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**UNEG**

NEG



**Moving Forward Together**

**Strategy 2025-2032**

**UNEG Strategy 2025-2032**



**Foreword by Chair**

Contents

[i](#_Toc189828808)

[**1** **Introduction** 1](#_Toc189828809)

[**2** **How UNEG functions** 2](#_Toc189828810)

[**3** **Learning from Strategy 2020-2024 implementation** 2](#_Toc189828811)

[**4** **Changing context for evaluation within the UN System** 4](#_Toc189828812)

[**5** **Development of the UNEG Strategy 2025-2032** 5](#_Toc189828813)

[5.1 Potential evaluation influences for 2025-2032 6](#_Toc189828814)

[5.2 SWOT analysis. 7](#_Toc189828815)

[**6** **UNEG Strategy 2025-2032** 9](#_Toc189828816)

[**6.1** **UNEG Vision** 9](#_Toc189828817)

[**6.2** **UNEG Mission** 9](#_Toc189828818)

[**6.3** **UNEG Strategic Objectives 2025-2032** 9](#_Toc189828819)

[**6.4** **Strategic Enablers** 9](#_Toc189828820)

[**7** **Pathways Towards Impact** 11](#_Toc189828821)

[**8** **Ways of Working to 2032** 11](#_Toc189828822)

[**9** **Key activities 2025-2032** 13](#_Toc189828823)

[**10** **Monitoring and Review** 15](#_Toc189828824)

# **Introduction**

The **United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG)**, established in 1984, is an interagency professional network of the UN system that brings together the evaluation functions of the UN system, including UN departments, specialized agencies, funds and programmes and affiliated organizations, and their staff. It relies on the goodwill, expertise and commitment of its members to achieve stronger evaluation functions and outcomes across the UN system. UNEG has developed the [UNEG Evaluation Norms and Standards](https://www.uneval.org/uneg_publications/uneg-norms-and-standards-evaluation-un-system) that assist in strengthening, harmonizing and applying high quality evaluation practices across the UN system.

The first UNEG Strategy (2014-2019) was built on the need to make UNEG "fit for purpose" at a time when evaluation was emerging as a mature profession and the [Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development](https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda)  provided a global pathway to shift the world onto a sustainable and resilient path. The second UNEG Strategy (2020-2024) placed stronger impetus on the UN focus "to work as one, to deliver as one and to be held accountable as one". The Strategy responded to the UN reform agenda, as well as recognising the different characteristics of UNEG membership (small, medium and large) and giving attention to streamlining of UNEG working practices.

Strategy 2025-2032 continues to define UNEG’s strategic direction, and articulate its vision, mission and objectives, building on the experiences of these two Strategies and the Mid-Term Review (MTR) of the 2020-2024 Strategy. The Strategy considers UNEG’s role in the UN landscape for the period ahead which will be marked by uncertainty and volatility with escalating global challenges. Within the UN system the future will bring the realization of the Agenda 2030 and discussions on a post-2030 development framework; pursuit of [UN 2.0](https://www.un.org/two-zero/en) towards agile, diverse, responsive, and impactful UN organizations through a Quintet of Change[[1]](#footnote-2) and the [Pact for the Future](https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/sotf-pact_for_the_future_adopted.pdf) ([A/RES/79/1](https://www.undocs.org/en/A/RES/79/1)). UNEG must proactively pursue and support initiatives to accelerate progress toward key UN development, peace and security and humanitarian priorities while advancing the specific goals and interests of its members.

UNEG membership is growing and evolving, making it essential for UNEG to strengthen its capacity as a vibrant network to support members with different levels of size, maturity and operational models. UNEG’s growth brings valuable diversity to the network but presents challenges in responding to differences across members’ evaluation functions. This requires a tailored approach to ensure that all members can actively engage and benefit from UNEG’s initiatives.

The consultation process for this Strategy highlighted that UNEG needs to be more proactive and forward-looking during the next period, with a focus on greater internal collaboration. UNEG has the potential to strengthen support to its membership by enabling member engagement in well-supported initiatives as well as deeper connection with cross-agency initiatives and frameworks.

The field of evaluation is evolving rapidly with the introduction of new tools, approaches, and methodologies. Notably, generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) presents significant opportunities that UNEG members can collectively harness to strengthen evaluation outcomes. AI also carries risks that UNEG can help to recognize and assist members to mitigate against potential harmful practices.

Through this Strategy, UNEG and its members reaffirm their commitment to achieving excellence in evaluation by upholding and safeguarding evaluation norms and standards; adopting improved evaluation approaches, tools, and techniques to accelerate professional development; and promoting the use of evaluations to benefit the environments, people, and communities served by UNEG members.

# **How UNEG functions**

UNEG functions as a collegiate network of UN Evaluation units/offices (functions). UNEG operates through an Executive Steering Committee elected by UNEG members. UNEG is not a legally registered entity with an institutional structure and allocated budget so relies on the goodwill and commitment of its members to function effectively. The [UNEG Principles of Working Together](https://www.uneval.org/uneg_publications/uneg-principles-working-together) guide the network governance, management and operations.

UNEG has grown from 18 members since its inception to 53 members and 7 observers in 2024. The 2021 “Administrative Instruction on Evaluation in the United Nations Secretariat” (ST/AI/2021/3) has strengthened the engagement of UN Secretariat functions within UNEG.

The growth of UNEG membership includes an increasing number of small evaluation functions (SEFs) with those consisting of five or fewer full-time staff members dedicated to evaluation activities. This resulted in UNEG publishing a specific [SEF Strategy](https://www.uneval.org/uneg_publications/uneg-small-evaluation-function-strategy) launched in 2024 to support the specific needs of these functions. The SEF Strategy summarized the issues faced by SEFs and identified how UNEG can strengthen support for these members. It outlines a roadmap to increase emphasis of UNEG on the needs of smaller functions, commencing with incorporation of the SEF Strategy into the UNEG Strategy. The issues raised have been embedded throughout this Strategy. In addition, tracking implementation of the SEF Strategy can provide learning on how UNEG can best respond to other diverse needs across its membership base.

Membership financial contributions provide the income stream to support the secretariat activities, communication, members’ events and prioritized working group activities. The Annual General Meeting (AGM) is the highest decision-making mechanisms for members to prioritize key actions and adopt work plans. The annual Evaluation Practice Exchange (EPE) provides a forum for sharing of knowledge and experience across network membership for those that can attend in person.

The achievements of UNEG to date have been accomplished because all activities are driven through the voluntary contribution and efforts of members (financial and in-kind). Self-organized interest groups are a forum for members to meet and share on topics of mutual priority. Approaches such as working groups, task forces or events are initiated, continued or modified, approved by the membership at the AGM, to address the agreed priorities and pursue wider activities in line with the UNEG vision and mission.

# **Learning from Strategy 2020-2024 implementation**

Strategy 2020-2024 was framed by three Strategic Objectives (SO): 1. Develop and Safeguard Professional Norms, Standards and Guidance; 2. Enhance Professionalization and Capacity and 3. Influence Policy-making and Operational Work through Evaluations. An extensive midterm review (MTR) of the Strategy 2020-2024 was conducted in 2022. UNEG Strategy 2020-2024 emphasized inclusiveness to promote ownership and use of UNEG products, but SEFs faced challenges in having their voices heard and in ensuring UNEG products are relevant to their institutional reality and needs.[[2]](#footnote-3) The MTR findings strongly informed the development of this Strategy 2025-2032. The survey for development of this Strategy found satisfaction with how UNEG operates was 55% (6% highly satisfactory, 49% satisfactory) with concerns related to fragmentation of activities, efficiency and transparency of decision-making.

UNEG's work since the MTR and the consultations for this Strategy confirmed significant progress on SOs 1 and 2. However, SO 3 was perceived as unclear and, in some cases, beyond the scope of UNEG's mandate. It was also noted that most working groups, though formally aligned with a specific SO, often achieved outcomes that contributed to multiple SOs. Additionally, collaboration between working groups led to broader, more impactful results. This highlights an opportunity to enhance the integration of work across UNEG in the future.

For SO 1, norms, standards and guidelines are UNEG’s foundational work and these needs to be maintained, safeguarded and updated where relevant. Initially developed in 2005 and last updated in 2016, the Standards provide pathways to assist evaluation functions to uphold the norms. UNEG members, and wider evaluation stakeholders use the Norms and Standards as a guide to strengthen capacity within their own context. During 2020-2024, UNEG focussed on generating guidelines for ethics, human rights and gender equality and a new environmental norm is under development. The ethics related to AI was an active area of discussion with potential for a new standard. The option for a ten-year review of the Norms and Standards was raised for consideration.

The UNEG Peer Reviews continue to be a valuable approach to inform UNEG members and their agencies on the level of maturity of their respective evaluation functions, identifying recommendations for strengthening standards, performance and practice. Adapting the peer review processes to the specific needs of SEFs was identified through the SDF Strategy as an important priority. Adapted peer review processes to fit with the varying contexts of SEFs has been under active discussion but is likely to require further development.

For SO 2, UNEG has actively supported capacity building for members and worked on a range of topics of common interest across the network through annual work plans. Areas of high interest for the future amongst members included: professionalization of evaluation (e.g. through the development and expansion of the current piloting of a UNEG training certificate course and further development of support to Young and Emerging Evaluators (YEE); improving methods for evaluating policy influence; joint evaluations, collaboration on synthesis initiatives and the use of AI in evaluation.

For SO 3, UNEG has been supporting initiatives to improve evaluation quality within its membership but influence across agencies is largely the responsibility of individual members within their own organizations. UNEG’s approach to partnerships was explored but found to be constrained by practical considerations of time and resources to invest in broader collaborations. Nonetheless, success has been achieved in targeted partnerships on specific topics such as the joint 2021 UNEG and UN Development Coordination Office Guidelines for the Evaluation of the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework. The peer reviews conducted with OECD have been useful to both UNEG and OECD. UNEG has also collaborated with a range of organizations in exploring AI solutions for evaluation. This demonstrates that UNEG can adopt a more focused partnership approach in the future, prioritizing collaborations where shared interests and clear objectives are identified.

Key gaps identified during the MTR of UNEG Strategy 2020-2024 included insufficient emphasis on promoting the use of evidence generated through evaluations and the application of evaluation findings. Addressing this requires greater focus on the broader dissemination of UNEG’s work within and beyond the UN, capacity development in effectively communicating evaluation results, and the synthesis of findings to produce accessible knowledge products. Another concern raised was the external perception of blurred distinctions between audit, evaluation, and other review functions. Addressing these present opportunities to strengthen the influence of evaluation functions within and beyond the UN system.

# **Changing context for evaluation within the UN System**

**Stronger UN institutional basis for evaluation**. Over the last five years, evaluation functions have been given more prominence within the UN system, exemplified through UNEG’s progress report on Resolution GA 69/237 and the 2023 UNGA resolution on Strengthening Voluntary National Reviews through Country-led Evaluation (A/RES/77/283), requesting UN agencies support Member States to undertake evaluations.

The Secretary General demonstrated commitment to strengthening evaluation across the UN. Notably, in 2021, Administrative Instruction ST/AI/2021/3 was issued to outline the governance arrangements and accountabilities, and performance standards, for evaluation functions in the Secretariat with the intention to better inform programme planning and reporting on programme performance.[[3]](#footnote-4) This has resulted in greater attention to evaluation across the Secretariat.

**System-wide evaluation**. The 2018 report “Repositioning the United Nations development system to deliver on the 2030 Agenda” (A/72/684-E/2018/7), included the Secretary-General’s proposal for an independent sys­tem-wide evaluation office (SWEO) to conduct system-wide evaluation. The SWEO was established in 2023 and the 2024 [System Wide Evaluation Policy](https://unevaluation.org/sites/default/files/agency_profile/UNSDG_System-Wide_Evaluation_Policy.pdf) sets out the framework for an effective system-wide evaluation function. The SWEO provides leadership and focus for UN system-wide evaluation activities. The SWEO is a member of UNEG and actively engages in UNEG activities, as well as working in partnership on wider initiatives. UNEG continues to be the main avenue for direct engagement between evaluation functions and strengthening of evaluation practice across the UN system.

**Small Evaluation Functions**. More than half of the current UNEG membership have less than five staff within their function. Some SEFs are independent, and others are co-located with other oversight functions with carrying levels of independence. Some co-located SEFs work collaboratively and efficiently with other oversight functions; other experience severe challenges that prevent the conduct of evaluations. Some SEFs attained full UNEG membership[[4]](#footnote-5) but others do not yet fulfil the necessary criteria for membership. SEFs that have attained membership often experience challenges in adhering to the UNEG Norms and Standards largely due to resource and capacity constraints. The SEF Strategy outlines the challenges in detail and proposes prioritization and adaptation of UNEG Guidelines and tools to align more closely to the realities faced by smaller functions.

**Decentralization of evaluation functions and decentralized evaluations**. As part of the 2030 Agenda and UN Reform, country-led development agendas take precedence and shape UN support within national borders. This has contributed to an increase in decentralized evaluations being conducted through regional and country offices of certain UN evaluation functions. At the same time, other UN entities are being encouraged to decentralize their structures and move closer to their constituent countries. A further group of evaluation functions, particularly small functions, are not always structured with a country presence, do not have a mandate or a mechanism for decentralized evaluations. They generally have other pathways for engaging with stakeholders that link to decentralized actions through alternative means. These shifts are affecting how evaluation is designed, managed and conducted across the UN system.

**2030 Agenda and beyond**. A critical juncture of the next five years will be the realization of the 2030 Agenda and the trajectory of decisions for the next stage of UN commitments to sustainable development. It is likely that the basic tenets of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs will continue. Localization and decentralized evaluations are likely to continue to gain prominence as the UN Reform processes continue to mature, as the Pact for the Future initiatives for such as digital cooperation, youth amongst other key issues, gain momentum. In the wider evaluation sector, the demand for real time, thematic evaluations in line with critical issues address by UN functions is increasing. Consequently, the collaboration between UN evaluation functions through UNEG will continue to be relevant and with potential for even greater contribution to the wider global agenda.

**Tightening fiscal contexts.** UNEG members operate in a common environment of constrained budgets, particularly resources for the evaluation function. The uncertainty of resource flows presents major challenges for planning and implementing evaluations where needed. This is a particular issue for SEFs that have limited human and financial resources. Although there is a trend of declining resources across the UN system, there is increasing recognition through OIOS, JIU and donor corporate review processes that evaluation is important. However, support for the roles and functions does not necessarily translate into increased resources for the conduct of evaluation activities.

**Shifts in the political environment.** Tightening fiscal constraints are emblematic of a broader trend in the inter-governmental ecosystem of which the UN system is a part: a retreat of some governments from multilateralism and their promotion of policy positions that directly contradict the defining values of the United Nations. This development and the ensuing financial implications have placed an unprecedented degree of strain on UN organizations, which might in turn place corresponding pressure on UNEG members to (further) strengthen resource efficiencies and consider greater creativity in how they work, both individually and with each other. While some evaluation functions are well positioned to help their respective organizations confront these challenges, and might even face increasing demands from their organizations to help them navigate the landscape in a variety of ways (e.g., through support to their strategic communications and advocacy efforts, through specific evaluation requests, and so on), others might face additional pressure to justify their own value proposition within their respective organizations.

# **Development of the UNEG Strategy 2025-2032**

This Strategy was developed between October 2024 to January 2025 by a Strategic Directions Task Force comprising representatives from 12 UNEG member agencies. The development of the Strategy was strongly informed by a comprehensive and participatory mid-term review (MTR) of UNEG Strategy 2020-2024 conducted in 2023[[5]](#footnote-6). The Strategy brought together analysis from a document review and a series of consultations with the Strategic Directions Task Force, findings from a members’ survey with 60 respondents and dialogue with 86 UNEG leaders and working group members to focus on the pathway ahead for UNEG. The process included discussions on key evaluation trends and potential influences UNEG should consider, with a particular focus on engaging members in forward-looking solutions to refine and advance UNEG’s strategic agenda.

## Potential evaluation influences for 2025-2032

The consultation for this Strategy raised several potential areas that are likely to influence evaluation in the coming years. How these relate to UNEG is explored below.

**Demand for evaluation is increasing but resources are stretched**. There is growing demand for evaluation both within and outside the UN. This is evidenced for instance, through the growing participation of government representatives at the series of National Evaluation Capacities conference, reflecting the growing importance of evaluation functions in national governments, and the increase in academic courses in evaluation highlighting growth in professional demand. However, most evaluation offices continue to face resource constraints that prevent them from fully delivering on their strategic mandates. Consultation for this Strategy highlighted that most UN evaluation functions are increasingly stretched and unable to respond adequately to the level of demand faced. This implies the need for new ways of working to respond to the demand, or better mechanisms for prioritization within evaluation workplans to deliver the most critical evaluation work.

**Increasing complexity of evaluation themes and methods**. The technical aspects of evaluation have widened and deepened with a wider toolbox of evaluation methodologies. Priorities emerging from intergovernmental summits and resolutions highlight the need for intersectionality and integrated solutions, for example the six transitions highlighted by the SDG Summit in 2023 that are essential to achievement of the SDGs: 1) food systems transformation; 2) energy transitions and access; 3) digital connectivity; 4) education and skills gaps; 5) decent jobs and social protection, including healthcare; and 6) climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution.

Recent major evaluation events have highlighted the importance of key topics such as gender empowerment, diversity and equality, social inclusion (particularly youth, disability, indigenous, migrant populations), environmental fragility, sustainability and climate change considerations. With COVID-19 and other global crises, attention is also being given to health systems, social protection, peace and security, humanitarian response and the crisis-development continuum. This is leading to evaluation being complexity-aware, requiring increased strategies for constructive stakeholder dialogue, a reconsideration of evaluation criteria beyond the OECD-DAC standard criteria and a deeper analysis of issues within the contexts in which evaluations are conducted.

**Appetite for innovation, particularly AI.** The data revolution, digitization of evidence, inter-relational database analysis and AI tools have emerged as a significant feature of contemporary evaluation approaches. UNEG is already active in assessing and supporting the adoption of both generative and non-generative AI in evaluation practice. AI also opens opportunities for evaluation offices to deliver evaluation findings in more timely and concise ways of working. and Visual AI-assisted products can be more widely disseminated, potentially enhancing evaluation use and impact. It is unlikely that the interest in such tools and approaches will abate. Their use can potentially bring about resource efficiencies that could translate to improved resource capacity for conducting evaluations. Harnessing the benefits of AI and effectively addressing the risks will require UNEG’s attention in activities that will improve tools and build capacity. UNEG is already working on preparing, setting and implementing standards for AI, aligned with UN data privacy and AI ethics policies and this work is in high demand across the UNEG membership.

**Greater attention to evaluation synthesis, joint evaluations, program, corporate, thematic, system-wide and impact evaluation**. There has been strengthening of M&E systems at the operational level and of decentralised evaluations within agencies, and with partners as part of business-as-usual. At the strategic level, there is interest in quality evaluations that can have greater influence in organisational and thematic decision-making by using the wealth of available evaluative evidence. This includes joint, meta- evaluations and evaluation syntheses. Implementation of the 2030 Agenda has highlighted evidence gaps that constrain progress. The 2024 Summit of the Future highlighted new investments in collaborative evidence-building mechanisms. Attention to evaluation use was raised as important throughout the Strategy consultation for both internal agency priorities and timed to feed into important decision-making processes e.g. QCPR processes, institutional priorities and major global events. Such initiatives require greater collaboration, agreement of aligned and synergistic processes but if successful, have the potential to generate more influential recommendations for decision-making and learning.

**Relevance, performance and applicability of evaluation**. Evaluation aims to contribute towards accountability, better decision-making in governance and learning. There are other avenues for decision-makers to gain input and knowledge through for example, academic papers, research institute and think tank studies, audits, political inquiries, reviews and foresight exercises. However, evaluations tend to have a lower profile in political processes and are seen as expensive and lengthy. The experience of UNEG members that are combined with other oversight functions has been variable, with several operating effectively and efficiently in collaboration with other functions (e.g. audit, performance review) but in other evaluation functions, there has been declining attention and resource allocation to evaluation. The evaluation sector is placing emphasis on more rapid approaches and pathways to influence but to date with variable success and consequently, its future relevance is at risk. Evaluation does not have prominent indicators for its own success in terms of recommendation uptake and use of evaluation findings and lessons learned. The survey for this strategy identified that the highest priority for the future (82% of respondents) was increasing the use of evaluation evidence for decision-making.

## SWOT analysis.

The UNEG MTR included a consultative process and detailed analysis on UNEG’s strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT), including an analysis of the patterns of UNEG SWOTs in 2013 and 2018. While UNEG’s strengths are clear, the MTR showed they are undermined by its weaknesses. The development of this Strategy updated and further explored the MTR analysis resulting key factors that need to be addressed as outlined in the following table.

Table UNEG Strategy SWOT analysis

| SWOT | Key factors to address in UNEG Strategy 2025-2032 |
| --- | --- |
| Strengths | * Mature network structure with a recognized profile. * Professional weight in establishing norms, standards and guidelines and competencies for UN evaluation functions * Enabling professional development in evaluation in the UN System (e.g. through attendance at the Evaluation Practice Exchange and other events, participation in work groups, UNEG training certificate course pilot) * Wealth of knowledge and expertise across the UNEG membership |
| Weaknesses | * Insufficient focus on diversity of contexts and needs across UNEG membership * SEFs that make up a large proportion of the membership face challenges in having a voice and accessing relevant support * Perceived lack of transparency, increasing fragmentation * Strategic actions led by few, overloaded WG leaders, variable engagement of wider members |
| Opportunities | * High credibility and potential to capitalize on UNEG expertise – potential higher level of advocacy within and beyond UN (targeted) * Interest in development of AI/data standards and practice for evaluation * Increase in capacity strengthening activities through stronger networking, alliance building, and knowledge management * Improved communications between members (and with partners for mutual benefit) * Share lessons on successful co-located oversight function offices and identify opportunities to strengthen synergies with other oversight functions |
| Threats | * Fatigue, apathy, decline in members engagement leading to lower level of activities, uncoordinated effort and slower achievement of results * Small evaluation functions that struggle to access sufficient resources to operate in line with the UNEG Norms and Standards. * Co-located evaluation functions that experience challenges in operating independently and conducting essential evaluations. * Loss of UNEG reputation and support if low/slow delivery of value for members or perceived lack of voice/appreciation |

Source: summarized from Strategy 2020-2024 MTR 2023 and Strategy 2025-2032 consultation, 2024.

# **UNEG Strategy 2025-2032**

## **UNEG Vision**

UNEG envisions that evaluation functions across the UN system generate credible evidence and learning in high-quality evaluations that are used effectively to contribute to inclusive sustainable development benefiting the environments, people and communities that we serve.

## **UNEG Mission**

UNEG advances and strengthens robust, credible, independent, innovative and influential evaluation functions and professional evaluation practice that are used to add value to sound governance, accountability, learning, and wise decision-making in line with the vision.

## **UNEG Strategic Objectives 2025-2032**

Guided by its Vision and to operationalize its Mission, UNEG is committed to the following strategic objectives to focus the Strategy implementation:

**Strategic Objective 1 - Set, promote and uphold Evaluation Norms and Standards across UN evaluation functions:** UNEG fosters and safeguards foundational norms and standards with commitment to quality and professional consistency.

**Strategic Objective 2 - Strengthen evaluation capacity within the UN system:** UNEG facilitates its individual members in sharing and applying expertise and knowledge, building evaluation credentials and skills amongst evaluation practitioners and decision-makers that have responsibility for evaluation functions.

**Strategic Objective 3 – Advance use of evaluations to add value to decision-making and learning**. UNEG fosters synergy, innovation and excellence to address barriers to use and to add value to evaluation results. UNEG actively promotes the use of evaluation evidence and learning across the UN system, and with targeted partners, towards achievement of the UNEG vision.

## **Strategic Enablers**

UNEG will invest in enablers to facilitate work across the three Strategic Objectives in an integrated way and drive the pathway towards the UNEG vision and mission. These strategic enablers include mechanisms to strengthen active networking both internally and with specific partners, engaging and recognising members in voluntary contribution, improved communication systems and knowledge building.

**Engaging members in active networking**. As a network, UNEG relies on the common interests, solidarity and collaboration of its members. The diversity within UNEG brings valuable expertise and specialization, enhancing knowledge-sharing and impact across the UN system. Individual members invest considerable time and effort into UNEG activities. Those who do engage and support UNEG priorities should be given recognition and support.

Membership engagement is shaped by multiple factors; therefore, it is crucial to ensure diverse representation in leadership to reflect the size of agencies, geographical balance, age, gender representation. This will help to ensure that the different contexts and needs of members are voiced in decision-making processes and more fully considered in UNEG activities.

As the number and diversity of members grows, UNEG can facilitate more networking opportunities and collaboration between groups. The UNEG website and members’ platform will assist in sharing information but for example, updating systems to support online scheduling and AI note taking systems to make it easier for working groups to organise, record and share information on activities during the year would create stronger interlinkages.

The identification of UNEG priorities is driven through the WGs and a series of mapping and planning activities, for example:

Specific activities to elevate the voices of SEFs are outlined in the SEF Strategy including key action such as establishing a specific WG with the objective of strengthening SEFs, building more information on SEF needs, tailoring UNEG products to the include the needs of SEFs and generating products and activities specifically designed for SEF needs. Resourcing will be required to prioritize and progress key activities.

Activities to elevate YEE engagement in UNEG should be pursued in line with the findings and actions for the future outline in the 2024 mapping exercise including, such as mentorships, targeted capacity-building workshops, and resource-sharing systems.

UNEG needs to establish more mainstreamed processes to recognise and embed diversity to acknowledge and address priorities across the membership, with integrated roadmaps for different groups. As new priorities emerge, clear communication of UNEG’s abilities and limits in supporting proposed activities and transparent and consultative decision-making will build membership confidence in UNEG’s capacity to support their needs as in an effective and efficient way with the resources available.

**Excellent communication.** Successful networks require strong communications to operate effectively. The role of leadership is important to drive clear and transparent key communications through the network. This requires clearer articulation of the work of the Executive Steering Committee, task forces and working groups during the year, not only at the AGM. A hybrid approach to the AGM and the EPE would enable participation from evaluation function staff who do not have the resources to attend in person.

Efforts should be made to strengthen communications in UNEG both across the membership and with the wider evaluation community. The UNEG website serves as a communication tool for both audiences. There is the potential to activate contemporary communication platforms to ensure an ongoing flow of information. This could also facilitate synergy between work groups – which has been shown to be very effective when it does occur.

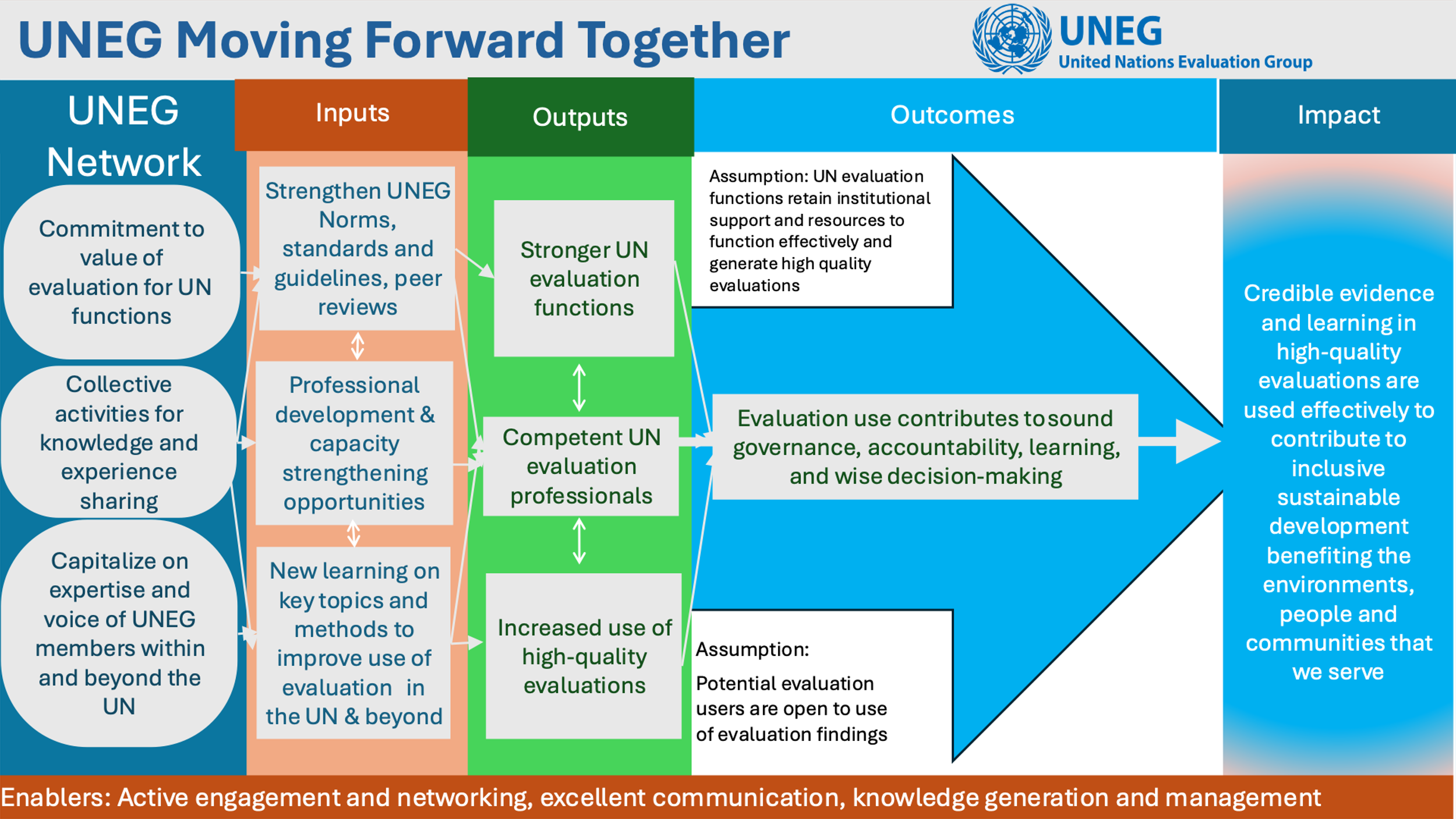
**Knowledge generation and management.** UNEG’s repository of member evaluations is an important knowledge bank that will continue to grow if members commit to sharing evaluation products. This will be even more important and of added value in an era where members are looking to jointly synthesise and share information. As the evaluation and global contexts change rapidly, UNEG will need to proactively address the impact and opportunities of AI and digital analytic approaches to evaluation and work with partners to chart a way forward. UNEG should continue to explore other topical issues such as the [UN Six transition Pathways](https://unsdg.un.org/resources/six-transitions-investment-pathways-deliver-sdgs) with other evaluation stakeholders. Partnerships can be used to further build and exchange knowledge for the benefit of UNEG members to apply in their own practice and contribute to UNEG and wider evaluation outcomes.

# **Pathways Towards Impact**

UNEG provides the forum and tools to build institutional and individual evaluation capacity to strengthen evaluation systems across the UN. As an informal network, it can adapt to the interests and needs of its members. The theory of change of the UNEG Strategy 2025-2032 builds on UNEG’s credibility and success, whilst addressing weaknesses and threats.

For 2025-2032, UNEG envisages a more dynamic, vibrant network – one that grasps the challenges of the changing context and drives more clearly the generation of high quality and influential evaluations by the UNEG membership and that contributes to positive change in the lives of the people and environments served by the UN.

Figure UNEG Theory Of Change



Source: UNEG Strategy 2025-2032 consultations.

# **Ways of Working to 2032**

The UNEG Principles of Working Together provide a sound basis for operation and are updated as needed by the UNEG leadership in consultation with members. A strong UNEG Secretariat is essential to coordinate these enablers and assist the ESG, WGs and TFs in resourcing and applying these across the workplan. A clear workplan and budget aligned to the SOs will assist in the effective implementation of the Strategy.

The following points address the identified SWOT priorities to contribute to a stronger network.

**A strong foundation and adapting to change.** This Strategy will cover the period 2025-2032. The period was determined to be appropriate for UNEG due to the uncertainty and foreseeable pressure on evaluation functions between 2029-2031 as the 2030 Agenda culminates and a new period commences. During this period, UNEG needs to be a strong and cohesive network with active and engaged membership. Focusing on foundational activities through Strategic Objectives 1 and 2, UNEG can remain strong and grow its core strategic thrust. Through Strategic Objective 3, UNEG can remain abreast of the changes in the UN system and the evaluation sector enabling it to respond effectively to the needs and benefits of its members.

**Careful investment of resources**. UNEG members financial contributions and massive volunteer efforts drive UNEG outcomes. The MTR of Strategy 2020-2024 flagged inefficiencies in resource use, including use of funds for external consultants. Conversely, use of resources to directly support members’ efforts e.g. through retreats and workshops to generate outputs was found to be effective. At the time of development of this Strategy, the financing context for UNEG members was becoming increasingly uncertain with the possibility of major cuts and consequently, potentially reducing the flow of funds to UNEG.

Financial resources and processes need to be prioritized and invested in maintaining foundational activities as well as driving progress on activities and enablers that will underpin work on the three SOs and enable realization of the UNEG mission and vision. A multi-year rolling plan based and resource framework linked to the SOs and enablers will help to keep the activities supported focussed on the Strategy.

An annual budget aligned to the plan and resource framework, and based on clearly defined decision-making parameters for resource allocation will ensure effective financial management. During implementation, resource gaps and implementation bottlenecks need to be identified and addressed, and performance tracked and managed in a proactive and cost-effective way.

**Clear governance**. Transparent and inclusive decision-making, and sustainability planning by UNEG leadership will help to ensure alignment with member needs and long-term benefits to the full membership. Clear leadership roles and responsibilities, and open consultation and feedback in decision-making processes will help motivate membership engagement. A more representative and functional-based leadership base could clarify responsibilities and relieve the workload. Working group coordinators already take a leadership role. This could be harnessed by at least biannual meetings of WG leaders to encourage synergy and integration. An interim online meeting of UNEG Heads in June each year could elicit emerging issues, opportunities and changing needs of members.

**Defined but flexible approach to UNEG work groups**. The UNEG Principles of Working Together provide a clear definition of interest and working groups. Phase-out criteria exist and are already applied but a more explicit process for assessing when work is completed or no longer relevant would keep the working group approach dynamic and productive, avoiding stagnation and demotivation. Stronger articulation of expected contribution to UNEG objectives would provide working groups with clearer direction and better understanding of the proposed work plan. Work plans may contribute to multiple UNEG SOs. Interest Groups would continue to be self-organised and flexible but should be encouraged to share updates on key topics of interest to the wider membership to foster collaboration and knowledge exchange.

**Partnerships.** UNEG has effective, collaborative relationships amongst its own members and with other UN entities and key external organization. UNEG released a Partnership Strategy in October 2018, and which was reviewed in 2020, explored alternatives for more formal partnerships. In practice, partnerships with UNEG are informal and operate most effectively when the relationship is focussed on an initiative of mutual benefit with specific documentation outlining a specific agreement rather than an umbrella partnership arrangement. The activities with partners are managed through the [UNEG Principles for Stakeholder Engagement](https://www.unevaluation.org/uneg_publications/uneg-principles-stakeholder-engagement)(2017) and the [UNEG *Principles of Working Together*](https://www.unevaluation.org/uneg_publications/uneg-principles-working-together)(2022).

# **Key activities 2025-2032**

UNEG needs to be able to adapt to shifting contexts that will arise in the coming years. The UNEG Strategy 2025-2032 calls for more collaborative and integrated approaches. Future UNEG work plans and updated Principles of Working Together processes will continue to determine the detailed activities required to fulfill and deliver on the Strategy. Workplans for working groups with a complex and longer-term horizon could operate on a bi-annual basis but in general workplans should be digitized and updated through a dashboard to reduce reporting burden and support the Executive Steering Committee in tracking network-wide progress.

Currently, working groups map their workplans to one SO. For this Strategy, a Working Group should have a stronger link to the UNEG theory of change and articulate expected results in line with the UNEG Strategy SOs, not only expected outputs. A Working Group may expect to contribute accomplishment to more than one SO and may include links with other working groups or specific partners in their workplan. Working and interest groups should be encouraged to arrange interim knowledge-based events to facilitate peer-to-peer learning, offering training and shared resources, and generate dialogue on contemporary issues.

To enhance UNEG’s ability to support members and maximize the benefits of network participation, UNEG will explicitly include consideration of the Strategy’s enablers across all its work. Communication mechanisms, easy to access repositories and digital tools should be updated to foster collaboration and integrated working.

Consideration of member diversity should be embedded in the design of UNEG products, encouraging progressive application of the UNEG norms and standards. Implementation of the priority actions from the SEF Strategy will assist in tailoring and monitoring key actions to respond to the different needs of SEFs. The progress of SEF Strategy implementation will also inform future efforts to support diversity within UNEG, for instance in supporting YEEs, evaluators in decentralized functions, evaluators from the global south that need additional support, amongst others that may arise during implementation of this strategy.

Creating accessible, searchable and AI-ready platforms for information sharing and analytics (including in multiple languages) will facilitate effective storage and curation of knowledge. Targeted investment in Strategy enablers across the three SOs should facilitate synergy and resource efficiency.

The following key activities provide an indicative framework to operationalize each Strategic Objective.

**Strategic Objective 1. Set, promote and uphold UNEG Norms and Standards across UN evaluation functions:**

* Phased review and update of the UNEG norms, standards and guidelines, initially to include the environmental norm and to reflect any changes related to AI in evaluation and then to identify others as required. This will be completed by 2027 (10 years since last update).
* Review and update the UNEG Competency Framework (2016) in line with the amendments to the norms, standards and guidelines.
* Tailoring of priorities for applying the Norms and Standards considering the specific contexts faced by different UNEG members is important, particularly SEFs, functions with increasing numbers of decentralized evaluations, and thematic contexts, for example functions working in humanitarian contexts. Guidelines need to be adapted accordingly.
* Continue to refine guidelines related to ethics and diversity including building on current advice for pursuing human rights, gender equity and “Leave No-one Behind” aspects within evaluation practice. Additional dimensions of ethics (e.g., disability, indigenous communities, or intersectional equity were raised as requiring attention in future).
* Develop safeguards or guidelines to ensure ethical use of AI tools in evaluations aligned with UN data privacy and AI ethics policies
* Digitise UNEG Norms and Standards and related guidance with intuitive interfaces for organizing and improving accessibility and ease of use and update.

**Strategic Objective 2. Strengthen evaluation capacity within the UN system:**

* Continue the conduct of peer reviews and other relevant approaches to assess and improve the quality of evaluation functions within UN entities, refining approaches to cater more effectively to different types and sizes of UNEG membership, including smaller evaluation functions and those co-located with other oversight functions. For SEFs with limited capacity and resources to apply guidelines, assistance is required to target the most critical and viable areas for improvement.
* Build on the learning from the UNEG Evaluation training certificate course pilot and extent options to members for strengthening evaluation credentialling pathways, for example in recognition of prior learning and portfolio development.
* Build further opportunities for expertise and experience sharing across the network, including through the EPE, supporting WGs, SEFs, YEEs and other interest groups to hold open or joint sessions on key topics during the year, with support for critical capacity strengthening priorities.
* Provide or facilitate more online options for knowledge and skills development, particularly for YEEs and SEFs with limited opportunities and resources for external training or for participation in the EPE. Consider the varying needs and capacities of UNEG members to participate in conferences and formal training opportunities and assist to spread opportunities equitably.
* Provide incentives to members to engage with and actively contribute to Working Groups e.g. through support for group-generated products rather than contracting external work, where possible, unless workload or expertise of members prevents it. This would enhance shared learning.
* Explore potential approaches to supporting decentralized evaluation functions through engagement with regional networks and decentralized functions to identify specific needs and opportunities.
* Continue to develop capacity strengthening resources such as case studies and peer learning opportunities to build evaluation competencies across the UN, including mutual learning opportunities between seasoned professionals and young and emerging evaluators, between evaluators in centralized and decentralized functions, between professionals in successfully co-located oversight offices, and those that are struggling, between and among small, medium and large evaluation functions to exchange experiences and pursue identified priority actions.

**Strategic Objective 3. Advance use of evaluations to add value to decision-making, and learning:**

* Engage actively in the development of evaluation as a contributor to UN system change, through UN 2.0, Pact for the Future and other emerging initiatives.
* Liaise with cross-agency initiatives and frameworks endorsed by the United Nations Sustainable Development Group (UNSDG) to advocate for greater uptake of evaluation
* Establish productive dialogue with other oversight functions within the UN to clarify roles and multiply benefits to evaluation as an independent and critical function across the UN system. This is likely to require different approaches for specific organizations so a taskforce may be taken to develop and implement targeted approaches.
* Work collaboratively internally, with the UN System-wide Evaluation Office and other relevant partners to engage with evaluations on system-wide priorities, global joint evaluations, evaluation syntheses, impact assessments and other wider initiatives to channel evaluation evidence to advance system wide priorities.
* Collaborate with targeted partners in areas of mutual interest to expand UNEG’s evaluation knowledge and practice and to jointly advocate for evaluation use.
* Explore the frontier of innovation in AI and digital evaluation approaches with technical partners, identifying opportunities to use AI to advance evaluation use.
* Explore, develop and disseminate innovative approaches to enhance the use of evaluation evidence by decision-makers within the UN system.

# **Monitoring and Review**

UNEG should systematically monitor its work to ensure it is aligned and relevant to the Strategy, and that it is achieving its targeted results. These results need to be communicated to members and stakeholders to demonstrate UNEG achievements. The previous strategy included detailed KPIs, but they were not actively tracked. Reporting on work activities has been limited to the AGM. The MTR found that 39% of respondents were unclear on the extent to which UNEG is achieving its objectives.

More dynamic and frequent, potentially automated monitoring mechanisms could reduce the reporting burden and bring more vitality to sharing information of progress, encouraging cross-fertilization of work between working groups. The following summary results framework should be expanded through the UNEG Workplan to identify alignment with current WG plans and where new initiatives may need to be established to achieve the KPIs.

Table UNEG Strategy 2025-2032 Results framework

| **UNEG Outcomes**  **2025-2032** | **Key Performance Indicator** | **Means of measurement** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| SO1 – set, promote and uphold Evaluation Norms & Standards | UNEG Norms and Standards reviewed and updated by December 2027 | UNEG Evaluation Norms and Standards updated document published. |
| SO2 – strengthen evaluation capacity within the UN system | UNEG Evaluation functions have completed self-assessments or external reviews within the past 5 years. | Number of self-assessments and validation reports for UNEG members, disaggregated by function size and type. |
| EPE capacity development events achieve at least 80% satisfaction rating post training and knowledge/skills from EPE are applied. | EPE evaluation forms post-training and follow-up forms are developed and tracked for satisfaction on quality of capacity development opportunities and likelihood and actual level of application. |
| Additional learning opportunities (webinars, networking sessions, etc) are available to members throughout the year. | Record and assessment data for additional learning events conducted through UNEG support. |
|  | UNEG Certificate training course pilot extended. | Updated certification process by 2030.  Number of certifications targeted reached. |
| SO3 – Advance use of evaluations for decision-making and learning. | UNEG contributes to UN system processes to enhance evaluation use.  UNEG activities generate activities and products that are used by members and other evaluation sector professionals to enhance evaluation practice. | UN system processes incorporate evaluation.  UNEG engages with cross-agency and partner initiatives for uptake of evaluation  New methods generated, documented and disseminated to enhance evaluation use and track use across UNEG members  Mutual assessment of value added through UNEG targeted partnerships  UNEG members present UNEG products at wider evaluation sector learning events; feedback and evidence of use after events. |
| Strategy Enablers | UNEG functions effectively for the three enablers to implement Strategy | UNEG Strategy MTR and evaluation quantitative and qualitative analysis based on SO achievements and member feedback.  UNEG operations satisfaction survey (Baseline 2024: highly satisfactory 6%; satisfactory 48%, neutral 32%, dissatisfied 10%; highly dissatisfied 3%)  Members’ survey on perception of UNEG’s progress towards objectives. (Baseline 2022: MTR survey data -36% satisfactory, 25% unsatisfactory, 39% do not know). |

Improved methods for tracking process could include a WG dashboard for input of progress data, handled by a nominated WG reporter, to relieve work burden on WG coordinators. The proposed interim collaboration meetings for WG coordinators and for UNEG Heads can be used to assess and document progress towards SOs. Effective governance performance metrics, as seen in other networks, are linked to member engagement, interest, and perceived outcomes. A regular, longitudinal member survey with trend analysis and targeted focus questions and analysis by type, size and maturity of function could support continuous improvement and adaptation.

A formal, systematic and robust evaluation of this Strategy should be conducted at mid-term during 2028. This should take account of the documented monitoring progress, consider the emerging shifts in the landscape for UNEG that affect the relevance of the Strategy, assess risks and status of mitigation and propose any recommendations for adjustment. A final evaluation will assist in the development of the next UNEG Strategy.

1. The Quintet of Change are innovation, data, digital, foresight and behavioural science skills and culture. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. UNEG Small Evaluation Strategy, 2024. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. The Administrative Instruction ST/AI/2021/3 was established under the authority of section 4.2 of the Secretary-General’s bulletin (ST/SGB/2009/4) to support implementation of Article VII (Evaluation) of the Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation, and the Methods of Evaluation (ST/SGB/2018/3). [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. To qualify for full UNEG membership, applications must be from the evaluation unit or a unit in charge of evaluation within a UN system entity. Applicants must have an approved evaluation policy and at least one full-time member of staff. Applicants that do not meet these requirements may apply for temporary (two-year) observer status during which time they must work towards meeting the criteria for full membership. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. The MTR included 34 key informant interviews and 109 survey respondents and given that the results were recent, they were considered still highly relevant for the development of the new Strategy. The delay in conduct of the MTR (scheduled for 2021/2022) was affected by the focus on the COVID pandemic. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)