Tool 32: How to keep the project implementation on track

The work plan, or the project proposal in the case of a funding application, lays the groundwork for implementation. However, users should not expect implementation to go exactly to plan. Deviations from the original plan are inevitable during implementation. However, to ensure that such deviations are within the scope of the project, it is crucial for a continuous tracking process to be in place. That allows deviations to be systematically tracked and corrective action/modifications to be taken or made to ensure achievement of the project’s objectives. Tackling deviations from the work plan is a highly dynamic process. It requires flexibility and the ability to adapt to (rapid) changes without losing sight of the objective [1].

Project reporting has proven useful for tracking deviations. In the case of funding applications, most programmes require progress reporting and provide specific forms for reporting (external reporting).

Internal reporting starts at the project partner level. The project partners report to the controller, who certifies the declared expenditure. The progress report that is subsequently prepared by the lead partner contains activities, outputs and costs that have been approved by the controller. Transfers of funds between the lead partner and project partners need to be defined in the partnership agreement [2].

Figure 1: Project reporting process

Lead partner

Project partner

Subcontractor

Controller

Transfer of funds

Report

Transfer of funds

Report

Report

Report

Certificate

Certificate

Source: [2]

As part of the project monitoring, work plans are revised periodically and adapted where necessary.

When starting to implement the cross-border collaboration project, it is important to establish a monitoring process to check whether the planned activities and deliverables are in line with the work plan. The following checklist is designed to provide guidance on what to consider in the scope of project monitoring.

Please go through the list and put a cross in the relevant field (‘yes’, ‘no’) if you have considered the monitoring content. Comments (e.g. reasons for non-consideration) can be entered separately. In the case of non-consideration, please think about the consequences (impact on other criteria or later stages of the project).

| Topic | Monitoring content | Considered? | Comments | Consequences(impact on other criteria, the whole project, the timeline etc.) |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| YES | NO |
| Information needs | * Who are the **primary information users?**
 |  |  |  | *Please consider the consequences if the monitoring content is not considered* |
| * Have their **information needs** been identified and prioritised?
 |  |  |  | *Please consider the consequences if the monitoring content is not considered* |
| Information sources and collection methods | * What is the **quality** of available/existing information?
 |  |  |  | *Please consider the consequences if the monitoring content is not considered* |
| * What is the **source** of available/existing information and who is collecting it? What are other donors doing?
 |  |  |  | *Please consider the consequences if the monitoring content is not considered* |
| * Is there an appropriate balance between **quantitative and qualitative** information?
 |  |  |  | *Please consider the consequences if the monitoring content is not considered* |
| * Have responsibilities for **information collection** been clearly identified and understood?
 |  |  |  | *Please consider the consequences if the monitoring content is not considered* |
| * Are the existing formats for information **recording and reporting** adequate and are users clear about how to use them?
 |  |  |  | *Please consider the consequences if the monitoring content is not considered* |
| * Where are the most significant **information gaps**?
 |  |  |  | *Please consider the consequences if the monitoring content is not considered* |
| Analysis and use | * **Who** **analyses** available data and information and at what level within the reporting hierarchy?
 |  |  |  | *Please consider the consequences if the monitoring content is not considered* |
| * Is information being **analysed at an operational level** to help implementers understand what they are doing before being passed up to higher levels?
 |  |  |  | *Please consider the consequences if the monitoring content is not considered* |
| * Is the **nature of the analysis** appropriate and useful? (e.g. are comparisons made between what was planned and actual outcomes?)
 |  |  |  | *Please consider the consequences if the monitoring content is not considered* |
| * Is there a functioning **review system** for bringing together project stakeholders to make decisions based on the available information?
* How does this operate and who is involved?
* Is it coordinated with other donors?
 |  |  |  | *Please consider the consequences if the monitoring content is not considered* |
| Capacity and resources | * What **existing physical and financial resources** are available for monitoring?
 |  |  |  | *Please consider the consequences if the monitoring content is not considered* |
| * What is the level of **staff skills** and their understanding of what is required?
* Are these adequate?
 |  |  |  | *Please consider the consequences if the monitoring content is not considered* |
| * Is there scope for developing **local capacity** either through provision of technical advice, additional financial resources and/or training?
 |  |  |  | *Please consider the consequences if the monitoring content is not considered* |

Source: [1]

References

[1] European Commission. Strengthening project internal monitoring. How to enhance the role of EC task managers. Brussels, 2007.

[2] INTERact. Project management handbook. n.d.

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Written by Gesundheit Österreich

Forschungs und Planungs GmbH

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