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STRENGTHENING PROJECT PROPOSAL DEVELOPMENT

A Webinar Series for CSOs in Eastern Partnership Countries

Questions and Answers from Live Webinars

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May 2024

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Q&A from Webinar 1: Overview of Project Design and Project Management

Question 1: How and when should the logical framework be developed?	**Answer 1:** We must differentiate the Logical Framework Matrix (LFM) from the Logical Framework Approach (LFA). The LFM is a standalone document that must be submitted at the Full Application (FA) stage of a Call for Proposals (CfP). It is the output or product of the LFA, which is a systematic way of approaching stakeholder and problem analysis to generate a good logical model for your proposal. It is advised that Stakeholder Mapping and Problem and Objective analysis are undertaken at Concept Note (CN) stage of a Call for Proposals to ensure a solid design and a strong relevance of your CN.
Question 2: Is it possible to apply for funding for socially useful projects outside the list of priorities specified in the Calls for Proposals?	**Answer 2:** It is always possible, but it is not advisable. The EU defines the overall objectives and priorities of Calls for Proposals and looks for proposals that are aligned with those priorities. The criterion for Relevance is assessed at the CN stage of the Call for Proposals and if your proposal is not aligned and coherent with the priorities expressed in the Call, it is very likely that your proposal will not score high in relevance and therefore may not be invited to submit a FA. Remember that there are also some EU funding opportunities that are actually channelled through larger Civil Society Organizations who are sub-granting funds and that may be more suitable for smaller organizations. So, you need to keep an eye on funding opportunities from a range of different sources in your country
Question 3: At what stage should we submit the seed idea for our project?	**Answer 3:** EU-funded Calls for Proposals work generally in a two-stage process for proposals submission. Seed ideas should be set at the first stage as Concept Notes, which are short documents (maximum 5 pages) to explain your idea. If your idea is evaluated positively, you may be invited to submit your Full Application, which is a longer document to explain in detail all the aspects of your project. The EU may decide, in exceptional cases, to go for a one-stage procedure where you have to submit both CN and FA at the

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	same time. The reason for that is usually to shorten the time taken for the whole process.
Question 4: What other tools, matrixes or resources should we use or look at to better prepare our proposals?	**Answer 4:** At the end of this document, you will find a list of useful websites and documents to look at to strengthen your proposals.
Question 5: Does an organization's experience in a relevant field increase the chances of getting funded?	**Answer 5:** Yes, indeed, experience and capacity are elements that are assessed at Full Application stage in an EU-funded Call for Proposals, and there are usually minimum requirements for applicants and partners, but not always. However, as it was mentioned in another question, there may be other opportunities to receive EU funds, through sub-grants, which often have lower requirements (or none) for experience or capacity.
Question 6: Are there exceptional instances when NGOs can be eligible to apply for a call for proposals without being based in the target country, not being based in an EU member state and without having local partners?	**Answer 6:** In general terms, no, it is not possible as there are clear rules for eligibility that include rules for origin. However, you may always refer your specific case to the EU Delegation in charge of the call to present your case.
Question 7: If the applicant is a new organization applying with a cohort of experienced applicants will it be considered as a new organization or having a strong board and partners will it be considered feasible?	**Answer 7:** You would have to refer to the specific Call For Proposals, but in general terms I would advise that the lead applicant, if possible, should be an organization with some experience and capacity to lead the process and increase the chances of having a positive response to your proposal. But EU-funding is also about capacity building, so it may be a good idea to conform a balanced partnership that provides several strengths and capacities.

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Q&A from Webinar 2: People in Projects

Question 8: Preparing a Concept Note seems like a challenge in terms of summarizing information, on what should we focus?	**Answer 8:** Indeed, it is a challenge to prepare a Concept Note, as summarizing key information in only 5 pages is not an easy task. You need to understand that you will be assessed for Relevance and Design at CN stage. In that sense, it is very important to describe your target groups and final beneficiaries, the people who you want to help and who will benefit from your project. Why they are facing a challenge or a problem. Explain how your project will solve or improve that situation. That is the reasoning, the coherent logic that you need to transmit in your CN
Question 9: In the governance model that you have shown, adapting PM^2, who will be the business manager in case of an NGO?	**Answer 9:** The PM^2 governance model can be adapted and tailored to the specific needs and constraints of NGOs. In general terms, the Business Manager will be the person that is responsible for the achievement of the project results and impact, whereas the Project Manager is responsible for the implementation of the project activities and the production of the deliverables. In that sense, they need to work in close coordination.
Question 10: How can we manage stakeholders with opposing viewpoints?	**Answer 10:** Diplomacy needs to be definitely involved. You would need to sharpen your negotiation skills and look for potential win-win situations, sidelining, the points in which they're opposing and finding common grounds for understanding. Alternatively, you will need to assess if you really need to work with both of them and decide to provide an exit strategy to one of them. In the end it will be up to communication and negotiation skills to foster dialogue.
Question 11: When is the best time to start making communication with new partners for an upcoming project?	**Answer 11:** Always as soon as possible, when you have a clear idea of what you want to communicate first. Once you know your terms, start as soon as possible to open the dialogue and the negotiation for the new project in the most open terms. You need time to develop the project with your partner before the deadline.

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Question 12: Does the governance aspect of the project also consider gender balance and leadership roles of women in those organizations and partners?	**Answer 12:** That is a matter for your consideration, but as far as I know there are no regulations coming from the EU to impose gender balance in the applying organizations. It would be of course appreciated in your proposal, as gender balance is a strong element.
Question 13: How to motivate people to be active in a project if it is a nonprofit project, more precisely how to keep people being motivated? It may be easier at the beginning, but you may lose motivation as you go through the project.	**Answer 13:** It is important to keep always the focus on the impact, in the purpose of why we are doing what we do. We do things for a purpose, aiming to change a situation we find it is not right and that we want to improve. We do that through active communication and by linking our activities and our daily work to the perspective of change, of impact for the people. It may be difficult, but we can do efforts in identifying the small gains and changes that are happening throughout the project to keep up the positive spirit. Thinking of the long term, on the impact that it may have for the people and the values that we share in terms of solidarity, democracy, human rights, can make a difference in motivation for all involved stakeholders.
Question 14: What is the level of information that we need to include in the Concept Note in terms of stakeholders?	**Answer 14:** As part of the Logical Framework Approach, it would be advisable to do your stakeholder mapping and analysis in the early stages of your project, for the preparation of your Concept Note. However, due to the limitation of the Concept Note (5 pages), you will have to carefully select which information to include, and which one to leave to include later at the Full Application. The focus is on relevance and design, and including in the CN elements that clearly indicate, with data, that you have done your stakeholder analysis, provide a strong element of credibility to your proposal.
Question 15: Why do we need to gather so much data from the stakeholders, target Groups and Final Beneficiaries? How do we analyse the data?	**Answer 15:** Because it is very important to know in detail the people you will be working with in your project as it is their situation that you will be aiming to change and improve. It is not only about the data, but what the data tells you about the people, their needs, characteristics, capacities, relationships. The more you know about them, the better prepared you are to define your project and work with them. Data is important to make informed decisions.

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	You may analyse the data with some statistic analysis in Excel, but it is also important to have a qualitative analysis of the data and how it reflects the situation and the context of the people.
Question 16: When projects are presented by an international partnership, the criteria is the same? How does it work?	**Answer 16:** In the case of partnerships, either with international partners or with local partners, the assessment criteria and the whole process works in the same way as with individual proposals. The difference is that there needs to be one lead applicant to submit a proposal, and the rest of the organizations are co-applicants. Co-applicants need to sign a mandate to the lead applicant, as it is the lead applicant that takes leadership and is the sole interlocutor for the project with the EU, in the name of the co-applicants. If the proposal is awarded a grant, then the lead applicant becomes the lead beneficiary of the grant and the co-applicants become beneficiaries of the grant.

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Q&A from Webinar 3: Purpose and Objectives in Projects

Question 17: What are some of the criticisms of the Logframe Approach? How can these criticisms be addressed?	**Answer 17:** The Logical Framework Approach and Logframes have been criticised for several reasons. The main one is that they may offer a representation of reality that is often over-simplified, reducing problems and activities to a set of linear cause-and-effect relationships that can overlook some of the complexities and dynamics in development contexts. It is also often regarded as complex, rigid and too donor-oriented. These criticism may be addressed by using the logframes as live documents that may be updated and used as monitoring tools that may help keep focus on long-term impacts.
Question 18: Is it acceptable for the EU to significantly revise the LFM (with outputs, outcomes, impact indicators) during project implementation?	**Answer 18:** In general terms, it is not acceptable to significantly revise Logframes at the level of impact, outcomes and outputs, as that would usually mean that the project is modified to a point that would call into question the award decision and the principle of equal treatment in the proposal evaluation process. In any case, it would be something that would require strong justification and prior approval from the EU, that would need to assess the contexts and the reasons provided for such a request for a project change.
Question 19: Could you please give us an example of the tree, taking a real problem?	**Answer 19:** At the end of this Q&A document you may find some references to examples of problem trees that may be used as reference.
Question 20: Is it possible or do you have such practice in the scope of EU intervention to have input in one field and obtain output in another one as a side effect, besides reaching the main objectives?	**Answer 20:** It is frequent that you may have unexpected or unplanned outcomes out of your projects, as it is something that falls out of your direct sphere of influence. It should not happen with inputs and outputs, as those levels are part of your direct sphere of influence and you are under control.

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Question 21: Is there a list of websites for the calls or the centralized is the only one?	Answer 21: Yes, the centralised is the only one for EU-funded Calls for Proposals that are managed by the EU. However, there may be other calls at local level that may be funded by the EU by means of sub-granting. The central website is mentioned at the end of this document, as a key resource.
Question 22: Can the Logical Framework be replaced by Theory of Change Framework?	**Answer 22:** The Logical Framework Approach (LFA) and the Theory of Change (ToC) are both valuable tools in project planning and management, each with its strengths and limitations. While they can complement each other, substituting one entirely for the other in EU-funded projects is not really possible due to how EU-Calls for Proposals are currently defined, as the Logframe is a requested document that is part of the Full Application. In general terms, it would be possible to develop a Theory of Change for your project and then use the information from it to develop a Logframe Matrix. Logframe Matrixes have been and will continue to be a part of the application process for EU-funded Calls for Proposals.

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Q&A from Webinar 4: Monitoring and Control in Projects

Question 23: Reading some reports I saw that organisations are usually able to track project success in terms of whether they have done the activities and not focus on it as a result. How to ensure that the organisation can define SMART indicators?	**Answer 23**: Project success cannot be only measured in terms of budget correctly spent, activities duly implemented, and outputs adequately generated. There needs to be an outcome, a result, a change as a consequence of those activities and outputs. So, in general terms, there is a need to have a degree of measurement of how the situation has evolved at the end of the project compared to the situation at the beginning. SMART objectives and indicators provide a good framework to work in that line. Organisations should work in that line and invest in training and capacity building for their staff in these areas, but also introducing timely activities in the workplans so that there is a structure dynamic and processes in the organizations to collect data, analyse it and use it for decision-making.
Question 24: What are the main parts of a Theory of Change and what is the difference between the Theory of Change and the Logical Framework Approach?	**Answer 24:** The Theory of Change generally offers a more flexible and context-sensitive approach to planning and evaluating social change initiatives. The Logical Framework Approach provides a structured, linear framework for project planning and management, focusing on clear objectives, activities, and measurable indicators. They both share the need to establish strong cause-effect explanations, but LFA is probably more linear and ToC provides a deeper understanding of the context and the multi-dimensional origins to problems.
Question 25: What would be your recommendation regarding synchronization of project indicators with OPSYS indicators?	**Answer 25:** I would suggest that you adhere to the indicators that you may have included in OPSYS and keep the records updated in OPSYS. I think it may create complications to have a duplicated structure, and the EU will be looking at the data in OPSYS, so that is where everything should be synchronized.
Question 26: How do you budget for monitoring activities? What % do you budget for the final evaluation of the project?	**Answer 26:** Monitoring activities are part of your Management activities and should be incorporated in that activity and budget line. In general terms, it would be advisable to allocate 7% to 15% to project management activities, including monitoring. However, this needs to be adjusted based on the project's unique needs and level of complexity.

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	For evaluations the percentage to cover for an external evaluation could be 5 to 10%, again depending on the size of the grant and the complexity of the project.
Question 27: How many indicators are recommendable to be developed per outcome and output?	**Answer 27:** There is no fixed number of indicators that you need to develop per each one of the levels in your Logframe. The rule of thumb would be "as many as you need, and not more" to measure the degree of progress and achievement. However, it needs to be considered the amount of effort and cost associated with the gathering of indicator data, and it is very likely that in many cases with one or two indicators you may have a good enough idea of how your outcome and outputs are evolving. It is always advisable to keep things as simple as possible.

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Useful References

Title	Comment
Calls for Proposals and Tenders https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/online-services/#/	The central website where all EU-funded Calls for Proposals that are implemented by the EU are published. It is possible to search by Country.
EU Roadmaps for engagement with Civil Society Armenia Moldova Georgia Ukraine Belarus Azerbaijan – not currently available Eastern Partnership	These are the links to the available policy documents in which the EU outlines its priorities and plans regarding Civil Society in each country (not all are available or updated). It is a good reference document to understand EU policy in each country.
Capacity 4Dev https://capacity4dev.europa.eu/_en	Capacity4dev is the knowledge sharing platform created by the European Commission's Directorate General for International Partnerships (INTPA) and it contains a great amount of useful resources for Civil Society Organizations. Make sure to look under "Resources" and under your "Country" for useful resources.
EuropeAid Project Cycle Management Guidelines European Commission Includes the Logical Framework Approach.	This is the **EU reference** manual for PCM, but it also includes the Logical Framework Approach with useful guidelines and examples.
The Logframe Handbook World Bank The Logical Framework USAID The Logical Framework Approach	Other manuals and guidelines documents from the World Bank, USAID, SIDA, and DFID.

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GDSI Delivering Sustainable Solutions

SIDA Howto Note on Logframes DFID	
Results and Indicators for Development Capacity4Dev	The complete reference to available indicators that are used by the EU.
EaP Civil Society Facility e-Learning Hub https://elearning.eapcivilsociety.eu/	The Eastern Partnership Civil Society Facility e-Learning Hub is the dedicated site with video resources. Our e-learning hub offers civil society activists a range of products to assist their learning across 8 topic areas