



Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation

**Independent Assessment of the
APEC Human Resources Development Working Group**

**Report to the APEC SOM Steering Committee
on Economic and Technical Cooperation**

21 April 2014

SCE/IA/2014

Prepared by:

Sherri Lauver, Ph.D.

Nancy Balow

Carla McClure

Synergy Enterprises, Inc.

8757 Georgia Avenue, Suite 1440

Silver Spring, Maryland 20910

United States

E-mail: SLauver@seiservices.com

Tel: (1+240) 485-1700

Produced for:

Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation Secretariat

35 Heng Mui Keng Terrace Singapore 119616

Tel: (65) 68919 600 Fax: (65) 68919 690

E-mail: info@apec.org

Website: www.apec.org

©2014 APEC Secretariat

APEC#214-ES-01.1

Acknowledgements

This report is the result of tremendous collaboration among the APEC Senior Officials' Meeting (SOM) Steering Committee on Economic and Technical Cooperation; members of the Human Resources Development Working Group (HRDWG); the Lead Shepherd of HRDWG and his leadership team; and the coordinators of the Capacity Building Network (CBN), APEC Education Network (EDNET), and Labour and Social Protection Network (LSPN). First and foremost, we owe a significant debt of gratitude to the members of the APEC Secretariat's office, including Mr. Andrew O'Sullivan, Ms. Daphney Chew, and Ms. Grace T. Cruz-Fabella, for providing us the opportunity to participate in the independent assessment. Mr. O'Sullivan provided much of the documentation required for review, and both he and Ms. Chew were unfailingly responsive to many requests. Ms. Cruz-Fabella, the program director, was also exceedingly helpful in responding to many requests for information and in providing feedback on protocols related to the assessment.

Next, we are tremendously grateful to the Lead Shepherd, Professor YoungHwan Kim, and his key staff members, Kyungsim Yeon and NaGyoung Kim, for providing us unfettered access to HRDWG during the entire meeting in Ningbo, China, in February 2014. The team willingly allowed us time to present the purpose of the independent assessment during the HRDWG meeting, answered many questions by e-mail, participated in on-site interviews, and allowed us to observe all meeting activities.

We are incredibly thankful for the time offered by all three Network leaders, including Ms. Adriana De Kanter (EDNET), Mr. Tsai Meng Liang and Dr. Kuei-yen Liao (CBN), and Mr. Malcolm Greening (LSPN) for offering us time to speak with their members during Network meetings and for participating in our interviews. We are also grateful to former Lead Shepherd Dr. Alan Ginsberg, who participated in review of interview and survey protocols and graciously provided an interview to help us understand his prior experience with HRDWG.

Finally, we are very grateful to all HRDWG members and other APEC officials who enthusiastically agreed to participate in the interviews, observations, and surveys. We appreciate their candor and trust throughout this process.

While acknowledging our indebtedness to these many individuals, the authors take responsibility for any errors or omissions that remain. The views expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect those of APEC.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements.....	iii
Abbreviations.....	vi
Executive Summary.....	vii
Recommendations.....	viii
Purpose and Objectives.....	1
Purpose.....	1
Objectives.....	1
Approach.....	1
Questions.....	2
Methodology.....	2
Document Analysis.....	2
Participant Observation and Interviews.....	3
Survey Analysis.....	3
Data Analysis.....	3
Limitations of the Independent Assessment.....	4
Organization of This Report.....	5
Findings.....	6
Question 1: How effective is HRDWG in implementing key ECOTECH goals? How does HRDWG provide technical assistance, build cooperation, and enhance economic capacity building in the areas of education, labor, and cultural awareness?.....	6
Aligning to Key Goals.....	6
Complexities Worthy of Mention.....	7
Implementing Key Goals.....	7
Approved Projects.....	7
Successful Projects.....	8
Aligned Projects.....	8
Project Funding Concerns.....	9
Providing Technical Assistance.....	9
Building Cooperation.....	10
Enhancing Economic Capacity Building.....	12
Question 2: How effective is HRDWG in encouraging women’s participation in activities? Are there any other significant gender disparities that need to be addressed?.....	13
Question 3: What are the main impacts of HRDWG on the ground in APEC member economies? How does HRDWG leadership work collaboratively with other APEC fora and non-APEC groups to support member economies and effectively achieve the working group’s mission?.....	15
Impacts for APEC Member Economies.....	15
Collaborative Work With Other APEC Fora and Multilateral Organizations.....	16
Question 4: How can HRDWG strengthen its work and operations across the wide range of its activities to maximize its impact and effectiveness?.....	18
Increasing the Strategic Focus and Quality of HRDWG Projects.....	18
Reform Steps Included in Terms of Reference.....	18

Identifying the HRDWG Niche	19
Sustaining Strong Leadership.....	20
Leadership Development	20
Selection Criteria for Lead Shepherd.....	21
Ensuring Structures and Processes That Support Effective HRDWG Operations	21
HRDWG Networks.....	21
HRDWG Meetings.....	22
Participation of Member Economies in HRDWG Networks and Meetings	23
Ongoing Monitoring and Evaluation of HRDWG Activities	23
Clarity of Procedures for Submitting Concept Notes Within HRDWG	24
Clarity of Other HRDWG Procedures	24
Recommendations.....	26
Appendices.....	30
Appendix A: APEC Human Resources Development Working Group (HRDWG) Theory of Action (Logic Model).....	31
Appendix B: Documents Reviewed for the 2014 Independent Assessment	32
Appendix C: Interview Questions for Delegates and Leaders.....	36
Appendix D: Delegate and Leader Survey	38
Appendix E: Survey Results.....	46
Appendix F: Recommendations for Future HRDWG Assessments.....	48

Abbreviations

ABAC	APEC Business Advisory Council
APEC	Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation
BMC	Budget and Management Committee
CBN	Capacity Building Network, one of three HRDWG Networks
ECOTECH	Economic and Technical Cooperation
EDNET	APEC Education Network, one of three HRDWG Networks
GFPN	Gender Focal Point Network
HRDWG	Human Resources Development Working Group
IAP	APEC Economy Individual Action Plan
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
LS	Lead Shepherd
LSAC	Lead Shepherd Advisory Committee
LSPN	Labour and Social Protection Network, one of three HRDWG Networks
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PD	APEC Secretariat Programme Director
SCE	SOM Steering Committee on ECOTECH
SEAMEO	South East Asian Ministers of Education Organisations
SOM	Senior Officials' Meeting
WG	Working Group

Executive Summary

At present, many APEC HRD member economies are in different stages of development and industrialization. Particularly in developing economies, the need appears to be more pressing for a highly skilled workforce. Therefore, there is an increasing call for strengthened cooperation in the region.

That statement from a Human Resources Development Working Group (HRDWG) member who was interviewed for this assessment exemplifies what the independent evaluator heard from many delegates. The reality of “different stages of development” has defined the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) region since the organization’s inception. But, as the recent global recession demonstrated, economies at all levels of development have needed to address issues such as high unemployment, mismatches between skills and jobs, and alignment of degree and credentialing programs to workforce demands. Without exception, members of this group spoke to the real value of nurturing a synergy between education and labor—within their individual economies and among their several economies.

However, tight finances in their home economies and in APEC itself have brought HRDWG members to a crossroads. Interviewees described fewer projects being funded and a greater number of inexperienced delegates participating in activities. Document reviews showed that repetitive agendas and inappropriate assignments of procedural tasks have tightened time resources in parallel with financial resources. Four years out from the previous assessment, it was time to identify strategic areas for improvement and to suggest actionable approaches and procedures that could support and sustain HRDWG’s role in APEC.

The APEC Senior Officials’ Meeting (SOM) Steering Committee on Economic and Technical Cooperation (SCE), as part of its key mission to oversee ECOTECH activities and goals, requested this independent assessment of HRDWG operations and structure. Through its work in promoting inclusive and effective education practices, stronger labor and protection programs for all members of society, and greater capacity-building systems, HRDWG is an important forum for economies to work together toward the defined objectives of the SCE.

This independent assessment was designed to focus on four research questions:

1. How effective is HRDWG in implementing key ECOTECH goals? How does HRDWG provide technical assistance, build cooperation, and enhance economic capacity building in the areas of education, labor, and cultural awareness?
2. How effective is HRDWG in encouraging women’s participation in activities? Are there any other significant gender disparities that need to be addressed?
3. What are the main impacts of HRDWG on the ground in APEC member economies? How does HRDWG leadership work collaboratively with other APEC fora and non-APEC groups to support member economies and effectively achieve the working group’s mission?
4. How can HRDWG strengthen its work and operations across the wide range of its activities to maximize its impact and effectiveness?

The findings suggest that delegates share a number of concerns about HRDWG projects and activities. These include the “quantity versus quality” of proposals forwarded to the Secretariat’s office, the effects of funding changes, the quality of completed projects, and the communication of findings beyond HRDWG. A majority of delegates who responded to the survey were equivocal about or dissatisfied with the level of evaluation conducted on HRDWG projects. The assessment also found that delegates had reservations about members being prepared to serve in leadership roles in coming years. Many delegates, especially those new to APEC, find the myriad of HRDWG mission, priority, goals, and objectives to be confusing. Drawing on the data collected for this assessment, the independent evaluator offers seven recommendations.

Recommendations

- 1. Improve the process for developing high-quality, high-priority Concept Notes.** The document review and interview responses indicate that the HRDWG Concept Notes process is fairly new. Many delegates described its current implementation as less than efficient, a reality that has combined with the Tier 2 funding designation to reduce HRDWG’s ability to gain approval for proposed projects.
 - The leadership team should devise specific steps (e.g., intra-Network and inter-Network ratings system, top co-sponsor recipients, top ranked note from each Network submitted to BMC) to ensure that only high-quality Concept Notes supported by multiple economies are submitted for funding. The review process should be made transparent to all so that sponsoring economies and their delegates receive feedback to help them understand areas of weakness.
 - Specify a structure and required elements for presentation of Concept Notes, and provide a template for a poster session and handout and/or a succinct PowerPoint presentation of the Concept Note that can be used during the meeting and shared electronically for further review and discussion within each home economy. Provide links to relevant APEC resources, including a list of current APEC priorities, the APEC Project Quality Assessment Framework, and criteria for evaluating and funding proposed projects.
 - Advocate with the APEC Budget and Management Committee to strengthen support for the HRDWG mission and to identify ways HRDWG can receive Tier 1 funding in addition to the “People-to-People Connectivity” category. Explore the use of specialized funds (e.g., ANSRR training and education funds, energy funds) for HRD projects.
 - Identify a short list of high-profile, self-funded topics/projects that would be in the self-interest for developed APEC economies to support financially. These should take particular advantage of APEC’s unique Asia-Pacific focus and show potential for flexibility to do quick projects that involve a smaller number of co-interested economies than larger multilateral organizations.
 - Crosswalk HRDWG’s recently proposed projects with those of other international fora (e.g., ASEAN, OECD, UNESCO) to determine a niche for HRDWG’s labor and education projects, and produce a paper that identifies (a) areas of overlap and (b) gaps in coverage. Once these are identified, consider collaborating with other fora to leverage resources and results, or focus new Concept Notes to address gaps that can benefit from the unique synergy of HRDWG’s combined labor and education expertise. Apply the crosswalk analysis process to each Concept Note to justify its value as a unique effort or as one that bolsters an existing effort.
- 2. Ensure that HRDWG objectives align with all APEC mission and priority statements.** Although HRDWG’s explicit, overall objectives align well with those of APEC and ECOTECH, the implicit goals embedded in project proposals may not present clear alignment to annual priorities when reviewed by the Budget and Management Committee.
 - Given HRDWG’s mission to strengthen human resource development and promote sustainable economic growth, carefully choose actions and projects that align with APEC’s core mission and eliminate projects that are economy-specific or insignificant to the majority of economies participating in HRDWG. In addition, the differentiated purposes and functions of the three HRDWG Networks (CBN, EDNET, LSPN) are not always clear, within and possibly beyond HRDWG. Tied to this is the need to make a clear statement about HRDWG’s potential for making unique contributions to APEC goals.
 - Create a document that explicitly states the relationship between each HRDWG objective and APEC priorities, including 4-year ministerial priorities and annual “host economy” priorities; update it annually to ensure that it bridges short-term and long-term goals.

- Update relevant HRDWG guidance and resource documents (e.g., Multi-year Planning Worksheet, 2009/HRDWG31/076) and make sure they are accessible on the HRDWG Wiki.
- 3. The Lead Shepherd should consider additional, low-cost opportunities to develop future HRDWG leaders.** Interview comments pointed to the importance of providing delegates with positive learning experiences, both to prepare future leaders and to sustain meaningful participation over time.
- Find delegates with specific expertise in facilitation, management, and strategic planning for optional professional development sessions conducted either in-person or via teleconference. The SCE, with input from all working groups, might identify this group of people and also compile a list of open education resources that can help to build leadership skills across working groups. Given its human resources expertise, HRDWG could be the appropriate partner to implement.
 - Make peer-to-peer mentoring an integral part of HRDWG activities. Increase the engagement of delegates who are “on the threshold” of leadership and would benefit from international meeting experience. These individuals, with permission of the hosting economy, could co-lead portions of the annual meeting with support from a Network Coordinator.
 - Use ongoing program evaluation to inform HRDWG and the Secretariat (e.g., collect and analyze data on the participation of “future leaders” and changes within HRDWG and APEC by gender and role).
- 4. Structure meetings to maximize time dedicated to substantive discussion.** Unlike some other international fora, APEC’s HRDWG brings the labor and education sectors together, thus enabling members to harness the full range of factors that contribute to a strong economy as they plan, manage, and evaluate successful projects.
- Create more opportunities for facilitated discussions that cross-pollinate education and labor perspectives. Network leaders would like more information on each economy’s policy on core HRD priority areas, and jointly led, small-group discussions regarding priorities could provide additional insight.
 - Rather than putting Network activities into silos, reduce the length of their independent meetings and leverage their specific interest areas by having them seed policy dialogues on important topics (e.g., labor and gender “inclusive growth” goals) by inviting content specialists, researchers, and representatives of other APEC fora to participate in discussions, either virtually or (when feasible) in person.
 - Minimize redundancies in the meeting agenda so that sessions on procedural activities (e.g., project proposals, evaluation information) are presented only once.
 - Make transparent the roles and responsibilities of each Network. CBN leaders and delegates clearly understand their mandate and purpose, yet others may not. CBN seems particularly well-suited for corporate, academic, and other entities outside of government to discuss important issues that are cross-cutting to both education and labor. It also maintains a substantive focus on building the capacity of developing economies to move from labor-intensive, low value-added economies to knowledge-intensive, high value-added economies.
 - Post meeting notes and related documents to the HRDWG Wiki as soon as possible after each meeting—and keep the HRDWG e-mail distribution list up-to-date—to support ongoing engagement around substantive issues.

5. Refine selection criteria and desired skill sets for the Lead Shepherd. The members of an APEC working group represent their member economies by providing content-specific expertise and policy experience. The Lead Shepherd's office has responsibility for ensuring that projects and activities align with goals, priorities, and operational expectations (such as those expressed in the group's Terms of Reference). As delegates indicated in interviews, the Lead Shepherd should efficiently manage these higher-level tasks, thus enabling group members to focus on understanding and implementing various perspectives and policies through projects and activities.

- Recognizing that the work of the Lead Shepherd is a significant undertaking, require that nominees for Lead Shepherd demonstrate support from their member economies in the form of sufficient and experienced human resources as well as funding to effectively lead HRDWG activities and to represent HRDWG at APEC and other multilateral meetings.
- Ideally, candidates for Lead Shepherd should have senior experience in the public sector, a strong background in economics, and an understanding of the role of human resources development in economic growth. Prior board management experience is beneficial. Candidates with this experience should be given additional consideration if multiple applicants for Lead Shepherd are nominated.
- Screen for demonstrated analytic, facilitation, cultural sensitivity, and communication skills, and for the ability to focus, prioritize, and lead collaborative efforts.
- Consider, but do not limit selection to, the Deputy Lead Shepherd.
- Consider women and men equally, based on merit.

6. Take evaluation seriously at all levels, including project planning and implementation.

Document reviews and interview responses revealed overlaps among major HRDWG guiding documents: the Terms of Reference, Strategic Plan, and Annual Workplan. The plans in particular lack grounding that could be provided by working backward from measurable outcomes.

- Nurture an evaluation mind-set among HRDWG members and within each Network. The Lead Shepherd's office can support this by carefully constructing draft strategic and workplans that contain measurable objectives and outcomes. Providing these documents to delegates in sufficient time for review within their home economies would encourage thoughtfulness and provide a model for constructing strong project plans.
- Ask delegates with experience in evaluation to review and amend objectives and outcomes to ensure they are measurable; engage these delegates to help the group maintain a focus on evaluation with an eye toward (a) continuous improvement and (b) progress in achieving project objectives, HRDWG objectives, and APEC priorities.
- Consult with the APEC Project Management Unit, as needed, to prepare project evaluation reports that can effectively inform current and future projects.

7. Demonstrate continued commitment to gender equality in all HRDWG activities and projects.

As survey and interview responses demonstrate, HRDWG has opened opportunities for women to participate in equal numbers with men. Now the focus might shift to creating opportunities for equal responsibility and recognition.

- Continue the strong record of welcoming and supporting women in leadership roles within the working group. Some women do have significant or developing APEC leadership experience and should be considered for other leadership roles upon completion of their present leadership roles.
- Leaders and delegate senior officials should strive to build support teams that model gender balance and respect the contributions, experience, and knowledge of female professionals.

- When preparing Concept Notes and planning projects, explicitly address any issues that might affect gender mainstreaming, as outlined in the *Framework for Integration of Women in APEC*.
- As suggested by the *Framework*, collect sex-disaggregated data and conduct gender analysis during baseline and outcome evaluations of internal and project activities.
- Make the data on gender status available to all APEC members so they may inform the full range of policies and activities.

Purpose and Objectives

Purpose

The Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Senior Officials' Meeting (SOM) Steering Committee on Economic and Technical Cooperation (SCE), as part of its key mission to oversee ECOTECH's activities and goals, requested an independent assessment of HRDWG operations and structure to review their efficacy and impact toward SCE's and APEC's paramount objectives of increased trade and development and closer international ties. SCE is seeking recommendations from a consultant evaluator to align HRDWG practices with broader APEC goals and to strengthen the working group's processes.

In promoting inclusive and effective education practices, stronger labor and protection programs for all members of society, and greater capacity building systems, HRDWG is an important forum for economies working together toward the defined objectives of the SCE. Three objectives guide HRDWG activities and projects: developing knowledge and skills for the 21st century, integrating HRD into the regional and global economy, and addressing the social dimensions of the globalized world. These objectives are actuated through projects proposed and cosponsored by member economies through three Networks—Capacity Building, Education, and Labour and Social Protection—and directed by the respective Network Coordinators.

A visual illustration of HRDWG's theory of action (logic model) is located in Appendix A. The model illustrates the relationship among the SCE priorities, HRDWG priorities, and Network (CBN, EDNET, and LSPN) priorities, as well as their projects and key outcomes. All projects are subject to process and impact evaluations, which provide feedback to leaders, who can thereby adjust the priorities as needed.

Objectives

1. Evaluate whether HRDWG is operating effectively and efficiently.
2. Determine whether the HRDWG Terms of Reference, strategic plan, or operations could be modified to better respond to APEC ECOTECH priorities and contribute to the achievement of APEC goals.
3. Identify ways to strengthen HRDWG's strategic priorities and direction for future work.
4. Explore how HRDWG can better take into account the APEC commitment to give gender greater consideration in accordance with directions outlined by the Policy Partnership on Women and the Economy.

Approach

A high-quality evaluation measures program implementation and impact, and also builds on past and emerging knowledge. Fortunately, HRDWG has engaged in evaluation work that helped frame the current evaluation project. The independent assessment of HRDWG conducted in 2010 by Dr. Jacqui True investigated a broad range of SCE and HRDWG materials and outcomes to determine methods to improve future working group activities. The 2010 assessment offered recommendations to bolster working group practices and policy and proposed significant changes to HRDWG related to Network organization and efficacy.

A review of guiding documents produced since the assessment, such as meeting summary reports, Terms of Reference, and the strategic goals and workplan, shows HRDWG has undertaken various efforts to address prior recommendations and continues to enhance its capacity to advance APEC goals. Events subsequent to the 2010 evaluation, such as the relegation of HRDWG projects to Tier 2 funding, have further changed the environment within which HRDWG operates and affected the opportunities for HRDWG to address issues pertinent to its mission.

The information learned from the 2010 Independent Assessment framed clear and useful research questions and developed rigorous analytic strategies that will continue to move HRDWG's agenda forward. For the 2013 assessment, explicit involvement by key stakeholders in the evaluation process was critical and required an empirical research study for the time period of 18 February 2014 to 21 March 2014. This work employed participant observation, surveys, document reviews, and interviews with key stakeholders to assess HRDWG's

1. Work process and operations to determine its effectiveness in meeting APEC ECOTECH goals and strategic priorities; and
2. Overall impact on its member economies and collaboration with other APEC fora and non-APEC parties.

Questions

The research questions that guided the evaluator's work were built on the work of the previous independent assessment and on project objectives provided by the APEC Secretariat and the SCE. Through collaboration with HRDWG and its Lead Shepherd, the evaluator conducted a robust assessment of operations and key activities to assess HRDWG's effectiveness and to identify strengths and weaknesses. The research questions are as follows:

1. How effective is HRDWG in implementing key ECOTECH goals? How does HRDWG provide technical assistance, build cooperation, and enhance economic capacity building in the areas of education, labor, and cultural awareness?
2. How effective is HRDWG in encouraging women's participation in activities? Are there any other significant gender disparities that need to be addressed?
3. What are the main impacts of HRDWG on the ground in APEC member economies? How does HRDWG leadership work collaboratively with other APEC fora and non-APEC groups to support member economies and effectively achieve the working group's mission?
4. How can HRDWG strengthen its work and operations across the wide range of its activities to maximize its impact and effectiveness?

Methodology

An empirical assessment of HRDWG required document analysis, participant observation at appropriate HRDWG forum meetings, and surveys and interviews with relevant stakeholders involved in HRDWG operations. A combination of data collection methods was used to gather robust data concerning HRDWG activities. The empirical research methods are detailed below.

Document Analysis

The first step involved a review of important APEC policy documents (Leaders' and Ministers' statements, HRDWG meeting minutes, project documentation, and prior evaluation reports) to assess the degree to which HRDWG has met its key goals and objectives and its impact on member economies. In addition, a logic model was developed to systematically and visually present an understanding of the relationships among the SCE, HRDWG, and Network priorities, along with their key projects, outcomes, and feedback loop (see Appendix A). The purpose of the logic model is to demonstrate the sequence of activities thought to bring about change and how these activities are linked to the outcomes the working group is expected to achieve. A complete list of documents reviewed for the purpose of this assessment is in Appendix B.

Participant Observation and Interviews

The evaluator attended the 36th HRDWG Meeting, held in February 2014 as part of the First Senior Officials' Meeting in Ningbo, China, with authorization of the HRDWG Lead Shepherd and the SCE. The Lead Shepherd allowed the evaluator to provide an introduction to the independent assessment at the technical and plenary meetings, full access to all HRDWG meetings for participant observation, interviews with all delegates and leaders, and a 90-minute meeting to understand his role. The evaluator observed Working Group plenary and Network meetings and used the opportunity to conduct short interviews with the Lead Shepherd and with the Coordinators of the Capacity Building Network (CBN), the Education Network (EDNET), and the Labour and Social Protection Network (LSPN). She also interviewed other officials and staff from the SCE, other Working Groups under ECOTECH, and additional individuals in positions that have oversight of or an active working relationship with HRDWG. These activities were conducted to gather additional information on how HRDWG collaborates across groups. Interviews with delegates from member economies and other organizations present at the meeting likewise provided information for the evaluation. See Appendix C for interview questions.

Semi-structured interview protocols were developed and shared with the Lead Shepherd, coordinators, and APEC program director for review and feedback during the design phase of the independent assessment. A copy of the interview protocol was shared with the previous Lead Shepherd for additional suggestions and feedback. Interviews were conducted during the 36th HRDWG Meeting and immediately thereafter via telephone or e-mail. Information from interviews is strictly confidential; no individual is identified by name within the evaluation report. The consultant discussed with interviewees their views on the effectiveness of HRDWG in meeting its goals, how it actively encourages women's participation in its activities, and its impacts on member economies. The evaluator was able to conduct 21 interviews with members of 17 economies, of which 6 occurred via e-mail correspondence with the respondent due to time zone differences.

Survey Analysis

An electronic survey (see Appendix D) was developed to assess the working operations and external impact of HRDWG activities and to gather data required to estimate the number of people affected, directly and indirectly, by relevant APEC programs. It required no more than an average of 10 minutes for an individual to complete. A draft copy of the survey was shared with the Lead Shepherd, the APEC project director, and three coordinators for additional review and feedback. Next, the draft survey was piloted with two member economies. After the survey was finalized, it was shared via e-mail with all member delegates involved in HRDWG. Both delegates and non-APEC individuals (independent, non-officials from each member economy) were invited to participate. After survey release, individuals were asked to complete the survey within 2 weeks. An e-mail reminder was sent to individuals prior to the deadline.

The electronic survey was closed on 21 March 2014, and 42 delegates responded, approximately 34 percent of the total number of individuals who attended the HRDWG meeting in Ningbo, China ($N = 123$). Thirty-five (35) respondents (14 men and 21 women) disclosed their gender on the survey, and 38 individuals disclosed their Network affiliations. A large proportion of the sample regularly attended EDNET ($n = 21$, or 55 percent of the sample), followed by nine individuals in CBN (24 percent) and eight individuals in LSPN (21 percent). See Appendix E for a summary of survey results.

Data Analysis

All quantitative and qualitative data were analyzed appropriately in terms of research principles and ease of use by the project's stakeholders. Reporting of both descriptive and narrative data provided the most

complete picture of APEC HRDWG functioning, and will give decision makers an adequate context for making data-driven programmatic decisions.

Survey data were analyzed using SPSS, a statistical software package, and were reported in an accessible format. On most items, survey respondents could choose from a 5-point scale (*Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, Strongly Agree*). It is important to note that many items received an agreement rate of approximately 50 percent, a fact that might be of concern to SCE and HRDWG leaders, as it could indicate that the APEC experience is not producing the results its member economies would like to see. However, the neutral response option on the survey scale makes it difficult to interpret some of the survey results, and the independent evaluator would propose removing it from the survey if future assessments are conducted (see Appendix F).

Sex-disaggregated statistical data were included wherever feasible. The evaluator triangulated data from all information sources to develop an evaluation report written in plain language for a wide audience. This evaluation references the previous evaluation and all relevant HRDWG documents and provides complete copies of all data tools developed for the independent assessment (i.e., structured interview protocol and survey tool). The report draws conclusions and recommendations where evidence has emerged across multiple data sources.

Limitations of the Independent Assessment

There are several noteworthy limitations to the project. First, the time available to conduct the evaluation activities was limited to one month, while the period of evaluation is four years (2010-2013). Thus, the evaluation must draw conclusions and recommendations from a review of meeting documents, many of which provide only cursory summaries of presentations without detail or depth. In addition, because the evaluator was contracted to attend only one of the four annual meetings of HRDWG, observational data about meeting operations are based on the evaluator's observation at that meeting only.

As an individual consultant, the evaluator was required to make decisions about how to efficiently manage time. Every effort was made to spend equivalent time at each Network meeting, although these occurred simultaneously. Some key leaders also requested interviews during Network meetings based on their individual availability.

Most interviews took place on site, as did several short impromptu conversations with delegates while on break or during the afternoon site visit. Six additional interviews occurred after the meeting. Interviews were conducted without a recording device or a note taker present, so any quotes from delegates herein were taken directly by hand by the evaluator. In-person interviews took place in the hotel lobby or meeting areas outside conference rooms, where confidentiality or noise could not always be controlled.

The evaluator made every effort to conduct as many interviews as possible with equal numbers of men and women. All leaders were interviewed to gather their suggestions and recommendations for the independent assessment. As there is high turnover among delegates, some of the interview candidates had little experience with APEC's HRDWG and could not speak to the four years under study.

The survey was available to delegates for 10 days, and two reminders encouraged them to participate. Every effort was made to develop a representative sample of data from various role groups.

The evaluator had some difficulty obtaining all of the documents necessary for the review from either the APEC HRDWG website or the HRDWG Wiki. No contact list of delegates was available, and there was extremely limited information on delegate participation in meetings by gender. It was sometime difficult to obtain summaries of current or ongoing HRDWG projects. cursory summaries of annual meetings were available but lacked the level of detail required for an evaluator's review and analysis. Finally, the evaluator was unaware of a change in leadership in CBN and mistakenly e-mailed a request to the wrong

individual. At least one other Network coordinator and the program director were also unaware of this change in Network leadership.

The very tight timeline created a need for simultaneous data collection and analysis. Leaders had little time to respond to the evaluator's requests for additional data or for answers to questions.

Appendix F suggests ways future independent assessments of HRDWG might address some of these limitations and improve the quality and utility of the assessment.

Organization of This Report

The findings of the independent assessment are organized by the four research questions approved by the Secretariat and HRDWG, with the evidence assigned where it most strongly relates. However, some overlap among the four core questions is possible. Relevant and representative excerpts from evidence are included throughout the findings. Following the Findings section is a series of seven detailed recommendations for consideration by the Secretariat, the SOM Steering Committee on Economic and Technical Cooperation, and HRDWG.

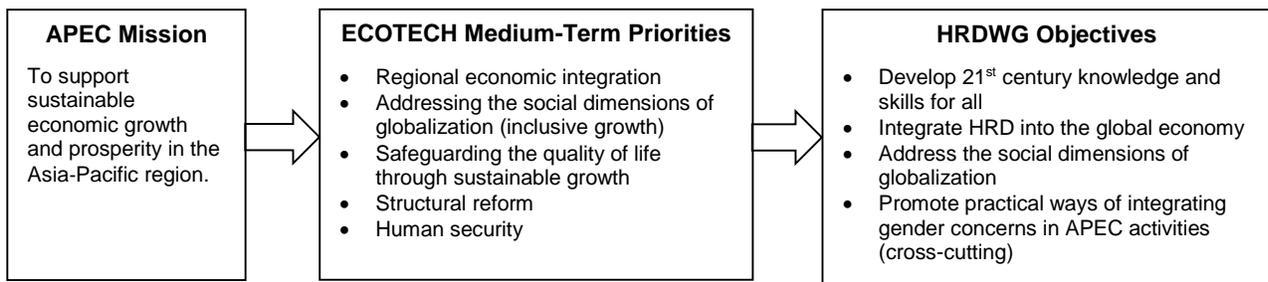
Findings

The findings are organized by the four research questions that frame the independent assessment. This assessment draws on evidence from all main data sources—participant observations, documents, interviews, and survey responses—to discuss findings related to each question.

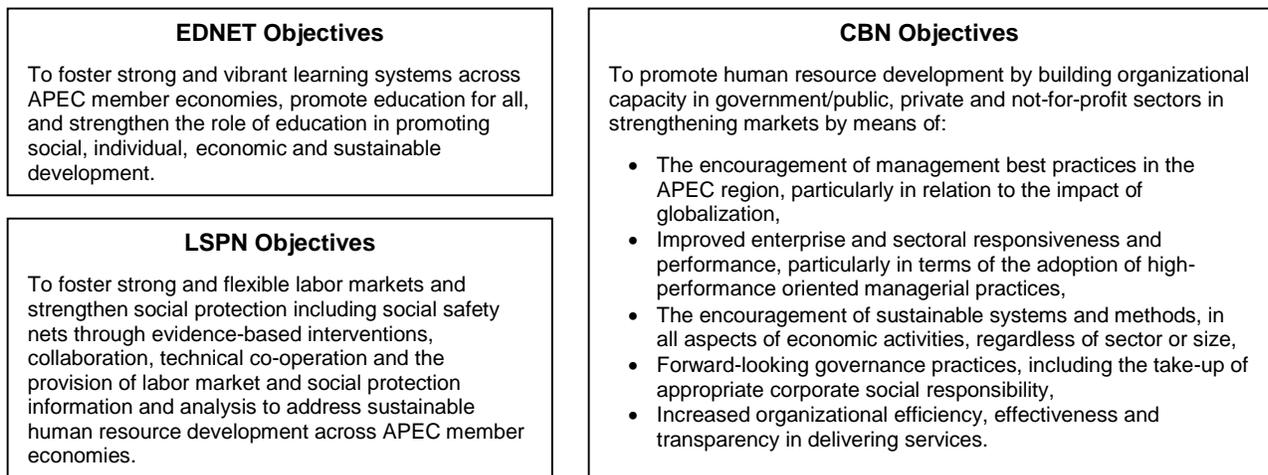
Question 1: How effective is HRDWG in implementing key ECOTECH goals? How does HRDWG provide technical assistance, build cooperation, and enhance economic capacity building in the areas of education, labor, and cultural awareness?

Aligning to Key Goals

Consideration of the first element of this question depends in part on how well HRDWG goals align with the goals and priorities of higher levels of the organization. Taking evidence from the document review, a simple side-by-side comparison demonstrates that HRDWG has developed goals that can further the ECOTECH priorities and the overarching APEC mission. (APEC website, 3-20-14; 2013/SOM3/HRDWG/010 *Terms of Reference of HRDWG and HRDWG TOR 2014*)



Within HRDWG, each Network has established objectives that further define the group’s work—again, in alignment with other priorities. (2013/SOM3/HRDWG/010 *Terms of Reference of HRDWG and HRDWG TOR 2014*)



HRDWG and Network meeting reports demonstrate that the Lead Shepherd and Network Coordinators take care to remind members of the importance of maintaining alignment to key goals. These excerpts provide examples of that mindfulness:

Dr. YoungHwan Kim discussed the relationship between the activities of the HRDWG in relation to the overall APEC agenda, and underscored the need for more evidence and

information from network members on their projects. (2011/SOM1/HRDWG/089 *EDNET Meeting Summary Report*, item 20)

The Co-Chair introduced China's 2014 priorities, emphasizing the effect of "Strengthening Comprehensive Connectivity and Infrastructure Development" to education, and encouraged innovative ideas, methods, and platforms to promote education connectivity. (2014/SOM1/HRDWG/010 *Education Network Meeting Summary Report*, item 6)

When asked about their satisfaction that the HRDWG Terms of Reference (TOR) adequately reflect Ministerial priorities (item 17), half of survey respondents (50 percent) selected *Agree* or *Strongly Agree*, and the remaining 50 percent selected *Disagree* or *Neutral*.

Complexities Worthy of Mention

In addition to the medium- to long-term key goals discussed above, various APEC bodies establish annual priorities, themes, and subthemes that guide the focus of annual meetings and the development of projects (note the second report excerpt provided above). These additional layers made it difficult to determine the desired relative importance or influence of each level. A further complicating factor was the opacity of terminology. For example, priorities may equate to goals, although that is not clearly defined; likewise, although objectives are named as such, they are not constructed to be measurable, nor do they have measurable outcomes attached to them, and they may equate to priorities or goals.

Although the APEC mission statement has remained constant over time, the ECOTECH priorities have occasionally been refined. During the time period covered by this assessment, the refinements have not constituted major changes in approach or policy, however.

Given these complexities, the assessment team chose to focus mainly on the APEC mission, the medium-term ECOTECH priorities, and the stated HRDWG objectives when reviewing and analyzing evidence for this report.

Implementing Key Goals

As one interview respondent observed, "Projects are where the working group adds value." Because projects are essential to achieving HRDWG objectives, evidence about HRDWG project activities was explored for indications of effectiveness of implementation. Document reviews and interviews provided the richest resources in this area.

Approved Projects

From 2009 to 2013, HRDWG reported a total of 39 approved, implemented projects. Of these, 26 were APEC-funded and 13 were self-funded. HRDWG project foci, as suggested by the titles in the following illustrative examples, captured a range of objectives and priorities. Asterisks designate projects that interview respondents named as "successful."

- 2008-13 Project Series
 - *APEC Forum on Human Resources Development, HRD 01 2013S, self-funded
- 2008-14 Project Series
 - *International Comparative Research to Identify Unique and Promising Practices in Mathematics and Science Teacher Preparation for APEC Economies (2013 project title)±
- 2010 Projects
 - *Lesson Study for Implementing Curriculum: Developing Innovative Assessment Problem, HRD 01 2010S, self-funded

- 2010 APEC Advanced Training for Vocational Instructors, HRD 02 1020S, self-funded
- Capacity Building for Policies and Monitoring of Cross-Border Education in the APEC Region, HRD 01 2010A, APEC-funded
- Effective Labour Market Signaling: A Strategy for Solving the Problem of Unemployment and Talent Mismatch, HRD 03 2010, APEC-funded
- 2011 Projects
 - *Human Capital Policies for Green Growth and Employment, HRD 02 2011A, APEC-funded
 - *Advancing Inclusive Growth through Social Protection, HRD 01 2011A, APEC-funded
 - Strengthening Human Resource Management System of SMEs for Facilitating Successful Trade and Investment in APEC, HRD 05 2011T, APEC-funded
 - Promoting Best Practices on Mathematical Modelling Course in Higher Education Curriculum of APEC Economies, HRD 06 2011A, APEC-funded
- 2012 Projects
 - APEC Career and Technical Education (CTE) and Licensing Portal – (1) Study on Current Status & Recommendations, HRD 01 2012S, self-funded
 - Building Natural Disaster Response Capacity – Sound Workforce Strategies for Recovery and Reconstruction, HRD 01 2012A, APEC-funded
 - *Skills Mapping Across APEC Economies – A Tool To Promote Regional Economic Integration and Address Skill Shortages, HRD 02 2012A, APEC-funded
- 2013 Projects
 - *Cooperative Alliance for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET)/ Career and Technical Education (CTE), HRD 04 2013S, self-funded
 - *Promoting Regional Education Services Integration: APEC University Associations Cross-Border Education Cooperation Workshop, HRD 02 2013, APEC-funded
 - Establishing Best Practices on Human Capital Development to Enhance Productivity, Quality Competitiveness and Innovation amongst SMEs : Research and Workshop, HRD 01 2013, APEC-funded

Source: *HRDWG Project 2013-2006*, provided by Lead Shepherd’s office, except for the project marked with this symbol, ±, which did not appear on that list but does appear in the APEC Project Database. Note that references to projects, and even lists of projects provided by Network coordinators, often did not use the official project titles; because of that, some projects mentioned by interview respondents could not be identified by the evaluator.

Successful Projects

When asked about satisfaction with the quality of projects sponsored by HRDWG (item 19), half of survey respondents chose *Agree* or *Strongly Agree*, one fifth chose *Strongly Disagree* or *Disagree*, and nearly one third chose *Neutral*.

During interviews, the evaluator asked respondents to name projects they believed to have been particularly successful. Their responses are indicated with an asterisk next to the project title in the above list.

Aligned Projects

To check alignment of HRDWG projects with ECOTECH priorities, the evaluator reviewed a list of projects provided by the LSPN coordinator. Between 2010 and 2013, LSPN received approval for 10 projects, and all aligned with one of the priorities, although some likely impacted more than one priority. Six of these projects aligned with “addressing the social dimensions of globalization” (e.g., APEC Forum on Human Resources Development 2013 – Vocational Training for People with Disabilities; Decent

Work During/After Maternity and Childcare Leave, 2012). Two projects aligned with “regional economic integration” (e.g., Effective Labour Market Signaling: A Strategy for Solving the Problem of Unemployment and Talent Mismatch, 2010). One aligned with “human security” (Building Natural Disaster Response Capacity – Sound Workforce Strategies for Recovery and Reconstruction, 2012), and one aligned with “safeguarding the quality of life through sustainable growth” (Human Capital Policies for Green Growth and Employment, 2011); the latter was developed in partnership with EDNET.

Project Funding Concerns

Although the number of projects conducted by HRDWG during the assessment timeframe seemed to represent a good effort, group members who were interviewed suggested that many potentially worthwhile projects did not receive approval or funding. In fact, in 2011, HRDWG lost its eligibility for APEC Tier 1 funding and was moved to Tier 2. This change effectively reduced the number of APEC-funded projects and decreased the amount of APEC funding any HRDWG project was eligible to receive. (The number of APEC-funded projects fell from 10 in 2009 to 3 in 2013.) One interviewee described making a better connection to goals as a way to improve the working group’s ability to gain project approval and funding:

The change to Tier 2 funding is a significant challenge, but we may be able to better align with APEC’s goals through “people to people connectivity” and for sustainability. As a group, we must demonstrate proactive cooperation with the business sector. For example, we could partner with agriculture or emergency preparedness groups to develop education projects that receive Tier 1 funding.

Other interviewees suggested strategies that might bring HRDWG’s project proposal process into stronger alignment with goals, thereby improving funding rates and impact. For example:

I would think that we do not need too many small projects. We need bigger project that many economies can work together. That way, information and results can be circulated for all members. That may improve connectivity and effectiveness of the project.

The central issue is number versus quality. There is no limitation on the number of projects put forward for funding; we are encouraged to put as many forward as we can contribute. Perhaps this is not the best idea. We may need to better balance quantity with quality given funding issues. We may need to think about the feasibility of each study and its outcome. I have an evaluation background and I worry that we are not designing studies to assess the outcomes.

Right now we have five education priorities—at least two priorities too many. We need to focus on fewer things, and to make them directly related to the APEC mission.

Survey respondents, too, appeared to have concerns about project funding. In responses to an item on satisfaction with the APEC funding process (item 20), just over one third of HRDWG respondents selected an agreement option, nearly one fifth selected a disagree option, and the largest percentage—nearly half—selected the *Neutral* response.

Providing Technical Assistance

Because human resource development provides an important foundation for economic development, HRDWG activities can add value to the work of many bodies within and outside of APEC. Certainly, HRDWG projects are designed to work at the economy level to tackle issues related to trade, labor, and education. (See the project list under Implementing Key Goals for illustrative examples of technical assistance projects in these areas.)

HRDWG documents and interviews provided insight into ways the group has provided internal technical assistance. One important tool for which the group can take credit is the HRDWG Wiki (<http://hrd.apec.org>). This website was described in an EDNET meeting report as follows:

Project report on the APEC Knowledge Bank and APEC Wiki (USA) – The U.S. described that the APEC EDNET satellite site began in 2002 as a static webpage and has significantly evolved to include a wide array of resources and increased visitors; the Wiki is intended to be a resource for EDNET members, as well as a collaboration tool for members. (2011/SOM1/HRDWG/089 *EDNET Meeting Summary Report*, item 25)

The Wiki has apparently offered good value to APEC delegates and staff, although some interview respondents noted difficulties with locating materials. Because the Wiki and its Knowledge Bank can also be accessed by members of the public, the site is positioned to have great potential as a technical assistance resource for external projects and economies that need reliable information and tools. Many more users could benefit from the site if files were thoughtfully reorganized and the site was stocked with statistics, products, and lessons learned from project implementation and evaluation activities. The 2013 announcement that the Secretariat will begin hosting the Wiki may indicate an intention to expand its reach. (2013/SOM3/HRDWG/063 *Education Network Meeting Summary*, item 8.1)

An interview respondent provided an example of how HRDWG project activities can assist both policy and practice:

Chinese Taipei implemented a TVAC training project and three ministries participated. This is a significant domestic issue, and we think the project was a success. I think that other projects that involve international comparison, such as the teacher preparation project are very valuable, especially when they offer good implications for policy makers. That project is successful because we can each bring something back to our economy, and it produces something tangible.

Another example of technical assistance appears in this project description:

Japan and Thailand presented on *Emergency Preparedness Education* and the Concept Note for the continuation project, *Emergency Preparedness Education: Focus on Fire and Eruption*. This series of projects utilizes the concept of lesson study to understand each other through the prism of emergency preparedness. The project has developed an Emergency Preparedness e-textbook that will be available in December 2013. (2013/SOM3/HRDWG/063 *Education Network Meeting Summary*, item 6.4)

Building Cooperation

As one interviewee noted, many sectors of an economy need to come together and find the right balance to focus on improvements. This respondent suggested that APEC and HRDWG experiences have informed the discussions:

With the recent emphasis in higher education quality issues framed as “trade in education services,” there has been a need to coordinate across many different domestic agencies within my economy and with members from several other APEC fora from my economy to ensure education interests within our economy are not compromised. The extent to which this collaboration now takes place far exceeds any other collaboration in the past and also has the attention of our Senior Official.

HRDWG has designed and supported multi-economy, multiphase cooperative projects to improve job skills and job prospects. The following examples have focused on defining commonly agreed-upon educational qualifications that would enable workers to travel among economies to meet labor needs when and where they occur. The reports come from different Network meeting summaries, and they

reflect internal cooperation among HRDWG members, who likely brought varied expertise in labor and education, and also HRDWG cooperation with ABAC:

Project report on Comparability and Benchmarking of Competencies and Qualification Frameworks in the APEC Region (China and Philippines) – China described a project focused on developing a common understanding of different CTE/Technical Vocational Education Training (TVET) programs in APEC economies. They conducted a survey (11 respondents) and held a seminar (Philippines, 2009) in which 11 economies participated, and China and the Philippines wrote a report summarizing CTE/TVET programs in APEC economies. China suggested convening a working group to take this project further to develop a regional qualifications framework; Chinese Taipei recommended that China continue this project. (2011/SOM1/HRDWG/089 *EDNET Meeting Summary Report*, item 41)

Indonesia has started to implement the qualification framework. Indonesia introduced the 3 pillars including standards of training, training provider, and certification program. CBN Co-chair mentioned that Indonesia will establish the new curriculum for training program. Indonesia also mentioned the recognition of the standard and certification among APEC economies, and the importance of networking with the other international organizations and associations. CBN Coordinator responded that by setting up some criteria, the TTQS will help to ensure the training program will deliver the training effectively. (2013/SOM3/HRDWG/062 *Capacity Building Network Meeting Summary*, item 6.c)

Australia presented a prototype of the APEC Skills Mapping Tool, with feedback given by the ABAC representative on progress to date. (2013/SOM3/HRDWG/064 *Labour and Social Protection Network Meeting Summary*, Reports on projects underway)

In addition to the above-cited document that demonstrates cooperation with ABAC, mentions of other fora and organizations appeared in other meeting summaries. However, these were less clear about the level of cooperation that resulted from the reported contacts. This excerpt from HRDWG's 2011 meeting provides an example:

The PECC [Pacific Economic Cooperation Council] representatives reported on PECC's International Social Resilience project, in its second year, and indicated PECC's interest in having a closer relationship with HRDWG. In turn, HRDWG members agreed with the necessity for further collaboration with PECC in the future and sharing more information on the social safety network with PECC. (2011/HRDWG33/SUM *Human Resources Development Working Group Summary Report*, item 19)

Two survey items addressed the idea of building cooperation beyond HRDWG. On an item about working relationships with non-HRDWG-focused APEC officials and working groups in the respondent's economy (item 2), responses suggested that HRDWG members do engage in cooperative activities. Across the survey, this item received the second-highest percentage of *Strongly Agree* responses, and overall agreement was above 60 percent. Another item addressed satisfaction with the current level of private sector involvement with HRDWG activities (item 3). Here, responses tilted to the negative, and respondents demonstrated their lowest level of agreement to any survey item: More than 38 percent of respondents selected a disagree option, about 31 percent selected an agree option, and the remaining 28 percent were neutral.

Two survey items explored respondents' impressions of how well HRDWG activities are promoted within and beyond APEC. One item addressed satisfaction with the level of publicity and marketing of HRDWG activities within APEC (item 22). Of all survey items, this received the lowest percentage of agreement from respondents, with no one selecting *Strongly Agree* and about 31 percent selecting *Agree*. Most respondents (41 percent) selected *Neutral*. The other item addressed satisfaction with how HRDWG

project outcomes are disseminated via the APEC website and HRDWG Wiki (item 21). Here, nearly half of respondents expressed satisfaction.

Enhancing Economic Capacity Building

When asked to respond *yes* or *no* to a survey item about awareness that a HRDWG discussion or project finding resulted in an action or policy change in APEC or in an APEC economy (item 25), the majority of survey respondents (62 percent) selected *yes*. This suggests enhancement of resources (knowledge), at least, and perhaps of capacity also.

The following project descriptions were excerpted from two meeting summaries and an interview, respectively. They offer examples of evidence of HRDWG's intended or delivered enhancements of economic capacity through improving workforce skills and knowledge.

The Philippines presented the project, *Effective Labor Market Signaling: A Strategy for Solving the Problem of Unemployment and Talent Mismatch*. The Philippines identified three main labor market challenges: structural unemployment; job-skill mismatch; and talent shortage. The objective is to identify core labor market signals from key industries and education with a focus on domestic labor market signaling and key industries that will drive employment creation. The project will also touch base with those employers to determine which skills they need and education institutions to determine what they need from employers to design skill training programs. (2011/SOM1/HRDWG/091 *LSPN Meeting Summary*, item 19)

IPR Strategies for Emerging Enterprises: Towards Successful Entry to Global Supply Chain. Japan reported on the successful completion of the project, which included development of training program and teaching materials for entrepreneurs. A casebook, as one of the project outputs, was distributed to all the participants. (2011/SOM1/HRDWG/064rev1 *Capacity Building Network Meeting—Summary Report, Reports of Existing or Recently Completed Projects*)

The work done to prepare for the 2008 Education Ministerial Meeting in Peru on math and science standards was then used by ACHIEVE in the United States to develop the Common Core State Standards. This was a big accomplishment, allowing my economy to benchmark standards against some of the highest performers in the world on TIMSS and PISA.

While they can point to past successes, some HRDWG members expressed concerns about future effectiveness, specifically with respect to the types of expertise delegates may bring to the group. Although they acknowledged the financial burden that sending multiple delegates (one from education and two from labor) may place on an economy, these interviewees stressed the importance of having the right people in place—and developing those people over time.

EDNET (and HRD generally) has evolved to where delegations are largely drawn from foreign affairs offices. They often lack expertise in HRD topics that other offices might have (e.g., statistical or research, manpower, primary/secondary or postsecondary). Encourage members to bring representatives from these offices to address substantive topics in relevant Ministry areas.

There needs to be some consistency in delegates sent to APEC. Currently turnover is too high. The goal is to create a network of people who trust one another, can ask one another for help, who can be transparent with one another, and confident that they can have sensitive political discussions and respect others' points of view.

The first key driver for the working group is that it's personality/people driven. Absent leaders emerging and active engagement by economies, it is very difficult to be

productive and have meaningful engagement....Value does grow from participation. If you don't show up, you won't get anything back.

In sum, the data collected in response to this research question present a mixed picture.

- With respect to alignment of goals, implementation of goals, and ability to build cooperation and enhance capacity, HRDWG has demonstrated good ideas and good intentions—along with several good results.
- With respect to delivery of high-impact technical assistance, cooperation, and capacity building, HRDWG has been inconsistent. The evidence suggests that contributing challenges have included decreased funding, less-than-optimal levels of cooperation with other bodies, and high delegate turnover.

An appropriate concluding statement for this section comes from an interview of a HRDWG delegate:

It would be ideal if there was some sort of mapping of HRD issues across multilateral organizations to understand where APEC can lend value-added activities through its priority setting and projects. It seems very redundant to work on the very same issues with many of the same economies in several multilateral fora.

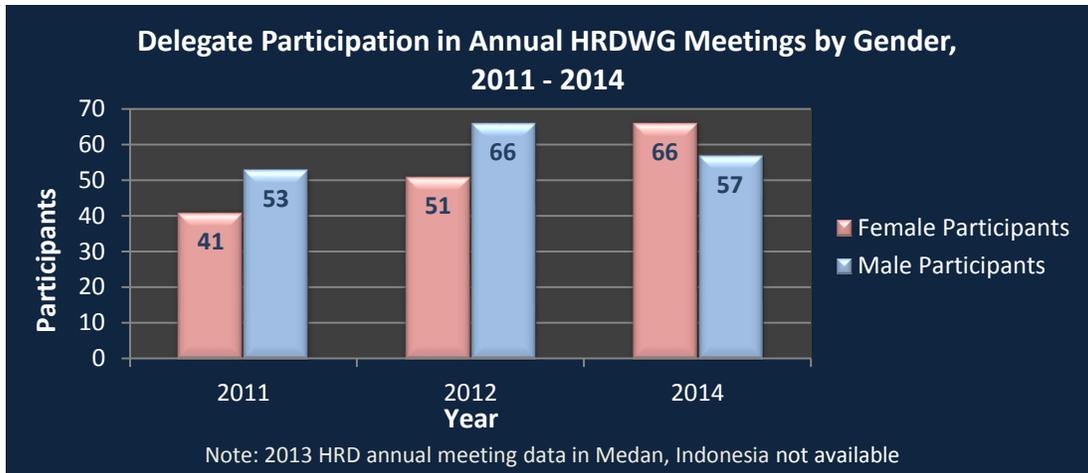
Question 2: How effective is HRDWG in encouraging women's participation in activities? Are there any other significant gender disparities that need to be addressed?

The evidence for the research question was informed by participation at the 2014 HRDWG meeting in Ningbo, China; data on male and female participation at three annual meetings provided by the HRDWG program director; responses to a survey item and an interview question regarding gender disparity; review of project and meeting documents; and a review of the 2010 independent assessment.

In 2010, neither the HRDWG Lead Shepherd nor any of its Network Coordinators were women. The 2010 independent assessment noted:

More men headed delegations than women, all the leadership positions in the WG are currently held by men, and considerably more men than women participated in the final day of the HRDWG meeting devoted to agenda-setting discussions on the HRD Ministerial meeting (17 male delegates compared with 7 female delegates)." (True, 2010, p. 14)

HRDWG responded to the 2010 independent assessment recommendation that "Economies should be encouraged to put forward women as well as men delegates based on merit for leadership positions in the HRDWG, including as Heads of delegations, Network Coordinators, and Lead Shepherd." Evidence from participant observation, survey, and interview data suggest that HRDWG has improved the participation of women in both delegate and leadership roles. Limited data provided by the HRDWG program director suggest that the numbers of women participating as APEC delegates has increased in the past four years. The graph below demonstrates that the number of female participants has increased from 41 in 2011 to 66 in 2014, while the number of male participants declined from 66 in 2012 to 57 in 2014. While the data suggest a growing number of female participants, it will be important for HRDWG to continue to collect accurate data about participation by female delegates, and especially for women in senior roles.



Since 2010, the number of women leaders has grown. One of the three Network Coordinator positions (EDNET) is currently filled by a woman. While neither EDNET nor LSPN has designated a Deputy Coordinator, CBN has designated a female deputy leader. Planning for the 6th HRD Ministers Meeting in Viet Nam is also being co-led by a female delegate. The Lead Shepherd’s chief coordinator is female and has significant responsibility for maintaining communication with the APEC Secretariat and three Network Coordinators, supporting the processes of discussion and decision-making among the leaders of HRDWG, supporting member economies to share ideas and suggestions, documenting HRDWG meetings and related activities, and managing other administrative support.

Survey results suggest that approximately 64 percent of all respondents are satisfied with the representation of women in HRDWG leadership roles. Comments include:

Representation of women in HRDWG leadership roles has improved at the Network level over the past four years. While I don’t necessarily see the following as a goal for the sake of it, the next challenge will be for a woman to become the HRDWG Lead Shepherd and on merit.

It would be helpful to encourage and nurture women into leadership roles. HRDWG should lead by example in this regard.

Also, 75 percent of survey respondents agreed that there are approximately equal numbers of men and women representing their economy in HRDWG (item 24). Several comments associated with this survey item noted that the “majority of our economy’s representatives are women” and that there are “now more women than men at APEC.” One delegate noted:

Note that much of the work of HRDWG occurs through project activity and project-related events, beyond the annual meetings. So while more men have represented my economy at the annual meetings, women have tended to do more of the representation in project events, not necessarily by design but because of their expertise.

A review of project documents showed that the United States led a special Gender Equity in Math and Science day-long seminar titled *Strengthening Developing Economies and Gender Equity through Standards, Assessment and Teachers* at the 2011 SOM1 HRDWG EDNET meeting in Thailand. The seminar highlighted efforts in various economies to support gender equity. At the 2013 SOM3 HRDWG meeting in Medan, the Philippines delegate described efforts to build the capacity of women to participate in training programs offering national certification and recognition of prior learning. The Philippines delegation recommended that HRDWG work cooperatively to develop this project across APEC economies.

Finally, interviews with delegates offered additional insights on how HRDWG could both involve women as delegates and increase their opportunities to take on leadership positions. One delegate stated:

APEC and HRDWG provide an opportunity for participants to gain high-profile international experience. It is also quite a supportive environment. While other international fora can be almost combative in style, APEC (or at least HRDWG) is not, and hence is an opportunity for international experience without being thrown into a situation in which a newcomer would struggle to cope. At the very least, given HRDWG's mission to further develop human capital, it should be the HRD which provides a model for others to follow.

Other delegates agreed, suggesting that many women could be ready for leadership roles in their delegation or within HRDWG, but may need encouragement. Delegates from all economies supported the concept of providing leadership development opportunities for all delegates interested in a leadership role. Finally, delegates recommended that data on participation be regularly collected:

The member economies [can] identify and define problems, develop options and choose the option which will be most effective and beneficial for both women and men on APEC HRDWG projects.

A former HRDWG leader suggests addressing gender disparity by including it as an issue within each project as appropriate. Although the *Framework for Integration of Women in APEC* outlines the value of employing sex-disaggregated data in planning and evaluating projects, it is not clear whether HRDWG currently follows the recommendations put forth in the *Guidebook on APEC Projects, Guide on Gender Criteria for APEC Proposals* (<http://www.apec.org/Projects/Forms-and-Resources.aspx>). The guidebook makes clear that all project proposals should contain one question on gender consideration and should describe what will be done to include women and women's perspectives in the design, implementation, and evaluation of the project (pp. 2-3). While many projects may, at first glance, appear "gender neutral," the PPWE finds that "you must support your assertion with evidence. In particular, you need to be sure that your project does not have different impacts for men and women (unless these are intentional and designed to mitigate past gender inequalities)."

Delegates should be encouraged to include any issues that might affect gender mainstreaming, as outlined in the *Framework for Integration of Women in APEC*, when preparing Concept Notes, project proposals, or project updates. HRDWG bears responsibility for ensuring that the use of gender equality criteria is assessed in all Concept Notes and proposals, and that at least one representative from member economies has specific gender equality and women and the economy expertise at all times. Finally, gender data should be available on the APEC Wiki for review by HRDWG members and those responsible for project evaluation.

Question 3: What are the main impacts of HRDWG on the ground in APEC member economies? How does HRDWG leadership work collaboratively with other APEC fora and non-APEC groups to support member economies and effectively achieve the working group's mission?

Impacts for APEC Member Economies

HRDWG impacts member economies at various levels, but primarily through two functions: projects and activities. The degree to which economies participate in proposing, sponsoring, and implementing projects, as well as project and Working Group activities, affects how each member experiences APEC on the ground. In addition, having someone elected to leadership positions within HRDWG and its Networks and serving as the host economy for an annual meeting affects a member economy's involvement with the group.

Economies that succeed in receiving funding for projects are impacted in several ways by HRDWG, as described in an interview:

There is always an element of capacity building and professional development involved with project implementation that will carry over to future projects conducted by the lead economies, whether through APEC or other channels. The chance to highlight the industry, policy, and academic experts who contribute to and occasionally drive HRDWG projects that are applicable and disseminated across the region is also advantageous to an economy and its institutions.

While some projects are limited in their reach and narrowly focused on a vital issue, others have much greater reach into an economy's population. As mentioned by one delegate, an evaluation of the e-language educational game "The Forgotten World," a coproduction of China and the United States, demonstrated significant gains in language attainment for students and is accessible to any students in the region who want to develop Mandarin or English as a foreign language; the project's success led to the development of a Spanish language version of the game. Review of LSPN documents suggests that recent projects have discussed such topics as employability for people with disabilities and decent maternity and child care leave, and these topics affect subpopulations in each participating economy that can benefit from sharing ideas and practical partnerships.

Meetings and other activities related to HRDWG projects or programs also have clear impacts on economies. Whether it is the annual HRDWG meeting as a small part of a Senior Officials' Meeting or a small panel to discuss promising practices or an innovative practice, the act of planning, coordinating, and hosting any HRDWG meeting brings demands and benefits to member economies. Meetings certainly demand substantial resources and capacities, but many economies find significant impacts on the ground. One delegate noted that developing economies are particularly well served when acting as host:

A HRDWG meeting provides occasionally remote host locations a chance to welcome delegates from across the Asia-Pacific region and improve infrastructure capacities, promote local business and culture, and boost local tourism and hospitality industries. Through cultural activities and site visits, economies gain significant exposure for their successful practices and organizations, which in turn raises the reputation of the economy and broadens the impact of HRDWG projects and activities. Hosting meetings may also necessitate training for staff and spotlighting the talented individuals who drive the success of HRDWG projects and activities.

The issue of bolstering cooperation with other APEC fora and regional organizations was raised in the recommendations in the 2010 Independent Assessment and remains a goal for HRDWG processes. The *HRDWG Workplan* for 2012 calls for a development support system that uses the "divergent and dynamic resources of APEC" and calls for "gradually working with government, non-government, and private sector" organizations to increase HRDWG's own capacity. The working group "continues to focus efforts on partnering with other fora, organizations, and private groups, especially as it seeks to align to broader APEC and SCE goals of trade facilitation and person-to-person connectivity."

Collaborative Work With Other APEC Fora and Multilateral Organizations

The assessment discovered several recent instances of network collaboration with other multilateral organizations. One delegate described a language education seminar in Singapore in April 2010, hosted jointly by APEC and SEAMEO's Regional Language Centre, which brought together more than 500 representatives from 16 economies. Another delegate mentioned that the local skills mapping initiative benefited from its OECD partners, and the LSPN meeting at the 36th HRDWG Meeting in Ningbo, China, welcomed the Deputy Regional Director of the International Labour Office's Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific and laid the groundwork for future collaboration. These partnerships provide

opportunities to cooperate with similarly minded organizations and players in the region, and are applauded by member economies and partners alike.

There has been less success with enhancing collaboration with other APEC fora in recent years. In 2010, the former Lead Shepherd hosted the first ever (and only) joint meeting between the APEC Economic Committee and HRD, and presented on HRD and Inclusive Growth. The Economic Committee chair suggested potential HRD questions for follow-up of interest to the Economic Committee, including:

- What are the effects of individual incentives on job/skill improvement?
- With good safety nets, what are the needs for secure employment?
- What is the best way to regulate heavily subsidized sectors?
- How should governments intervene in unregulated sectors (e.g., Japanese preparatory schools or *juku*)?; and
- What are the best ways to minimize excessive precautionary savings? (2010/HRDWG32/SUM *Human Resources Development Working Group Summary Report*, items 5 and 7)

The 36th HRDWG Meeting included a presentation from ABAC on its HRD-related priorities, and welcomed a representative from the APEC Secretariat's Communication office. The Lead Shepherd noted several meetings with counterparts in other working groups, but there was little indication of any specific partnerships or outcomes of these meetings. Nevertheless, discussions in both plenary sessions and Network meetings centered on the need to increase collaboration across APEC fora and across other regional multilateral organizations to align missions and increase funding opportunities, reduce barriers to information, work collaboratively and efficiently, and share successful experiences. (The 36th APEC Human Resources Development Working Group Meeting, *Summary Report*)

These findings suggest the need for a strategic outreach and partnership agenda for HRDWG to take advantage of the possible benefits of many successful partnerships. Such an agenda would be driven by clear and attainable benefits realized through such partnerships, and should include paths for working both within and outside of APEC. This will take some research and consideration to determine points of similarity between the activities of HRDWG and potential collaborators, but the core mission and objectives of HRDWG should not be overlooked in the search for partners.

One survey item suggested that HRDWG members might wish to expand the realm of partnerships. When asked about their satisfaction with the current level of private sector involvement in APEC HRDWG activities (item 3), respondents showed the highest level of disagreement registered by all survey items—just over 38 percent chose *Strongly Disagree* or *Disagree* in response to this item, and about 33 percent selected an option that indicated agreement. Although some interviewees expressed conflict-of-interest concerns about private sector representatives holding leadership roles in HRDWG, it appears that members would welcome greater private sector involvement in the group's activities.

Two factors—leadership and funding—affect both the impact of projects and activities and the extent to which HRDWG successfully collaborates with other APEC fora and organizations. Strong working group and Network leadership can be more effectively translated into strong projects, active and engaged delegates, and direction and authority to forge meaningful relationships. The current Lead Shepherd has been a visible presence at HRDWG activities and APEC meetings, and has served as an ambassador to public, private, and academic organizations in the region. However, the most determined leaders cannot succeed without funding. The relegation of most HRD projects to Tier 2 status in the APEC funding process and the subsequent decline in approved projects have significantly decreased opportunities for member economies to take part in HRDWG activities.

In light of such challenges, several interview respondents indicated that marketing might be a proper solution. Expanding awareness of HRDWG’s mission, activities, and projects may facilitate and improve partnerships with other APEC fora:

The Secretariat could do more in terms of publicizing successful projects and the HRDWG online presence and functionality could be substantially improved.

More could be done to promote HRDWG projects that also have relevance to other working groups.

Enhance dissemination activities to build interest in HRD by: writing press releases for each of its completed studies or important activities and distribute them widely, working with the Secretariat to have stories of completed projects disseminated by APEC Communications office, and ask participating economies to prepare findings for Ministerial publications or national process. For example, the U.S. asked *EDWEEK* to cover several HRDWG related activities by contacting the appropriate reporter.

Given the APEC Secretariat’s Communication Team’s offer of assistance, this might be a good opportunity for HRDWG to consider enhancements to its communication efforts to increase its impact.

Question 4: How can HRDWG strengthen its work and operations across the wide range of its activities to maximize its impact and effectiveness?

Findings relevant to this research question were informed by a review of survey and interview responses, HRDWG documents, and the 2010 independent assessment.

HRDWG projects are the primary means for accomplishing the working group’s mission: “Sharing knowledge, experience, and skills to strengthen human resource development and promote sustainable economic growth” (TOR, Articles II and V). Accomplishing projects and activities powerful enough to have systemic impacts on critical human resource development issues within and across APEC member economies requires attention to (a) the strategic focus and quality of HRDWG projects, (b) leadership in generating and accomplishing such projects, and (c) structures and processes that support effective operation of HRDWG. Findings in this section of the assessment report are organized according to these three dimensions of HRDWG work and operations.

Increasing the Strategic Focus and Quality of HRDWG Projects

Reform Steps Included in Terms of Reference

In response to the 2010 independent assessment, HRDWG revised its *Terms of Reference* (TOR), Article V, to specify six “reform steps” to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of projects and activities: build on previous project findings, approve projects with broad member support, maximize project resources, coordinate within HRDWG Networks and with other APEC fora, publicize HRDWG, and implement APEC project evaluation guidelines. These reform steps remain relevant to increasing the quality and strategic focus of HRDWG projects.

Further, the reform steps described in the TOR align with recommendations included in an independent evaluation of APEC projects conducted in 2013 for the APEC Budget and Management Committee (BMC). The evaluation suggested that sub-fora identify a limited number of priorities in their strategic plans and focus capacity-building projects on systemic policy, regulatory, and procedural changes rather than on activities aimed at individuals, “as there may be high levels of staff turnover in certain Ministries/agencies.” (2013/SOM3/BMC/011 *Project Management Reforms: Evaluations of APEC Projects*)

Interview data indicate delegates' agreement with the strategy of proposing fewer projects of higher quality:

We may need to reconsider whether to put out 15-20 marginal projects or 2-3 with great questions that align closely with leaders' declarations.

[A key issue is] marginal return on projects, especially micro-level projects pertaining to one economy and no application on a macro level.

The 2013 report on project management reforms also cited a need for quantitative indicators focused on outcomes rather than outputs, increased investment in multiyear projects, and baseline data to enable measurements of project indicators over time. (2013/SOM3/BMC/011 *Project Management Reforms: Evaluations of APEC Projects*) Awareness of the need for measurable outcomes is exemplified by this interview response: "I worry that we are not designing studies to assess the outcomes." Survey responses to item 23 indicates that more than a third of respondents are satisfied with the level of evaluation conducted on existing HRDWG-funded projects, a fourth are dissatisfied, and the rest (more than a third) are equivocal. Compared to responses to other items across the survey, this level of dissatisfaction is relatively high.

In 2010, HRDWG acted on the reform steps described in its TOR, Article V, by reviewing a cross section of projects to develop a framework for future capacity-building efforts. (2010 SOM1/HRDWG/046rev1 *APEC Strengths and Weaknesses in Building Human Resource Development Capacity*, p. 11). The review identified several challenges. First, one-off seminars and workshops without follow-up can help to create networks, but make concrete improvements difficult to achieve. Second, managing knowledge is difficult, though the Wiki helps. Third, planning is difficult, especially with respect to balancing creativity, experimentation, and alignment to strategic goals, then maintaining focus on sustainability of results (pp. 17-18). The review identified three corresponding areas to be addressed: (a) how to develop effective multi-activity, multiphase programming approaches; (b) how to manage and disseminate the knowledge; and (c) how to implement and learn from follow-up evaluations (p. 21). The CBN followed up by submitting a report on the advantages of multiyear planning. (2010/SOM1/HRDWG/059 *Report of the Meeting of the Capacity Building Network*)

These actions show that HRDWG has acted to improve the strategic quality and focus of its projects by incorporating recommendations from the 2010 independent assessment and the 2013 independent evaluation of APEC projects. The findings of the current assessment confirm the importance and value of continuing to implement these reforms.

At the 2010 HRD ministerial meeting, the Ministers instructed HRDWG to take stock of the findings of previous projects and the experience of relevant international and regional organizations to ensure enhanced relevancy, effectiveness, and efficiency of its technical cooperation and capacity building activities. (2010/HRDMM/029 *HRDMM Action Plan*) Continued efforts in this area can help HRDWG strengthen its project plans and potential impacts.

Identifying the HRDWG Niche

An overarching concern emerged around the need to clearly identify HRDWG's "niche"—its potential for making unique contributions to APEC goals. An interview respondent stated,

HRDWG is unique because you cannot meet APEC goals without social protection and labor, and these are addressed within human resources. HRDWG is the only group that can address these sensitive issues.

Another interview respondent emphasized the need to communicate the HRDWG niche in a meaningful way: “If APEC believes in education, they should focus on it for the sake of it. Recycling rhetoric around the APEC mission is not necessarily going to improve the nature of HRDWG or its projects.”

Although HRDWG contributions to APEC issues are made primarily through projects, the SCE might also leverage the group’s expertise to inform the work of other fora. Interview responses suggest that not all delegates have the same understanding of HRDWG’s cross-cutting function. One respondent suggested positioning HRDWG as a cross-cutting group, “more like the Gender Focal Point Network,” while another commented, “I feel that HRDWG is already a cross-cutting group.”

A definition of “the HRDWG niche” might also need to take into account ways to complement or build on the work of other multilateral organizations rather than duplicate it. An interviewee stated,

I have talked to the international organizations like the ILO, ASEAN, etc., and it seems that APEC HRD projects in the field of skills development are indistinguishable [from] other ILO technical cooperation projects and other ODA projects.

Another interviewee suggested that, to protect “the APEC brand” in general,

APEC as an organization needs to re-evaluate its stance on lending the APEC name to self-funded projects of long duration. There are no quality checks for these projects. Many seem to wander far from the original purposes of the project...and may no longer represent APEC.

Sustaining Strong Leadership

Leadership Development

An important factor in sustaining the impact and effectiveness of HRDWG activities is the availability of individuals with APEC experience who are prepared and willing to assume leadership roles. The 2010 independent assessment recommended formalizing the positions of Deputy Lead Shepherd and Deputy Network Coordinator as one way to build leadership capacity. However, that recommendation was not instituted; the decision of whether to have a deputy is left to the individual Lead Shepherd or Network Coordinator. (2011/SOM1/HRDWG/089/*EDNET Meeting Summary Report*) One interview respondent explained the decision as follows:

Many people complained about redundant communication channels and its complication, as we already have four leadership positions (Lead Shepherd... and three Coordinators). Also we do not have a Deputy Lead Shepherd position in the TOR; we first have to agree on revising the TOR [and] whether it is necessary or not. Any leadership positions should not be decided arbitrarily and should be drawn from the consensus from all economies.

In December 2014, three of the four current leadership positions will be vacated (Lead Shepherd, EDNET coordinator, LSPN coordinator). Half of survey respondents agreed or strongly agreed that there are members of HRDWG prepared to serve leadership roles (item 6), while slightly more than a fifth disagreed with the statement, and more than a quarter of respondents remained neutral on the matter.

Yet many of those interviewed voiced the opinion that there is room for improvement. “Perhaps there could be...a program for leadership development,” suggested one interview respondent. Another suggested that economies might identify young people, especially women, who are “on the threshold of leadership and would benefit from international meeting experience to help push them over that threshold.” This delegate asserted,

Given HRDWG’s mission is to further develop human capital, it should be the working group which provides a model for others to follow.

Economic constraints across economies, however, make it unlikely that HRDWG would be able to implement a formal leadership development program. Formalizing deputy leadership positions is one possible way to develop emerging leaders. For now, however it seems that leadership development will continue to be an informal and voluntary endeavor.

Selection Criteria for Lead Shepherd

The TOR specifies that the Lead Shepherd should be selected by consensus. Survey responses indicate that about a third of the respondents are satisfied with the current process for nominating future leaders, and an equal number are neutral on the issue.

The TOR lists the various functions the Lead Shepherd is expected to perform but provides no criteria for selection. Interview respondents suggested establishing selection criteria for the Lead Shepherd position. Criteria mentioned included experience as a senior government official, meeting management experience, the ability to synthesize discussion points during meetings, prior international experience, strong support from one's government and leadership, cultural sensitivity, and an inclusive leadership style. One respondent was more specific:

The Lead Shepherd needs substantive knowledge of human resource development from an economics and business perspective. This knowledge would combine with three types of skills to manage HRD: (1) leadership skills...(2) analytic and moderator skills to generate substantive discussions... and (3) organizational and management skills.

A longtime APEC member cautioned:

The pool of candidates is limited. A qualified nongovernment person is preferable to a nonqualified government person. However, all things being equal, a government person is preferable (because it helps avoid possible conflicts of interest with individuals representing their own business or corporate interests).

This interview respondent explained that well-qualified candidates are sometimes unable to assume the Lead Shepherd position because their home economies are unable to allot the time and resources necessary to support the candidate in the position. Another respondent cautioned about the need to avoid excluding candidates from developing economies.

The relatively high number of interview comments regarding Lead Shepherd criteria indicates the group's recognition of the critical role of the Lead Shepherd in HRDWG's success. Instituting selection criteria, however, would require a change in the TOR.

Ensuring Structures and Processes That Support Effective HRDWG Operations

HRDWG Networks

The 2010 independent assessment recommended that "the core work programme of the CBN be reallocated among the LSPN and EDNET, and other relevant groups within APEC." However, at a 2011 CBN meeting, participants agreed that CBN should be continued and should clearly define its role and core competencies. Acknowledging overlap between CBN and LSPN activities, the group specified that CBN's focus could best address the demands and needs of the society and the business community (capacity building in the workplace), given that LSPN's core activities are social protection and labor market regulation. The CBN Coordinator was charged with making CBN meeting agendas more attractive to member economies. The consensus was that future meetings should avoid simultaneous breakout sessions of the three Networks, and that CBN may wish to meet one day before or after CTI or EC to invite participants from those groups. When CBN proposes projects on specific areas, project overseers

should work closely with area-related fora (such as SMEWG, IPEG, IEG) to develop projects. (2011/SOM1/HRDWG/064rev1 *Capacity Building Network Meeting—Summary Report*)

In 2010, the TOR was revised so that Article III defines three HRDWG objectives that guide all three Networks in achieving the HRDWG mission, and Article IV describes the goals and objectives of the three HRDWG Networks. An interview respondent cited this revision as a major accomplishment:

The TOR sets out the purposes, roles and structures of HRD. A notable accomplishment was to replace eight unfocused and overlapping HRD priorities with three overarching priorities aligned with the basic mission of APEC.

Despite streamlining of HRD objectives, the differentiated purposes and functions of the three HRDWG Networks charged with carrying out these objectives are not always clear to members.

Our goal should be to lower trade barriers, and it is unclear whether or not we need three Networks to do so.... If we keep HRD, then we need to deal with the structure, and how we talk and engage across Networks.

The three Networks (CBN, LSNP, EDNET) are pretty overlapping in terms of agendas, projects, participants....Having too many subnetwork meetings...often leads to low participation rates from the economies.

However, other interview comments indicate a reinvigorated dedication to CBN. For example:

CBN is a very relevant group to bridge issues between LSPN and EDNET, as almost all economies must find a way to bridge these two divisions of government.

Interview respondents provided their perspectives on ways to improve CBN functioning.

[Appropriate topics for CBN] include skills mapping and mutual recognition of qualifications (e.g., nurses can travel among economies and find work). CBN can also work collaboratively with EDNET to develop higher education that promotes workforce development....It's now a global marketplace and mutual recognition of qualifications will allow economies to meet their employment needs.

Responses to the survey administered as part of the 2014 independent assessment indicated significant but not overwhelming support for the decision to continue all three Networks, as more than 50 percent of respondents expressed satisfaction with the current structure of HRDWG, including the structure of CBN, EDNET, and LSPN; slightly more than a fourth of respondents were neutral on the matter, and about a fifth expressed dissatisfaction. These survey responses, together with the interview responses represented above, suggest possible room for improvement in the delineation and functioning of the three Networks.

HRDWG Meetings

Survey responses indicate that respondents are generally satisfied with the accommodation of different perspectives and agendas of member economies in HRDWG meetings (item 9), Network meetings (item 15), and Ministerial meetings (item 18). For each item, at least 59 percent of respondents expressed satisfaction and no one selected the *Strongly Disagree* option.

Nearly three fourths of respondents expressed satisfaction with Network Coordinators' efficient use of meeting time (item 16), making this item the most highly rated across the survey. By contrast, fewer than half of respondents expressed satisfaction with the Lead Shepherd's efficient use of meeting time (item 11); nearly a third expressed dissatisfaction, and less than a fourth selected the *Neutral* option.

Similarly, nearly two-thirds of respondents expressed satisfaction with the overall design of Network meeting agendas (item 12) and the content and substance of Network meetings (item 13), while fewer than half of respondents expressed satisfaction with these aspects of HRDWG technical, thematic, and plenary meetings (items 10 and 7).

Interview respondents offered the following suggestions for improving HRDWG meetings:

Reconsider the purpose and structures of annual meetings to maximize the limited amount of time available by focusing more on content issues and less on procedural items that can be adequately dealt with intersessionally.

There is too much repetition among the technical meeting, the plenary, and the [CBN] Network meeting. The HRD could be more productive if each economy were allowed 5 minutes for a report-out on key issues, Concept Notes, updates to the group.

Nearly half of survey respondents expressed satisfaction with time allocated for discussion of critical policy issues during HRDWG technical, thematic, and plenary meetings (item 8); about a fifth expressed dissatisfaction, and more than a third were equivocal. Respondents were slightly more positive about time allocated for such discussions during Network meetings (item 14). Interview comments supported the view that time for substantive discussion is valued by member economies and needs to be preserved:

Within the Network meetings, there is no time for substantive discussion....The only time that significant issues are discussed is during the ministerial meetings, which occur only every few years.

We need more time to share and engage in policy dialogue.

One interview respondent cited the importance of having HRDWG leaders “who understand the tie-in of education and labor as HRD pillars into the overall SCE and APEC goals and agenda.” Without such leadership, “the group misses opportunities to discuss content issues in depth.”

To sustain inter-meeting engagement, it is important to keep the HRDWG e-mail distribution list up to date—an issue raised during a 2013 LSPN meeting (2013/SOM3/HRDWG/064 *Labour and Social Protection Network Meeting Summary*)

Participation of Member Economies in HRDWG Networks and Meetings

Ensuring that “the right people” are at the table, and that participation is supported over time, seems to be a topic worthy of discussion across HRDWG and its Networks (see “Enhancing Economic Capacity Building” section of this report). As one interview respondent commented,

There’s a disconnect. Education ministers who attend education ministerial meetings are primarily K-12 ministers, and in some countries there’s a higher education minister. So if cross-border education is to be a major topic, you might not have the right people at the ministerial meeting.

Ongoing Monitoring and Evaluation of HRDWG Activities

Document review identified several statements about the role of monitoring and evaluation in improving HRDWG operations and impact. For example, at the 2010 HRD ministerial meeting, the Ministers directed HRDWG to systematically monitor implementation of the *Ministers’ 2011-14 Action Plan* by undertaking regular evaluation and reporting on the progress achieved at the annual HRDWG meeting. The Ministers encouraged the establishment of an APEC HRD evaluation framework and system to facilitate economies in measuring progress toward economic growth, particularly inclusive growth. (2010/HRDMM/029 *HRDMM Action Plan*) At the 2011 EDNET meeting, the Lead Shepherd discussed

the relationship between the activities of HRDWG in relation to the overall APEC agenda and underscored the need for more evidence and information from Network members on their projects. (2011/SOM1/HRDWG/089 *EDNET Meeting Summary Report*) In 2013, the SCE emphasized the importance of using monitoring and evaluation to make HRDWG capacity building activities as effective as possible. (2013/SOM3/HRDWG/012 *APEC Secretariat Report on Key Developments SOM Steering Committee on ECOTECH*)

The 2014 draft workplan does not specify the role of ongoing monitoring and evaluation. It may be that such activities are being performed in relation to the TOR Article VI requirement that HRDWG report annually to the SCE. However, these reports were not available for review. Therefore, the extent of HRDWG's follow-through in this area is not clear.

Clarity of Procedures for Submitting Concept Notes Within HRDWG

The TOR, Article VI, directs each HRDWG Network to form its own Assessment, Monitoring, and Evaluation Committee (AMEC) to evaluate projects at HRDWG meetings, using the APEC Quality Assurance Framework and providing comments and ratings. AMECS are also responsible for reviewing and rating final evaluation reports on completed projects. (2013/SOM3/HRDWG/010, HRDWG TOR 2014 *Terms of Reference of HRDWG*) Interview responses indicate that Concept Notes are presented for consideration within HRDWG Networks and rated by Network member economies shortly after the HRDWG meeting.

However, the procedure for proposing HRDWG projects to put forward for APEC funding is not easily understood, especially by new delegates. An interview respondent stated, "The process to go from a concept to a project is unclear." Another called the process "confusing" and cited a need for HRDWG to "improve the clarity of processes" for submitting and approving Concept Notes. Part of the confusion might be attributed to the fact that the process is fairly new. In 2010, the APEC Secretariat introduced Concept Notes as a way to present project ideas that might be expanded into project proposals with the help of the Secretariat's PMU. This change in the APEC project cycle was part of the SCE's movement to de-link priority areas from quality in project proposals. (2010/HRDWG32/SUM *Human Resources Development Ministerial Meeting Planning Session*) In 2011, the APEC PMU reported on the new APEC project cycle, starting with submission of a Concept Note and progressing to project proposal, implementation, completion, and reporting. (2011/HRDWG33/SUM *Human Resources Development Working Group Summary Report*)

The APEC project cycle is explained in detail in the *Guidebook on APEC Projects*, which includes relevant criteria, forms, and templates, including the APEC Quality Assessment Framework Template (<http://www.apec.org/Projects/Forms-and-Resources.aspx>). A review of the HRDWG Wiki found that the availability of this resource for developing projects is not readily evident on the Wiki's project page, and it is not "packaged" with HRDWG-specific guidance. Also, it seems that HRDWG-specific guidelines on the format and length of Concept Note presentations at HRDWG meetings is not available to members of the working group. Further, in light of interview responses about the need for presenting fewer Concept Notes of higher quality to the APEC BMC, the method for deciding which Concept Notes HRDWG submits to APEC for funding consideration could be more transparent and might need to be revisited.

Clarity of Other HRDWG Procedures

Interviews indicate that the procedures related to Concept Notes are not the only ones that might be "confusing" to HRDWG members:

It's also about the deliverables, the outcomes, and what is presented at Ministers' meetings. [HRDWG could] (1) improve the clarity of processes, e.g., the process of developing and editing the strategic plan/work plan, Terms of Reference, and concept

papers—and how they get approved. Otherwise the process is a bit all over the place.
(2) Make clear when and how certain items are posted to the agenda, e.g., the nominations for Lead Shepherd.

In 2011, HRDWG members discussed the creation of a voluntary subcommittee to support the Lead Shepherd in providing a basis for the group’s effectiveness through strategic planning, monitoring, and reporting of results (e.g., Medium Term Workplan, alignment of the broad HRDWG activities with the goals of APEC Leaders). This group was also to help with communications within and beyond HRDWG. This concept was to be further developed intersessionally, with the support of the Secretariat. (2011/HRDWG33/SUM *Human Resources Development Working Group Summary Report*) This subcommittee could play a valuable role in clarifying and communicating HRDWG procedures. Document review does not make it clear whether a subcommittee has been established. When asked about ways to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of HRDWG, an interview respondent suggested involving representatives from other APEC fora:

Review previous performance and discuss by sharing ideas on the strategic plan, annual work plan, and TOR among HRDWG member economies, including hearing from other representatives such as the ABAC representative.

The HRDWG Wiki is a valuable tool for keeping members informed about processes and resources essential to HRDWG activities. Topic-specific links to relevant APEC resources are not generally included on the Wiki. For example, monitoring and evaluation tools are available on the APEC website. (2013/SOM3/HRDWG/012 *APEC Secretariat Report on Key Developments SOM Steering Committee on ECOTECH*) The APEC website also houses guidance documents and templates relevant to Concept Notes and projects. The HRDWG Wiki, however, doesn’t link directly to relevant pages and documents within the APEC site. Doing so might be part of a “next generation” Wiki enhancement to help delegates understand and apply available guidance.

Recommendations

The concerns presented in the findings of this independent assessment, particularly those that reflect tight finances for project funding and the need for strong, diverse, and equitable leadership, indicate that HRDWG members perceive their working group to be at a crossroads. Interviewees described fewer projects being funded and a greater number of inexperienced delegates participating in activities. Document reviews showed that repetitive agendas and inappropriate assignments of procedural tasks have tightened time resources in parallel with financial resources. Many survey responses showed disagreement or neutrality rather than strong support for the item statements. Drawing on the data collected for this assessment, the independent evaluator offers the following recommendations.

- 1. Improve the process for developing high-quality, high-priority Concept Notes.** The document review and interview responses indicate that the HRDWG Concept Notes process is fairly new. Many delegates described its current implementation as less than efficient, a reality that has combined with the Tier 2 funding designation to reduce HRDWG's ability to gain approval for proposed projects.
 - The leadership team should devise specific steps (e.g., intra-Network and inter-Network ratings system, top co-sponsor recipients, top ranked note from each Network submitted to BMC) to ensure that only high-quality Concept Notes supported by multiple economies are submitted for funding. The review process should be made transparent to all so that sponsoring economies and their delegates receive feedback to help them understand areas of weakness.
 - Specify a structure and required elements for presentation of Concept Notes, and provide a template for a poster session and handout and/or a succinct PowerPoint presentation of the Concept Note that can be used during the meeting and shared electronically for further review and discussion within each home economy. Provide links to relevant APEC resources, including a list of current APEC priorities, the APEC Project Quality Assessment Framework, and criteria for evaluating and funding proposed projects.
 - Advocate with the APEC Budget and Management Committee to strengthen support for the HRDWG mission and to identify ways HRDWG can receive Tier 1 funding in addition to the "People-to-People Connectivity" category. Explore the use of specialized funds (e.g., ANSRR training and education funds, energy funds) for HRD projects.
 - Identify a short list of high-profile, self-funded topics/projects that would be in the self-interest for developed APEC economies to support financially. These should take particular advantage of APEC's unique Asia-Pacific focus and show potential for flexibility to do quick projects that involve a smaller number of co-interested economies than larger multilateral organizations.
 - Crosswalk HRDWG's recently proposed projects with those of other international fora (e.g., ASEAN, OECD, UNESCO) to determine a niche for HRDWG's labor and education projects, and produce a paper that identifies (a) areas of overlap and (b) gaps in coverage. Once these are identified, consider collaborating with other fora to leverage resources and results, or focus new Concept Notes to address gaps that can benefit from the unique synergy of HRDWG's combined labor and education expertise. Apply the crosswalk analysis process to each Concept Note to justify its value as a unique effort or as one that bolsters an existing effort.
- 2. Ensure that HRDWG objectives align with all APEC mission and priority statements.** Although HRDWG's explicit, overall objectives align well with those of APEC and ECOTECH, the implicit goals embedded in project proposals may not present clear alignment to annual priorities when reviewed by the Budget and Management Committee.
 - Given HRDWG's mission to strengthen human resource development and promote sustainable economic growth, carefully choose actions and projects that align with APEC's core mission and

eliminate projects that are economy-specific or insignificant to the majority of economies participating in HRDWG. In addition, the differentiated purposes and functions of the three HRDWG Networks (CBN, EDNET, LSPN) are not always clear, within and possibly beyond HRDWG. Tied to this is the need to make a clear statement about HRDWG's potential for making unique contributions to APEC goals.

- Create a document that explicitly states the relationship between each HRDWG objective and APEC priorities, including 4-year ministerial priorities and annual “host economy” priorities; update it annually to ensure that it bridges short-term and long-term goals.
- Update relevant HRDWG guidance and resource documents (e.g., Multi-year Planning Worksheet, 2009/HRDWG31/076) and make sure they are accessible on the HRDWG Wiki.

3. The Lead Shepherd should consider additional, low-cost opportunities to develop future HRDWG leaders. Interview comments pointed to the importance of providing delegates with positive learning experiences, both to prepare future leaders and to sustain meaningful participation over time.

- Find delegates with specific expertise in facilitation, management, and strategic planning for optional professional development sessions conducted either in-person or via teleconference. The SCE, with input from all working groups, might identify this group of people and also compile a list of open education resources that can help to build leadership skills across working groups. Given its human resources expertise, HRDWG could be the appropriate partner to implement.
- Make peer-to-peer mentoring an integral part of HRDWG activities. Increase the engagement of delegates who are “on the threshold” of leadership and would benefit from international meeting experience. These individuals, with permission of the hosting economy, could co-lead portions of the annual meeting with support from a Network Coordinator.
- Use ongoing program evaluation to inform HRDWG and the Secretariat (e.g., collect and analyze data on the participation of “future leaders” and changes within HRDWG and APEC by gender and role).

4. Structure meetings to maximize time dedicated to substantive discussion. Unlike some other international fora, APEC's HRDWG brings the labor and education sectors together, thus enabling members to harness the full range of factors that contribute to a strong economy as they plan, manage, and evaluate successful projects.

- Create more opportunities for facilitated discussions that cross-pollinate education and labor perspectives. Network leaders would like more information on each economy's policy on core HRD priority areas, and jointly led, small-group discussions regarding priorities could provide additional insight.
- Rather than putting Network activities into silos, reduce the length of their independent meetings and leverage their specific interest areas by having them seed policy dialogues on important topics (e.g., labor and gender “inclusive growth” goals) by inviting content specialists, researchers, and representatives of other APEC fora to participate in discussions, either virtually or (when feasible) in person.
- Minimize redundancies in the meeting agenda so that sessions on procedural activities (e.g., project proposals, evaluation information) are presented only once.
- Make transparent the roles and responsibilities of each Network. CBN leaders and delegates clearly understand their mandate and purpose, yet others may not. CBN seems particularly well-suited for corporate, academic, and other entities outside of government to discuss important

issues that are cross-cutting to both education and labor. It also maintains a substantive focus on building the capacity of developing economies to move from labor-intensive, low value-added economies to knowledge-intensive, high value-added economies.

- Post meeting notes and related documents to the HRDWG Wiki as soon as possible after each meeting—and keep the HRDWG e-mail distribution list up-to-date—to support ongoing engagement around substantive issues.

5. Refine selection criteria and desired skill sets for the Lead Shepherd. The members of an APEC working group represent their member economies by providing content-specific expertise and policy experience. The Lead Shepherd’s office has responsibility for ensuring that projects and activities align with goals, priorities, and operational expectations (such as those expressed in the group’s Terms of Reference). As delegates indicated in interviews, the Lead Shepherd should efficiently manage these higher-level tasks, thus enabling group members to focus on understanding and implementing various perspectives and policies through projects and activities.

- Recognizing that the work of the Lead Shepherd is a significant undertaking, require that nominees for Lead Shepherd demonstrate support from their member economies in the form of sufficient and experienced human resources as well as funding to effectively lead HRDWG activities and to represent HRDWG at APEC and other multilateral meetings.
- Ideally, candidates for Lead Shepherd should have senior experience in the public sector, a strong background in economics, and an understanding of the role of human resources development in economic growth. Prior board management experience is beneficial. Candidates with this experience should be given additional consideration if multiple applicants for Lead Shepherd are nominated.
- Screen for demonstrated analytic, facilitation, cultural sensitivity, and communication skills, and for the ability to focus, prioritize, and lead collaborative efforts.
- Consider, but do not limit selection to, the Deputy Lead Shepherd.
- Consider women and men equally, based on merit.

6. Take evaluation seriously at all levels, including project planning and implementation.

Document reviews and interview responses revealed overlaps among major HRDWG guiding documents: the Terms of Reference, Strategic Plan, and Annual Workplan. The plans in particular lack grounding that could be provided by working backward from measurable outcomes.

- Nurture an evaluation mind-set among HRDWG members and within each Network. The Lead Shepherd’s office can support this by carefully constructing draft strategic and workplans that contain measurable objectives and outcomes. Providing these documents to delegates in sufficient time for review within their home economies would encourage thoughtfulness and provide a model for constructing strong project plans.
- Ask delegates with experience in evaluation to review and amend objectives and outcomes to ensure they are measurable; engage these delegates to help the group maintain a focus on evaluation with an eye toward (a) continuous improvement and (b) progress in achieving project objectives, HRDWG objectives, and APEC priorities.
- Consult with the APEC Project Management Unit, as needed, to prepare project evaluation reports that can effectively inform current and future projects.

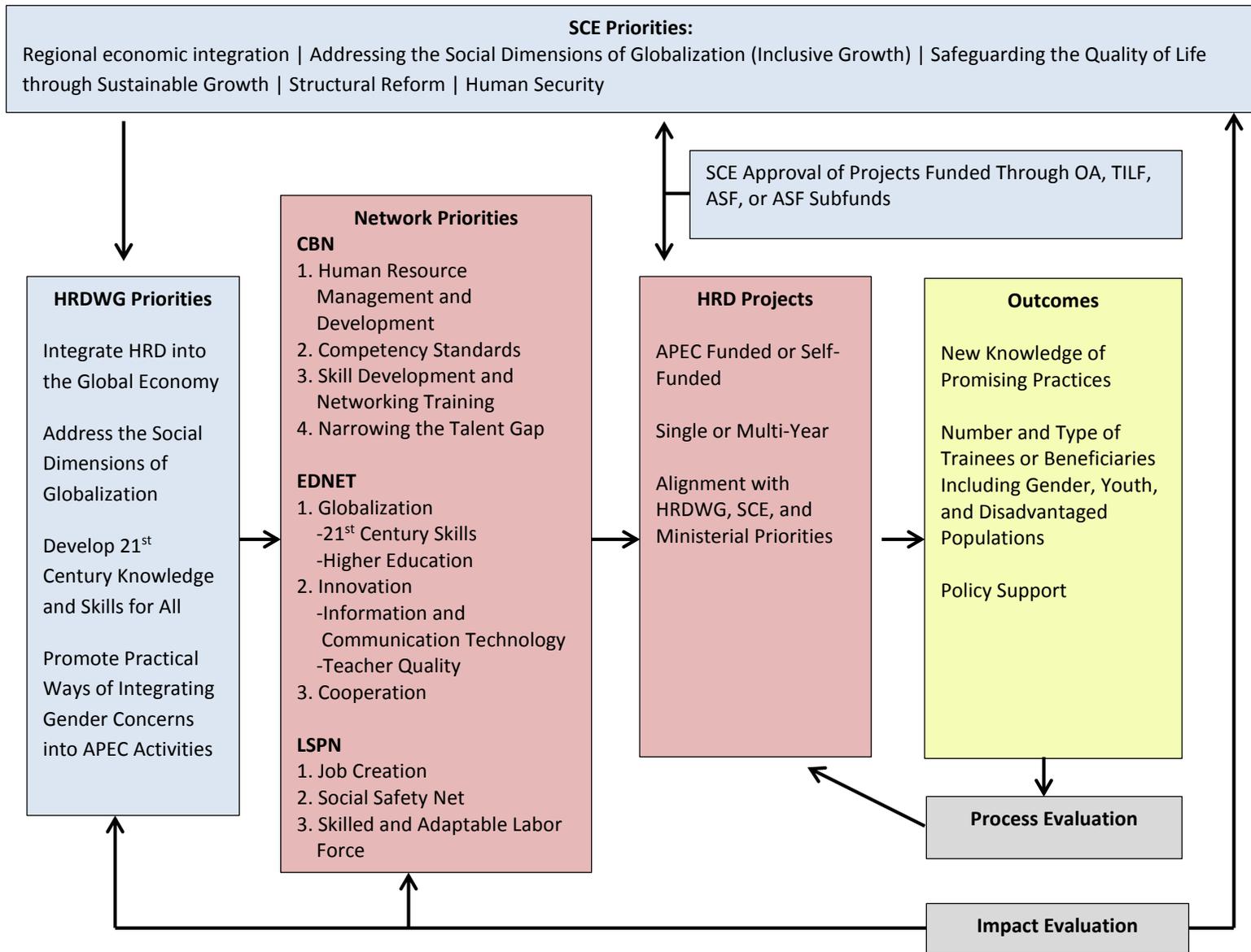
7. Demonstrate continued commitment to gender equality in all HRDWG activities and projects.

As survey and interview responses demonstrate, HRDWG has opened opportunities for women to participate in equal numbers with men. Now the focus might shift to creating opportunities for equal responsibility and recognition.

- Continue the strong record of welcoming and supporting women in leadership roles within the working group. Some women do have significant or developing APEC leadership experience and should be considered for other leadership roles upon completion of their present leadership roles.
- Leaders and delegate senior officials should strive to build support teams that model gender balance and respect the contributions, experience, and knowledge of female professionals.
- When preparing Concept Notes and planning projects, explicitly address any issues that might affect gender mainstreaming, as outlined in the *Framework for Integration of Women in APEC*.
- As suggested by the *Framework*, collect sex-disaggregated data and conduct gender analysis during baseline and outcome evaluations of internal and project activities.
- Make the data on gender status available to all APEC members so they may inform the full range of policies and activities.

Appendices

Appendix A: APEC Human Resources Development Working Group (HRDWG) Theory of Action (Logic Model)



Appendix B: Documents Reviewed for the 2014 Independent Assessment

1994 Documents

Declaration: A Human Resources Development Framework for the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation, Jakarta, November 1994 (1994/AMM/JMS/2)

1999 Documents

Framework for the Integration of Women in APEC (APEC#99-SO-01.1, available at http://www.apec.org/~media/Files/Groups/GFPN/02_aggi_framework.pdf)

2002 Documents

APEC Guidelines for Framework for the Integration of Women in APEC (APEC#207-SO-01.2, available at http://www.apec.org/~media/Files/Groups/GFPN/02_aggi_guides.pdf)

2010 Documents

Jacqui True, *Independent Assessment of the APEC Human Resources Development Working Group*, February 2010 (file name: 210_sce_HRDIndependent Assessment%281%29)

Fifth APEC Human Resources Development Ministerial Meeting, *Joint Ministerial Statement*, Beijing, China, 16-17 September 2010 (file name: 10_hrdmm_jms)

5th Human Resources Development Ministerial Meeting, *Action Plan*, Beijing, China, 16-17 September 2010 (2010/HRDMM/029)

32nd Human Resources Development Working Group Meeting, *Technical Summary Report of Three Sub-Themes*, Hiroshima, Japan, 24-28 February 2010 (2010/SOM1/HRDMM/31)

32nd Human Resources Development Working Group Meeting, *Summary Report*, Hiroshima, Japan, 24-28 February 2010 (2010/SOM1/HRDWG32/SUM)

32nd Human Resources Development Working Group Meeting, *Labour and Social Protection Network Meeting Report*, Hiroshima, Japan, 24-28 February 2010 (2010/SOM1/HRDWG/062)

32nd Human Resources Development Working Group Meeting, *The 26th EDNET Meeting Record*, Hiroshima, Japan, 24-28 February 2010 (2010/SOM1/HRDWG/060)

32nd Human Resources Development Working Group Meeting, *Report of the Meeting of the Capacity Building Network*, Hiroshima, Japan, 24-28 February 2010 (2010/SOM1/HRDWG/058)

32nd Human Resources Development Working Group Meeting, *APEC Strengths and Weaknesses in Building Human Resource Development Capacity*, Hiroshima, Japan, 24-28 February 2010 (2010/SOM1/HRDWG/064rev1)

The 18th APEC Economic Leaders' Meeting, *The APEC Leaders' Growth Strategy*, Yokohama, Japan, 14 November 2010 (file name: 10_aelm_dec_3)

HRDWG Workplan, 2010 (available at http://hrd.apec.org/index.php/HRDWG_Workplan)

2011 Documents

33rd Human Resources Development Working Group Meeting, *Capacity Building Network Meeting – Summary Report*, Washington, D.C., United States, 7-11 March 2011 (2011/SOM1/HRDWG/064rev1)

33rd Human Resources Development Working Group Meeting, *China's Report on HRDMM5*, Washington, D.C., United States, 7-11 March 2011 (2011/SOM1/HRDWG/054)

33rd Human Resources Development Working Group Meeting, *Summary Report*, Washington, D.C., United States, 7-11 March 2011 (2011/SOM1/HRDWG33/SUM)

33rd Human Resources Development Working Group Meeting, *Education Network Meeting Summary Report*, Washington, D.C., United States, 7-11 March 2011 (2011/SOM1/HRDWG/089)

33rd Human Resources Development Working Group Meeting, *LSPN Meeting Summary*, Washington, D.C., United States, 7-11 March 2011 (2011/SOM1/HRDWG/091)

2012 Documents

34th Human Resources Development Working Group Meeting, *Priorities for 2012*, Moscow, Russia, 5-10 February 2012 (2012/SOM1/HRDWG/013)

34th Human Resources Development Working Group Meeting, *HRDWG Workplan for 2012*, Moscow, Russia, 5-10 February 2012 (2012/SOM1/HRDWG/008rev1)

34th Human Resources Development Working Group Meeting, *5th APEC Education Ministerial Meeting – Presentation for EDNET Meeting*, Moscow, Russia, 5-10 February 2012 (2012/SOM1/HRDWG/075)

34th Human Resources Development Working Group Meeting, *HRDWG Meeting Summary Report*, Moscow, Russia, 5-10 February 2012 (2012/SOM1/HRDWG/096)

34th Human Resources Development Working Group Meeting, *Labor and Social Protection Network Meeting Summary Report*, Moscow, Russia, 5-10 February 2012 (2012/SOM1/HRDWG/099)

34th Human Resources Development Working Group Meeting, *Education Network Meeting Summary Report*, Moscow, Russia, 5-10 February 2012 (2012/SOM1/HRDWG/098)

APEC Project Proposal (file name: 20120612_APEC-Project-Proposal-Template)

APEC Project Quality Assessment Framework (QAF) Fora assessment of Project Quality at Application, in *APEC Project Guidebook (7th Ed) – Appendix D* (file name: 20120821_QAF_Quality_Assessment_Framework_2012)

2013 Documents

APEC Secretariat, *Guidebook on APEC Projects (8th ed.)*, June 2013 (file name: 20130730_GuidebookOnAPECProjects_8thEd_June2013)

Multi-Year Project: August Monitoring Report, 2013 (file name: 20130705_MultiYrProjectAugMonitorRptTemplate)

Second Budget and Management Committee Meeting, *Evaluation of APEC Projects – Presentation*, Medan, Indonesia, 29 June 2013 (2013/SOM3/BMC/018)

Second Budget and Management Committee Meeting, *Project Management Reforms: Evaluation of APEC Projects*, Medan, Indonesia, 29 June 2013 (2013/SOM3/BMC/011)

Annex A: APEC Framework on Connectivity (file name: 13_aelm_dec_anxa)

The 35th Human Resources Development Working Group Meeting, *Summary Report*, Medan, Indonesia, 22-26 June 2013 (file name: 13_hrdwg_summary)

35th Human Resources Development Working Group Meeting, *Project Management Update*, Medan, Indonesia, 24-26 June 2013 (2013/SOM3/HRDWG/011)

35th Human Resources Development Working Group Meeting, *Terms of Reference of HRDWG*, Medan, Indonesia, 24-26 June 2013 (2013/SOM3/HRDWG/010)

35th Human Resources Development Working Group Meeting, *HRDWG Annual Work Plan 2013*, Medan, Indonesia, 24-26 June 2013 (2013/SOM3/HRDWG/008)

35th Human Resources Development Working Group Meeting, *HRDWG Strategic Plan 2013-2016*, Medan, Indonesia, 24-26 June 2013 (2013/SOM3/HRDWG/009)

35th Human Resources Development Working Group Meeting, *APEC Secretariat Report on Key Developments*, Medan, Indonesia, 24-26 June 2013 (2013/SOM3/HRDWG/012)

35th Human Resources Development Working Group Meeting, *Education Network Meeting Summary*, Medan, Indonesia, 24-26 June 2013 (2013/SOM3/HRDWG/063)

35th Human Resources Development Working Group Meeting, *Capacity Building Network Meeting Summary*, Medan, Indonesia, 24-26 June 2013 (2013/SOM3/HRDWG/062)

35th Human Resources Development Working Group Meeting, *APEC Labour and Social Protection Network Meeting Summary Report*, Medan, Indonesia, 24-26 June 2013 (2013/SOM3/HRDEG/064)

2014 Documents

Project Management Update, SOM1 & related meetings, February 2014 (file name: Project management update SOM1 ACTWG)

36th Human Resources Development Working Group Meeting, *Summary Report*, Ningbo, China, 18-21 February 2014 (file name: 14_hrdwg_summary)

36th Human Resources Development Working Group Meeting, *EDNET Update*, Ningbo, China, 18-21 February 2014 (2014/SOM1/HRDWG/003)

36th Human Resources Development Working Group Meeting, *ABAC 2014—Human Resources Development-Related Issues and Priorities*, Ningbo, China, 18-21 February 2014 (2014/SOM1/HRDWG/006)

36th Human Resources Development Working Group Meeting, *Education Network Meeting, 19-20 February 2014 – Summary Report*, Ningbo, China, 18-21 February 2014 (2014/SOM1/HRDWG/010)

36th Human Resources Development Working Group Meeting, *Capacity Building Network Meeting, 19-20 February 2014 – Summary Report*, Ningbo, China, 18-21 February 2014 (2014/SOM1/HRDWG/011)

36th Human Resources Development Working Group Meeting, *Labour and Social Protection Network Meeting, 19-20 February 2014 – Summary Report*, Ningbo, China, 18-21 February 2014 (2014/SOM1/HRDWG/012)

Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Human Resources Development Working Group (HRDWG), *Strategic Plan 2014-2016* (draft). 2014 (file name: HRDWG Annual Work Plan 2014)

Terms of Reference, Human Resources Development Working Group (file name: HRDWG TOR 2014)

Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Human Resources Development Working Group (HRDWG), *Strategic Plan 2014-2016* (file name: HRDWG Strategic Plan 2014-2016)

Working Groups and SOM Taskforces Draft Workplan Template, *Proposed Workplan for 2014, Fora: Human Resources Development Working Group (HRDWG)* (file name: HRDWG Annual Work Plan 2014)

Mission Statement, 20 March 2014, APEC website: <http://www.apec.org/About-Us/About-APEC/Mission-Statement.aspx>

Human Resources Development, 20 March 2014, APEC website: <http://www.apec.org/Groups/SOM-Steering-Committee-on-Economic-and-Technical-Cooperation/Working-Groups/Human-Resources-Development.aspx>

Appendix C: Interview Questions for Delegates and Leaders

Questions for Delegates from Member Economies

1. How long have you participated as a member of the APEC HRDWG? In which group do you participate?
2. Have you been involved in any particular Network projects, or have you offer expertise or experience from your economy to one of the Networks? If so, could you describe your experience working with other member economies on a project?
3. What are the greatest successes of your Network (EDNET, LSPN, CBN) in the last four years?
4. What are the greatest challenges for the HRDWG and your Network at the present? Do you have any suggestions to address gender disparity in the HRDWG?
5. Do you discuss issues of key importance with other non-HRDWG APEC officials from your economy? If yes, can you describe occasions when you worked together or where you may have increased their awareness of HRDWG activities?
6. Do you have any suggestions as to how to ultimately improve the efficiency and effectiveness of HRDWG or that can inform the independent assessment?

Other Questions, only if time permits:

7. A HRDWG leader is expected to have knowledge of economic principles and trade, in addition to previous leadership experience. What do you think are the skills and knowledge necessary to serve in leadership roles such as Lead Shepherd? Network Coordinator?
8. HRDWG projects are now categorized as Tier 2, and much of the funding for Tier 2 projects has decreased. Do you have any recommendations as to how HRDWG can continue to fund its projects given this change?
9. Do you have any special concerns or want to discuss any other issues that we haven't yet discussed?

Lead Shepherd, Program Director, and Network Coordinators:

1. How long have you served in your leadership position? Did you serve in an APEC leadership position prior to your current role?
2. Could you describe the major responsibilities of your role? What are the skills and knowledge necessary to serve in leadership roles such as Lead Shepherd? Network Coordinator?
3. Let's review together the recommendations made in the previous independent assessment. Which of these recommendations have you made priorities? [Probe: Can you describe any changes you've made as a result of the previous independent assessment?]
4. What do they see as the unique role of APEC compared with other international organizations?
5. How do you work to build a set of projects that collectively form and disseminate a significant knowledge base in a particular area? Can you provide an example?
6. What are the greatest successes of your Network (EDNET, LSPN, CBN) in the last four years?

7. What are the greatest challenges for the HRDWG and your Network at the present? Are there additional challenges that you face as leader that you'd like to discuss?
8. As a leader, how does HRDWG work with other APEC working groups in ways that promote APEC's mission and key objectives?
9. HRDWG projects are now categorized as Tier 2, and much of the funding for Tier 2 projects has decreased. Do you have any recommendations as to how HRDWG can continue to fund its projects given this change?
10. Do you have any suggestions to address gender disparity in the HRDWG?
11. Do you have any suggestions as to how to ultimately improve the efficiency and effectiveness of HRDWG or that can inform the independent assessment?
12. Do you have any special concerns or want to discuss any other issues that we haven't yet discussed?

Questions for Leaders of Other Groups (CGI, GOs, ABAC)

1. How long have you served in your leadership position?
2. Have you worked productively with members of the HRDWG, including the Lead Shepherd and/or Network Coordinators? Why or why not?
3. How would you describe HRDWG's impact on other APEC groups? Probe: Can you provide any examples of successful collaboration with APEC HRDWG?
4. Can you provide examples of any specific challenges with which HRDWG must contend?
5. Do you have any recommendations for HRDWG?
6. Do you have any special concerns or want to discuss any other issues that we haven't yet discussed?

Appendix D: Delegate and Leader Survey

HRDWG: Questionnaire for Delegates

We would greatly appreciate 10 minutes of your time to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of HRDWG for its delegates. The survey consists of 25 multiple choice questions and an optional comment area for each. The answers you provide below remain anonymous and will be shared in aggregate form only. Please note that your IP address is not stored on the server. This is a secure site using SSL encryption. Thank you for your help!

Sherri Lauver
Independent Assessor

Organizational Structure

1. I am satisfied with the current organizational structure of the HRDWG, including the structure of the three working groups (EdNET, LSPN & CBN).

Strongly disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly agree

Comment:

2. I maintain strong working relationships with non-HRDWG focused APEC officials and working groups in my economy.

Strongly disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly agree

Comment:

3. I am satisfied with the current level of private sector involvement in APEC HRDWG activities.

Strongly disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly agree

Comment:

4. There are approximately equal numbers of men and women representing my economy in APEC HRDWG.

Yes No

Comment:

Leadership

5. I am satisfied with the process used by HRDWG to nominate future leaders.

Strongly disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly agree

Comment:

6. I am satisfied with the representation of women in HRDWG leadership roles.

Strongly disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly agree

Comment:

7. I am satisfied that there are members of HRDWG prepared to serve a leadership role in the upcoming year.

Strongly disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly agree

Comment:

Annual Meetings

The next several questions (#8 - #12) pertain to the HRDWG meetings (including technical, plenary, and thematic). Please consider only these meetings, and NOT network meetings, when choosing your answer.

8. I am satisfied with the content and substance of the annual HRDWG meetings, including the HRDWG technical, plenary, and thematic meetings.

Strongly disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly agree

Comment:

9. I am satisfied with the time allocated for discussion of critical policy issues during HRDWG technical, thematic, and plenary meetings.

Strongly disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly agree

Comment:

10. I am satisfied that the different perspectives and agendas of member economies are accommodated in HRDWG meetings.

Strongly disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly agree

Comment:

11. I am satisfied with the overall design of the agendas for the HRDWG technical, thematic, and plenary meetings.

Strongly disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly agree

Comment:

12. The Lead Shepherd (or his designee) efficiently manages time during HRDWG meetings.

Strongly disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly agree

Comment:

Network meetings

Next, I'd like to know more about your experience in your network meetings (EDNET, CBN, or LSPN).

13. Which network are you assigned or do you attend most of the time?

EdNet - Education Network LSPN – Labor and Social Protection Network CBN – Capacity Building Network

Comment:

14. I am satisfied with the overall design of the agenda for network meetings.

Strongly disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly agree

Comment:

15. I am satisfied with the content and substance of network meetings.

Strongly disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly agree

Comment:

16. I am satisfied with the time allocated for discussion of critical policy issues during network meetings.

Strongly disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly agree

Comment:

17. I am satisfied that the different perspectives and agendas of member economies are accommodated in network meetings.

Strongly disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly agree

Comment:

18. The Network Coordinator (or his or her designee) efficiently manages time during network meetings.

Strongly disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly agree

Comment:

Ministerial Priorities

19. I am satisfied that SCE (SOM Steering Committee of ECOTECH) policy criteria and the HRDWG Terms of Reference adequately reflect Ministerial priorities.

Strongly disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly agree

Comment:

20. I am satisfied that the different perspectives and agendas of APEC economies are accommodated in Ministerial meetings.

Strongly disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly agree

Comment:

Projects

21. I am satisfied with the quality of projects sponsored by the HRDWG.

Strongly disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly agree

Comment:

22. I am satisfied with the APEC project funding process.

Strongly disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly agree

Comment:

23. I am aware of instances where an HRDWG discussion or project finding resulted in an action or policy change in APEC or an APEC economy since 2010.

No

Yes

Comment:

24. I am satisfied with the manner in which project outcomes are disseminated by APEC HRDWG via the APEC website and wiki.

Strongly disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly agree

Comment

25. I am satisfied with the level of publicity and marketing of the HRDWG projects and activities within APEC.

Strongly disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly agree

Comment:

26. I am satisfied with the level of evaluation conducted on existing HRDWG funded projects.

Strongly disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly agree

Comment:

Comments and Suggestions

27. If you have any final comments to share, please include them here. If your comments pertain to a specific question in the survey, please include the number of the question below. Thank you!

28. Optional: Please indicate your gender.

Male
 Female

29. Optional: If you would like to have a confidential interview with the independent evaluator via phone or email, please provide your contact information here or email the independent assessor at slauver@seiservices.com.

Name	<input type="text"/>
Economy	<input type="text"/>
Email/phone	<input type="text"/>

Appendix E: Survey Results

Survey Item	Percent				
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. I am satisfied with the current structure of the HRDWG, including the structure of the three working groups (EDNET, LSPN & CBN).	4.76	16.67	26.19	40.48	11.90
2. I maintain strong working relationships with non-HRDWG focused APEC officials and working groups in my economy.	4.76	11.90	21.43	42.86	19.05
3. I am satisfied with the current level of private sector involvement in APEC HRDWG activities.	4.76	33.33	28.57	30.95	2.38
4. I am satisfied with the process used by HRDWG to nominate future leaders.	0.00	23.81	35.71	35.71	4.76
5. I am satisfied with the representation of women in HRDWG leadership roles.	2.38	2.38	30.95	50.00	14.29
6. I am satisfied that there are members of HRDWG prepared to serve a leadership role in the upcoming year.	2.38	19.05	28.57	42.86	7.14
7. I am satisfied with the content and substance of the annual HRDWG meetings, including the HRDWG technical, plenary, and thematic meetings.	7.32	17.07	26.83	46.34	2.44
8. I am satisfied with the time allocated for discussion of critical policy issues during HRDWG technical, thematic, and plenary meetings.	2.63	18.42	28.95	47.37	2.63
9. I am satisfied that the different perspectives and agendas of member economies are accommodated in HRDWG meetings.	0.00	10.00	25.00	55.00	10.00
10. I am satisfied with the overall design of the agendas for the HRDWG technical, thematic, and plenary meetings.	2.56	17.95	30.77	48.72	0.00
11. The Lead Shepherd (or his designee) efficiently manages time during HRDWG meetings.	10.00	20.00	22.50	35.00	12.50
12. I am satisfied with the overall design of the agenda for Network meetings.	2.63	10.53	21.05	57.89	7.89
13. I am satisfied with the content and substance of Network meetings.	2.63	10.53	23.68	55.26	10.53
14. I am satisfied with the time allocated for discussion of critical policy issues during Network meetings.	2.63	7.89	28.95	50.00	10.53
15. I am satisfied that the different perspectives and agendas of member economies are accommodated in network meetings.	0.00	10.26	15.38	48.72	25.64

Survey Item	Percent				
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
16. The Network Coordinator (or his or her designee) efficiently manages time during Network meetings.	0.00	0.00	20.51	48.72	30.77
17. I am satisfied that SCE (SOM Steering Committee of ECOTECH) policy criteria and the HRDWG Terms of Reference adequately reflect Ministerial priorities.	0.00	10.53	39.47	44.74	5.26
18. I am satisfied that the different perspectives and agendas of APEC economies are accommodated in Ministerial meetings.	0.00	7.69	33.33	51.28	7.69
19. I am satisfied with the quality of projects sponsored by the HRDWG.	5.26	13.16	31.58	42.11	7.89
20. I am satisfied with the APEC project funding process.	5.26	13.16	44.74	34.21	2.63
21. I am satisfied with the manner in which project outcomes are disseminated by APEC HRDWG via the APEC website and Wiki.	0.00	15.79	36.84	47.37	0.00
22. I am satisfied with the level of publicity and marketing of the HRDWG projects and activities within APEC.	5.13	23.08	41.03	30.77	0.00
23. I am satisfied with the level of evaluation conducted on existing HRDWG funded projects.	2.56	23.08	35.90	35.90	2.56

Survey Item	Percent		
	Yes	No	
24. There are approximately equal number of men and women representing my economy in APEC HRDWG.	74.81	26.99	
25. I am aware of instances where an HRDWG discussion or project finding resulted in an action or policy change in APEC or an APEC economy since 2010.	62.16	37.84	
Survey Item	Percent		
	EDNET	LSPN	CBN
26. Which Network are you assigned or do you attend most of the time?	55.26	21.05	23.68
Survey Item	Percent		
	Male	Female	
27. Optional: Please indicate your gender.	40	60	

Appendix F: Recommendations for Future HRDWG Assessments

These suggestions might help future independent assessments obtain richer data and produce more focused recommendations.

Participant Observation

- Contract with the independent evaluator at least a year ahead of the due date to give the independent evaluator an opportunity to attend an annual meeting and sufficient time to become acquainted with APEC/HRDWG operations.

Document Review

- Consider making additional documents available to the evaluator; for example, project evaluation reports would contribute greatly to determining the impact and value of HRDWG activities, and HRDWG reports to ECOTECH would provide a window into group members' understandings of successes and challenges.

Survey Revisions

- To provide deeper context for data analysis, include items that collect data about respondents' roles and length of service with APEC. If tied to other responses, this would enable the evaluator to present the perspectives of long-time members versus one-time expert consultants, whose different roles and history of involvement would affect recommendations in different ways.
- To determine participation across economies, ask survey respondents to identify the economy they represent, and be sure to indicate that this information is not linked to other items so that anonymity can be preserved.
- Change from a 5-point scale to a 4-point scale to eliminate the neutral response option.

Nurture an Evaluation Mind-Set

- As suggested in the recommendations, encourage HRDWG (and other working groups) to learn about and employ planning and management approaches that incorporate evaluation activities. This independent assessment revealed that at least a few HRDWG members or delegates have evaluation experience; perhaps they or other knowledgeable APEC staff can help group and project leaders learn and apply such planning techniques as developing measurable objectives and outcomes from goals, designing basic data collection questions and instruments, and being mindful of lessons learned when moving into the next round or phase of a project.