

UNHCR Evaluation Management Response			
Evaluation title:	Evaluation of UNHCR's Innovation Fund		
UNHCR evaluation reference:	Decentralised <b>ES/2020/08</b>		
Entity that commissioned the evaluation:	Innovation Service		
Due date of Management Response:	08/01/2021		
Management Response approved by ( <i>senior manager in commissioning entity</i> ):	Name: Hovig Etyemezian	Job title: Head of Innovation Service	Country/Office: Geneva (HQ)
Date:	22/12/2020		
General comments on the evaluation:	<p>Innovation service worked closely with the independent evaluation team as well as UNHCR's evaluation service during the various phases of the evaluation of the fund. The service commends the work of the evaluators who had the challenge of commencing an evaluation during COVID 19 travel restrictions which hampered their ability to conducting crucial field visits. The service fully agrees with most of the recommendations made by the evaluation team and believes that this evaluation, which took place at the end of the funding cycle for the second iteration of the fund, will influence the re-design process of the third iteration of the fund. The re-design process has been launched in order to implement/build on the recommendations and the Innovation Service has contracted a service design expert firm which will commence its work in February 2021.</p>		
RECOMMENDATION 1:	<p><b>Increase staff resourcing for the Innovation Fund.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The evaluation recommends increased staffing, in particular to allow the Fund to invest in communications, innovation support, in building peer networks among grantees, and in supporting grantees beyond the project lifecycle.</li> <li>This should also include clarifying the roles and expectations of Innovation Service staff situated in other offices globally in promoting the Fund.</li> </ul>		
Management response:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Partially agree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree		

<b>Reasons (if partially agree or disagree):</b>						
<b>Unit or function responsible:</b>		Innovation service Team leading on the Innovation Fund redesign process.				
<b>Top line planned actions</b>		<b>By whom</b>	<b>Comments</b>	<b>Expected completion date</b>	<b>Progress</b>	
	Invest in Staff resourcing	Innovation Service	The service recognizes that the fund lacked an adequate and dedicated staffing structure which could have greatly enhanced the programmatic excellence of the fund. In this scope, and since the fund is currently being redesigned and the service is seeking new donors who could support the fund, The service will make sure that the newly designed fund has in its structure/budget the adequate staffing with clearly identified roles and responsibilities.	April – June 2021	Design and Fundraising phase	
<b>RECOMMENDATION 2:</b>		<p><b>Clarify the strategic objectives of the Innovation Fund.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Innovation Service should narrow and clarify the objectives for Round 3, including clarifying whether the <b>primary</b> purpose of the Fund is to invest in potential innovations with the aim of testing them and supporting them towards sustainability and diffusion, or whether the primary aim is to help a broader cross-section of staff to learn about innovation by doing.</li> <li>In the longer term, the objectives of the Fund should be protected from frequent changes in the Innovation Service management, staff and other initiatives. The objectives should be defined within the Innovation Service's strategy and should complement other components of this strategy as well as UNHCR's strategic position on innovation.</li> </ul>				
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<b>Reasons (if partially agree or disagree):</b>		"				
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Top line planned actions		By whom	Comments	Expected completion date	Progress	
					Status	Comments
	Clarify the primary objectives of the fund while ensuring strategic alignment with UNHCR strategic directions and the Innovation Service Strategy.	Innovation Service	<p>The service agrees that the strategic objectives of the fund should be clarified and should be complementing the service's strategy and its mandate within UNHCR. The Service also acknowledges that defining clear objectives in alignment with UNHCR strategic directions is key to allow the team to monitor and assess the achievement of the Innovation Fund as mentioned in the evaluation. The Service also agrees that strategic alignment with UNHCR strategic direction is essential for the Fund to <b>not lose sight</b> of how it engages with other aspects of UNHCR's structure and culture.</p> <p>The service also agrees that the primary objective of the fund should be further clarified and that the fund should have a consistent more medium/long term approach. The service however, believes that building staff/end users capabilities, knowledge and skills on Innovation is intrinsic and a key element of the Innovation Fund but might not be its primary objective. These recommendations will be taken into consideration during the design phase of the next iteration of the fund.</p>	April – June 2021	Design and Fundraising phase	
<b>RECOMMENDATION 3:</b>		<p><b>Revisit application criteria for the Fund, including requiring innovators to work with persons of concern to UNHCR.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The evaluation recommends that the Innovation Service narrows the scope of the Fund by revisiting the application criteria, including reintroducing the criteria for team members to engage with persons of concern to UNHCR and promoting whole-of-society approaches.</li> <li>At the same time, the Innovation Service should invest in its capacities to support stronger engagement of persons of concern to UNHCR in innovation processes.</li> </ul>				
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	Revisit application criteria of the Fund to include meaningful engagement or leadership by PoCs as key element of the selection criteria.	Innovation Service	<p>As per the evaluation, the service agrees that the inclusion of persons of concern to UNHCR in innovation initiatives is viewed as a strategic priority and a vital component of developing innovations that will help UNHCR to improve in its core competencies. The Service also recognizes the added value for Innovation projects to partner with external stakeholders including the private sector so as to ensure that UNHCR leverages external innovation expertise and innovative solutions that may have the potential to generate significant impact for the organisation and its PoCs.</p> <p>These recommendations will be taken into consideration during the design phase of the next iteration of the fund.</p>	April – June 2021	Design and Fundraising phase	
<b>RECOMMENDATION 4:</b>		<p><b>Develop approach to supporting innovators in defining problems.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The evaluation recommends that the Innovation Service develop an approach to working with potential innovators (outside funding rounds) to formulate clear problem statements based on their operational priorities.</li> <li>The Innovation Service should refocus its support on connecting projects with other parts of UNHCR, brokering partnerships, and generating and sharing learning.</li> </ul>				
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<b>Reasons (if partially agree or disagree):</b>						
<b>Unit or function responsible:</b>		Innovation service Team leading on the Innovation Fund redesign process.				

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					Status	Comments
	Develop an approach to supporting innovators in defining problems and connecting innovation projects with other parts of UNHCR to enhance partnerships and share learning	Innovation Service	The Innovation Service also agrees with the evaluation that problem definition in the third iteration of the fund should look at the opportunity to address challenges more closely aligned to UNHCR's strategic priorities. These recommendations will be taken into consideration during the design phase of the next iteration of the fund.	April – June 2021	Design and Fundraising phase	
<b>RECOMMENDATION 5:</b>		<b>Systematize support for innovation projects, including for mentorship, technical support and brokering partnerships.</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The evaluation recommends building on the existing, highly valuable non-financial support, including codifying the approach and developing a way to resource it.</li> <li>The approach should include support for peer learning, a mechanism for grantees to “graduate” from the Innovation Fund, and clarity on the support that innovators can expect afterwards.</li> <li>The Innovation Service should incorporate provisions for face-to-face support where that is needed.</li> </ul>				
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	Design a clear capacity building approach to provide technical and advisory support and guidance to innovators.	Innovation Service	The innovation service recognises that providing systematic and need-tailored advisory support and technical assistance to innovators at all stages of the innovation process is key for the success of the innovation projects supported by the Innovation Fund. The Service will ensure that this is	April – June 2021	Design and Fundraising phase	

			considered in the re-design of the innovation fund and that enough resources are budgeted to support such an approach when raising funding with donors.			
<b>RECOMMENDATION 6:</b>		<b>Leverage the Innovation Fund's position in UNHCR to identify potential pathways for grantees to scale.</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Innovation Service should explore supporting projects to scale, including identifying ways of sharing successful project ideas through the divisions and other internal structures.</li> </ul>				
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	Leverage the innovation fund's position in UNHCR to identify potential pathways to scale	Innovation Service	The service has a longstanding approach of collaborating with various country teams and divisions within UNHCR. The service has expanded its collaboration to include the newly decentralized regional bureaux as well as various divisions in headquarters. The service intends to continue reinforcing its partnerships in house but also externally. The challenges around scaling are numerous and the service intends to reflect on those challenges and on the possible pathways/approaches to support scale during the redesign phase of the fund	April – June 2021	Design and Fundraising phase	
<b>RECOMMENDATION 7:</b>		<b>Extend the project implementation period</b>				

	The evaluators recommend extending the implementation period to at least 9 to 12 months. Given the administrative restrictions around spending cycles, this could be through a phased approach where projects are first supported to design their innovations and then provided with funding to implement their innovations in a second phase.					
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	Extend the project implementation period	Innovation Service	The service believes that a multi-year approach should be adopted in order to establish a more flexible innovation project management cycle. The multi-year approach will allow the service to accompany the project teams in an adequate and reasonable working framework. The service intends to include this approach in the design of the next iteration of the fund.	April – June 2021	Design and Fundraising phase	
<b>RECOMMENDATION 8:</b>		<b>Clarify internal communications objectives and channels in ways that facilitate access to the Innovation Fund from UNHCR's diverse workforce.</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The evaluation recommends reviewing the Fund's approach to communications with the aim of making the language as simple as possible and promoting access to the Fund across the organization.</li> </ul>				
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<b>Reasons (if partially agree or disagree):</b>						

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					Status	Comments
	Clarify communication objectives and channels and simplify the language to ensure better accessibility.	Innovation Service	The service acknowledges that internal communication is key in promoting the Innovation fund and identifying innovators. Therefore, as suggested in the evaluation, the service will seek to review the Innovation Fund's approach to communications with the aim of making the language as simple as possible and promoting access to the Fund across the organization. These recommendations will be taken into consideration during the design phase of the next iteration of the fund.	April – June 2021	Design and Fundraising phase	
<b>RECOMMENDATION 9:</b>		<b>Clarify administrative requirements at the outset.</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The evaluation recommends updating the Terms of Use for the Innovation Fund to include information regarding procurement and contracting processes, as well as continuing to encourage teams to include staff with a programme background, where possible.</li> </ul>				
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<b>Unit or function responsible:</b>		Innovation service Team leading on the Innovation Fund redesign process.				
Top line planned actions		By whom	Comments	Expected completion date	Progress	
					Status	Comments
	Clarify administrative requirements	Innovation Service	These recommendations will be taken into consideration during the design phase of the next iteration of the fund.	April – June 2021	Design and Fundraising phase	



<b>RECOMMENDATION 10:</b>		<b>Invest in learning.</b> Investment in learning might include developmental evaluation approaches, annual reviews of stakeholder relationships, fund management and impact, or other approaches to encourage reflection. It might include establishing and nourishing a community of practice				
<b>Management response:</b>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Partially agree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree				
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<b>Unit or function responsible:</b>		Innovation service Team leading on the Innovation Fund redesign process.				
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	Invest in learning	Innovation Service	These recommendations will be taken into consideration during the design phase of the next iteration of the fund. In addition, and whereas the current evaluation did not look into the outcomes, outputs and impact of the funded projects, the service intends to establish an M&E framework for the future fund and capture impact Moreover, the service has already begun looking into the establishment of a community of practice for its signature Fellowship programme and it intends to learn from that experience which will certainly feed into the reflection of establishing a community of practice for the Fund.	April – June 2021	Design and Fundraising phase	