CCG Management Response to:
OPM's Management Review Recommendations 2025

CCG appreciates the review of the management of the Climate Compatible Growth applied research programme with a focused follow-up of progress on management-related recommendations made in the Phase 1 evaluation of the CCG programme. The management review was conducted at the request of the FCDO to inform and further strengthen the CCG programme management's oversight, and it has provided valuable and independent insight on CCG's direction of travel and reflections on potential emerging issues. The report acknowledges recent and updated programme management and administrative systems and processes that have emerged following the Phase 1 evaluation.

CCG management by and large, acknowledges the recommendations of the management review and our considered responses against the review questions and numbered recommendations are tabulated below.

Unfortunately, CCG's budget uncertainty lingers. The FCDO confirmed restoration of CCG's 2025–26 full budget on 12 June 2025, which was much welcomed news across the Consortium partners. However, at the same time the FCDO indicated that CCG would not be exempt from budget cuts the following year and suggested CCG plan for several instances of potential budget reductions for 2026–27 (Year 7) and 2027–28 (Year 8) respectively. The FCDO furthermore indicated that they are likely to confirm the revised 2026–27 CCG budget only towards the end of 2025, or at the beginning of 2026.

It would be remiss not to mention at the onset that CCG's biggest challenge continues to be the impact of continued and elevated budget uncertainty. Therefore, recommendation #4 of "suggestions for a range of actions, in descending order of impact, that would mitigate or partially mitigate the current budget cycle risk" is – in these circumstances – difficult to contemplate implementing.

Given the anticipated budget cuts (Year 7 and beyond), CCG Directorate in its summer deliberations has opted not to proceed with new Flexible Research Fund (FRF) contracting for this year given they are predominantly multi-year financial commitments. While FRF open calls were global in scope, nevertheless they have traditionally provided southern country researchers additional funding avenues. In fact, CCG has since taken a prudent approach to reduce its multi-year budget commitments for FRF going forward and correspondingly revived short-term projects instead. To this effect, CCG opened internal application calls in late summer, to solicit submissions for the Southern Partners, Engagement, and Agile funding mechanisms.

In a similar vein, Loughborough University (LU) and other CCG consortium partner institutions have had little option but to pause recruitment of planned new staff positions. As a result, institutions are bracing themselves for potential staff turnover and loss of institutional knowledge given that neither FCDO nor CCG can pre-empt the degree of future budget cuts nor provide contractual security to staff who do not already have open ended contracts from their respective institutions. This adversely impacts the management review recommendations, including #3, that CCG should proceed with recruitment of the remaining unfilled posts in the current staffing plan.

The CCG Directorate appreciated the review question on the functioning of the STEER Centre at Loughborough University. The finding, despite acknowledging that the Centre had not produced any economies of scale, nevertheless identified added value in facilitating a non-standard, higher

education institution and requested CCG transactions were within the LU Research and Innovation Office (RIO) environs. The review highlighted some challenges regarding alignment with the RIO's practices, particularly regarding contracting with international partners such as ICTP (a subsidiary of UNESCO). The review further hints at some broader challenges, stating, "LU still has a way to go to move towards a 'research as a business' approach that would allow it to move quickly to take advantage of new opportunities to build a portfolio of work in this area". CCG management fully endorses this finding. For CCG to be successful, particularly in new co-funding opportunities, we need collectively to adopt a more pragmatic and agile approach over strict adherence to traditional university contracting norms. CCG will continue to work closely and collaboratively with LU RIO to jointly overcome barriers and challenges related to strategic and seamless engagement with our growing international partners.

The programme has restructured its reporting templates for the FCDO, resulting in more focused and easier to navigate reports. Due to historic challenges regarding delays in receipt of partner invoices, CCG has adopted a solution in consultation with the FCDO, namely, to process instances of delayed invoice receipt separately, without withholding the reporting of other invoices.

Furthermore, to partially mitigate the impact of the UK aid cut on CCG's portfolio and to ensure the long-term sustainability of the programme, CCG's efforts are ongoing to accelerate co-funding endeavours to diversify funding while safeguarding the programme's integrity. As part of such initiatives, the CCG 'shop window' brochure will be made available to FCDO Posts this year, for in-country decentralised co-funding considerations.

CCG Management and its consortium partners remain committed to successfully completing our mandate to 2030, with best endeavours within the resources made available.

Abbreviations

AGA	Accountable Grant Agreement		PI	Primary Investigator
CCG	Climate Compatible Growth		PM	Programme Management (CCG)
COP	Conference of the Parties		PMU	Programme Management Unit (PMU)
ERMS	Enhanced Risk Management Strategy		RIO	Research and Innovation Office (LU)
FCDO	Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office		SLOCAT	Sustainable Low Carbon Transport Partnership
FRF	Flexible Research Fund (CCG)		SPF	Southern Partner Fund (CCG)
GESI	Gender Equality and Social Inclusion		STEER	Sustainable Transitions: Energy, Environment and Resilience
ICTP	The Abdus Salam International Centre for Theoretical Physics		TOR	Terms of Reference
IITD	Indian Institute of Technology Delhi		UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
LU	Loughborough University		UNOPS	United Nations Office for Project Services
MEL	Monitoring, evaluation, and learning		UNUI	United Nations University Institute
OIF	Operational Intelligence Framework (CCG)		VFM	Value for Money

Management Review Recommendations 2025

#	Recommendations	Priority	CCG Lead
2.2	**_Programme management:_** _Review question: How is CCG's attempt to projectise the research portfolio developing?_		
	Recommendations **#1.** CCG should continue with its current efforts to further embed its projectisation process. The move to ClickUp should continue but with careful review as rolled out, to ensure the adoption for workstreams, who are inputting the data, is as easy as possible and that CCG's systems as a whole only require data to be inputted once. [MEDIUM] **#2.** CCG should consider providing additional support and guidance to workstreams 1, 5b, 5c, and to holders of Agile and SPF [Southern Partner Fund] projects, to bring the quality of their projectisation reporting up to that of the other workstreams. [HIGH] _Response (pls select):_ _Accepted recommendation_	[MEDIUM] [HIGH]	Operational Intelligence Framework (OIF) / Programme Management (PM)
	CCG Management Response/Strategic Action Plan		**Timeline**
	The CCG Project Manager is continuing to support CCG workstreams to transition and embed projectisation for 25–26 into ClickUp software and all efforts are made to support the teams in the transition with monthly workstream meetings, not only to familiarise them with ClickUp software, but to support them to monitor and update the projectisation milestones and use the Gant and Pert project view features.		31 December 2025

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<td>At the same time there will be flexibility to allow different project management styles to be reflected in the projectisation content. Full adoption of ClickUp is expected during the course of the year FY6 (2025–26), and the year end annual document will report on the projectisation update.</td>
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<td>CCG accepts the recommendation for dedicated and more detailed guidance to workstreams 1, 5b, 5c, and to holders of Agile and SPF projects, to bring the quality of their projectisation reporting up to that of the other workstreams.</td>
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<td colspan="2">*Staffing and resourcing:*

Review question: Is the PMU [Programme Management Unit] appropriately staffed/resourced? Are there capacity bottlenecks in the programme management or administrative structures and how might these be mitigated? How might CCG more formally/effectively monitor and forecast programme/project management and administrative burden? How can this inform mitigation?</td>
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<td>*Recommendations*

#3. CCG should proceed with recruitment of the remaining unfilled posts in the current staffing plan in order to be adequately resourced to be able to ensure the monitoring, evaluation, and learning function in OIF is fully supported and that general progress on reducing bottlenecks with administrative and contracting processes, in conjunction with RIO, continues.

Response (pls select):

Partially accepted recommendation *(subject to sufficient original budget confirmation for 2026–27 which will only be known in quarter 4)*</td>
<td>[HIGH]</td>
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<td colspan="2">**CCG Management Response/Strategic Action Plan**</td>
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<td>Given the FCDO indicated budget cuts (tbc) envisaged from April 2026 onwards, it would not be possible to recruit additional staff for PMU or OIF at this stage (LU will not underwrite budget beyond March 26, and advertising positions for 6 months or less has failed to attract high calibre candidates in past endeavours). Should the 26–27 full or near full CCG budget be approved (budget information to unfold in Dec 25/Jan 26 timeframe) then CCG will reconsider this recommendation. However, in the meantime, with 25–26 budget restoration, additional short-term consultant contracts can be considered for specific expertise to fill gaps, with the caveat that consultants would need to be trained before</td>
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		they can be assigned responsibilities and would have limited access to LU systems (which is normally awarded to staff contracted personnel).		
3.2		***Budget cycle risk*** *Review question: How does the perception of budget cycle risk, and the necessity of break-clause implementation in contracts, impact on contracting and project management? How could this be better managed?*		
		Recommendations **#4**. We suggest a range of actions, in descending order of impact, that would mitigate or partially mitigate the current budget cycle risk: a. FCDO provide multi-year confirmed budget figures. This would fully mitigate the risk, but in the current circumstances of UK Government imposed development assistance, budget cuts may be difficult to achieve. b. FCDO provide earlier confirmation of the budget figure for the following fiscal year. Confirming the budget figure in December each year should provide adequate time for CCG consortium partners to finalise plans and budgets in advance of the new fiscal year starting. Confirming a budget figure at least 3 months in advance of the fiscal year should also avoid the issue of staff termination notices being issued. c. FCDO and CCG confirm agreement of proposed change in the wording of the AGA [Accountable Grant Agreement], with the replacement of the break clause with a requirement for FCDO to provide 3 months' notice of funding reductions. This would reduce the staffing risk, at least for Loughborough, but would not resolve all issues. d. FCDO and CCG reduce the time it takes to sign the amended grant agreement; the current estimated five to six weeks seems like a very extended timescale to complete what should be a straightforward amendment with no changes to terms and conditions beyond confirmation of the budget figure for the year. e. CCG consortium members to do more to plan on the basis of the minimum budget figure provided in December, perhaps with scenarios to cover a 5 or 10% uplift if it occurs when the final figure is issued in February, to avoid delays caused by consortium partners being late in submitting their budgets and planned outputs for the new fiscal year.	[HIGH]:	FCDO (c, d, e joint with CCG)

		Timeline
	FCDO to Response #4 (except c,d,e recommendation which CCG partially accepted within caveat/constraints of continued budget uncertainty):	
	CCG Management Response/Strategic Action Plan	
	While alternative wording for the break clause had been contemplated in the earlier draft, the final AGA had the break clause reinserted by the FCDO (presumably due to budget uncertainty-related risk). (c) The FCDO and CCG consortium were pleased with the news of the restoration of CCG's original budget for 24–25 communicated in June 25 and have accordingly made available an up to typically 13% uplift (typically) in restored consortium partner budgets, as well as reinstatement of flexible funding pots for SPF, Engagement, and Agile fund processes. However, the FCDO in the same message also communicated that the CCG budget would not be exempt from budget cuts for 26–27 onwards and have requested CCG to plan for scenarios of up to 50% budget cuts. Therefore, CCG are handicapped in committing funds to multi-year projects beyond March 2026 at this stage and have opted not to award further new FRF contracts, as funding commitment projections into the following year cannot be sustained at this stage. Should the budget cuts be significant (worst case scenario of 50% among options being planned for), then CCG operations would need to be significantly scaled down, unless alternative co-funding streams materialise in a timely manner. (d) CCG needs to include the consortium partner deliverables against corresponding budget in the Letter of Variation that is signed by all partners (serves purpose also of collaboration agreement). This is turned round by LU/RIO within 7–10 days once all the information has been received. However, it is not possible to issue the Letter of Variation individually until all inputs have been received as it also serves to record the consensus of all partners for variations. (e) CCG has requested FCDO for an indicative year 7 minimum budget, outlining the consortium wide risk of personnel turnover/retention and visa issue impact given the lingering uncertainty. CCG intends to plan to identify criteria to determine the CCG strategic priorities within the indicative minimum budget by the end of December 2025. Further adjustments to budget allocation across the consortium are envisaged in fourth quarter, as and when actual CCG Year7 budget is confirmed by FCDO, with anticipation that actual budget would improve on the indicative minimum.	

CCG Management will continue to work closely with the FCDO, informing them of the potential impact of continued budget uncertainty and lateness of timeframes to confirm CCG's actual budget (for Year 7 and beyond).	

4	***Monitoring, evaluation, and learning [MEL]*** ***4.1 MEL Strategy*** *Review Question: With reference to CCG's developing MEL strategy: What is CCG's programme-wide approach to Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning, how can MEL be institutionalised within the programme, and is continual MEL appropriately incentivised/resourced?*

	MEL System Recommendations **#5.** A more detailed written document should be produced that shows how each MEL indicator is to be reported, the criteria for the analysis, data sources, individual responsible, and other key information so that the team is clear on how each indicator is assessed. **#6.** To ensure MEL data security and retrievability there should be a written record that identifies what datasets and evidence are collected, where they are stored, and any regular processes that need to be carried out (e.g. cleaning and removing duplicates). This should be accompanied by a log that confirms when these processes have been undertaken, by whom, and their results. **#7.** CCG should consider introducing more feedback loops with programme counterparts or targeted recipients of the work delivered to capture new outcome-level results obtained, especially in the use of public goods provided by CCG. **#8.** CCG should more actively use MEL quarterly data to facilitate not just discussion on what has been achieved to date, but as an opportunity to reflect on and agree actions required to address issues such as underperformance or course changes or reallocation of budget to ensure full utilisation and avoid underspend over the year ahead. These discussions should be recorded in a report for future reference and review of progress on actions agreed. The mid-year general meeting would be a particularly useful time to do this. **#9.** CCG should also consider developing more dynamic tools or ways to display the outputs from the MEL system (such as dashboards) to support greater engagement on and discussion of results. **Response (pls select):** **Partially Accepted recommendation** [the MEL functionality and monitoring efficiency is also dependant on restoration of CCG-OIF staffing levels]	[HIGH] [MEDIUM] [LOW]	CCG Head of Portfolio/ Operational Intelligence Framework (OIF)
	CCG Management Response/Strategic Action Plan		**Timeline**

Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) Observations and Data Gaps (4.1, 4.1.1, and 4.1.2).

While the review's assessment of CCG's Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) system provides a fair overview, it fails to make reference to other critical elements of the CCG programme's MEL processes, particularly around target-setting and performance reflection. The report for example, states (4.1.1) that, "The Monitoring and Evaluation Framework states its purpose to be to support accountability, foster continuous learning and improve programme effectiveness", and notes that data flows continuously into a centralised repository, with biannual targets used to monitor progress. However, the report does not acknowledge the processes already in place for setting and reviewing targets. Specifically, collaborations between the CCG Directorate and FCDO during quarterly CCG-FCDO workshops, ensuring progress and alignment with strategic objectives. Additionally, the Theory of Change, LogFrame, and associated targets are agreed and updated annually with the FCDO, in collaboration with the Operational Intelligence Framework (OIF) unit, a structured process that involves deep reflection on programme performance.

The OIF further presents programme performance against these targets (typically quarterly) during bi-monthly Primary Investigator (PI) and Directorate meetings to ensure broad engagement. While the reviewers are correct that this reflection process lacks formal PI meeting documentation – a gap that CCG acknowledges and is working to address – the absence of this detail in the report underrepresents the programme's commitment to continuous learning.

Moreover, the report's observation that "no workstream lead interviewed was able to recall an occasion in which they have used monitoring data to inform their decision" overlooks the potential for deeper workstream-level analysis. CCG agrees that insight into performance per workstream is currently limited and should be improved, as the reviewers suggest. To address this, data collection is underway as part of a revised annual consortium review process, which will enable more granular performance insights at the workstream level, enhancing the MEL system's utility for adaptive management.

CCG has developed its MEL framework, and this will be disseminated after Directorate approval and FCDO endorsement in October 2025. It aims to enhance CCG's capacity to monitor, evaluate, and foster continuous learning, improving the programme's effectiveness and delivering on CCG's Business Plan (Addendum). The MEL Framework draws primarily from the CCG LogFrame which provides the basis for target setting. Several other performance indicators also inform the Framework, such as the Value for Money (VFM) Framework (revised in 2025), projectisation, Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) annual reporting indicators, Country Partnership reporting indicators, and the risk assessment register.

Oct 2025

While efforts will be made to disseminate the MEL data against targets in a timely manner to Primary Investigators and their teams through multiple fora – including at relevant meetings, at least once a quarter – the formal reporting of MEL

	(as annex) is currently envisaged at mid-year and in the annual schedule which is made available to the FCDO in addition to the CCG Workstreams. The MEL process - notwithstanding the distinct and separate annual CCG Consortium Review process and document - details the outputs, outcomes (per LogFrame), and results per CCG budget centre, and includes qualitative narratives to compliment the quantitative statistics presented. In terms of introducing feedback loops (#7) and developing dynamic dashboards (#9), this is contingent on resource availability.		
4.2	*Monitoring of risk* *Review question: Does CCG have an effective internal process for recording, monitoring, and escalating risks?*		
	Recommendations **#10.** The programme and workstream risk registers should include additional columns showing a consolidated risk based on the combination of the likelihood and impact. This should be compared to FCDO / CCG's agreed consolidated risk appetite for each risk. **#11.** Workstreams should be supported to provide a more uniform depth of risk analysis in their registers. Workstreams 3a, 5a and 5b should be encouraged to provide more depth in their analysis while workstream 5c needs to provide a much more concise analysis of the most important risks. #12. The programme level risk framework should be consolidated further by removing duplicates and risks that are no longer relevant. It also needs to include the specific risks the senior management team is actively managing down at the current time and not just, as is the case now, a set of generic risks and generic responses. **Response (pls select):** **Accepted Recommendation**	[HIGH] [HIGH] [HIGH]	*CCG Head of Portfolio/* Operational Intelligence Framework (OIF)/PMU

	CCG Management Response/Strategic Action Plan	Timeline
	Risk Register and Operational Risks (4.2, 4.2.2). The reviewers' insights on risk management, as outlined in Section 4.2, are highly constructive, particularly their recommendation to enhance the risk register by incorporating operational risks. The report (4.2.2) notes, "the programme level risk framework is notable in that it only contains generic risks. There is nothing that is a specific and live risk that suggests the senior management team is actively identifying and managing current risks that are an issue at a programmatic level"**.** The reviewers makes reference to specific examples of operational risks that should be included, such as "the lack of a final confirmed budget figure for FY25/26 (which had resulted in some CCG staff receiving termination notices), continued staffing gaps in the PMU leading to challenges at peak contracting workloads, and problems with Loughborough University allocating sufficient time from RIO staff time"**.** This feedback is invaluable, as it highlights a critical gap in the current Enhanced Risk Management Strategy (ERMS), which, "details (4.2.1) the process for recording, monitoring and escalating risks" but lacks specificity for live, operational challenges. The evaluation's clear prioritisation of these issues provides a practical roadmap for CCG to strengthen its risk management processes, ensuring that both generic and specific operational risks are actively monitored and mitigated. CCG appreciates the reviewers' thorough analysis and actionable suggestions, which will guide the programme in refining its risk register to better reflect the dynamic challenges it faces, thereby enhancing overall programme resilience. CCG's OIF will present an updated CCG Risk Register to the Directorate to escalate identified risks on a quarterly basis for considered management response and mitigation, as appropriate. The Risk Register is also captured in the quarterly reports to FCDO.	

4.2	**Monitoring of Value for Money (VFM)** *Review question: To what extent has CCG been able to adapt and contextualise a Value-For-Money framework that is useful for both programme management and reporting?*		
	Recommendations #13. Across the current version of the VFM framework as a whole CCG should reconsider the standards being set for each criterion in the light of the generic	[MEDIUM]	LU PM

	description of 'excellent', 'good', 'adequate' and 'poor' provided in Table 2 to ensure they are sufficiently ambitious to meet these definitions.		
	#14. For the economy criteria, CCG should avoid trying to use the VFM framework as an expenses / procurement policy and instead seek to identify, for each criterion, what average performance over a year would merit 'good' and then relative to that, what excellent, adequate and poor would look like.	[MEDIUM]	
	#15. CCG and FCDO should seek to finalise this framework as speedily as possible, given it has been in draft form now for well over a year. ***Response (pls select):*** ***Accepted Recommendation***	[HIGH]	
	CCG Management Response/Strategic Action Plan		**Timeline**
	Value for Money (VFM) Framework Application (4.3, 4.3.2 and 4.3.3). The reviewers' observations on the Value for Money (VFM) framework, are insightful and well-received, particularly their emphasis on its retrospective application. The report clarifies (4.3.3), "We would suggest one of the reasons why there are difficulties with the economy area of the VFM framework is that CCG management is trying to treat it as an expenses / procurement policy, which is not what it was designed to be. The intention was for the framework to retrospectively measure the VFM achieved from exercising such policies in practice"**.** This distinction is crucial and aligns with CCG's experience, as using the VFM framework for proactive budgeting and financial control has proven challenging and administratively burdensome. For instance, attempting to align real-time spending decisions with VFM thresholds often conflicts with the prevailing diverse policies of consortium partners: "Individual consortium partners follow their own policies around hotels, travel and expenses…". CCG agrees with the need to attain a pragmatic balance for more flexibility, such as the need for inserting caveats into standards to allow for specific situations (eg exempt the COP hotel costs from scoring), has been partially addressed to the extent possible in the revised overarching VFM framework (to be finalised). However, the implementation of monitoring and policing the VFM implementation continues to be challenging, given that consortium partner IT systems and approval processes have not been (nor can be) adapted to this framework, nor do the consortium partners (beyond Loughborough team) have programme management resources to enforce. CCG overall agrees to a pragmatic, agile VFM approach, provided the solution complies with institutional requirements, ensuring fairness and accountability. By focusing on retrospective evaluation, the VFM framework can better assess		

	overall performance against benchmarks, "what average performance across the consortium over a year would merit 'good' performance and then relative to that what excellent, adequate and poor would look like". This approach reduces the friction of applying VFM proactively, allowing CCG to balance cost efficiency with the practical needs of its diverse team.		
	CCG is actively working to revise the VFM framework, in consultation with the Directorate and FCDO.		Dec 2025
5	### *5.1 Decision making and governance* *Review question: Are improvements being made in support from senior management to CCG academics adequate? Particularly in relation to:* *how individual workstreams fit within and add value to CCG's overarching goals and outcomes;* *what changes are proposed to improve this (including consulting with CCG academics and integrating their views when changes are made);* *how important decisions are made and how has the recently implemented 'enhanced annual consortium review' contributed to that process.* ### *5.2 Functioning of Advisory Group* *Review question: Is the Advisory Group an effective means of providing expert external advice and direction? How could the AG improve?*		
	#16. Further clarity could be provided on the purpose of the Advisory Group member role. Given the scale and complexity of CCG, external advisors, if used, should be allocated to individual workstreams, with regular task-based touch points scheduled, to allow them to develop some depth of knowledge of an area of CCG operation and be in a better position to provide whatever function is required of the role type eventually decided upon. *Response (pls select):* *Accepted Recommendation*	[LOW]	CCG Directorate

	CCG Management Response/Strategic Action Plan	Timeline
	CCG Management accepts the recommendation and agrees that there is no formal structure for the Advisory Group to engage with the Directorate and/or PIs on a regular basis throughout the year, outside the General Meeting format, notwithstanding the selective outreach to select Advisory Group members for specific inputs relevant to their expertise. For example, the UNOPS advisory member provided substantial input to the drafting of CCG's GESI strategy; IITD's & UNUI advisory members contributed to the Southern Partner "Empowerment Ecosystem" strategy; while SLOCAT's advisory board member has been an active reviewer for flexible fund applications. The Advisory Group were also actively engaged and encouraged to provide input and comments to CCG's Programme Research Strategy. In fact, CCG has revamped its programmed research structure under the appointed Research Director, providing regular interactions and opportunities for wider collaboration within research and the consortium as a whole. The Advisory Group are not envisaged to be involved in CCG's operations. CCG will disseminate and make available its half-yearly and annual reports and other strategic documents to the Advisory Group members. CCG intends to generate updated TORs for the Advisory Group as well as map Advisory Group member skills and expertise to CCG portfolio going forward. Among the numerous lessons learned from the recent CCG Consortium review process and scoring feedback, CCG intends to explore engaging select members from the Advisory Group for next year's process.	Nov 2025 March 2026