



# Using Results-Based Approaches in Development Education Settings: A Practical Toolkit

Updated for the 2020 Irish Aid Development Education Grants Round (Oct 2019)



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## Introduction

### Rationale

This toolkit has been developed from IDEA's work on measuring the impact of Development Education (DE) projects. Since 2011, Irish Aid-funded DE projects have been obliged to demonstrate measurable results. This move has brought benefits, in that it has encouraged critical reflection about what we do, why we do it, how we do it and how we can improve. At the same time, the emphasis on results puts pressure on organisations that work towards long-term, complex change, as this type of work does not fit easily into standardised models for results-based approaches. IDEA has attempted to create an approach that balances the need to deliver results with the need to do justice to the complex learning that takes place in DE.

With the publication of Irish Aid's Development Education Strategy 2017-2023 and the accompanying Performance Measurement Framework (PMF), the context for project 'results' has become more clearly defined. Irish Aid now requires grant applicants to 'outline how your proposed development education project contributes to the achievement of the outcome, outputs and activities set out in the Development Education Strategy 2017 -2023'.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, throughout this toolkit, we will remind applicants to check for alignment with and contribution to Irish Aid's strategy. This is not to say that work that does *not* align with the strategy may not have value, but for the purposes of the tool, we are assuming that organisations are aiming to fulfil the criteria for an Irish Aid grant, and accordingly will want to align with the Irish Aid strategy.

This toolkit is aimed primarily at organisations involved in Irish Aid's Development Education Grants programme. This programme replaces the previous Development Education Annual Grants scheme and now includes the option of two-year funding. Therefore this toolkit uses the format and language required for the Development Education Grants application, and addresses the particular challenges associated with formulating and achieving 'results' within a limited timeframe (12 to 24 months) and with a relatively modest budget (average Annual Grant for 2018 was €44,500). It also assumes that the proposed project is primarily educational in nature. However, the toolkit is transferable to other contexts and we encourage you to use it in any situation in which it is helpful.

In the following pages, IDEA provides practical guidance based on our understanding of Irish Aid's approach to results in their Development Education Grants application form. It is important to note that the toolkit does not necessarily express the opinions of IDEA or of its members

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<sup>1</sup> Irish Aid DE Grants 2020 Application Form, Section 3 'Strategic Approach'

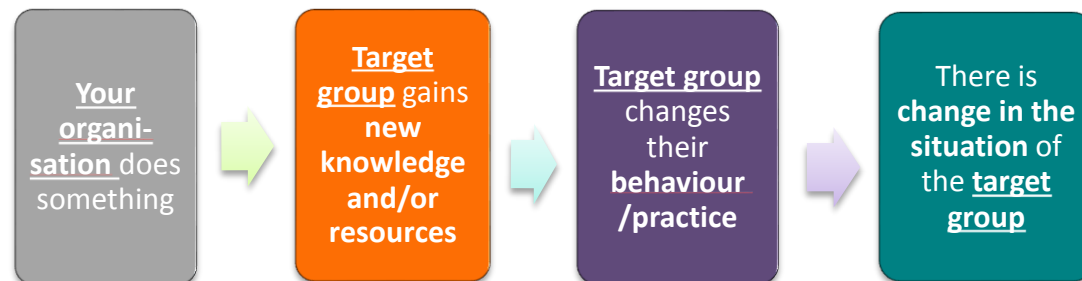
about the benefits and drawbacks of using results-based approaches in DE. It also should be noted that this brief toolkit confines itself to the specific task of helping users to complete the Results Framework in the Irish Aid DE Grants application. It does not attempt to explore many interesting and varied contexts in which results-based thinking can be applied.

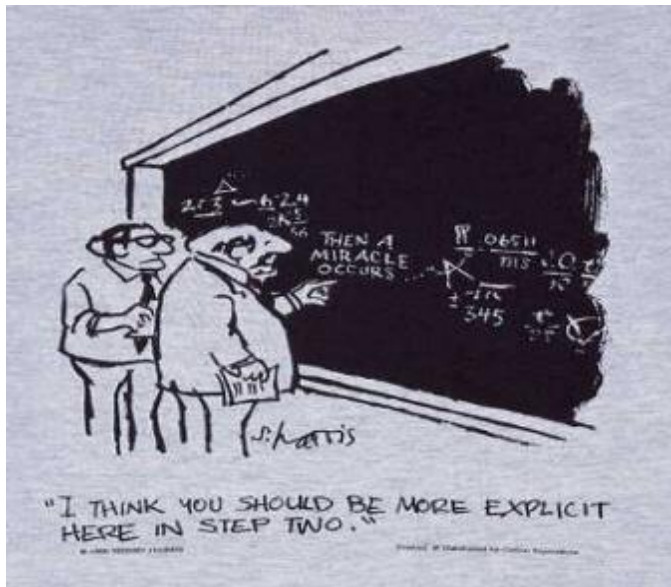
### What does a 'results-based approach' mean?

A 'results-based approach' is about describing the change you wish to create, and then mapping out the steps in the journey towards reaching this change. This is demonstrated in a 'Results Framework' (RF).

In order to build an effective results table, you need to be knowledgeable about the internal and external contexts of your work, and you need to possess a strong understanding of **how change happens** in your targeted area.

You need to set out a 'results chain' which demonstrates how your desired changes will be achieved. A very basic results chain looks like this:





Change happens in different ways in different contexts. Also, it is important to recognise that the 'results chain' is an analogy or conceptualisation, and that in reality, change rarely happens in a strictly linear way. Instead, change is a complex process involving sideways and even backward steps as well as a progression forward. Do not worry if your results chain looks a bit different from ones you may see in how-to guides (including this one). What you *do* need to ensure, though, is that there is a logical thread running through the chain, with clear cause-and-effect links, and no huge or unexplained leaps of faith.

## Building a Results Framework

The Results Framework in the Irish Aid DE Grants Application (Annex A) looks like this:

Organisation Name										
Overall Project Goal										
Project Timeframe										
Desired Outcomes	Planned Activities	Performance Indicators	Baseline	Targets		Results <sup>2</sup>			Data Source, Collection Method, Frequency of Measurement	Irish Aid Contribution
				Yr 1	Yr 2	Yr 1	Yr2	Cumulative		
Outcome 1										
Outcome 2										
Outcome 3										

Irish Aid expects applicants to ‘demonstrate a clarity of understanding on how the activities of the proposed project will lead to the achievement of the project’s desired outcomes and the [Irish Aid] strategy outputs.’<sup>3</sup> The RF is where you need to demonstrate this understanding and where you will need to set out the logical flow from activities to results to goal. The following sections of the toolkit will take you through each heading of the RF.

<sup>2</sup> The ‘Results’ columns are left blank at the application stage and are completed at end of project reporting stage only. Do not complete at application stage. This footnote applies to all copies of the Results Framework included in this document.

<sup>3</sup> Irish Aid DE Grants 2020 Guidelines for Applicant Organisations, p. 6

## What is the relationship between the Irish Aid Performance Management Framework (PMF) and your organisation's Results Framework (RF)?

As mentioned in the introduction to this toolkit, all Irish Aid-funded projects must align their Results Frameworks with Irish Aid's PMF. The purpose of this requirement is to ensure that all funded projects make a clear contribution to the strategic goal, outcome and outputs of the Irish Aid Development Education Strategy 2017-2023.

However, it is important to realise that *aligning* your RF to the Irish Aid PMF does not mean *replicating* the Irish Aid PMF. The Irish Aid PMF was developed to track the full breadth of changes envisioned in the Irish Aid DE Strategy 2017 – 2023. This task is far beyond the scope of any one funded project. Therefore, there will be substantial areas of the PMF that are not relevant to your project and your RF. You are being asked to identify which areas of the PMF are relevant to your work and to construct your RF in such a way that the data you generate can feed into Irish Aid's PMF. In this way, all Irish Aid-funded projects contribute towards demonstrating the overall impact of Irish Aid's Development Education work.

Irish Aid has released aggregated data from the 2017 PMF. This is well worth looking at, as it can help you to visualise where your data might fit in. This is available from Irish Aid or on the members' log-in area of the IDEA website:

<https://www.ideaonline.ie/members/data-about-the-sector/> If IDEA members have trouble accessing this, please contact the IDEA office directly.



## Overall Project Goal

Organisation Name										
Overall Project Goal										
Project Timeframe										
Desired Outcomes	Planned Activities	Performance Indicators	Baseline	Targets		Results			Data Source, Collection Method, Frequency of Measurement	Irish Aid Contribution
				Yr 1	Yr 2	Yr 1	Yr2	Cumulative		
Outcome 1										

Before you get going with measuring results, you need to articulate the overall goal of your programme.

The overall goal of your proposal should describe a relatively substantial change for your target groups that will happen, in due course, as a result of your organisation's work. There is always a bit of a balancing act here between ambition and accountability. You need a goal that carries a reasonable level of significance, but you also need to ensure that you are capable of making some measurable progress towards it during the 12 - 24 month timeframe.

In the notes on the 2020 DE Grants Application Form, Irish Aid provides the following guidance for 'Overall Project Goal': 'This is the high-level statement that provides overall context for what the project is trying to achieve. The overall goal should describe a substantial change for the chosen target groups that will result from the project and should contribute to Irish Aid's Strategic Goal.'<sup>4</sup>

For most organisations, this big picture of change does not change from year to year. Despite being funded within a 12-24 month timeframe, many DE Grants projects are conceived on scale of many years. In other words, their project work does not go into fresh territory every year,

<sup>4</sup> Irish Aid DE Grant 2020 Application Form, p. 12

but builds on work accomplished in the previous year. If this is your case, you can use the same overall goal that you used in the previous year, perhaps adapting the language slightly to reflect your achievements thus far.

In the narrative portion of the application (Section 3: Strategic Approach), you are asked about your organisation's Strategic Plan, including 'clear organisational purpose' and 'strategic goal and objectives'.<sup>5</sup> You can use your response to this question to help articulate the goal for your RF. However, you will need to change from the language of planning to the language of results (see language point on page 8).

**Check for alignment with Irish Aid's PMF (Performance Measurement Framework):**

**Your overall project goal needs to lie within the parameters of the Strategic Goal of the Irish Aid Development Education Strategy 2017-2023 (stated on p. 4 of the PMF):**

*'People in Ireland are empowered to analyse and challenge the root causes and consequences of global hunger, poverty, injustice, inequality and climate change; inspiring and enabling them to become active global citizens in the creation of a fairer and more sustainable future for all, through the provision of quality development education.'*

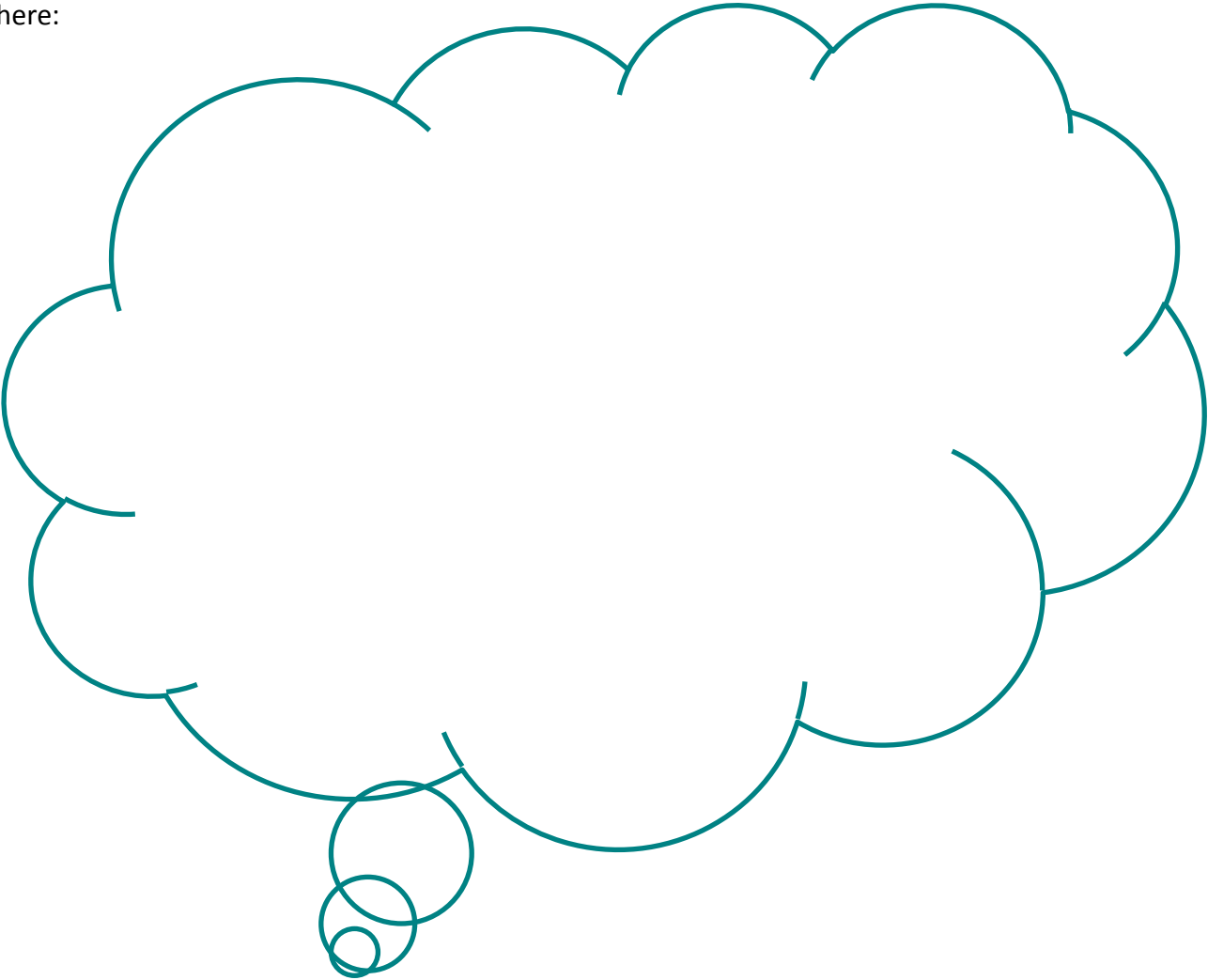
**As this is such a broad goal, it is very likely that your project can be situated within it without difficulty. In fact, the Irish Aid goal may be useful to you in articulating your project's goal.**

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<sup>5</sup> Irish Aid DE Grant 2020 Application Form, p. 8

Sometimes it helps to visualise the goal. Think...if you had adequate time and resources, what would you achieve? What would success *look like*??

Sketch it out here:



Try to write the goal as briefly and simply as possible. You do not need a lot of detail here; the detailed components of the goal belong in the 'desired outcomes' section. For the purposes of the Irish Aid RF, the goal is there to 'set the scene' for your long-term aims. A simple example of a goal could be: 'Primary school pupils in our region act as informed global citizens.'

**LANGUAGE POINT:**

Use the language of *results* when writing your goal ('Primary pupils act as informed global citizens...') rather than the language of *planning* ('To empower primary pupils...')

It often is helpful to write down a few possible versions of your goal, and then leave it aside until you have done some work on your objectives, and then come back and tweak the goal.

**Our goal....**

**Version 1:**

**Version 2:**

## Desired Outcomes

Organisation Name										
Overall Project Goal										
Project Timeframe										
Desired Outcomes	Planned Activities	Performance Indicators	Baseline	Targets		Results <sup>6</sup>			Data Source, Collection Method, Frequency of Measurement	Irish Aid Contribution
				Yr 1	Yr 2	Yr 1	Yr2	Cumulative		
Outcome 1										

Once you have your overall project goal stated, you need to be able to break down this high-level statement into more specific, achievable, measurable ‘small goals’. These are the benefits or changes which you expect to happen as a result of your work, and which will ensure that you make progress towards your goal. There are a number of benefits to thinking in terms of these ‘small goals’, including an increased clarity about the change you seek to create, and a greater understanding about how your activities help to achieve your desired change.

If you sketched out your goal as a picture in the previous section, then go back to that visualisation and think about the various scenes that would be taking place within the picture. Think:

*Who is doing what differently?*

*How, where and when are they doing it?*

<sup>6</sup> The ‘Results’ columns are left blank at the application stage and are completed at end of project reporting stage only. Do not complete at application stage. This footnote applies to all copies of the Results Framework included in this document.

For example, if you envisioned a scene in which primary pupils became more active citizens, what are the details of the scene?

Try sketching it out:

**Our picture of success**

*What is happening here?*

*And here??*

*And here???*

These small goals are ‘desired outcomes’, which Irish Aid defines as ‘the benefits or changes which you expect to happen as a result of your work or interventions, and which will ensure that you make progress towards your goal. They should be specific and achievable, and written in the language of results.’<sup>7</sup> In results-based thinking, you need to focus not on what *you did* but instead on the **changes in your target groups as a result of your interventions**. You have to be able to think past a successful delivery of your activities (**outputs**) and look to what your target group is able to do as a result of your work (**outcomes**). This is probably the most important aspect of Results-Based Thinking so once you have shifted the focus to the outcomes of your activities, you are well on your way to creating a successful Results Framework.

Formulating outcomes can be challenging because outcomes don’t happen suddenly in one ‘ah-ha’ moment; outcomes develop through small increments. Sometimes it is helpful to distinguish between short, medium and long-term outcomes. To take an example of a DE course for teachers, you could have a range of outcomes:

- Short-term: Teachers report that their DE knowledge and skills have increased as a result of your course.
- Medium-term: Teachers integrate material from your course into their classroom practice.
- Long-term: Teachers develop and implement their own DE initiatives.

Given this range of outcomes, how do you decide what type of outcome to use in the ‘Desired outcomes’ column in your DE Grants RF? This is a difficult question, and it reveals inherent challenges in using outcomes in the context of a one- or two-year grant timeframe. Outcomes take time to happen. It takes time for you to plan and implement activities and then it takes time for participants to change as a result of these activities: firstly in terms of their level of knowledge, skills and confidence, and secondly in terms of how they apply their learning, and so on. Therefore, it is not realistic to expect long-term outcomes in a 12 or even a 24 -month timeframe.

As a general rule (though it is not hard and fast), you should use medium - term outcomes in the ‘Desired outcomes’ column of the RF if you are applying for a 12-month grant. If you are applying for a 24-month grant, you should be able to demonstrate some elements of longer-term impact, perhaps phrasing one of your outcomes in terms of increased progress towards one of your organisation’s strategic goals. Note that if you are applying for a two- year grant, your outcomes cover the full two-year period. The Irish Aid guidelines state: ‘For 2 year projects, goals and outcomes for the two-year period should be agreed at the outset’.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Irish Aid DE Grants 2020 Application Form, p. 12

<sup>8</sup> Irish Aid DE Grants 2020 Guidelines for Applicant Organisations, p. 6

How many desired outcomes should a one- or two-year RF contain? In the 2020 application form, Irish Aid suggests a 'limited number' of desired outcomes<sup>9</sup> and provides space for three outcomes on the RF Spreadsheet. This is sound advice. Too few outcomes makes your project look weak, and too many outcomes will diffuse the overall impact of your project.

Ideally, each desired outcome should cover a different aspect or level of the overall change that you will need to create in order to achieve your 'picture of success'. For example, one desired outcome might deal with changes in teachers, another with changes in students<sup>10</sup> and a third with institutional change. The institutional change might be very small over the course of just one year (for example, one new policy might be adopted) but it is still worth tracking this important element of change, especially if you hope to build it into next year's baseline.

Try to avoid a compound 'desired outcome', e.g. 'Young people increase their knowledge about international debt and take actions at EU level', as it will be too difficult to measure. It is better to have two separate outcomes, one around increased knowledge levels and another around the actions taken.

**LANGUAGE POINTS:**

**Use the language of results to describe a change that happened as a result of what you did ('Increased actions taken by...').**

**Do not use the language of planning ('To increase actions taken by...')**

**Include as many details as possible about *who* is doing *what*, *where* & *when***

**Remember, your desired outcome should be about your target group and not about you.**

<sup>9</sup> Irish Aid DE Grants 2020 Application Form, p. 12.

<sup>10</sup> Measuring a change at learner level is recommended, as applicants will have to supply data for this for Irish Aid PMF outcome indicators anyway; see the section on Indicators for details on this.



Try articulating some 'desired outcomes':

**Desired Outcome 1:**

**Desired Outcome 2:**

**Desired Outcome 3:**

It is crucial to check that there is a clear line of logic between the desired outcomes and the overall project goal. In other words, if you successfully achieve the desired outcomes, will they have a collective impact and help you to make substantial progress towards your overall project goal?

### Check for alignment with Irish Aid's PMF (Performance Measurement Framework):

Are your desired outcomes in line with Irish Aid's Development Education PMF?

In Section 3, 'Strategic Approach', of the narrative element of the DE Grants application, you are asked to outline 'how your proposed development education project contributes to the achievement of the outcome, outputs and activities set out in the *Development Education Strategy 2017 -2023*'. Therefore if you have completed even a preliminary draft of the narrative section of the application, you already will have thought about how your project will contribute to at least one of the five Output areas in Irish Aid's PMF.

Most Annual Grants projects will fall under Output 3 ('Further integration and mainstreaming of quality DE in formal education curricula, programmes and structures') or Output 4 ('Increased integration, quality and spread of DE in non-formal education curricula, programmes and structures'). There is some scope for contribution to Output 2 (e.g. Partnerships; Knowledge Products) and for Output 1 (e.g. Information-sharing; Partnership with European counterparts). Output 5 is internal to Irish Aid. You are not meant to contribute across all Output areas; IA expects you to select those that are 'relevant and appropriate' to your project.

It is worth revisiting the PMF Output areas at this stage, to gauge how closely your outcomes align with the relevant sub-sections of the IA outputs. The closer the 'fit', the easier it will be for you to formulate indicators that will serve for both your own RF and for your required contribution to the IA PMF (see 'Indicators' section of this toolkit). Therefore you may want to tweak/revise your outcomes so as to better align with the PMF.

## Planned Activities

Organisation Name										
Overall Project Goal										
Project Timeframe										
Desired Outcomes	Planned Activities	Performance Indicators	Baseline	Targets		Results <sup>11</sup>			Data Source, Collection Method, Frequency of Measurement	Irish Aid Contribution
				Yr 1	Yr 2	Yr 1	Yr2	Cumulative		
Outcome 1										

This is a relatively straightforward section. Activities are what you are going to DO in order to achieve your desired results. The activities need to connect logically to the desired outcomes: If we do X, then our target group should be able to do Y.

Activities need to be within your sphere of control. Do not include an activity unless you are confident that your organisation will be able to carry it out, barring exceptional unforeseen circumstances. Once you have drafted your activities, it is a good idea to examine potential risks to the delivery of activities, and to consider how you will safeguard against these risks. A summary of these risks should be included in your Risk Table in Section 1.4 of the application.

When listing your activities, be specific as possible about what you are doing and who you are doing it with. You are asked to transfer the activities line directly into the budget table (see Application Annex B 'Sample Project Cost Summary'). Therefore the activity descriptions need to be specific enough to justify the figures that you put in the budget table.

<sup>11</sup> The 'Results' columns are left blank at the application stage and are completed at end of project reporting stage only. Do not complete at application stage. This footnote applies to all copies of the Results Framework included in this document.

## SAMPLE PROJECT COST SUMMARY

Planned Activities (as set out in the Project RF)	Overall Costs				Total Budget Yr 1	Irish Aid Contribution Yr 1	Total Budget Yr 1	Irish Aid Contribution Yr 1	Total Irish Aid Contribution
	Project Personnel Costs	Event Costs	Project Transport Costs	Materials /Fees					
a.									
b.									
c.									

**LANGUAGE POINT:** Make sure you articulate the activities in terms of something concrete and specific, not something vague or intangible like 'empowering young people'. Use action verbs---design, run, research, etc.

A good way to check if something can be considered an activity or not is the 'telephone test': If someone phoned your organisation and wished to speak to Mary, you might say 'She can't come to the phone right now because she is running a workshop'. You would not say 'She can't come to the phone right now because she is empowering young people'.

Try drafting some activities related to your 'desired outcomes':

Activity 1a		<i>Leading to...</i> <b>Desired Outcome 1:</b>
Activity 1b		
Activity 1c		
Activity 2a		<i>Leading to...</i> <b>Desired Outcome 2:</b>
Activity 2b		
Activity 2c		
Activity 3a		<i>Leading to...</i> <b>Desired Outcome 3:</b>
Activity 3b		
Activity 3c		

Check the logic: Match up activities to the desired outcomes. Visualise it if you can, and think, if we carried out activities A, B and C, would it be realistic to expect to see progress towards Desired Outcome 1? If not, why not? It could be:

- You need an additional activity in order to achieve the desired outcome
- Your drafted desired outcome may be too ambitious and needs to be scaled back

Play a bit of back-and-forth; try changing the scope and/or wording of the activities and of the outcomes and see how it looks.

## Performance Indicators

Organisation Name										
Overall Project Goal										
Project Timeframe										
Desired Outcomes	Planned Activities	Performance Indicators	Baseline	Targets		Results <sup>12</sup>			Data Source, Collection Method, Frequency of Measurement	Irish Aid Contribution
				Yr 1	Yr 2	Yr 1	Yr2	Cumulative		
Outcome 1										

### What are indicators?

There is often a lot of confusion around indicators but the idea is actually very simple - an indicator is something that *indicates* whether or not we are making progress towards our desired outcomes. The word ‘indicate’ is significant - an indicator is not ‘proof’, it is just a sign or symptom that is helpful to us. We all use indicators in our everyday lives; for example, taking someone’s temperature is a simple and easy way of obtaining an indicator of their overall health. The Irish Aid Application asks applicants to ‘identify a small number of indicators that reflect the changes connected with the development education intervention’.<sup>13</sup>

You might go back to your sketch/visualisation and ask yourself:

***How will I be able to tell if I am making progress towards the change I want to happen?***

***What will I see or hear, or what will other people be able to notice, that will show that a change has occurred in our target groups?***

<sup>12</sup> The ‘Results’ columns are left blank at the application stage and are completed at end of project reporting stage only. Do not complete at application stage. This footnote applies to all copies of the Results Framework included in this document.

<sup>13</sup> Irish Aid DE Grants 2020 Application Form, p.13

It might help to imagine what target groups were like before they participated in your programme, and how they are afterwards. Try not to be too 'woolly' when visualising this change; Indicators need to be as SMART as possible---Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound.

Some qualities of strong indicators:

- An indicator should show progress clearly. It should link to your desired outcome and demonstrate that it is being achieved.
- An indicator should be practical to assess. You need to ask yourself if your organisation has the time, skills and money to gather the necessary information.
- An indicator should be responsive to change, and should be capable of accommodating the different ways in which change can happen. Don't box yourself into a binary (yes/no) indicator.
- An indicator should be relevant and important to your stakeholders. If possible, ask them if they see it as a valid measure of what they think the project is trying to achieve.
- An indicator should be GDPR-compliant. Make sure that the indicator does not rely on you collecting information that you will not be able to store and share.

### Aligning indicators with the Irish Aid Performance Measurement Framework

The publication of Irish Aid's PMF in December 2016 brought changes to the requirements for Annual Grants. These changes were introduced in the 2018 Annual Grants Round and are currently in their third year of use. Irish Aid now requires funded projects to *align with* and *contribute to* the IA PMF output and outcome indicators.<sup>14</sup> There are differences between the process for Irish Aid's **Output** and **Outcome** indicators so we will deal with them separately.

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<sup>14</sup> For details, see PMF slides presented by Irish Aid at the 2019 Grants Information Session on 11 October 2018. Slides available from IDEA.

## a) PMF Output Indicators

Organisations are asked to identify which **PMF output indicators** relate to their work and to align their indicators with the Irish Aid indicators, *wherever relevant and appropriate*.<sup>15</sup> Irish Aid does not expect applicants to align with output indicators across the entire breadth of the PMF; that would be impossible in the scope of a One or Two Year Grant. Irish Aid states: ‘different projects will contribute to different output indicators of the PMF’.<sup>16</sup>

In some cases, this process is straightforward. For example, if one aspect of your proposed project is Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for teachers, then you need to include an indicator in your RF that aligns with PMF Indicator 3.4 (‘Number of qualified teachers receiving CPD in DE and % of those teachers reporting an improvement in their DE Knowledge and Skills’). Most likely, an indicator that you developed independently to track your CPD work with teachers would match closely with the PMF indicator above. In fact, the Irish Aid requirement in many ways makes the job of your RF easier, as the PMF provides a whole suite of ready-made indicators.

But what if some aspects of your project do not seem to align with any of the PMF output indicators? Firstly, take another look and see if you can spot an entry point - the PMF casts a very wide net and if you think a bit creatively, you probably could align nearly any DE project with some aspect of the PMF. If you still cannot find a suitable PMF output indicator for one aspect of your project, that still is acceptable, as Irish Aid states that ‘Partners are not required to align every performance indicator to the PMF indicators, as it is expected that partners may also use project performance indicators which will not align to the PMF.’<sup>17</sup> Note, however, that the phrase, ‘not required to align every performance indicator...’, implies that the *majority* of your indicators should align with the PMF.

Take note of Footnote 1 in the RF Template (Appendix A) in the DE Grants Application. It says ‘Clearly identify which PMF indicator your performance indicator aligns to if it is not already clear from the wording, e.g. As per PMF Output Indicator 2.4.’ This footnote did not appear in previous versions of the RF template and its inclusion this year suggests that IA expects to see a close alignment between your RF and their PMF.

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<sup>15</sup> Irish Aid DE Grants 2020 Application Form, p. 13

<sup>16</sup> Irish Aid DE Grants 2020 Application Form, p. 13

<sup>17</sup> Irish Aid 2020 DE Grants Application Form, p. 13



## b) PMF Outcome Indicators

As well as aligning with PMF output indicators, funded organisations are now required to collect data for Irish Aid's **outcome indicators**. There are three outcome indicators:

1) Numbers of learners who report improved global citizenship literacy, based on:

- Learner's understanding of the root causes, consequences and solutions of global hunger, poverty, injustice, inequality and climate change
- Learner's ability to relate and critically assess what is happening in their society and the wider world (disaggregated by gender, age group and sector)

2) Percentage (of total number of learners) and number of learners who can give an example of how participating in a DE event/learning activity has influenced their attitude or behaviour (disaggregated by gender, age group and sector)

3) Coverage nationally, disaggregated by county and/or institutions<sup>18</sup>

*Note: Irish Aid has provided data collection templates for this; See Annexes in the Irish Aid PMF Document*

Irish Aid states that 'All projects are required to contribute to the **outcome indicators** of the PMF'. They go on to say that 'Partners may choose to design their project Results Frameworks to include the PMF Outcome Indicators' but 'partners may prefer to report on the PMF Outcome Indicators as an appendix using the PMF Outcome Indicator reporting template.'<sup>19</sup>

It is, of course, entirely up to you, but it may make sense to include at least one of the outcome indicators in your own Results Framework for the following reasons:

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<sup>18</sup> Irish Aid Development Education Strategy 2017 – 2023 Performance Measurement Framework, p.4

<sup>19</sup> Irish Aid 2020 DE Grants Application Form, p. 13

- They are reasonable indicators of change at an individual level;
- They have been ‘pre-approved’ by Irish Aid so would not be queried during the application appraisal process;
- The data collection instrument already has been designed by Irish Aid;<sup>20</sup>
- You have to collect the data anyway so you might as well use it in your RF.

Looking back at the section on desired outcomes, you will recall that outcomes can happen at a number of levels: for example, one outcome might happen at institutional level, another with teachers and another with individual students/learners. If you have a desired outcome at the level of individual student/learner, and then it would make sense to use Irish Aid Outcome Indicators One and/or Two in your RF. If you do not already have a desired outcome at individual learner level, you could consider adding one in.

### Some questions to consider

*Quantitative and/or Qualitative?* Quantitative indicators are numerical and address such questions as, How many? How much? or, How often? Qualitative indicators are descriptive, drawing on people’s perceptions and experiences, and address such questions as How? Why? In what way?

In our everyday life, we routinely draw on both quantitative and qualitative assessments of how well something is progressing, so it is only natural that we would do this in our RFs. Irish Aid encourages the use of both quantitative and qualitative indicators and suggests that indicators should be ‘mutually supportive’ so as to build up a composite picture of change. There is a wise maxim: ‘No number without a story, no story without a number.’

*Perception-based indicators?* Some people may argue that perception-based indicators are not sufficiently robust, but realistically they are one of the most effective ways to measure educational change, particularly in the short timeframe of the Annual Grants round. For example, an indicator in a training project for youth workers could be: Percentage of Youth workers reporting an increase in confidence in their ability to deal with global issues.

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<sup>20</sup>Irish Aid Development Education Strategy 2017-2023 Performance Measurement Framework, Annex I

## How to set indicators

Start out by making a list of all possible indicators. If possible, ask for suggestions from target groups and donors so that you can get an idea of what success 'looks like' from their perspective. Be creative and think as widely as possible, so that you produce indicators that reflect different aspects of your work and the effects it may have. You can also draw on the indicators in the Irish Aid PMF and/or in independent 'indicator banks', but be prepared to modify to fit your own context. You will now have a longlist of possible indicators. You can narrow down your selection using the AIMS acronym:

- **Action-focused.** Indicators should inform action. If you can't imagine what you would do with the indicator data once you have collected it, it probably would not be worth collecting it.
- **Important.** It is only worth measuring what people care about and is relevant to them.
- **Measurable.** The data for an indicator needs to be collectable in a practical and relatively easy way - e.g. through surveys, interviews, user records.
- **Simple.** The indicator needs to be clear and direct enough to be understood by all stakeholders.

Go through your list of possible indicators. You can use the 'AIMS' matrix below to compare indicators. Remember if you have too many indicators, you will not have time to gather, record and analyse all the data, and your users may get fed up with being surveyed too many times. But if you have too few indicators, you may not capture the full range of your outcomes. When choosing your indicators, make sure you have a good mix of quantitative and qualitative.

Possible Indicator	Action-focused (Score 1 low - 3 high)	Important (Score 1 low - 3 high)	Measurable (Score 1 low - 3 high)	Simple (Score 1 low - 3 high)	Total Score
1.					
2.					
3.					
4.					
5.					

If you have used some of the indicators in previous years, take a bit of time now to think how they could be adjusted slightly to reflect any changes in contexts or in your desired outcomes.

**LANGUAGE POINT:**

Indicators need to be *neutral*. State 'change in level of awareness' instead of 'increased awareness'. The 'increased' goes into the target.

**Terms to use in indicators**

- The level of...
- The extent to which...
- The type of...
- The number of...
- The ability to...
- The percentage of...

## Common Mistakes with Indicators

Formulating indicators can be tricky and it is easy to make mistakes. Irish Aid has produced a helpful document entitled '[Common RF Mistakes 2018](#)',<sup>21</sup> which is based on RFs submitted in the 2018 Annual Grant Round (Oct 2017 deadline). It is worth looking carefully at these examples to ensure that you do not make similar errors. Problems with indicators include:

- Choosing indicators that are not SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound). You should not use words that are vague and open to widely different interpretations.
- Choosing indicators that do not clearly relate to the desired outcomes.
- Choosing indicators which provide insufficient evidence that the desired outcome has been achieved (e.g. using a number of hits to an educational website to measure increased DE capacity in teachers).
- Listing the data collection method (e.g. survey, participant feedback) as the indicator without stating what the data collection method is actually measuring.
- Confusing an indicator with the actual outcome - remember that an outcome is a change that is meaningful in itself and an indicator is simply a **sign** that shows that progress towards the desired change has occurred.

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<sup>21</sup> Common RF Mistakes: [https://www.ideaonline.ie/uploads/files/Common\\_RF\\_Mistakes\\_2018\\_Final.pdf](https://www.ideaonline.ie/uploads/files/Common_RF_Mistakes_2018_Final.pdf)

**Write down some of your indicators here and check that they are free from the faults listed above:**

## Baselines, Targets and Results

Organisation Name										
Overall Project Goal										
Project Timeframe										
Desired Outcomes	Planned Activities	Performance Indicators	Baseline	Targets		Results			Data Source, Collection Method, Frequency of Measurement	Irish Aid Contribution
				Yr 1	Yr 2	Yr 1	Yr2	Cumulative		
Outcome 1										

**Baselines** are your starting point and will allow you to measure progress against your selected performance indicators. A baseline has to fit hand-in-glove with your indicator. If you followed the 'AIMS' criteria for selecting indicators (see previous section) then you should be able to identify relevant and measurable baseline data. Remember, there is no point in laboriously collecting baseline and follow-up data about some aspect of your work that does not say something meaningful about your progress towards your desired outcomes and overall goal.

If your proposed project is an extension of work you are already doing, then setting up a baseline is fairly straightforward. In theory, last year's target, having been fulfilled, becomes this year's baseline. Indeed, the IA Guidance Note states, 'If the indicator is similar to what you used last year, the baseline will be last year's result.'<sup>22</sup> If you are fortunate enough for this to be the case, congratulate yourselves. If not, do not panic. Often we have incomplete data sets, or data that does not correlate exactly with what we intended to collect (this often happens when we are relying on a partner organisation to collect data for us). Just look through last year's report and ask yourself: What data contained here gives a good picture of where we are now, and is relevant to where we want to be at the end of next year? Provide as much detail as possible. Organisations usually have much more data available than they realise. Act like a detective to find some stored data that will give you a sense of where you are at the start of the project.

<sup>22</sup> Irish Aid 2020 DE Grant Application Form, p.13

If your indicator relates to the level of learning amongst individual learners, and if you are working with a new cohort of learners each year, you have to be careful that you do not put last year's target as this year's baseline. For example, if your target group is Transition Year students, you will have a new intake of TYs this year and they cannot be expected to start at the level of knowledge at which last year's TYs finished! In this type of situation, use the same baseline as last year and put in a footnote which states that this is for a new cohort of learners. However, you must ensure that not all of your baselines follow this pattern; IA will be looking for 'progression' amongst other indicators.

What should you do if your proposed project covers a totally new area of work for your organisation? You could use a proxy baseline, which is a figure borrowed from another organisation that has worked on a similar project. If there really is no data available, then include some data (as specific as possible) that demonstrates that you have adequately researched your context and have identified a gap in provision which justifiably should be filled.

In Irish Aid's 'Common Results Frameworks Mistakes 2018' you can see examples of baselines which are characterised by 'insufficient data or vague incomprehensible text.'<sup>23</sup>

**Targets** are a way of expressing the level you wish to achieve in relation to your objective. The guidance note for the DE Grants application advises applicants to 'Identify a small number of targets that are SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound) to show what achievement will look like and are clearly aligned to the indicators.'<sup>24</sup>

Your targets need to be connected to the baseline so that progress is visible. However, most projects change from year to year (this is a good thing - it demonstrates that you are responding to formative feedback and to a changing social context), so do not worry if you are measuring something slightly different in this year's target, as compared to a baseline that was gathered last year. If this requires an explanation, explain succinctly in a footnote and describe it more fully in the 'lessons learned' (Section 4) part of the narrative.

Do not make all your targets purely numerical. You should have some targets that measure qualitative changes in your participants. The Irish Aid 'Common RF Mistakes' document criticises RFs that 'only contain targets for numbers reached and which do not contain any targets

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<sup>23</sup> Irish Aid, 'Common RF Mistakes 2018', p. 1

<sup>24</sup> Irish Aid DE Grant 2020 Application Form, p. 13



regarding the depth of engagement or the change in participant knowledge/ critical thinking/ recognition of global interdependency/ attitude/ behaviour/ professional practice.<sup>25</sup> You can have targets that combine quantitative and qualitative elements, e.g. '60% of participants report an increase of at least 20% on a scale rating their confidence to teach about development issues'.

Be realistic about what you can achieve in a 12 or 24 month timeframe. Setting targets is a balancing act. You want to make your application look attractive to the funder, but you do not want to make unrealistic promises that you will not be able to deliver. Remember that you will need to fill in the 'Results' column when reporting at the end of the year and you want to avoid having to justify/explain why you did not achieve the target that you set for yourselves.

If you are applying for a two-year grant, you need to list targets for both Year 1 and Year 2. However, you should beware of automatically setting out the same rate of progress for both years across all of your outcomes. Depending on how your project is set up, you could expect to make substantial progress towards some outcomes in Year 1 and then not as much for Year 2, and in other outcomes you may not expect much progress in Year 1 but expect strong progress in Year 2. For example, if Outcome 1 is about recruiting new groups for your project, you may set a target of 10 new groups for Year 1 but only 2 additional new groups for Year 2, whereas if Outcome 2 is about increased skills in your target group, Year 1 may show only a 10% increase as they are just getting started, and Year 2 may aim for a 40% increase. Therefore you need to take a holistic view of all of your outcomes when setting your two-year targets.

The issue mentioned in 'Baselines' above, that of new cohorts of learners coming on board each year, is particularly important to bear in mind when setting targets on participant learning within a two-year project. If you have a new cohort of learners starting in Year 2, they cannot be expected to be starting where the Year 1 group finished. In this case, you need to make it clear in the RF that Year 2 involves a new intake of learners.

In some cases, baselines may be very high, so your goal may be to simply maintain these high levels with a new cohort of participants. For example, if 95% of participants in your course last year rated it as excellent, it would be unreasonable to expect that this year's participants would rate it even more favourably. In this case, you can keep the target at the same level as the baseline and add a footnote justifying this.

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<sup>25</sup> Irish Aid, 'Common RF Mistakes 2018', p.2.

## Results

Do NOT complete this column at the application stage---LEAVE IT BLANK! In the guidance notes, Irish Aid states: ‘This column is to be completed at end of project reporting and should state the actual progress made towards the targets set out in the project proposal.’<sup>26</sup>

You do not need to worry about this column until reporting. However, at this stage the ‘results’ column serves as a useful reminder to set *realistic* targets - remember that in 12 short months, you will be required to enter the actual result right next to where you are now writing in your target.

## Data Source, Collection Method, and Frequency of Measurement

Organisation Name										
Overall Project Goal										
Project Timeframe										
Desired Outcomes	Planned Activities	Performance Indicators	Baseline	Targets		Results <sup>27</sup>			Data Source, Collection Method, Frequency of Measurement	Irish Aid Contribution
				Yr 1	Yr 2	Yr 1	Yr2	Cumulative		
Outcome 1										

The guidance notes for this section instruct the applicant to ‘state the sources of monitoring data, the methods by which the data was collected and the frequency of the various methods of data collection’.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Irish Aid DE Grants 2020 Application Form p. 13

<sup>27</sup> The ‘Results’ columns are left blank at the application stage and are completed at end of project reporting stage only. Do not complete at application stage. This footnote applies to all copies of the Results Framework included in this document.

<sup>28</sup> Irish Aid DE Grants 2020 Application Form, p. 13

You need to specify how you are going to collect the data. This can be done through:

- Questionnaires and Surveys
- Interviews
- Focus Groups
- Tests and Assessments
- Diaries
- Observations
- Web-Based Monitoring (e.g. Google analytics)

Most organisations rely heavily on questionnaires and surveys, as they are useful for collecting information from a large number of participants in an efficient, anonymous way, and if done via online tools (e.g. Survey Monkey) the data can usually be analysed easily. Furthermore, if you use scaled questions (e.g. Likert scales), you can get quantifiable information about people’s opinions and attitudes. However, it is also worth noting that questionnaires do have some drawbacks. For example, response rates can be low, and they rarely allow for an in-depth exploration of issues.

Different activities in a project may be measured in different ways depending on the length, depth and nature of the engagement with the learner. For some activities the survey may be the best method of data collection, but for other activities it would miss out on potentially valuable qualitative feedback.

In the Annexes to their PMF Document, Irish Aid has provided some templates for data collection for their Outcome and Output Indicators.<sup>29</sup> They are a practical starting point for Grant applicants. If you can use these as they are, or adapt to suit your particular context, this will save you time now and at reporting time. However, Irish Aid has stated that it is open to other methods that organisations use to measure and track progress towards their targets. If you devise your own tool, remember to explain in the narrative (Section 2.2) the thinking behind the tool and/or how it works. If you use a variety of tools, think of how they can enhance and support each other by showing different aspects of the change that has occurred. Also consider how different methods of data collection could provide alternative ‘cover’ if some of your planned data collection doesn’t happen.

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<sup>29</sup> Irish Aid Development Education Strategy 2017-2023 Performance Measurement Framework, Annexes

There is a wealth of information available in terms of data collection tools. A good starting point is the [Charities Evaluation Services](#) (UK) website, where you can download a range of excellent free resources such as ‘Information Collection Methods: Choosing Tools for Assessing Impact’.<sup>30</sup> As CES explain very well in this document, it is very important that you have a clear idea about what you want to measure; otherwise you may end up choosing a tool that looks nice but is not fit for your purpose.

**Check for alignment with Irish Aid’s PMF (Performance Measurement Framework):**

**If you have decided to use some of indicators used by Irish Aid in their PMF (as discussed in the ‘Indicator’ section of this tool), you can avail of the data collection templates set out in the Annexes to the PMF. You can use them as they are, or you can adapt to fit your own circumstances.**

Whatever tools you decide to use, be explicit in describing them. The ‘Common RF Mistakes 2018’ document notes that in the Means of Verification column, a number of applications ‘tell us that the project will gather evidence without specifically stating what data collection approach will be used.’<sup>31</sup> Again, it is worth looking at the ‘Common Mistakes’ document to ensure that you do not make similar errors.

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<sup>30</sup> <https://knowhownonprofit.org/organisation/impact/measuring-your-impact/questionnaires/InformationcollectionmethodsFINAL34.pdf>

<sup>31</sup> Irish Aid, ‘Common RF Mistakes 2018’, p. 2

## Irish Aid Contribution

Organisation Name										
Overall Project Goal										
Project Timeframe										
Desired Outcomes	Planned Activities	Performance Indicators	Baseline	Targets		Results <sup>32</sup>			Data Source, Collection Method, Frequency of Measurement	Irish Aid Contribution
				Yr 1	Yr 2	Yr 1	Yr2	Cumulative		
Outcome 1										

This is the final column in the Results Framework. According to the Irish Aid guidance note, the applicant should ‘State the financial contribution of Irish Aid to each activity or objective...Please also include the % contribution of Irish Aid funding to the cost of each activity or objective.’<sup>33</sup> This should be relatively straight-forward. Do not forget to ensure consistency with the budget table in the application (Annex B).

<sup>32</sup> The ‘Results’ columns are left blank at the application stage and are completed at end of project reporting stage only. Do not complete at application stage. This footnote applies to all copies of the Results Framework included in this document.

<sup>33</sup> Irish Aid DE Grants 2020 Application Form, p. 13

## Review and Troubleshooting

Congratulations for reaching this stage in the process. Before you finalise your Results Framework, go back over it a few times, and if possible get a fresh pair of eyes to review it.

To reiterate the comments made in the Irish Aid 'Common RF Mistakes 2018' document, the most common flaws are found in **the relationship between the RF columns**, for example:

- Baseline is providing information which does not align with what the indicators or targets are measuring
- Targets do not align with what the indicators are measuring
- The data collection method outlined is too vague and/or the relationship to the indicators is unclear
- Weak logic linking the activities to desired outcomes and goal

*Tip: Read through the columns horizontally to check that the baseline, indicators, targets and means of verification columns are all talking about the same thing.*

Finally, it is important to remember that **the RF is not an entity on its own but is an integral part of your application**. The results framework, narrative and budget need to align with and support each other.

Take the time to proofread and double-check. Try to make it as easy to navigate as possible. Keep it clear and succinct. Your RF should not contain long chunks of text about your project. This text belongs in the narrative.

Make sure that a logical thread runs through the columns and rows of the RF. This will help the funder to understand your project and also will make it easier for you to use the table for monitoring and reporting.

We hope that this toolkit has been useful to you. It has focused on the very specific task of creating a good RF for your Irish Aid DE Grant application form. However, once the application is sent in, we encourage you to continue to explore how results-based approaches can improve different aspects of your organisation's work.

Feel free to contact IDEA with any questions or comments on this toolkit – [communications@ideaonline.ie](mailto:communications@ideaonline.ie)

## Resources

BOND (2015), *Impact Evaluation Guide*, available at [https://www.bond.org.uk/data/files/Impact\\_Evaluation\\_Guide\\_0515.pdf](https://www.bond.org.uk/data/files/Impact_Evaluation_Guide_0515.pdf)

Charities Evaluation Services (2010), *Assessing Change: Developing and using outcome monitoring tools*, available at <http://www.ces-vol.org.uk/Resources/CharitiesEvaluationServices/Documents/assessingchange-740-748.pdf>

Charities Evaluation Services (2008), *Keeping on Track: A guide to setting and using indicators*, available at <http://www.ces-vol.org.uk/Publications-Research/publications-free-downloads/keeping-on-track.html>

Charities Evaluation Services (2013), *Information Collection Methods: Choosing Tools for Assessing Impact*, available at <http://www.ces-vol.org.uk/Resources/CharitiesEvaluationServices/Documents/Information%20collection%20methods%20FINAL%2034.pdf>

DEEEP (2012), *A Journey to Quality Development Education: Starting points that help you to be clear about what you do and why you do it*, available at <http://library.deeep.org/record/1025/files/DEEEP-GUIDE-2015-007.pdf>

DEEEP (2015), *Monitoring Education for Global Citizenship: A Contribution to Debate*, available at [http://deeep.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/DEEEP4\\_QualityImpact\\_Report\\_2014\\_web2.pdf](http://deeep.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/DEEEP4_QualityImpact_Report_2014_web2.pdf)

Grantcraft (2006), *Making Measures Work for You: Outcomes and Evaluation*, available at [http://www.grantcraft.org/assets/content/resources/guide\\_outcome.pdf](http://www.grantcraft.org/assets/content/resources/guide_outcome.pdf)

Intrac (2010), *Impact Assessment: Understanding and Assessing our Contributions to Change*, available at <http://www.intrac.org/data/files/resources/695/Impact-Assessment-Understanding-and-Assessing-our-Contributions-to-Change.pdf>

Irish Aid (2017) *Irish Aid Development Education Strategy 2017 -2023 Performance Measurement Framework*.

Irish Aid (2018) 'Common RF mistakes' document

Think Global and Charities Evaluation Services (2011), *Evaluating Global Learning Outcomes: A guide to assessing progress in intercultural, environmental and development education projects*, available at <http://think-global.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2011/04/Evaluating-global-learning-outcomes.pdf>

The Wheel, *Knowing and Showing your Outcomes and Impacts* (2012), available at <http://www.wheel.ie/content/knowning-and-showing-your-outcomes-and-impacts>

Van Ongevalle, Jan., *Measuring the effects of global education programmes: towards a learning centred monitoring and evaluation practice* (2013), available at <http://deeep.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/Measuring-the-effects-of-global-education-programmes-Jan-Van-Ongevalle1.pdf>



**Notes**



**IDEA**  
6 Gardiner Row  
Dublin 1  
Ireland

**Tel:** 00 353 (0) 1 8788480  
**e-mail:** [info@ideaonline.ie](mailto:info@ideaonline.ie)  
**[www.ideaonline.ie](http://www.ideaonline.ie)**

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*IDEA acknowledges funding received from the Development Education and Civil Society Unit of Irish Aid. The ideas, opinions and comments herein are entirely the responsibility of IDEA and do not necessarily represent or reflect Irish Aid policy.*