**ECG Academy – jointly building capacities in independent evaluation**

*A draft proposal by WBG-IEG and ADB-IED*

**Introduction**

Evaluators from ECG members share common challenges in the design and implementation of evaluation. There are aspects relating to each ECG member’s institutional context (processes, systems, instruments, areas of work), organization of the evaluation function, evaluation modalities, processes and approaches to evaluation (etc.) that are unique to each organization. At the same time, the similarities in mandates, modalities, processes and approaches are apparent. Independent evaluation functions of ECG members have evolved in similar ways, in part thanks to the role of the ECG itself.[[1]](#footnote-1)

ECG members are confronted by similar external drivers of change. Evaluation practice in IFIs is influenced by broader trends that include *inter alia*:

* An ever-growing diversity in evaluation models and associated methods.
* Innovations in technology as well as new techniques for managing and analyzing data which in combination with a growing availability of (especially new and big) data are already having significant effects on evaluation approaches and practices.
* Global phenomena such as climate change and inequality that challenge evaluators in coming up with better frameworks and approaches to generate the right insights that help our organizations to effectively address them.

Some ECG members have established internal capacity building programs for new and existing staff members. While there is a need for evaluation capacity building initiatives that are attuned to the specificities of each institution, there is significant scope for collaboration in capacity development initiatives for independent evaluation function staff.

**Purpose and scope**

The primary purpose of the ECG Academy is to contribute to enhancing the quality and utility of evaluative work conducted by ECG members. ECG Academy is a platform for learning about evaluation practices that seeks to occupy an important niche between institution-specific capacity development offers and evaluation capacity development offers that already exist but are not attuned to the specific needs of independent evaluation in the context of IFIs.

In short, ECG Academy focuses on building evaluation capacities through learning events and learning resources that are specifically attuned to the context and needs of independent evaluation in IFIs.

In doing so, the concept of ECG Academy is based on the following principles:

* *Achieving economies of scale and efficiency gains:* by offering a consolidated platform for learning about evaluation ECG members do not need to duplicate efforts and members will be able to benefit from the resources and expertise offered by all.
* *Enhancing quality:* by bringing together the best available expertise across the network and setting common standards for design and delivery.
* *Building on comparative advantages:* by offering a space in which individual members can share their specific know-how and expertise and offer capacity building events or resources to the ECG community.
* *Taking advantage of low-hanging fruits*: by building on existing initiatives by ECG members, the feasibility of implementing ECG Academy given time and resource constraints will increase.

**Pillars**

The ECG Academy will encompass the following four pillars:[[2]](#footnote-2)

* *Pillar 1 - core workshop: Foundations of Evaluation Design (FoED).* This 2-3 day workshop will be delivered in the framework of IPDET’s[[3]](#footnote-3) annual delivery of its onsite training program at the University of Bern in Switzerland. The FoED course will be developed on the basis of the existing FoED curriculum that is offered by IEG to its staff. In collaboration with ECG members the curriculum will be revised to reflect the broader context of (different types of) ECG members and will include instructors from different institutions.
* *Pillar 2 – Community of Practice on Innovation.* The idea is to organize two meetings per year to discuss: (i) innovative work conducted by ECG members (based on lightning talk presentations); (ii) strategic topics of interest in the field of innovation in data and methods. The (initial) focus will be on the application of data science (particularly artificial intelligence) applications in evaluation.
* *Pillar 3 – decentralized offering of learning events by ECG members.* ECG members will be invited to propose and subsequently organize and deliver learning events on specific topics that are of interest to and open to the broader ECG community. Learning events would be mostly virtual but could also be offered in-person.[[4]](#footnote-4)
* *Pillar 4 – guidance materials on good practices in evaluation.* Guidance materials can constitute an effective source of learning especially if they are linked to specific learning events or international good practice standards.[[5]](#footnote-5) To ensure that guidance materials are accessible and potentially useful to ECG staff, the following process could be considered: (i) conducting an inventory of ECG members’ methodological guidance materials; (ii) assessing whether guidance materials are relevant and fit for purpose for other ECG members; (iii) sharing selected guidance materials in a repository[[6]](#footnote-6) available to all ECG members (adhering to ECG members’ institutional policies for information disclosure); (iv) developing additional guidance materials (revising existing guidance materials and developing new materials) to be shared through the repository. In principle the repository should be based on open access. However, part of the repository could have restricted access to ECG members only.

**Proposed roll-out**

Given resource and time constraints, ECG Academy will be rolled out in two phases. The first phase will include the establishment of pillars 1 and 2. The first ECG-wide training workshop can be scheduled in the summer of 2025 (aligned to the IPDET 2025 onsite program). Upon positive assessment these activities may be continued going forward. Subsequently, pending perceived value-added in relation to the required time and resources the second phase (comprising pillars 3 and 4) will be developed and implemented.

**Organization**

WBG-IEG and ADB-IED propose to take an initial leading role in the development and roll-out of ECG Academy. WBG-IEG will lead on the development and implementation on pillar 1. WBG-IEG and ADB-IED will jointly lead on the development and implementation of pillar 2. ECG members are invited to contribute to the development of both pillars.

1. Including its seminal publication, the 2012 Big Book on Good Practice Standards: <https://www.ecgnet.org/document/ecg-big-book-good-practice-standards>. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. See point below on phased roll-out. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. The International Program for Development Evaluation Training. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. This might be done cost-efficiently if the events are linked to international conferences/meetings that ECG staff are likely to attend. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. The ECG Good Practice Standards are in need of updating. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. The methodological guidance repository on IEG’s intranet site could serve as an example. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)