



Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada
**Quality Assurance Framework for
Decision-Making**

Aussi disponible en français sous le titre : *La Commission de l'immigration et du statut de réfugié du Canada, Cadre d'assurance de la qualité pour la prise de décisions*

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Introduction to the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada's Quality Assurance Framework

Overview and objectives

The Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (IRB) has a statutory mandate of resolving immigration and refugee cases efficiently, fairly and in accordance with the law. To ensure that the IRB is well positioned to respond to the changing global migration patterns and unprecedented volume of people seeking access to Canada's immigration and refugee protection system, the IRB has established a multi-year Growth and Transformation agenda. The agenda was announced in 2019–20 and is focused on three strategic objectives: improved and sustained productivity; enhanced quality and consistency in decision-making; and strengthened management, with a focus on people management.

As the IRB grows, it is essential that it maintain its reputation for high-quality and fair decisions. The Board also recognizes the important role that quality decision-making plays in ensuring access to justice. The IRB's Quality Assurance Framework provides an overview of the various activities, processes, strategies and structures that contribute to quality decision-making, as it relates to adjudication, across the IRB's four divisions. In the judicial setting, courts frequently speak of the need for administrative decision-making to be transparent, intelligible and justified. These are the elements that mark a quality decision. Consequently, the IRB defines quality decisions as those which can be shown to be transparent, intelligible and justified. The activities outlined in this framework are therefore closely aligned to these elements and create a path for the IRB to follow towards its strategic objective of enhanced quality and consistency in decision-making. To this end, several principles guide the IRB and decision-makers as they pursue this objective.

Guiding principles

The following principles guide quality assurance at the IRB:

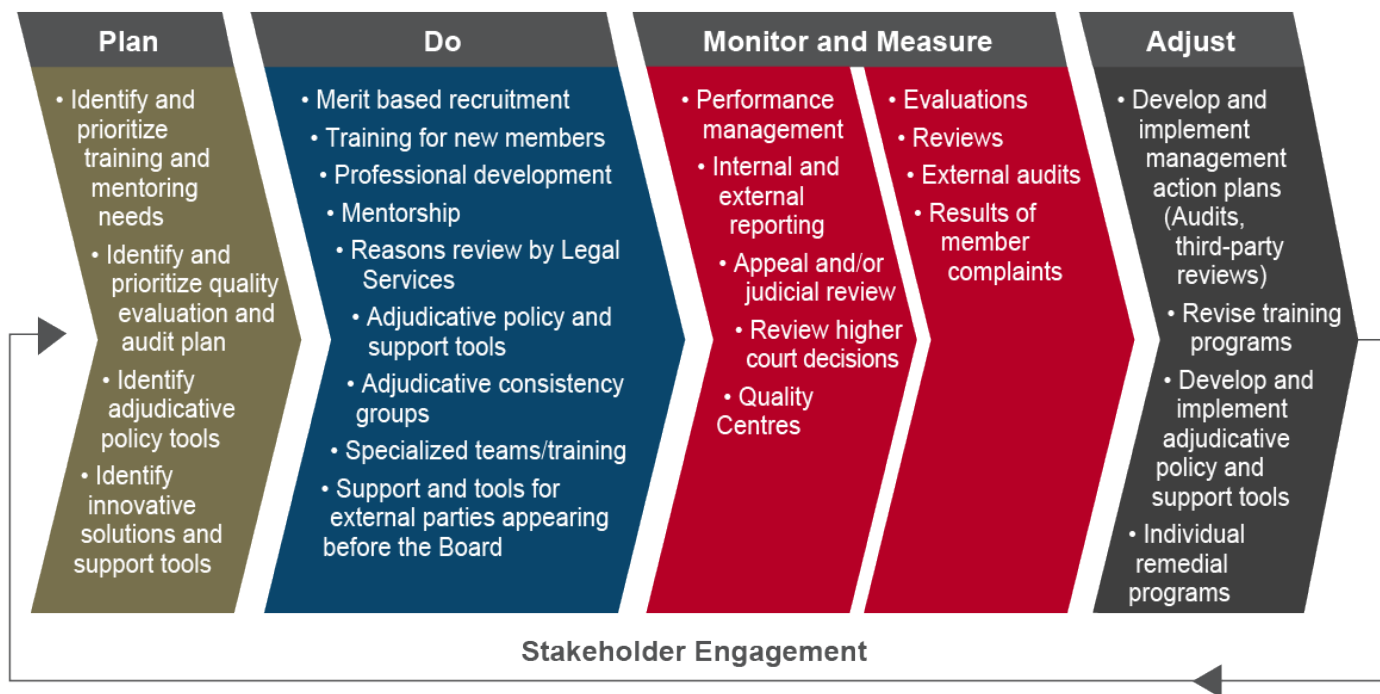
- Compliance** The necessary adherence to legislation, regulations and policies to fulfill the IRB's mandate
- Consistency** The belief that the decision-making process and the factors that are considered should be applied consistently
- Equity** The belief that all cases should be treated in a fair and impartial manner, in accordance with the law
- Independence** Quality assurance strategies support the accountability of members and facilitate the independence of member's decision-making
- Collaboration** Quality assurance is a shared responsibility across IRB management and members
- Ongoing process of improvement** Quality assurance is not an end result but an integral component of the decision-making processes, with a commitment to the continual improvement of quality assurance strategies and tools

Approach

The IRB Quality Assurance Framework is organized according to the stages of a continuous improvement cycle: Plan, Do, Monitor & Measure, and Adjust (see fig. 1). Although many of the activities across the stages run concurrently, there is a natural flow of progression.

- 1. Plan:** This stage ensures that activities and investments in support of quality decisions are reviewed and prioritized at the onset of the year and revisited at least semi-annually in order to ensure continued alignment with corporate quality and performance objectives. Quality planning focuses on training, mentoring, performance targets and evaluations, which are all aimed at ensuring that best practices are in place for continued improvement. Additionally, updates to adjudicative policy tools occur periodically as part of an ongoing effort to ensure they are up to date and support high-quality, fair, efficient decision-making.
- 2. Do:** This stage addresses all the activities which directly support quality decisions in an operational context, where operations at the IRB are comprised of decision-makers across four divisions: the Refugee Protection Division (RPD), the Refugee Appeal Division (RAD), the Immigration Division (ID) and the Immigration Appeal Division (IAD). Activities include recruiting and training new members, as well as providing ongoing training and mentorship, to ensure continued professional development (PD) for all members. Further focus is put on ensuring that decision-makers have collaborative forums to engage with their colleagues on current issues and challenges, and that they have the collaborative tools to facilitate the sharing of information.
- 3. Monitor and 4. Measure:** This stage is about monitoring and measuring the effectiveness of what was defined in the “Plan” stage and performed in the “Do” stage. It answers questions about the effectiveness of the IRB’s training and mentorship programs. It reviews the quality of decisions, ensuring the Board has the right practices in place to support decision-making excellence, including timely and complete pre-proceeding readiness; respectfulness of proceedings; focused proceedings; and clear, complete, concise and timely decisions. The activities at this stage are facilitated both at the division level, where quality centres have been established (in RPD and RAD), and centrally, where independent third-party reviews are facilitated.
- 5. Adjust:** The final stage of the framework is comprised of activities to address the changes that need to be either incorporated immediately into operations (the “Do”) or included as input into the next planning cycle to identify new and evolving priorities. This includes activities such as the development of action plans to address findings from third-party reviews and external audits, revisions to training programs, and adjustments to adjudicative policy tools in response to changing trends. Finally, this stage provides for defining remedial actions to support individual members in their professional development.

Figure 1: IRB Quality Assurance Framework for Quality Decision-Making



[Long description](#)

Roles and responsibilities

The IRB’s leadership plays an important role by promoting and emphasizing innovation and teamwork, which provides an important foundation for implementing the Quality Assurance Framework. However, lasting results cannot be achieved without the commitment and support of the entire organization. Within this collaboration, several groups play integral roles in upholding quality assurance:

Chairperson	The Chairperson provides overall leadership and direction with respect to quality assurance and professional development.
Deputy chairpersons	The deputy chairpersons are accountable to the Chairperson for the quality decision-making of the members assigned to their divisions. They provide vision and set priorities with regard to quality programs and enable assistant deputy chairpersons to implement these priorities.
Assistant deputy chairpersons	Assistant deputy chairpersons provide leadership in implementing quality programs and ensuring that appropriate resources are committed to support quality decision-making. They create an environment for their teams that facilitates and fosters continuous improvement and quality decision-making. Representative assistant deputy chairpersons from RPD and RAD play an integral role in the management of the quality centres in those divisions.

Quality centres	The quality centres provide focused attention on initiatives, tools and mechanisms that improve quality. They also provide a mechanism to ensure that best practices are communicated and that quality issues are identified and addressed in a timely manner, independent of the individual performance management system.
Coordinating members	Coordinating members support and encourage members' professional development by providing regular feedback and identifying areas for development with respect to quality decision-making. They provide advice on procedural and other issues, identify training needs or areas of inconsistency in member performance, and promote the use of best practices.
Members	Members are responsible for appropriately applying legislation, regulations and policies, and for employing strategies and tools to render quality decisions. They also participate in learning and professional development opportunities for the purpose of enhancing competencies, thereby strengthening quality decision-making.
Legal Services	Legal Services prepares jurisprudential updates, case notes and other essential documentation contributing to quality decision-making. Legal Services is available to assist members by providing legal opinions and providing legal advice on draft reasons. It is also involved in the training of members.
Strategic Directions and Corporate Affairs Branch	The Strategic Directions and Corporate Affairs Branch maintains the quality assurance framework, including regular updates as required. It is responsible for many of the monitoring and measuring activities, and the reporting of results. It also leverages the framework to help the Board identify Quality-related priorities and is responsible for updating policy instruments.

1. Plan

1.1 Identify and prioritize training and mentoring needs

The identification of training and mentoring needs is an ongoing process for the IRB. Training and mentoring needs are identified so that members receive training and mentoring support where it will be most impactful to ensure quality adjudicative decision-making. Within each division, supervisors consider member requested needs, data trends, performance information and stakeholder feedback when holding professional development (PD) sessions, establishing mentorships, designing new member training, developing training materials, and planning country presentations.

Identification of training needs occurs at either a regional or national level, or both, depending on the management and operational requirements of each division. Regionally based PD committees establish forward agendas for PD training based on current issues and needs identified in their regions. The committee meets at least once per month to identify training needs and to plan PD sessions. The committee is responsive to training needs identified by management and Legal Services, and provides the forum for such training in its regularly scheduled PD sessions. Similarly, a national divisional PD training committee comprised of regional representatives and legal advisors, with divisional management, recommend learning objectives for the year to ensure ongoing PD. Nationally delivered training promotes the sharing of ideas and consistency between regions. Learning priorities are identified with input from divisional Adjudicative Strategy and PD committees, Quality Centres (RPD and RAD), and emerging Federal Court jurisprudence. Other elements for training are received from Legal Services and management action plans (MAPs) developed in response to quality measurement initiatives (QMIs addressed in [Section 4.2—Reviews](#)).

Mentors and needs for mentorship are identified within each division of the IRB and are assigned based on member request, performance needs, and as part of new member training.

A Member Learning Secretariat (MLS) was created in spring 2019, as a resource for all divisions to support certain facets of the administration of member training. The MLS plays a key role in supporting the identification and prioritization of training needs. The goal of the MLS is to provide national, organization-wide coordination of learning and PD activities for decision-makers such as new member training, PD sessions, country presentations, mentoring and national training symposiums. This support comes in the form of planning training and learning activities, preparing training material, coordinating with regional counterparts for venues and equipment, tracking training sessions, evaluating training sessions, etc. The MLS has also developed checklists to assist divisions in identifying training needs, ensuring that the process is systematic and thorough across the Board. The MLS Governance Committee sets the direction and priorities for member adjudication learning and training, and establishes the priorities for and provides oversight to the MLS. This committee has representation from all divisions and serves the Chairperson of the IRB.

1.2 Identify and prioritize quality evaluation and audit plans

The planning of the IRB's third-party reviews and internally led evaluations helps to ensure that all components of quality decision-making are reviewed, and that areas for continuous and ongoing improvement are identified.

The evaluation unit within the Strategic Planning, Accountability and Reporting (SPAR) Directorate conducts an annual planning exercise to identify and prioritize all third-party reviews, as well as internally and externally led evaluations over a five-year period. This process is conducted in accordance with the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat (TBS) *Policy on Results* and is facilitated through the use of the TBS's *Evaluation Coverage Tables*.

As part of this exercise, some reviews such as quality measurement initiatives (addressed in [Section 4.2—Reviews](#)) are planned for each division on a biennial basis, while other reviews are planned at the request of internal IRB stakeholders, the TBS or Parliament. Reviews that are initiated internally seek to ensure the quality of initiatives that support adjudicative decision-making, as well as the quality of the decisions themselves.

The proposed list of prioritized evaluations and audits are reviewed and approved by the Audit, Evaluation and Performance Measurement Committee (AEPMC).

The IRB rarely initiates or conducts its own audits; rather, the audits are conducted by the Office of the Auditor General (OAG) or the Office of the Comptroller General (OCG). The coordination of responses to these audits and the development of Management Action Plans (MAPs) is the responsibility of the SPAR Directorate and is integrated into the SPAR Directorate's plans.

1.3 Identify adjudicative policy tools

At a foundational level, adjudicative policy tools guide the IRB as a tribunal and drive consistency and quality in decision-making. While each decision-maker is independent, adjudicative policy tools are used to provide guidance on adjudicative matters, model best practices, to provide examples of sound decision-making strategies, to explain complex areas of law, and to explore unsettled questions of fact.

The Board's adjudicative policy tools can be loosely grouped into two categories:

- **soft law instruments**, for example guidelines, policies and practice notices; and
- **adjudicative instruments**, such as jurisprudential guides, persuasive decisions, three-member panel decisions and reasons of interest, which consist of individual decisions that are utilized for strategic adjudicative purposes.

Collectively, these tools are intended to facilitate efficient and fair decision-making that is responsive to developments in both jurisprudence and the evidentiary foundations on which decisions are based.

Adjudicative policy tools are identified and implemented in order to enhance quality, consistency and efficiency in decision-making. For example, where the RAD uses one of its adjudicative policy tools to map out a legally sound framework for analysis that can be used in a large number of cases, this framework can then be used by other decision-makers to render legally sound decisions in an efficient manner. The framework does not dictate a result, or infringe upon independence in decision-making, but does foster a consistent approach to adjudicating similar cases. Decisions with respect to the use of adjudicative policy tools are driven by a number of factors, including assessments of common case types, unresolved legal and factual issues, and country volumes. The use of these tools is developed in collaboration with adjudicative strategy committees and their respective divisions. Once designated, these tools are evaluated and monitored based on their ongoing utility to members and their continued accuracy and relevance. Examples of existing adjudicative policy tools include jurisprudential guides, Chairperson's guidelines, persuasive decisions, and reasons of interest, which are published online.

Planning related to adjudicative policy tools occurs on an ongoing basis through the use of metrics to support the forecasting of legal issues or to identify areas of inconsistency, for example. This allows the IRB to map out particular topics and determine if use of an adjudicative policy tool may be warranted. Additionally, key legislative changes (including to the Rules) trigger significant planning events to review, improve or adjust our adjudicative policy tools. More flexible policy instruments, such as practice notices, are used to make minor adjustments, if required, between major legislative reviews. (More information on this aspect is provided in [Section 5.3—Develop and implement adjudicative policy and support tools.](#))

1.4 Identify innovative solutions and support tools

Technological innovation can bring about quality improvements by increasing consistency, improving information sharing and reducing errors. A variety of technological tools and resources are in place to support members and those who appear before the Board. The IRB is committed to remaining a leading-edge administrative tribunal and therefore is continuously engaged in the process of reviewing and implementing new technology, and making adjustments to a wide range of support tools as required.

The adoption of new technology and innovative tools is an important aspect of ensuring the Board remains responsive to its environment and to the needs of its members and those appearing before it. Planning related to the development of new tools to support decision-making occurs as part of the IRB's annual strategic planning and investment planning processes, and takes into consideration the Board's current and future operating context.

2. Do

2.1 Merit-based recruitment

The IRB has developed staffing strategies and tools to ensure future decision-makers are able to render fair and efficient decisions. During the hiring process, applicants must successfully complete a written exam and an interview that are tailored to measure decision-making ability, alongside other necessary qualities, such as judgment and reasoning, information-seeking and self-control. A reference check and background check or security clearance are also administered to verify the candidate's suitability for the member position. Values and ethics are assessed as part of the hiring process, and any isolated or specific conflict-of-interest considerations are addressed throughout the hiring process and on an ongoing basis. The staffing strategy is responsive to data trends, such as determining the predicted number of applications needed to fill a set number of positions.

For all divisions, merit-based recruitment is in place to ensure that persons hired are qualified and able to render quality decisions. Recruitment of RPD and ID members follows policies and procedures which respond to the *Public Service Employment Act*. At the RAD and the IAD, in collaboration with Governor in Council Secretariat Services, a list of qualified persons is presented to the Minister for consideration for appointment by the Governor in Council (GIC).

Fostering a more diverse and inclusive workplace is a central pillar of the IRB's organizational culture. It is important that the workforce fully reflects Canada's diversity. As such, the IRB actively seeks to recruit qualified members who are representative of the Canadian population.

2.2 Training for new members

Co-delivered by experienced member trainers and Legal Services counsel, New Member Training (NMT) combines enhanced pedagogy with teaching to the theory of the case, helping members focus on determinative issues and deliver quality decisions. New Member Training ensures that all new members have a solid understanding of the law, including divisional rules and case law, and introduces RPD and RAD members to a range of IRB research products and services that assist members in developing the country-condition knowledge needed to fairly assess claims. NMT is built on the principles of adult education, and incorporates hands-on member experience such as job shadowing, mock hearings, and/or participating on three-member panels, as appropriate.

While these principles apply for all, each division has a training program for new members which is tailored to its unique needs and realities. For example, in the RPD, this training runs for approximately seven weeks, and ensures that all new members have a standardized approach to conducting hearings and rendering decisions. The IAD generally trains new members in a two-step approach, lasting approximately two weeks each. The first phase is on certain appeal types, and the second phase takes place several months later on the remaining appeal types. In between the two phases, members are gradually assigned files on the appeal types for which they have been trained.

The Member Learning Secretariat supports divisional training in the form of planning training and learning activities, preparing training material, coordinating with regional counterparts for venues and equipment, tracking the training sessions, etc. In RPD and RAD, Quality Centres play a central role in leading NMT initiatives.

NMT ensures that all new members receive the knowledge, tools and support required to develop their decision-making skills to a level where their decisions are of high quality. Training is regularly updated to reflect changes in policy, procedures and law. Lessons learned are created at the end of each session to promote the quality and integrity of the training.

2.3 Professional development

Monthly Professional Development (PD) sessions provide an opportunity for members to reflect on pressing substantive and legal issues, including feedback resulting from appellate decisions and/or judicial reviews of the Federal Court. These regular sessions provide continuous learning opportunities for all members on matters most pertinent to their work so that they are well informed about current issues and better equipped to make quality decisions.

PD sessions are developed based on emerging issues and needs identified by way of developments in jurisprudence, results from divisional or Board-wide quality assessment activities, feedback from stakeholders, and management observations of trends. PD sessions cover a wide range of topics from jurisprudential and policy updates, to issues of hearing room management, to the finalization of less complex claims, and the efficient rendering of decisions. Additionally, they cover topics such as avoiding burnout, sensitivity fatigue, resilience and other areas that address the mental health and wellbeing of members. These topics contribute to better working environments, which result in a better quality of work.

Professional Development sessions are usually nationally coordinated and regionally offered, though the specific approach may differ based on divisional and regional requirements. Generally, PD sessions are organized by a national PD committee consisting of several members, regional representatives, Legal Services, and management, with collaboration from the Quality Centre or the Deputy Chairperson's Office, as appropriate. Additionally, informal regional PD sessions are frequently conducted by regional assistant deputy chairpersons. For the ID, a more regional approach is taken, with each region developing its own PD sessions based on their respective emerging issues.

2.4 Mentorship

Mentorship aims to ensure that members have access to support structures. In the case of remedial mentorship, it also allows for the targeting of identified performance challenges of specific members. Mentoring support reinforces training material and helps members develop and maintain the skills needed to make high quality decisions.

Mentorship at the IRB takes three forms: 1) New member mentorship (both peer-to-peer colleague support ["buddies"] and assigned mentors); 2) Ongoing professional development (mentorship requested by a member to improve a specific skill); and, 3) Remedial/reactive mentorship (based on an identified performance need). Mentors are either experienced members who add this to their existing tasks, or are former IRB members hired for this purpose.

Across the IRB, mentors are provided to new and, where necessary, existing members to support them in their roles. Mentors may review files with members, observe hearings and provide feedback on the conduct of the hearing, or provide guidance on the drafting of reasons. Mentorship is usually provided proactively to all new members. It is continued for varying amounts of time depending on the new members' needs, and is given remedially in situations where particular performance needs have been identified. It is important to note that mentors help members address identified areas for improvement in a manner which respects their adjudicative independence.

Divisions have developed tailored mentorship programs to address their specific needs. For example, the IAD contracts former members to act as mentors for new members beginning to preside on their own or who otherwise require additional support. In the IAD, mentors are required to provide a written report on the member's progress, which is shared with the member and their Assistant Deputy Chairperson.

The RPD has several mentorship initiatives to support new members, including the New Member Buddy Initiative and the National Mentorship Program. The proactive National Mentorship Program helps new

members transition into a full hearing schedule and implement lessons learned from training. This provides support for new members during the first four to six weeks of decision-making. It is the next step in adjudicative development after New Member Training. The program's goal is to create and maintain the skills needed to support fair, efficient and high-quality adjudication.

Overall, mentors across the IRB contribute to the success of new members, as well as the growth of more experienced members, by enhancing the quality of their work through coaching.

2.5 Reasons review by Legal Services

Legal Services counsel is available to assist members in articulating quality, well-reasoned decisions and offering advice that adopts a legal risk approach to possible appeals or higher court review. Under the IRB's [Reasons Review Policy](#) and [Instructions Governing Solicitor-Client Privilege](#), reasons reviews by counsel are confidential to members, and voluntary, except during the training period so that management can be apprised of any training needs. Members are assigned a Legal Services advisor who is available to address any legal question whether it be case specific or a broader adjudicative/legal question.

New members are expected to make use of the reasons review service offered by Legal Services in accordance with the New Member Training Program. While reasons review is generally an optional service offered to decision-makers, the training of new members is a special situation, in which legal counsel work with them as part of a support team. This team may be composed of a legal advisor, an experienced member acting as a mentor, and the new member's manager.

Additionally, a member's manager may recommend to a member that they should have Legal Services review their draft reasons because of the complexity or novelty of the case or because the member manager is of the view it would be consistent with the objectives of reasons review.

When providing reasons review, counsel seek to promote quality, efficiency and independence along with consistency in their advice, including in providing timely advice to members seeking to render oral decisions. However, how the legal advice is applied or used is at the discretion of the member, as the decision and reasons remain their own. The decision-maker is free to accept or to reject comments made by Legal Services on the reasons. Legal Services does not share any specific cases or concerns with management, but may raise frequently noted issues and trends, for purposes of identifying general training needs.

It is important to note that many decisions of the ID are rendered orally and generally Legal Services has fewer reasons to review. However, all members rendering oral decisions, including members of the ID, IAD or RPD, may seek specific advice from a Legal Services advisor through a meeting or phone call to help inform them in the rendering of their oral decision.

2.6 Adjudicative policy and support tools

Adjudicative policy and support tools are developed to facilitate quality decisions by improving procedures, information access, and/or horizontal member engagement. As described in [Section 1.3—Identify adjudicative policy tools](#), these tools, which support adjudicative policies or support the decision-making process in general, lead to improved quality through enhanced consistency in decision-making.

Adjudicative policy tools are primarily written guidance for members—and in some cases the Registry, or others involved in proceedings before the IRB—dedicated to improving the quality of IRB decision-making.

Adjudicative policy tools include:

- The Chairperson’s guidelines, which provide guiding principles for adjudicating and managing cases;
- Jurisprudential guides, which support consistency in adjudicating cases which share essential similarities;
- Policies, which are formal statements that explain the purpose and the mechanics of operational initiatives at the Board; and
- The Chairperson’s instructions, which provide formal direction that obliges specific IRB personnel to take or to avoid specific actions.

Adjudicative tools can also cover specific situations (e.g. [Guideline 9: Proceedings before the IRB Involving Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression, and Sex Characteristics](#) or [jurisprudential guides](#)).

Members make use of adjudicative tools to reach their own conclusions based on the facts of each particular case. Although not binding, members are expected to follow guidelines, unless compelling or exceptional reasons exist to depart from them.

Support tools are primarily concerned with improving information access and horizontal member engagement, which subsequently enhances decision quality. Up-to-date country statistics, [National Documentation Packages \(NDPs\)](#), and [Responses to Information Requests \(RIRs\)](#) are all tools that support information accessibility and also help managers with monitoring trends in the RPD and the RAD. RPD and RAD members also refer to NDPs and RIRs to justify their decisions and practise transparency in their reasoning. For the ID, an aide-mémoire assists members in detention review hearings to address detainees in plain language. Divisions also publish legal overview papers prepared by Legal Services as reference for members and parties.

As stated in [Section 1.4—Identify innovative solutions and support tools](#), innovation and the adoption of new technology is an important aspect of ensuring the Board remains responsive to its environment and to the needs of its members and those appearing before it. Some support tools are based on technological innovation. For example, the IRB has introduced the MS Teams platform to conduct virtual hearings and to deliver virtual professional training to members. Case files for virtual hearings have also been digitized. The MS Teams platform also facilitates easy collaboration between members, including regular member-only meetings which are hosted by some divisions. The purpose of the RPD’s Knowledge Management Tool is to improve access to important information and has been designed specifically to meet member needs.

The wide variety of support tools aim to ensure both the consistency and the quality of decision-making and proceedings more broadly at the Board and allow members to efficiently and consistently consult knowledge that assists them in carrying out their duties.

2.7 Adjudicative consistency groups

RPD members meet in adjudicative consistency groups (ACGs) to discuss adjudicative trends and issues related to emerging country conditions, claim type analysis, case law, etc., in an effort to improve adjudicative quality and consistency in divisional decision-making. This allows a forum for members to discuss and understand trends and issues in depth and in a consistent manner.

ACG meetings are Consolidated-Bathurst type discussions led by a member. These meetings typically last about two hours and occur once a month. They are designed to enhance the consistency and quality of the decision-making objective of the RPD. ACG meetings allow all members adjudicating the same

countries to have plenary discussions on issues of prevailing country conditions, policies, procedures and law, while respecting the adjudicative independence of the participating members. Members discuss these issues amongst themselves, share their experiences and ask questions of their colleagues. Highlights from these conversations are captured in summary reports (Feedback Forms) that provide a record of the major issues discussed, the material that was provided, and any follow up that may be required.

The objective of ACG meetings is to ensure that members are fully aware of all the issues, trends and developments in the countries from which they hear claims. ACG meetings are not meant to be prescriptive about what decisions members should make in their hearings. ACG meetings help to address matters of intra-team variance related to both decision-making and the efficient use of hearing room time.

Due to the smaller member complements, other divisions do not hold ACGs but achieve the same objective through a variety of means such as discussions at member meetings and regular jurisprudential updates.

2.8 Specialized teams/training

Specialized teams and task forces have been used for various reasons in the past (to address backlogs or specific regional issues, for example) and have also been created for quality purposes.

Specialized teams (whether divisional or regional), and the related specialized training, allow the RPD to develop advanced subject matter expertise in areas related to country conditions, claim types, questioning techniques, and dealing with sensitive claims and vulnerable claimants. Specialized teams afford the RPD opportunities to test quality improvement and adjudicative strategy initiatives and to receive timely feedback. New emerging issues can also be identified efficiently.

Country specialization is a foundational principle for the assignment of cases to RPD members in the Central Region. Teams tend to be specialized in a set number of countries, and within each team there can be further specialization, which allows members to develop an in-depth understanding of country conditions and claim types. Members are therefore well placed to recognize patterns and respond appropriately when country conditions quickly change. Country specialization also leads to greater efficiency within the hearing room and in the rendering of decisions.

Country specialization considers organizational needs but also members' expertise and preferences. Where a limited volume of cases precludes country specialization, countries are assigned based on regional or thematic specialization.

In regions and divisions with smaller member complements, specialization is not possible. Members are expected to hear all types of cases. This ensures that members can hear many types of cases and a flexible approach can be employed within the division when required.

2.9 Support and tools for external parties appearing before the Board

A variety of external parties appear before the Board, including legal counsel, claimants, appellants (including self or unrepresented), designated representatives, witnesses, persons concerned, etc. While the IRB is not responsible for the conduct of these external parties, their level of preparedness at a hearing, or the quality of oral and written information they provide, all of these aspects do impact the quality of the decision rendered. The IRB has a responsibility to ensure tools and supports are in place to support external parties, which are regularly updated by the Board to enable their participation in the proceedings to the fullest extent possible. Additionally, new tools and supports are identified as part of the IRB's ongoing continuous improvement process ([Section 1.4—Identify innovative solutions and support tools](#)), and in response to feedback received directly from external parties, such as through post-hearing surveys.

The IRB currently provides a wide range of tools and supports on its website to help claimants, appellants, counsel, persons concerned, and others to prepare for their proceedings. This includes guides and instructions, which are provided in multiple languages, as well as step-by-step instructions for what to expect throughout the process. Additionally, forms, guides, and examples of previously rendered decisions all help external parties prepare for hearings. In the RPD, Ready Tours for refugee protection claimants are held in-person or virtually. During a Ready Tour, refugee claimants learn about refugee law and determination, meet employees of the RPD, see inside a hearing room, learn what will happen at the hearing, and have a chance to ask questions about the process. Additionally, the IRB provides the National Documentation Package and Responses to Information Requests to claimants and counsel to provide them with the most recent country-of-origin information used by members in the determination process.

The IRB has undertaken enhancements to its Designated Representatives program. A designated representative is someone who represents the interest of a person appearing before the IRB who is unable to represent themselves, either because they are under 18 years of age, or they are unable to understand the nature of the proceedings. A designated representative is usually a parent, family member, legal guardian, or friend, although a contracted designated representative may be identified if no other option is available. The IRB publishes a guide on its website to help designated representatives understand their roles and responsibilities, as well as what to expect at IRB hearings and non-hearing proceedings. The IRB is also updating its orientation material for these individuals and will develop quality control measures, including a complaint mechanism.

The Interpreter program has also been reviewed and updated. An interpreter is an independent contractor retained by the IRB to interpret to and from the language of the proceeding and the language of the subject of the proceedings or their counsel. The IRB provides tools and resources related to the roles and responsibilities of interpreters and has introduced online testing for these individuals, in addition to the on-site testing which was previously available. Additionally, work is ongoing to update orientation and training material and ensure that quality control measures relating to the quality of interpretation are in place. In order to be proactive and supportive to the subject of the proceedings, divisions may review case files to identify needs for interpretation, outside of this being identified by counsel.

The wide variety of support and tools available to external parties helps to ensure that everyone participating in a proceeding at the Board is prepared to the fullest extent possible.

3. Monitor

3.1 Performance management

Performance Management of public service employees across the IRB, including members in the RPD and the ID, follows the Public Service Performance Management (PSPM) Cycle, as set by the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat (TBS). This includes setting performance objectives at the beginning of the fiscal year, and conducting midyear and end-of-year reviews. It also includes an assessment of the member against the four core competencies of the Public Service. In addition, members receive regular reports on their performance in terms of timeliness of decisions and productivity, and in the case of RPD, meet with their managers on a monthly basis to discuss their performance. The member Code of Conduct is included as a measure in these reviews. In addition, coordinating members (supervisors) will regularly review decisions as part of this cycle and will, on occasion, pull audio files to listen to how hearings are conducted. Any identified issues are addressed on an ad hoc basis, as well as in a more structured fashion during the formal performance cycle.

Supervisors build quality into performance management agreements at the beginning of each year. Members have qualitative performance objectives, which are largely evaluated by way of the review of hearing transcripts or audio recordings, as well as the review of written or transcribed decisions by management. Decisions overturned by appeals or higher court, feedback from hearing surveys or complaints against members may also be considered.

For new members in the RPD, there is an onboarding process that includes staged assessments over a six to eight-month period. A report is prepared based on the review of two hearings with four decisions at each assessment stage. The reports are then discussed in a committee consisting of training and onboarding personnel. These meetings permit additional training, coaching or mentoring needs and measures to be identified and implemented. For the ID, new member readiness is assessed within the regions by division management and mentors prior to new members beginning to hear cases on their own. After approximately four to five weeks, transcripts are reviewed and another informal assessment takes place with management to determine whether additional support is required.

Given that RAD and IAD members are GIC appointees, they do not fall under the PSPM; however, they follow a separate, similar formal review cycle, with annual (RAD) or mid-mandate (IAD) and end-of-mandate reviews (RAD and IAD). GIC members have both quantitative and qualitative performance objectives. At the IAD, the evaluation of qualitative objectives is largely done by way of hearing observations, and reasons review by the member manager. Productivity of IAD members is also monitored monthly through reports and regular meetings with assistant deputy chairpersons. Similar to other divisions, in the IAD, mentors support a new member throughout their training. In consultation with Legal Services, management determines when a new member can be released from having their decisions reviewed. At the RAD, qualitative criteria are used to assess quality of decision-making at each annual review, and at the Member's end of mandate review. Productivity of RAD Members is also monitored monthly through reports and regular meetings with Assistant Deputy Chairpersons. Federal Court activity is closely monitored to ensure that any quality concerns are addressed.

Performance management is also supported through the Office of the Ombudsperson (see [Section 4.4.—Results of member complaints](#)) and Human Resources. Human Resources provides support on a variety of aspects of the organization, including Performance Management (PM) and Talent Management (TM). The PM/TM team provides support to the entire IRB. It also acts as the link between the IRB and the TBS, which requires reporting on PM and TM through the Management Accountability Framework.

The numerous means available to assess, motivate and manage IRB members ensure that decisions, reasons and hearing room conduct are of high quality.

3.2 Internal and external reporting

Regular monitoring of the IRB's progress against priorities, targets and other key activities ensures the IRB is able to recognize challenges and continually make adjustments in order to meet our quality objectives. Regular reporting and publishing of these reports also ensures a level of transparency and accountability with respect to the IRB's activities, including results, audits, etc.

Internal reporting related to quality is coordinated by the Strategic Planning, Accountability and Reporting (SPAR) Directorate through regular updates to the Audit, Evaluation and Performance Measurement Committee and the Executive Management Board. These executive level committees review results of audits and evaluations, as well as updates on priority initiatives, including quality. Additionally, the Performance Measurement and Analytics Directorate produces regular reports that provide information on divisional performance, which are reviewed by the executive-level Adjudication and Operations Committee. This regular operational reporting assists divisional management in determining possible issues for further investigation as well as adjustments that may be required to case management approaches. Finally, there are specific situations which warrant close internal monitoring and reporting, such as detention review cases where the detention exceeds 180 days. Such cases are subject to close management oversight, with members required to provide a hearing summary after each detention review, which is reviewed by senior management.

External reporting related to quality is also coordinated by the SPAR Directorate through public reports to Parliament such as the Departmental Plan (DP) and the Departmental Results Report (DRR), which are submitted to Parliament and published on the IRB's external website. These public reports indicate plans and results related to the program targets of the IRB, one of which is quality of decision-making. The reports indicate the planned and actual percentage of cases that meet high quality standards.

The results indicated in the DRR are based on the IRB's quality measurement initiative (QMI) whereby a third-party reviewer assesses a sample of decisions from each of the four divisions (RPD, RAD, ID and IAD) against a checklist of procedures that ensure high quality decision-making. More information about QMIs is available in [Section 4.2—Reviews](#).

Regular reporting helps to determine the IRB's overall results for decision-making excellence, including: timely and complete pre-proceeding readiness; respectful proceedings; focused proceedings; and clear, complete, concise, and timely decisions.

3.3 Appeal and/or judicial review

An appeal to the RAD, the IAD, or a judicial review, with leave, at the Federal Court (all considered "higher courts") are legal remedies where eligible parties to the initial decision think an error has been made and/or believe that a breach of natural justice has occurred. These function as corrective measures and may also be seen as qualified indicators of quality decision-making when decisions of a division are upheld.

The RAD reviews decisions of the RPD when the claimant or the Minister believes that an error was committed by the RPD or that a breach of natural justice occurred, or wants the RAD to review the RPD decision in light of information that could not have been presented to the RPD prior to the RPD decision.

The RAD decides to either:

- confirm the determination of the RPD;

- set aside the determination and substitute a determination that, in its opinion, should have been made; or
- refer the matter to the RPD for redetermination, giving the directions to the RPD that it considers appropriate.

The IAD reviews a subset of admissibility hearing decisions of the ID when the person concerned believes that an error was made by the ID or that a breach of natural justice occurred. Detention reviews and many admissibility hearings are not subject to appeal at the IAD but are subject only to leave and judicial review at the Federal Court. Other than specified Minister's appeals, the IAD may also grant special relief based on humanitarian and compassionate considerations—a remedy not within the ID's jurisdiction. In most cases, in deciding an appeal made from a decision by the ID, the IAD either confirms the determination made by the ID or sets aside the determination and substitutes a new determination. The IAD can also refer the matter back to the ID, however this is infrequent.

When the Federal Court decides to judicially review an IRB decision, it typically decides whether the decision was reasonable. A hearing where both the claimant or appellant and the Minister's counsel provide arguments is part of this process. The Federal Court may grant or dismiss the judicial review. If it is granted, the matter is returned to the IRB for redetermination.

The IRB may decide to seek leave to intervene in a higher court proceeding to explain to the court the Board's adjudicative strategy, to make submissions on jurisdiction or to explain operational considerations. In any case in which the IRB seeks leave to intervene, the impartiality of the Board must be maintained.

3.4 Review higher court decisions

Federal Court decisions are reviewed by divisional management and Legal Services to assess whether they identify particular professional development needs or member-specific concerns.

Legal Services provides regular jurisprudential updates on Federal Court and appeal decisions as well as develops specific training in light of new or novel jurisprudence. For example, Legal Services monitors nearly all final reasons rendered by the IAD in order to set priority in publication, flag reasons of interest or concern, and identify any developing trends to the Deputy Chairperson or member managers. Summaries of higher court decisions are regularly shared with members by Legal Services. These summaries allow members to be up to date on how the appellate bodies view the findings of the first level. Any decisions of the appellate bodies and the Federal Court that are of particular significance to the divisions are discussed in greater detail at Professional Development sessions.

A Higher Court Decisions database is maintained with case notes of decisions dealing with refugee and immigration matters. Most of the case notes are from decisions rendered by the Federal Courts of Canada. However, it also contains selected decisions of other courts (e.g., the Supreme Court of Canada and provincial courts). The application includes case notes of decisions rendered since July 22, 1996. The case notes are prepared by the IRB's Legal Services. Each case note includes a string of keywords and a hypertext link that leads to the full-text reasons when available.

3.5 Quality centres

The quality centres in the RPD and the RAD have been established to monitor the quality of decision-making. Quality centre data analysts mine RAD and RPD decisions, as well as Federal Court cases in order to identify specific legal questions which repeatedly occur. Joint RPD/RAD meetings are also held to discuss legal issues and approaches to questions concerning refugee determination.

The quality centres provide focused attention on initiatives, tools and mechanisms that improve quality, such as improved training, mentorship, performance management and adjudicative strategies. They ensure that legal issues in decisions are identified early on, and appropriate adjudicative strategies are adopted in response. They provide a mechanism to ensure that best practices are communicated and that quality issues are identified and addressed in a timely manner, independent of the individual performance management system. For example, if a quality centre notices a trend, such as an increase in the postponement rate due to counsel not being able to access certain documentation, it would trigger a discussion on how the issue could be addressed, with the goal of encouraging consistency and adherence to rules. In this case, a new adjudicative policy tool might be proposed, such as the issuance of a practice notice.

With smaller member complements, these monitoring functions are performed by assistant deputy chairpersons and management teams within the ID and IAD.

4. Measure

[IRB Program and Policy Reviews: Evaluations, Audits, Reviews](#)

4.1 Evaluations

An evaluation in the Government of Canada is a systematic and neutral collection and analysis of evidence to judge merit, worth or value. It determines the extent to which a program or project has achieved expected results. Evaluation informs decision-making, improvements, innovation and accountability.

An evaluation is a formal process which must adhere to Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat [Evaluation standards](#), must include recommendations and a management action plan (MAP); the results of the evaluation and the MAP must be reported to Treasury Board, and must be published on the IRB's external facing website. Evaluations are encouraged when findings will inform program decisions or investments (i.e., pilot programs).

An evaluation may be conducted internally (led by internal IRB staff) or externally (led by a third-party assessor) when specific expertise is required. The evaluation of IRB programs, processes and procedures help to identify strengths and areas for improvement by measuring the quality of initiatives that support decision-making, and also help to measure the quality of decision-making itself.

The evaluation team within the Strategic Planning, Accountability and Reporting (SPAR) Directorate supports the IRB divisions or branches in assessing the quality of new and ongoing initiatives/programs. The SPAR Directorate facilitates the development of logic models and theory of change models against which success can be measured. In a leading role, and in consultation with the Performance Measurement and Analytics Directorate, the SPAR Directorate supports the development of performance measures and methodologies for collecting data to inform performance. The SPAR Directorate analyzes the results, and reports findings to the client.

Conducting evaluations improves IRB decision quality by assessing the outcomes of new initiatives that support decision-making.

4.2 Reviews

A review is a less formal version of an evaluation ([Section 4.1—Evaluations](#)). Reviews do not encompass all the requirements of an evaluation, which reduces the expected requirements and generally take less time to conduct; but also lessens the weight and impact of the results. Reviews are encouraged when findings will inform what is working or not working within a program or initiative. Like evaluations, reviews can be led internally (by staff of the IRB, typically a member of the evaluation team) or externally (by a third-party assessor).

Third-party reviews are coordinated internally, but the evaluative component is outsourced to leverage external expertise, when needed. For example, the evaluation team in the Strategic Planning, Accountability and Reporting (SPAR) Directorate leads biennial quality measurement initiatives (QMIs), which assess the quality of proceedings and decision-making within each IRB division, through the use of a third-party assessor who follows a standardized approach. The assessments are conducted on a sample of cases for a given division and are measured against a set of standards for quality decision-making. QMIs are not intended for use in the assessment of individual member performance but rather as a means of identifying aggregated training needs and other systemic issues. Within each QMI, Gender-Based Analysis Plus (GBA+) is also conducted, as per guidelines by the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat which indicate that GBA+ must be conducted for all new initiatives and evaluations. Strengths and areas for improvement are identified in the final report and recommendations are

provided. The divisions use the findings to support improvements to their programs and, more specifically, to the quality of member procedures and decisions-making. External evaluations and other reviews are often initiated as a result of findings from other processes (complaints, QMIs or other external influences).

A report with recommendations is produced following all reviews. The IRB responds with a Management Action Plan (MAP), which is monitored by the SPAR Directorate and updated by the office of primary interest. Reports and MAPs are presented and monitored through the Audit, Evaluation and Performance Measurement Committee (AEPMC), which is chaired by the IRB Chairperson. Examples of MAPs related to quality assurance include: improved support for the planning, design and delivery of member training programs; and provision of professional development refreshers regarding member questioning.

4.3 External audits

Auditing is a professional, independent and objective assurance and consulting activity designed to add value and improve an organization's operations. It helps an organization accomplish its objectives by bringing a systematic, disciplined approach to assessing and improving the effectiveness of risk management, control and governance processes.

External audits of the IRB are typically conducted by the Office of the Auditor General (OAG) and the Office of the Comptroller General (OCG) which send out routine and non-routine call letters to inform departments of new audits and the associated areas that will be assessed. The role of the IRB, with the Strategic Planning, Accountability and Reporting (SPAR) Directorate as the lead, is to analyze the audit request, coordinate responses with offices of primary interest, and compile responses and evidence for submission to the office that is conducting the audit.

Following the OAG/OCG's examination, a draft report is shared with the IRB to confirm the accuracy of their findings, review recommendations, and when necessary, respond to recommendations with Management Action Plans (MAPs). Reports and summaries are published on the IRB website. The OAG/OCG monitor these MAPs and request annual or semi-annual updates. Once artefacts are provided that demonstrate that the IRB has fulfilled the audit recommendations, MAP items can be closed.

Independent, objective and systematic audits of the IRB represent a vital resource for maintaining and improving decision quality at the IRB. It presents an opportunity for the IRB to identify program gaps and initiate departmental improvements.

4.4 Results of member complaints

Anyone may [file a complaint](#) about the conduct of an IRB member through the Office of the Ombudsperson. The complaint procedure is meant to address a members' professional conduct. It provides a formal mechanism for counsel, any party to IRB proceedings, IRB personnel, an organization or the public to raise any concerns in member behaviour that they see as contrary to the [IRB Member Code of Conduct](#). Complaints must be made in writing to the Office of the Ombudsperson. A complaint form and procedures guide are available on the IRB public website.

Allegations against members that fall under the scope of paragraphs 9 to 15 of the Member Code of Conduct are examined by the Office of the Ombudsperson or by an external investigator. A report of the investigation is provided to the Chairperson, who will examine it and decide whether to accept the conclusions, and communicate the outcome to the complainant, the member concerned, and the Assistant Deputy Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson. The Chairperson will decide whether any further actions are required. Overall system trends are monitored and used to inform updates to training programs as required.

Aggregate data and disposition of complaints against members is published on the IRB's website as part of an Annual Report on Member Complaints. Publishing aggregate data on the website regarding the member complaints process promotes transparency.

5. Adjust

5.1 Develop and implement management action plans (audits, third-party reviews)

Management Action Plans (MAPs) or Management Response and Action Plans (MRAPs) are developed in response to recommendations indicated in audits, and reviews such as quality measurement initiatives (QMIs) and evaluations. The Strategic Planning, Accountability and Reporting (SPAR) Directorate coordinates the development of a MAP/MRAP by engaging the office of primary interest (typically a division) to review the recommendations of an audit or third-party review. The office of primary interest will then respond by accepting or rejecting it, and providing a plan for how they will address the recommendation, including timelines. MAPs and MRAPs are presented at the Audit, Evaluation and Performance Measurement Committee (AEPMC) or the Executive Management Board (EMB) for approval. Progress against the MAP is monitored and tracked by the SPAR Directorate, and brought back to AEPMC to ensure ongoing accountability of implementation.

MAPs are integral to quality improvement as they consider identified program or process gaps and specify next steps for resolving them, leading to improvements in processes, training and results. Beyond outlining a plan of action, the development of a formal MAP ensures ongoing accountability to both internal and external stakeholders. MAPs remain active until sufficient evidence is provided to ensure gaps have been addressed and functional quality is improved.

5.2 Revise training programs

Member training programs for new and experienced members are reviewed on a continuous basis by the divisions, in consultation with and with the support of Legal Services and Member Learning Secretariat (MLS). Training revisions ensure that training methodology and content are up to date with best practices, and allow new tools, strategies and research to be integrated into the training program. Additionally, revisions consider whether any changes in legislation, rules, regulations, policies, and jurisprudence, findings through QMIs, or systemic issues identified through performance management and the member complaint process warrant updates to the training program.

Revisions to training are a shared responsibility between the divisions, Legal Services and MLS, with accountability for setting and delivering training resting with divisions. MLS is an enabler, providing support from an adult-learning perspective by identifying new methodologies, tools, and best practices. Divisions are responsible for the content of their curriculum and are required to ensure their training programs, including new member training (NMT), are up to date and revised regularly. Training on new technology or tools may be delivered by an expert within a division, or others within the organization such as the Chief Innovation and Technology Branch.

While there are periodic formal review exercises to update training programs, revisions are often an “evergreen” activity performed in the period preceding scheduled new member training (NMT). At a minimum, relevant jurisprudence that has emerged since the last delivery of NMT is updated. Other revisions will be made subsequent to discussions of the Adjudicative Strategy and Professional Development committees, or upon the recommendations of the lead of the Quality Centre, in the case of the RPD or the RAD.

5.3 Develop and implement adjudicative policy and support tools

As identified in [Section 1—Plan](#), adjudicative policy tools are central to the IRB's efforts to enhance both consistency and quality in decision-making. The Board's adjudicative policy tools can be loosely grouped into two categories:

- **soft law instruments**, for example guidelines, policies and practice notices; and
- **adjudicative instruments**, such as jurisprudential guides, persuasive decisions, three-member panel decisions and reasons of interest, which consist of individual decisions that are utilized for strategic adjudicative purposes.

Collectively, these adjudicative policy tools are intended to facilitate efficient and fair decision-making that is responsive to developments in both jurisprudence and the evidentiary foundations on which decisions are based.

The development and implementation of a new adjudicative policy tool, or the modification of an existing one, may be triggered by changing events or situations. The level of adjudicative policy tool selected is dependent on the nature of the identified issue. The choice of tool will depend on the nature of the quality issues and the immediacy required to take corrective action. Adjudicative policy tools can respond both to the procedural aspects of hearings and to changing immigration and refugee intake patterns and trends. In some cases, it may mean the revocation of an existing adjudicative policy tool to reflect higher court decisions or changes in adjudicative/operational priorities. The ongoing review and adjustment process allows for continuous monitoring and identification of solutions that may improve the quality of the IRB's proceedings and decision-making.

Currently, adjudicative policy tools are identified for updating by either a divisional Adjudicative Strategy Committee, regional Adjudicative Consistency Groups (ACGs), the Strategic Directions and Corporate Affairs Branch, or divisional management with legal services input. In cases where a tool is needed for multiple divisions, it may be identified by the Adjudications and Operations Committee, where decisions about revisions to guidelines and some other policy tools are made on an annual basis.

As described in [Section 1.4— Identify innovative solutions and support tools](#), support tools, including technological and resource tools, are primarily concerned with improving information access and horizontal member engagement, which subsequently enhances decision quality. For example, these tools may include knowledge management tools, handbooks, or technological solutions. Support tools are reviewed on a regular basis to determine if any modifications or enhancements are needed. Additionally, if a gap is determined to exist based on trends identified through regular monitoring activities, plans for developing or implementing new support tools are made.

5.4 Individual remedial programs

As part of the Public Service Performance Management (PSPM) program for public service employees, including RPD and ID members, performance reviews are a continuous discussion throughout the year, during which both good performance and issues are addressed. As part of Performance Management (PM), learning and development plans, and in some cases performance improvement plans (individual remedial programs), are established.

The Strategic Human Resources Management (SHRM) Directorate includes PM, Talent Management (TM), and Learning. The PM/TM team helps with all aspects of PM and TM and, in collaboration with the learning team, supports managers in developing learning and development plans. Official languages, succession planning, and training are other components related to PM/TM.

A learning and development plan must be developed for each public service employee and includes both the employee's career goals and aspirations, as well as planned activities that support the achievement of the employee's established work objectives, expected behaviours and continuous development.

A performance improvement plan must be initiated when employee performance does not meet expectations, or any time the manager determines that a performance issue needs to be documented. A performance improvement plan must include:

- Specific areas for improvement;
- Actions that will be taken by the employee to address the identified areas needing improvement;
- Description of the support that will be provided by the manager to the employee to improve performance; and
- A timeline and milestones against which to measure the employee's progress.

The Governor in Council (GIC) Secretariat Services supports performance management for GIC members. Though not governed by the PSPM process, customized individual remedial programs are developed for GIC appointees (RAD and IAD members) if warranted and are similar to those developed for public service employees, as outlined above.

The performance improvement plan is a means of addressing individual quality issues. It is usually decided by the member's immediate manager and could include a range of activities, such as specific professional development training courses, in-house training, mentorship, or returning to New Member Training. Remedial programs reactively address key issues in individual member performance to remediate member specific quality issues.

Stakeholder engagement

The IRB's external stakeholders provide on the ground perspectives of those who appear before the Board, enhancing the development and review of initiatives and processes. Sustained and proactive stakeholder engagement helps keep the IRB accountable, responsive and innovative. As such, stakeholder input and perspectives are sought during the various stages defined in the quality assurance framework. This approach helps strengthen the development, review and monitoring of policies, initiatives and service standards programs. Additionally, internal personnel, including Divisions, Legal Services and other internal services, provide feedback on an ongoing basis to support continuous program improvements, as well as improvements to adjudicative and other support tools.

The Policy, Engagement and Parliamentary Affairs Directorate is responsible for national external stakeholder engagement. Divisions are responsible for regional-level external engagement with stakeholders. To this end, the IRB leverages its already existing stakeholder networks in order to facilitate and maximize its consultations on the various elements of its quality programs. These networks include:

- **National stakeholders:** The IRB has an established consultative committee (IRB Consultative Committee) which is the Board's primary stakeholder channel through which to consult and inform on initiatives and procedures. The IRBCC meets at least twice annually as well as on an ad hoc basis to consult on specific initiatives. The IRBCC's member organizations consist of counsel associations (lawyers and immigration consultants), provincial legal aid program and refugee advocate organizations.
- **Regional stakeholders:** Each division also maintains its established regional consultative committees with its local stakeholder groups, which may include partner organizations such as the Canada Border Services Agency. In some regions, the consultative committees are cross-divisional, while in others they are specific to each division. Regional stakeholder meetings provide a forum to identify and address regional operational issues, as well as sharing information or consulting on new initiatives at a regional level.

Additionally, in developing and monitoring its quality programs, the IRB engages with portfolio partners and subject matter experts (SMEs):

- **Portfolio partners:** The IRB frequently consults its federal immigration and refugee portfolio organizations—Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada and the Canada Border Services Agency—to provide input on operational matters and enhance efficiency along the decision-making continuum. This is done with the clear understanding of the IRB's institutional and adjudicative independence.
- **SMEs:** The IRB consults with SMEs, which include counsel, NGOs and academics who have specialized knowledge and leading-edge experience on specific topics. With regard to the Board's quality measures, SMEs can provide input on considerations outside the Board's scope of expertise. SME input helps ensure that the Board's approaches are informed, respected and cutting-edge.

Comprehensive and sustained external stakeholder engagement helps strengthen the IRB's quality programs while also facilitating early buy-in for new initiatives.

From an internal perspective, continuous improvement relies on frequent engagement of internal stakeholders such as members and staff, as well as collaborative relationships between the Divisions, Legal Services, and Registry. This document highlights many of the mechanisms used by the IRB to ensure that engagement is ongoing, and feedback is received and incorporated.

Annex

Long description

Figure 1: IRB Quality Assurance Framework for Quality Decision-Making

The IRB's Quality Assurance Framework for decision-makers is depicted by a series of five chevrons sequentially aligned to illustrate how each section of the Framework leads to the next as a cycle of continual improvement. The sections are **Plan, Do, Monitor & Measure, and Adjust** and contain the key activities of each section. Finally, all sections are underpinned by Stakeholder Engagement which takes place throughout the process with specific impacts to the activities under the **Plan** and **Do** sections.

The **Plan** section includes the following activities:

- Identify and prioritize training and mentoring needs
- Identify and prioritize quality evaluation and audit plans
- Identify adjudicative policy tools
- Identify innovative solutions and support tools

The **Do** section includes the following activities:

- Merit-based recruitment
- Training for new members
- Professional development
- Mentorship
- Reasons review by Legal Services
- Adjudicative policy and support tools
- Adjudicative consistency groups
- Specialized teams/training
- Support and tools for external parties appearing before the Board

The **Monitor** section includes the following activities:

- Performance management
- Internal and external reporting
- Appeal and/or judicial review
- Review higher court decisions
- Quality centres

The **Measure** section includes the following activities:

- Evaluations
- Reviews
- External audits
- Results of member complaints

The **Adjust** section includes the following activities:

- Develop and implement management action plans (Audits, third-party reviews)
- Revise training programs
- Develop and implement adjudicative policy and support tools
- Individual remedial programs