



Common Back Office Step-by-Step Guidance Note

Launching a Common Back Office (CBO) under the Self-Starter Approach

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Acronyms

BMB	Business Management Branch of DCO
BOS	Business Operations Strategy
CBO	Common Back Office
CEB	Chief Executives Board (for Coordination)
CMS	Case Management System
CP	Common Premises
CSR	Client Satisfaction Rating (contextual term)
DCO	Development Coordination Office
EHS	Environmental, Health, and Safety
EOI	Expression of Interest
FTE	Full-Time Equivalent
GOUNH	Green One UN House (Vietnam model)
HACT	Harmonized Approach to Cash Transfers
HQ	Headquarters
HR	Human Resources
ICT	Information and Communication
ITB	Invitation to Bid
LAN	Local Area Network
LTA	Long-Term Agreement
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
OMT	Operations Management Team
PPE	Personal Protective Equipment
RC	Resident Coordinator
RCO	Resident Coordinator's Office
RFI	Request for Information
RFP	Request for Proposal
SoW	Statement of Work
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure
ToR	Terms of Reference
UAT	User Acceptance Testing (for ICT systems)
UNDCO	United Nations Development Coordination
UNCT	United Nations Country Team
UNSDG	United Nations Sustainable Development
VAT	Value-Added Tax
Wi-Fi	Wireless Fidelity (wireless internet)

Purpose

This guide walks Resident Coordinators (RCs), RCOs, and UN Country Teams (UNCTs) through each step required to initiate and implement a Common Back Office (CBO) using the streamlined Self-Starter Approach, as piloted in countries like the Philippines.

Quick Overview of Self-Starter CBO Criteria

- Offer 50+ services from the official CBO catalogue (including your existing CP services).
- Have 50%+ participation from country-level UN entities or 10 entities, whichever is less.
- Sign a CBO Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).
- Implement the Case Management Tool, where needed.
- Follow Client Satisfaction and Costing Principles.

Step-by-Step Process

Phase 1: Kick-off and Baseline (Approx. 1 Month)

1. RC signals intent by emailing BMB-DCO HQ (copied to DCO Regional Director and Regional Business Operations Coordinator—prior RC and DCO Regional Director talks and UNCT consultations encouraged before signaling email).
2. RC and RCO have further consultations with the UNCT entities and OMT to define service scope, service participation, and service providers and determine readiness. Initial analysis of existing common services and potential services to be done in advance of consultations.
3. RC/RCO fills out the Rationale for Change (See Annex 1) and presents it to UNCT for endorsement. Entities to communicate and engage within their organizations, as needed.
4. Upon endorsement, the Rationale for Change is shared with BMB. See Annex 1 and 2 for Rationale for Change Template and Checklist (See Annex 2).
5. BMB provides guidance, orientation, examples, and templates for RCOs and country data focal points on data gathering for Simplified Baseline Report for determined service scope (See Annex 3 and Annex 4).

Phase 2: Proposal & Evaluation (Approx. 3 Months)

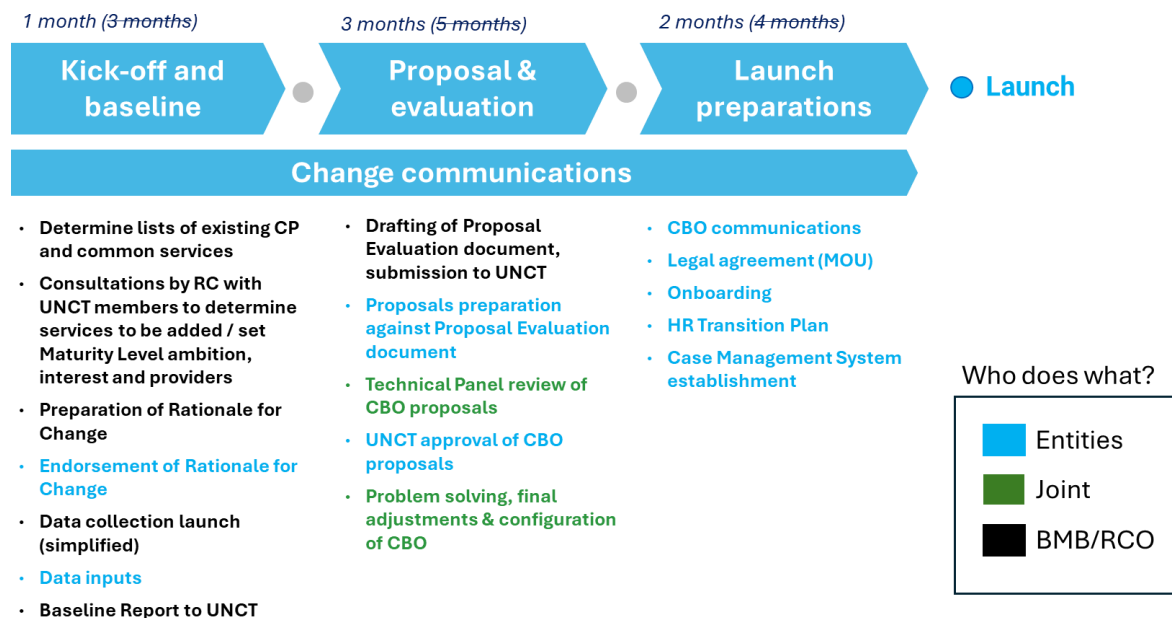
6. BMB prepares Proposal Template Document and RC opens for proposal submissions. (See Annex 5).
7. CP entity and/or others submit proposals.
8. Panel reviews proposals and makes recommendations to UNCT (See Annex 6).
9. UNCT formally endorses the final proposal.

Phase 3: Launch Preparation (Approx. 2 Months)

10. Secure buy-in from entities and signature of the MOUs (See Annex 7).
11. Establish HR transition plan to recruit CBO capacities and Case Management System.
12. RC announces official launch.

Phase-driven visualization of launching process*

crossed out timeframes are those associated with the previous conventional CBO strategy



Key Pain Point to Prepare For

Pain Point	Mitigation
Leadership vacuum (RC leaving soon)	DCO may pause the process until stable leadership is in place
Entity hesitation to participate due to lagging time between establishment and benefits	Communication from existing CBOs on benefits, both qualitative and financial
Upfront division of services between multiple providers difficult to achieve	Use client satisfaction survey for incumbent provider(s) + KPIs to help decision
Delays in decision making within entities	Entities to engage and communicate internally with their HQ or regional offices, as needed
Negative feedback on incumbent CP services provider	All providers must submit proposals; selection is performance-based

GO / WAIT / NO GO Decision Logic

Criteria

Criteria	GO	WAIT	NO GO
RC tenure	Long-term	Ending soon but successor known	About to leave + unclear handover
RCO capacity	Sufficient	Needs support	Lacks capacity, no support
Entity participation	50%+ likely	Nearing 40%	Below 30% with no prospect
Services maturity	BOS and CP services coverage + new > 50 services	BOS and CP services coverage + new > 40 services	BOS and CP services coverage + new < 30 services

Phase 4: Post-launch Implementation

Lessons learned of governance structures and processes; guidance note on governance success factors and risk chart as well as communication strategy of the Self Starters are being developed (See Annex 8 and Annex 9).

Annex 1 Rationale for Change Template

[The template below has been filled in for a fictitious country called Macata]

Unit: [United Nations Macata]
Submitted by: [Resident Coordinator Macata]
Submitted to: [UNCT Macata]
Date: [26 April, 2025]

1. Rationale for change

[This section provides the context and background, at the global and local level. It refers to other efficiency initiatives, progress made, and expected benefits from introducing the CBO]

The Common Back Office initiative was introduced through *UN General Assembly resolutions 67/226 and 71/243*. These resolutions aimed to enhance efficiency within the UN system by consolidating support services at the country level, reducing duplication, and lowering administrative and transaction cost

Common Back Offices were introduced during 2024 in Brazil, Kenya, Tanzania and Vietnam and other countries are now working on establishing their Common Back Offices.

For the United Nations in Macata the Common Back Office initiative is highly relevant at this moment of budget pressures and uncertainties.

With a total of 24 UN entities present in Macata with 3,000 personnel and total annual expenditures of \$838M (CEB 2024), the potential for increased efficiencies is significant.

The efficiencies reported from our collaborations through the Business Operations Strategy (BOS) and our Common Premises services amounted to \$0.4M for 2024, and the Common Back Office initiative allows us to take these efforts to the next level by pooling our operations personnel to offer operational services to all the United Nations in Macata.

This will make the United Nations in Macata both more efficient and effective, freeing up important resources in a funding environment where every dollar counts.

The expected benefits of setting up a Common Back Office are the following:

1. *Efficiency and Cost Savings*: Consolidating back-office functions reduces duplication and generates savings, freeing resources for programmatic activities. Modelling based on the data from the first CBO countries suggests that labour cost savings of 20 percent on the services pooled should be attainable through specialization and economies of scale.

2. *Improved Service Quality*: Specialized staff and systems ensure faster, more reliable support for beneficiaries.
3. *Focus on Core Mandates*: Reducing administrative burdens allows agencies to concentrate on their primary objectives.
4. *Scalability and Innovation*: The CBO enables quicker adoption of service innovations to meet emerging challenges.
5. *Risk Mitigation*: Streamlined operations minimize risks linked to fragmented processes.

2. Scope of CBO services

[This section outlines the scope of services which the CBO will be offering. It is expected that this list of services will be created after review of the existing CP and BOS services, consultation with UNCT and OMT members, and analysis of which services have the greatest client interest. A detailed list of these services will be included in the annex. A minimum of 50 services are required to be considered a CBO but it is possible to implement these in phases. These services can be Tier 1 services as well as Tier 2 services]

Based on consultations over the past week, the proposal is to include services related to Administration, ICT, Procurement, Human Resources, Logistics and Finance. This will make us a fully-fledged CBO. A detailed list is provided in the Annex *[note that UNCT can choose a shorter list of services if preferred and it is recommended to include all common premises related services and add to this services that the majority of entities want to participate in]*. It is indicated which services are already in place.

Focus will be on the services which have been included in the existing Common Back Offices, but a few additional services were included based on your inputs during the consultations, such as vehicle fuel management and consultant recruitments.

3. Service Providers

[This section outlines which entities will provide which services - on the assumption that an upfront agreement can be reached on this. If multiple entities want to provide the same services, a competitive process can be undertaken to determine who will provide the services]

Based on your feedback during the consultations, two organizations will be asked to put forward proposals for the services.

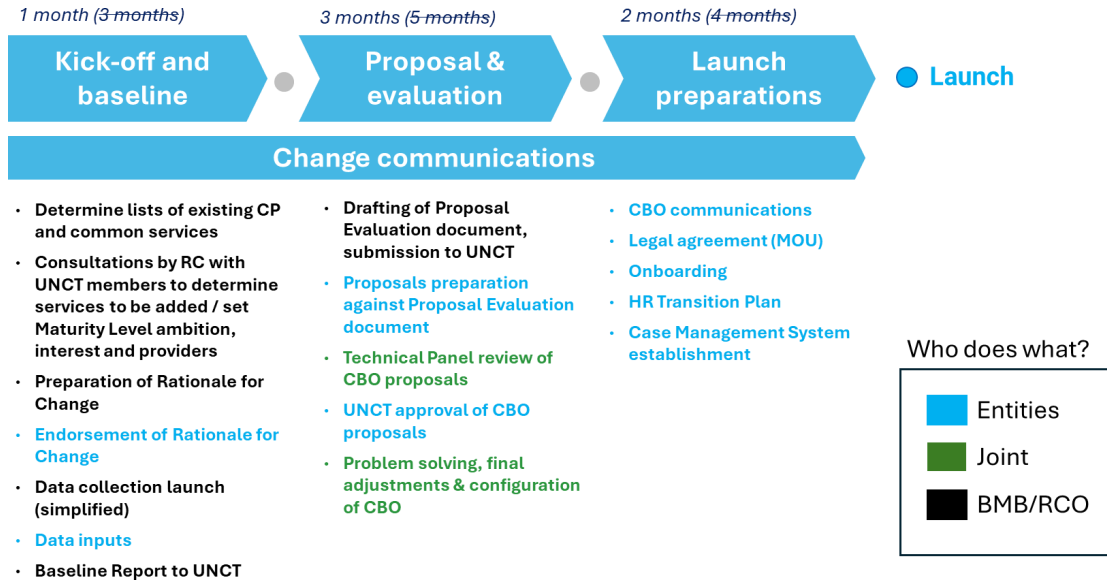
Entity 1: Administration, ICT, Human Resources, Finance

Entity 2: Logistics, Procurement

4. Process

[This section outlines the process steps and timeline]

The planning process will start 1st of May 2025, and it will follow the three steps and timeline outlined below:



Addendum Scope of Proposed Services (example)

[This section outlines the detailed list of services which make up the CBO service scope]

Administration - 36 services

- Protocol management (Visa arrangements for outgoing/ incoming official travel; Resident cards for international staff & dependents; Customs exemption; Packing /exemption certificates / shipment of personal effects of relocating staff; Staff vehicles; Staff driving licenses)
- Meetings and conferences – internal (Booking of conference room/meeting rooms within office; Setting up / equipping in-house meeting rooms; Catering services for meetings and conferences)
- Meetings and conferences – external (Liaison with internal sections for conference arrangements; Liaison with external venues for conference arrangements; Interpretation / translation for conferences, whether internal or external)
- Copying and printing (Bulk printing / copying / binding in-house; Bulk printing / copying / binding through external party; Servicing / maintenance of photocopiers through third party)
- Archiving (Archiving of documents)
- Office supplies (Management of office supplies)
- Building management (Real estate portfolio management and facility planning; Office lease contract management; Office space and parking space management; Building maintenance; Cleaning services; Garden maintenance; Ground maintenance; Office furniture and fittings; Maintenance of office utilities equipment e.g. heating, air conditioning, generator, etc.; Reception service; Cafeteria / catering service; Insurance

- of premises, office equipment and furniture and fittings; Utilities management; Staff welfare spaces; Environmental management and environmental initiatives)
- Security and fire safety (Managing security personnel and services (UN or external workforce); Managing office badges)
- General administrative services (Pouch and mail management)
- Vehicle fuel management (Tier 2)

Human Resources - 14 services

- HR development (Training/learning and development activities)
- Talent sourcing and recruiting administration (Vacancy announcements; Local Outreach; Screening/long-listing applicants; Interview/assessment of shortlisted candidates; Verification, screening and reference checking; Selection panels - Attending, supporting and administering interview panels; Selection panels - Assisting with reporting of panel recommendations); Common rosters; Obtaining approval for interview list
- Staff support (Medical services and dispensary; Staff counselling; Activities to boost staff well-being)
- Consultant recruitment (Tier 2)

ICT - 8 services

- Telecoms (Local mobile and desk telephones; Installation and management of any other equipment required for local connectivity and telecom)
- ICT services (Helpdesk; Case management / service ticketing system)
- ICT infrastructure (Management of ICT hardware infrastructure; Manage local area network (office network); Manage internet connectivity and traffic routing, including wireless; Support for staff conferencing – audio, video etc.)

Procurement - 9 services

- Procurement planning / strategy (Procurement planning / strategy)
- Market analysis (Market analysis, Requests for Information and Expressions of Interest)
- Sourcing (Assistance to sections in the development of ToR / SoW and bid evaluation criteria; Bid approval process (involving Committee if needed); Proposal / bid evaluation; Supply requisition; Request for proposal; Invitation to bid; Small value purchase)

Logistics - 14 services

- Logistics planning (Logistics network optimization)
- Goods transport (Delivery and transport planning (except cold chain); Shipment/cargo consolidation; Landside transport; Logistics Contract management and evaluation; Specialized transport solutions (temperature controlled, etc. except cold chain); Data processing and reporting)
- Goods import management (Import or export goods: customs clearance)
- Goods storage (Storing of goods; Manage inventory; Manage auxiliary services (general labour, pest control, etc.); Warehouse workforce management; Specialized storage solutions (temperature controlled, etc., except cold chain)

- Technical assistance and knowledge transfer (Technical and operational Logistics Know-How Transfer)

Finance - 3 services

- VAT management (VAT recovery management)
- Treasury (Banking relations - local)
- Partner financial monitoring - includes HACT (Micro-assessment of implementing partners)

Annex 2 Checklist: Preparing the Rationale for Change

This checklist helps the Resident Coordinator (RC) ensure all key elements are covered when preparing the Rationale for Change for establishing a Common Back Office (CBO). (Red = Not Started, Orange = In Progress, Green = Completed)

#	Checklist Item	Status (Red/Orange/Green)	Comments
1	Local context described: budget pressures, operational challenges, or opportunities		
2	Annual UN expenditures in the country (from CEB or other sources)		
3	Number of UN entities in the country		
4	Number of UN entities in the largest common premise in the main city		
5	Total UN personnel, and number of personnel in main city		
6	List (and #) of current shared services including in Common Services MOU		
7	List (and #) of current shared services including in Common Premises MOU		
8	List (and #) of current common services included in BOS not included in the MoUs		
9	Past efficiency gains (e.g., through BOS or Common Premises)		
10	List of services to be added based on consultations with UNCT and OMT on services in high demand, and CP and BOS services and		

	opportunities (aiming for total of 50 or more services)		
11	List of entities willing to participate in additional services (aiming for 50% or 10 entities)		
12	Estimated benefits potential including quality and efficiency improvements		
13	Capacity to manage the process: Term dates for Resident Coordinator, OMT chair and RCO Chief (checking team is not about to change)		
14	Current CP service managing entity and results of any client satisfaction surveys conducted		
15	List of potential service-providing entities, indicating also for which services		

Annex 3 Baseline Data Report Tools

Two spreadsheets have been prepared for the simplified data collection exercise:

- A. CBO Service Selection ([link](#))
 1. Only one file per country needs to be completed and submitted to DCO.
 2. It must reflect the set of services selected by the UNCT for the country's CBO (as listed in the Rationale for Change endorsed by UNCT).

- B. CBO Workload Drivers ([link](#))
 1. Each entity participating in the CBO rollout in the country must fill out a copy of this file.
 2. It must reflect both the baseline and forecasted transaction volumes, considering a January-to-December annual cycle.

These files will serve as inputs to the FTE Estimator run by DCO for calculating the approximate number of FTEs working in the country's main location. A summary of the data will also be made available through the Baseline Report to entities wishing to submit service provision proposals.

Annex 4 CBO Service Catalogue

As part of the global effort to streamline shared services a Service Catalogue has been established. It is important to use these service descriptions and definitions to ensure benchmarking and comparison of performance.

For the full service CBO catalogue see this [link](#). It contains 197 services across the six service lines of Administration, Finance, Human Resources, ICT, Logistics and Procurement.

Annex 5 Proposal Template Document

The proposal template document contains the guidance and templates to be used for the formal consultation to be carried out by UNDCO, on behalf of the UNSDG. The consultation aims to register the interest of UN Entities in a country to serve as the Host of the CBO and operate as provider of common services to other UN Entities. The templates in this document will have to be filled in with the relevant information by each interested UN Entity. The information collected with this exercise will be reviewed by a panel appointed by the Resident Coordinator to make recommendations with regards to the Host of the CBO. The UNCT (or an equivalent governance body) endorses the recommendations with regards to the Host, and the process completes with the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding. The Proposal Templates are available [here](#).

Annex 6 Proposal Evaluation Sheet

Proposals are evaluated by the Panel with the following [Terms of Reference](#).

The composition of the panel is as follows:

- Four members
- DCO to hold the Secretariat role
- No non-UN members
- Proposing entities cannot be members

The panel is selected by RC, who can chair panel. Two members from local UNCT/OMT. One member from Regional OMT (outside county)

A two-stage procedure used in evaluating the Proposals, with evaluation of the Technical Proposal being completed prior to any Financial Proposal being opened and compared.

- First stage: *Technical proposal evaluation (max 100 point)*. Each responsive Technical Proposal was be given a technical score. Examined whether the minimum technical score of 60 points is achieved.
- Second stage: *Financial proposal evaluation*. If the combined technical score is 60 or more points, as indicated above, the proposer will be considered for *financial evaluation*. The total obtainable score for the financial evaluation corresponds to 100 points.

The overall evaluation score will be based on the combined technical and financial scores. The maximum possible score is 200 points.

The technical scoring makes use of the **Technical Scoring Sheet** which is included in the [Generic Proposal Evaluation Document](#) (pages 13-15)

For **Financial Scoring** there are two processes, one for competitive processes where multiple proposals must be compared, and one for non-competitive processes with only one proposal.

When the process is not competitive, the panel reviews the financial proposals which make use of the following templates.

[Financial Proposal Form - Administration Financial](#)

[Proposal Form - Human Resources Financial](#)

[Proposal Form - ICT](#)

[Financial Proposal Form - Procurement](#)

[Financial Proposal Form - Logistics](#)

[Financial Proposal Form - Finance](#)

When the process is competitive, the following approach is used.

The total obtainable score for the financial evaluation is 100 points.

The maximum number of points in the financial evaluation will be allocated to the Financial Proposal with the lowest total price. Financial Proposals from other Proposers will receive points according to their total price, in inverse proportion to the Financial Proposal with the lowest total price.

The rating function assigns points based on how far a price deviates from the “Lowest Price”. The “Lowest Price” receives 100 points. Prices closer to the “Lowest Price” receive higher points, while prices which exceed twice the “Lowest Price” receive no points

Rating the Financial Proposal per Service Line, as described below:

Rating the Financial Proposal per Service Line, as described below:

$$\text{Points}_i = \begin{cases} \left(\frac{2 \times \text{Lowest Price} - \text{Price}_i}{\text{Lowest Price}} \right) \times 100, & \text{if } \text{Lowest Price} \leq \text{Price}_i \leq 2 \times \text{Lowest Price} \\ 0, & \text{if } \text{Price}_i > 2 \times \text{Lowest Price} \end{cases}$$

The rating function assigns points based on how far a price deviates from the “Lowest Price”. The “Lowest Price” receives 100 points. Prices closer to the “Lowest Price” receive higher points, while prices which exceed twice the “Lowest Price” receive no points.

Annex 7 MOU template

The Memorandum of Understanding for establishment of a CBO for provision and use of common services and its annexes is available [here](#).

Annex 8 Client Satisfaction Survey Template

This survey template has been created based on the Vietnam Green One UN House client satisfaction survey. Please adapt it to your needs.

Welcome!

Thank you for taking the time to complete our Client Satisfaction Survey. Your feedback is essential in helping us improve the quality, efficiency, and effectiveness of our services. This survey should take approximately 10-15 minutes to complete. All responses will remain confidential and will be used solely for service improvement purposes.

Section I: General Satisfaction

1. How satisfied are you with the overall service provided?
 Very Satisfied Satisfied Neutral Dissatisfied Very Dissatisfied
-

Section II: Facilities & Environment

2. How comfortable is your working environment (e.g., workspace, lighting, temperature)?
3. How would you rate the amenities provided (e.g., break rooms, wellness spaces)?
4. Are you satisfied with the cleanliness and maintenance of the facilities?
5. How responsive is the maintenance team to repair requests?
6. Have you experienced any issues with sustainability features (e.g., energy, water, waste)?
 Yes (Please specify): _____
 No
7. Do you have any suggestions regarding access, security, or visitor management?
 Yes (Please specify): _____
 No

(Use 1-5 scale for questions 2-5 and 7)

Section III: ICT Services

8. How would you rate the quality and reliability of ICT services?
9. How satisfied are you with ICT support and troubleshooting?
10. How responsive is the ICT support team?

(Use 1-5 scale)

Section IV: Administrative Support

11. How satisfied are you with administrative support (e.g., supplies, logistics)?
12. How well are protocols and procedures managed (e.g., access, security)?
13. How effective is support for official documentation or permits?
14. Do you have any suggestions for improving administrative services?
 Yes (Please specify): _____
 No

(Use 1-5 scale for questions 11-13)

Section V: Space & Occupancy

15. How inclusive and accessible is the working environment?
16. Are spaces conducive to collaboration and teamwork?
17. How satisfied are you with office space allocation?
18. How effectively are space changes managed?
19. How satisfied are you with the booking process for shared spaces?

(Use 1-5 scale)

Section VI: Event Support

20. How would you rate support for planning and coordinating events?
21. How effective is logistical support for events?
22. How would you rate the availability and condition of event equipment?
23. Suggestions for improving event management: _____

(Use 1-5 scale for questions 20-22)

Section VII: Service Desk

- 24. How easy is it to access the service desk (e.g., portal, phone, email)?
- 25. How would you rate the response time?
- 26. How clear and helpful is communication from the service desk?
- 27. How useful is the internal information platform (e.g., intranet)?
- 28. Is internal communication adequate regarding updates?
- 29. Suggestions for improving service desk support: _____

(Use 1-5 scale for questions 24-28)

Section VIII: Sustainability

- 30. How satisfied are you with the implementation of green initiatives?
- 31. Are sustainability features being used and maintained effectively?
 - Yes
 - No (Please specify): _____
- 32. Additional green initiatives you'd like to see: _____

(Use 1-5 scale for question 30)

Section IX: Responsiveness

- 33. How satisfied are you with the responsiveness to issues or requests?
- 34. How well are you kept informed about issue resolution?
- 35. Have you had to escalate any unresolved issues?
 - Yes (Please specify): _____
 - No

(Use 1-5 scale for questions 33-34)

Section X: Staff Wellbeing

- 36. Do you feel the organization promotes a healthy work environment?

37. Suggestions for improving safety, security, and wellbeing: _____

(Use 1-5 scale for question 36)

Section XI: Additional Feedback

38. What aspect of our services do you find most valuable?

39. What improvements would you suggest?

40. Any additional comments or suggestions?

(Open-ended)

Section XII: Respondent Profile

41. Organization/Department: _____

42. Gender: Female Male Other

43. Age: <30 30-40 40-50 >50

44. Years with the organization: <1 1-5 5-10 >10

45. Years at current location: <1 1-3 3-6 >6

Annex 9 FAQ

[To be further developed based on consultations]

1. What is the purpose of the Self-Starter CBO Guide?

The guide supports Resident Coordinators (RCs), Resident Coordinator Offices (RCOs), and UN Country Teams (UNCTs) in initiating and implementing a Common Back Office using a streamlined, country-led approach piloted in countries like the Philippines.

2. What are the key criteria for launching a Self-Starter CBO?

To qualify, a country must:

- Offer **50+ services** from the official CBO catalogue (including existing CP services).
- Have **50%+ participation** from country-level UN entities or 10 entities, whichever is less.
- Sign a **CBO Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)**.
- Implement the **Case Management Tool**, if needed.
- Adhere to **Client Satisfaction and Costing Principles**.

3. What are the main phases of the Self-Starter CBO process?

Phase 1: Kick-off and Baseline (Approx. 1 Month)

RC signals intent to BMB-DCO HQ.

Consultations with UNCT and OMT to define scope and services.

Rationale for Change is developed and endorsed.

Baseline data is gathered with BMB support.

Phase 2: Proposal & Evaluation (Approx. 3 Months)

Proposal Evaluation Document is prepared.

Proposals are submitted and reviewed.

Final proposal is endorsed by the UNCT.

Phase 3: Launch Preparation (Approx. 2 Months)

MOUs are prepared and signed.

HR transition and Case Management System setup.

Final confirmation of participation and scope.

Official launch is announced.

4. What are common challenges and how can they be mitigated?

Pain Point	Mitigation Strategy
RC leadership transition	DCO may pause until stable leadership is in place

Pain Point	Mitigation Strategy
Entity hesitation due to delayed benefits	Share success stories and benefits from existing CBOs
Difficulty dividing services among providers	Use client satisfaction surveys (See Annex 8)
Delays in decision making within entities	Entities to engage and communicate internally with their HQ or regional offices, as needed
Negative feedback on current CP provider	All providers must submit proposals; selection is performance-based

5. How is the decision made to proceed with a CBO?

Criteria	GO	WAIT	NO GO
RC tenure	Long-term	Ending soon, successor known	Leaving soon, unclear handover
RCO capacity	Sufficient	Needs support	Lacks capacity, no support
Entity participation	50%+ likely	Nearing 40%	Below 30%, no prospect
Services maturity	50+ services	40+ services	<30 services

6. Who should be contacted to initiate the process?

The RC should email **BMB-DCO HQ**, copying the **Regional Business Operations Coordinator**, after prior consultations with the RD and UNCT.