



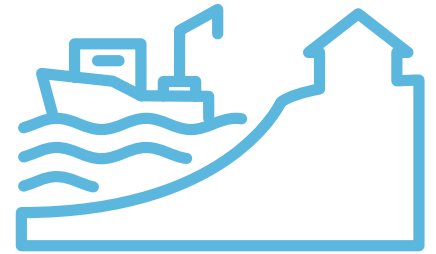
Evaluating CLLD Handbook for LAGs and FLAGs



Urban



Rural



Coastal

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Acronyms

LAG	Local Action Group
FLAG	Fisheries Local Action Group
CLLD	Community-Led Local Development
ESIF	European Structural and Investment Funds
LDS	Local Development strategy
MA	Managing Authority
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation

-  Definition
-  Theory
-  Example
-  Tip

Introduction

Background

In the 2014-2020 period, Community-Led Local Development (CLLD) can be funded under all European Structural and Investment (ESI) Funds. Local Action Groups (LAGs) financed from the different ESI Funds have been set up throughout Europe and tasked with the development and implementation of Local Development Strategies (LDS) through multi-stakeholder, public-private partnerships.

This handbook is for LAGs, including Fisheries Local Action Groups (FLAGs), funded from one or several of the four ESI Funds¹ as well as external evaluators carrying out LAG evaluations. It aims to provide easy-to-use tools and methods, along with examples from different LAGs and FLAGs, that can serve as guidance and inspiration for evaluating CLLD.

Why evaluate?

Evaluation is a compulsory component of CLLD². However, the time spent evaluating and reflecting on a LAG's contribution to its community is invaluable for a range of reasons:

- › Checking whether the LDS objectives are still relevant
- › Knowing if the LAG has achieved its original aims and objectives
- › Helping to critically reflect on how to improve the LAG's activities and processes
- › Obtaining knowledge to demonstrate achievements

The learning that comes from assessing one's work is fundamental to optimising the use of public funding and improving the potential of CLLD to bring tangible and positive change to local communities.

This handbook builds on guidelines developed by the European Evaluation Helpdesk for Rural Development on the "**Evaluation of LEADER/CLLD**" (a guide to evaluating mono-funded LEADER³ at programme and LAG level), and by the FARNET Support Unit on "**Results oriented CLLD**" (a practical guide for FLAGs on designing, implementing and evaluating local strategies in fisheries areas). It is organised into the following four chapters which LAGs should keep in mind throughout their work.



1 **EAFRD, EMFF, ERDF** and the **ESF**.

2 The **Common Provision Regulation** No 1303/2013 requires LAGs to provide for specific arrangements for evaluation in their LDS (Art.33.1(f)). It foresees evaluation as one of the key tasks of LAGs (Art.34) and specifically allows for covering the costs linked with these activities through the running costs of the LAGs (Art.35).

3 Funded exclusively under the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (**EAFRD**).

1. Planning your evaluation

1.1 What is evaluation?

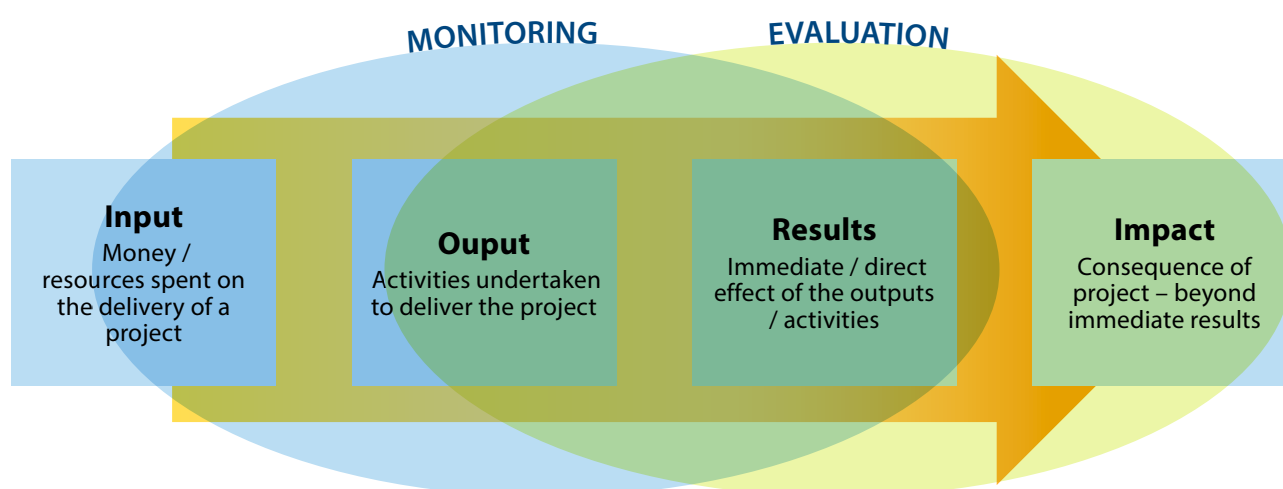
'Evaluation is not a test!'

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) provide the evidence base, which enables a LAG to validate the logic of its local development strategy (LDS), to check if the intended results are being achieved as planned, and to see what improvements are needed. For this, LAGs should organise effective monitoring and evaluation as an integral part of the LDS.

Monitoring is about counting things and keeping activities on track. Numbers – of events, of participants, of projects – are monitoring data. It is important to be clear what information is really needed for management, control, demonstrating progress and finally for evaluation.

Evaluation is a periodic assessment of the design, implementation and outcomes of an ongoing or completed process. In the context of CLLD, evaluation can assess the local development strategy and/or the LAG's work. The purpose is to help in decision-making, to ascertain achievement or value, to gain insight into prior or existing initiatives, to enable reflection and help identify future change.

Monitoring and evaluation are closely linked to each other. Monitoring tracks progress against a small number of pre-established targets/indicators – while evaluation goes beyond outputs to assess results identifying both planned and unintended effects.⁴ Nevertheless, the basis for evaluation activities is monitoring data.



⁴ Impact Evaluation Notes No. 2. April 2012, 'Linking monitoring and evaluation to impact evaluation,' Burt Perrin, The Rockefeller Foundation.

What is special about evaluating CLLD?

Community-Led Local Development (CLLD) involves a specific methodology, developed originally for rural development (the so-called LEADER approach). Due to its bottom-up, partnership-based character, CLLD is expected to foster socio-economic development in a way that cannot be delivered by top-down policies. Indeed, the process of community outreach, known as “animation”, and involvement of the local population in the development of its area can be as important as the sum of the individual projects funded.

Community animation can help reach target groups that are hard to reach by traditional, top-down funding schemes; it’s integrated nature can help foster partnerships and joint action between different stakeholder groups, and the fact that decision-making happens at a local level can encourage more flexible and innovative responses to local problems. It can provide targeted support while building the capacity of local actors to develop and implement their own projects and the special place afforded to networking and cooperation can facilitate the transfer of knowledge from one area to another and increase the impact of individual actions. The results achieved through the CLLD method are sometimes called the **added value** of the approach.



Source: LEADER European Observatory 2001

This added value of CLLD* can come, for example, from:

- Improved **social and human capital**, expressed in increased levels of trust, the development of new skills and capacities, the establishment of new networks etc., making the community more resilient and adaptive to changes.
- Improved **local governance** through community and stakeholder involvement in decision making, the LAG’s role in multi-level governance and its ability to manage public-private funds
- Enhanced **project results** due to increased leverage, more sustainable projects, new project promoters and more innovative projects at local level.

When evaluating CLLD, it is important to keep such elements in mind and **focus on identifying where the LAG aims to bring added value to their local community**.

*see Guidelines for Evaluation of LEADER/CLLD, August 2017, European Evaluation Helpdesk for Rural Development

1.2 When to start?

'The success of evaluation depends on your preparation'

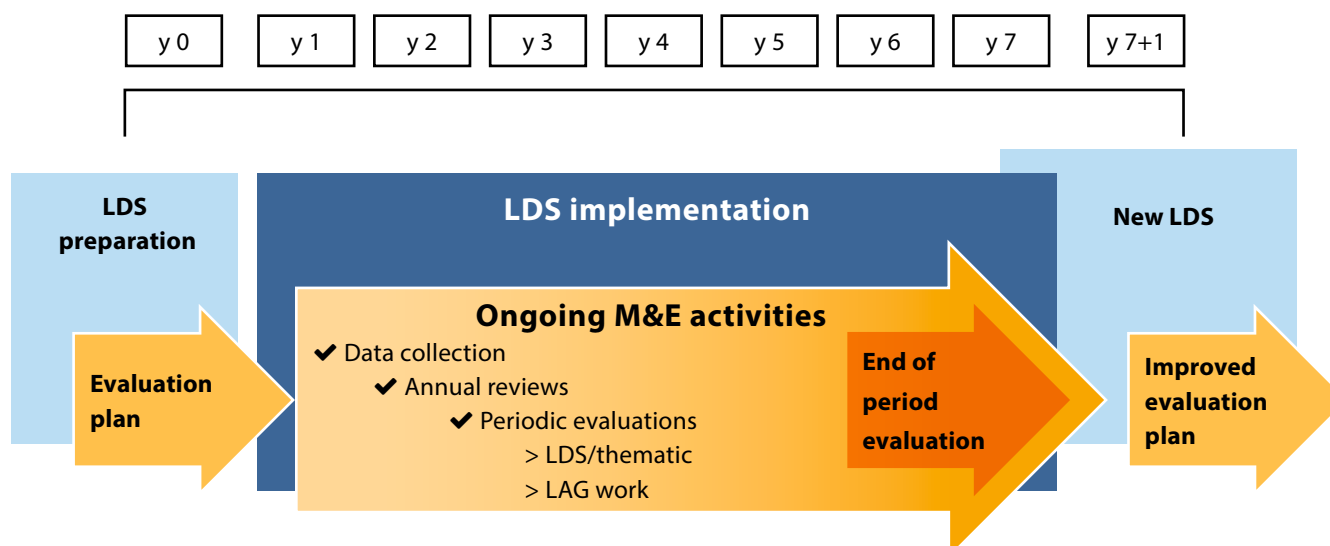
The process of monitoring and evaluating LAG work is an integral part of CLLD and should be designed **during the preparation of the local development strategy (LDS)**. Indeed, monitoring and evaluation arrangements should be presented when the group's LDS is submitted for approval by the managing authority (MA).

Four reasons stand out for starting your evaluation reflection and planning **as early as possible** so that it is built into the LAG's work as an ongoing activity:

- If planned along with the LDS, it helps to keep strategic objectives and targets realistic and measurable.
- It helps to ensure the necessary data collection systems (including the necessary baselines) are in place from the beginning of LAG operations, saving time and resources later on.
- If it is built into the LAG's daily work, it will allow the LAG to respond quickly to contextual changes and newly identified needs still in the current programming period.
- It can allow the LAG to build in a longer-term vision to their work.

The figure below shows an example of a timeline for planning and implementing monitoring and evaluation activities. The planning should take place alongside the development of the LAG's local development strategy and data collection systems should be put in place at the beginning of implementation. Annual reviews can help to assess LAG progress and results on a regular basis and can feed into periodic assessments and/or an end of period evaluation. The evaluation of a given programming period is a key element informing the LDS of the following period.

Proposed timeline for planning and implementing a LAG evaluation



1.3 Where to start?

'CLLD is a participative process and evaluating it should be so too!'



The evaluation process starts with **planning your evaluation**. This helps your LAG define the scope and suitable methods to collect, analyse and present data. It should also clearly attribute roles and responsibilities for undertaking these activities, along with an estimation of how much time they are likely to take up and an approximate budget. Below are the main elements that LAGs should consider including in an evaluation plan:

Objectives and focus of the evaluation

It is important to be pragmatic about the scope of your evaluation. Local development strategies will have multiple objectives and their results and impacts are not always easy to attribute. It will not be possible to capture all the outcomes of the LDS and/or LAG work. Therefore, when planning your evaluation, ask yourself:

- What does your LAG *most* want to know?
- What information will you need to provide to your managing authority?
- What will the results be used for?

Evaluation should be a learning process and it is important that LAG members and other stakeholders are closely associated with the process, that the evaluation objectives are agreed upon and that the results are used to improve LAG work and adapt the LDS where necessary. On top of this, evaluation results can be used as a communication tool to raise awareness of the LAG's work in the community and to decision-makers.

Basic reporting to the managing authority is another use that is likely to be made of the results. Evaluation is also extremely valuable to making strategic improvements in the future and informing any subsequent LDS.

Do you want your evaluation to help you...

- › *Improve LAG outreach to the community?*
- › *Make the application process quicker and easier for the beneficiary?*
- › *Improve support for project development?*
- › *Understand the results of projects funded?*
- › *Adjust/redesign the LDS?*
- › *Report specific information to the MA?*
- › *Report progress and results to the LAG stakeholders?*
- › *Communicate results to the wider public?*
- › *Other?*

Data sources and collection

Identifying data sources and planning the collection of data is fundamental if the LAG is to have the relevant information to analyse changes effected by the LDS. So, once your LAG has decided what it wants to learn from evaluation, it is important to clarify which information is needed, how it will be collected – and if it is realistic to collect it. Depending on what the LAG expects to assess, it might need a baseline, which must be established early on to help compare the situation at the end of the period. Other evaluation activities such as measuring community involvement, the development of social capital, the added value of the presence of the LAG in the area, etc. are likely to require specific information collection over a longer time period. Further information on data collection can be found in Chapter 2.



A baseline is the measurement of conditions at the start of a project (or a local strategy), against which subsequent progress can be assessed⁵

Evaluation tools and methods

Evaluation may be external or internal and can use a variety of methods. Having a good idea in advance of the types of methods you expect to use for your evaluation will help ensure activities are budgeted for, planned in advance and coherent with the data collection methods. For example, if the group plans to undertake surveys of how opinion changes over time, the same question will need to be asked before and after the intervention. Self-assessment is one method that can be effective for LAGs with limited resources⁶. Chapter 3 gives an overview of different evaluation methods that LAGs might want to consider.

5 <https://goodpracticereview.org/9/monitoring-and-evaluation/baseline-data/>

6 For more information on self-assessment, see p17 of the Evaluation Helpdesk guidelines “[Evaluation of LEADER/CLLD](#)”.

Timeline

The LAG must assess how much time the foreseen data collection and evaluation activities are likely to take and how much time it can realistically dedicate to M&E activities. The foreseen activities, timeline and resources allocated will need to be developed together. With regards to timing, LAGs should give careful consideration questions such as:

- › When it expects to undertake monitoring activities?
- › When it expects to undertake evaluation activities?
- › How long it expects each of the activities to take?

Resources

Resources should be clearly allocated for M&E activities and must be proportionate to the amount of funding available for the LDS/projects. Beyond the allocation of a budget, time and skills are also vital resources that must be foreseen. Depending on the scope of the evaluation and the capacity of the LAG, some evaluation might need to be outsourced. The cost of this will vary but a survey undertaken in 2017⁷ pointed towards a cost of €6,000-25,000 for an external ex-post evaluation. Once your evaluation plan is developed, ensure the resources foreseen match the ambitions of your plan. The resources or evaluation scope may then need to be adapted.

Does your budget allow for...

- › *An in-depth evaluation of all sections of the LDS and of LAG work?*
- › *Analysis of specific areas of the LDS and LAG work only?*
- › *Analysis of available data from project applicant forms only?*
- › *Specific activities, such as surveys, interviews, working groups etc.?*

Roles and responsibilities

Evaluation can be done by an independent evaluator, or by a member of the LAG team. However, ensuring that a member of staff is clearly responsible for driving forward the M&E process is vital to it being an integral part of the LAG's work. Whether evaluation is undertaken internally or by an external evaluator, the process must be coordinated and actively involve the board members.

Using evaluation results

How and when M&E activities are planned should be directly linked to what the LAG expects to use the results for. Methods used to collect mandatory information requested by the managing authority, for example, may be very different to activities undertaken to obtain feedback on community animation or on a very specific objective of your LAG's local development strategy. As such, the group should have the intended uses in mind when planning its evaluation. This will also help ensure that maximum use is made of the results.



Ensure your evaluation planning is flexible. You may need to adapt to contextual changes between the time of writing and the start of evaluation activities (e.g. the financial crisis during the 2007-2013 period).

7 Survey carried out by the FARNET Support Unit of all existing FLAGs, many of which were also LEADER LAGs.

1.4 What to evaluate?

Evaluation questions

The evaluation questions should be in line with what the LAG wants to find out and with the basic intervention logic of the local development strategy (see box below). They usually deal with some or all of the following issues:

- › Was the intervention **relevant**? (Is there a link between what the LAG is trying to do and the existing problems and needs?);
- › Was it **effective**? (What has been done compared to what was originally planned? expected versus actual outputs, results and impacts);
- › Was it **efficient**? (How do the outputs and results achieved compare with the inputs – particularly financial resources – used to achieve them?; value for money);
- › Was it **useful**? (How do the effects of interventions correspond to the real needs of the community, irrespective of the stated objectives of the LDS?);
- › Was it **sustainable**? (Are the results long-lasting, will the change be maintained without further public support?).

LDS intervention logic

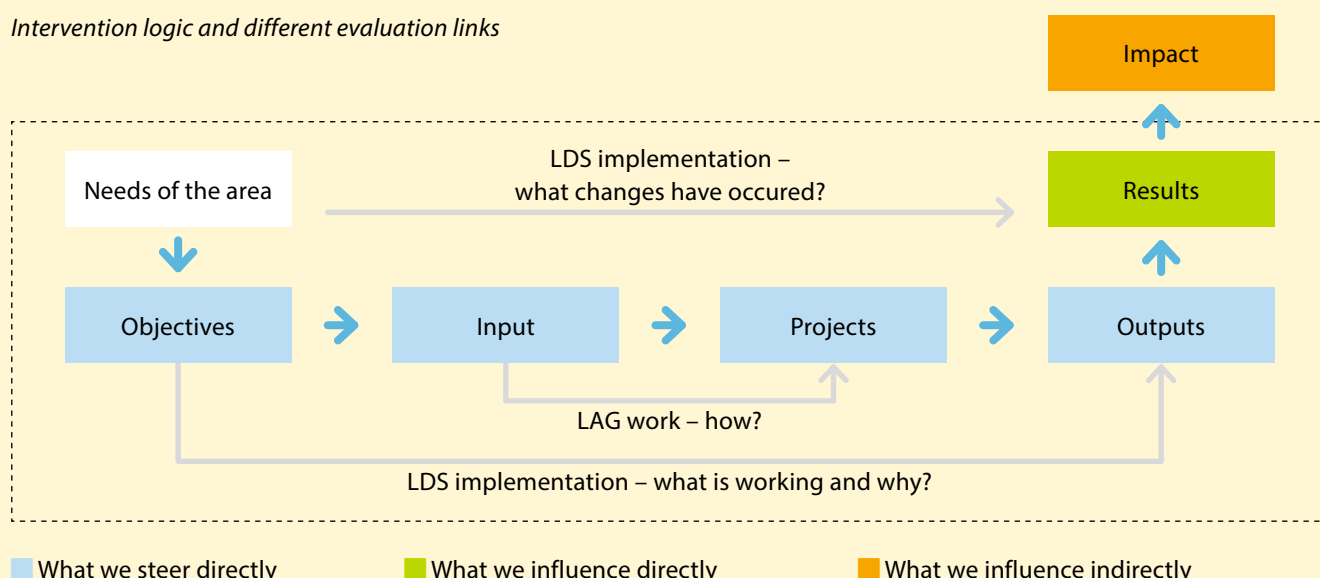
Implementing a local development strategy involves translating the **needs** (problems, opportunities) of an area into **objectives** and trying to address those needs (achieve the objectives) through a set of projects/activities, with support/funding (**input**) from the LAG.

Evaluation is an assessment of:

- › What has been done through individual projects/activities (**outputs**).
- › To what extent these outputs have contributed to addressing specific problems (**results**).
- › How have these results helped to achieve the broader objective of the strategy (**impact**).

The link between the needs/problems of the area, objectives of the strategy, activities/projects, outputs, results and impacts is called **intervention logic**.

Intervention logic and different evaluation links



In the context of CLLD, the inputs are both financial (projects funded under the LDS) and human resources (LAG activities such as animation and project development support). It is **important to evaluate both the work of the LAG as well as the results of the projects funded** as they will both influence the quality of the results achieved by the LAG. Below are some examples of evaluation questions a LAG can ask:

Meeting LDS objectives through projects funded

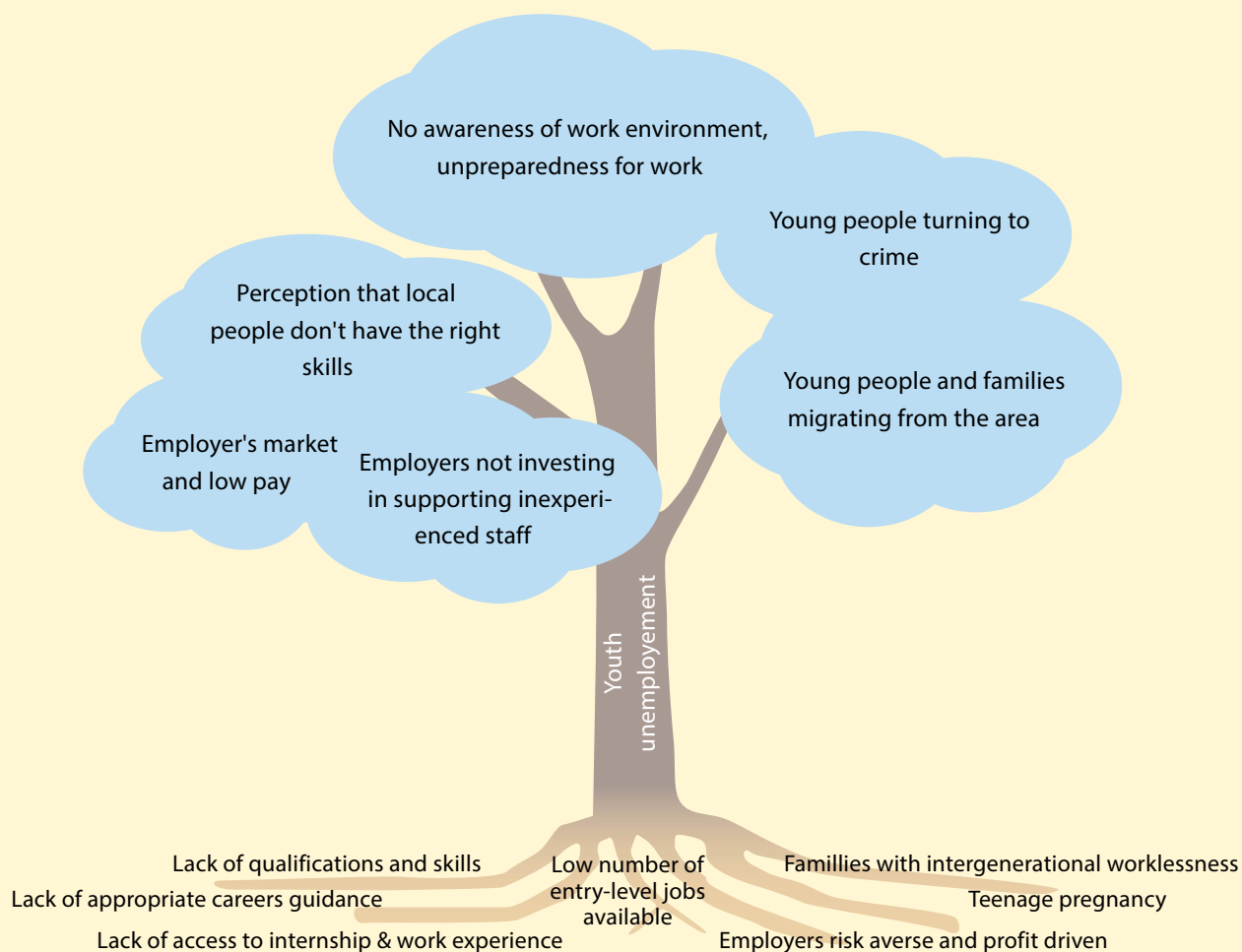
- *To what extent does the design of LDS reflect the needs of the local community?*
- *Do the projects contribute to the objectives of the LDS?*
- *Are the objectives of the LDS still relevant?*
- *What are the results of the funded projects?*
- *Do the projects provide the foreseen value added for the local community?*
- *Have local capacity and skills been improved?*
- *Has social capital been enhanced?*
- *Is the community more involved in local decision-making?*
- *How successful and sustainable are the new partnerships fostered?*
- *Have new ideas been realised to bring local improvements? (innovation)*

Supporting community development through the work of the LAG

- *Does the CLLD approach mobilise community participation?*
- *Is the local community aware of the funding opportunities offered by the LAG?*
- *Did potential beneficiaries receive the support they needed to develop and present projects?*
- *Is the application process simple?*
- *Are funding decisions objective & transparent?*
- *Were projects assessed and processed in a timely fashion?*
- *Does the funding support projects that could not have been implemented otherwise?*

 Using a problem tree to identify needs and develop objectives

Adapted from Urbact II Local Support Group Toolkit



Above is an example of how intervention logic can be developed based on a “problem tree” from which solutions to the problems can be proposed, and subsequently translated into objectives with expected outputs and results.

Indicators

As well as asking the right evaluation questions, selecting good indicators is fundamental to ensuring the LAG obtains the information it needs. Indeed, once the LAG has identified what it wants to know, it will need to establish **how it will assess these things**. For example, how will it assess to what extent the objectives laid down in its LDS have been met (what constitutes success?) and whether the process went smoothly?

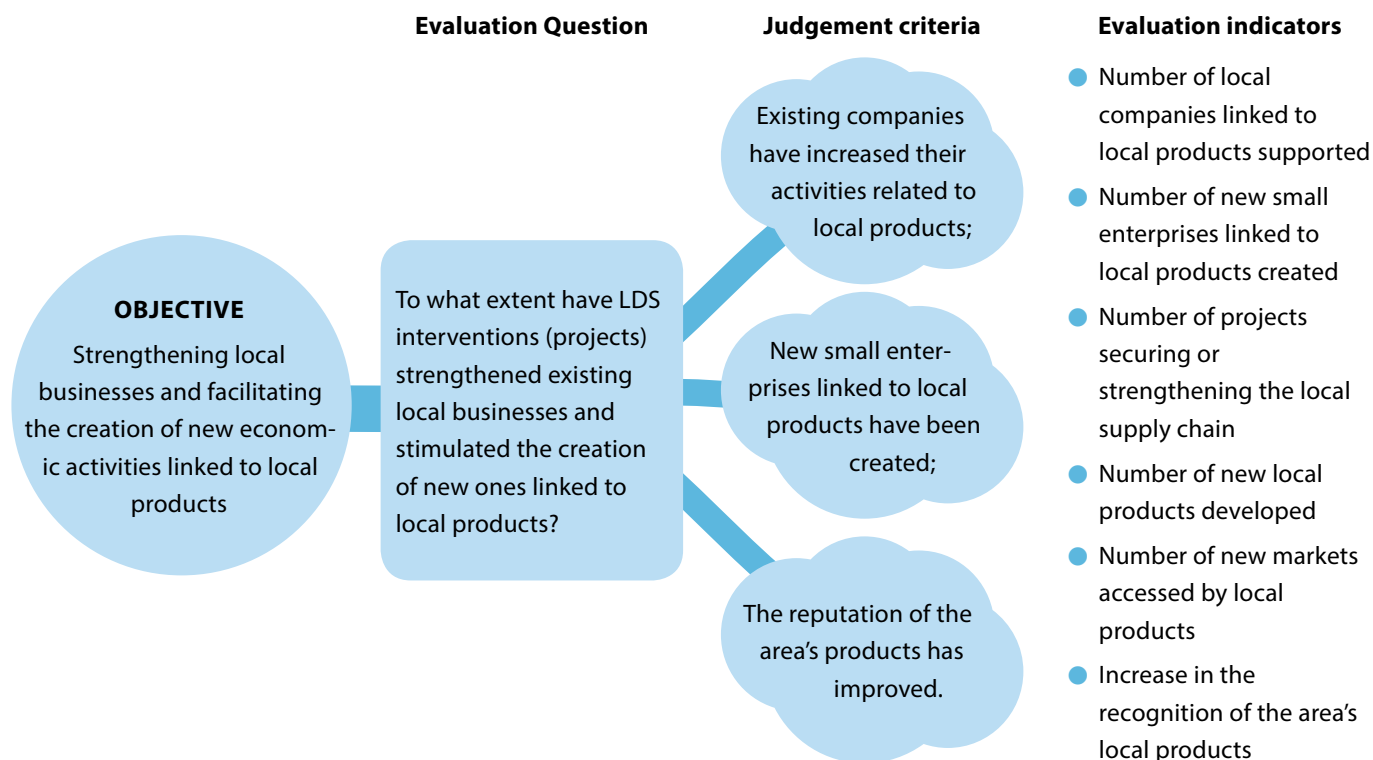
Q An indicator is a variable that provides quantitative or qualitative information on a phenomenon; it can be used to measure the degree to which an objective is achieved.

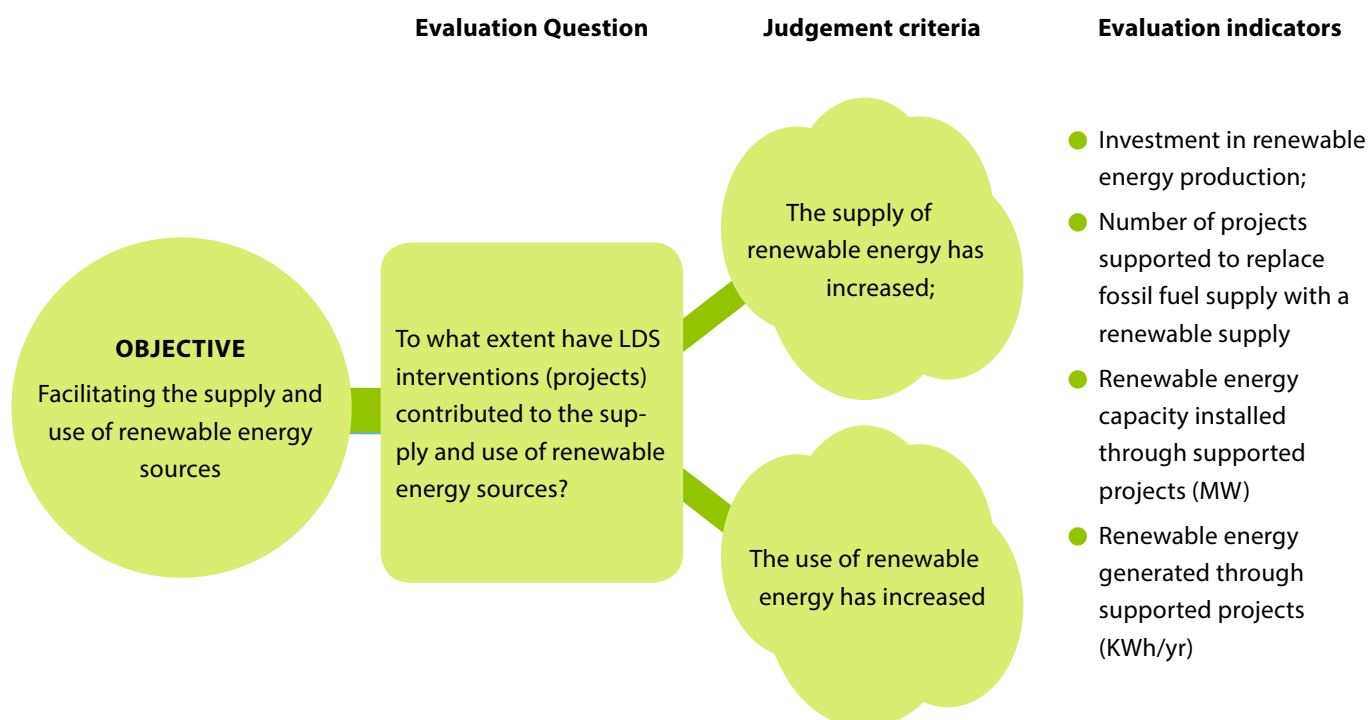
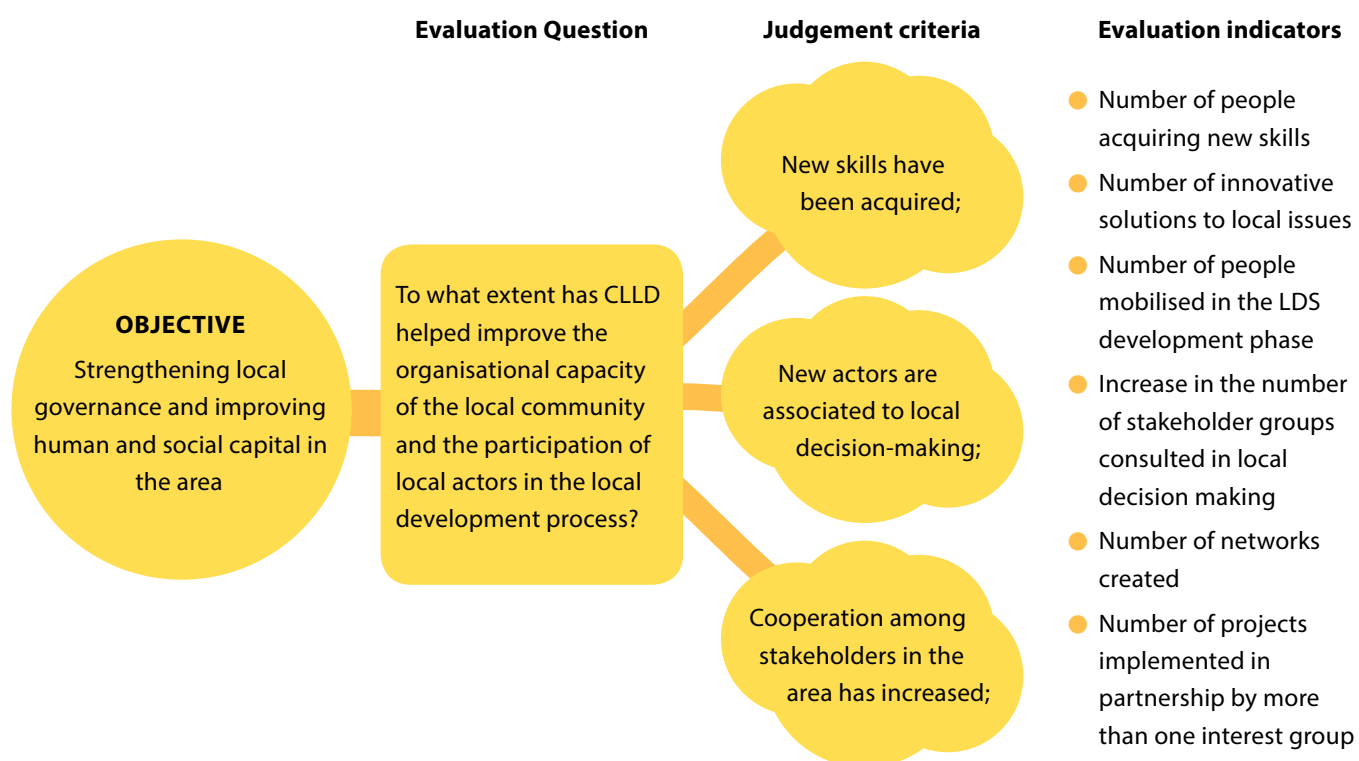
Setting good and relevant indicators for an evaluation question is not always easy. It can help to first develop **judgement criteria** to help the LAG to understand what it should focus on. These break down evaluation questions into more detailed aspects and can serve as a checklist for internal as well as external evaluation.

Indicators can then be more easily established to measure and value progress and verify whether and to what extent objectives are being reached. Indicators can be used as success criteria for individual projects as well as for longer-term implementation processes. They may be qualitative, e.g. perceived improvements in environmental quality or to local cultural heritage, or they can be quantitative, e.g. the number of jobs created or the number of new partnerships initiated.

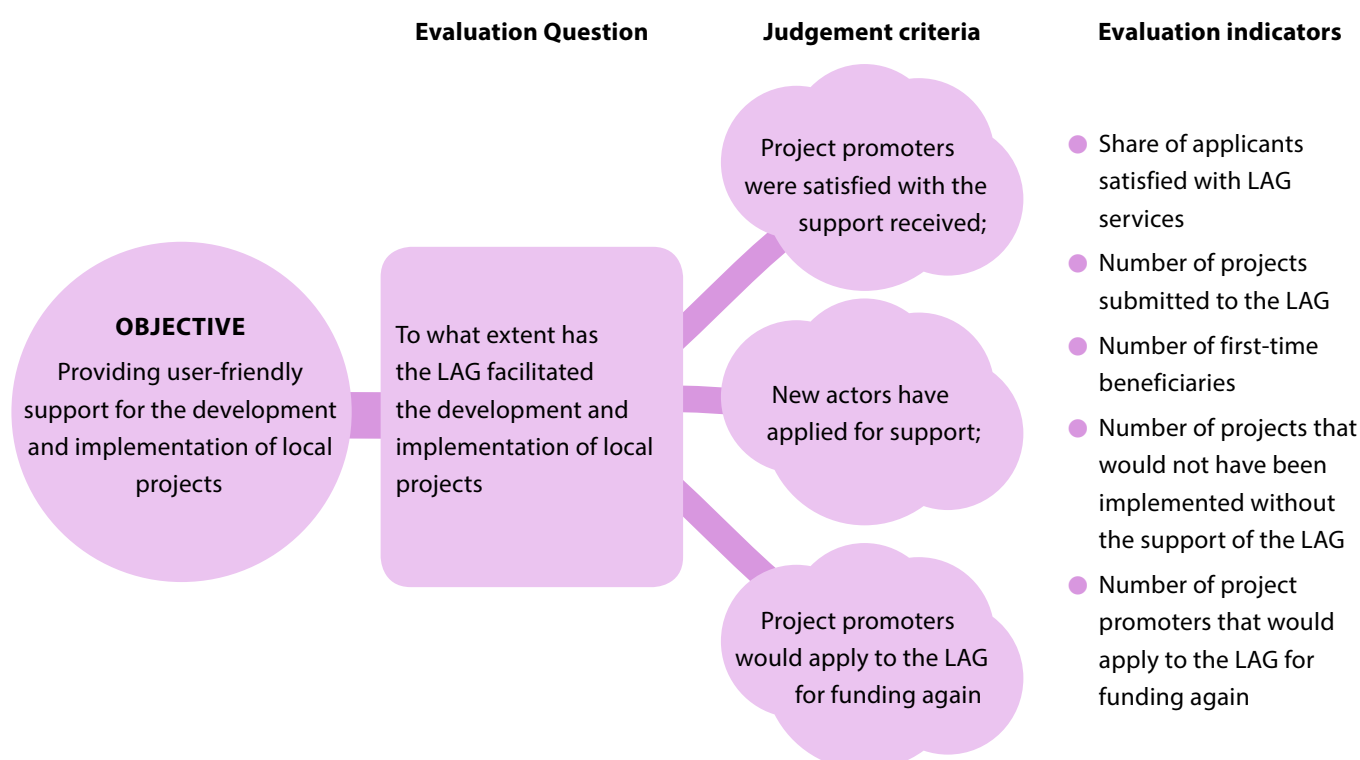
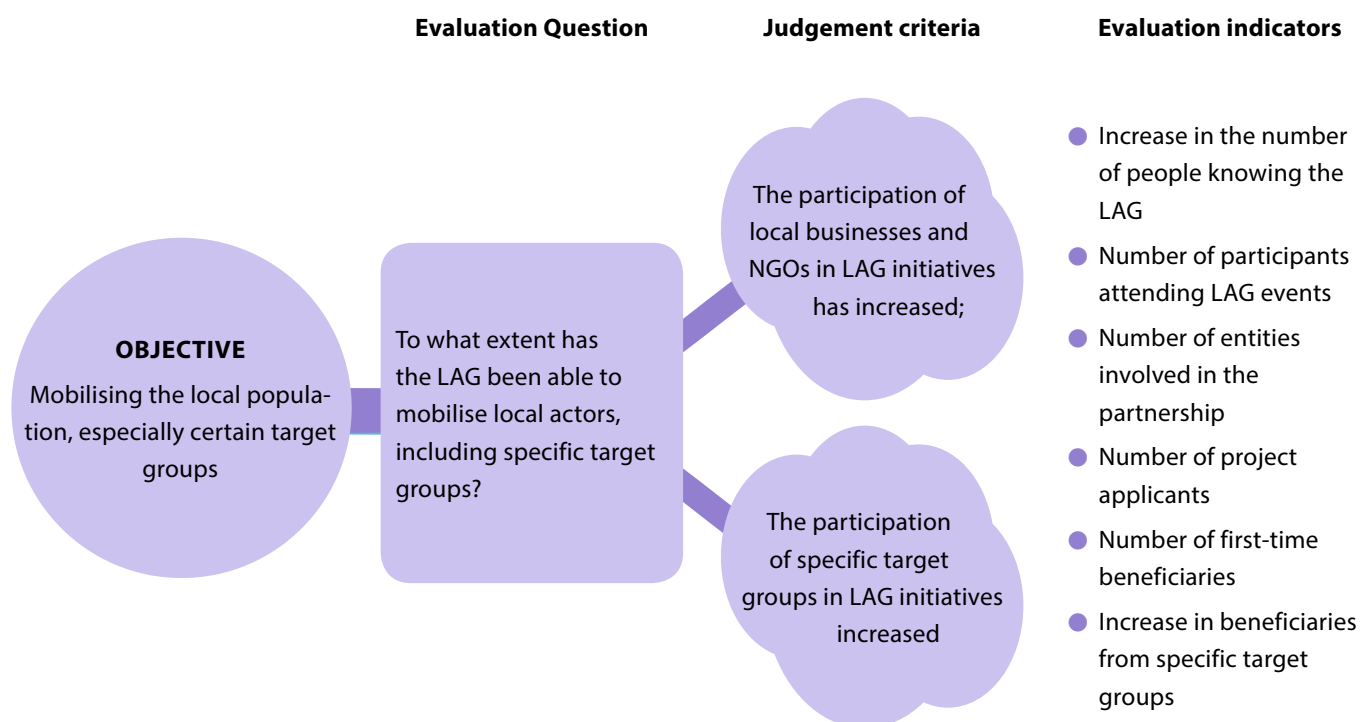
From evaluation questions to indicators, some examples

... related to possible strategic objectives





... related to elements of LAG work



Indicators can be linked to outputs, results or impacts. While output indicators tend to be the simplest to measure, they tell us a limited amount about what a project or intervention has achieved. Far more significant for measuring achievements are result indicators. In the context of CLLD, results are sometimes incremental and small-scale. Quantitative indicators alone are therefore unlikely to express the benefit of the work done; qualitative indicators will be important for completing the picture.



Output indicators: the immediate tangible product of a project. There is little likelihood of other influences than the intervention and data is generally easily available from basic monitoring.



Output indicators from Finland

The Finnish national rural network proposed the following output indicators for LAG animation:

- No. of animation events organised
- No. of participants (men/women) in the animation events
- No. of presentations in external events, number of participants
- No. of evaluations carried out by the LAG
- No. of press articles on LEADER projects and animation
- No. of visitors on the LAG's web page & social media followers
- No. of new project applicants
- No. of applications transferred to other funding sources
- No. of LAG members (men/women/organisations)



Result indicators: products/services (mostly tangible) delivered as a consequence of implementing a set of activities at the level of addressing a specific problem or issue. Use of resources, data availability and likelihood of other influences depend on the preparation of the evaluation, the monitoring data available and the type of indicators chosen.



Result indicators from Scotland

The following are some of the result indicators used by the Highland FLAG:

- No. of individuals gaining new skills or reskilled
- No. of new/innovative methods of adding value to local products
- No. of new products developed
- No. of jobs created in the processing sector
- No. of jobs created in the tourist sector
- No. of new/innovative methods introduced which improve quality of life

Impact indicators measure broader change effected in the area and generally need to be looked at over the longer term. In the context of local development, impacts can often be difficult to attribute directly to the work of the LAG given the likelihood of other influences. Moreover, data availability for relevant indicators tends to be very limited at local level and so the systematic evaluation of impacts usually goes beyond the capacity and resources of a LAG. However, ambitious LAGs might evaluate some of the qualitative impacts they have fostered in the area, such as the development of social capital, thanks to increased networking and/or community participation in local development.

TIP

Establish a set of few but meaningful indicators – and keep them SMART:

Specific: well-defined, operational and focused

Measurable: able to determine progress/completion; the same methodology delivers the same findings

Achievable: realistic, practical and achievable within operational constraints

Relevant: capture or measure the outcome they are intended to measure

Timebound: attached to a time frame.

Whatever the indicators selected, they should be both **well-defined and explained** to those, e.g. project applicants, expected to provide the information. This will help ensure that the right data and relevant evidence is provided and that it is as consistent as possible. The Highland LAG, Scotland, UK, for example has prepared a definition of all its indicators as well as examples of the type of evidence that might be collected.

Three results indicators explained, Highland LAG, Scotland

Results indicator	Definition	Evidence
No of community facilities improved	Number of existing community facilities improved (e.g. libraries, sports halls) that have been improved as a result of LEADER funding (physical, accessibility, opening hours, resources/equipment etc., range of users)	Plans/planning documents etc., photos, publicity material, survey results
Annual change in the number of visits to facilities/attractions	Footfall. Applicants will need to establish a baseline at the point of application and be able to set out how the project will work to increase visitor numbers over a prescribed period of time. The indicator should be able to measure the success (or otherwise) of the intervention	Survey results/records of attendance/ use, website visit data
No of volunteers feeling better supported to undertake volunteering opportunities	People reporting that they feel better supported to undertake volunteering opportunities, following LEADER funded intervention	Volunteer survey, focus groups

Source: M&E guidance material prepared by the Highland LAG, Scotland.

Once the LAG has defined its indicators (for example, number of community facilities improved or increase in visits to a local attraction), it can set itself a **target** for each (e.g. 5 community facilities improved, 800 additional visits to a local attraction...). It will also have to establish **who should collect the necessary information and how**. This should be decided before starting to implement its local development strategy. Progress towards reaching its targets can then be monitored if the right data is collected.

Below is an example which can help LAGs think through and plan their selection and use of indicators and targets: how will they define their indicator, do they need a baseline, where will the data come from, how often and who will collect and report it and how.

Monitoring & evaluation (M&E) framework example

Indicator	Definition	Baseline	Target	Data source	Frequency	Responsible	Reporting
Annual change in the number of visits to a local attraction	See Highland LAG example above	3000 visitors / year	3800 visitors / year	Ticket sales	Annually for 3 years	Project promoter & LAG	Project evaluation form

Source: adapted from www.tools4dev.org

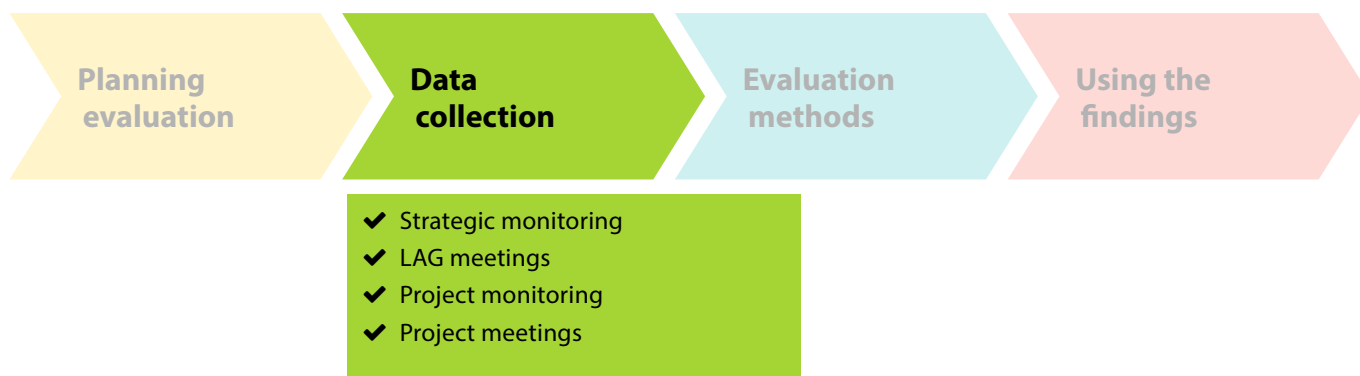
Based on the objectives of your evaluation, the available data, the evaluation capacity in the LAG and the resources available, LAGs must **select adequate data collection and evaluation methods**. The next two chapters offer examples of data collection and evaluation methods which might offer inspiration and ideas.

TIP



Don't hesitate to request support from your managing authority or existing support networks...

2. Data collection and monitoring



‘Ongoing monitoring helps ensure a culture of learning’

A well planned and designed local development strategy (LDS) does not automatically ensure good results. It is essential to regularly check the progress towards targets and to measure the results achieved. For this, a LAG needs to define clearly what it is going to measure, which leads to two basic questions:

- What information do you need?
- How will you obtain it?



A lot of quantitative data can be covered by monitoring activities. This includes for example, number of projects, number of beneficiaries, type of projects, type and number of cooperation activities, participants at events, jobs created, jobs maintained, etc.

However, **qualitative data can often express the added value of CLLD projects better** than numbers and percentages. Qualitative data include perceptions, attitudes, qualities or feelings and this type of information is usually needed to assess, for example, the quality or sustainability of actions funded and the extent to which the community feels they are valuable.

Data collection can and should start right from the beginning of the LDS implementation and should be a continuous activity throughout the programming period. The first contact with potential beneficiaries offers an opportunity to collect information, right through to the payment phase and beyond.

LAGs should give careful thought to which opportunities provide the **simplest and easiest ways to collect information**, in a way which maximises the quality and relevance of the information while minimising the burden on the FLAG staff and the beneficiary.

Below are just some examples of data collection methods that LAGs might want to use:

2.1 Strategic monitoring

Description: Recording quantitative information on implementation to check that LAG activities and expenditure are on track, according to the priorities laid down in the LDS. This might be done using a simple Excel overview of progress or IT tools designed specifically for such monitoring (normally by the MA or paying agency).

Useful for: Timely identification of underspending or underperformance in a particular area which allows the LAG to adapt its animation and other activities, or LDS if relevant.

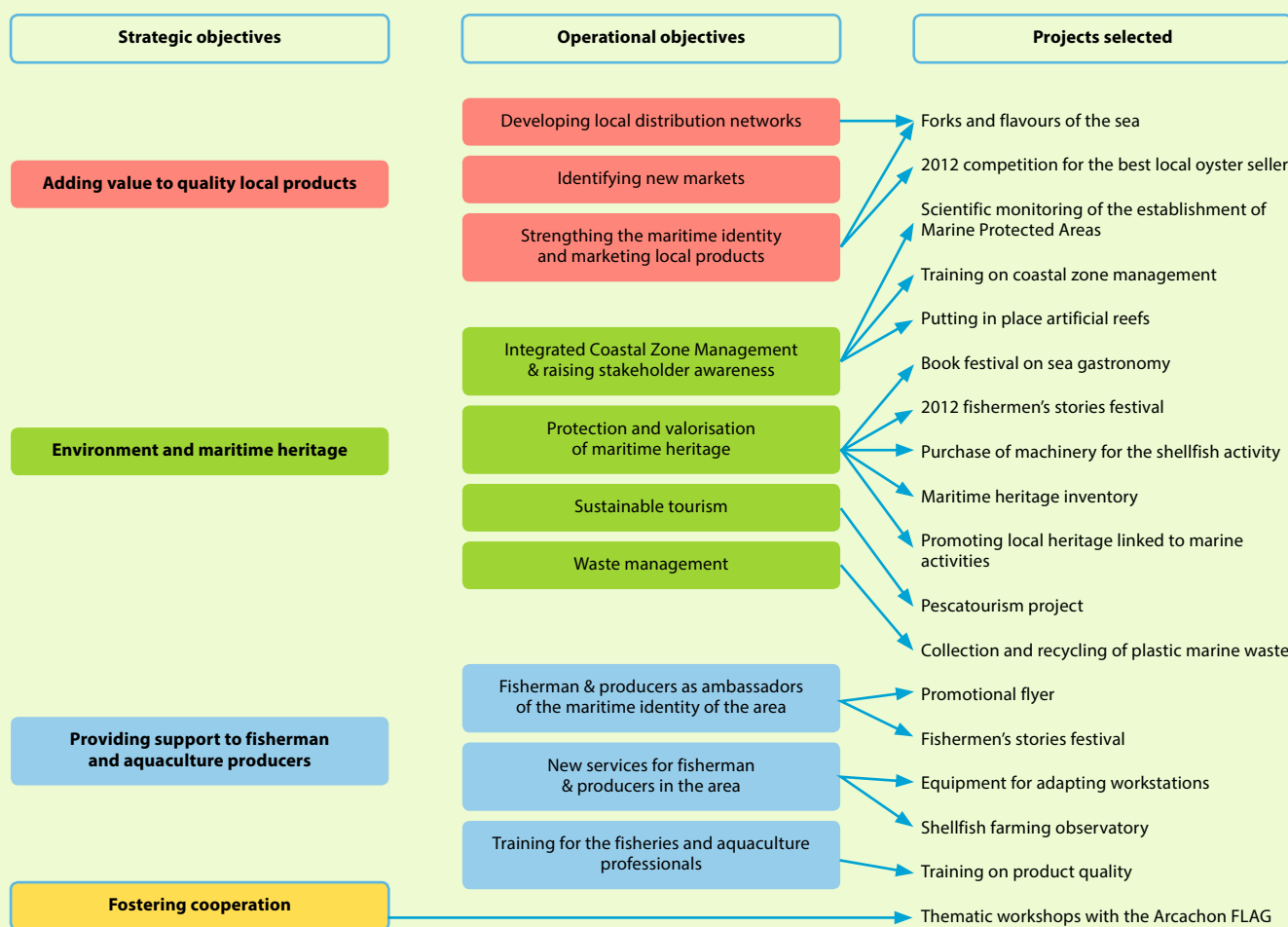
Resources: Limited resources needed, especially if information recorded is kept to a minimum.

Limitations: Shows what is being funded and implemented but not usually what the results are.



Strategic monitoring by the Marennes Oléron FLAG, France.

Marennes Oléron FLAG used the following diagram to monitor and analyse the fit of selected projects to its objectives, reflecting the intervention logic foreseen in the LDS. This complemented an Excel overview of project applications, selection and financial commitments.



Source: model provided by the consultants (ACTeon, Sea matters & Allegans) contracted at national level to evaluate all French LDS

2.2 Regular LAG meetings

Description: Frequent (e.g. every quarter) meetings with the LAG boards organised by the LAG staff and often chaired by a LAG member.

Useful for: Discussing the findings of strategic monitoring information, as well as collecting further information in a short time period from the board members on emerging issues or results. It helps to ensure active participation of LAG members to improve work and/or LDS implementation. On top of these sorts of frequent meetings, annual review meetings are an effective way of ensuring more in-depth stock taking, often following data compilation and analysis of the year's results by the LAG staff, which is then presented to the board.

Resources: Time by LAG staff and board members to attend (approximately 0.5-1 day, depending on travel distances) and LAG staff to organise (1-5 days, depending on the scope of the meeting).

2.3 Project monitoring

Description: Recording outputs, milestones and estimated result figures for projects supported and comparing actual results as implementation progresses. This sort of information can be collected from project applicants when projects are presented or selected and updated during the project cycle through to the end payment and beyond.

Useful for: Maintaining a focus on achieving results and collecting data on project results with little burden on the beneficiaries or the LAG staff.

Resources: Minimum, careful consideration to be given when designing the project application forms, minor additional burden on project applicants. An example of a M&E form developed and used by the Highland LEADER LAG can be found [here](#).

Limits: Often limited to quantitative data which might not capture the details or results of these projects. This can be addressed to some extent by collecting short descriptions of actual results. Estimates of results provided by applicants might be unrealistic or unreliable.



Establishing and monitoring project targets – Highland FLAG, UK

The Highland FLAG required project candidates to indicate: 1) the results they expected their project to deliver against a list of specified indicators developed at the time of designing the LDS; and 2) the number of people from specified target groups that they expected their project to benefit. If none of these indicators were relevant, they agreed on a bespoke indicator with the FLAG.

*This was a compulsory part of the **application form for funding** and applicants were required to provide the actual figures for the selected indicators and target groups in a **project monitoring and evaluation form** upon completion of the project and prior to final payment.*

Limitations included:

- *For certain projects, applicants had difficulties to estimate the number of people their project was likely to benefit and to measure the actual numbers (e.g. how to estimate how many people will or have used a children's playground?) and the figures were therefore not found to be very reliable.*

Lessons learnt:

- Clear explanation from LAG staff is needed to help applicants be realistic in their target setting and honest in their reporting (some of the figures provided appeared inflated, possibly for fear of not receiving funding)

2.4 Project meetings

Description: Meeting project beneficiaries (often involving a visit to the project) to monitor implementation, outputs and any results achieved. Meetings can follow a standardised check list in order to understand the progress of each project, any difficulties faced or support needed. The data can be used to compile the annual LAG report.

Useful for: Qualitative analysis of projects and picking up any implementation problems or delays in time to take corrective action in a timely fashion. Such meetings also allow the LAG to maintain a close relationship with project promoters and to informally discuss ideas for developing the project and the area in the future.

Resources: High LAG staff involvement

Limits: This can be more challenging in very large areas or where human resources in the LAG are very low compared to the number of projects funded.



Project meetings – Sepra LEADER LAG, Finland

The LAG staff organise a meeting once a year in their offices with each project promoter to collect data about progress achieved in individual projects, in a format that can be aggregated at the LDS level.

The meetings involve filling in a form (box ticking), comparing what was planned with what has been carried out, based on the criteria used for selecting the project. The Sepra team member uses their own judgment to respond to questions, rather than asking them directly to the beneficiary. Completed forms are stored in the IT system.

Two to three team members are usually involved in a meeting which covers several projects and takes a couple of hours. The compilation of information received from projects forms the basis of the annual report on LDS implementation, communicated to the board and the MA.

These are just some of the common methods LAGs might like to use to monitor CLLD implementation and results. The important thing is that they obtain the information they need, when they need it. Many more and imaginative ideas exist for doing so.



Data collection can be fun! – Liepaja LAG-FLAG, Latvia

*Liepaja District Partnership decided to use a “**Best project awards event**” to collect projects results. To participate in the selection, projects must have received CLLD funding from the LAG or FLAG and applicants were requested to provide results data.*

Benefits for the LAG:

- › *Opportunity for the LAG to collect data, analyse results and rank projects in terms of effectiveness*
- › *Adds responsibility and accountability to projects funded*
- › *Possibility to encourage new potential project promoters*
- › *Good PR and media attention*

Benefits for the community are:

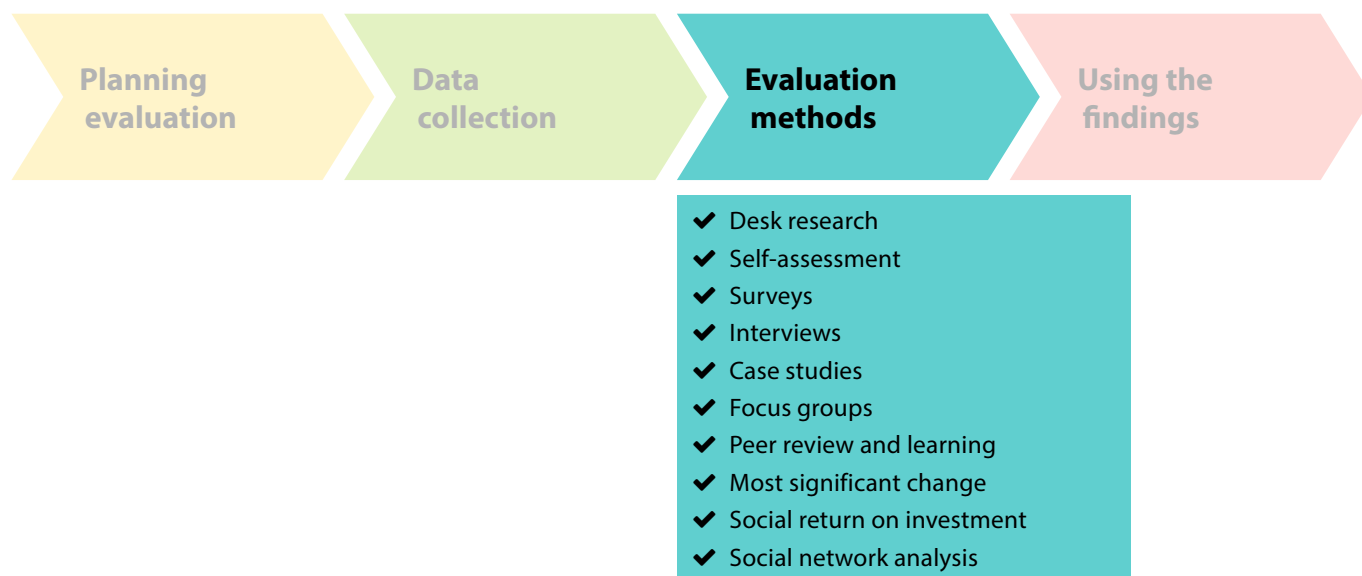
- › *Inspiration from experienced project promoters*
- › *Visibility and recognition of projects carried out*
- › *Fun and social event leading to community cohesion*
- › *Publicity*

TIPS



- **Keep monitoring participative to ensure the quality and legitimacy of the information collected**
- **Don't overburden beneficiaries or yourself! Focus data collection on information that is directly useful, easy to measure and can realistically be managed**

3. Putting evaluation into practice



'Keep evaluation simple'

The multi-faceted character of CLLD means that in order to assess a LAG's contribution to its community, a combination of evaluation tools and methods will be needed. While monitoring data is likely to form the basis of a LAG evaluation, additional data collection and, in particular, consultation with relevant stakeholders will be important for understanding what is working and what needs to be improved. There are numerous methods which can be used at local level depending on the objectives of the evaluation and the resources available.

Some methods are simple but time consuming, others might require external support, for example for moderation of workshops or more complex analysis. Depending on the objectives and expected uses of the evaluation results, it may be important for the evaluation to be independent to achieve external legitimacy. If the main purpose of the evaluation is internal learning, it may be more appropriate for the process to be kept largely in-house. Below we propose some of the most used or transferable practices from existing CLLD groups.

3.1 Desk research

Description: Analysis of all available information, starting with monitoring and reporting data and including other relevant contextual information, policy and trends. It can be also useful to research past LDS implementation as benchmarks or control examples.

Useful for: Forming the basic structure of the evaluation and identifying further information needs. This will then help inform the design of the consultative elements of the evaluation.

Resources: 2-5 days

Limits: Only written information, harder to capture opinions, perceptions and attitudes which are especially important in the CLLD context. A review of existing reports should be complemented by methods which involve FLAG members, project beneficiaries and, where possible, the broader community.

Q A benchmark is a standard of excellence or achievement against which similar projects/activities can be measured or assessed⁸

Q A control group is a group of individuals or an area not receiving CLLD support, which can be compared with beneficiaries of LAG support in order to demonstrate that certain changes or outcomes are caused by CLLD. The control group needs to be as similar as possible to the group receiving support⁹

3.2 Self-assessment

Description: Assessment which is done by the LAG, in particular by those who are involved in the design and implementation of the strategy (LAG members, decision body, LAG staff, etc.).

Useful for: Checking how your work has led to change, based on a defined starting situation.

Resources: Self-assessment is generally resource-friendly and can be considered in case of a limited budget.

Limits: Self-assessment may sometimes be biased by subjective views of the LAG.

3.3 Surveys

Description: Surveys generally focus on obtaining quantitative data from LAG members, beneficiaries or the local population. However, comment boxes can also allow for a limited amount of qualitative information to be collected. They normally involve a questionnaire which can be distributed by post, email or online, or carried out by phone or face-to-face. They can be self-completed or involve a surveyor.

Useful for: Collecting observations, perceptions and feedback e.g. on project results, LAG contribution to the area, support provided by the LAG staff, LDS focus, etc.

Resources: Costs depend on the length and complexity of the questionnaire, whether self-completed or not, postal or online, and to how many people it is sent (sample size). Qualitative approaches are generally more expensive. Online tools such as JotForm, Survey Monkey, etc. enable direct analysis of the findings but require careful design, using the right questions.

Limits: Surveys can be quite time consuming and it is not always easy to receive an adequate and relevant response rate. Moreover, sample sizes for robust statistical reliability are unlikely to be achieved in a single LAG evaluation. They are generally less reliable than analysis of monitoring and reporting data or census approaches.

⁸ Adapted from <http://www.dictionary.com/>

⁹ Adapted from <http://www.whatworksgrowth.org/blog/how-to-evaluate-find-a-control-group/>



Survey questions put to project beneficiaries by the Aberdeen FLAG, UK

Application Process:

- *Did you complete an Expression of Interest form prior to submitting a project application? Yes / No*
- *How would you rate the initial enquiry and application process? Excellent / Good / Fair / Poor*
- *Were there any parts of the application which you found particularly difficult to complete? None / Project description / No. of jobs safeguarded or created / Links to strategy / Project milestones and outcomes / Costs, financial info and estimates*

Securing match funding

- *How would you rate the process of securing match funding towards your project? Excellent / Good / Fair / Poor*
- *Had you already secured match funding before submitting an application? Yes / No*

Monitoring and Evaluation

- *Did your Project receive a visit from the FLAG Co-ordinator as part of the Monitoring and Evaluation Process? Yes / No*
- *Did the Co-ordinator highlight any issues with the project during the visit which needed to be rectified? Yes / No*

Finance and Administration

- *Did your organisation encounter any cash flow problems? Yes / No*
- *How would you rate the FLAG Claims Process from submitting the claim to receiving payment? Excellent / Good / Fair / Poor*
- *On average, how long would you say it took for the grant money to be received in your bank account after submitting a claim? 3 months+ / 1-3 months / 2-4 weeks / 1-2 weeks*

Fisheries Local Action Group

- *How did you hear about the CLLD Programme? FLAG event / FLAG leaflet / local press and media / FLAG website / word of mouth*
- *Do you feel that the Programme was well promoted in Aberdeenshire's coastal areas? Excellent / Good / Fair / Poor*
- *If you had to re-live the process again, would you apply to FLAG for funding? Yes / No*

TIPS



- **Don't wait till the end of the period to collect feedback on the application process and support provided by the LAG. The quality of the information obtained will be better if the questions are asked while still fresh in the mind of the interviewee/ survey respondent.**
- **Remember: evaluation questions are rarely suitable to be used directly in an interview or questionnaire.**

3.4 Interviews

Description: These are normally conducted by telephone or face-to-face with key stakeholders such as LAG members, community representatives and project applicants. The questions can be adjusted in depth as required and to the consultee. They can cover both qualitative and quantitative elements. These are normally among the most in depth elements of the consultative approach.

Useful for: Project evaluation as well as collecting observations, perceptions and feedback on LDS implementation and LAG work. They are a flexible way of gaining an in-depth understanding of the subject.

Resources: Approximately 2 days to develop the questions and up to half a day to conduct and write up each interview

Limits: The quality of the interview depends very much on developing the “right” questions and the ability of the interviewer to engage the interviewee.

3.5 Case studies

Description: Case studies involve in-depth analysis of a particular subject. They may focus on individual projects or the implementation of the LDS more generally and can vary hugely in approach. They may involve both desk research and consultative or primary research elements. Findings may be presented as a specific report or within a main evaluation report.

Useful for: Complementing the more quantitative evaluation approaches with a more in-depth and nuanced illustration of a situation or result. They tend to be helpful for exposing the reason for change (or lack of change) and capturing the added value of CLLD which is usually not possible with just figures.

Resources: Costs are affected by a wide range of factors such as nature, scale and location. A LAG might expect to spend 0.5-10 days on a case study depending on its scope.

Limits: They can be time consuming and, depending on the choice of cases, may not be representative.

3.6 Focus groups

Description: Focus groups are generally used to address a specific topic or question or a specific section of the population, providing an opportunity for dialogue between several people sharing their experiences and different points of view. They generally involve a small number of individuals (five to fifteen), supported through impartial facilitation.

Useful for: Exploring a specific topic or evaluation theme and/or for discussing and validating initial findings. This mutual listening and sharing of opinions can play a crucial role in understanding what is happening and can sometimes help identify some of the broader impacts and added value that the LAG is bringing (or failing to bring) to the area. Capitalising on the knowledge and experience shared in focus groups should help contribute to better decisions for the future.

Resources: Costs will vary depending on location, duration, facilitators and desired outputs. A focus group may run over 0.5-2 days and will require significant planning.

Limits: Generally require a skilled moderator and participants who have some knowledge of the topic to be discussed.



Focus groups carried out by the Jerte Valley LEADER LAG, Spain

The Jerte Valley LAG carried out seven thematic focus groups within the framework of its self-evaluation at the end of the 2007-2013 period (young people and community organisations; women and equality; culture and education; sustainable tourism etc.). They took place over a period of three months (September-November 2013), each lasting 2-3 hours and involving 8-15 local citizens involved in the specific area of work.

The LAG board debated and selected the themes, designed the focus group questions and coordinated the work. It also selected a local specialist on each theme to moderate the discussions (often a LAG member), with the support of the FLAG staff for note taking etc. Each focus group sent out a simple questionnaire in advance and discussed four main questions:

- › *What have we achieved?*
- › *What remains to be done?*
- › *What are the priorities for the future?*
- › *What new ideas are there for putting these into practice?*

The results were then discussed in a Valley-wide, one day (9.00-16.00) assembly, bringing together 112 participants. They formed the basis of the LAG's 2014-2020 strategy and helped develop a series of ideas to improve its local development work, in particular to foster better community participation and capitalise on "collective intelligence" as a vital step in addressing the area's needs.

3.7 Peer review/learning

- Description:** Peer review is the evaluation of one LAG's work by another LAG. It provides a valuable point of view by an external person with similar level of knowledge and experience. Peer review methods are employed to maintain standards of quality, improve performance and provide credibility.
- Useful for:** Receiving considered opinions and feedback on LAG work (and sometimes LDS results) from another practitioner, along with proposals for improvements.
- Resources:** 1-2 days for the peer review (involving several people) plus preparation (2-3 days) and usually a written report.
- Limits:** Depends very much on good preparation in advance and similar level of expertise of the visiting and the host LAG.



Peer audit process – Sepra LAG, Finland

Sepra is involved in a peer audit system which covers all the LEADER LAGs in Finland. It involves a structured exchange on the LAG activities with a visiting team from another LAG. Until now such exchange visits have involved LAGs from the same region, who already know each other quite well. From 2018 the plan is to exchange with peers further away to ensure a fresh view (the National Rural Network will help organise the “match-making”).

The visit from the peer-auditing LAG takes a whole day, it usually involves the whole team of the host LAG and two people from the visiting LAG. The host LAG sends the information about the processes which are to be audited four weeks in advance. Then there is a face-to-face meeting and discussion based on a special template, with the host team providing information, responding to questions, sometimes also referring to documents.

*One important outcome of such a visit is to agree on at least **one action for improvement**, with the host LAG making a commitment to carry out this action within an agreed deadline (this is included in the report, together with information on who is responsible). There can also be recommendations for improvements; these can be implemented if considered valid, but without a specific deadline. The visiting LAG is also supposed to identify at least **one good practice** from the activities of the host LAG which would be relevant for other LAGs.*

The peer review system is particularly useful for assessing the management and operations of the LAG, but less so on reaching strategic objectives. In 2018 the peer audit will focus on how the quality management system, implemented by all Finnish LAGs, is working.

3.8 Most significant change

Description: The most significant change (MSC) method is a participative form of monitoring and evaluation involving the collection and analysis of stories of significant change which have occurred as a result of intervention. Through focus groups, local stakeholders, including project beneficiaries, LAG staff and LAG members are involved in proposing and deciding the sorts of change to be recorded within selected themes, why the changes are significant and how the projects contributed to such change. MSC offers a qualitative approach to monitoring and evaluation, however the number of stories in each theme can be recorded. [Further information on MSC.](#)

Useful for: Capturing multiple results of a project or LDS, unexpected changes, or the impacts of participative projects or social change. The technique is particularly relevant for those LAGs aiming to capture some of the longer-term results and added value of CLLD and is also helpful in cases where there has been no previous monitoring and evaluation of the LAG work and/or LDS.

Resources: External moderator and approximately 1-2 days per workshop, several meetings are usually necessary.

Limits: Most significant change is relatively time consuming and generally requires several rounds of proposals, selection and discussion. If a significant change is confirmed, selected stories are usually then verified with a field visit and additional information collected. MSC should be used as a complement to other evaluation methods rather than a stand-alone technique.



The MSC method consists of 10 key steps

1. Raising interest and securing the participation of stakeholders
2. Defining the broad areas of change to look for (e.g. increased social cohesion)
3. Deciding how often to monitor and report changes (e.g. every 3 months, once a year)
4. Collecting stories of significant change (e.g. by asking project promoters or LAG members what they believed the most significant change that their project or the LAG led to)
5. Selecting the most significant of the stories (through group discussion)
6. Feeding back the results of the selection process and the reasons to all interested stakeholder
7. Verification of stories and collection of additional information
8. Quantification of results and identification of similar results elsewhere in the area
9. Secondary analysis and review
10. Revising the MSC method to fit the needs and objectives of the LAG evaluation

Source: Overseas Development Institute www.odi.org



Story-telling to capture multiplier effects – Oberallgäu LAG, Germany

Given the challenge to capture the so-called multiplier effects which occur over time when new projects are triggered by a past LEADER project (e.g. a previously set up thematic route), the Oberallgäu LAG is exploring a **story-telling technique** which includes some aspects of MSC style evaluation.

This involves monitoring the results and effects of projects over longer periods and asking the promoters for results which go beyond the duration of the project phase supported by the LAG. The driving thought behind using this technique is that the effects of the local development process often only become visible in the long term, where certain projects and processes have triggered new projects. It also allows a reflection on the CLLD process and the level of stakeholder involvement and can improve the image of the LAG work.

The LAG has previously presented the local development process to the general public, including, for example, the development of thematic routes over a period of time, how more actors got involved, synergies were created etc. In their view this could be the starting point of the “story telling” evaluation technique.

The outline of the story telling for the Oberallgäu LAG is as follows:

Objective	Presentation of the effects of LEADER and the LAG in an easily understandable, vivid and interesting form.
Description	Information and facts are collected and processed through a story. Important: Stick to the truth!
Focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ LEADER core elements and added value; ➤ Development processes initiated by LEADER and the LAG (Keywords: participation, networking, local development strategy, innovation, animation, soft / indirect effects,...)
Basic Conditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Information must be sufficiently detailed and accessible and should document the LAG processes ➤ Those involved should have long-term experience of LAG management and be able to combine abstract terms with concrete aspects of the implementation process
Process	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Choose an appropriate topic (e.g. How individual initiatives have contributed to a recognised area-wide brand) 2. Collect information (e.g. Project descriptions, press documentation,...) 3. Process the information into a story (e.g. flow chart, short story, photo reportage, screenplay,...) 4. Present the story (e.g. at an event, in a leaflet, as a comic strip, on Youtube, as a theatre sketch...)

3.9 Social return on investment

Description: Social return on investment (SROI) offers the opportunity to demonstrate the financial value to local economies created by positive social improvements and developments that have not previously been monetised. The value of this approach is that whilst identifying that there are limitations to assessing value based on financial transactions, it sets out a framework for ascribing a financial value to less “tangible” outcomes. Through this process it establishes a very useful means of comparing and benchmarking the impact of LAG projects.

Useful for: Capturing hard-to-measure contributions of LAG work to the community, including cost-benefit analysis of the social impacts

Resources: External expertise is needed due to its relatively complex nature.

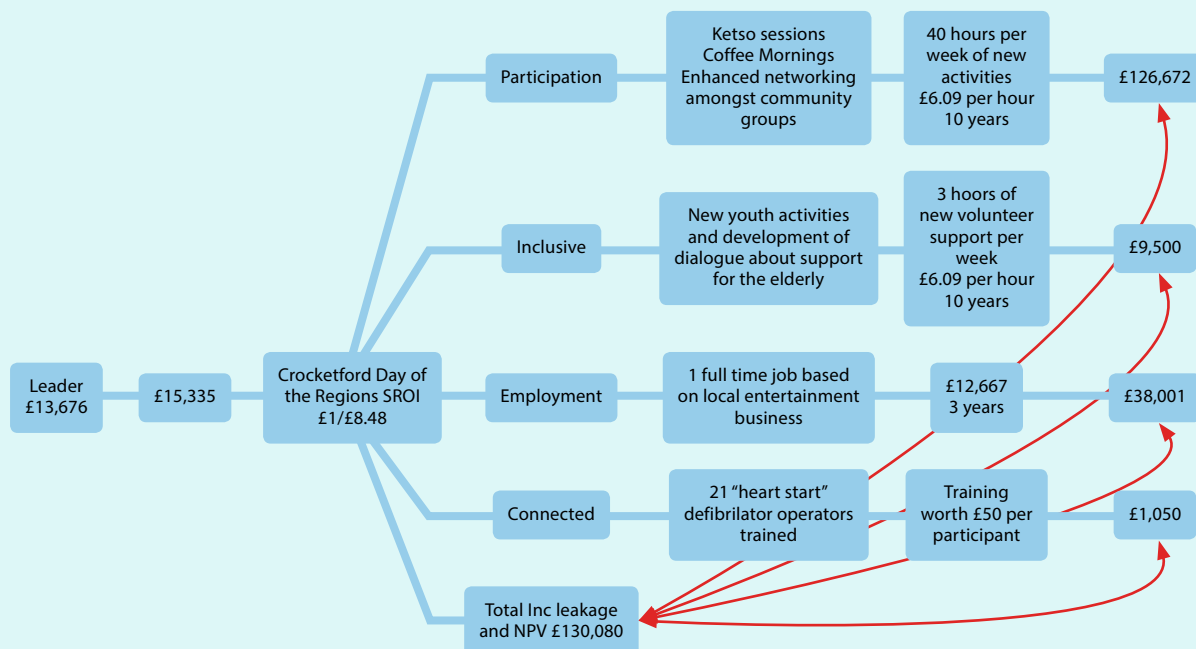
Limits: One of the dangers of SROI is that people may focus on monetisation of benefits without following the rest of the process. Needs considerable capacity and it should be remembered that some outcomes are not easily associated with monetary value.

Calculating the social return of investment of LEADER projects in Dumfries and Galloway, UK

In one of the communities of the Dumfries and Galloway LEADER LAG – Crocketford – various community development activities were implemented and the LAG, supported by consultants, has tried to apply monetary values to the outcomes they achieved. The assumptions used to apply a monetary value to the outputs are as follows:

- ▶ **Participation** – 40 hours per week of additional participation of volunteers in community activities have been developed through the initiative. These have been valued at the minimum wage (£6.09 per hour) and projected over 10 years.
- ▶ **Inclusive** – New activities for young people have been developed. These involve 3 hours of volunteer time per week. These have also been valued at the minimum wage (£6.09 per hour) and projected over 10 years.
- ▶ **Employment** – 1 new job has been created by the initiative. It involves the self-employment of a young person as an entertainer. It has been valued at the minimum wage and projected over 3 years.
- ▶ **Connected** – 21 individuals have been trained in the use of defibrillators – this training was valued at £50 per participant.

The total amount invested by the LAG in the activities in Crocketford was £15 335 (of which £13 675 from LEADER). Further calculations included 15% discounting for leakage (things would have happened anyway and the effects of the programme outside of Crocketford itself) and recalculating the long-term effects to a net present value. Overall, these calculations show this project to have delivered a minimum of £130 080 monetised benefits to the community. This represents a Social Return on Investment of £8.48 for each £1 of project funding invested.



Source: Dumfries and Galloway LEADER Evaluation Final Report, Rocket Science UK Ltd, with Rose Regeneration and Catalys Ltd.

3.10 Social network analysis

Description: SNA is the process of investigating social structures through the use of **networks** and **graph theory**. It characterizes networked structures in terms of nodes (individual actors, people, or organisations within the network) and the ties (relationships or interactions) that connect them. Examples of social structures commonly visualized through social network analysis include **social media networks**, **memes** spread, **friendship and acquaintance networks**, **collaboration graphs** etc.

Useful for: Analysing the LAG's contribution to building social capital within the area.

Resources: Can be complex and time consuming and requires external expertise with specific skills.

Limits: Needs large sets of data which can be time consuming and expensive to collect.



Analysing the network of trust among fishermen, Italy

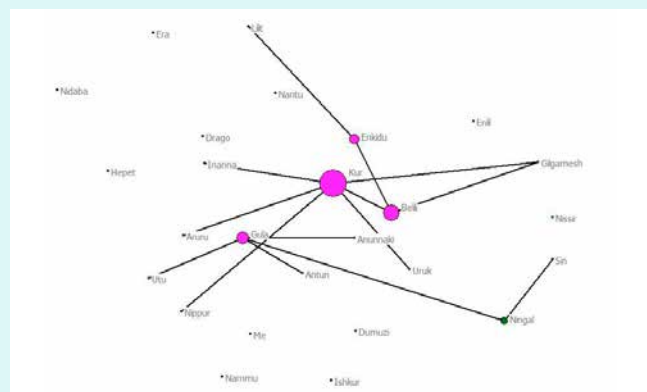
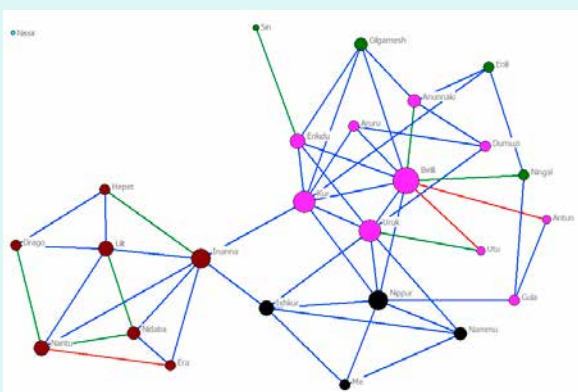
The **Stretto Coast FLAG** in Italy supported a research project to analyse and map information flows in the fisheries community, in order to assess the quality and intensity of relationships. This involved approaching 54 of the 128 local fishermen, 26 of which took part in an in-depth interview.

The analysis pointed to a paradox: on the one hand, it revealed a dense network of acquaintances and a predominance of trust among fishermen, however, on the other, the exchange of professional or management information was limited due to a number of communication blockages. This meant that information on support programmes or funding opportunities, for example, often did not reach those they were intended for.

To solve such blockages and support the FLAG in improving its activities in the future, the study produced a series of recommendations to increase opportunities for developing common projects, which would help improve information flows, encourage more efficient use of the limited financial resources devoted to fisheries development and increase the effectiveness of existing and future fisheries policy and management.

Pretty much everybody knows everybody...

... Yet exchange of professional information is scarce



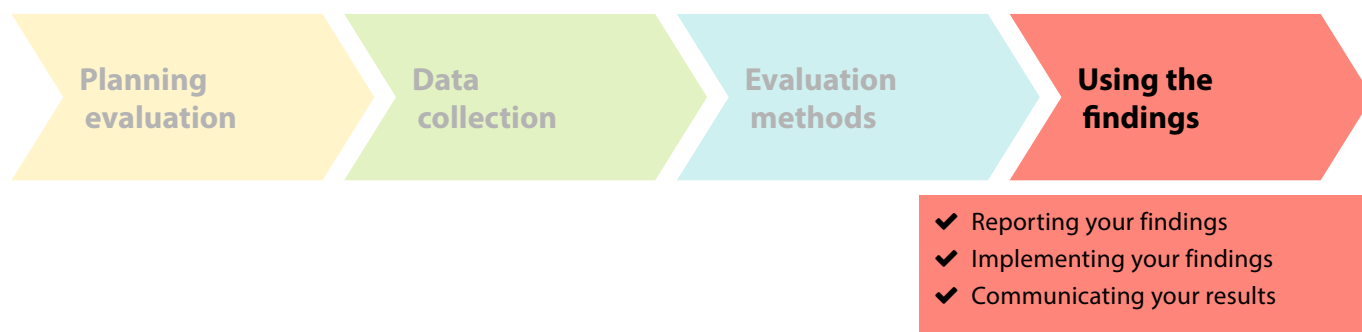
Source: **FARNET Good Practice**

TIP



Keep those involved in the evaluation (interviewees, survey respondents, board members...) informed with quick feedback on the evaluation process and emerging results. This helps to build a culture of evaluation and an understanding of its importance.

4. Using the findings



‘Don’t let your findings sit on a shelf’

Arguably, the most important part of the M&E process is the use made of the findings. Reporting the results to the programme management is a basic first step but most important is to establish a learning curve in terms of process and implementation.

4.1 Reporting your findings

Written report

The most traditional and common way of communicating your evaluation results will be through a written report. The report structure can be flexible, depending on the requirements of your stakeholders and whether your managing authority requires specific information to be reported in a particular format.

Recommendations are generally included at the end of evaluation reports and may propose changes to LAG activities or the types of projects supported. The findings may highlight weaknesses as well as identifying which areas of the LAG’s support are working well and should be continued in the future.



Extract of recommendations from the evaluation of the Highland LEADER LAG, UK (2007-2013), EPIC Regeneration Consultants LLP.

Identifying beneficiaries & outputs

- *In setting targets for the programme, be realistic about what the programme is likely to achieve, and have a clear understanding of the capacity of participants to collect data relating to these*
- *Keep the number of activity and other output indicators to a minimum*
- *Clearly identify the type and nature of projects the next programme will support in the earliest possible stages...*
- *Many community-focused projects, particularly in rural areas, may be better measured by soft indicators such as improved sense of community cohesion.*

Funding & claims

Funding and the processing of claims was one of the main issues with the LEADER 2007-2013 programme, and a number of recommendations should help diffuse or ameliorate similar challenges in the next programme:

- *An interest-free loan fund should be built into the fabric of the next LEADER programme...*
- *At the start of the application process, project managers should be provided with support to identify appropriate and timely milestones...*
- *Applicants also need to be fully briefed on the financial audit trail required at the end of the project at an early stage.*
- *Separate the process for making payment claims from those for monitoring and reporting: it is not a sensible use of project staff or volunteer time to require detailed monitoring reports every time a project needs to pay its bills*

Monitoring & reporting

- *The next programme should aim for minimal reporting: this is the progress we have made, this is what we have spent the money on, and these are the milestones and targets we have reached. Where possible these should be tick box or drop-down targets, not long written answers...*

LAG membership

Local communities should have a stronger voice in determining the membership of each LAG, and it should be clear how members are elected; under what circumstances they can be removed and how; and how they can be held accountable to the people they represent...

Presenting the finding at LAG meetings

It is very important that the LAG board is fully aware of the findings of CLLD evaluation and has a chance to discuss the findings and recommendations made. A specific board meeting or workshop to present and discuss the finding is an effective way to ensure the members receive and understand the results. It will also allow them to react to the findings and contribute to the reflection on how best to address them. It is possible that the board may decide that certain recommendations are not relevant or are too difficult to implement but the discussion must take place and the board should take ownership any decisions taken. An external evaluator or moderator can also help to make such discussions as objective and proactive as possible.

TIP



Don't forget to identify any improvements that could be made to the M&E process itself which could make future evaluations more valuable.

4.2 Implementing your findings

Your evaluation should provide information on how to improve your LAG's working practices as well as to what extent the LDS is reaching its objectives and continues to be relevant to the needs of the local community. Both are essential to consider if the LAG is to improve the results and added value it brings to its area. Most importantly, any recommendations must be discussed and, where relevant and possible, put into action. Developing a short **action plan** can help formalise uptake of evaluation findings and ensure they are built into future work.

Enhancing LDS results

'A strategy should be a living document'

Evaluation findings should provide information on the extent to which LAG work and projects are achieving the objectives laid down in the LDS. Depending on the scope of your evaluation, you should learn if the types of projects funded are **in line with the strategic objectives** and, ideally, if they are **delivering the desired results**. The evaluation should also indicate if the objectives laid down in the **LDS are still relevant** in light of experience and/or possible contextual changes.

Findings may provide a basis to:

- › Strengthen thematic support
- › Increase expectations in terms of project results
- › Re-allocate resources
- › Adapt or improve the current LDS
- › Inform a new LDS for the future



Strengthening strategic results

Activities a LAG might consider to increase project proposals on specific themes or improve project quality include:

- › Specific thematic calls or competitions
- › Adapt project selection criteria
- › Tailored animation activities (direct contact with relevant stakeholders, thematic working groups...)
- › Increased support to project development



What we changed as a result of evaluation... ESKO FLAG and Sepra LAG, Finland

While analysing the reports of implemented projects, the board of the organisation realised that most results in terms of strategic objectives came from business-related projects (and not, for example, from educational projects). The board therefore decided to put more effort into encouraging business projects, and the conditions for funding were adjusted. The maximum level of public support rate has been increased to 75%, this maximum was previously only given to projects with several partners to stimulate cooperation. With the increased focus on business projects, the board decided to allow the maximum rate to be given to entrepreneurship-related projects.

Improving LAG work

Some elements of LAG work will be dictated by procedures laid down by the managing authority or paying agency and may therefore be difficult to change. This is likely to be the case with the project application and payment process. However, while the LAG will find it difficult to speed up formal approvals by the relevant authorities, small changes to internal organisation can often still make a difference. Better communication and management of expectations can also help applicants experience the administrative process more positively.

Some of the broad areas that LAGs might be able to improve include:

- Information and animation activities to mobilise broad sections of the community
- Project application and selection procedures that are quick, simple and transparent
- Accessibility and knowledge of staff and good customer service
- Communication and promotion to ensure the results of CLLD are clear and visible to the community



What we changed as a result of evaluation... Highland FLAG, UK

The Highland FLAG implemented a number of recommendations emerging from the evaluation of its 2007-2013 programme. The following are some of the ways it has improved its delivery of fisheries CLLD:

- Increased outreach to fishing and aquaculture stakeholders which were felt to be under-represented, e.g. by targeted press releases, attendance at more industry events and advertisements which resulted in the Scottish white fish Producer Organisation (representing 1,400 fishermen) joining the FLAG board.
- Increased support to help project promoters secure match funding, by working more closely with potential match funders
- Now receiving project applications on a rolling basis to ensure maximum flexibility to candidates.
- Has set a minimum grant award (£1000) to avoid spending time (both applicants and FLAG staff) administering micro-projects.
- Streamlined the application process by making the previously compulsory “post-offer meeting” between FLAG and project promoter optional in the new period.

4.3 Communicating your results

'Sell your work'

CLLD is about community involvement and as such, local stakeholders should be aware of what the LAG is bringing to the community. Ensuring that regional or national level decision makers are aware of your achievements is also important to justify the provision of public funds in the future. **Evaluation results should provide a wealth of information that can be shared.**

Not all stakeholders have the same information needs. LAG members are likely to be interested both in how LAG work can be improved and in strategic focus. Other stakeholders may be more interested in the overall effectiveness of CLLD.

Different stakeholders will also be receptive to different channels and formats for this information. The timing of when certain information is communicated to specific stakeholders is also important. It is therefore helpful to develop a plan on how to disseminate your findings to the different stakeholders. The main elements of a communication strategy can be found in the table below.

Main elements of a communication strategy

WHO (Person responsible)	WHO FOR (target audience)	WHAT (which information)	WHEN (timing)	HOW (Channel)
LAG manager	MA, PA	Evaluation report		Email
	Decision-makers, local leaders			
	LAG members & staff	Evaluation report findings		LAG meeting/ workshop
	Project beneficiaries			Public event
	Local community, general public	Brochure of local CLLD funded projects		Printed and distributed in the community

Source: Adapted from guidance from the European Evaluation Network for Rural Development

Online and printed material

Disseminating your evaluation report, e.g. by email and by posting it on the LAG website, is the most obvious action the LAG should undertake to ensure access to the findings and transparency of the CLLD process. However, evaluation reports can be long and inaccessible for many stakeholders. More reader friendly and attractive summaries, leaflets and brochures can be developed from the information that will have been uncovered by evaluation.

The Highland Leader LAG developed a brochure for the public to publicise its achievements and encourage others to get involved



Events and meetings

Meetings and events are a good opportunity to engage LAG or community members in a more interactive way in understanding what results have been achieved and what improvements have been proposed. They also allow additional ideas and feedback to be gathered and can help mobilise the community to contribute to the vision and strategy for the future.

Press and media

Press articles or radio/television coverage might be appropriate in some cases and can be useful in reaching a broader public to promote the achievements of CLLD in the area. LAGs should work closely with local media who have a specific interest in local news and developments. The fact that a formal evaluation has taken place can add credibility to discussions regarding the contribution of the LAG to the community.

TIP



Don't forget to **monitor your strategy for communicating** evaluation results to make sure they reach the right people at the right time – and to obtain feedback on the usefulness of the information provided and any further information needs.

Further resources

This handbook is the result of a collaboration between the FAME and FARNET Support Units for Directorates General MARE, AGRI, REGIO and EMPL. The content builds on previous work by national and EU networks, managing authorities and Local Action Groups.

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- The Highland LEADER LAG, and the Highland and Moray FLAG, Scotland, UK
- Sepra LEADER LAG and ESKO FLAG, Finland
- Oberallgäu LEADER LAG, Bavaria, Germany
- Marennes Oléron FLAG, France

Some additional useful documents can be found below:

[Guidelines: Evaluation of LEADER/CLLD](#), Evaluation Helpdesk for Rural Development

[Results oriented CLLD](#), FARNET Support Unit

[LEADER Tool-Kit](#), European Network for Rural Development

[LEADER Toolkit – Monitoring and Evaluation](#), Scottish Rural Network.

[Self-evaluation workbook for Local Action Groups](#), Finnish NRN

[Self-evaluation guidance for LAGs](#), German NRN (in German only)

[EVALSED, evaluation of Socio-Economic Development](#), DG REGIO

[Understanding and measuring social capital](#), World Bank

[10 steps to a Results-Based Monitoring and Evaluation System](#), OECD

[Assessing the added value of the LEADER approach](#), Leader 2 Observatory

[Starting CLLD implementation in practice](#), FARNET Support Unit

