

URBAN FUTURES PROGRAMME

Terms of Reference

External Evaluation (2023–2027)

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In collaboration with:

Fondation Botnar

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This Terms of Reference outlines the purpose, scope, methodology, roles, and deliverables for the external evaluation of the Urban Futures program, implemented across ten intermediary cities in Colombia, Ecuador, Indonesia, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

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1. Introduction

1.1 About HIVOS

Hivos is an international organization committed to social justice, climate justice, and civic participation. Hivos works through long-term partnerships with civil society, governments, and private actors to influence policies and practices, shift power toward people and communities most affected by inequality, and support transitions toward fairer, more sustainable systems.

Within Urban Futures, Hivos serves as the global program lead and fund manager, taking responsibility for strategic coordination and financial oversight. Hivos works closely with Regional Teams in Latin America and Southern Africa, and with Humanis in Indonesia, helping them build shared agendas with diverse actors and providing technical and political accompaniment to local coalitions. It also leads core cross-cutting functions, including monitoring evaluation and knowledge management, linking & learning, advocacy, communications, and internal governance and plays a convening role between Fondation Botnar and implementing partners.¹

Hivos' role is facilitating and supportive; implementation, innovation, and day-to-day change processes are led by local partners, youth collectives, community organizations, and city coalitions.

1.2 About Fondation Botnar

Fondation Botnar works with and for young people towards a world that fulfils their rights and supports their wellbeing. Challenges continue to rise in urban and digital spaces where young people live, learn, work, connect and play. By supporting innovative initiatives and research and bringing together partners from across sectors to enable youth voices, we shape systems to create opportunities for young people around the world.

Within Urban Futures, Fondation Botnar is both a funder and a strategic partner. Fondation Botnar provides core financial support to the program and plays an active role in shaping its strategic direction, including emphasizing youth agency rather than youth as passive beneficiaries.²

1.3 Program Description

1.3.1 Overview of Urban Futures and where it works

Urban Futures (UF) is a youth-centered program that works in rapidly urbanizing contexts where food systems face pressure from environmental stress, economic inequality, fragmented governance, and limited participation of young people and women. The program focuses on how urban and peri-urban food systems can become fairer, healthier, more climate-resilient, and more inclusive, and on how young people and women can gain influence, recognition, and economic opportunity within those systems.

Urban Futures is a multi-country, multi-city initiative running from 2023 to 2027. The program operates in 10 intermediary cities and city-regions across five countries:

- **Colombia:** Cali, Medellín
- **Ecuador:** Manabí (MANPANOR), Quito–Chocó Andino

¹ For more information on Hivos and its role within Urban Futures, please visit <https://hivos.org/program/urban-futures/>

² For more information on Hivos and its role within Urban Futures, please visit <https://www.fondationbotnar.org/project/urban-futures>

- **Indonesia:** Bandung, West Manggarai
- **Zambia:** Kitwe, Chongwe
- **Zimbabwe:** Bulawayo, Mutare

Urban Futures is explicitly place-based, meaning that the program works through and with the specific political, institutional, social, ecological, and economic realities of each city-region rather than applying a uniform model across countries. A place-based approach recognizes that pathways of change unfold differently in every territory, and that meaningful transformation requires anchoring strategies in local actors, governance arrangements, markets, food environments, and cultural practices. In each city-region, Urban Futures supports locally led coalitions composed of youth groups and youth-led initiatives, civil society organizations, producer associations, municipal and regional authorities, market and space managers, universities, incubators, and in some cases private sector and finance actors. Rather than engaging these actors separately, UF helps convene them into coherent, recognized processes that shape decisions related to food systems, markets, land use, public space, budgeting, public procurement, and enterprise financing. Urban Futures positions young people not as project beneficiaries but as political, cultural, and economic actors who shape decisions, public narratives, and local food system transformation.

1.3.2 Rationale for Urban Futures

Urban Futures responds to a set of persistent, cross-cutting challenges observed across participating cities and city-regions.

Food system governance is highly fragmented: decisions about land use, territorial markets, food environments, and public space tend to occur across disconnected municipal departments, informal arrangements, and shifting political administrations. Young people and women are structurally underrepresented in these processes. At the same time, urban food environments are increasingly dominated by ultra-processed products and narratives that normalize convenience over nutrition, cultural identity, and sustainability, while youth- and women-led alternatives remain undervalued. Young people and women are structurally underrepresented in these processes, even though youth-led groups, collectives, and movements already play visible roles in local food economies, civic mobilization, and climate action.

Climate stressors, such as droughts, floods, heat, salinity, and biodiversity loss, already affect local production, storage, transport, and access, placing intermediary cities at particular risk. These pressures interact with structural barriers faced by youth and women, such as limited access to infrastructure, market opportunities, and finance. Informal food economies often provide essential livelihoods but lack recognition, protection, and pathways to more stable economic opportunities. For many young people, these spaces are the main entry point into local food systems, yet their work, organizing, and innovations remain largely invisible in formal policy debates. At the same time, greening and regenerative practices in these cities create opportunities to mitigate climate impacts, strengthen resilience, and generate new forms of youth- and women-led participation in local food systems.

Against this backdrop, Urban Futures supports locally led coalitions to strengthen inclusive governance, shift narratives and public demand, advance climate-resilient and regenerative agri-food practices, and expand economic and financial opportunities for youth and women in food systems and related circular/green economies.

1.3.3 Theory of Change and its evolution

Based on the Global ToC (Reference Annex 1), and the diagnostic phase (City Region Food System assessments) in each of these cities, at the start of the program, city coalitions developed local Theories of Change emphasizing inclusive governance, narrative change, and entrepreneurship. However, cross-city analysis during 2023–2024 revealed that a significant portion of visible and relevant change involved youth- and women-led entrepreneurship, cooperative formation, training on Sustainable Agri-Food Practices, access to markets and infrastructure, and negotiations for financing and legitimacy.

Based on these lessons, and localized ToCs, in 2024 the program initiated a structured review and consolidation of the Global Theory of Change. This process included analysis across cities and regions and external academic review (including by Universidad EAFIT). The review concluded that the program needed to explicitly recognize a fourth pathway of change around “Sustainable Agri-Food Practices.” The Global ToC was updated accordingly, and the program’s monitoring framework realigned. Two out of three regions and its city coalitions are already integrating this pathway into their planning and indicators, though adoption remains uneven across sites.

The table below links each pathway of change to the intended direction of change by 2027, providing a consolidated view of Urban Futures’ strategy and long-term vision.

Pathway of Change	Long Term Outcomes
Inclusive and participatory governance UF supports the establishment, strengthening, and institutionalization of platforms, councils, advisory bodies, and other multi-stakeholder mechanisms that bring youth, women, producer groups, market actors, municipal authorities, and in some cases finance actors into structured dialogue and negotiation around food systems, public and edible space, food environments, procurement, and territorial development. These are not ad hoc “consultations,” but are meant to become recognized parts of how cities govern and allocate resources.	Governance becomes institutionalized and inclusive. Inclusive, transparent and participatory food policies and governance strategies that support youth and gender equality through multi-stakeholder collaboration.
Narrative change and shifts in demand / social norms UF supports strategic communication, storytelling, cultural work, and public campaigning led by youth and community actors. The goal is to change how food, health, climate resilience, and cultural identity are talked about and valued, and to legitimize youth and women as credible actors in these debates. This pathway is not “awareness raising.” It is about shaping the public and political narrative so that inclusive, climate-aware, culturally grounded, healthy food systems are seen as legitimate and urgent.	Public narratives shift Youth- driven narratives of inclusive, conscious, and climate- resilient cities, promote behavioral change and improved consumption patterns that favor sustainable, healthy, and food heritage practices.
Sustainable, regenerative, and climate-resilient agri-food practices UF supports practices and infrastructures that build resilience and reduce extraction. This includes short value chains, local procurement and territorial markets connecting producers and consumers,	Resilient agri-food practices are embedded. Agri- food systems adopt sustainable, regenerative, and climate- resilient practices

circular and low-waste approaches, green and edible public spaces, and regenerative production. The intent is that these practices are not isolated pilots but gradually embedded into city and territorial planning, resourcing, and regulation.	
Financial flows and entrepreneurship for youth and women UF works to connect youth- and women-led initiatives in food systems and related circular/green economies to actual financial opportunities. This includes incubation and enterprise development support, cooperative formation and legalization, technical assistance on business and financial planning, and efforts to unlock or negotiate access to financing instruments from municipal budgets, public programs, private sector, and multilateral or philanthropic sources. This pathway also covers the political work needed to establish youth and women as legitimate, investable actors within local food systems.	Youth and women access real economic opportunity. Increased resources and opportunities from diverse stakeholders— private, public, multilateral, and community- based— create an inclusive and climate- adapted entrepreneurial ecosystem that supports youth and women’s participation in food system initiatives.

Since 2023, Urban Futures has implemented a comprehensive Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) system that combines quantitative and qualitative evidence to support learning, adaptation, and strategic decision-making. The MEL system includes a set of ten core quantitative indicators that track progress across the program’s four pathways of change, complemented by qualitative evidence generated through Outcome Harvesting processes conducted at city, regional, and global levels. Outcome Harvesting has been used to identify, document, and analyze significant changes in governance, narratives, practices, and economic opportunities, as well as the contribution of Urban Futures to these changes. Together, these MEL processes have generated a substantial body of quantitative and qualitative evidence. All relevant MEL data, including indicator data, outcome descriptions, and synthesis reports, will be shared in a timely manner with the external evaluation team to enable triangulation, deeper analysis, and the identification of learning and forward-looking recommendations. The evaluation is expected to build on and critically engage with this existing evidence base, rather than starting from scratch.

1.3.4 Current state of the implementation

In mid-2023, at the start of the program, efforts focused on building the core teams, selecting the participating cities, and establishing partnerships with local organizations to lead implementation. During this phase, the program also carried out a diagnostic phase (City Region Food System or CRFS assessments), which included a rapid scan, Theory of Change workshops, in-depth assessments, and the development of internal guiding document or city strategies. Several cities went on to adopt these strategies as the basis for their local work.

Since Mid-2024, Urban Futures have advanced across the four pathways of change (Updated ToC), and each city moves at its own pace depending on its political, institutional, economic, and social conditions. This variation reflects the program’s place-based approach, which adapts strategies to local governance dynamics, youth and women’s organizing capacity, market structures, and the opportunities or constraints in each territory.

On inclusive governance, several cities initiated new or strengthened multi-stakeholder platforms that bring together youth, women, producer groups, municipal authorities, and market actors for regular dialogue and shared decision-making. Young people and women

present proposals, influence local regulations, and engage in planning processes through these spaces. Other cities continue building foundational participation structures as they navigate fragmented institutions or tighter civic space.

On narrative changes, youth groups and community partners produce stories, campaigns, and cultural content that shift how people talk about food systems, climate resilience, health, and identity. Cities with strong youth communication collectives generate materials that amplify their voices and shape public conversations toward healthier, more sustainable, and more inclusive food systems, while others continue strengthening their communication capacity.

On sustainable, regenerative, and climate-resilient practices, city partners and youth coalitions implement initiatives such as urban gardens, bio-input production, green and edible public spaces, short value chains, territorial markets, school-based food environments, and circular economy pilots. Some territories already integrate these practices into broader planning processes, while others focus on smaller pilots that create evidence and momentum for future institutionalization.

On financial flows and entrepreneurship, Urban Futures supports youth- and women-led initiatives through incubation, cooperative formation, technical assistance, business and financial planning, and connections to public, private, and multilateral financing opportunities. Some cities activate stronger entrepreneurial ecosystems thanks to supportive partners and clearer financing pathways, while others advance more gradually due to economic instability, regulatory barriers, or limited access to financial education and capital.

Overall, Urban Futures move forward across the pathways with different speeds in each city but with a coherent trajectory of consolidation.

1.3.5 Governance and Implementation Structure

Urban Futures is implemented through a multi-level governance structure designed to ensure strategic coherence, context-sensitive accompaniment, and strong local leadership. Hivos acts as the global team, responsible for overall program coordination, financial management, monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL), and liaison with Fondation Botnar. Regional Hivos teams in Latin America and Southern Africa, together with Humanis in Indonesia, provide strategic and operational support to implementing partners, while the Global Management Team and the Steering Committee play key roles in strategic alignment, oversight, and decision-making. At the territorial level, the program is anchored in locally led coalitions composed of youth groups, civil society organizations, and public actors, with strategic accompaniment from RUAF on food systems. (Reference to Annex 2).

2. Evaluation purpose, objectives, scope, questions and audiences

2.1 Purpose and objectives

The evaluation takes place now to inform strategic decisions towards the final implementation period (2026–2027), strengthen adaptive management, and guide reflections on potential next phase. The purpose of this evaluation is to generate evidence on the relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, and emerging sustainability of Urban Futures, and to understand how the program's strategies and pathways of change contribute to transformative outcomes across diverse city-region contexts. In particular, the evaluation will examine the extent to which Urban Futures strengthens young people's agency, leadership, and meaningful

participation in governance, narratives, climate-resilient practices, and economic opportunities.

The evaluation prioritizes learning and strategic insight. Its findings will help Urban Future, and local coalitions deepen their understanding of what works, why, and under what conditions; identify where adaptation is needed; and determine what to stop, start, scale, or adjust. Preliminary findings shared during the evaluation will support timely decision-making and real-time course correction.

To fulfil this purpose, the evaluation will pursue the following key objectives:

1. Assess the relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, and emerging sustainability of Urban Futures, with specific attention to how the four pathways of change operate across diverse city-region contexts.
2. Analyze the extent to which the program strategies, governance arrangements, and implementation approaches enable or constrain progress, and identify the contextual factors that shape results across different cities.
3. Identify good practices, innovations, and learning that deepen understanding of what works, for whom, and under what conditions, with special attention to youth-led and youth-focused outcomes and that strengthen adaptive management at global, regional, and city levels.
4. Provide forward-looking, actionable recommendations on what to adjust, scale, replicate, discontinue, or reinforce during the final implementation period and in considerations for potential next phases, including how to further center youth leadership and decision-making in the program.

2.2 Scope

The evaluation will cover the Urban Futures program in its entirety, including its global coordination model, regional structures, and implementation across the ten participating cities and city-regions. The evaluation will span the entire program period (2023-2027) to focusing on progress and contribution along the four pathways and acknowledging that cities follow different trajectories due to contextual variation across political, institutional, economic, and social systems.

The evaluation will operate at two levels:

1. A global assessment, which will analyze program strategy, governance arrangements, coherence across regions, and cross-cutting functions such as MEL, Linking & Learning, GEDI, and communication.
2. A set of city-level deep dives, designed to generate in-depth evidence on contribution mechanisms, context-specific pathways of change, and the conditions that enable or constrain progress in selected cities. These deep dives will take into account the significant differences between regions, as well as the diverse political, institutional, socio-economic, and spatial realities of each city, including their size and level of urban complexity.

The scope includes analysis of program design, implementation approaches, partnership models, and the quality and use of evidence and learning. It also includes the examination of expected and unexpected results, both positive and negative, across different contexts. Given the complex and adaptive nature of Urban Futures, the evaluation will focus on contribution rather than attribution and will not attempt to establish counterfactual impact. The evaluation will not include a financial audit, compliance review, or exhaustive assessment of every activity or output across all cities.

2.3 Indicative Evaluation Questions

The evaluation will respond to the indicative questions outlined below. **We encourage evaluators to further refine, reduce and prioritize these questions during the inception phase, based on an initial desk review and consultations with key stakeholders.** This process will help clarify which questions should be addressed at the programmatic level and which require deeper exploration through city-level deep dives.

2.3.1 Global Evaluation Questions

Relevance and coherence

- To what extent does the Urban Futures strategy, including its four pathways of change, respond to the needs, priorities, and realities of youth and women across diverse city-region contexts?
- How effectively do UF's governance and partnership arrangements (Global Team, Regional Teams/Humanis, Steering Committee, Global Management Team, RUAF, Fondation Botnar, and city coalitions) function in terms of clarity, complementarity, trust, responsiveness, and decision-making?
- To what extent, and in what ways, are UF's cross-cutting priorities—Linking & Learning, Gender Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (GEDI), and Technology & Digitalization—meaningfully and coherently embedded in planning, decision-making, implementation, and adaptation, and what trade-offs or tensions emerge in their application across different contexts?
- To what extent and for which groups of young people, does Urban Futures strengthen voice, leadership, and decision-making power in local food systems and urban governance spaces, and how inclusive are these processes across different socio-economic, gender, and territorial contexts?

Effectiveness

- What progress emerges across the four pathways of change, how relevant are these pathways across different city-region contexts, and how do program strategies, partnerships, and implementation approaches contribute to these results in light of local priorities and conditions?
- What intended and unintended outcomes (positive and negative) appear across cities, and through which mechanisms do these changes occur?
- How, and under what conditions, do Urban Futures' strategies lead to tangible improvements in young people's wellbeing, agency, and economic opportunities in the food system?

Efficiency

- How efficiently do the program's structures—global coordination, regional teams, city coalitions, and implementing partners—support planning, implementation, learning, and decision-making?
- To what extent does the program allocate and use financial, human, and technical resources in ways that are equitable and responsive to the diverse needs, contexts, and trajectories of cities across the portfolio?
- What operational or structural bottlenecks limit efficiency, and which practices or arrangements improve it?

Sustainability

- What early signs indicate the potential sustainability of results within governance, narratives, climate-resilient practices, and youth- and women-led economic opportunities?

- Which institutional, political, financial, or social conditions strengthen or limit the likelihood that results will continue beyond the program period?
- Which elements of UF's approach, and which local coalition partners or platforms, show the strongest potential for long-term adoption, institutionalization, or scaling including the capacity to engage with and hold municipal authorities accountable, beyond the program period?

2.3.2 Deep Dive Evaluation Questions

The following questions apply only to the cities selected for in-depth analysis. We expect a minimum of four deep dives across the portfolio.

Deep dive findings are expected to be integrated into the analysis of the main evaluation questions, providing contextual depth and comparative insight, rather than being treated as a separate analytical stream. This approach aims to avoid duplication and ensure coherence between global-level findings and city-region level evidence.

Context-specific pathways of change

- How were these local ToCs developed, how relevant are they, and how do they unfold in practice within the selected city, and which mechanisms drive or hinder progress across the four pathways?
- To what extent has the diagnostic analysis or City-Region Food System (CRFS) assessment methodology helped as a basis for strategic planning, priority-setting, and decision-making within the program?

Coalition dynamics and governance

- How do local coalitions of youth, women, civil society partners, producer associations, market actors, and public authorities shape decision-making, participation, and influence within local food systems?
- Within local coalitions, what roles do young people play (initiators, decision-makers, implementers, communicators), and how does Urban Futures influence these roles over time?

Adaptive strategies and learning

- How do partners and coalitions in the selected city adapt to political, institutional, and market shifts, and what learning emerges from these adaptations?

Transferability and learning across the portfolio.

- What lessons from the selected deep dive cities offer value for other Urban Futures cities, and under which conditions similar approaches could work elsewhere?

2.4 Audiences

The evaluation serves both operational and strategic audiences. Primary audiences are those directly responsible for decision-making in Urban Futures, while secondary audiences include actors who use evaluation insights for learning, coordination, or advocacy.

2.4.1 Primary Audience

The primary audience for this evaluation consists of the actors directly responsible for the strategic direction, management, and implementation of Urban Futures. This includes:

- Urban Futures Global Team
- Urban Futures Regional Teams
- RUAF
- City-level implementing partners.
- Fondation Botnar

2.4.2 Secondary Audience

Secondary audiences include actors who influence or benefit from program learning, but who are not directly responsible for day-to-day management. These may include:

- Municipal and regional authorities
- Youth groups, community organizations.

3. Methodology

The evaluation will adopt a mixed-method, utilization-focused, and contribution-oriented approach, suitable for a complex, adaptive, and place-based program such as Urban Futures. The methodology will combine global-level analysis with a set of city-level deep dives to ensure both breadth and depth, while recognizing that cities move at different speeds and follow different trajectories.

3.1 Approach

Building on the principles outlined above, the evaluation will apply a complexity-aware and contribution-oriented lens to explore how the program contributes to change across different city-region contexts. The evaluation will focus on examining the causal pathways embedded in the updated Theory of Change, the mechanisms that enable or constrain results, and the political, institutional, social and economic dynamics that shape each city's trajectory across the four pathways of change.

The evaluation will use a mixed-methods design that combines qualitative and quantitative evidence. Methods will include document and use MEL data review, key informant interviews, focus groups with youth and women, observation of platforms and spaces of decision-making, simple trend analysis, and contribution analysis. Throughout the process, the evaluators will engage with program teams through iterative sense-making sessions to validate emerging findings and deepen shared understanding.

Learning sits at the center of this evaluation. The purpose is not to verify compliance or audit implementation, but to generate practical insights that help the program strengthen its strategies, adapt to shifting contexts, and prepare for the final implementation period. In collaboration with Urban Future, the evaluation team will co-design opportunities for structured learning. Preliminary findings will be shared early in the process to support timely decision-making.

Given that Urban Futures operates in ten cities with distinct institutional arrangements, governance structures, levels of civic space, and market conditions, the evaluation will treat context not as background information but as a core analytical dimension. Understanding how local conditions influence pathways of change will be essential to interpreting progress, explaining variation across cities, and generating insights that remain useful beyond individual cases.

The evaluation will apply an equity and inclusion approaches, recognizing that youth, women, and marginalized groups are central political and economic actors in Urban Futures. Analysis will explore whose perspectives shape decision-making, who benefits from different types of support, and how program strategies engage and amplify diverse voices along the four pathways.

The evaluation will adopt youth-centered and youth-responsive methods where feasible, such as peer-led interviews, youth-facilitated focus groups, and participatory tools that allow young people to articulate their perspectives on governance, narratives, climate-resilient practices, and economic opportunities.

Finally, the evaluation will not assess proportional resource allocation or attempt to verify every activity across all cities. Instead, it will focus on contribution, learning, and strategic insight to strengthen program performance and inform forward-looking decisions

3.2 Sampling

The evaluation is expected to include a minimum of four deep-dive cities, selected to ensure regional and contextual diversity across the Urban Futures portfolio. The final selection of deep dive cities will be proposed by the evaluation team during the inception phase, based on the criteria outlined below and in consultation with Hivos and Fondation Botnar.

Criteria	Description
Political and institutional context diversity	The city offers a distinct governance environment (e.g., strong vs. fragmented institutions, levels of civic space, stability vs. volatility).
Maturity across the four pathways	The city shows different levels of progress across pathways (advanced in some, emerging in others), creating opportunities for comparative learning.
Strength and configuration of coalitions	Presence of active youth and women groups, producer associations, market actors, and municipal authorities working in coalition (or facing gaps worth understanding).
Evidence of innovation or bottlenecks	The city presents notable breakthroughs, challenges, or learning opportunities relevant to understanding contribution mechanisms
Regional balance	Selection ensures representation from Latin America, Southern Africa, and Indonesia.
Potential for transferable learning	Insights from the city can help inform strategies, decisions, or adaptations across other Urban Futures cities.

3.3 Role of external evaluation team

The external evaluation team will lead an independent, learning-oriented assessment that strengthens Urban Futures' understanding of progress, contribution, and contextual dynamics across the ten participating cities. While maintaining independence and analytical rigor, the evaluators team will work in close collaboration with Urban Future team to ensure that the evaluation remains useful, transparent, and aligned with the program's learning and strategic needs.

In the inception phase, the evaluators will work with Urban Future to build a shared understanding of the evaluation objectives, refine the evaluation questions, and finalize the methodological approach, deep dive sampling, and data-collection tools. The evaluator will draw on the program's monitoring, evaluation, and learning systems, and will triangulate this information with additional qualitative and quantitative data to analyze contribution across the four pathways of change.

The evaluation will actively and deliberately involve young people from participating cities. The evaluation team is expected to include local evaluators and to create opportunities for youth who participated in Urban Futures to contribute to data collection and, where feasible, to collaborative analysis processes. This may include contracting youth under a cash-for-work modality to support fieldwork activities, which not only strengthens local ownership but also

contributes to youth capacity development and meaningful engagement in evaluation and learning.

The administrative responsibility for the cash-for-work modality will lie with the external evaluation team, including the contracting and payment of participating youth. Selection of youth participants will be based on previously defined criteria, with local implementing partners playing a key role in identifying suitable profiles and ensuring safeguarding and contextual relevance. The mentorship component of this exercise will be led by the evaluation team—rather than by implementing partners—and is expected to go beyond data collection to also involve participating youth, where feasible, in basic data interpretation and reflection processes. This approach aims to strengthen learning, ownership, and meaningful youth engagement in the evaluation process.

Throughout the evaluation, the evaluators will engage Urban Futures programming teams in structured and purposeful learning moments, including targeted sense-making sessions and consultations at global, regional, and selected city levels. References to city partners are intended to denote a representative subset of local partners and coalitions, as outlined in Annex 2, rather than all actors involved in the program. The evaluators will facilitate a validation workshop to discuss emerging findings and a final co-creation workshop with Urban Futures and selected partners to develop actionable and forward-looking recommendations for the remainder of the program and potential future directions. These evaluation-related learning moments are expected to build on and complement existing MEL and Outcome Harvesting processes, avoiding duplication and minimizing time demands on participants.

The evaluators will analyze evidence through complexity-aware, contribution-focused, and context-sensitive approaches, applying attention to equity, inclusion, and youth and women's participation. The evaluators will not conduct an audit or compliance review, nor assess proportional resource allocation or attempt to verify every activity. Instead, the evaluators will generate practical insights that help the program understand what works, why, and under what conditions.

The evaluators will deliver high-quality outputs, including an inception report, preliminary findings, a final report, and validation and recommendations workshops, and will communicate findings in clear, accessible, and actionable formats to support strategic decision-making across the Urban Futures partnership.

3.4 Governance and Management of the Evaluation

The evaluation will be managed by an Evaluation Manager appointed by Hivos, who will be responsible for day-to-day coordination of the evaluation, primary decision-making, and quality assurance of deliverables, in close collaboration with Fondation Botnar. Strategic oversight will be provided through an Evaluation Steering Group composed of representatives from Hivos and Fondation Botnar, which will provide guidance, validate key deliverables, and support alignment with the evaluation's purpose and use, without being involved in data collection or analysis.

Regional and country-level partners will be engaged in the evaluation through clearly defined and time-bound moments, including inception consultations, participation in selected data collection activities (particularly in deep dive cities), and validation and sense-making workshops. Their role will be consultative and contributory, aimed at ensuring contextual accuracy, learning, and ownership, rather than consensus-based decision-making. Where appropriate, a broader Evaluation Reference Group may be convened for advisory purposes,

bringing together representatives from different regions or city coalitions, without a formal decision-making mandate.

3.5 Deliverables

The evaluation will produce a set of deliverables designed to support learning, strategic reflection, and decision-making across Urban Futures. Each delivery must be practical, accessible, and aligned with the evaluation's contribution-oriented and place-based approach.

The draft Inception Report and draft Final Report will undergo an independent external Quality Assurance (QA) review, arranged by Hivos and Fondation Botnar. Evaluators are also expected to provide their own internal QA processes.

Inception Report

The evaluators team will prepare an inception report that includes:

- A refined evaluation purpose, objectives, and questions.
- A detailed methodological design integrating mixed methods and a contribution analysis approach.
- Criteria and final selection of deep dive cities.
- Data-collection tools and ethical considerations.
- A workplan with timeline and roles.
- A clear description of limitations and mitigation strategies.

The inception report will reflect early consultations with Urban Future and will be delivered after a joint inception meeting.

Data Collection Summary and Emerging Insights (Preliminary Findings Note)

To support real-time learning and timely decision-making, the evaluators will prepare a concise note that summarizes:

- key patterns emerging from data collection.
- early insights related to pathways, contribution, and context.
- initial hypotheses regarding mechanisms of change.
- areas that may require adaptation during the final implementation period.
- This note is expected to be concise (approximately 5–7 pages) and produced once during the data collection phase, unless otherwise agreed during inception.

Validation Workshop

The evaluators will facilitate a validation workshop with Urban Future to:

- Test the robustness of emerging findings.
- Clarify context-specific nuances.
- Ensure accurate interpretation of evidence.
- Identify cross-cutting learning to inform the recommendations process.

Validation processes may include, where relevant and feasible, targeted validation moments with local partners and coalitions in selected deep dive cities, to ensure contextual accuracy and meaningful interpretation of findings.

Recommendations Co-Creation Workshop

After the validation workshop and before drafting the final report, the evaluators will facilitate a co-creation workshop with Urban Future program to:

- Develop actionable, context-aware recommendations.
- Prioritize options for the final implementation period.
- Define strategic insights to be integrated into the Final Evaluation Report.

This ensures recommendations are practical, aligned, and realistic for the final phase of Urban Futures.

Final Evaluation Report

The evaluators will deliver a final evaluation report that synthesizes global-level analysis and deep dive findings, including:

- A concise executive summary.
- Analysis structured around the evaluation criteria (relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, emerging sustainability).
- Findings for each of the four pathways of change.
- Cross-cutting insights on learning, adaptation, governance, and context.
- A synthesis of deep dive findings and their implications for the portfolio.
- Contribution analysis and clarified causal mechanisms.
- Good practices, innovations, and lessons learned.
- Co-created, actionable, forward-looking recommendations.

The report will be clear, accessible, and oriented toward decision-making.

Slide Deck of Key Findings

The evaluators will prepare a slide deck summarizing key findings, conclusions, and lessons to share with secondary audiences, including municipal authorities, coalitions, and other stakeholders across the Urban Futures ecosystem. The slide deck should be designed for dissemination and learning purposes, using accessible language and visual formats.

4. Ethical Considerations

The evaluation must uphold the highest ethical standards and ensure the safety, dignity, and rights of all participants—particularly youth, women, and marginalized groups who play central roles in Urban Futures. The evaluation team will secure informed consent, protect confidentiality, and handle all data responsibly and in line with international standards.

Evaluators must apply safeguarding protocols when engaging young people, use culturally appropriate approaches, and avoid any action that may expose participants or partners to risk.

Given the program's diverse political and institutional contexts, the evaluation must remain sensitive to local norms, power dynamics, and civic space conditions. The team will adopt inclusive practices that elevate diverse voices without reinforcing inequities, ensure that participation is voluntary and non-extractive, and contextualize findings carefully to avoid harm. All activities must comply with UNEG Ethical Guidelines

https://www.unevaluation.org/uneg_publications/uneg-ethical-guidelines-evaluation

and Hivos's safeguarding and data protection policies

<https://www.hivos.org/assets/2019/02/Hivos-Safeguarding-Policy-Jan-2019-DEF.pdf>

5. Other requirements and logistics

5.1 Proposed Timeline

Urban Futures will launch the call for expressions of interest in early February 2026. The selection and contracting process will unfold in several stages to ensure a fair, transparent, and high-quality recruitment process. The expected timeline is as follows:

Activity	Responsible	Indicative Timeline
Launch of the Call for Expressions of Interest	Hivos & Fondation Botnar	February 16, 2026
Submission deadline for Expressions of Interest	Evaluation teams	March 16, 2026
Shortlist of EOI submissions and Invitation to submit full proposals	Hivos & Fondation Botnar	April 13 , 2026
Submission of full proposals by shortlisted teams	Evaluation teams	June 1, 2026
Selection of preferred evaluation team	Hivos & Fondation Botnar	July 6 , 2026
Contract negotiation, signature and kick off meeting	Hivos	July 15, 2026
Inception phase	Evaluators	July 15 – October 8, 2026
Data collection (including field visits)	Evaluators	October 20 , 2026 – January 31, 2027
Validation & recommendation co-creation workshops	Evaluators	February 25, 2027
Final evaluation report & slide deck	Evaluators	April 15, 2027

The table below provides an indicative timeline for key evaluation deliverables and feedback loops, aligned with the overall procurement and implementation schedule. Exact dates will be confirmed during the inception phase.

Deliverable	Indicative Timing
Submission of draft Inception Report	September 10 , 2026 (approximately 6 weeks after contract signature)
Feedback on draft Inception Report (Hivos & Fondation Botnar)	By September 24 , 2026 (within 3 weeks)
Submission of final Inception Report	October 8 , 2026 (within 2 weeks after feedback)
Data collection (including fieldwork and deep dives)	October 20, 2026 – January 31, 2027
Submission of Data Collection Summary & Emerging Insights (Preliminary Findings Note)	January 15, 2027
Validation & recommendation co-creation workshops	February 25, 2027
Submission of draft Final Evaluation Report	March 10, 2027
Feedback on draft Final Evaluation Report (Hivos & Fondation Botnar)	By April 1, 2027 (within 3 weeks)
Submission of final Evaluation Report & slide deck	April 15, 2027

5.2 Field Trips

Given the place-based nature of Urban Futures and the importance of understanding political, institutional, market, and social dynamics directly in context, the evaluation must include in-person visits to at least one city in each region where the program operates: (Latin America and the Caribbean or LAC, Southern Africa or SAF and Indonesia)

These visits will allow the evaluation team to engage directly with youth groups, women-led initiatives, coalitions, municipal authorities, producer associations, market actors, and other local partners. The selection of specific cities will follow the deep dive sampling criteria described in the methodology section and will be finalized during the inception phase.

5.3 Budget

Hivos expects a maximum of EUR 200,000 euros application for this evaluation. (including all fees and expenses).

6. Evaluators team requirements

6.1 Experience and skills required.

Urban Futures seeks an evaluation team with strong experience in complex, multi-country evaluations, and the ability to generate rigorous, context-sensitive, and actionable learning. The team must demonstrate:

Technical and Methodological Expertise

- Proven experience with mixed methods, contribution analysis, and complexity-aware evaluation designs.
- Skills in qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis (interviews, focus groups, observation, document review, trend analysis).
- Ability to integrate equity, gender, youth, and inclusion into analytical frameworks.

Thematic and Contextual Knowledge

- Experience in one or more relevant areas: food systems, urban governance, climate resilience, circular/green economies, youth participation and youth-led organizing, gender justice, or systems change.
- Work experience in at least two of the three program regions: Latin America and the Caribbean, Southern Africa, and Indonesia.
- Inclusion of in-country or regional evaluators to ensure contextual relevance and ethical engagement.

Language Requirements

- Fluency in English (mandatory for reporting and global coordination).
- Fluency in Spanish (required for work in LAC and for reviewing program documentation).
- Bahasa Indonesia proficiency (preferred), or clear strategies for translation and interpretation.

Facilitation and Learning Skills

- Ability to design and facilitate sense-making sessions, validation workshops, and co-creation processes.
- Effective communication skills to present complex findings clearly to diverse audiences.

Ethical and Inclusive Practice

- Experience engaging youth, women, and marginalized groups safely and ethically.
- Adherence to international evaluation ethics and safeguarding standards.
- Proven experience designing and implementing evaluations with and for young people, including youth-friendly tools, safeguarding, and participatory approaches.

Independence and Integrity

- Capacity to work independently while collaborating constructively with Urban Future teams, and key stakeholders.
- No conflicts of interest with program partners.

Team Composition

A competitive team will include a Team Lead, food system regional experts, thematic specialists such as on gender, mixed-methods researchers, and others (as necessary) with the required language competencies.

Teams integrating local evaluators and youth researchers from participating countries as core team members will be viewed favorably and are strongly encouraged to propose concrete roles for youth in fieldwork and reflection processes, beyond data collection alone.

6.2 References

Applicants are requested to include at least three hyperlinks of evaluations that are broadly representative of the evaluation team's capability in relation to the experience/skills required.

7. Proposal and Deadline

7.1 Expression of Interest (EOI)

Applicants are invited to submit an Expression of Interest (EOI) to demonstrate their suitability to undertake the evaluation. The EOI should include:

- A cover letter (up to 2 pages) outlining the team's understanding of the evaluation purpose, a brief description of the proposed approach, and the relevance of the team's experience.
- CVs of proposed core team members (in the Annex)
- Links to up to three examples of comparable evaluation reports (in the Annex)

Please note that proposal reviewers are not obligated to read beyond the page limit specified above.

7.3 Deadline for Submissions

Urban Futures will launch the call for Expressions of Interest in early February 2026. EOIs must be submitted by March 16, 2026.

Shortlisted teams will be invited to submit a full proposal in April 2026. The final selection will take place by July 2026, with contracting expected in July 2026 and the evaluation starting in July/August 2026.

8. Annexes

Annex 1. Theory of change

You can find it in the following link:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1YAqqVB16hxHJ0mvMvZ_kPspBJqdoaWom/view?usp=drive_link

Annex 2. Further Information about Urban Future Program

Program structure, governance, and delivery model

Urban Futures is delivered through a layered governance and support structure:

Global Team (Hivos):

Provides overall coordination and program management; steers MEL, learning, communications, advocacy; manages donor relations; and ensures coherence across cities and regions. The Global Team is responsible for organizing program-wide linking & learning and for reporting to Fondation Botnar.

Regional Teams (Latin America and Southern Africa) and Humanis in Indonesia:

Provide contextualized strategic guidance and day-to-day support to implementing partners in each country. They coordinate the design and rollout of city strategies, maintain ongoing engagement with municipal and regional authorities, and help navigate political and institutional barriers. They also play a key role in identifying risks, capturing learning, and negotiating access to decision-making spaces.

Global Management Team (GMT):

The GMT meets regularly (monthly) to review delivery, surface issues that need escalation or adaptation, and align planning across regions. The GMT links implementation realities to program-level decisions and to donor reporting.

Steering Committee (SC):

The SC provides higher-level strategic oversight. It met in July 2024 to review implementation and align priorities, and again in February 2025 to review and approve 2024 results. The SC helps maintain a shared view between Fondation Botnar, Hivos, RUAF, and Regional Teams / Humanis.

RUAF:

RUAF is the strategic partner on urban and territorial food systems, governance, and advocacy. RUAF also helps connect city experiences to wider debates on territorial food systems.

Local partners and coalitions:

UF works with approximately 38 partner organizations across the five countries. In Indonesia, UF is implemented through eight consortia comprising 22 organizations across Bandung and West Manggarai, including: Pangan Bernas (KEHATI with KRKP, Yakines); KOPAJA (RISE Foundation with Frontiers for Health, SEMAK, Cahaya Inklusi); Simpul Pangan (Pamflet Generasi with Rombak Media); PESPA (Article 33 with CRPG, IATL-ITB, Sinergantara); WRI Indonesia (with Parongpong RAW Lab, Garda Pangan); ASLI (ASPPUK with Alifa); PUPA (AKATIGA with Seni Tani); and Prestasi Junior Indonesia.

Across other countries, local partners include Fundación SIDOC and Fundación Mi Sangre (Colombia: Cali, Medellín), Fundación FUEGOS and Fundación Imaymana (Ecuador: MANPANOR, Quito–Chocó Andino), BVTa and partners in Bulawayo and Green Governance Zimbabwe Trust in Mutare (Zimbabwe), and CHEP with CUTS/GNS in Zambia (Kitwe, Chongwe). These organizations lead implementation, co-design strategies, coordinate youth participation, and anchor multi-stakeholder platforms.

Youth coalitions / youth-led structures:

In each city-region, UF supports youth collectives, youth councils, and informal and emerging youth groups. The program does not position youth only as participants. The expectation is that youth are political and economic actors who enter negotiations around food systems governance, space management, budgets, enterprise opportunities, and procurement. The quality and durability of these spaces, and the ability of youth to use them, are a core focus of this MTR.

This governance model matters for the MTR because one of the central evaluation questions is whether this structure - Global Team, Regional Teams / Humanis, GMT, SC, local coalitions, youth structures actually function in a coherent way that enables timely support, learning, and political traction, rather than creating confusion or duplication.

Program approach and offer to cities and coalitions

Urban Futures does not operate as a traditional “project implementer” that delivers predefined activities. Instead, it positions itself as a broker and enabler for locally defined and locally owned change processes. Concretely, UF’s offer in each city-region includes:

Financial support in the form of grants and sub-grants to local partners and coalitions.

Technical assistance and accompaniment on urban / territorial food systems, governance, inclusive participation mechanisms, short value chains, and climate-resilient practices.

Incubation and entrepreneurship support, including support for cooperative formation and formalization, market access, financial literacy, business planning, and positioning youth- and women-led initiatives to access finance.

Facilitation of governance platforms and participation spaces that are designed to last beyond the program and become part of how cities make decisions about food, space, and markets.

Monitoring, evidence, and learning support (MEL) to generate credible documentation of change that can be used in advocacy, in negotiations with municipal and national actors, and in influencing future investment.

Linking & learning across cities and countries, creating channels to compare strategies, replicate approaches that are working, and co-develop solutions when partners face similar political or operational constraints.

Communications and narrative support that amplifies youth and community voices, reframes food and climate issues in ways that resonate locally, and protects credibility and legitimacy of youth-led and women-led initiatives in public and political space.

This model assumes that building inclusive, climate-resilient, youth-driven food systems is not primarily a technical problem; it is power, governance, and resourcing problem. The program's job is to support local coalitions to build leverage within those systems.

Key Stakeholders

The following stakeholders are considered key actors within the Urban Futures ecosystem and may be engaged, where relevant, throughout the evaluation process:

- Fondation Botnar
- Hivos Global Team
- Regional Teams (Latin America, Southern Africa) and Humanis in Indonesia
- RUAF
- Steering Committee and Global Management Team
- City and regional authorities (mayors' offices, planning, food/market management, health, youth/ Key economic opportunity, territorial development, environment/climate)
- Youth coalitions and youth-led / youth-representative structures involved in food systems, public space, local markets, and entrepreneurship
- Local and national public stake holders.
- Producer groups, cooperatives, SMEs, and market actors
- Financial actors (local finance actors, municipal financing channels, incubators/accelerators)
- Academic and knowledge partners (universities, institutes, research organizations)
- Civil society and community-based organizations
- Where relevant: national authorities responsible for agriculture, territorial planning, youth employment, climate/environment, or health

Youth should be treated and engaged as political and economic actors with agency, not only as "beneficiaries."

Annex 3. Minimum Methodological Criteria for Youth Session(s)

Pre-Meeting Preparation

- Participants will receive a preparation package that includes a brief background on the UF
- If youth participants are asked to do a presentation, they will receive a one-page document with clear instructions to prepare a 2-minute presentation on a meaningful engagement experience (positive or negative) from their city.
- Youth may also receive a survey to gather information and initial thoughts to develop the workshop. All participants, especially youth, will submit a profile of up to 100 words with a photo. They may include their Instagram handle if available and only with explicit consent. Profiles will be compiled and shared in advance to help participants get to know each other and lower language barriers.
- The profile file (including photos and optional handles) will be translated into Indonesian before distribution (at minimum using DeepL).

During the session

- Ensure that sessions are held in a respectful and non-discriminatory environment where all youth feel safe to express their views.
- Apply participatory methods (e.g., group discussions, creative tools, interactive exercises) that allow young people to actively shape the conversation.
- Use clear, inclusive, and culturally relevant language.
- Actively address power dynamics (age, gender, social status) to ensure that marginalized voices (young women, LGBTQ+, indigenous youth, etc.) are heard.
- Include time for youth to reflect on the process and provide feedback, ensuring their inputs shape the evaluation

Format and Timing

Duration: Maximum of 2 hours per day (to be discussed with consultant team).

Participants: Minimum of 20 youth representatives from the 10 city regions, plus Local Partners, Hivos, Humanis, and the Botnar Foundation.

Platform: Microsoft Teams or Zoom