Guide to evaluating ESF/Co-financed Projects©

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SEEDA

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About this guide

This guide provides information to support both SEEDA-funded ESF "Action Projects", such as those providing services to beneficiaries, and "Research Projects" carrying out research activity.

Who is this guide for?
This guide is for project managers and those involved in the design, delivery and/or implementation of ESF projects, and is intended to develop an understanding of the benefits of good evaluation and of how to carry out evaluation effectively.

How should the guide be used?
ESF projects vary enormously and therefore require quite different approaches to evaluation. This guide will take the reader through the evaluation process and provide suggestions along the way to help those responsible for evaluation to decide what and how they will evaluate. The emphasis throughout is on choice. The guide does not provide a prescriptive framework; the important thing is to decide which sections are felt to be of most value, and to apply these accordingly.

Introduction

What is evaluation?

Evaluation enables organisations that fund and deliver projects to:

- assess the degree to which project aims were met
- reflect upon and understand what the project has achieved
- work out the cost of these achievements
- show accountability for project spend against performance
- highlight any important lessons taught by the project, particularly those that can be applied to future project design and delivery.

Good evaluation demonstrates the actual or (if time will not allow) the potential *impact* the project has or is likely to have on individual beneficiaries, stakeholders, policy-makers, local communities and targets. In this way, it helps to develop a deeper understanding of projects.

Evaluation is not a description of the day-to-day activities of a project, nor is it an exercise in validating personal actions or decisions.

What does good evaluation do?

It helps make decisions

- about project direction and allocation of resources
- about the cost-effective design, implementation and management of projects.

It develops understanding

- of beneficiary needs and what can be done to address those needs
- of how to support, defend or oppose future projects.

It improves design

- so that future projects are informed by the lessons learned, thus maximising their chances of success
- so that different organisations understand what has been achieved and by whom.

It provides evidence

- of an organisation's track record in delivering projects, increasing their credibility
- of what a project has achieved, for whom, and at what cost.

It lifts hearts

- by developing a sense of pride and enthusiasm among those involved in project management and delivery on the ground.

When to evaluate

Evaluation is one of the first things that need to be considered, not the last thing. It shouldn't be left to the end … but, many times, that's exactly what happens. Perhaps there's a dawning realisation of a contractual obligation to provide SEEDA with an evaluation report. Or maybe the motivation is that by leaving it as late as possible the maximum number of beneficiaries can be included in achievement figures.

Whatever the reason, it's important not to leave anything until the last minute. Providers have to consider what is going to be evaluated and how, right from the outset, so that:

- the right information can be captured
- at the right time
- with as little difficulty as possible throughout the life of the project.

Consider the following questions that might be asked of a beneficiary:

"What did you expect to get out of taking part in this project?"
"Were your expectations met?"

Imagine how unlikely it would be to get a valid answer to these questions from the beneficiary 18 months after they took part. Memories fade, and it might be difficult for them even to remember what they took part in, never mind why or whether their expectations were met. It might also be that contact details are out of date because beneficiaries have moved on.

It would be much better to ask this question close to the start of a programme:

"What do you expect to get out of this project?"

And this question near the end:

"Were your expectations met?"

These questions are far more likely to elicit meaningful and valid responses, which can then be collated, analysed and used to support evaluation.

Internal or external evaluation?

Evaluation needs to be in proportion to the size of the project and the funds available to support evaluation. If you haven't already done so, make sure you have a budget set aside to fund evaluation activity!

Projects of less than £50,000 in value
Internal methods are likely to be quite adequate. Two simple, cost-effective methods are:

- adding questions to existing beneficiary forms
- using individual learning plans to determine the changes in an individual over a period of time.

Methods like these don't create a lot of additional work. The important thing is to get systems in place to collect and analyse the data right from the start.

Projects of between £50,000 and £250,000
The larger a project is, the more information is needed to evaluate it. Providers should consider whether they have enough internal resources to carry out an effective evaluation. They should also think about the degree to which a purely internal evaluation is impartial. There may be a case, on both grounds, for using the services of an external evaluator.

Projects of more than £250,000
There is a clear expectation that an independent, external evaluator will be contracted to carry out a formal evaluation. SEEDA should be able to suggest organisations that may be able to help.

Choosing external evaluators
The chosen organisation should:

- have a good record of carrying out evaluation with similar target audiences and producing reports in clear English, avoiding technical and complex language wherever possible
- be interested and experienced in the type of work you are carrying out
- be able to function appropriately within the project's beneficiary culture
- show that they can develop positive relationships with the management and delivery teams
- Work with those responsible for evaluation to ensure co-ownership of the evaluation activity and outcome.

Always remember that where an external evaluator is engaged, projects still need to gather information right from the start to inform evaluation activity.

It is also important to remember that, while you may decide to buy in the services of an external evaluator, the project manager is still responsible for overseeing the evaluation activity and for ensuring that the process is acceptable to beneficiaries and project workers, and that the final report addresses the right issues.

Summary

Evaluation aims to:

- assess the degree to which the project's aims were met
- measure the impact of the project
- identify the lessons learned.

The key to successful evaluation lies in deciding what to evaluate, then developing systems to capture this information right from the start. Even where external evaluators are used, providers must still put in place systems to collect the right information at the right time.

It's important to be specific about the information gathered. Quality is more useful than quantity.

There is no one correct way to evaluate. Each project has to decide for itself the areas that are most important to evaluate and how best to carry out evaluation.

Key stages in evaluation

1. Decide what you want to evaluate

What questions do you and others want your evaluation to answer?

It will be important to discuss the questions you may wish to have answered by the evaluation with stakeholders and the project team who are delivering services on the ground, in order to ensure wider ownership of the evaluation process and an understanding of the rationale of the evaluation activity.

The questions that you decide you want to be answered will help focus the design of your evaluation. This is essential, as many projects focus on gathering a plethora of information, most of which is not collated or analysed and is thus of very little use in supporting evaluation. Considering questions at the outset will help ensure that you gather only that information that is needed to answer those questions.

In choosing your questions, you might find it useful to revisit your ESF Tender Application in order to examine the original aims and objectives of the project. You might also find it helpful to look at the SEEDA evaluation guidance detailed at Annex 1.

You will need to ensure that your objectives are Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Timed, e.g. SMART, in order that they can be used to support evaluation.

Questions you want answered should also focus on the achievement of a combination of input, output and impact objectives.

Inputs

Inputs are the resources put into the project, and are closely aligned with hard targets. Input questions may include:

What was the outlay for each beneficiary?
What services did we provide and for whom?
What was our research method?

Questions that focus on the following will be examining inputs:

- money
- the number of staff involved/their time commitment
- the number of learners involved
- methods used
- project meetings or briefing time
- review meetings
- systems and procedures implemented.

Outputs

These are what you get out of the project, and are generally quantifiable (things that you can count). They are the short-term effects of the project activity and are again linked closely to hard targets. Questions that you may wish to have answered about outputs include:

How many learners completed programmes?
How many businesses participated?
How many NVQs or units were achieved?
What materials/web sites/publications were developed?
Did we produce a research report in line with our original objectives?

Impact

This aspect is of most interest to SEEDA. It is perhaps the most important element of any evaluation, yet is often the most difficult to measure. Most people are relatively comfortable with collecting information about the actual numbers of people attending training programmes and the qualifications they achieve. It is more difficult to assess the difference the research made and to whom, or what action projects have contributed to the person who has received the support, their family, the local community, their employing organisation and the achievement of SEEDA objectives. It is also likely that some of the impact can be measured later in the life of the project, when the full effect of the change or implementation has had time to establish itself.

Impact measurement could be referred to as the **"so what?"** factor. So the project achieved all the required outputs at the right price within the right time frame. So what does this really mean to the individual beneficiary and the wider community? What impact did the project have on people, on systems, on procedures? How far has the programme contributed to SEEDA's goals? Did the programme make a difference?

Examples follow of other questions that you might wish to consider. The list is not exhaustive; nor is it prescriptive. It is merely designed to help you start thinking about the areas you would like your evaluation to address.

Action and research project questions

Project impact

- What difference will the project make and to whom, and how can this be evidenced?
- What was its impact on the achievement of SEEDA's aims?
- Which activities had more impact than others?
- Were any negative impacts experienced?
- Have new relationships developed with other agencies, and, if so, what impact has this had?
- Is there evidence of any cultural change or attitudinal change?

Achievement of targets

- What were the project's achievements, compared to its targets and objectives? Did the project achieve what it set out to achieve?
- Was the rationale for the project right? Were the targets right? Were the methods appropriate?
- Was there any unanticipated deviation from the original project or research plan, and, if so, why and what difference did this make to project success?
- Was the project/research appropriately structured to ensure that objectives were met? If not, what needed to change?
- What unexpected outcomes or opportunities emerged from the project/research that were useful or worthwhile?
- Were the numbers of beneficiaries or of those approached to support research adequate to achieve the desired result?
- Were these within the profile of those described in the original ESF Tender?

Innovation

- Were there any elements of the project that were particularly innovative? How well did these innovations work?

Lessons learned

- Which activities or research elements were the most successful/useful and why?
- What lessons have been learned regarding new ways of working with the target group?
- Which factors most affected the success of the programme/research?
- What went well, and what were the project's strengths?
- How well did we introduce the project to participants/the research sample?
- What did not go well in the project, or what were the project's weaknesses?
- What could have been done to prevent drop-out from programmes?
- Given the opportunity to deliver a similar project again, what would you do differently? What changes or recommendations would you make?
- What administrative lessons were learned? How can these be used to help support more effective project delivery in the future?

Sustainability

- Is the rationale for the project or research still valid? If yes, how should the project be taken forward? If not, why not?
- Will the project continue once ESF funding has ceased? If so, how?

Finance

- How well did the project keep within its budget?
- Could the project have achieved the same results more cheaply? If so, how?
- What could you have achieved if more funding had been available?
- Were any resources wasted?

Resource availability

- What information/materials/web sites have resulted, and who is (or who do you anticipate) using these and for what purpose?

Action project questions

Project impact

- What difference did the project make to beneficiaries? (This is perhaps the most important question, and one that you may decide needs to be further segmented and matched to the services delivered and what you had hoped the difference would be.)

    - Differences might be "soft", such as:
        - increased beneficiary confidence
        - improved staff morale and motivation
        - enhanced working relationships.

    - Or they might be "hard" differences, such as:
        - accredited qualifications obtained
        - application of new techniques to business practice, resulting in £x saved costs to the company
        - new business generated
        - beneficiary progression data.

- Were any new partnerships established? If so, with whom, and what impact did this have?

- To what extent have staff skills increased and what difference has this made to the profitability and/or sustainability of participating companies?

- Has this project resulted in a reduction in benefit claims?

- What impact was achieved and at what cost?

- What was the project's impact on the wider community?

- To what extent has the project provided value for money?

- Is there evidence of an increased skills base for the region, which might tackle skills-shortage areas?

Finance

- What was the cost per beneficiary?

- What was the cost per successful outcome?

- To what extent was value for money achieved?

Research project questions

Project Impact

- Whom will the research affect?
    - What impact has the research had or will it have on those responsible for making policy decisions?
    - What impact has the research had or will it have on local communities, businesses, and individuals?
    - What impact has the research had or will it have on those delivering services?

Methods used

- Was the sampling strategy clear, well defined and appropriate (for participants and settings)?
- Were the methods used to gather information reliable and verifiable?

Findings

- Are the findings and conclusions plausible and coherent?
- Is it clear how the findings were identified from the data gathered?

2. Information-gathering

What information do you need and how will you collect it?

Once you have defined the questions that you want to have answered, it will be important to consider what information you need to, and will, gather in order to obtain these answers. This is a most important stage. Decisions will have to be made as to how and by whom the information will be collected, analysed and stored, and when.

The need to benchmark
Some of your questions, such as “What difference did this project make to beneficiaries?”, may mean that you will need to consider the extent to which you have to collect benchmarking information. This means the need to understand and compare the beneficiaries’ situation at the start of the project and on completion, in order that the impact of the project can be measured.

In the case of research projects, it might be useful to provide a literature-search summary, to examine what information and/or research results were available at the outset, to help put the project into context, and to allow the evaluation report to reflect on how the research has added to current thinking, and how it can inform future developments.

Ensuring questions are asked before and after project participation
The evaluation procedure for action projects should ensure that a selected sample of beneficiaries are asked questions at the outset, are tracked, and are then asked questions at project conclusion in order to obtain evidence of distance travelled.

SEEDA have contracted with Spirit Research & Evaluation Ltd to carry out a collective evaluation of all Round 3 ESF projects, and part of this activity will include longitudinal follow-up of 5% of the total number of beneficiaries. It will be important to ensure that individual project follow-up activity dovetails with this. Spirit Research & Evaluation Ltd will contact each project to provide the opportunity to explore how dovetailing can become a reality.

Using monitoring information
It is important to consider that monitoring information, as prepared for SEEDA to ensure contract compliance, can provide useful quantative information to support evaluation. Monitoring and evaluation are closely aligned, as both highlight the activities undertaken by a project.

Pilot
Whatever methods you choose, it is useful to try them out before using them wholesale. If you are using a questionnaire, get two or three beneficiaries to complete it in order to ascertain whether all the questions can be understood, and that you have got the information you need. This is particularly important when there is nobody available to clarify questions.

Suggestions and considerations to support effective information-gathering

The need to ensure that the right people are asked the right questions
Think carefully about whom you will be gathering information from; it may not be solely the beneficiaries that you need to approach. For example, where a project encourages employees to import lean manufacturing techniques to a business, you may need to gather information from the employees trained to do this, from their employer, and perhaps from other stakeholders and/or partners, such as Business Links or Sector Skill Councils partnering a project, in order to gain a fuller picture of the extent of the project's impact on the business (see Annex 3 for an example of a stakeholder question).

Methods of collecting information
Information from employers, beneficiaries or others may be gathered by:

- Self-completion questionnaires
- One-to-one interviews
- Group interviews
- Observation
- Documentation, including Management Information
- Case studies.

It is highly likely that you will need to use a combination of these. The following are some considerations that might help you determine which you will use.

Questionnaires

Considerations:

- Ensure that Data Protection Act requirements are adhered to before using any personal data.
- Question responses should elicit information that is easy to measure (quantitive data) and is thus easy to analyse and report upon, and information which is more detailed (qualitative data), in order that a deeper understanding of the project can be achieved.
- Ensure questionnaires are of an appropriate length; most importantly, that questionnaires are not too long.
- The language level must be appropriate and easily understood by target audience, which is of particular importance to those with essential-skills needs.
- An introductory paragraph (spoken or written) should be provided which states the purpose of the questionnaire and ensures confidentiality.
- Questions must be clear (any lack of clarity could result in varying interpretations of the question) and plainly linked to the information that you are seeking, in order to have your questions about the project answered.

- Support should be offered where more complicated questionnaires are used, to ensure that all questions are answered and that they are properly understood.
- Consider using pre- and post-activity feedback questionnaires to help judge the distance travelled as a result of the activity.
- Consider involving beneficiaries in designing the questionnaire to ensure that questions are appropriately constructed and understood.
- If further follow-up is planned to explore responses in more detail ask for consent to do this.
- Provide a deadline by which the questionnaire needs to be returned (if using a postal questionnaire, then provide a stamped addressed or freepost envelope).

Self-completion questionnaires

- If external evaluators are issuing postal questionnaires, it will be important to ensure that Data Protection Act regulations are complied with.
- E-mail questionnaires can be quicker and provide higher returns, yet you need to ensure that all parties are able to access this method if you are to obtain a representative sample.
- Handing the questionnaire to the beneficiary and getting them to complete it on the spot can help ensure a good response rate, although it might be difficult to ensure anonymity.
- Make sure there is enough room for answers!
- Send out three to four times as many questionnaires as you would like returned, as response rates can often disappoint.

One-to-one interviews (face-to-face and telephone interviews)

Note that many of the above positive considerations will also apply.

<u>Considerations:</u>

- If beneficiaries' literacy levels are low then this method ensures that questions and responses are understood.
- Interviews can be a better approach for beneficiaries who lack confidence.
- It may be more difficult to elicit an honest response, as anonymity is not provided.
- While interviews can prove to be a lengthy, time-consuming and costly exercise, they can often elicit in-depth and valuable information that could not have been obtained through questionnaire use alone.
- If different interviewers are used it is hard to ensure consistency of interviewing.
- Ask participants at the outset whether they are happy to participate in a face-to-face or a telephone interview.

The different types of interview:

Structured interview: questions are predetermined, thus ensuring consistency and easy analysis of results.

Semi-structured interview: broad areas that wished to be discussed are predetermined, but areas of particular interest to a beneficiary can be explored in more detail.

Unstructured interview: While these allow for a far deeper analysis of areas of particular interest to a beneficiary, results are difficult to analyse and whole areas of projects may not be discussed that it was hoped the evaluation would address.

Group interviews

Once again, many of the considerations for one-to-one interviews will apply. In addition:

Considerations

- Group interviews allow for discussion and exploration of issues in more detail in a small-group environment; they must be facilitated by a skilled interviewer to ensure:
    - The interviews are well planned
    - All those present have the opportunity, and are encouraged, to speak freely, thus addressing the tendency for one or two group members to dominate discussion.
    - Discussion remains focused.
    - Issues raised are reflected back to the group and the opportunity to confirm group ownership of these (or otherwise) is given.

- It might be more difficult to criticise a project in a group environment.
- It is possible to identify a core subject of key importance and to focus on that during the group interview.
- Analysis of group interviews can prove difficult.

Observation

- Skilled observers are needed to observe beneficiary activity such as attendance at a presentation or a training event.
- Very careful planning is needed to ensure that the observational information is gathered consistently and is valid and reliable.
- A process needs to be developed which describes what is being sought from the observation (e.g. behaviour, opportunity for knowledge acquisition, application of knowledge/skills acquired, and attitudinal changes).
- Those being observed need to know why, and you also need their permission. This can affect their behaviour and thus render the activity unreliable! Any observation needs to be made as informal as possible to avoid creating an artificial environment.

- Employing the services of “mystery shoppers” who present as potential beneficiaries to observe the project can help in evaluation, although you need to decide whether or not to tell project workers and managers that this approach is being used. If you decide not to there is a risk of hostility.

Documentation, including management information

<u>Considerations</u>

- Consider how reviews by trainers or assessors can be used to support evaluation.
- Use evidence produced by the beneficiaries, such as the portfolio of evidence, to measure their progress.
- The review process, as recorded in the Individual Training Record, could also offer valuable information that would support evaluation.
- In addition to Learner Records, Short Event Records, monitoring information, administration/management systems, procedures, minutes, event-evaluation sheets or any other written record of activity can be very useful in helping answer your evaluation questions.

Case studies

<u>Considerations</u>

- These can provide the reader of an evaluation report with a good understanding of the impact of a project; however, they must maintain impartiality as far as is possible, and link to the questions that you want answered by the evaluation.
- They should clearly describe how the project has made a difference and to whom (the individual, business, local community, SEEDA, stakeholders).

3. Deciding who is going to do what

To support the planning and process of your evaluation, you need to decide who will be responsible for what. We list a number of people who might have a role. Of course, smaller projects might have only one person responsible for evaluation. It will be important to ensure that any definitions of roles and responsibilities are included in job descriptions.

Who is likely to be involved?

In most cases, key responsibilities will be undertaken by named project representatives. In some small projects, all roles may fall to one or two individuals. In larger projects, whole teams may be involved.

Key roles and responsibilities are likely to include:

The project manager

- finalising the questions to be answered by the evaluation
- ensuring that systems are in place and are used to gather the required information consistently
- making sure that evaluation is considered from the start of the project
- ensuring that publication and copyright issues are addressed and agreed
- specifying when a report is to be produced
- drawing up a project plan to support procurement of external evaluation support.

The evaluator

- if engaged at the outset, making sure that evaluation is considered from the start of the project (in partnership with the project manager)
- helping support the setting-up of systems and procedures to capture appropriate management information and feedback from beneficiaries and stakeholders throughout the life of the project
- developing and agreeing the evaluation plan with the project manager and the key partners
- understanding SEEDA requirements for evaluation
- developing appropriate evaluation procedures; analysing and discussing data generated with project team to check for any discrepancies in findings.

The project team and delivery partners

- understanding the importance of data capture and its role in supporting evaluation
- informing beneficiaries of the rationale for asking evaluation questions and allaying any fears that they are being "assessed" personally
- collecting the required information
- collecting feedback from beneficiaries, employers and partners

- feeding back to the evaluator on aspects of the project with which they are involved.

Stakeholders / beneficiaries / project participants

- providing information about how well they feel the project is progressing
- feeding back to project managers and project teams to enable them to assess whether the original objectives were appropriate, whether progress is in line with their needs, and whether changes are required.

SEEDA / funding bodies

- receiving and analysing the results of evaluation over and above the quarterly progress reports
- ensuring that all involved in projects understand the need for evaluation
- providing projects with the opportunity to learn from the success or otherwise of other projects
- evaluating activities jointly undertaken by the project and the funding body, such as contracting, performance reviews and joint events
- evaluating the collective achievements of all co-financed projects across the region.

4. Planning

Having decided what you want to evaluate – the questions you want the evaluation to answer, and how and what information will be gathered – you need to put together a plan to capture this information. Using a framework is helpful in enabling you to assess the extent to which your methods will allow you to gather the information you need to support evaluation.

An example of a framework that can be used to support this process is provided below. SEEDA representatives, as part of their monitoring role, will periodically visit this plan with you to provide support in carrying out the activities as recorded.

Action project

Objectives	Questions that evaluation will answer	How information will be collected	Who is responsible, with dates
To increase number of companies using lean manufacturing techniques in the South East	How many beneficiaries/companies took part?	MI	PW ¼ reporting
	What % of these is now using lean techniques?	Beneficiary and company questionnaire	PW Jun 07 75% follow-up
	What % of these was not using lean techniques prior to the project?	Benchmark question used at Induction	SW Jan 05
	How has the introduction of lean techniques affected the business?	Company and beneficiary questionnaire	PT Jun 06
		Case studies	FM Jan 07
		Ranking scale: to what extent has the project had an impact on your business?	SW Oct 06
		Open questions: How?	SW Oct 06
		Will it continue to do so?	SW Oct 06

To make companies more competitive and profitable	To what extent has the project resulted in individual companies becoming more profitable?	Companies advised at outset that this question will be asked at end, and if necessary advised how and what data can be collected to illustrate profitability Case study	PT Jan 05 FM Nov 06
To encourage companies using lean techniques to network and share good practice	How many network events held and how many companies attended these? Did numbers increase over time? Did this result in any sharing of good practice?	MI MI Group interview held at a networking event. Questionnaire e-mailed to participating companies	PW Dec 07 PW Dec 07 SW Oct 06

Research project

Objectives	Questions that evaluation will answer	How information will be collected	Who is responsible, with dates
To produce a research report to inform future delivery of programmes and to provide evidence to prompt a wider, more informed debate	Did the research make a difference? If so, how, and to whom? Are there any findings that indicate a need for a new way of working?	Stakeholder and partner interviews Dissemination event feedback Publication feedback	PK Mar 07

5. Producing the project evaluation report

In deciding how you want your evaluation report structured and styled, consider how it will be used and by whom. Do not produce a highly detailed report with a plethora of information, when a focused evaluation report is often preferable. It may be that you need to produce the report in two styles, one detailed, and the other perhaps a simple A4 sheet that summarises the key evaluation findings and themes for dissemination to a wider audience.

Writing the evaluation report
We will now consider a format you could use to write your evaluation report. It is not designed to be prescriptive, but should offer a useful indication of the way in which to record the information that you have gathered during the project.

Report sections

Introduction
Introduce your project and state what it aimed to achieve, why it came about, and how it fits in with wider provision (or the absence of this). Portray the project in the wider context, highlighting current policy and thinking in this area of work. Summarise the project, its original aims, its objectives and the methods used. Include also the aims and objectives of the evaluation (noting of course the questions that you wanted to have answered), and how the evaluation was carried out.

Executive summary
To include the key points from the full report.

Key findings
This should provide a description of the questions you wished to have answered by the report, along with the answers to those questions.

Analysis of findings / conclusions
So what do answers really tell you?

- What was the project's impact?
- Was the rationale for the project/research right? Were the targets right? Were the methods used appropriate?
- Does the project rationale remain valid? If so, how should the project be taken forward?
- What went well in the project? What were the project's strengths?
- What did not go well in the project? What were the project's weaknesses?

Recommendations and lessons learned
What can we draw from these findings in order to learn, grow and help others to achieve?

- Given the opportunity to deliver a similar project again, what changes or recommendations would you make?
- What should happen next? Will the project be taken forward, if so how?

6. Disseminating project findings

It is very important that the evaluation findings are used to benefit your project and ensure its ongoing success, and that they are used to inform other projects' design and delivery. Consider how you will provide interested parties with the findings from your report. Map who you think would benefit from receiving the information and consider how best you can get this information to them. Think about posting the report onto a web site. SEEDA may be able to advise you which web sites might be the most appropriate and how best to approach the technical issues of presenting the report in a suitable format. Also consider whether a dissemination event would be useful. Perhaps a half-day could be taken to present the results of the report and give delegates the chance to talk about them in smaller groups, to see how they might make good use of the lessons learned. Evaluation can provide a good opportunity to market your organisation. Others can see what you have achieved and that you are willing to share your story with them to help inform their project development.

Considerations

Who would benefit from the results of the project activity and evaluation?
All the people connected with the project will certainly be interested in feedback, including staff, SEEDA, beneficiaries and partners. In addition, representatives of other similar projects will have an interest and will wish to learn from it.

How would the audience benefit?
Considering how the audience would benefit helps to ensure that the content is appropriate for their needs.

What do you want to tell them?
What are the key themes and messages of interest (this may vary from audience to audience)? What are your main findings? How did the processes work? What results did you achieve? What recommendations would you make for future action? Where could the project go next? What key lessons can be taken from the project?

How to tell them
Should there be a press release, a presentation at an event, a workshop, a newsletter or an article in other organisations' newsletters, an e-mail, a report, a video, a local radio interview, or a combination of these? It is good practice to prepare a summary of the evaluation. If the report is too lengthy, many people will not read it.

When to tell them
Try not to leave all feedback to the end: it might be too late to support or influence others in learning from your findings, recommendations and lessons. It is worth considering the ESF bidding cycle and how the report might inform those preparing bid applications. SEEDA can advise you about this.

Annex 1

SEEDA evaluation requirements

Description of project and how it ran

Links with government programmes

Did the project run as stated in the application?

Were any changes agreed?

Details of changes and dates notified

Describe how you publicised that ESF was involved and how beneficiaries knew that ESF was part-funding

Describe the methods used to evaluate how the project was carried out

How did your project support and promote equal opportunities?

How did your project support regional approaches to sustainable development?

How did you involve the ICT in your project?

How did your project fit in with local initiatives?

Annex 2

Gathering information from partners/stakeholders

You may feel that it is important to ask partners to evaluate areas such as the impact of the project, e.g. by using the following question, asked of a trade association partner:

Q. “How significantly do you feel this programme has impacted on your member companies?”

1 = No impact 4 = Significant impact

1 2 3 4

Q. “Please provide examples of impact or attach case study”

Example of a beneficiary question

The question you want the evaluation to answer is: “How well did we introduce this programme to people and is there anything we could have done to improve on this?”

To answer this you could adopt a ranking system for the following beneficiary question, e.g.:

Q “Were you clear what you would get out of taking part in this programme?”

1 = Not at all clear 4 = Very clear

1 2 3 4

You could then ask a more detailed question to supplement this, such as:

Q. “Is there any additional information that you would have liked at the outset to help you prepare for participation? If so, please describe.”