VERIFICATION GUIDE FOR ASSESSING AN INTERVENTION'S INTERNAL MONITORING AND REPORTING SYSTEM

2025 - V1

INTRODUCTION : WHAT IS AN INTERNAL MONITORING SYSTEM?

Effective monitoring is essential for enhancing performance. It ensures systematic tracking of progress, facilitates the timely identification of issues, supports informed decision-making and compliance with contractual reporting obligations. This allows for adjustments to strategies, ultimately leading to better results.

At the core of this process is an internal monitoring system, a structured approach to collecting, analysing, and using data. Internal monitoring measures progress toward expected results, tracks the implementation of activities, assesses the quality and use of resources, and identifies emerging risks. Together, these functions provide a solid foundation for effective management and continuous improvement.

In this guide, we focus **on monitoring by the Implementing Partner (IP)**. Internal monitoring might be complemented by external monitoring systems, which are implemented by experts not on the payroll of the IP and thus providing an external assessment.

There is no single model for monitoring and reporting systems; each organisation develops its own, based on its needs. This tool is not designed to prescribe a single model, but to ensure that the internal monitoring systems of interventions are functional and support high-performing EC External Actions.

KEY CONCEPTS: WHAT DOES AN INTERNAL MONITORING SYSTEM CONSIST OF?

An internal monitoring system typically consists of the following key parts:

1. A **Monitoring Framework** (what, how, who). A monitoring framework is an essential component of results-based management (RBM). It helps to ensure that development interventions are aligned with their intended goals and that resources are used effectively. What to monitor[1] is based on all the elements of the Logframe Matrix and the Activity Matrix (including means and resources). How to monitor refers to data collection methods, tools and frequency. A monitoring framework must also specify the roles and responsibilities for data collection.

2. **Data Management** provisions: data storage, quality Control (QC), data analysis, and data protection and privacy. Data Management encompasses the systematic handling of data to ensure its integrity, accessibility, and security throughout the monitoring process. *Data storage* involves organising and maintaining data in secure, scalable, and accessible systems including after the finalization of the intervention. *Quality Control* ensures data accuracy, consistency, and reliability through validation checks, error detection, double-counting deductions and regular audits when needed. *Data analysis* transforms raw data into actionable insights using statistical tools, visualisation techniques, and analytical methods to inform decision-making and reporting. *Data Protection and Privacy* are critical to safeguarding sensitive information, ensuring compliance with legal and ethical standards (e.g., the General Data Protection Regulation - GDPR[2]), and implementing measures such as encryption, access controls, and anonymisation to protect stakeholders' rights.

1. Please check the annex e3d of the EU PRAG for an overview of the LFM and Activity Matrix in the case of Grant Contracts. For Contributions Agreements, there is no specific LFM template. However, what should be monitored and reported on is defined in Article 3.2 of the General Conditions of the Contribution Agreements (V.2025): "The report shall describe the implementation of the Action according to the activities envisaged in Annex I as well as the degree of progress towards the achievement of its Results (Outputs, Outcomes and if possible Impact) as measured by corresponding Indicators. The report shall be drafted in such a way as to allow monitoring of the Results, the means envisaged and employed. The level of detail in any report shall match that of Annexes I and III".

2. The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) is a comprehensive legal framework established by the European Union to protect the personal data and privacy of individuals within the EU and the European Economic Area (EEA), while also addressing the transfer of such data outside these regions.

3 **Reporting and dissemination** arrangements. *Reporting* involves the structured and timely communication of accurate, comprehensive, and insightful monitoring data, adhering to predefined contractual obligations such as frequency, formats, templates, and communication channels. *Dissemination* refers to the process of making the results and deliverables of an intervention available to the stakeholders and to the wider audience to support decision-making, accountability, and transparency.

4 A **Learning Plan** to outline how monitoring and results data will be used to support timely adjustments to strategies and activities based on evidence. *Feedback loops* are integrated to ensure data informs ongoing planning and implementation. Additionally, the plan includes the use of monitoring data for *other assessments,* such as evaluations or impact studies, to deepen the understanding of outcomes. It also prioritises the documentation and dissemination of *good practices and lessons learned*, creating a knowledge base to guide future initiatives and enhance organisational effectiveness.

5 A specific **Resource Plan** with the allocation of financial, human, and technical resources required to design, implement, and sustain the monitoring system.

HOW TO USE THIS VERIFICATION GUIDE?

Assessing the IPs' monitoring systems and capacities is a key activity conducted by Operational Managers (OMs) in EU External Actions. This guide serves as a practical self-assessment tool to verify whether the monitoring systems of interventions are fit for purpose for the following stages of the intervention: Inception and Advanced Implementation. It also enables OMs to identify specific gaps or weaknesses and **advise the IPs to address them effectively**. The document allows the OM and/or IP to track their comments and observations, and can provide as such a basis for their discussion on how to improve the intervention's monitoring system if needed.

The guide provides a comprehensive overview of the internal monitoring system elements to be assessed. **The user is at liberty to apply this guidance at length or partially depending on the type of contractual arrangements underpinning the intervention and the needs of the implementing partner.** The essential questions that should be considered in all cases are highlighted in bold, while the remaining questions are left to the discretion of the OM.

VERIFICATION GUIDE FOR ASSESSING AND IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF THE INTERNAL MONITORING AND REPORTING SYSTEMS

Question	How to and Corrective measure	OM / IP Comments
Results Monitoring framework		
Inception phase		
1. Has the contractually agreed Logframe been updated and meets quality standards?	To assess the quality of the Logframe and implement corrective measures please use the complementary "Checklist to assess the quality of a Logical Framework (Logframe)" available here. At this stage of the implementation cycle all baseline and target values, including their applicable disaggregation, should have been properly defined. *If this is not the case, please request the implementing partners to do so because this is a contractual requirement (No baselines or no targets impede to measure results).*	

Question	How to and Corrective measure	OM / IP Comments
2. Is there a monitoring plan in place for the intervention?	At a minimum, the monitoring plan of an intervention should include the following information: which results will be measured (a list of indicators with an explanation for each), who will carry out the data collection, how and how often the data collection will be conducted (source of data), how inputs are used per result and how risks and mitigation measures are being monitored. The below description proposes a typical but not mandatory basic monitoring plan: **A. Monitoring framework.** It is divided into three main sections, WHAT, HOW, and WHO (in columns) for each indicator of the Logframe (in rows). ***1. WHAT Section:*** • Result: Specifies the level of the result being monitored (e.g., Impact, Outcome, Output). • Indicator: Lists the specific indicators used to measure progress toward the result. As a reminder, please ensure that all relevant corporate indicators (e.g. GERF, GAP III…) are directly encoded in the Logframe and properly referenced. • Unit of Measure: Defines the unit in which the indicator is measured (e.g., percentage, number of people). • Available Disaggregation (Y/N): Indicates whether data is available following the relevant categories (e.g., gender, age, location). • Status Values (Y/N): Shows whether baseline, target, and current values are available for the indicator. ***2. HOW Section:*** • Methodology Note: clear and detailed explanation of how indicators will be measured. It includes the Indicator Definition, Unit of Measurement and Calculation Method if needed. • Source of Data: Identifies where the data is collected from • Data Collection Method: Describes the technique used to gather data • Used For: Specifies what the data will be used for (e.g., progress reports, steering committee meetings, monthly reviews). • Frequency of Data Collection: Indicates how often data is collected • Tool for Data Collection: Lists the tools or instruments used for data collection (e.g., survey forms, software, data collection forms, focus group discussions, etc.). ***3. WHO Section:*** • Responsible Person/s for Data Collection: Identifies the individual or team responsible for collecting the data. **B. Use of Inputs and progress of activities:** explanation about how the use of resources and the progression of activities will be monitored and their links with the results. Typically, process and input indicators will consist of % of tasks performed, and resources spent against plan, and number of deliverables produced against those planned. Indications of how and who will collect this data should also be detailed.	

Question	How to and Corrective measure	OM / IP Comments
	C. Risk management section: Risks are potential events or conditions that could negatively impact the achievement of an intervention's results. A monitoring system should typically track risks that are within a reasonable degree of mitigation by implementers and the effectiveness of the connected mitigation measures. These risks often include: • Operational Risks: Delays in activity implementation, insufficient human or technical resources, or logistical challenges. • Financial Risks: Budget shortfalls, mismanagement of funds, negative impacts of exchange rate or inflation or delays in disbursements. • Stakeholder Engagement Risks: Lack of participation or buy-in from key stakeholders, including beneficiaries, partners, or local authorities. • Compliance Risks: Failure to adhere to legal, contractual, or donor requirements. Environmental Risks: Local environmental factors that could disrupt implementation (e.g., weather conditions, mobility disruptions), where mitigation measures are feasible. *If the information required to understand how the indicators' monitoring process is organised are missing or weak, please discuss with the IP how to improve or create a document that gathers all the relevant information.*	
Advanced Implementation phase		
3. Does the internal monitoring system track the progress of all indicators included in the logical framework?	If an indicator is no longer useful or requires excessive resources to track, its replacement or removal should be discussed. The monitoring system must be comprehensive and ensure the tracking of all indicators included in the intervention's logical framework. *If needed, please review with the IP which indicators are not being tracked and the reason for this.*	
4. Does the monitoring system allow for data disaggregation?	All indicators related to people must include sex disaggregation. If needed, disaggregation by age, geography, or other criteria should be included and data collection systems must be in place to gather data based on agreed disaggregation. *If needed, please discuss with the IP the necessary measures to collect the required disaggregated data.*	
5. Have data collection tools as defined in the Monitoring framework been developed?	All data collection tools, including software as defined in the Monitoring Framework must be developed or installed to track results, risks, activities and inputs and included in specific sections, annexes or descriptors of the system. *If such information is not available, please consider checking with the IP the status of data collection tools and the measures to complete their development and use.*	

Question	How to and Corrective measure	OM / IP Comments
Data Management		
Inception phase		
Data storage, security and privacy		
6. Is the monitoring system compliant with data protection and privacy?	Key element to consider: • The monitoring system complies with relevant data protection laws and regulations and institutional privacy policies • There are clear protocols in place for obtaining informed consent from individuals whose data is being collected, stored, or processed based on legal requirements. • There are dedicated protocols to obtain, handle and communicate any data, including pictures of minors and persons from disempowered groups in line with highest protection and ethical standards. *If needed, please request the IP to strengthen data protection and privacy measures.*	
Advanced Implementation phase		
Data storage, security and privacy		
7. Is data storage well organised and protected?	Key element to consider: • The data is stored in a well-organized and logical structure (e.g., databases, folders, or cloud-based systems) that allows for easy retrieval and management. • There are clear naming conventions, metadata, and categorization systems in place to ensure data is easily identifiable and searchable. • There are robust security measures (e.g., encryption, firewalls, access controls) in place to protect personal/ sensitive data from unauthorized access, breaches, or loss. • Access to data is restricted based on roles and responsibilities and data access and modifications are tracked. • There are regular backups and maintenance procedures (e.g., data cleaning, archiving) implemented to ensure data integrity and availability over time. *If needed, please advise the IP to strengthen data storage and protection.*	
Quality Control		
8. Does the system include mechanisms for data validation and triangulation, ensuring reliability and consistency (double-counting)?	There should be clear rules for data cleaning and pre-process (e.g., handling missing values, removing outliers, validation rules including triangulation and errors in data reporting, removing double-counting, etc) to ensure accuracy and reliability before analysis. *If needed, please review with the IP how the accuracy and verification of information in the system are ensured, including with the participation of beneficiaries making sure that such participation includes the voices of the different groups (along age, gender and status lines).*	

Question	How to and Corrective measure	OM / IP Comments
9. Does the internal monitoring system define who cleans and analyses data and makes relevant adjustment decisions?	*If needed, please confirm with the IP who will receive information from the monitoring system and will be able to implement corrective measures if needed.*	
Reporting and dissemination		
Advanced Implementation phase		
10. Are monitoring reports generated periodically (monthly, quarterly, annually) as required contractually or agreed upon all parties?	The internal monitoring system should function as an early warning system to identify issues in achieving results and allow for corrective measures. Therefore, the frequency of data collection and analysis is crucial. While reporting to the EU may occur once or twice a year, the internal monitoring system should ideally operate on a monthly or bi-monthly basis to allow for adjustments. *If needed, please ensure with the IP that the monitoring system produces the required information in time for reporting.*	
11. Does the report contain quantitative information on each indicator to allow its back-to-back inclusion in OPSYS?	Ideally, it should provide a tracking table for all indicators, including baseline values, current reported period values, cumulative values to date, and targets, specifying the date for each value. *If needed, please ensure with the IP that the monitoring system provides the necessary information for OPSYS.*	
Resources		
Inception phase		
12. Is there a designated person responsible for the internal monitoring of the intervention?	*If needed, please discuss with the IP the need to assign a person responsible for monitoring the intervention.*	
13. Are human, financial, and technical resources available for M&R activities? (e.g., data collection, data analysis, compilation of indicators value, reporting, other data dissemination, etc.)	The sources of all means in support to M&E activities can vary (be part of eligible costs or embedded within indirect costs/overheads). Regardless the source of funding, each element of the monitoring system should be costed in the M&E Plan, with specific attention to: • Data sources needed. • Tools development or acquisition. • Data storage and maintenance. • Data collection and cleaning activities. • Reporting and dissemination. • Capacity development needs for monitoring and reporting. *If needed, please consider discussing with the IP the resources allocated to the internal monitoring system. These resources should include personnel (time of the responsible person), financial (resources for data collection), and technical (IT tools for data aggregation and reporting).*	

Question	How to and Corrective measure	OM / IP Comments
Learning		
Advanced Implementation phase		
14. Do monitoring mechanisms facilitate feedback and adaptive learning?	Key element to consider: • There are established mechanisms internal and external to the intervention (e.g., regular monitoring & planning reviews, regular steering committee meetings, peer reviews, sector dialogues etc) where monitoring data are shared, discussed and used for adjusting implementation arrangements, and plans. • Feedback from stakeholders and beneficiaries is systematically collected, documented, and analysed to inform adjustments to the intervention. *If needed, please advice the IP to put in place the necessary measures for a better use of the data collected to improve the performance of the intervention.*	
15. Are there established processes for capturing, documenting and sharing lessons learned?	Documenting and disseminating knowledge is crucial to avoid repeating mistakes and to leverage best practices. Key element to consider: • Lessons learned, best practices, and adaptive changes are documented and shared with relevant stakeholders. • There is a culture of learning and adaptation within the team, where monitoring data is openly and safely discussed (guaranteeing confidentiality and privacy and without fear) and used to drive continuous improvement. *If needed, please consider discussing with the IP how to improve the knowledge management mechanisms*	
16. Is there a good integration between monitoring and evaluation activities?	Key element to consider: • Monitoring and evaluation processes are designed to complement each other, with shared indicators and data collection methods. • Monitoring data is used to inform the design and focus of evaluations (e.g., identifying areas for deeper investigation). • Evaluation findings feed back into the monitoring system to refine indicators or data collection methods. *If needed, please discuss with the IP how to improve the integration of Monitoring and Evaluation.*	

OTHER RESOURCES

Please check additional available resources:

> **ICM WIKI :**
https://wikis.ec.europa.eu/spaces/ExactExternalWiki/pages/50108897/Intervention+Cycle+Methodology+Guide

> **Link to a LF checklist:**
Checklist for assessing the quality of the Logframe Matrix | Capacity4dev

> **List of GERF indicators:**
https://capacity4dev.europa.eu/resources/results-indicators/global-europe-results-framework_en

> **Link to INTPA Academy for public and internal trainings:**
https://international-partnerships.learning.europa.eu/