
E-MANUAL

GUIDE TO PLANNING EU PROJECTS IN THE HEALTH AND SOCIAL HEALTH SECTOR

3.6 MONITORING AND EVALUATION

A project must contain hierarchically defined goals (inputs, activities, outcomes, purposes and an overall goal), a set of specific assumptions and a system for verifying and evaluating the outcomes obtained, i.e., a monitoring system.

A monitoring system for project evaluation helps facilitate the management process, legitimizes and strengthens project credibility, motivates participants, and is able to transfer and replicate the benefits achieved. For this purpose it must be:

- 1) outlined in the initial phase of the project
- 2) structured around a group of objectively verifiable indicators
- 3) organized in consideration of the critical moments of the project so as to ensure its verification
- 4) must ensure the participation of all stakeholders.

MONITORING TOOLS

Appropriate tools need to be established to ensure the conditions necessary for the monitoring process to apply to actions to be taken, expected outcomes, and adherence to the budget (cost control).

Documentation tools, outcomes and outputs

Classify and record the content, relevance and location of all partnership-related documentation and correspondence through **a single documentation management system common to all partners**. In reporting procedures, in order to ensure quality control, maximum transparency is required in highlighting and communicating the contributions made by each of the partners in achieving tangible outcomes. **A list of all project-related tools and outputs** must be available, up-to-date and accessible to all partners. It is usual, in cases where the project involves the activation of a website, to create a restricted area where all project tools are uploaded and become accessible only to the partnership.

Internal communication and shared responsibility

Developing and constantly updating **a web-based internal communication system** serves to keep all partners informed of progress. Such a system must operate on the basis of shared responsibility and not the exclusive "top-down" input of the Lead Partner.

Reporting

An efficient communication system, as pointed out above, can easily form the basis of a semi-informal internal reporting structure. **Writing internal reports and reports** is not always a programme necessity, but such a task can be thought of as an internal tool for closely monitoring the progress of work and especially expenditures. However, if further developed, such a system can be used to facilitate and speed up official reporting procedures (e.g., financial reports that are generally due every 6 months).

Project changes

It is assumed that the implementation phase will meet the terms defined in the application form, as approved. In the event that changes need to be made (including those due to possible partner defaults or under-spending), it is prudent to **respond early to the need for change and inform the project officer** so that solutions can be found together. Letting a not-so-obvious problem grow unchecked and then being unable to correct it can produce very negative effects in the long run, including automatic blocking of funding or exclusion from participation in future European calls for proposals.

Choose indicators

Indicators are measurement tools that provide useful data for project management as well as for monitoring and evaluating the efficiency of the activities carried out. Thus, they enable better decision-making, promote greater efficiency and produce more relevant outcomes.

Indicators should relate directly to the main goals of the project and provide an adequate picture of what the project aims to achieve. However, since such indicators can only provide a partial "snapshot" of the progress of the work, the first decision to be made is about "what" to measure, that is, to determine which parts of the project are most important and worthy of interest. The difficulty in selecting indicators is to find measurable quantities/elements that can reflect the most significant effects, combining what is substantively relevant, as a reflection of expected outcomes, with what is instead realistic in terms of data collection and management. Sometimes the call suggests a set of indicators, and for each project one must then consider adopting them and using them as a means of measuring the benefits derived from the project. From the outset, **the partnership must agree on the type of unit-based indicators to be used in the project evaluation**, establish a baseline from which to start working, introduce targets to be achieved, and define specific mechanisms and times of data

collection to be able to measure progress.

Some of the key problems with monitoring and evaluation processes can be eliminated from the outset by defining a broad set of appropriate indicators that clearly measure the purpose of activities and project goals:

- 1) *Output indicators*: measure what project activities produce
- 2) *Outcome indicators*: measure the immediate effects on the chosen beneficiaries
- 3) *Impact indicators*: measure long-term contributions to the overall goal

Logical connections must then be made among these three categories of indicators. For example: an analysis or report (output indicator) on an issue of particular relevance in the area common to the partner organizations may help to promote greater awareness (outcome indicator) among the chosen recipients (target group), public opinion included, of issues highlighted in the report, and, based on this new knowledge, it is possible that improved changes in adopted policies may be produced (impact indicator).

In order to measure and evaluate each element of actual project performance (outcomes, financial efficiency, etc.), it is **a good idea to define specific and relevant indicators that can be truly applicable and measurable in relation to the needs and timing of the project** (take as a reference the moments when a given goal is achieved).

Evaluation process

Evaluation means to comprehensively, critically and objectively examine the appropriateness of the goals and the quality of the actions taken in relation to the outcomes achieved, the effects caused and the needs they set out to satisfy.

With the evaluation process comes a process whose steps must be planned throughout the life of the project itself, in relation to the different areas of interest:

- **Ex-Ante**: logical planning (design and identification of resources including a cost-benefit analysis).
- **Interim/during**: relevance and effectiveness of implementation actions (project management, evaluation of goals, control of external factors).
- **Ex-Post**: effectiveness and impact of outcomes (goals achieved, value added).

The evaluation process needs to take into account both the more strictly measurable approaches (financial aspect, outcomes, value) and the formative ones (development of specific skills, performance improvement), ensuring a certain balance between time and resources, research and analytical work, work team management and relationship building with stakeholders.

How to ensure an efficient evaluation process
Define the project context (actors and beneficiaries; activities, type of evaluation required)
Establish terms of reference related to the evaluation process
Develop a proposed work plan for the evaluation (general approach, logical and analytical framework, methodology and techniques, work programme related to what information to collect and how)
plan and budget the resources needed for this process (staff/work days, type of staff required, skills needed)
carry out the evaluation (implement the method and work programme, cultivate relationships with stakeholders, manage the work team, resolve unforeseen issues)
establish a schedule for presenting outcomes (plan the frequency of meetings and appropriate times);
define the nature and style of evaluation reports