results, and determining any potential areas for optimisation.

> **F14. The NAPA Project embodied efficient execution and a strategic vision, demonstrating strong delivery speed and an appropriate allocation of resources. These factors contribute to the Project's alignment with the national priorities and needs and purposefully position it to foster gender equality (in non-traditional and often overlooked areas).**

The NAPA project was planned from July 2020 until December 2022- a thirty-month implementation period. However, the complexity of this initiative and its multi-dimensional institutional development scope, together with the measures introduced during the COVID-19 pandemic, posed limitations and challenges to completing all activities within this (relatively limited) timeframe. Thus, the response to the NAPA's request through the Project Steering Committee to pursue a non-cots extension was adequate and well-justified. The amendment to the Third-Party Cost Sharing Agreement[59] extended implementation until 31. December 2023. This additional time for implementation allowed the UNDP/ NAPA Project Team and its partners to complete all activities and processes and wrap up the Project activities. The extended timeframe and available funds ensured that this initiative focused on NAPA's institutional development and capacity improvement[60]

The mentioned Third-Party Cost-Sharing Agreement governed the Project's financial structure, facilitating the release of funds in three tranches that amounted to US$2,153,498.02 (equivalent to 20 million SEK). The Project Steering Committee (PSC) oversaw the Project's operational and financial progress, including necessary budget adjustments. They also facilitated bilateral discussions for optimising activity implementation[61].

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[59] This agreement was signed on 15 July 2020 between Sweden, represented by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency SIDA and the UNDP Office in Serbia.

[60] This also prevented from getting into a "delivery trap" where undue pressure falls primarily on the execution of activities and the disbursement of funds

[61] For example, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Project underwent three small-scale budget adjustments to ensure high-level performance and adaptability to digital platforms. According to the NAPA, these adjustments totalled 429k USD and were crucial for maintaining project momentum during unprecedented times.

Figure 4: Output delivery status, %
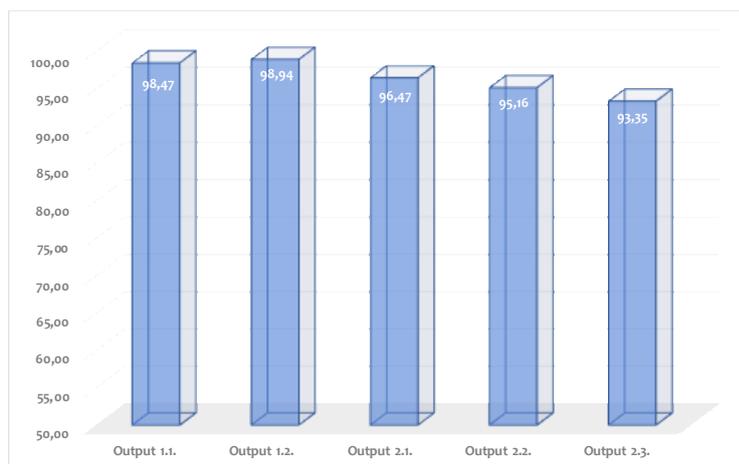
Source: Project Financial Report

A significant financial development was utilising an accumulated exchange rate surplus of 131,108.02 USD in January 2023. The NAPA planned and requested a "strategic allocation of these funds to develop the M-learning software", showcasing the Project's (UNDP/ SIDA) resourcefulness and adaptability. Operational costs were kept low, with a small yet efficient management team consisting of only a project manager and an associate, a notable achievement for a project of this complexity.

Figure 5 Overall NAPA Project delivery status, %
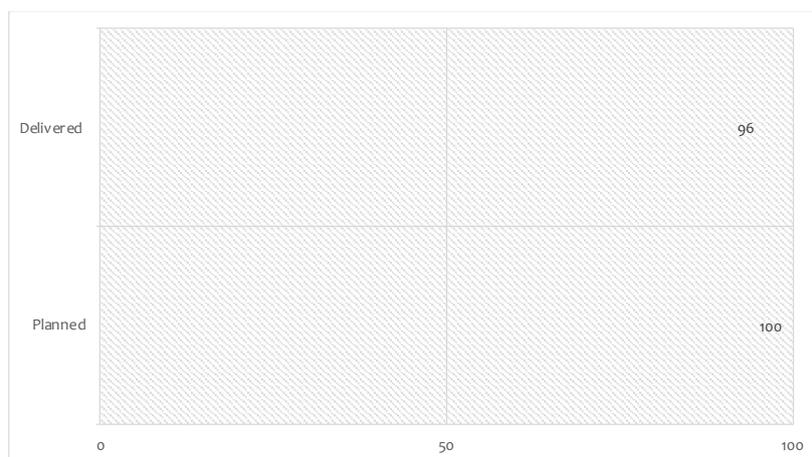
Source: Project Financial Report

As of the evaluation date, the Project had utilised $2,057,691.27 of its funds, accounting for 96% of the total received, while the remaining 4% was also committed. This figure demonstrates efficient financial management and the effective deployment of resources towards Project objectives.

F15. The NAPA Project had well-established management and operational systems that contributed to delivering results.

The Project adopted results-oriented annual and monthly work plans, providing a solid foundation for scheduling, resource allocation, budget control, and achieving desired objectives. These comprehensive work plans facilitated activities' planning, implementation, and synchronisation, ensuring coherence and responsiveness to identified NAPA priorities and needs (and also considering other partners' institutions in Serbia). The EC finds that the preparation of work plans reflected a comprehensive, gender-sensitive approach involving the joint efforts of the Project team and the NAPA in planning inputs and scheduling activities. The NAPA representatives highlighted the benefits of this approach, as it facilitated collaboration and synergy with other initiatives in the sectors, helped align with the national policies and reform priorities, and promoted progress in critical sectors.

The monitoring system has been based on the NAPA's logical matrix. The NAPA Project employed a comprehensive intervention logic and strategic framework that connected its objectives, activities, and expected outcomes to enhance the professionalism and effectiveness of Serbia's public administration, aligning it with international standards and modern administrative practices. These results align with the public administration reform priorities to integrate comprehensive knowledge management and career development systems. Still, the EC identified challenges related to defining targets and measuring progress. While outputs-level indicators effectively encapsulated the Project's initiatives and were well-monitored and analysed in progress reports, the outcome-level indicators presented challenges, requiring sources of verification that are outside of the control (e.g., SIGMA reports), and occasionally being overly ambitious. These issues could hinder the accurate measurement and reporting of progress at the project outcome level. Therefore, the EC finds the need to reassess and refine its outcome-level targets and indicators, facilitating more effective progress tracking and analysis.

The Project demonstrated a high communication standard, effectively disseminating key messages through various channels and tailored approaches. Its communication and visibility strategy provided directions spotlighting the Project's transformative influence on developing civil servants and human resources within public administration.

Concerning **knowledge generation and management,** the Project excelled in its reporting structure, producing a substantive and informative deliverables overview. A key achievement was upgrading NAPA's Learning Management System (LMS), integrating modern e-Learning features such as gamification, artificial intelligence for learning recommendations, and live streaming. Furthermore, the Project assisted in introducing a mobile learning platform (M-learning) that seamlessly integrated with the LMS. This mobile application has been linked to the LMS's Knowledge Base and other resources, offering a user-friendly and efficient tool for content dissemination. The Project supported the development of a knowledge base (e-Library) software that complemented these educational advancements. This initiative aligns with NAPA's goal of using innovative methods to disseminate knowledge and develop essential skills among civil servants. The Project's focus on modernising learning tools and methodologies underscores its commitment to enhancing the professional development of civil servants in Serbia.

> **F16. The partners acknowledged that the UNDP NAPA Project Team has been focused and dedicated, ensuring efficient implementation and continuity of activities.**

In this context, engaging experienced and highly skilled professionals with sector-specific expertise, a full-time Project Manager and a Project Associate added strength to the implementation structure. The Project benefited significantly from the UNDP support, enriched with technical knowledge and provided administrative, financial, and communication support, demonstrating a commitment to excellence and alignment with the formal implementation arrangements.

The EC recognises that the NAPA Project was a multifaceted and managerially demanding initiative. It comprised numerous components related to the institutional development and transformation of NAPA, together with changes in the planned and introduced new activities and requirements for specialised skills and expertise, resulting in a substantial workload for the project team and the portfolio manager. This extensive operational demand accentuated the robust management and coordination requirement that UNDP implemented, adhering to defined roles and ensuring specialised skills. The partners stated that the "UNDP/ NAPA Project Team's accomplishments derive from excellent collaboration, planning, and strategic alignment"; hence, they recommended applying this management model to future initiatives.

The steering structure and coordination mechanism have been timely established and contributed to sound decision-making (on strategic and operational priorities). The Project Steering Committee (PSC) ensured planned and transparent coordination of the Project's implementation and monitoring. As indicated in the previous paragraphs, the PSC provided essential policy guidance, aligning the Project's goals with national PAR efforts and the Sustainable Development Goals. Collaboratively, the PSC members addressed challenges, monitored progress, and steered the Project towards its objectives. Progress Review meetings between UNDP, NAPA and SIDA were held annually, contributing to the Project's strategic alignment and

focus. Overall, these coordination mechanisms fostered collaboration, cohesion, and information exchange among diverse stakeholders, enhancing the effectiveness and impact of the NAPA Project[62].

The NAPA Project was well-coordinated and cooperated with other initiatives. The role of the UNDP Portfolio Manager for PAR was valuable in shaping the Project's focus, fostering trust-building and strengthening partnerships with this and other national institutions relevant to public administration reform. This strategic involvement also aligned UNDP initiatives, enhancing coherence and synergies. For example, the NAPA Project cooperated with the joint gender-related initiative on ending violence against women and girls, developing capacities of governmental bodies and institutions to ensure that practices and policies prevent gender-based violence, changing perceptions and dominant gender stereotypes[63]. Similarly, the Project skilfully aligned with the "Serbia at Your Fingertips – Digital Transformation for Development". The NAPA was instrumental in building national capacities for technical advancements to accelerate digital transformation in Serbia, enhancing the accessibility and efficiency of public services. Simultaneously, the Project closely collaborated with the "Accelerating Change – Support to Public Administration and Local Self-Government" to strengthen the capacities of public administration and local self-government entities, aiming to improve governance and service delivery at various administrative levels.

5.6   Sustainability

In assessing the sustainability of the NAPA Project, the EC scrutinised the likelihood of the Project's benefits persisting post-completion hinged on the effectiveness of the exit strategy and the robustness of national mechanisms capable of maintaining the results. The Project's strides in fostering national ownership of results, building partnerships, and developing capacities for sustained benefits were explored. Lastly, the EC evaluated the project's expansion potential and ability to spawn innovative and replicable practices.

> **F17. The sustainability of both NAPA as an organisation and its services are interdependent and rests on the continuous evolution of its operational methodologies, the commitment of its leadership, ongoing financial and policy support from the Serbian government and international donors, and active participation in the global public administration community. Regular assessments and adaptations to the changing needs of the civil service remain crucial in maintaining the relevance and effectiveness of the established capacities.**

The Project has effectively supported the NAPA in implementing systems, processes, and tools for operational improvements and institutional functioning, setting a robust foundation for NAPA to "firmly grasp its mandate, deliver quality services and support reform processes in various sectors[64]". However, the longevity of these improvements depends on sustained leadership commitment and consistent government backing.

Additionally, expanding NAPA's international presence through collaborative academic and research initiatives and outreach activities has been an important achievement. These efforts enhanced NAPA's connectivity and peer-to-peer exchange of best practices, ensuring the organisation remains integrated with global public administration networks. Maintaining and expanding international partnerships remains critical for NAPA's continued institutional improvement and sustainability of these achievements.

The Project supported NAPA in expanding innovative learning tools and methodologies and its services largely revolve around these achievements. Still, the EC finds NAPA needs to continuously invest in the Center of Excellence established for the public sector and human resource development, adopting new curricula to address public administration challenges. Adapting to global best practices and incorporating advanced pedagogical techniques are critical for these services' sustained relevance and effectiveness. The EC finds that the Project's focus on strengthening staff capacity, including the NAPA's professional employees and associates (such as certified trainers, coaches, and technical experts) has been a long-term human resource investment. Still, the sustainability of these results and achieved progress depends on the

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[62] KII notes, including inputs from UNDP and SIDA

[63] KII notes and desk review of the UNDP portfolio in Serbia

[64] KII notes

availability, planned and strategic use of these capacities while adapting to the civil servants' and beneficiaries' changing requirements and needs.

The organisation's commitment to embracing technological advancements and e-learning platforms has been a well-recognised achievement that the Project massively supported. Sustainability in this area requires ongoing technological updates and investments to keep pace with the evolving digital landscape. While online and digital learning platforms offer benefits for civil servant training, the EC notes a decline in the NAPA's plans and actions for in-person training programs. Prioritising online learning over traditional in-person methods has been justified during the global COVID-19 pandemic. Still, the practical experience, as much as research and academic papers[65], show that in-person training programs are crucial because they provide interactive and engaging learning experiences that foster a more profound understanding and retention of information. These face-to-face sessions enable direct communication, real-time feedback, and networking opportunities vital for holistic professional development. They also facilitate the development of soft skills like communication, teamwork, and problem-solving, which are essential in public administration but difficult to cultivate in a purely digital environment. The analysis[66] recognised that online courses are valuable for their accessibility and convenience, but the prevailing opinion is that these programs should complement rather than replace the rich, immersive learning experiences offered by in-person training. Therefore, the analysis recommended balancing both methods and ensuring a well-rounded approach to developing civil servants, catering to diverse learning needs and styles[67].

F18. Regarding the established capacities in civil service and public administration, their sustainability is closely tied to effectively implementing a professional development management system.

Still, despite the remarkable increase in the number of training attendees over the last five years, the professional development management system in the Serbian civil service faces a disconnect between training program delivery and the lack of transparent integration with human resource development plans and career paths. Although the Serbian legal framework acknowledges capacity development as "a right and obligation of civil servants and public administration employees", there's an evident gap as the incentives and rewards for undergoing training are not clearly defined or aligned with career progression.

Moreover, the turnover of highly qualified staff in line ministries exacerbates this issue. Frequent changes in ministry composition, often driven by electoral cycles, lead to a loss of institutional memory and expertise. This turnover disrupts continuity in public service delivery and impacts skilled personnel's long-term development and retention.

The recent analysis[68] and various documents indicate a need for establishing clear linkages between completing training programs and career progression, including promotions and other incentives. There is a need to advocate for stabilising the workforce within ministries through strategies aimed at reducing turnover and fostering a culture of continuous learning and development. Regular monitoring and evaluation of the training programs, especially concerning often overlooked practical training applications

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[65] Research indicates that while online education has become increasingly prevalent, it often lacks the perceived quality and individualized instruction of traditional in-person learning. Studies suggest that online learning may not be as effective for students with weak academic preparation or from low-income and underrepresented backgrounds, who often underperform in fully online environments. In contrast, in-person training offers interactive experiences vital for developing soft skills crucial in public administration. It's important to balance both online and in-person methods to ensure a comprehensive approach to professional development in public administration.

More available at: Gregory Gross,Rui Ling,Brad Richardson: In-Person or Virtual Training?: Comparing the Effectiveness of Community-Based Training, American Journal of Distance Education-Volume 37, 2023 - Issue 1; or Anna Ni: "Comparing the Effectiveness of Classroom and Online Learning: Teaching Research Methods", June 2023 Journal of Public Affairs Education 19(2):199-215

[66] Report on the evaluation of the impact and quality of training programs in public administration, Institute for Economic Studies, 2023

[67] Ibidem, the evaluation of the impact and quality of training programs

[68] Report on the evaluation of the impact and quality of training programs in public administration

in daily work and their impact on improved functioning (of particular public administration institutions), will be essential to ensure their effectiveness and address any emerging challenges.

F19. The Project has exhibited strong country ownership and capacity strengthening, crucial for sustaining its efforts and benefits. This ownership was defined by partner institutions' and stakeholders' active involvement and influence over the Project's activities and decisions.

The EC analysed the ownership, reviewing the extent to which NAPA and national partners are engaged and have control over various aspects of the Project. This method included ownership of processes (how activities are planned and executed), resources (allocation and utilisation of funds and materials), results (benefits of the project), and decisions (making critical decisions about project direction and implementation).

The Project fostered functional partnerships with the NAPA in its centre, which began with identifying joint priorities aligned with sectoral or national strategies and conducting participatory needs assessments. All activities, including online educational programs, were aligned with these strategic priorities and national policies. The Project's high degree of process ownership was critical for implementing capacity development, knowledge transfer and all other activities. Stakeholders noted the Project's responsiveness to their needs and formulation of responses. For example, the EC finds that the NAPA received tailor-made assistance to address organisational and functional aspects; this response has been based on the joint problem identification and priority setting from the inception phase. The capacity development component has been based on training needs assessment among the beneficiaries, enabling them to set priorities and implement various mandatory laws and legal provisions. For example, the Project, in partnership with UNDP gender initiative, provided the central program on gender equality and gender mainstreaming (in public administration), following the provisions from the gender-related legal framework.

The Project effectively ensured that NAPA perceived all deliverables as integral resources in sync with its operational priorities and service delivery objectives. The EC observed substantial evidence of NAPA's investment in "soft" resources- advocacy, awareness and communication support- in creating the necessary working space for public administration reform and human resource development. Additionally, NAPA allocated financial resources to build upon and expand the results and activities the Project delivered or initiated, showing its strategic organisational development commitment and efforts to ensure the sustainability of results. NAPA's ownership of results, effective integration into improved organisational structure, and even broader, collaborated efforts for a broader public administration landscape are closely connected to resources. The NAPA management and technical staff played a central role in linking the Project's results to its core services, with the PAR priorities in sight. The EC finds that this alignment indicated a deep understanding and acceptance of the Project's goals and methodologies by these national partners, signifying a solid sense of ownership.

The NAPA collaborated with the main partners (the MPALSG, UNDP and SIDA) and exercised strong ownership over decisions within the Project. This encompassed operational aspects, such as preparing and implementing work plans, budgetary revisions, and activity prioritisation. In addition, NAPA was leading strategic decision-making, facilitated through the Project Steering Committee (PSC) and annual review meetings. This dual-level ownership over decisions ensured that day-to-day operations and long-term strategic directions aligned closely with the Project's objectives and stakeholders' interests, fostering a sense of commitment and accountability.

The EC finds high NAPAs and national ownership as crucial for the sustainability and relevance of this development Project that was tailored to the specific organisational and beneficiaries' needs while determined by the local context conditions.

F20. The NAPA Project demonstrated a potential for scalability and replication, offering invaluable insights and lessons for future initiatives in public administration reform and civil service improvement.

The Project exemplified the effectiveness of multi-institutional collaborations, innovative training methods, and strategic policy development in the public administration sector. In this context, the EC finds the

Project's approach to modernising training design and delivery exemplary. Concerning modernisation, the Project supported NAPA in upgrading the Learning Management System (LMS) and integrating advanced e-learning techniques, including gamification and AI for personalised learning recommendations. All these results established a platform for improved, new standards for civil service training. Developing a mobile learning platform further demonstrated the Project's commitment to leveraging technology for educational purposes.

In addition, the partners recognised that establishing the e-Library and creating a wide array of educational content, including redesigned and new video materials, demonstrated NAPA's continued work towards creating a comprehensive and easily accessible knowledge repository. This resource is a model for other institutions to systematise and enable access to generated knowledge (within various international development programs or under the core mandates of these institutions). Furthermore, the informants expressed views that the NAPA's knowledge management system could expand as a knowledge hub, enabling the collection, codification and availability of knowledge for all public entities. In this context, the informants expressed their opinion on exploring opportunities and linking the NAPA e-library with the governmental knowledge portals, such as the Intersectoral Development Coordination Network (ISDACON) that the Ministry of EU Integration is currently redesigning.

Moreover, establishing the Research Center within NAPA in 2022, which fostered a research and analysis culture for informed policy-making, can be a replicable model. This success mirrors experiences from other established national training institutions in public administration. NAPA's approach, combining systematic research practices with strategic planning and operational models, offers a valuable blueprint for other institutions seeking to integrate similar methodologies into their governance structures.

NAPA's approach in comparing its training programs with global institutions demonstrates a progressive strategy. This analysis enhanced the relevance and efficacy of NAPA's programs and offered a replicable framework for other institutions aiming to align with international standards. The project's emphasis on gender mainstreaming and inclusivity, including targeted training for women mayors and addressing rural marginalized populations, underscores a commitment to diverse and democratic governance. Additionally, NAPA's active international networking and collaborations through conferences and meetings highlight the value of global knowledge exchange in public administration reform, providing a model for similar initiatives.

On a broader level, the EC recognizes the NAPA Project's initiatives as exemplars in technological innovation, inclusivity, global benchmarking, and research-driven continuous learning. These initiatives have notably enhanced Serbia's civil service capabilities, serving as a model for countries, particularly in the IPA region, aiming to modernize their public administration and governance systems. This acknowledgement highlights NAPA's role in setting a replicable standard for public administration excellence.

5.7 Impact

Analysing the potential impact of the NAPA Project in connection with its sustainability, the ET has made informed predictions based on the changes observed during and after the Project's implementation, specifically addressing two key questions.

> **F21. While the Project's tangible contributions have already begun to reshape NAPA's structure and offerings, the accurate measure of its impact—an enhancement of NAPA's internal capabilities and elevation of its role within the public administration sector—will likely become more pronounced in the coming years. This forward momentum is anticipated to serve the immediate needs of Serbia's public administration sector and lay the groundwork for lasting improvements in governance and public service delivery.**

The Project's interventions have positioned NAPA on a trajectory towards organisational development, with anticipated long-term impacts that align with the goals of public administration reform in Serbia. The establishment of advanced operational systems has already demonstrated the potential for streamlining administrative processes, increasing efficiency, and reducing bureaucratic inertia. Such improvements are expected to yield lasting benefits in service delivery and operational responsiveness.

In the realm of capacity building, the Project has, among others, laid a robust foundation by connecting NAPA with a network of domestic and international experts, enhancing the institution's educational programs. These relationships, alongside a series of targeted training initiatives, are poised to enrich NAPA's role in supporting public administration reform, fostering a culture of continuous professional development. The upgrade of the knowledge management infrastructure[69] represent progressive steps toward an evolved learning environment, which is anticipated to make training more dynamic and accessible for civil servants in the long term.

The inception of the Centre of Excellence within NAPA marks a seminal development, projected to be a nucleus for innovation, research, and policy development in public sector management and human resource development. As a nexus for intellectual and pragmatic exchange, the Centre is expected to drive the propagation of best practices and transformative ideas across the public administration landscape.

F22. Evaluating the NAPA-delivered training programs showed that these initiatives improved the performance and efficiency of participants, public administration professionals

In the context of impact analysis, the EC undertook a thorough review to determine how NAPA's training programs have transformed the performance of its beneficiaries. Given the inherent limitations of the timeframe for this evaluation, the EC relied on independent research findings[70] to gauge the impact and ascertain the quality of the public administration training programs (reference). This research[71] provided a substantive basis for understanding the effectiveness of NAPA's educational initiatives in enhancing public administration competencies, showing that these initiatives generally improved the performance and efficiency of participants.

In 2022, NAPA experienced a significant upsurge in training activities, delivering a record 737 programs, a notable leap from 364 in 2021 and a considerable increase from 269 in 2020. This escalation in training volume corresponded with a substantial rise in participant numbers, reaching 25,678, compared to 16,568 the previous year and 12,559 in 2020. However, only a small fraction (13.8%, equating to 3,545 attendees) participated in in-person training. The training modalities were predominantly virtual, with 71% of programs conducted via virtual classrooms and 17% as online self-paced learning. At the same time, the remaining sessions were either in-person or a combination of learning approaches. Feedback from participants indicated a strong preference for in-person training, enhanced by online support, as the most effective method for knowledge acquisition. While addressing the need for scalability and accessibility, this trend towards virtual learning highlights the continued importance of traditional face-to-face interaction in the learning process.

The evaluation of the training programs revealed several key aspects: Content relevance was highly aligned with job requirements and current sector challenges, scoring 4.04. Implementation success was rated at 4.20, indicating effective training delivery and environments. The sustainability of the training's long-term benefits scored 4.20. Still, some of the evaluated dimensions scored lower marks. For example, the effectiveness of the training, with an average rating of 3.85, reflected how imparted skills and knowledge trainees applied in the workplace, while the impact, rated at 3.83, indicates the influence on workplace productivity and performance. These figures suggested that participants found the training valuable for their professional development. They could incorporate what they learned into their daily tasks, leading to observable work efficiency and output improvements. At the same time, these figures showed the need for improvements. Interestingly, the classical classroom training excelled in relevance, successful implementation, impact, and sustainability, while combined learning methods led the way in effectiveness and innovation[72]. Thus, this research provided quantitative and qualitative data serving as a robust testimony

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[69] Including already mentioned Learning Management System and the advent of mobile learning tools

[70] Report on the evaluation of the impact and quality of training programs in public administration, Institute for Economic Studies, December 2023

[71] This independent evaluation utilized a hybrid methodology incorporating desk and field research, featuring online surveys and focus groups, to measure the training's relevance, implementation, effectiveness, impact, sustainability, and innovation.

[72] Moreover, the Kruskal-Wallis test confirmed statistically significant differences across all criteria based on the training modalities, underscoring the tailored approach's effectiveness.

to the training programs' effectiveness in enhancing individual capabilities and contributing to the broader organisational development goals within Serbia's public sector. These results demonstrate NAPA's pivotal role in advancing the public administration sector's competencies: with such a comprehensive and adaptable training framework, NAPA has established itself as a cornerstone institution in the realm of public administration reform and capacity building[73].

The document outlined a detailed strategy for NAPA to elevate civil servant training. It advocates for regulation refinement to align training with specific job roles, mandating fundamental training programs and rewarding performance improvement. Emphasis is on customising content to match job and organisational specifics and broadening the scope and frequency of specialised training sessions. Practical exercises and global best practices are crucial to linking theory with application effectively. Enhancing training effectiveness should include various strategies, such as promoting training benefits among management, employing innovative and practical methods, and utilising modern, interactive online platforms for a more engaging learning experience. Flexibility in scheduling and the involvement of experienced public administration professionals as trainers are vital to maximising training impact and relevance.

5.8 Overall rating

The EC analysed all the findings under each criterion and prepared the following marks:

Assessment	Rating	Score
A: Assessment of Project Outcomes		
1. Project Effectiveness of achieving results	Highly satisfactory (6) to Highly Unsatisfactory (1)	6
2. Project Efficiency in achieving results	Highly satisfactory (6) to Highly Unsatisfactory (1)	6
3. Project Relevance	Relevant or not relevant	R
Output rating	*Averaged from above*	*30%*
B: Sustainability		
4. Sustainability of Results	Likely (4) to Unlikely (1)	4
5. Sustainability within the Socio-Political setting	Likely (4) to Unlikely (1)	4
6. Sustainability of Institutional framework and governance	Likely (4) to Unlikely (1)	4
Overall Likelihood of sustainability	*Averaged from above*	*20%*
C: Monitoring and evaluation		
7. Project M&E design at entry	Highly satisfactory (6) to Highly Unsatisfactory (1)	5
8. M&E plan implementation	Highly satisfactory (6) to Highly Unsatisfactory (1)	5
M&E overall rating	*Averaged from above*	*20%*

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[73] KII notes

D: Implementation		
9. Quality of UNDP project implementation	Highly satisfactory (6) to Highly Unsatisfactory (1)	**6**
10. Inclusion of relevant crosscutting issues (gender, human rights etc.	Highly satisfactory (6) to Highly Unsatisfactory (1)	4
Overall Implementation rating	*Averaged from above*	*30%*
Overall project quality	**Based on weightings of above scores.** Highly satisfactory (6) to Highly Unsatisfactory (1)	4,9
	Highly Satisfactory (91,6%)	5,1

6 Conclusions and lessons learned

6.1 Conclusions

The Evaluation Consultant examined the findings, employing diverse judgment criteria, and arrived at the subsequent comprehensive conclusions:

Relevance

C1. The NAPA Project demonstrated its relevance in modernising and professionalising human resources as the main challenge within the public administration system. The Project's demand-driven nature, rooted in thorough problem analysis, facilitated its comprehensive approach to the NAPA institutional strengthening, providing operational capacity building, technical and research capabilities enhancement, and service quality improvement. These efforts addressed NAPA's infrastructure and operational frameworks, establishing it as a pivotal institution in civil service training and aligning its processes with global best practices (F1).

C2. A critical aspect of the NAPA Project's relevance lies in its foresight and adaptability, particularly in response to the evolving landscape of public administration and the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Integrating advanced e-learning platforms and educational technologies ensured continuity of activities and delivery of training programs. (F2, F3). However, while diminishing traditional in-person methods, the Project's emphasis on online training post-pandemic suggests a need for a more balanced approach that values the unique benefits of physical learning environments that enable engagement, networking, and real-time interaction, crucial elements for effective learning (F3).

Coherence

C3. The Project demonstrated strong coherence, effectively aligning with Serbia's reform objectives and UN/UNDP's well-defined strategic framework. Strong internal coherence existed, and adherence to a Theory of Change maintained this coherence and effectively guided the Project's implementation (F4). Internal coherence is confirmed in the Project's alignment with UNDP's corporate strategic efforts from the Strategic Plan 2022-2025 and the priorities outlined in the UNDP Country Programme Document for Serbia (2021-2025). This alignment underscores the Project's strategic relevance in fostering democratic governance, enhancing public sector efficiency, and supporting Serbia's reform process (F5, F6). The Project also demonstrated coherence with the United Nations Sustainable Development Framework, contributing significantly to various Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDG 16 (F7).

C4. The Project aligned with national priorities, and these alignments highlight the Project's role in supporting Serbia's ongoing efforts to modernise its public administration system, enhance public services, and foster a professional and efficient civil service. In this context, the NAPA Project closely adhered to Serbia's strategic goals for public administration reform and civil service development. Its alignment with the Public Administration Reform Strategy 2021-2030 and its focus on enhancing public administration operations, digital transformation, and policy formulation in line with European Principles of Public Administration demonstrate the Project's relevance to Serbia's strategic directions. The Project also supported specific objectives under the national framework for the professional development of employees in public administration. (F6).

Effectiveness

C5. The NAPA Project contributed to enhancing NAPA's operational and functional capacities. The development and operationalisation of the Document Management System (DMS) and the standard operating procedures reinforced this progress. Similarly, the Project continued to bolster staff capacities and support NAPA's institutional development by covering a wide spectrum of competencies. (F8).

In advancing innovative learning tools, the Project effectively integrated modern e-learning platforms and multimedia educational technologies, reflecting its commitment to digital solutions in education. Establishing a Centre of Excellence and developing a comprehensive quality assurance system further underscore the Project's success in fostering continuous improvement and innovation in public sector training and human resource development (F9).

C6. The shift to online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic has been a critical technological leap. This transition led to enhanced interactive learning experiences and increased accessibility, expanding NAPA's program reach. However, this rapid digitalisation also brought challenges, such as difficulties for some employees adapting to new technologies and concerns about the effectiveness of digital-only training forms. Despite these challenges, the Project's adaptability, influence in policy-shaping, and resilience in facing global crises have been pivotal in its effectiveness(F10 & F11).

Gender and leave no one behind

C7. Despite initially lacking specific gender-sensitive analysis and strategies for the 'leave no one behind' principle, the NAPA Project evolved to incorporate these elements effectively in its implementation. The adoption of gender-sensitive approaches in operational systems and procedures marked this evolution. The Project's commitment to gender equality and human rights became evident in its training programs, curriculum development, and overall quality assurance system. However, the NAPA needs to work to identify and address gender-specific challenges in public administration roles (F12, F13).

Efficiency

C8. The Project was efficiently implemented: the strategic resource use and effective management, adaptability, collaborative engagement, and robust communication and knowledge management were critical elements that contributed to this (F14, F15, F16).

The Project adeptly aligned its resources with national priorities and NAPA developmental objectives, demonstrating delivery speed and appropriate resource allocation despite implementation challenges (F14). The initial thirty-month implementation period was pragmatically extended due to complexities and the COVID-19 pandemic, allowing for completing all activities; the financial structure supported implementation. The strategic use of an exchange rate surplus (for developing M-learning software) exemplifies the Project's resourcefulness and underlines the Project's financial management efficacy (F14). The Project Team's focus and dedication, supported by skilled professionals and UNDP's technical and administrative backing, ensured efficient implementation (F15). The Project's high communication standards and visibility strategy effectively spotlighted its transformative impact. In knowledge generation and management, the Project excelled, with notable achievements like the upgrade of NAPA's LMS and the introduction of a mobile learning platform. (F15, F16).

Sustainability

C9. The Project results are associated with a high degree of sustainability F17, F18, F19); still, it hinges on several factors, including the evolution of its operational methodologies, the ongoing commitment from its leadership, continuous support from the Serbian government and international donors, and active engagement in the global public administration community (F17). The Project's efforts to expand NAPA's international presence through collaborative academic and research initiatives have been important, enhancing NAPA's connectivity and encouraging the exchange of best practices for its continued institutional improvement. The sustainability of NAPA's services revolves around continuous evolution, adopting new curricula and practices that align with international standards, and addressing current public administration challenges (F18).

C10. Despite the remarkable increase in training attendees, a disconnect persists between training program delivery and integration with human resource development plans and career paths in the Serbian civil service. The high turnover of qualified staff in ministries, often influenced by electoral cycles, disrupts the continuity in public service delivery. Establishing clear linkages between training completion and career progression is crucial, along with strategies to reduce workforce turnover and foster a culture of continuous learning (F17, F18).

C11. The NAPA Project demonstrated strong country ownership and capacity strengthening, which are crucial for sustaining its benefits. This ownership was evident in the active involvement of partner institutions and stakeholders in the Project's activities and decisions. (F19).

C12. The NAPA Project's potential for scalability and replication is evident in its approach to modernising training and development within the civil service sector. Upgrading the Learning Management System,

developing a mobile learning platform, and establishing an e-Library are key achievements that set new standards for civil service training. The Project's focus on gender mainstreaming and inclusivity, international collaboration, and strengthening research and analytical capacities are significant steps towards more effective public administration. These initiatives offer valuable insights for other countries seeking to modernise their public administration and governance systems (F20).

Impact

C13. The Project, focusing on modernising and professionalising Serbia's civil service, has set in motion a transformative journey for the NAPA. These results are expected to yield enduring benefits in service delivery and operational responsiveness. Regarding capacity building, the Project has established a solid foundation by enhancing NAPA's educational programs and connecting them with a network of experts. Introducing modern e-learning tools and mobile learning platforms are anticipated to have long-lasting effects, fostering a culture of continuous professional development within the public administration sector. The Centre of Excellence within NAPA is expected to become a hub for intellectual and practical discourse, driving the adoption of best practices and transformative ideas across the public administration landscape (F20).

C14. The NAPA's training programs indicate the enhancement in the performance of public administration professionals. The training programs, emphasising content relevance, effective implementation, and innovative methods, have positively impacted individual and organisational performance. The surge in training activity and the increase in participant numbers underscore NAPA's growing influence in public administration reform. The analysis showed the need for a multifaceted approach to improve professional training. This includes refining regulations to closely align training programs with specific job roles, expanding the scope and frequency of training sessions, and incorporating practical exercises and examples of best practices. Enhancing the success of training programs also involves improving promotional efforts, adopting innovative training methods, enhancing online platforms, and ensuring optimal training length and scheduling. These recommendations, if implemented, can significantly elevate the effectiveness and impact of NAPA's training programs, contributing further to the development of Serbia's public sector. (F22)

6.2   Lessons learned

The ET identified the following lessons learned:

The NAPA Project's success is mainly credited to its comprehensive stakeholder engagement strategy. The Project has successfully supported NAPA to actively involve a broad spectrum of stakeholders, including government bodies, independent institutions, and local authorities; this approach ensured that a diverse range of needs and demands and insights and expertise were integrated into its initiatives. This inclusive approach was instrumental in developing holistic training solutions that addressed the varied needs of beneficiaries- civil servants. The needs assessment and support to identified needs fostered a sense of shared responsibility and ownership among all participants, which is crucial for the effective implementation and sustainability of any capacity development and training programs. The success of the NAPA Project highlights the importance of maintaining this inclusive stakeholder engagement in future projects to ensure that strategies are comprehensive, inclusive, and widely accepted across different segments of public administration.

Adaptability to Changing Circumstances: The Covid-19 pandemic highlighted the importance of flexibility and adaptability in Project execution. The NAPA Project demonstrated a high level of resilience by swiftly adjusting its strategies in response to the changing landscape. This experience emphasized the necessity of designing projects with inherent flexibility, allowing for mid-course corrections based on evolving circumstances while keeping the core objective intact. It underscored the value of contingency planning and the ability to adapt to unforeseen challenges in project design.

Balancing traditional in-person training with online opportunities is a strategic approach in civil service and public administration, combining the advantages of both methods to enhance learning and skill development. Still, the shift towards online training in public administration can inadvertently favour technically advanced institutions or municipalities and more skilled public employees, potentially widening the gap between them and their less-developed counterparts or less-skilled peers. This disparity arises

because online training inherently requires a certain level of digital infrastructure and literacy. Municipalities with advanced technological resources and employees proficient in digital skills are better positioned to leverage online training opportunities effectively. On the other hand, regions with limited digital infrastructure and employees with lower digital literacy levels may find it challenging to access or fully benefit from online educational resources. This situation can lead to a growing divide, where technologically advanced areas continue to progress, further outpacing those with less digital proficiency and resources. This gap affects the skill level of individual employees and can also impact public services' overall efficiency and effectiveness.

In the NAPA Project, integrating research and data analysis is a cornerstone, highlighting a commitment to informed decision-making and planning. Establishing a Research Centre under its auspices is a testament to this commitment, serving as a hub for gathering, analysing, and interpreting vital data. This focus on research enables the Project to identify and understand the unique challenges within the public sector, ensuring that capacity development initiatives are precisely tailored to address specific needs. NAPA's efforts to incorporate comprehensive data analysis tools and methodologies will ensure that all decisions and policy interventions are grounded in solid empirical evidence, enhancing their effectiveness and relevance to the sector's evolving demands. Moreover, the role of the Research Centre in guiding capacity development as the backbone for strategy formulation and functional implementation cannot be overstated.

The NAPA Project underscored the significance of sustainable support, which was pivotal for its success. This support, encompassing funding, expertise, and resources, was provided consistently throughout the project's lifespan. Such a long-term commitment allowed for continuity and adaptability to new challenges and ensured that the progress achieved was sustained and built upon. Future initiatives similar to the NAPA Project should emphasise securing this kind of sustained support. It's crucial for maintaining momentum and maximising impact, ensuring that the project's benefits extend well beyond its formal conclusion.

Research and data played a key role in the NAPA Project, underlining the value of informed decision-making in public administration. The project leveraged detailed research and thorough data analysis to gain insights into the complexities of the public administration sector and guide strategic decisions. Future projects should continue to prioritise robust research and data collection as they provide a strong foundation for strategy development, help navigate challenges, and measure the effectiveness of interventions.

Communication and awareness-raising were important elements of the NAPA Project. By educating stakeholders, particularly civil servants and public administration professionals, the project strengthened their understanding of modern administrative practices, digital tools, and innovative learning methods. This increased awareness contributed to a more informed and skilled workforce capable of driving effective and efficient public administration services. Thus, future projects should focus on comprehensive communication strategies and awareness campaigns to ensure all stakeholders are well-informed, engaged, and empowered to contribute to modernising and improving public administration systems.

7   Recommendations

The analysis of primary and secondary data served to define findings and form conclusions. Considering these inputs, recommendations have been defined as a framework for further analysis and follow-up actions.

The evaluation consultant has formulated the following main recommendations

Recommendation 1:	Strategic Focus on Public Administration Reform (PAR):
For: UNDP, SIDA, MPALSG, NAPA, GoS	- **Transition to Partnership Approach**: The EC recommends to transit to partnership approach that emphasises co-creation and collaboration, moving beyond the traditional beneficiary model (to a partnership framework). The partners can foster a more integrated and cooperative approach to public administration reform by engaging closely with the Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Governments, NAPA and

	other national PAR-related institutions. This transition recognises the value of shared ownership and collaborative strategy in addressing complex systemic challenges in public administration
	- **Defining Larger-Scale Initiatives:** The partners should collaboratively design a comprehensive initiative that aligns with and actively contributes to the PAR Strategy priorities. This larger-scale initiative would involve a holistic approach, targeting key areas of reform and leveraging a range of resources and expertise. The goal is to create a sustained impact through strategic interventions that address immediate needs and long-term reform objectives.
	- **Long-Term Strategic Alignment:** Ensuring that the initiative's next phase is aligned with the longer-term goals and timeframe of the Action Plan of the PAR Strategy. This alignment will guarantee that the activities and outcomes contribute to the broader strategic objectives of public administration reform, ensuring consistency and relevance over time. (C1, C2, C5, C6).
Recommendation 2: **For:** **UNDP, SIDA, MPALSG, NAPA, GoS, local authorities**	**Introduce component to address capacity building for local government employees:** - **Targeted Research on LSG Needs:** Conducting this research with NAPA is vital to understanding the specific challenges and requirements at the local government level. The insights gained will enable the development of training programs that are relevant and highly effective in addressing the unique contexts of local governments. - **Developing Specialised Training Programs:** These programs, informed by in-depth research, should be tailored to the nuanced needs of local government employees. They should focus on practical skills, local governance issues, and specific challenges identified through the research, ensuring that the training is directly applicable and beneficial to the recipients. - **Incorporating Case Studies and Diverse Training Modes:** Including real-life case studies in the training programs will provide practical insights and relatable learning experiences. Diverse training modes, such as workshops, seminars, and e-learning, should cater to different learning preferences and ensure that the training is accessible and engaging for all participants (C1, C5).
Recommendation 3: **For:** **UNDP, SIDA, MPALSG, NAPA, GoS**	**Advocate for Developing a Comprehensive Human Resources Strategy:** - **Linking Training to Career Progression:** The partners should advocate to establish clear connections between training and career progression within the Serbian civil service. There is a need to advocate for developing career pathways linked to training and development opportunities while suggesting incentives for employees to participate in training programs. - **Reducing Workforce Turnover:** The partners should consider strategies to reduce staff turnover, particularly among skilled and trained employees. This could involve considering options for competitive salaries and benefits, providing opportunities for career advancement, and creating a supportive and inclusive work environment.

	- **Promoting a Culture of Continuous Learning**: Fostering a culture of continuous learning and professional development is key to ensuring the effectiveness and sustainability of public administration. The partners should work to provide demand-driven and needs-based training opportunities and advocate and promote organisational culture within public administration that values and supports ongoing learning and development (C4, C10).
Recommendation 4: **For:** **NAPA** **UNDP, SIDA**	**Balanced Approach to Training Methods:** - **Integrating Online and In-Person Learning**: This hybrid approach should combine the flexibility and accessibility of online learning with the engagement and interactivity of in-person training. The goal is to leverage the strengths of both modalities to create a more effective and holistic learning experience. - **Maximising Engagement and Interaction**: The NAPA should design training methods to maximise engagement and interaction among participants. This process could involve interactive sessions, group discussions, and practical exercises encouraging active participation and collaboration among trainees (C2, C7, C8).
Recommendation 5: **For:** **NAPA** **UNDP, SIDA**	**Enhancing and Sustaining Technological Advancements within the NAPA:** - **Continuous Development of E-Learning Platforms**: The focus should be on ensuring that these platforms are up-to-date, user-friendly, and equipped with the latest educational technologies. This will involve regular updates, testing, and feedback from users to ensure that the platforms meet the evolving needs of learners. - **Incorporating Feedback Mechanisms**: Feedback from users should be actively sought and used to improve the e-learning platforms continuously. This could involve surveys, focus groups, and user testing to gather insights and suggestions for improvement. - **Ensuring Accessibility and Continuity**: The technological advancements should be designed to be accessible to all users, regardless of their location or technical capabilities. This will ensure that the platforms are easy to use, compatible with a range of devices, and available to users with different levels of digital literacy (C5, C6).
Recommendation 6: **For:** **NAPA** **UNDP, SIDA**	**Strengthening International Collaborations and Scalability:** - **Enhancing Global Academic and Research Partnerships**: NAPA should continue building strong international partnerships as key to learning from and contributing to global best practices in public administration reform. These partnerships can provide valuable insights, resources, and support that can enhance the effectiveness and impact of NAPA's initiatives. - **Using Successful Approaches for Wider Application**: The methodologies and practices developed through the NAPA Project should be documented and shared with other countries and institutions. This will showcase the successes of the project but also provide valuable models and lessons that can be adapted and replicated in different contexts.

	- **Continuous Improvement through Learning**: NAPA should actively seek opportunities to learn from international experiences and incorporate these learnings into its own practices. This could involve participating in international conferences, workshops, and training programs, as well as collaborating with international experts and institutions (C3, C9, C12).
Recommendation 7: **For:** **NAPA, MPALSG, GoS** **UNDP, SIDA**	**Gender Role Transformation in Public Administration:** - **Comprehensive Gender Analysis**: Conducting such analyses is the first step in identifying and understanding the existing gender disparities within the public administration. This analysis will provide a baseline for measuring progress and identifying specific areas where interventions are needed to promote gender equality. - **Research and Insights for Targeted Interventions**: NAPA's Research Centre should utilise various research methods to gain a nuanced understanding of gender dynamics within public administration. This research will inform the development of targeted interventions and policies to promote gender equality and inclusivity. - **Developing Gender-Inclusive Training Programs**: Based on the insights gained, NAPA should lead the development of training programs to address gender disparities and promote inclusivity. These programs should aim to change attitudes, behaviours, and practices within public administration to ensure that gender equality is considered in all aspects of public service. - **Sustained Commitment to Gender Equality**: Embedding gender equality within public administration requires ongoing commitment and effort. This involves implementing specific gender initiatives and fostering a culture within public administration that values diversity and sees gender equality as an integral part of effective governance (C7, C13).
Recommendation 8: **For:** **NAPA** **UNDP, SIDA**	**Robust Monitoring and Evaluation Framework:** - **Developing a Monitoring System**: A comprehensive monitoring system should be developed to continuously assess the effect and effectiveness of the planned and implemented activities. This system should be designed to collect and analyse data on various indicators, including training outcomes, participant satisfaction, and organisational performance. - **Evaluate training programs:** In close connection to designing a monitoring framework, NAPA should develop a comprehensive evaluation system to effectively measure the immediate impacts of training and the longer-term utilisation and benefits of such training in the workplace. This system should assess the direct results of training programs and how these outcomes translate into enhanced performance and service delivery within the public administration. Crucially, the evaluation framework should extend to monitoring improvements in the quality of services provided by trained personnel and the corresponding levels of citizen satisfaction. This comprehensive approach to evaluation will enable NAPA to refine its training programs continuously, align them more closely with practical

	needs, and ultimately drive meaningful improvements in public administration and governance.
	- **Utilising Data for Strategic Improvements**: NAPA and other partners should use the data collected through the monitoring and evaluation system to inform strategic decisions and improvements. This could involve identifying areas for improvement, developing new initiatives, and adjusting existing programs to meet the needs of participants better.
	- **Ensuring Long-Term Training Benefits**: The focus should be on ensuring that the benefits of the NAPA programs are sustained over the long term. This involves achieving immediate learning goals and building the capacity and resilience of NAPA and its partners to continue delivering high-quality training and development programs in the future (C13).

8 Annexes

Annex 1 List of interviewed stakeholders

Institution/body/ agency	Contact person	Title	Email address
UNDP Serbia	Irena Cerović,	Good Governance Team Leader	irena.cerovic@undp.org
UNDP Serbia	Sonja Puletić,	Program Analyst – Good Governance	Sonja.puletic@undp.org
UNDP Serbia	Natasa Dimitrijevic	Project Manager	natasa.dimitrijevic@undp.org
NAPA	Dejan Miletić	Director a.i.	dejan.miletic@napa.gov.rs
NAPA	Snežana Antonijević	Assistant to NAPA Director	snezana.antonijevic@napa.gov.rs
NAPA	Dejan Raketić	Assistant to NAPA Director	dejan.raketic@napa.gov.rs
MPALSG	Jasmina Benmansur	Assistant Minister	jasmina.benmansur@mpalsg.gov.rs
SIDA	Snežana Vojičić,	Programme Officer	snezana.vojcic@gov.se
Local self-governments			
	Marija Ćurčin	Pančevo Municipality	marija81.curcin@gmail.com
	Ivona Fustic	Zvezdara Municipality,	ivonafustic04@gmail.com
	Vesna Sandic	Zrenjanin Municipality	vesna.sandic@grad.zrenanjin.rs
NISPAcee	Gajdosova Ludmila,	Executive Director	gajdosova@nispa.org
Faculty of Organisational Sciences	Jovan Filipović, PhD	University professor	jovan.filipovic@fon.bg.ac.rs
NGOs and academic institutions	Prof PhD Ljiljana Manić,	Visoka škola socijalnog rada,	ljiljanamanic1@gmail.com
NGOs and academic institutions	Prof PhD Dušan Pavlović	Association for Political Scienece	dusan.pavlovic@mac.com
NGOs and academic institutions	PhD Dijana Štrbac,	Research Associate, Institute of Economic Sciences	dijana.strbac@ien.bg.ac.rs
Beneficiaries			
	Zorana Antic	NAPA accredited trainer	zorana.antic@hotmail.com
	Sinisa Barjaktarevic	NAPA accredited trainer	sinisa.barjaktarevic@napa.gov.rs
	Snežana Abramović	NAPA accredited trainer	snezana.abramovic@napa.gov.rs
	Ivona Simic	NAPA accredited trainer	Ivona.simic@hr-team.rs

Annex 2: Interview guides

UNDP Project Team

Relevant evaluation criteria: RELEVANCE

EQ1.1. To what extent did the design and implementation of the Project respond to the priorities of NAPA and the need for the development of human resources in public administration?

> SQ1.1.1. Has the Project responded to the NAPA institutional priorities and needs?

> SQ1.1.2. Has the Project addressed and supported civil servants' capacity development needs and priorities (context of PAR)?

EQ1.2. To what extent has the NAPA project relevance been considered and examined during its implementation?

> SQ1.2.1. What was the reason for the proposed changes in the Project activities and plans? How well justified and required have the suggestions for change been?

Relevant evaluation criteria: COHERENCE

> SQ2.1. To what extent does the Project align with national development priorities and strategies? Can you provide some examples?

> SQ2.2. To what extent does the project contribute to the public administration reform and human resource development objectives in Serbia?

> SQ2.3. To what extent has the NAPA Project considered and contributed to SDGs and its targets?

> SQ2.4. To what extent has the NAPA Project considered the UN Development Cooperation Framework and UNDP strategic plan?

Relevant evaluation criteria: EFFECTIVENESS -

EQ3.1.1. To what degree has the Project achieved its outputs (as per ToC)?

> SQ3.1.1. To what extent has the NAPA developed its capacities for effective coordination and implementation of the professional development management system? Has the Document Management System been introduced?

> SQ3.1.2. To what extent has the NAPA Project succeeded in strengthening staff capacities to support the further development of the institution?

> > *To what extent has participation of civil servants in training been enhanced?*

> SQ3.1.3. Has the Project supported the NAPA in introducing new training methods and establishing a training quality assurance system?

> SQ3.1.4. To what extent and how has the NAPA Project supported establishing the Centre for Research and Policy Advice of the Public Sector and Human Resource Management and Development? *Has the Research Centre and Library been established? Has the co-ordination policy of the civil service training been adopted*

> SQ3.1.5. To what extent has the Project enhanced media outreach and visibility of the NAPA and SIDA?

> EQ3.1.6. To what extent have you, as beneficiaries (NAPA and civil servants) and partners, been satisfied with the Project implementation and results

EQ3.2. To what degree has the Project contributed to the achievement of outcomes?

> SQ3.2. To what extent has the Project contributed to NAPA's capacities through operational and functional systems, processes and tools

EQ3.3. In which areas does the project have the greatest achievements? Why and what have been the supporting factors?

> JC3.3.1. Have there been areas in which the NAPA Project has shown the greatest achievement (or underperformed)?

> JC3.3.2. To what extent did external and internal factors affect the NAPA Project implementation?

Relevant evaluation criteria: EFFICIENCY

EQ4.1. Have the NAPA Project's activities been implemented on time and delivered results?

> SQ 4.1.1. Have the planned activities been implemented timely (without delays)- analysis of planned vs implemented activities and delivery of outputs or delays and changes in implementation of plans

> SQ4.2.1. To what extent has the leadership and management of the NAPA Project contributed to the delivery of results

> SQ4.2.2. To what extent have the management systems, including monitoring mechanisms, facilitated efficient implementation? To what extent has the monitoring data been objectively used for the management of risks, actions and decision-making

Relevant evaluation criteria: SUSTAINABILITY

EQ5.1. What is the likelihood that the benefits from the Project will be maintained for a reasonably long period after the Project phase-out?

> SQ5.1.1. To what extent are there capacities within NAPA to maintain the results achieved? Have sufficient financial resources been assigned to NAPA?

> SQ5.1.2. To what extent are policy and regulatory frameworks in place to support the continuation of future benefits for men and women?

EQ5.2. To what extent did the intervention succeed in building individual and institutional capacities to ensure the sustainability of benefits?

EQ5.3. To what extent has national ownership of the project been achieved?

Relevant evaluation criteria: IMPACT

EQ6.1. To what extent has the project contributed to the NAPA's functioning and the progress in the area of human resource management and education of civil servants in Serbia?

> SQ6.1.1. To what extent has the Project contributed to the improved NAPA functioning and implementation of the PAR priorities, especially in the area of HRM?

> JC6.1.2. To what extent has the Project contributed to the UN Country Programme?

> JC6.1.3. To what extent has the Project contributed to the advancement and progress of the EU Accession agenda and other national development priorities?

Relevant evaluation criteria: CROSS-CUTTING

> SQ 7.1.1. To what degree have the partners been capacitated to implement "leave no-one behind" and rights-based approach? SQ7.1.2. To what extent has the Project ensured benefits to the poor, women and other disadvantaged and marginalised groups?

EQ7.2. To what extent has gender been addressed in the design, implementation and monitoring of the NAPA Project?

> SQ7.2.2. To what extent has the NAPA promoted positive changes in gender equality? How?

Interview guide: National Academy for Public Administration

Relevant evaluation criteria: RELEVANCE

SQ1.1.1. Has the Project responded to the NAPA institutional priorities and needs?

SQ1.1.2. Has the Project addressed and supported civil servants' capacity development needs and priorities (context of PAR)?

SQ1.2.1. What was the reason for the proposed changes in the Project activities and plans? How well justified and required have the suggestions for change been?

Relevant evaluation criteria: COHERENCE

SQ2.1. To what extent does the Project align with national development priorities and strategies? Can you provide some examples?

SQ2.2. To what extent does the project contribute to the public administration reform and human resource development objectives in Serbia?

Relevant evaluation criteria: EFFECTIVENESS -

EQ3.1.1. To what degree has the Project achieved its outputs (as per ToC)?

SQ3.1.1. To what extent has the NAPA developed its capacities for effective coordination and implementation of the professional development management system? Has the Document Management System been introduced?

SQ3.1.2. To what extent has the NAPA Project succeeded in strengthening staff capacities to support the further development of the institution?

To what extent has participation of civil servants in training been enhanced?

SQ3.1.3. Has the Project supported the NAPA in introducing new training methods and establishing a training quality assurance system?

SQ3.1.4. To what extent and how has the NAPA Project supported establishing the Centre for Research and Policy Advice of the Public Sector and Human Resource Management and Development?

Has the Research Centre and Library been established?

Has the co-ordination policy of the civil service training been adopted

SQ3.1.5. To what extent has the Project enhanced media outreach and visibility of the NAPA?

EQ3.1.6. To what extent have you, as beneficiaries, been satisfied with the Project implementation and results

EQ3.3. In which areas does the project have the greatest achievements? Why and what have been the supporting factors?

JC3.3.1. Have there been that the NAPA Project has shown the greatest achievement (or underperformed)?

JC3.3.2. To what extent did external and internal factors affect the NAPA Project? Which factors?

Relevant evaluation criteria: EFFICIENCY

EQ4.1. Has the implementation of the Project followed work plans (timely implementation), flexibility and responsiveness? Have you been satisfied with communication with UNDP?

Relevant evaluation criteria: SUSTAINABILITY

SQ5.1.1. To what extent are there capacities within NAPA to maintain the results achieved? Have sufficient financial resources been assigned to NAPA?

SQ5.1.2. To what extent are policy and regulatory frameworks in place to support the continuation of future benefits for men and women?

EQ5.2. To what extent did the intervention succeed in building individual and institutional capacities to ensure the sustainability of benefits?

EQ5.4. What are the potentials for the continuation or upscaling of the initiative? Are there opportunities to continue and expand the results and activities in PAR and human resources development?

Relevant evaluation criteria: IMPACT

SQ6.1.1. To what extent has the Project contributed to the improved NAPA functioning and implementation of the PAR priorities, especially in the area of HRM?

JC6.1.3. To what extent has the Project contributed to the advancement and the progress of the EU Accession agenda and other national development priorities?

Relevant evaluation criteria: CROSS-CUTTING

EQ7.1. To what extent have poor, women and other disadvantaged and marginalised groups benefitted from the NAPA Project?

SQ 7.1.1. To what degree have you been capacitated to understand and implement "leave no-one behind" and rights-based approach?

SQ7.1.2. To what extent has the Project ensured benefits to the poor, women and other disadvantaged and marginalised groups?

EQ7.2. To what extent has gender been addressed in the design, implementation and monitoring of the NAPA Project?

SQ7.2.2. To what extent has the NAPA promoted positive changes in gender equality? How?

Interview guide: Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Governments

Please describe your role and the circumstances under which you have engaged in the project design and/or implementation.

RELEVANCE

- Has the NAPA Project addressed the organisation's needs by improving and strengthening its management and functional capacities? Has this support been relevant and timely?

COHERENCE

- Are you aware of the interventions that are supporting the NAPA? Have you been involved in the coordination platform concerning capacity development and training in the public sector? Could you please provide examples?

EFFECTIVENESS

- Has the NAPA improved its performance, and how? Has there been an evident increase in the NAPA's performance and training delivery efforts?

- What were the main challenges in the NAPA's functioning? Have these challenges affected the process so far?

EFFICIENCY

- How satisfied have you been with cooperation with UNDP and the NAPA Project? Have there been issues and delays in the implementation of activities? What were the main challenges?

- How flexible has the UNDP NAPA Project been, and how responsive to your requests (if any)?

SUSTAINABILITY

- To what extent will the NAPA Project achievements and changes to the NAPA's organisational and functional aspects be sustained? To what extent is NAPA capacitated to continue activities that were available through the Project?

- What are your suggestions for the next stage of capacity development for public institutions? How can the role of NAPA be enhanced in the reform of public administration and professionalisation of civil service in Serbia?

GENDER AND CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES

- Are you aware if the NAPA has considered a rights-based approach and gender equality and followed the "no one is left behind" principle during its design and implementation?

Focus Group Discussion - Guide for partners/ beneficiaries

I) - Focus Group discussion with the LSGs on cooperation in implementing measures and activities to contribute to improved capacities

Thank you for participating in this FGD organised for the purpose of the final evaluation of the Civil Service Training for the 21st Century in the Republic of Serbia- NAPA Project.

You were selected as a beneficiary/ partner of the project. We would like to discuss several issues with you that will help us understand the project's effects and recommend possible improvements for future similar actions.

Your participation is voluntary and confidential, and nothing you say will be linked to your identity. Information will be used only for the purpose of the evaluation.

Please, could you briefly present yourself and indicate in which NAPA activities you have participated?

- How much you are familiar with the overall UNDP/ SIDA support to the NAPA?

- Have you participated in the training programs that NAPA delivered? Have these training programs responded to your needs and addressed your priorities?

- How would you mark the training program that NAPA delivered? Are you familiar with NAPA's services and facilities - for example, online opportunities or the Centre for Research and Policy Advice of the Public Sector and Human Resource Management and Development?

- How would you assess the partnerships between five local governments and the NAPA? What are the main benefits?

- What would you recommend regarding the next stage of partnership with NAPA?

II) Focus Group discussion with the NAPA trainers

Thank you for participating in this FGD organised for the purpose of the final evaluation of the Civil Service Training for the 21st Century in the Republic of Serbia- NAPA Project.

You were selected as a beneficiary of the project. We would like to discuss several issues with you that will help us understand the project's effects and recommend possible improvements for future similar actions.

Your participation is voluntary and confidential; nothing you say will be linked to your identity. Information will be used only for the purpose of the evaluation.

Please, could you briefly present yourself and indicate which project activities you participated in.

- What is your opinion- has the NAPA enhanced and improved its service delivery capacities? Has the quality assurance system been improved?

- What is your opinion about the role of NAPA in enhancing capacities of civil service in Serbia? In what ways?

- Are there any innovative practices you have implemented or practices that could be replicated?

- How effective and sustainable are the capacities of the NAPA and human resources of the civil service? What are your priorities for the future for improved delivery of these activities

Annex 3: Evaluation matrix

Relevant sub-question	Judgement criteria	Indicators	Data analysis	Data Sources and collection tools
Relevant evaluation criteria: RELEVANCE				
Key Question 1: Has the Project been relevant in responding to the needs of NAPA, other national institutions and beneficiaries?				
EQ1.1. To what extent was the design and implementation of the Project responded to the priorities of NAPA and needs for development of human resources in public administration?	JC1.1. The extent to which the Project responded to the NAPA institutional priorities and needs JC1.1.2. The extent to which the Project addressed capacity development needs and priorities of civil servants (context of PAR)	• Evidence that the objectives and outputs of the Project are supporting the NAPA's priorities and organizational development needs • Evidence that the Project and its activities responded to the needs of final beneficiaries-civil servants from various national institutions	Desk based research Assessment of the strength of the ToC designed for the Project (explicit or implicit). Interviews and group interviews with identified stakeholders from NAPA (including NAPA trainers)	Programming documents: Project documents, , Annual Progress Reports Stakeholders from the implementing partners, public institutions, policy-making bodies and, other government institutions, and development partners in the respective fields
EQ1.2. To what extent has the NAPA project relevance been considered and examined during its implementation? *How well justified and required have the suggestions for change been?*	JC1.2.1. The degree of lasting relevance of the NAPA Project and its activities (measured through the flexibility of the project and changes introduced during planning and implementation) JC1.2.2. Existence of changes in the NAPA's environment that required changes and adjustments of the intervention	• Evidences (including opinions) about the changes in the NAPA Project environment and the need to adjust activities and implementation approach • Justification for modifying and adjusting the NAPA Project's implementation approach and evidence of the Project's flexibility • Evidence (including opinions and desk examples) that the Project considered and responded to the political, legal, economic institutional changes in the country		
Relevant evaluation criteria: COHERENCE				
Key Question 2: Has the project aligned its intervention with the priorities for the achievement of PAR priorities, and development goals of the Republic of Serbia?				

EQ2.1. To what extent has the NAPA Project established and ensured internal coherence?	JC2.1. The extent of the internal horizontal and vertical coherence among the NAPA Project's objectives	• Analysis that the links between outputs and outcomes, assumptions and activities- logical connections and consistency • Analysis of the indicators at various levels (including baselines and targets)	Desk based research Analysis of national and sector-specific priorities that the NAPA Project addressed Analysis of the Serbia's International benchmarks- especially SIGMA recommendations and the EU accession framework Interviews with key informants including development partners	Programming documents: The Project, Annual Progress Reports. Other project deliverables Stakeholders from the NAPA, public institutions, policy-making bodies and other government institutions, and development partners in the respective fields
EQ2.2. To what extent is the project in line with national development priorities and strategies, country programme outputs and outcomes?	JC2.2.1. The extent to which the Project and its outputs and outcomes are aligned with the national development priorities and strategies, JC2.2.2. The extent to which the NAPA Project considered UN Development Cooperation Framework, UNDP strategic plan, and relevant SDGs	• Evidence and opinions about the NAPA Project objectives (at various levels) are aligned with the priorities and goals of Serbia's strategies and policies, including country's international commitments and obligations • Evidence that the NAPA Project aligns with the UN Development Cooperation Framework • Evidence that the NAPA Project addressed SDGs and contributed to its targets		
EQ2.3. To what extent does the project contribute to the public administration reform of the country?	JC 2.3. The extent to which the Project aligns with the PAR Strategy and contributes to its implementation	• Evidence (including opinions and examples) that the Project assigns with the PAR Strategy and its objectives and priorities		

Relevant evaluation criteria: **EFFECTIVENESS -**

Key question 3: Have the Project and its approaches and activities contributed to the attainment of the planned and expected outputs and outcomes?

EQ3.1. To what degree has the Project achieved its outputs (as per ToC)?	JC3.1.1. The extent to which the NAPA Project met its targets and achieved its outputs
	JC3.1.2. The extent to which the NAPA management and staff, trainers and experts and beneficiaries have been satisfied with the Project implementation and achieved results
		• Evidence of developed capacities of the NAPA for effective coordination and implementation of the professional development management system
		  • *Document Management System introduced*
		  • *Development, implementation and monitoring of training plans completed*
		• Evidence of strengthening staff capacities to support the further development of the institution
		  • *- Participation of civil servants in training (%)*
		• Evidence of introducing new methods of training and establishing a training quality assurance system
			Desk based research including national and organizational statistics, and third parties' reports
			National statistics and international performance indicators on the priority areas
			Interviews and group interviews with identified stakeholders from NAPA and MPALSG. Focus groups with trainers and beneficiaries.
				Programming documents: The Project, Annual Progress Reports. Other project deliverables
				Stakeholders from the NAPA, public institutions, policy-making bodies and other government institutions, and development partners in the respective fields

		• *Linkage between performance appraisals and measures designed to enhance professional achievement* • *Professionalism of performance assessments* • Evidence that the Project supported the establishment of the Centre for research and policy advice of public sector and human resource management and development • *Research Centre and Library established* • *Co-ordination of the civil service training policy* • Evidence and examples that media outreach and visibly of the NAPA and SIDA have been enhanced • *Communication Plan adopted* • *Recognition of training as a right and a duty of civil servants* • Evidence that beneficiaries (NAPA and civil servants) and partners have been satisfied with implementation and results	The intention is on validating or refuting lines of inquiry - collecting perceptions about results (outputs) achieved with the reference to outputs and progress towards outcomes.
EQ3.2. To what degree has the Project contributed to the achievement of outcomes?	JC3.2. The extent to which the NAPA Project's outputs contributed to progress under outcomes	• Evidence (including opinions) that NAPA has enhanced its capacities through operational and functional systems, processes and tools • Evidence that innovative learning tools have been developed and in use • Evidence that a Centre of excellence for public sector and human resource development is in place and operational	
EQ3.3. In which areas does the project have the greatest achievements? Why and what have been the supporting factors?	JC3.3.1. Existence of areas that the NAPA Project has shown greatest achievement (or underperformed). JC3.3.2. The extent to which external and internal factors to the NAPA Project affected (supported or constrained) the effectiveness	• Analysis of external situation that have affected implementation of the Project • Opinions of stakeholders if the Project has achieved some unintended results and examples of these results • Examples of negative and unplanned internal and external developments that have affected the achievement of the outputs of the Project	

Relevant evaluation criteria: **EFFICIENCY**				
Key question 4: Have the implementation of the Project and its approaches been efficient concerning adherence to the work plans (timely implementation), flexibility and responsiveness?				
SQ4.1. Have the NAPA Project's activities been implemented in in a timely manner and delivered results?	JC4.1.1. The degree of timely implementation of the NAPA Project, in a logical sequence, and availability of inputs in a timely fashion JC4.1.2. The extent to which the Project has introduced sound and effective management practices (including reporting and communication)	• Evidences of timely implementation of activities (without delays)- analysis of planned vs implemented activities and delivery of outputs or delays and changes in implementation of plans • Extent to which project documents and initiatives have been prepared and contracts signed in time, and evidence and examples of timely implementation of this project	Desk based research including national and organizational statistics, and third parties' reports Analysis of the NAPA Project budget and management/ organizational structure Analysis of the steering mechanisms and minutes from the meetings- to verify decision making approaches Interviews with key informants – focus groups with beneficiaries and experts	Programming documents: The Project Document, Annual Progress Reports. Steering Committee meeting minutes Contractual arrangements including analysis of the approved budget Stakeholders from the implementing partners- NAPA, MPALSG, other ministries and governmental structures,
SQ4.2. Has the NAPA Project established effective leadership and management practices to maximize results?	JC4.2.1. The extent to which leadership and management of the NAPA Project contributed to delivery of results JC4.2.2. The extent to which management systems, including monitoring mechanisms, facilitated efficient implementation	• Evidence that the Project's management structure has been optimized and cost-efficient to ensure efficient delivery • Evidence that management system was well-established (compared to development assistance benchmarks) and facilitated delivery of results • Evidence that the monitoring data were objectively used for management of risks, actions and decision making		
EQ4.3. What external factors affected the project, and to what extent was the project been able to adapt and/or mitigate the effects of such factors?	JC4.3.1. Existence of external factors and the extent to which they affected the Project implementation JC4.3.2. The extent to which the Project responded to these challenges	• Examples of external factors and forms that they affected implementation of the Project • Examples that the Project adjusted and responded to these challenges		
Relevant evaluation criteria: **SUSTAINABILITY**				
Key Question 5: Has the NAPA Project contributed to partnerships, polices and capacities of stakeholders to ensure ownership and sustainability of achieved results?				
SQ5.1. What is the likelihood that the benefits from the Project will be maintained for a reasonably long period of time after the Project phase out?	JV5.1.1. Existence of capacities within NAPA to maintain the results achieved (and the extent that financial and human capacities are in place)	• Type of national mechanisms/ structures to maintain the results achieved	Desk based research including national and organizational statistics, and third parties' reports	Programming documents: The Project Document, Annual Progress Reports.

	JC5.1.2. The extent to which policy and regulatory frameworks are in place that will support the continuation of benefits for men and women in the future	• Evidence that financial resources are assigned to the NAPA for the delivery of services and trainings • The extent to which partners are committed to providing continuing support • Evidence that policy and regulatory frameworks are in place that to support the continuation of benefits for men and women in the future	Analysis of the project budget and management/ organizational structure Interviews with key informants - Group interviews if possible (to discuss achievements and validate findings)	Contractual arrangements Stakeholders from the implementing partners- NAPA, MPALSG, other ministries and governmental structures,
SQ5.2. To what extent the intervention succeeded in building individual and institutional capacities to ensure sustainability of benefits?	JC5.2.1. The extent to which stakeholders' capacities (individual and institutional) have been developed to ensure sustainability of efforts and benefits JC5.2.2. The extent to which target groups benefited (and will continue benefiting) from the NAPA Project	• Evidence that institutional systems (legal frameworks, policies and governance structures and processes) and individual capacities are in place for sustaining benefits • Existence and identification of factors that are affecting sustainable institutional development of the NAPA and other public institutions/ civil servants that benefited from the NAPA Project • Evidence about the turnover of staff from participating organizations, including existence of human resources development plans and strategies to retain employees		
SQ5.3. To what extent has national ownership of the project been achieved,	JC5.3.1. Existence of the country ownership of the results and partnerships with relevant stakeholders JC5.3.2. Existence of readiness of future support by national partners and stakeholders to the continuation of the initiative	• Evidence that legal frameworks, policies and governance structures and processes are in place for sustaining project benefits		
SQ5.4. What are potentials for continuation or up scaling of the initiative, future overarching of identified gaps and sustainability?	JC5.4. Opportunities for continuation and expansion of the results and activities in the area of the PAR and human resources development	• Evidences about the opportunities for continuation and expansion of the results and activities in the PAR and Project areas (including innovative approaches and practices for human resources development)		

Relevant evaluation criteria: **IMPACT**

Key question 6 Has the Project contributed to Serbia's broader progress in the reform of public administration and development of civil service in the country?

EQ6.1. To what extent has the project contributed to the NAPA's functioning and the progress in the area of human resource management and education of civil servants in Serbia?	JC6.1.1. The extent to which the Project contributed to the improved NAPA functioning and implementation of the PAR priorities, especially in the area of HRM JC6.1.2. The extent to which the Project contributed to the UN Country Programme outputs and outcomes JC6.1.3. The extent to which the Project contributed to the advancement and the progress of EU Accession agenda and other national development priorities	• Evidence- examples and opinions- that the Project contributed to the implementation of the PAR priorities, especially in the area of Human Resource Management, • Evidence that the Project contributed to the UN Country Programme outputs and outcomes • Evidence, including opinions, examples and analysis that the Project contributed to the advancement and the progress of EU Accession agenda	Desk based research including national and organizational statistics, and third parties' reports Interviews with key informants - Group interviews (to discuss achievements and validate findings)	Programming documents, Project documents, Annual Progress Reports. Project deliverables. PAR progress reports/ EU Progress reports National and international statistics Stakeholders from the implementing partners, public institutions and other stakeholders

Relevant evaluation criteria: CROSS-CUTTING

Key Question 7: Has the NAPA Project considered gender equality, and followed the principle of no-one if left behind during its design and implementation?

EQ7.1. To what extent have poor, women and other disadvantaged and marginalized groups benefitted from NAPA Project?	JC7.1.1. The degree to which partners are capacitated to implement "leave no-one behind" and rights-based approach JC7.1.2. The extent to which the Project ensured benefits to poor, women and other disadvantaged and marginalized groups	• Examples of practices in promotion and mainstreaming of human rights during its formulation and implementation • Evidence- opinions that the Project contributed to capacity development of the stakeholders to implement "leave-no one behind" and human rights principles in its activities	Desk based research including national and organizational statistics, and third parties' reports Interviews with key informants - Group interviews (to discuss achievements and validate findings)	Programming documents, Project documents, Annual Progress Reports. Project deliverables. PAR progress reports/ EU Progress reports National and international statistics
EQ7.2. To what extent has gender been addressed in the design, implementation and monitoring of the NAPA Project?	JC7.2.1. The extent to which gender mainstreaming was considered and implemented under the NAPA Project JC7.2.2. The extent to which NAPA's promoted positive changes in gender equality	• Evidence and opinions that gender was considered and mainstreamed during the NAPA Project implementation • Evidences that partners enhanced capacities for gender mainstreaming in all activities		Stakeholders from the implementing partners, public institutions and other stakeholders

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Title:	Project Evaluator (Final project evaluation)
Project:	Civil Service Training for the 21st Century in the Republic of Serbia
Reporting to:	Programme Analyst (Evaluation Manager)
Duty Station:	Belgrade, Serbia
Contract Type:	Individual Contract (IC) / Reimbursable Loan Agreement (RLA)
Duration:	November – December 2023 (output-based consultancy)

Purpose

The purpose is to provide information about the results of the *Civil Service Training for the 21st Century in the Republic of Serbia* project implementation.

Objective

The objective is to assess whether and how the project outcomes are achieved, the efficiency with which the outputs are achieved and contribute to the achievement of outcomes, relevance for the national strategic framework and the UNDP Country Programme outcome and sustainability of the results, and to provide recommendations for future engagement.

Background Information

The project "Civil Service Training for the 21st Century in the Republic of Serbia" supports the development of an effective and professional civil service by enhancing the capacities and skills of future management staff and other civil servants in public institutions and organizing their continuous training, as this is a critical condition for the overall modernization of public administration and the implementation of administrative, economic, and social reforms.

The system for professional development of civil servants in Serbia has continuously faced challenges in recent years due to the lack of a well-rounded knowledge management cycle and career management system.

These gaps have been pinpointed in several assessments and reviews in recent years, including the Analysis of the key stakeholders in the field of professional development of civil servants and the Analysis of the legal and institutional framework for professional development of civil servants in the Republic of Serbia, which served as a basis for the preparation of the Strategy for the Professional Development of Civil Servants.

The main shortcomings of the professional development system for civil servants that have been identified include:

- The lack of a well-rounded approach to the issue of the professional development of civil servants within the broader field of Human Resource Management in the public sector and

- The lack of a clear link and relationship between the general and specific professional development and training programs, and the strategies and objectives of Public Administration reform (PAR)

In order to address the underlying issues, the Strategy for the Professional Development of Civil Servants stipulates the establishment of a "Central National institution for the implementation of professional development programs for civil servants" which would be mandated with the responsibility for the overall coordination of the professional development of civil servants and would be located outside the ministry responsible for the coordination of public administration.

The National Academy for Public Administration (NAPA) was established in 2018 in accordance with the Law on the National Academy for Public Administration, as a special organization with the status of a legal entity. Supervision over the work of the National Academy is carried out by the ministry in charge of the state administration system. The special bodies of the National Academy are the Programme Council and the Permanent Programme Commissions.

The National Academy performs tasks related to: systematic collection and processing of data related to the improvement of the work and professional capacities of the public administration and data that are of importance for the development, preparation, implementation, verification and evaluation of the professional development programmes and the management of an appropriate documentary information base; creation and development of methodology and standard instruments for the preparation and implementation of training programs; accreditation of the training programs and training providers; preparation, implementation and development of general professional training programs and training programs for managers; providing professional assistance and coordination regarding implementation of tasks related to the preparation and implementation of special training programs; preparation and implementation of training programme for trainers, mentors, coaches; monitoring the effects of the implementation of training programs; cooperation with the service responsible for human resources management, i.e. professional development of employees in autonomous provinces and local self-government units; research and analytical work and cooperation with scientific institutions; cooperation with domestic, foreign and international institutions, organizations; performing publishing activities; maintaining the central record of the professional training programs in the public administration.

Despite Serbia's continuous progress in the EU accession process, the EU 2018 Progress Report for Serbia noted that the country "is moderately prepared with the reform of its public administration", while some progress has been made in a number of PAR areas, including the area of professional development in PA, by establishing the national training academy.

The Serbian Government adopted the PAR Action Plan 2018-2020 in July 2018 with one of its key objectives is to establish a coordinated public service system based on merits and the promotion of human resource management and in particular to achieve the full functioning of the National Academy for Public Administration.

The 2019 SIGMA Monitoring Report for Serbia3 that was published in 2019 recognises the establishment of the NAPA as the main PAR institutional change during the previous period. The report further concludes that the NAPA has gradually started to carry out its responsibilities, as well as that a set of secondary and tertiary legislation was passed, either by the Government or by the Director of NAPA. The Report emphasizes that the NAPA team is committed to build a truly modern institution for professional development and training, adding that the process will take some time, but the goodwill and commitment are clearly visible.

The current Project represents a continuation of the development initiatives that were implemented in 2018 and 2019 – the EU funded "Support to Establishment of the National Academy for Public Administration" project provided support to the establishment of the National Academy for Public Administration during 2018 and in that context supported the drafting of the Act on internal organisation and systematization of working posts, the development of internal procedures, directives and acts, supported the preparation of by-laws (1 decree and 2 Rulebooks) based on the Law on NAPA and corresponding laws (Law on Changes and Amendments to the Law on Civil Servants and Law on Changes), assisted the NAPA in the developing of the strategy for the introduction and development of financial management and control within the NAPA and the preparation of a Programme Budget for 2019, including mid-term budget plan (2019-2021) and the

"Support to the NAPA in professional development of public administration" which was funded by the Good Governance Fund of the United Kingdom of Great Britain which supported NAPA in conducting a training needs analysis, assisted NAPA in upgrading its professional development programmes and developing and evaluating online courses for priority topics.

The Project aims to build on the previous achievements which were recognized both in Serbia and internationally, and provide effective support to the National Academy for Public Administration (NAPA) in (1) further building and strengthening its internal capacity at the staff/trainer and institution level, (2) designing new, innovative and competitive training programs and redesigning of existing ones in line with the needs of the public sector and the latest global trends of public administration for aligning to the 4th industrial revolution, (3) introducing modern e-learning platforms using effective electronic multimedia educational technologies and (4) supporting NAPA's international cooperation activities, educational research, as well as outreach activities in order to promote and ensure greater visibility of NAPA's mission and activities.

Plans for the further development of NAPA include the introduction of new curricula based on international standards and training methods that reflect contemporary challenges in public administration, the use of leading pedagogical, ICT and innovative technologies, the involvement of high-calibre professors from foreign universities in the programs, the implementation of joint programs on public administration with foreign think tanks and universities, the organisation of comprehensive studies on international best practices in public sector management and design recommendations for further enhancement of the public administration system in Serbia.

The project was aimed to achieve the following outcomes and outputs:

OUTCOME 1: INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY BUILDING BY ESTABLISHING SYSTEMS, PROCESSES AND TOOLS

- Output 1.1: Developing the capacities of the NAPA for effective coordination and implementation of the professional development management system.

- Output 1.2: Strengthening staff capacities to support the further development of the institution.

OUTCOME 2: DEVELOPMENT OF INNOVATIVE LEARNING TOOLS AND A CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE FOR PUBLIC SECTOR AND HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

- Output 2.1: Introducing new methods of training and establishing a training quality assurance system.

- Output 2.2: Establishing a centre for research and policy advice of public sector and human resource management and development.

- Output 2.3: Ensuring media outreach and visibly of the National Academy for Public Administration and the Kingdom of Sweden as a leading donor in the public sector management reform.

In line with the abovementioned, UNDP Serbia invites applications from qualified consultants in order to perform the final evaluation of the Accountable Public Finance Management Platform project.

Note: Project Results Framework showing the structure of outcomes and outputs is annexed to this ToR.

Duties and Responsibilities

a. Scope of work

The final evaluation should assess the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability of the project. It should assess what works and why, highlight intended and unintended results, and provide strategic lessons to guide decision-makers and inform stakeholders.

Evaluation criteria and key guiding questions

The Evaluator will review, analyze and provide conclusions and recommendations on the following: (questions are to be further refined once the evaluator is selected):

Relevance and Coherence

- To what extent is the project in line with national development priorities and strategies, country programme outputs and outcomes, United Nations Development Cooperation Framework, strategic plan, as well as relevant SDGs?

- To what extent was the project relevance examined during project implementation considered and suggestions made for change in implementation to match the changes noted?

- To what extent does the project contribute to the public administration reform of the country?

- To what extent has the project been appropriately responsive to political, legal, economic, institutional, etc., changes in the country?

Effectiveness

- To what extent has the project contributed to the implementation of the relevant national legal and strategic framework on public administration reform, especially in the area of Human Resource Management, as well as to the Country Programme outputs and outcomes

- To what degree have project activities listed in the Project Document been successfully implemented and desired outputs achieved and what factors contributed to effectiveness or ineffectiveness?

- In which areas does the project have the greatest achievements? Why and what have been the supporting factors? In which areas does the project have the fewest achievements and what factors have contributed to this? How can this be changed through future actions?

- To what extent have beneficiaries (National Academy for Public Administration and civil servants) benefited from the project activities?

- To what extent are beneficiaries (National Academy for Public Administration and civil servants) and partners satisfied with programme implementation and results?

- To what extent has the project mainstreamed a human-rights approach and environmental sustainability and improved gender equality and women's rights?

Efficiency

- To what extent has the project approach ensured efficiency in delivering outputs?

- What external factors affected the project, and to what extent was the project been able to adapt and/or mitigate the effects of such factors?

- To what extent has the project management approach contributed to achieving planned results, including the role of stakeholders and coordination with other development projects in the same area?

- To what extent has there been an economical use of financial and human resources, have resources been allocated strategically to achieve outcomes and has this contributed to the delivery of activities in a timely manner?

- To what extent have the applied monitoring and evaluation systems ensured effective and efficient project management?

Impact

- To what extent has the project contributed to Serbia improving its overall progress in the area of human resource management and education of civil servants.

Sustainability

- To what extent has national ownership of the project been achieved, with a view on readiness of future support by national partners and stakeholders to the continuation of the initiative?

- What are potentials for continuation or up scaling of the initiative, future overarching of identified gaps and sustainability?

- To what extent are policy and regulatory frameworks in place that will support the continuation of benefits for men and women in the future?

- To what extent have partners committed to providing continuing support?

- To what extent will the target groups benefit from the project interventions in the long term?

Cross cutting issues

The evaluation must also include an assessment of the extent to which programme design, implementation and monitoring have taken the following cross cutting issues into consideration:

Human rights

- To what extent have poor, women and other disadvantaged and marginalized groups benefitted from NAPA's interventions?

-Gender Equality

- To what extent has gender been addressed in the design, implementation and monitoring of the NAPA programme?

- To what extent has NAPA's programme promoted positive changes in gender equality? Were there any unintended effects?

- How did the programme promote gender equality, human rights and human development in the delivery of outputs?

The evaluation team will include a summary of the main findings of the evaluation report. Findings should be presented as statements of fact that are based on analysis of the data.

A section on conclusions will be written in light of the findings. Conclusions should be comprehensive and balanced statements that are well substantiated by evidence and logically connected to the evaluation findings. They should highlight the strengths, weaknesses and results of the project, respond to key evaluation questions and provide insights into the identification of and/or solutions to important problems or issues pertinent to project beneficiaries, including issues in relation to gender equality and women's empowerment.

Recommendations should provide concrete, practical, feasible and targeted recommendations directed to the intended users of the evaluation about what actions to take and decisions to make. The recommendations should be specifically supported by the evidence and linked to the findings and conclusions around key questions addressed by the evaluation.

The evaluation report should also include lessons that can be taken from the evaluation, including best and worst practices in addressing issues relating to relevance, performance and success that can provide knowledge gained from the particular circumstance (programmatic and evaluation methods used, partnerships, financial leveraging, etc.) that are applicable to other UNDP interventions. When possible, the evaluation team should include examples of good practices in project design and implementation.

It is important for the conclusions, recommendations and lessons learned of the TE report to include results related to gender equality and empowerment of women.

b. Methodology

The evaluation approach has to respond to standard international practices in project evaluation. The methodology should look into the consistency of evidence with causal relationship. This method identifies

patterns that align with a potential causal relationship and is grounded in well-developed ToC, seeking evidence to either confirm or disconfirm the identified patterns. In addition, the most significant change of an initiative could be applied by collecting the stories of change from beneficiaries so it could be filtered upward in project.

Qualitative and quantitative data collected through interviews, observation and documentation must be triangulated and interpreted. Evaluator should propose whether the mixing, explanatory or exploratory design method will be used.

The proposed steps in conducting the evaluation will be:

- Review of project documentation, monitoring records and progress and other relevant reports.

- Initial meeting with Project Team to agree the specific design and methods for the evaluation, what is appropriate and feasible to meet the evaluation purpose and objectives. Agree on the evaluation questions that will need to be answered, given limitations of time and extant data.

- Organization of interviews with key staff involved in the project implementation.

- Prepare inception report with evaluation matrix*.

- Discussions with members of the project team and members of the public finance ecosystem (project beneficiaries) to assess project's relevance and effectiveness of project implementation take note of their perceptions of accomplishments and potentials for further development and provide suggestions for management response to evaluation findings. Objectively verifiable data should be collected whenever available to supplement evidence obtained through interviews and focus group discussions.

- Prepare Draft Report and present it to the Project Team, Implementing Partner and beneficiaries.

- Incorporate feedback received through the audit trail into the Final Report.

- Prepare the Final Report** with the Executive Summary.

- Each evaluation criterion should be scored using the evaluations rating scale: Highly Satisfactory (HS), Satisfactory (S), Moderately Satisfactory (MS), Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU), Unsatisfactory (U) and Highly Unsatisfactory (HU), as follows

A: Assessment of Project Outcomes	Rating	Weighting
1. **Project Effectiveness of achieving results**	Highly satisfactory (6) to Highly Unsatisfactory (1)	
2. **Project Efficiency in achieving results**	Highly satisfactory (6) to Highly Unsatisfactory (1)	
3. **Project Relevance**	Relevant or not relevant	
Output rating	**Averaged from above**	30%
B: Sustainability		
4. **Sustainability of Results**	Likely (4) to Unlikely (1)	
5. **Sustainability within the Socio-Political setting**	Likely (4) to Unlikely (1)	
6. **Sustainability of Institutional framework and governance**	Likely (4) to Unlikely (1)	
Overall Likelihood of sustainability	**Averaged from above**	20%
C: Monitoring and evaluation		
7. **Project M&E design at entry**	Highly satisfactory (6) to Highly Unsatisfactory (1)	
8. **M&E plan implementation**	Highly satisfactory (6) to Highly Unsatisfactory (1)	
M&E overall rating	**Averaged from above**	20%

D: Implementation		
9. **Quality of UNDP project implementation**	Highly satisfactory (6) to Highly Unsatisfactory (1)	
10. **Inclusion of relevant crosscutting issues (gender, environmental safeguards, Human rights etc.**	Highly satisfactory (6) to Highly Unsatisfactory (1)	
Overall Implementation rating		**30%**
Overall project quality	**Based on weightings of above scores.** Highly satisfactory (6) to Highly Unsatisfactory (1)	

A following set of information sources about the project will be made available to the Evaluator:

- Project documents.

- Progress reports.

- Key documents (strategies, policy papers, monitoring reports, surveys etc.) produced by the project.

* Inception report and evaluation matrix formats are annexed to this ToR (Annexes IV, V and VI constitute an integral part of this ToR)

**The final report must include, but not necessarily be limited to the elements outlined in the quality criteria for evaluation reports (Annex I constitute an integral part of this ToR).

c. Deliverables and Timelines

It is expected that the evaluation will be completed in line with the below specified schedule, with the following deliverables due:

Deliverables	Duration (days)	Deadline
Inception report including work plan and evaluation matrix prepared and accepted	7 days	27 November 2023
Draft Evaluation Report prepared and accepted	14 days	8 December 2023
Draft Evaluation Report presented to the Project Team, Implementing Partner and beneficiaries	1 day	9 December 2023
Final Evaluation report with Executive Summary prepared and accepted	5 days	14 December 2023

Travel costs (transport, accommodation and living costs) should be included in the consultant's lump-sum offer and payables agreed prior to the start of the mission.

The criteria of utility, credibility, appropriateness will be used for assessing the quality of the evaluation report:

- The report has to be written in clear language (English);

- The Executive Summary should be a short chapter, highlighting the evaluation mandate, approach, key findings, conclusions and recommendations and not a copy-paste from the body text of the report or ToR;

- The information in the report should be complete, well-structured, and well presented.

- The information in the report should be reliable i.e., well documented and supported findings.

- The information in the report should address priority or strategic information needs.

- Recommendations should be concrete and implementable.

- Human rights and gender equality perspective has been considered.

Detailed quality criteria are given in Annex 1.

Evaluation ethics

Evaluation consultant will be held to the highest ethical standards. The evaluation should be conducted in accordance with the principles outlined in the Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation. Evaluators need to sign the Pledge of Ethical Conduct in Evaluation, which constitutes integral part of this ToR.

Management and implementation arrangements

The evaluation process shall be led by the Evaluator, while the UNDP Project team shall provide technical support in terms of providing all relevant information, as requested by the Evaluator. Among other things, the UNDP Project team shall provide the Evaluator with all project documents, reports and material developed within the project, as well as contacts of all stakeholders and partners. Project team will support the Evaluator in the process of scheduling of all meetings and interviews needed during the process of evaluation.

Evaluation Manager will be responsible to consolidate comments on the draft Inception and evaluation reports and to communicate them with the Evaluator, as well as to accept deliverables.

Skills and Competencies

- Excellent analytical skills.

- Displays ability to synthesize research and reach empirically based conclusions on related subject.

- Strong writing skills.

- Proven capacity to produce reports.

- Displays capacity to provide experienced advice on best practices.

- Possesses knowledge of inter-disciplinary development issues.

- Focuses on result for the client and responds positively to feedback.

- Good application of Results-Based Management.

- Good communication, coordination, and facilitation skills.

- Consistently ensures timeliness and quality of work.

- Treats all people fairly without favourism.

- Displays cultural, gender, religion, race, nationality and age sensitivity and adaptability.

Demonstrates integrity by modeling ethical standards.

Qualifications

Education:

- Bachelor or equivalent in relevant field of humanities, social science, economics or business administration.

Work experience:

- Minimum 5 years of relevant professional experience, preferably in international/multilateral development context.

- Experience in evaluating and monitoring technical cooperation and development activities and projects.

- Experience in M&E or performance management assignments.

- Understanding of current policies, legislation and international standards related to public administration reform and public finance management.
- Familiarity with the UN(DP) evaluation policy, norms and standards.
- Knowledge in the use of computers and office software packages and handling of web-based monitoring systems.

Language:

- Excellent knowledge of written and spoken English

Application Procedure:

The application must include the following documents:

- CV in English language containing date of birth, contact information (home address, phone number, e-mail) and timeline of work experience (including description of duties); CV must include contact information and references for all evaluations and assessments performed; **All criteria set in evaluation methodology should be elaborated in CV.**
- Offeror's Letter (only PDF format will be accepted) confirming Interest and availability for the Individual Contractor (IC) Assignment.

Financial Proposal:

Lump sum contracts

The financial proposal shall specify a total lump sum amount, and payment terms around specific and measurable (qualitative and quantitative) deliverables (i.e. whether payments fall in installments or upon completion of the entire contract). Payments are based upon output, i.e. upon delivery of the services specified in the TOR. In order to assist the requesting unit in the comparison of financial proposals, the financial proposal will include a breakdown of this lump sum amount (including travel, per diems, and number of anticipated working days).

Travel

In case of in country travel, costs incurred will be covered by project. In general, UNDP should not accept travel costs exceeding those of an economy class ticket. Should the IC wish to travel on a higher class he/she should do so using their own resources.

Evaluation

1. Cumulative analysis

When using this weighted scoring method, the award of the contract should be made to the individual consultant whose offer has been evaluated and determined as:

a) responsive/compliant/acceptable, and

b) Having received the highest score out of a pre-determined set of weighted technical and financial criteria specific to the solicitation.

* Technical Criteria weight; 70%

* Financial Criteria weight; 30%

Only candidates obtaining a minimum of 70% (70 points out of maximum 100 points) obtained in technical evaluation would be considered for the Financial Evaluation.

Criteria	Weight	Max. Point
Technical-desk review	*70%*	*100 points*

Criteria A	Professional experience in monitoring and evaluations and project or programme management preferably in international/multilateral development context. Relevant working experience has to be clearly demonstrated through submitted CV.	50 points
Criteria B	At least 10 evaluated development projects, programs and country programmes (mid-term and final evaluations). Relevant working experience has to be clearly demonstrated through submitted CV.	50 points
Financial	*30%*	

Additional Information:

- Individual Contract (IC) will be applicable for individual consultants applying in their own capacity. If the applicant is employed by any legal entity, IC would be issued upon submission of Consent letter from the employer acknowledging the engagement with UNDP. Template of General Conditions on IC could be found on: http://www.undp.org.rs/download/ic/Confirmation.docx

- Reimbursable Loan Agreement (RLA) will be applicable for applicants employed by any legal entity. Template of RLA with General Terms and Conditions could be found on: http://www.undp.org.rs/download/RLA%20with%20General%20Terms%20and%20Conditions.doc. In the case of engagement of Civil servants under IC contract modality a no-objection letter should be provided by the Government entity. The 'no-objection' letter must also state that the employer formally certifies that their employees are allowed to receive short-term consultancy assignment from another entity without being on "leave-without-pay" status (if applicable), and include any conditions and restrictions on granting such permission, if any. If the previous is not applicable 'leave-without-pay' confirmation should be submitted.

Engagement of Government Officials and Employees

- Government Officials or Employees are civil servants of UN Member States. As such, if they will be engaged by UNDP under an IC which they will be signing in their individual capacity (i.e., engagement is not done through RLA signed by their Government employer), the following conditions must be met prior to the award of contract:

(I) A "No-objection" letter in respect of the individual is received from the Government employing him/her, and;

(II) The individual must provide an official documentation from his/her employer formally certifying his or her status as being on "official leave without pay" for the duration of the IC.

- The above requirements are also applicable to Government-owned and controlled enterprises and well as other semi/partially or fully owned Government entities, whether or not the Government ownership is of majority or minority status.

UNDP recognizes the possibility that there are situations when the Government entity employing the individual that UNDP wishes to engage is one that allows its employees to receive external short-term consultancy assignments (including but not limited to research institutions, state-owned colleges/universities, etc.), whereby a status of "on-leave-without-pay" is not required. Under such circumstance, the individual entering into an IC with UNDP must still provide a "No-objection" letter from the Government employing him/her. The "no objection" letter required under (i) above must also state that the employer formally certifies that their employees are allowed to receive short-term consultancy assignment from another entity without being on "leave-without-pay" status and include any conditions and restrictions on granting such permission, if any. The said document may be obtained by, and put on record of, UNDP, in lieu of the document (ii) listed above.