Extension project M&E planning guide

Hort Innovation

Contents

Purpose

An annually updated project monitoring and evaluation (M&E) plan is required for each Hort Innovation extension and industry development (extension) project. Exemptions may include short-term desktop studies, evaluation projects or impact assessment projects.

This Extension project M&E planning guide supports extension delivery partners to develop a project M&E plan that links to the Hort Innovation Evaluation Framework, which can be found on the Hort Innovation website here.

Hort Innovation may require an independent mid-term evaluation for extension projects and the relevant Hort Innovation process owner will advise if this is required. The review will be contracted by Hort Innovation. Delivery partners are asked to support the review and supply any necessary project M&E data collected to date.

The members of Hort Innovation's Extension and Data & Insight Teams are available to support delivery partners in the development of their M&E plan.

Definitions

Monitoring or "what's happening?" is the regular collection of data used to monitor progress towards achievement of key performance indicators (KPIs) and outcomes, and where necessary to make adjustment to project activities and outputs.

Extension projects focus on facilitating change for target audiences in the following areas:

- Knowledge, Attitude, Skills, Aspirations (KASA)
- Practices
- Culture
- Leadership.

Extension project team members monitor outcomes (sustainability, profitability, competitiveness, preparedness, etc.) generated for the industries involved, due to the changes the project audience has made in these areas as a result of the project.

Evaluation or "what happened?" is the use of available data collected over a particular time (i.e., at milestone, mid-term or end-of-project reporting), as well as other data collected especially for evaluation purposes (e.g., mid-term interviews), to assess the effectiveness, relevance, appropriateness, and efficiency of the approach taken in the delivery of an extension project.

At annual, mid-term and end-of-project reporting, extension project team members reflect upon the effectiveness, relevance, appropriateness, and efficiency of approaches taken to achieving changes in KASA, practices, and culture and leadership within target audiences; and the outcomes or benfits they have gained as a result.

What to include in your project M&E plan

Hort Innovation M&E plans for extension projects include the following:

- Strategic Investment Plan (SIP) and end-of-project outcomes, strategies and KPIs – SIP outcomes, strategies and KPIs are listed in the relevant industry's SIP under the extension and capability outcome area. These are developed into end-of-project outcomes and KPIs during the design stage of an M&E plan by identifying the contribution the contracted project will make towards SIP extension and capability outcomes and associated KPIs, and the strategies that will be adopted

    You can access the SIP for each industry on Hort Innovation's website here to view the extension and capability outcomes, strategies and KPIs.

- The program logic is a "plan on a page" that shows how a project has been designed to contribute towards achievement of industry SIP extension and capability outcomes, measured through KPIs
- Key evaluation questions (KEQs) – questions that are developed to assess the effectiveness, relevance, appropriateness, and efficiency of the approach taken in a project
- M&E data collection, collation, synthesis, and analysis – the planned arrangements for collecting, and analysing data, including methods, specific data sources and responsibilities for collection
- Reporting – the planned reporting arrangements including milestones, mid-term evaluations (including independent reviews where relevant) and final reports.

    To assist with development of an M&E plan, access the **Extension project M&E template** on the extension resources page of the Hort Innovation website here.

1. SIP and end-of-project outcomes, strategies and KPIs

To generate end-of-project outcomes, strategies and KPIs:

- Identify the extension and capability outcomes, strategies and KPIs in the relevant industry's SIP
- Develop end-of-project outcomes by determining what outcomes the project can achieve with the time and resources available
- Determine end-of-project KPIs by adding measurable targets to the relevant generic KPIs from the SIP
- Adopt or adapt the strategies from those listed in the SIP when designing how the project will achieve the identified end-of-project outcomes.

An example is provided in the Table 1 below.

Table 1. SIP project alignment

	Outcomes	Strategy	KPI
From an industry SIP	Improved capability and an innovative culture that maximises investments in productivity and demand and builds a resilient Australian vegetable industry	Use extension and communication processes to support industry to achieve supply and demand priorities supporting profitable businesses especially in the areas of new technologies to enhance sustainable production practices, food safety, waste management, biosecurity and use of data to assist with decision-making	Establishment of a baseline and then increased share of industry (hectares) with positive change in knowledge, attitude skills aspiration and practice change and implementation of targeted high priority areas (e.g., food safety, waste management, export capability and decision-making)
End-of-project (developed by project team)	Increased profitability and sustainability of the Australian vegetable industry through the development and adoption of an integrated FAW management system	Implement regionally based and nationally integrated participatory action research focused on localised on-farm demonstrations to support industry to develop and adopt more profitable and sustainable integrated FAW management systems	Establishment of a baseline and then increased share (%) of industry (hectares) applying integrated FAW systems (KASA and practices); and the gains in profitability and sustainability that are being achieved by industry because of these changes

1. SIP and end-of-project outcomes, strategies and KPIs

The program logic is the extension project's "plan on a page". It outlines the steps in the strategy adopted in the project to achieve the contracted end-of-project extension and capability outcomes (Figure 1). The steps to completing the program logic include:

- Enter the SIP outcomes and KIPs into the relevant section of the logic template

- Enter the end-of-project outcomes and KPIs determined in the previous section into the relevant section of the logic template

- Using the strategy adopted for the project, schedule the contracted outputs (i.e., sequence and timing) required to achieve the end-of-project outcomes in the outputs section of the logic template

- Determine the activities and resources needed to plan for and implement the contracted outputs, and list them in the activities section of the logic template

- In the relevant section, list the resources and knowledge that has been used to develop the logic.

Figure 1. Program logic template

		Project resources
Relevant SIP outcome(s)	Industry SIP extension and capability outcomes, KPIs and strategy(ies) your project is aligned with	Final report guide Final report template
End-of-project outcome(s)	The desired final result of your project. Your project's unique contribution to the relevant SIP outcomes (e.g., profitability, sustainability, etc.) and KPIs measured throughout the project and reported in the final report. Sometimes there is more than one end-of-project outcome	Milestone guide Milestone template KASA and practice change, culture and leadership outcomes
Intermediate outcomes	· Cumulative progress toward end-of-project outcomes and KPIs achieved up to a reporting period · Documented annually in milestone reporting	Milestone guide Milestone template KASA and practice change, culture and leadership outcomes
Outputs	What outputs will you deliver? For example: · Milestone reports delivered along with the deliverables that were contracted for each milestone (e.g., peer to peer learning group, webinar, training courses, field days, fact sheets, articles and other events and resources as listed in the MRT) · Priorities set, project and annual plan developed · Baseline report produced for priority areas and informs the M&E plan · Project reference group meeting held and minutes taken	Project M&E planning guide Project M&E planning template Baseline data
Activities	What you do to prepare for and deliver an output? For example: · Project administration · Preparing for project priority setting and project planning event(s) with key stakeholders · Collect target audience baseline KASA, practices, culture and leadership data across priority areas and asses opportunities for changes that will deliver on SIP outcomes (e.g., profitability, sustainability, etc.)	Project M&E planning guide Project M&E planning template Project planning documents
Project resources and knowledge	Project resources and knowledge: · Contract and milestone descriptions · Industry statistics and data about potential priority areas · Industry extension strategy · Data base of stakeholder groups and target audiences · Links to R&D · Industry resources / insights · Collaboration/partnerships and project team	

3. Key evaluation questions

Key evaluation questions (KEQs) are the overarching questions that guide assessment of the effectiveness, relevance, appropriateness, and efficiency of the approach taken within a Hort Innovation extension project.

KEQs guide project evaluation. KEQs are questions the extension project team ask of themselves and their stakeholders in order to evaluate their project delivery and approach. Project teams would benefit from asking these questions at annual review and planning events.

KEQs should be tailored to each specific project. Project delivery partners are encouraged to modify and/or create new KEQs addressing the four domains in Table 2.

Figure 2. Key evaluation questions relevant at the project level

Domain	Key evaluation questions
Effectiveness To what extent has the project achieved its expected outcomes?	1 To what extent has the project achieved its expected outcomes? 2 What are the major benefits (profitability, sustainability, impacts (KASA) and practice change, leadership, and culture) that the project has delivered stakeholders?
Relevance How relevant was the project to the needs of the intended beneficiaries?	3 Is there grower/stakeholder support for a new extension project? 4 What legacy will the project leave?
Process appropriateness How well have intended beneficiaries been engaged in the project?	5 To what extent were methods successful to the target audience/s of the project? 6 What changes to project delivery occurred from grower/stakeholder insights?
Efficiency What efforts did the project make to improve efficiency?	7 Did the project deliver required outputs and outcomes on time and on budget? 8 What efforts did the project make to improve efficiency (both for growers and project team)?

4. Data collection, collation, synthesis and analysis plan

Data collection may involve a range of quantitative (numeric) or qualitative (descriptive, text-based or visual) information. The important thing is that data collection methods address the information needs as defined by the extension project's intended outcomes along with KPIs and KEQs.

To address data gaps or deficiencies, use multiple data collection methods. A suggested format for identifying data collection methods and sources is provided in Table 3.

Table 3. Project monitoring plan

Program logic	What to monitor and evaluate	Performance measures (KPIs and KEQs)	How to monitor Suggested methods	Data source Suggested sources	When Suggested timing	Responsibility and reporting Suggestions
End-of-project outcomes	The end-of-project extension and capability outcomes	Outcomes and KPIs as measured over the life of the project and reported in final report	Measure outcomes achieved through changes in KASA and practice change by target audiences over the life of project	Database of interactions with growers/target audiences – over life of project; finalised narrative of key representative stakeholders engaged with the project, practices changed and outcomes received	As required for evaluation	Project team members Included in final report
	Effectiveness, relevance, appropriate-ness and efficiency of project delivery	KEQs	End of project interviews and review of monitoring data for evaluation purposes	Interviews with target audience Project monitoring database	Submitted with final report	Independent with support from project staff Included in final report
Intermediate outcomes	Progress towards end-of-project extension and capability outcomes measured	Outcomes and KPIs as measured at milestone reporting and at mid-term review	Measure outcomes achieved through changes in KASA and practice change amongst target audiences within reporting period	Database of interactions with growers/target audience – within reporting period. Report on KASAP changes in narratives of key stakeholder representatives	Milestone reporting Mid-term review/report	Project team members Milestone reports
			Event surveys Follow up phone calls Readership statistics of communication products Narrative participant interviews	Interviews with target audience Narratives Project monitoring data base Interview, phone call, statistics data collected after outputs and entered into data base Field notes Narrative notes		

Program logic	What to monitor and evaluate	Performance measures (KPIs and KEQs)	How to monitor Suggested methods	Data source Suggested sources	When Suggested timing	Responsibility and reporting Suggestions
Intermediate outcomes (continued)	Effectiveness, relevance, appropriate-ness and efficiency of project delivery	KEQs	Project interviews (formal and informal) and review of monitoring data at mid-term review	Interviews, project record, amalgamated monitoring data	Milestone reporting Mid-term review/report	Mid-term report
Outputs	Outputs as contracted	Milestone achievement criteria	Number of criteria achieved, on track or delayed	Project records	Ongoing – reported annually with updated workplan	Project team members
			Counting events and other outputs as they are delivered	Project records	During/after each output which is then amalgam-ated and reported at milestones	Project team members
Activities	Project administration	Contract	Reconciliations between projected and actual achievements, spending, etc.	Project records	Ongoing – reported annually with updated workplan Milestone reports Final report Extension strategy	Project team members
	Priority setting	SIP priorities/ industry priorities	Industry needs confirmed and extension strategy developed	Growers Advisors IRBs/PIBs Industry statistics Consolations SIPs and industry documents	Extension strategy	Project team members
	Target audience baseline data	Benchmarking achieved Baseline data to track changes in KPIs	Benchmarking survey – baseline data analysis	Benchmarking survey	Baseline report	Project team members

5. Reporting

Investments must demonstrate their performance using the results of M&E to Hort Innovation, levy-paying growers and other industry stakeholders through reporting. The final report will provide information on the project's performance specifically related to addressing the KEQs and KPIs and how these support the achievement of the fund level outcomes (identified in the relevant SIP). Ongoing reporting against M&E progress will be provided through milestone and mid-term reporting.

The Hort Innovation Final report guide and Final report template can be found on the project resources page of the Hort Innovatio website here.

Share your thoughts

We strive to provide the best experience possible for our delivery partners. Please share your feedback on how we can improve this document for you and other delivery partners in the future by emailing us at communications@horticulture.com.au

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