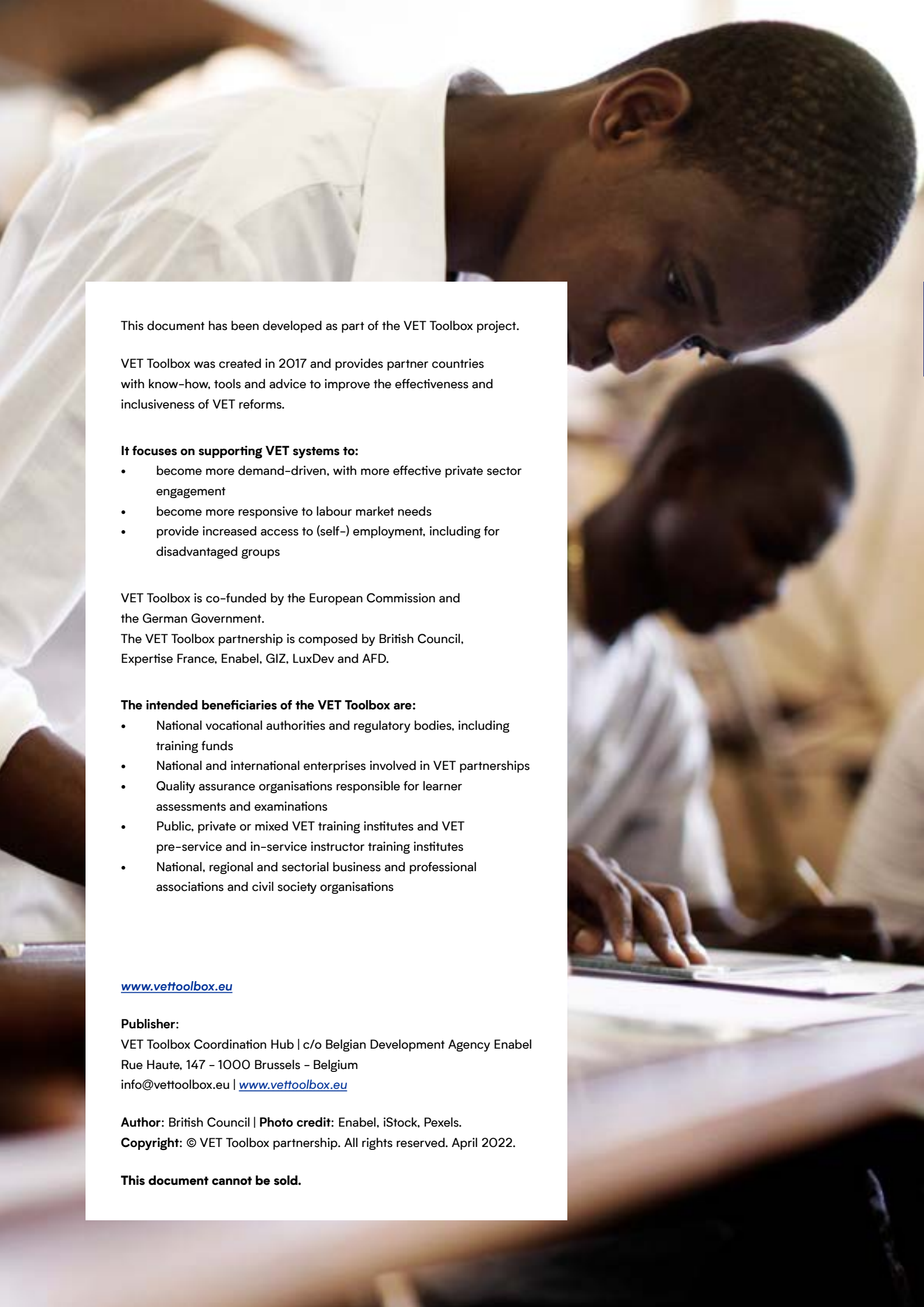


Tracer studies for VET: supporting their creation and implementation



This document has been developed as part of the VET Toolbox project.

VET Toolbox was created in 2017 and provides partner countries with know-how, tools and advice to improve the effectiveness and inclusiveness of VET reforms.

It focuses on supporting VET systems to:

- become more demand-driven, with more effective private sector engagement
- become more responsive to labour market needs
- provide increased access to (self-) employment, including for disadvantaged groups

VET Toolbox is co-funded by the European Commission and the German Government.
The VET Toolbox partnership is composed by British Council, Expertise France, Enabel, GLZ, LuxDev and AFD.

The intended beneficiaries of the VET Toolbox are:

- National vocational authorities and regulatory bodies, including training funds
- National and international enterprises involved in VET partnerships
- Quality assurance organisations responsible for learner assessments and examinations
- Public, private or mixed VET training institutes and VET pre-service and in-service instructor training institutes
- National, regional and sectorial business and professional associations and civil society organisations

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INTRODUCTION

This document and the accompanying sample tracer study are designed for those involved in VET either at a system or institutional level. It is intended to support those who are seeking to improve their understanding of the efficacy of training courses by conducting tracer studies.

The best way to improve VET systems and support the objectives they contribute to is to understand the effectiveness of current training and the specific gaps, challenges and opportunities, and then, take action based on this evidence. Too often, however, this evidential base is inconsistent and inadequate.

Where resources are limited and systems have high degrees of informality, information on the effectiveness of training – including on what happens with graduates after the training – is often not available. A comprehensive tracking of learners is needed to see if the training led to the envisaged success. Therefore, it presents a need for more agile tools to accurately provide an evidential base upon which value judgements and decisions can be made.

A tracer study is one mechanism that can be used to this effect. It is simply a survey of learners after they have finished their training. Tracer studies can be used to better understand the effectiveness of training, both for employers and learners. This guide and the accompanying template will assist those policy makers and training institutions seeking to use tracer studies as an effective evidence-gathering mechanism, and ultimately help to improve their decision making.



OUTLINE

This is a practical guide to the steps involved in designing and disseminating a small-scale decentralised tracer study to measure the progression of graduates, the perceived effectiveness of training, and gaps that might exist between training and the needs of the labour market. This guide has been designed to be used as a planning tool by VET policy and curriculum developers wanting to set up a tracer study. It is based on a series of checklists with explanatory notes that can be applied at the four key stages of designing and developing a tracer study¹:

- Planning
- Data
- Methodology
- Reporting

¹ CiCan Education for Employment Program (C-EFE)

TOOL 1.1 – PLANNING CHECKLIST

The table illustrates the steps involved in developing and planning a tracer study

Activity	Description	Check
Setting objectives	Agreeing information that will be gathered and how it will be used, for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Measuring gaps in training• Understanding graduate destinations• Informing curriculum design	Defined project objectives
Timeframe	Tracer activities mapped through a project plan	Developed project plan and Gantt chart
Steering Committee /Secretariat	Establish a project steering group made up of stakeholders from Government, industry and the VET sector to provide guidance, governance and insights. Appoint an accompanying full-time secretariat that will manage the design and delivery of the tracer study. The role of the secretariat should be agreed in advance and could include: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Undertaking discrete tasks agreed by the project board• Managing the process of distributing and collating the tracer study• Arranging review meetings of the project board	Established steering committee and secretariat
Financial plan	Allocating budget to activities, travel, survey tools, collection, administration, training and reporting.	Budget defined, profiled and approved

PLANNING CHECKLIST – ADDITIONAL NOTES

1) Setting Objectives: Agreeing information that will be gathered and how it will be used

Tracer studies are agile tools and only as effective as the information they gather and, crucially, the action taken. Care must be taken to ensure that the information gathered supports the objective of the tracer study. For example, in seeking to use the study to measure the progression of learners, questions should be directed towards outcomes rather than just satisfaction with the training. It is also helpful to maintain consistency in the information collected. This will allow accurate comparisons to be made over time, and the effectiveness of any interventions in meeting objectives informed by previous surveys to be measured.

Information gathered by a tracer study typically includes²:

- (a) Course, institution, level of study etc. Information that would allow the mapping of outcomes to programmes and institutions
- (b) Demographic information to track target groups
- (c) Progression outcomes for graduates after leaving the education/training institution
- (d) Employment outcomes, which need to be clearly defined, e.g. full time (over 37 hours per week), part time (15 –37 hours, 0 –15 hours per week etc.) and applied consistently across the survey
- (e) Information on training programmes taken after employment
- (f) The period of time required to find employment (as defined in (d))
- (g) The nature of employment (e.g. self-employed, seasonal, permanent contract, trial period etc. (as defined in (d))
- (h) If this employment in an occupation directly linked to the area of study
- (i) If graduates use the skills (soft and technical) and knowledge they have gained in the education/training institution. The extent to which the skills are used, and the reasons for not using them
- (j) The skills and competencies demanded in the workplace and how these are mapped to training programmes
- (k) Mapping of training equipment and facilities to technological requirements of the workplace

² Cedefop (2016) *Carrying out tracer studies: Guide to anticipating and matching skills and jobs VOLUME 6*



The information gathered can be used to better understand three key areas:

1. Identification of gaps between employers' skills demands and VET programmes
2. Measuring the employability of graduates
3. Collection of feedback from graduates to help improve the quality of programmes.

These areas should also be crosschecked with other LMA data such as employer surveys run by relevant agents and other development projects. This would validate graduates' perceptions of the applicability of their skills against employers' views.

For study area 1) the following insights to inform training could be sought:

- Applicability of taught skills in the work environment
- Need for retraining following employment
- Employees' perceptions of their work readiness
- Access to equipment that reflected the workplace during training



For study area 2):

- Current employment situation
- Time taken to find work and duration of job search if different
- Income and position
- Tasks and use of competencies
- Usefulness of training relative to current employment

For study area 3):

- Details of training taken including which skills acquired were of most and least value
- Degree to which the learning environment (i.e. tools / machines) in the training centre was comparable to the workplace
- Need for additional training, including any company-specific training programmes that had to be undertaken
- Evaluation of training taken against job requirements
- Proposals for improvements in training

2) Timeline

When setting a timeline it is important to consider the following:

- Does the timeframe align to the training calendar so that the results can inform improvements at the appropriate time?
- Is the timeframe for data collection feasible and does it ensure that enough time is left to analyse data?
- Does data collection match up with any convenient events such as alumni meetings or holidays when learners from training cohorts are likely to be together and able to complete the survey?
- Is there value in agreeing a fixed point in the yearly calendar to raise awareness of the tracer study and running it annually?
- Does the timeline allow enough time to collect responses in different ways such as written and orally?
- Does the timeframe exclude any groups and do any steps need to be taken to ensure it is representative?

3) Forming the Secretariat

A study steering committee should be formed consisting of identified stakeholders such as

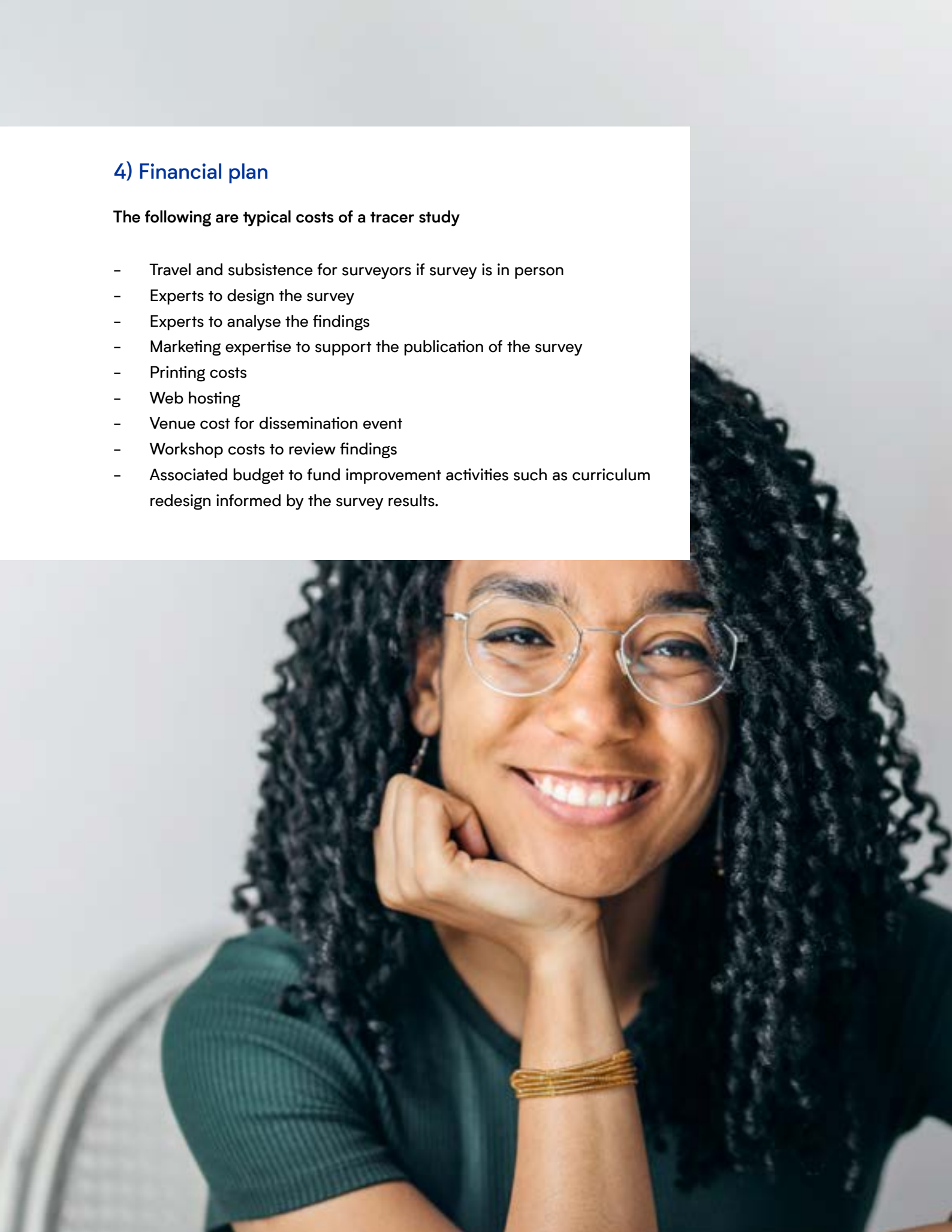
- The relevant Ministry to provide leadership and oversight
- The VET agency
- Regional VET offices to ensure that a local focus is included in the study
- VET training providers in the public and private sectors
- Employers including through sector associations
- Learner alumni groups who could help with the uptake and response to the tracer study
- Community organisations to capture the progression of learners from the informal sector to employment
- Advocacy groups such as those who have expertise in inclusion.

A secretariat accountable to the steering committee should be established to lead on the 'day to day' operations of the study, with support from relevant parties. Clear terms of reference and roles should be assigned to both the steering committee and the secretariat.

4) Financial plan

The following are typical costs of a tracer study

- Travel and subsistence for surveyors if survey is in person
- Experts to design the survey
- Experts to analyse the findings
- Marketing expertise to support the publication of the survey
- Printing costs
- Web hosting
- Venue cost for dissemination event
- Workshop costs to review findings
- Associated budget to fund improvement activities such as curriculum redesign informed by the survey results.



TOOL 1.2 – DATA AUDIT CHECKLIST

Activity	Description	Check
Target population	Clearly define the target learner groups that the study is focusing on. This includes: institution, level, programme, year, demographic sub-sectors (region, gender etc.)	Defined target population
Target data	Decide what data to collect: e.g. employment rates after six months, one year etc., period of study (e.g. up to five years after graduation), graduation rates, progression rates to target sector, satisfaction with the learning programme. This should be based on the <u>study objectives</u> identified in Tool 1.1.	Defined target data sets
Risks and mitigations	Identify barriers to data access e.g. respondent apathy, lack of employer engagement to promote study to employees, out of date contact details, and mitigating strategies developed.	Risk and Mitigation summary
Primary and secondary data	Conduct a review of available secondary data sources (Government statistics, employer surveys, institution monitoring, existing reports, other development programmes etc.). Utilise secondary data to help inform and develop focus for primary data approach to be developed in <u>methodology stage (1.3)</u>	Budget defined, profiled and approved



PLANNING CHECKLIST – ADDITIONAL NOTES

The steering committee/secretariat needs to define the target graduate groups, **this would include:**

- year of graduation
- programme of study
- period for study
- region
- level
- institution
- and demographics.

There should also be an agreement on target response rate, with an understanding that these can be extremely low for tracer studies without mitigation. Mitigation can be actions such as direct phone call follow-ups to chase responses or incentives such as vouchers to improve the completion rate. There needs to be consistency in the approach to previous studies to help support comparisons between different groups. Any external factors that could affect the results should be noted — for example, a new funding or awarding mechanism for learners being implemented that leads to short-term disruption in longitudinal data patterns.

The target data, as well as the sample size and sampling techniques, required to inform the study’s objectives have to be defined. There needs to be a clear understanding of any barriers that exist in collecting the target data and the development of mitigating strategies. This could include

developing incentives that encourage responses and support for individuals when completing the study. This would also include consideration of the survey’s language and any translation requirements. Attention should also be given to anonymising the data to help reassure and encourage the respondents.

Although a tracer study will predominantly be built on the primary data gathered through the survey, it would be good practice to conduct analysis of available secondary data to help inform the study.

This could include:

- employment rates on a regional and sectorial level to allow for comparisons with the target population and measure any added value to employment opportunities afforded to VET graduates
- rates of self-employment and business start-up and sustainability amongst graduates existing institutional alumni data
- data on skills gaps derived through other LMA studies
- data from any previous tracer studies conducted with this toolkit
- reports from other development programmes

TOOL 1.3 – METHODOLOGY CHECKLIST

Activity	Description	Check
Develop primary data collection strategy	Select approach to data collection: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Survey• Focus Group• Structured interviews• Mixed approach	Selection of primary data collection approach agreed
Data collection timeline	Develop a timeframe	Primary data collection timeframe
Research ethics and principles	Ensure the tracer study is built on agreed research ethics and principles	List of tracer study research ethics and principles
Develop tracer study questionnaire	Develop a series of core and optional questions that ensure that focus on the target data. Presented to and approved by the steering committee prior to testing	Tracer study questionnaire developed
Test questionnaire and collection approach	Test primary data collection approach to ensure it is effective and any problems are identified and resolved	Use steering committee to ensure stakeholder input into testing process
Conduct the research	Questionnaire is distributed to the target group with reminders at fixed times. Key stakeholders involved in the distribution are identified and roles formally agreed through a tracer study distribution plan. Regular monitoring takes place to understand take up and allow timely corrective action.	Study distribution plan. Distributed and completed questionnaires
Evaluation and follow up	The Secretariat should evaluate the effectiveness of the study using key indicators such as; response rates, quality of responses (completion), stakeholder and respondent feedback	Evaluation report compiled



METHODOLOGY – ADDITIONAL NOTES

The Steering Committee needs to decide which data collection method would be the most effective in achieving the objectives. **Potential mediums include:**

- **Personal interviews** — valuable data can be gathered with a good response rate. However, very time consuming and expensive;
- **Mail survey** — effective if addresses are available, however, can be expensive, slow to administer, time consuming when adding received information to databases and poor response rates;
- **Telephone survey** — expensive to administer but achieve good response rate from contacted individuals;
- **Online survey** — would help to reduce costs; printing paper questionnaires and data entry are not required, the results of the survey are available very quickly with no specialised staff for data entry necessary and the questionnaire can be tailored for different groups (with filters) which allows for a decentralised and institutionally focused approach. Online survey response rates, however, can be very low and unbalanced
- A mixed approach may prove the most effective with efficiency in scale through online but depth through interviews to interrogate the reasons behind answers more thoroughly. A 'no', can be a 'no' for many reasons. It is important to remember you are seeking to instigate improvement and to inform this it is important to understand as much as possible about the current challenges and successes . The use of multiple collection mediums would also allow for responses from graduates who do not have online access.



QUESTIONS FOR PRIMARY DATA GATHERING³

In developing a tracer study the core questions could be developed with a focus on the following areas⁴:

- A. The course studied at the training institution
- B. Effectiveness of medium of study (e.g. internships, work experience)
- C. Post-graduation outcomes — transition to employment
- D. Employment
- E. Work requirements
- F. Links between study and work
- G. Further training
- H. Demographic information
- I. Comments and recommendations

³ Adapted from Cedefop (2016), Carrying out tracer studies: Guide to anticipating and matching skills and jobs VOLUME 6

⁴ ETF Background Note (2016), Tracer studies: Evaluating the impact of training programmes

Preamble

The questionnaire should start with an overview of the study, its rationale and incentives for contributors. It would then be followed up with some general questions:

Example questions

Age

CompanyJob role

Location

Qualification

A. The course studied at the training institution

Questions about; institution, qualification, programme (including information on work experience, internships etc. if applicable. Recommend three or four questions)

Example questions

Where did you study?

What programme did you study at the VET institution?

What qualification did you achieve?

Bachelors +
FTC/DIP
Professional/technical
Vocational
Short course part of employers' training program
Other

Did you do an internship during your course?

YesNo

Besides qualification, which skills did you gain?

B. Effectiveness of medium of study (e.g. internships, work experience)

When measuring the effectiveness of study a ‘Likert scale’ (1 — 5) questions could be applied to help develop a more detailed understanding of respondents’ perceptions. Questions could include rating of study conditions (materials, teaching, any work-based learning experiences, equipment, support, college infrastructure etc). There could also be a focus on the effectiveness of study in terms of work. This could include questions on: links between taught subject matter and practical experience, trainers’ knowledge of up-to-date industry practices, value of any work-based learning experiences etc. More general questions could also be asked about satisfaction with study such as ‘would you choose to study the course again’. (Recommend four to six questions)

Example questions

How would you rate your training at your VET college?
Please rank from 1 (low) to 5 (high) the quality of

Teaching	1	2	3	4	5
Training equipment	1	2	3	4	5
Work based learning opportunities	1	2	3	4	5
Course contents	1	2	3	4	5

How would you rate your training experience in relation to your job?
Please rank from 1 (low) to 5 (high)

Trainers up to date understanding of the industry	1	2	3	4	5
Training programmes are up to date with industry practice	1	2	3	4	5
Training equipment reflecting workplace	1	2	3	4	5
Value of the careers advice and guidance you received at college	1	2	3	4	5

Would you choose the same programme and college again? Yes No

Reasons why or why not

To what extent do you feel that your training has improved your employability? Please rank from 1 (low) to 5 (high)

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

C. Post-graduation outcomes — transition to employment

In this section, questions could include; employment status after a period of time after graduation (employed, self-employed, ad hoc employment, informal sector, further study, unemployed, other), when did you get your first job after graduation and how long did it take to find one. How did you find your first job? Recommend between four and six questions)

Example questions

What applied to your situation in the first six months (or timeframe agreed by the study) after graduating?

Employment	Housewife/mother
Self-employment	Unemployment
Further study	Other: _____

When did you find employment after graduation?

- You found work before you began your training programme
- Before graduation
- One month
- One to three months
- Three to six months
- Still looking for work

How did you find employment?

- Through college
- Advertisement
- Word of mouth
- Job fair
- Careers advice and guidance

Did your training institute provide you with any careers advice and guidance during your programme? Yes No

If yes, please rank the value of this advice in finding work from 1 (low) to 5 (high)

1	2	3	4	5
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D. Employment

This section of the tracer study would include questions around the following areas; current situation (full time employed, part time, permanent, temporary, further study, region where you are working, did you have to move to find work, sector, job title, duties and income range). It would also focus on Information on employer (sector, size, nature of the business). It could also test job satisfaction and if the current job matches the respondent’s employment aspirations. (Recommend between six and eight questions)

Example questions

What is your current employment situation (more than one is possible)?

- Full time job
- Part time job
- Self employed
- Temporary employment
- Trial period
- Further training
- unemployed
- Other:

What is your job title?

What is your monthly income? (use a scale)

- Less than €xxx
- €xxx to under €xxx
- €xxx to under €xxx
- €xxx to under €xxx
- €xxx to under €xxx
- €xxx to under €xxx
- More than €xxx

In what sector do you work? (list of choices)

- Sector 1
- Sector 2
- Sector 3
- Sector 4
- Sector 5

In what region do you work? (list of choices)

- Region 1
- Region 2
- Region 3
- Region 4
- Region 5

Did you have to move to find work? Yes No

What is the number of employees in your company (list ranges)

Less than 10

10 to under 50

50 to under 100

More than 100

To what extent does your satisfaction with your current job meet your expectations prior to employment?

Much greater than expected

Greater than expected

About the same

Less than expected

Much less than expected



E. Work requirements

This section would explore the skills and competencies required in the respondents' current job role. This could include a ranking of skills and competencies taught in the relevant programmes. (Recommend one or two questions)

Example questions

In what area of the industry sector is your current job?

Tour operator	Front Office	Hotel and lodges
Camping	House Keeping	Safari (Hunting)
Travel agency	Heritage (museums)	Safari (General tourism)
Food production	Other: _____	

To what extent do you use the following soft skills / competencies in your current job?
Please rank 1 (low) to 5 (high)

Entrepreneurship skills	1	2	3	4	5
Communication	1	2	3	4	5
Negotiation	1	2	3	4	5
Time management	1	2	3	4	5
Handling complaints	1	2	3	4	5
Safety awareness	1	2	3	4	5
Confidence	1	2	3	4	5
Customer service	1	2	3	4	5
Teamwork	1	2	3	4	5

➤ Add a list of skills (technical) taught in target programmes depending on Travel and Tourism curriculum

Do you feel the level of your training is similar to your job role?

Much higher

Higher

About the same

Lower

Much lower

F. Links between study and work

This section examines the relationship between the respondents' study programmes and employment. This would include through; the degree of utilisation of taught skills in current job role, the relation between the job and study, the match between qualification and study level with current role and the usefulness of the study programme for the job role. (Recommend four to six questions)

Example questions

To what extent do you use the skills you learnt during your time at your training provider in your current job? Please rank from 1 (not at all) to 5 (a lot)

1 2 3 4 5

To what extent do you think your training was a good preparation for your current job role? Please rank from 1 (not at all) to 5 (a lot)

1 2 3 4 5

Do you feel your training programme provided you with the technical skills you need to successfully operate the equipment required in your job? Please rank from 1 (not at all) to 5 (a lot)

1 2 3 4 5

Do you feel the level of your training is a close match to your current job role?

Considerably below job role

Below current job role

Good map

Above job role

Considerably above job role

Overall how would you rank the value of your training? Please rank from 1 (not at all) to 5 (a lot)

Helping you to find a job	1	2	3	4	5
Helping you to find a job that you enjoy	1	2	3	4	5
Preparing you for work	1	2	3	4	5
Providing you with job relevant skills	1	2	3	4	5
Helping you to find a job at the level and income you want	1	2	3	4	5

G. Further training

This section would allow for analysis of whether or not VET graduates have continued to train, the reasons for this training (e.g. to address skills gaps), who’s conducted the CPD training (employers, other training providers), topics and level of additional training. (Recommend three or four questions)

Example questions

Did you start your job before starting the training programme? Yes No

Have you continued professional training after completing your full time initial VET training?
Yes No

What type of further training have you followed? _____

Why have you taken further training? To acquire skill that are required by current job role
Change in profession and/or sector
In house company training programme
To boost employment opportunities
Due to gaps in initial training
To be able to access better jobs



H. Demographic information

Capturing demographic information on age, gender, disabilities, region (as identified by the steering committee) would help track the progress of target groups into employment. It could also allow for a regional picture to be developed for the relevant sector and understand the variances in achievement and experience that need to be addressed. (Recommend two or three questions)

Example questions

What is your gender? Male
Female
Non-binary
Transgender
Intersex
Let me type...: _____
I prefer not to say

How old are you? _____

Which region are you from? _____

Did you have to travel to a different region to study? *(Please provide further details)*

(Plus additional information as required by the study's objectives)

I. Comments and recommendations

The study could finish with more open questions that allow the respondents to reflect on recommendations they would like to make for the improvement of their study programmes, positives and negatives about their training programmes and feedback on the questionnaire itself. This section could also gauge alumni’s enthusiasm for future links to their training organisations. (Recommend three or four questions)

Example questions

Please share any recommendations you’d like to make about your training programme and institution to help improve the quality of provision

Have you continued professional training after completing your full time initial VET training?
[Yes](#) [No](#)

What type of further training have you followed? _____

Why have you taken further training?



It is envisaged that the development of the core questions will be conducted by the Secretariat in consultation with the steering committee. Specific institutions who are distributing the survey could add optional and specific questions to the core questions. Any additional questions should be approved by the steering committee to quality assure the contents. This would support a carefully managed ‘decentralised’ approach would be built from central core but allows for regional and institutional information. The questionnaire also needs to be carefully ‘toped and tailed’ with clear explanations to help the respondents easily navigate the questions. The ease of completion should be carefully reviewed at the testing stage. It is important that the core of the study remains and is not overwhelmed by bespoke additions.

A strategic and coordinated approach to the distribution of questions needs to be taken, through a study distribution plan. This will include agreeing roles between national and regional offices and VET providers. The insight and support of the steering committee in supporting distribution and completion will be vital.

TOOL 1.4 – REPORTING CHECKLIST

Activity	Description	Check
Record data	The data gathered through the study should be electronically recorded on a current and suitable database or a specifically developed database	Data loaded onto Management Information System (MIS)
Prepare draft report	<div>The draft report should cover:</div> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Study overview including objectives• Contributing stakeholders• Background on target group and rationale• Sample survey/questionnaires• Results of survey/questionnaires• Conclusions and recommendations• Discussion on results (potential for errors, future efforts, missing primary data, etc)• Implementation action plan	Draft report completed
Review study	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Steering committee reviews the draft report• Decision on whether further data gathering is needed• Recommendations for changes to conclusions, methodology, etc.	List of tracer study research ethics and principles
Distribute	Distribute the report to stakeholders. Dissemination events held, including in collaboration with other initiatives.	Dissemination of the report
Implement	An implementation plan to update curriculum and qualification programme boards should be established to ensure that the study results are being utilised through curriculum and programme development. This will not be the only source of information and will need to align with other studies and initiatives to inform implementation of reforms derived from this study.	Implementation plan and examples of updated curriculum/ programmes
Update	Develop workplan for ongoing information collection to ensure consistency and synergy with future tracer studies	Development of next tracer study plan



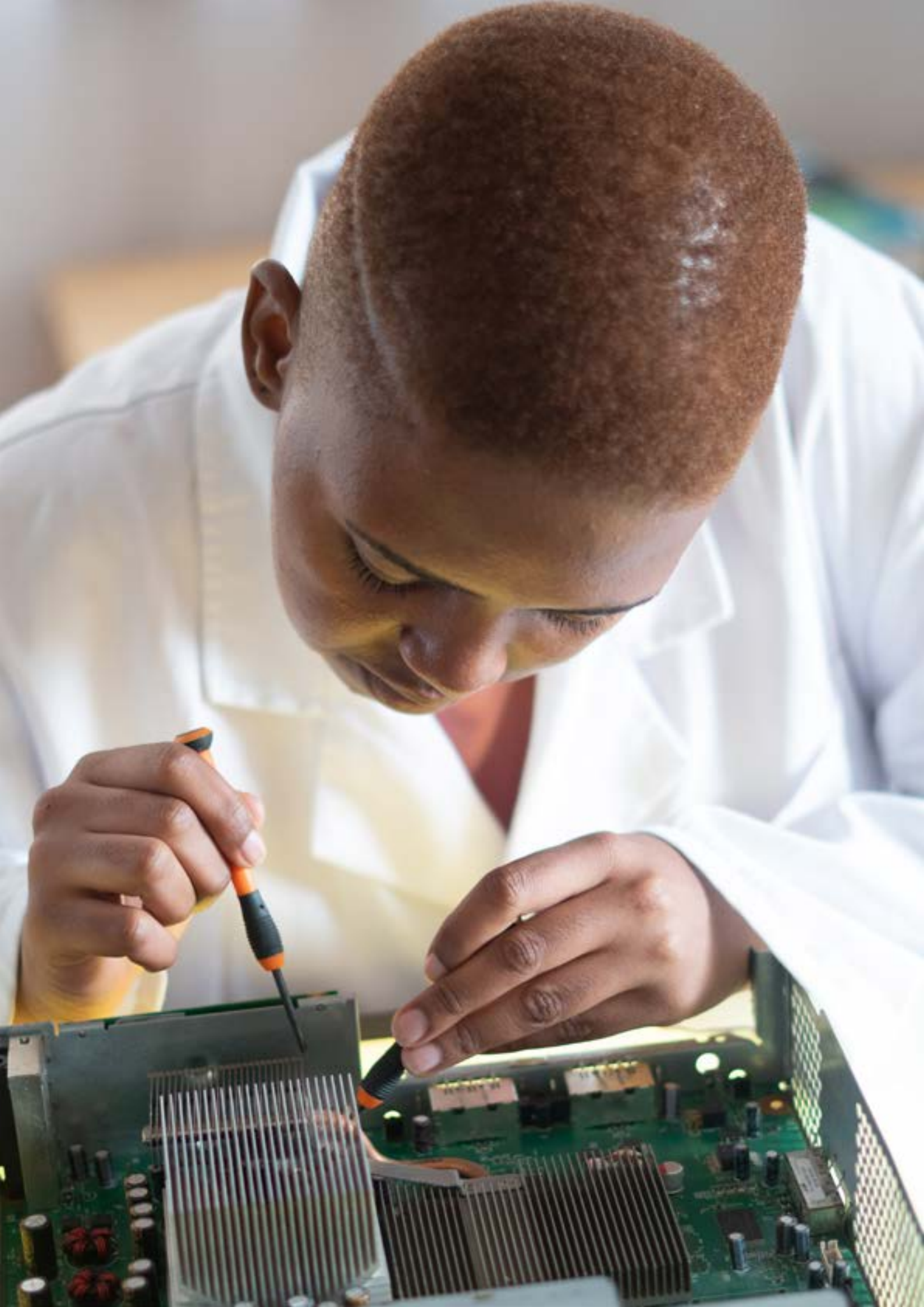
REPORTING – ADDITIONAL NOTES

It is recommended that the study results are shared with the highlighted stakeholder groups. Data collected is only useful if it is shared and acted upon. This will ensure that they have an impact at both provider and policy levels. It will also help to update employers and their representative groups on learners’ perceptions of their work readiness following graduation.

At the implementation stage, there are a number of areas of VET delivery that could be enhanced through the utilisation of the results. **These would include:**

- Mapping of curriculum to employment (including current programmes and designing new courses)
- Providing data that informs programme development and approval
- Contents and focus for professional development programme for current and future VET trainers
- Data to inform Careers Advice and Guidance information to support the transition from VET to employment
- Understanding of hot and cold spots of employment disaggregated by industry and linked to concentration of VET provision
- Development of equipment and infrastructure
- Input for institutional quality improvement programmes

The report should also be mindful of linking to future studies to help ensure a longitudinal approach is taken that guarantees consistency and utilises synergies between different tracer studies. This longitudinal approach will ensure that any VET capacity activity developed through this planning tool will be based on accurate and relevant data sets.



1.5 – PUBLICISING RESULTS

Information collected is only as valuable as the use it can be put to and the impact it has on sustainable focused capacity building activities will be directly link to the effectiveness of its publication and dissemination. There are several international models of publicising tracer study results that could be contextualised to meet with your requirements. One model that could be utilised is that taken by the UK's Longitudinal Education Outcomes (LEO) dataset⁵. Although this is a much larger study than is being recommended through this project, there are some valuable approaches which could be adapted to support the effective dissemination results derived through this planning tool.

Typical results areas would include information on earnings mapped against study, employment outcomes mapped against study and information describing results for target groups such as earnings for females mapped against males and regional data (often described as POLAR ('participation of local areas')). Income data is typically recorded using different scales of earnings for a specific subject in terms of; minimum, lower quartile, median, upper quartile and maximum. Results comparing income and employment outcomes for different groups (e.g. male and female learners/learners from two regions) include information on differences between earnings for each different subject areas. Some studies such as LEO, also utilise and cross reference other data sources such as tax codes, employment records etc. to validate self-assessment returns. Although, some of these data sources may not be available for this planning tool, it is worth considering how results can be checked and the quality of the data validated (this could include through referencing other development project's LMA initiatives). Results can also be referenced against institutions and programmes to help identify strong practice in terms of employment and earnings outcomes e.g. if the median earnings/employment rate of a particular programme or institution was higher than the subject/regional average the it could be identified as an example of good practice.

It is important the methodology used to define the results is clearly explained when publicising the results. This would include the definition of terms (e.g. employment, earnings, subject levels etc.). The methodology would also explain how POLAR (Participation of Local Areas) data is also considered and other factors such as learners' attainment level before joining the target programme/ institution. There also needs to be explanation around other defining criteria such as; the target cohort, breakdown of employed/unemployed to rule against respondent bias, timelines (e.g. how long since graduation), percentage of returns, demographic information etc. The publicising of the data could be disseminated through the government websites and events such as regional or sectoral conferences.

⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/graduate-outcomes-for-all-subjects-by-university>



ANNEX: SUMMARY OF APPROACH

Please note that these steps are not presented ‘chronologically’ as there will be the need for the simultaneous delivery of activities and adaption to different national contexts:

1. Identification of tracer study owner
 - Ministry
 - Employer/Employer Association
 - VET provider/Association
 - Development Partner
 - NGO
2. Development of tracer study delivery team and overseeing body
3. Identification of training needs and capacity building requirements of tracer study delivery team. Development of appropriate training activities
4. Identification of focus sector(s) based on:
 - Economic value
 - Strategic importance
 - Opportunity to disseminate to wider sectors
 - Existing VET infrastructure
5. Identification of current strategic initiatives/development projects that could be aligned to tracer study initiatives. Development of understanding of current LMA activities and how they can be harmonised with planned study.
 - Desk research
 - Meetings with key stakeholders
6. Identification of key stakeholders to support the design and delivery of the tracer study:
 - Government
 - Regional representatives
 - Employers
 - VET providers
 - NGOs
 - Development partners
 - Advocacy bodies
 - Regional offices

7. Agreement on national/regional/local VET priorities through steering committee and consultation with key stakeholders
8. Establish clear links between tracer study and national priorities
 - Curriculum development e.g. CBET
 - Industry–Training links via development of employer bodies
 - Quality and relevance of VET development programmes
 - Current LMA initiatives
 - Development programmes
 - VET infrastructure funding
9. Agreement of roles, governance structure, budget, timeframe
10. Planning for actual Tracer study
 - Establishing study steering committee
 - Appointing delivery team
 - Agreeing and setting study objectives
 - Establishing study timeframe and project plan, including through Gantt Chart
 - Setting study budget and financial plan
11. Identification of focus and data
 - Target population (detailed definition)
 - Target data
 - Risks and mitigations in acquiring data
 - Response incentives strategy
 - Secondary data sources
 - Primary data sources
12. Development of methodological approach to study
 - Primary data collection strategy
 - Data collection timeframe
 - Recording of study’s ethics and principles
 - Development of study tools, including testing
 - Branding and communication strategy
 - Collection strategy
 - Evaluation
13. Reporting
 - Use of MIS databases
 - Development of report
 - Publicising and dissemination of results
 - Application of data against target areas/activities
 - Feeding into the development of the next study
 - Dissemination to other LMA activities
 - Evaluation

