15. End of Project Evaluation & Project Closure

15.1 Evaluation

Evaluating a project provides an opportunity to gain a wider understanding than merely monitoring your project. Evaluating the project includes making an assessment of the overall achievements of your project, and should address such questions as:

- Have the objectives of the project been met?
- How effectively were the outputs and results achieved? and
- What would have happened without the intervention?

15.1.2 Why Evaluate?

- To assess whether a project has achieved its aims and objectives which are beyond what can be achieved by monitoring. For example, monitoring data may tell you that your ERDF project has created 100 jobs, but some of these jobs may have been created even if the project had not gone ahead;
- An evaluation permits an in-depth investigation of all project issues;
- Evaluation will explain the reasons behind project successes and failures, enabling the sharing of good practice;
- If aspects of the project have not worked so well, evaluation can provide recommendations of what might work better next time;
- Project-level evaluation will also contribute to an overall assessment of how well the Structural funds have worked in Wales.

15.1.3 Who Should Evaluate and When?

All sponsors are required to undertake or commission evaluations of their projects. All projects awarded £2 million grant or more (ESF or ERDF) for a single project and all projects involved in implementing ERDF supported innovative or experimental actions and all projects identified as innovative under Article 7 of the ESF Regulation are required to have their project evaluated by an external independent contractor.

If a project falls below the thresholds of mandatory external evaluation, you may still wish to appoint external contractors because of the independent perspective they provide.
15.2 Objectives of Project Evaluation

When completing an Evaluation you must ensure that you have clear objectives that you want to achieve. The following outlines key objectives that can be covered in your project’s evaluation:

15.2.1 Demonstrating the Need for your Project (prior to delivery)

For your project to be eligible for Structural Fund assistance its aims and objectives must fit in with the Operational Programme and Strategic Framework documents. As part of this you will need to demonstrate the evidence for the need for your project.

You should use as much existing background data and information as you can gather when deciding your aims and objectives. It is possible that there will be a lack of information on which to base your aims and objectives. In such instances you may decide to collect, or commission the collection of, data to fill the gap.

Large projects can go a step further and carry out an evaluation to identify the need for the project and help set its aims and objectives. A project may also carry out research to see if the projects aims, objectives and plans are realistic and deliverable (feasibility study).

At this stage of the project it is also important that baseline data are recorded. Progress cannot be assessed meaningfully without baseline information in place.

15.2.2 Evaluating Project Processes

This part of the Evaluation should cover such issues as:

• Progress to date against key output, result and financial indicators;
• Whether the project is working well as a mechanism for delivering its aims;
• How efficient are the project processes; and
• Recommendations to address any issues found; and
• Whether and to what extent the project is still relevant to its external context, for example, its socio-economic environment.

Process evaluation questions and suggested methodologies can be found at: http://www.wefo.wales.gov.uk/default.asp?action=page&ID=2
15.2.3 Evaluating Project Outcomes

This part of the Evaluation should cover such issues as:

• Did the project achieve, or is on course to achieve, its objectives?
• If not, why not?
• What has worked well/not so well?
• What is the impact of the project likely to be?
• What is the external context?
• How has this changed and how has it affected the project’s outcomes?
• How efficient were the project processes?
• Could the objectives have been achieved in another way?
• Have recommendations from any previous evaluations been implemented? If so, what effect have they had?

ERDF and ESF impact evaluation questions and suggested methodologies can be found at: http://www.wefo.wales.gov.uk/default.asp?action=page&lID=2

15.2.4 Reporting against Impact Indicators

If your project is aligned with a particular Strategic Framework you should use the evaluation questions contained within that Strategic Framework document.

These questions are based on the Priority-level impact indicators and should form the basis for the evaluation of your project.

The Operational Programme shows the logical flow from output to result through to impact. You should follow this logical flow with respect to your selection of impact indicators.

15.3 Evaluation Methods

Evaluation methods can be broken down into two groups: methods for collecting data and methods for analysing data:

It is important to carefully consider which the selection of evaluation methods as each method has different resource implications. For example: If a project requires a particular evaluation method that is expensive or time-consuming to implement (e.g. face to face interviews) then the resource implications of this method may be balanced against the limitations of using a less resource-intensive method (such as telephone interviews or a postal survey. The amount of data to be analysed also has resource implications.

Full WEFO guidance on evaluation methods can be found at:

15.4 Managing an Evaluation

The main principles of managing an evaluation are essentially the good project management principles that you will already be using in the management of your Structural Funds project. These include:

- Developing clear objectives for the evaluation;
- Deciding on the resources needed to do the work;
- Planning the various stages of the evaluation;
- Involving all relevant stakeholders; and
- Monitoring progress against your plan.

Guidance on good practice in Structural Funds project management can be found at: http://www.wefo.wales.gov.uk/default.asp?action=page&ID=1520

15.5 Terms of Reference for an Evaluation

You will need to write a Terms of Reference (or specification) for your evaluation, whether undertaken in-house or externally contracted.

A sample terms of reference can be found at:

15.6 Monitoring Progress

To ensure that your evaluation is on track to achieve its objectives on time you should have regular meetings with the evaluation team whether these are external contractors or colleagues within your organisation.

Monitoring and Evaluation Guidance: