

Darwin Initiative Extra

Stage 2 Workshop - Round 32: Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning



Welcome!



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Session Agenda



12:00 - 13:15	What does good MEL look like at Stage 2? • From Stage 1 idea to Stage 2 project logic • Unpack your “pathway to change” • Theory of Change (ToC) to logframe – exercise
13:15 – 13:30	15 Minute Break
13:30 – 14:30	The Importance of Good Evidence and Appropriate Indicators • Why evidence matters • SMART Indicators • Project vs Standard indicators • Means of Verification • Logframe review – exercise

General Housekeeping



Please keep yourself muted during the presentation.



If you have any questions, please use the “raise hand” feature (you can find this by clicking on the “Participants” button at the bottom of your screen) and we will invite you to unmute and ask your question. Otherwise please feel free to write in “chat”.



We have some specific guidelines later on for how we plan to use Miro for the interactive exercises.

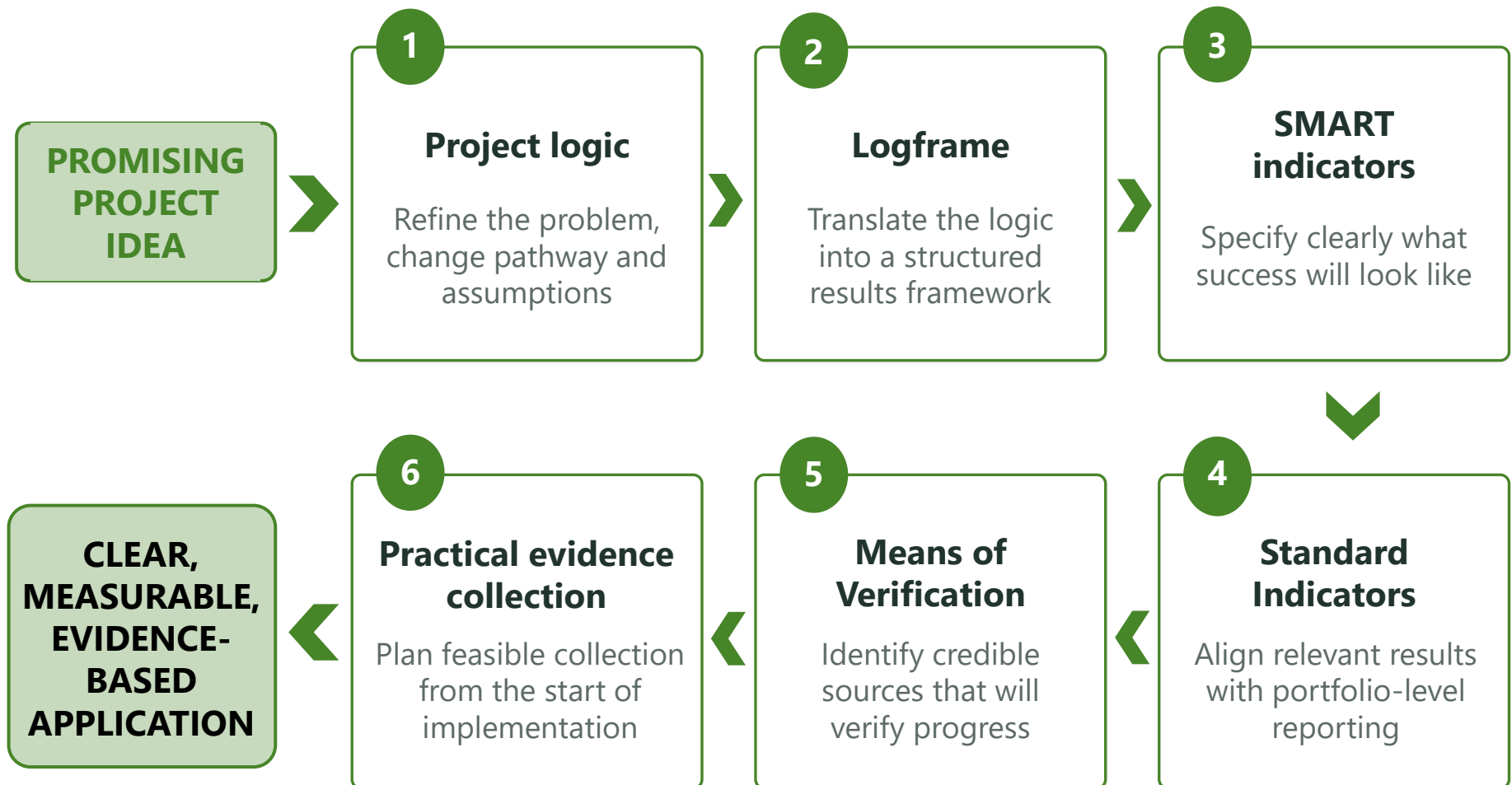


Camera up to you – but recommended for group work!

Aim of The Workshop



Support you to build the application through six connected design components.



What does good MEL look like at Stage 2?



Aim of The Workshop



- How your application's MEL will be assessed
- From Stage 1 idea to Stage 2 project logic
- Unpack your "pathway to change"
- ToC to logframe – exercise



What's Your Why? What Change?



In order to get through the next stage, you need to explain:

- **What** you expect to change
- **Why** your project is needed
- How you expect your work to **contribute** to that change
- How you will show **measure** your contribution
- How you will **learn** through the process



Stage 2 MEL



What does good MEL look like at Stage 2?

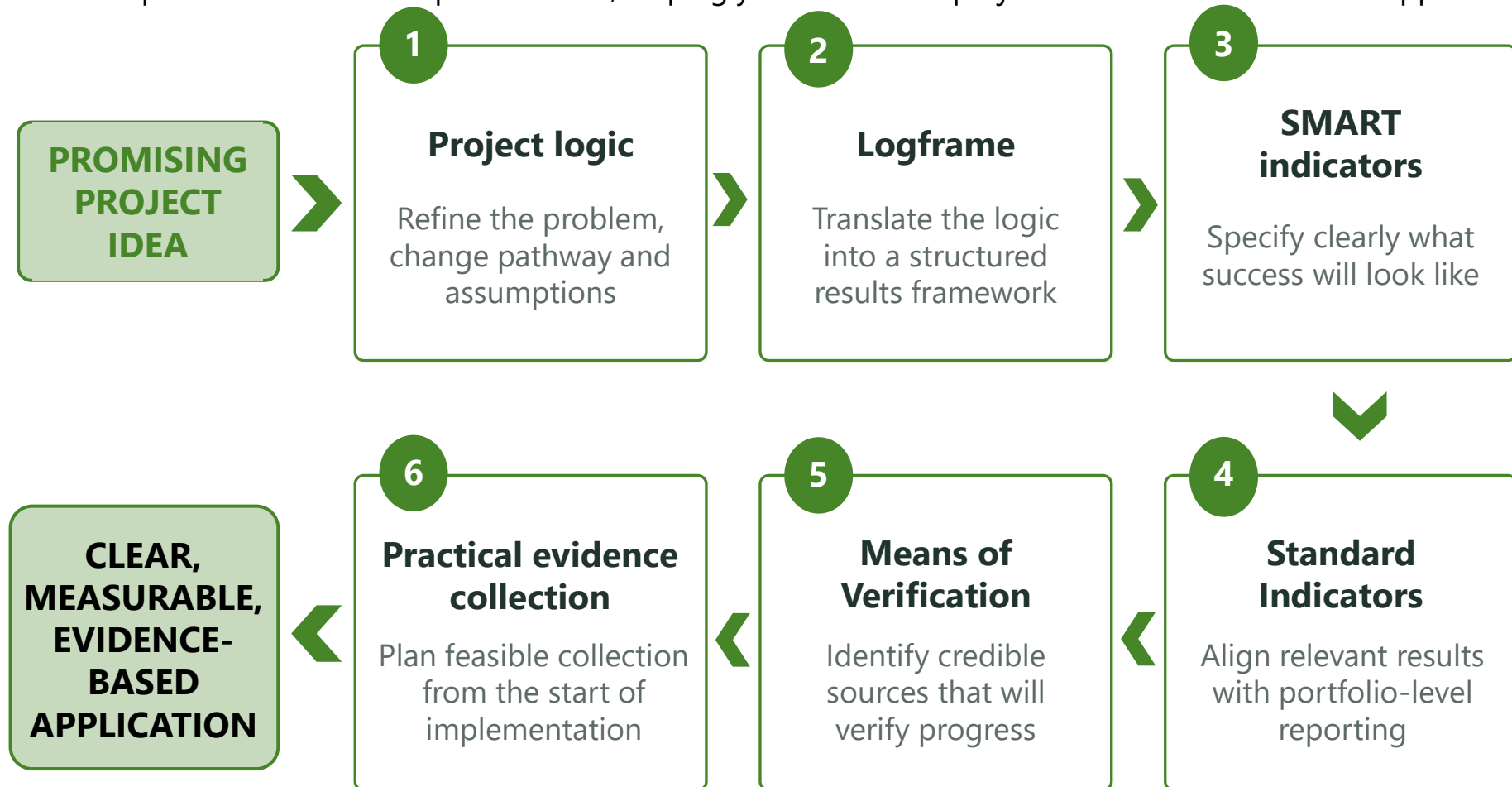
- A clear and coherent story of change
- Well-defined outputs and one realistic project outcome statement
- Clear assumptions and logical links between results
- SMART project indicators with baselines and realistic targets
- Feasible, relevant and reliable evidence sources
- Darwin Initiative Standard Indicators selected where relevant

Project Logic: Stage 1 to Stage 2



Support you to build the application through six connected design components.

Each component builds on the previous one, helping you move from project idea to evidence-based application.

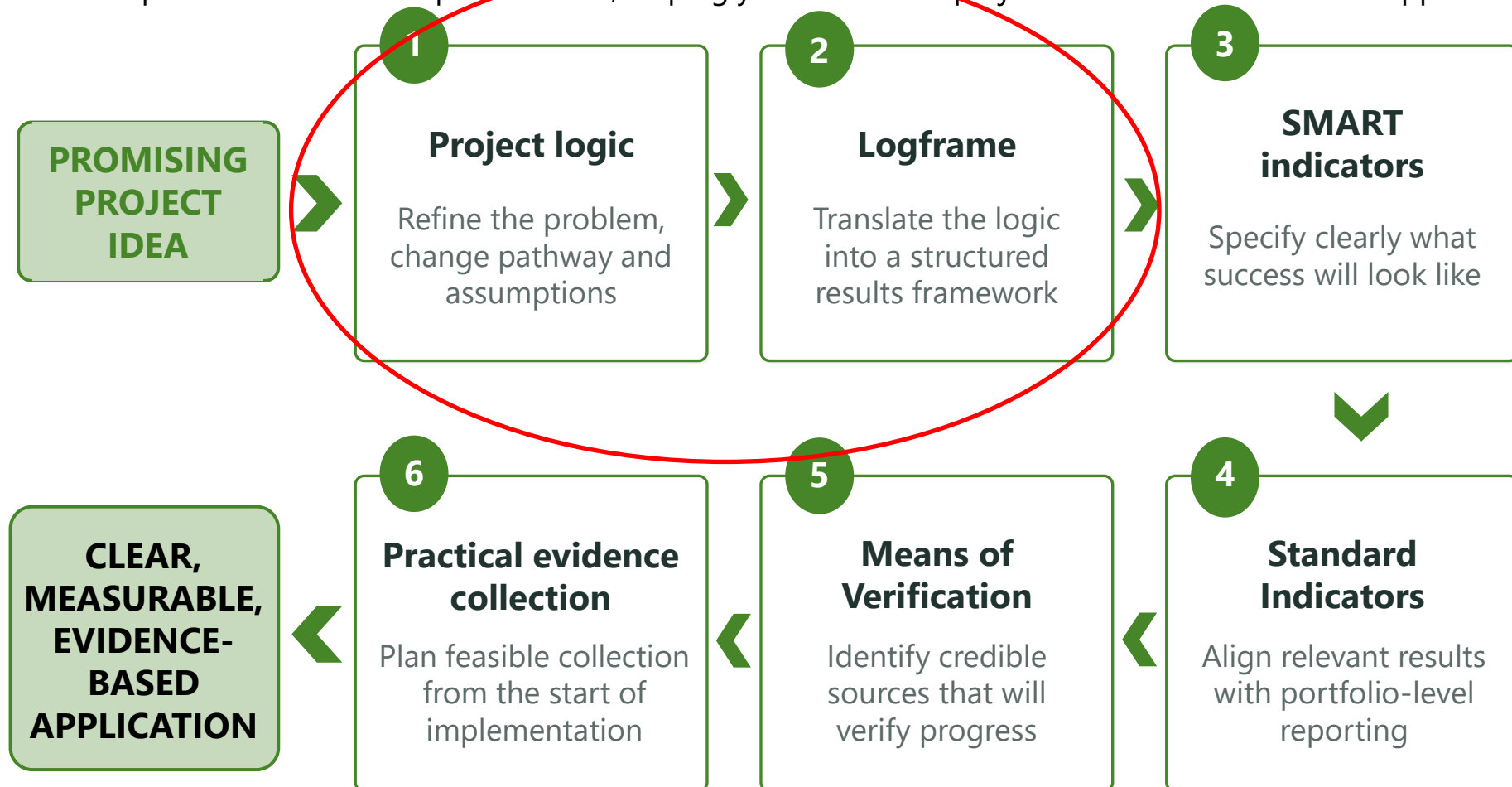


Project Logic: Stage 1 to Stage 2



Support you to build the application through six connected design components.

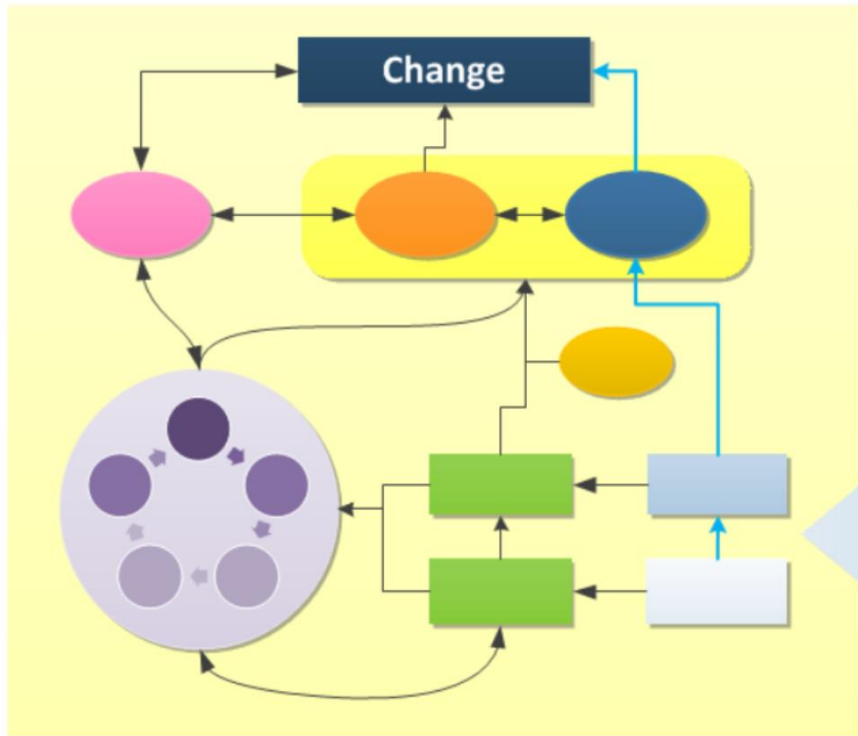
Each component builds on the previous one, helping you move from project idea to evidence-based application.



What is a Theory of Change?

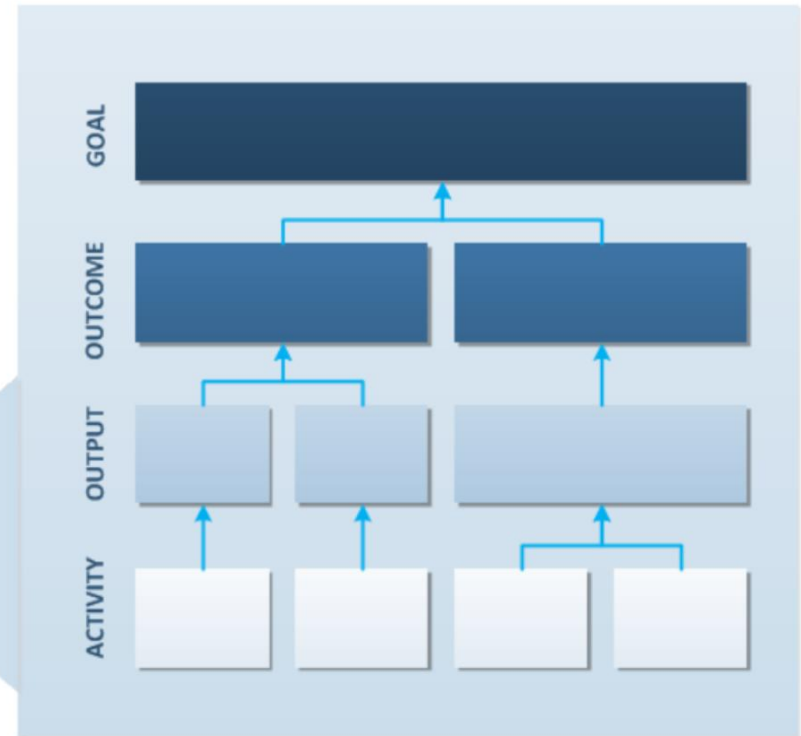
Theory of Change

Shows the big picture with all possible pathways – messy and complex



Logical Framework

Shows just the pathway that your program deals with – neat and tidy



Unpacking your change pathway



The current
situation/
reality

Change pathway

The intended
new situation
CHANGE



Can the activities
and outputs
really achieve
the intended
outcomes?

What other things
might influence
the Outcome? Do
you have control
over them?

What key assumptions are there at each stage of this chain?

Unpacking will...

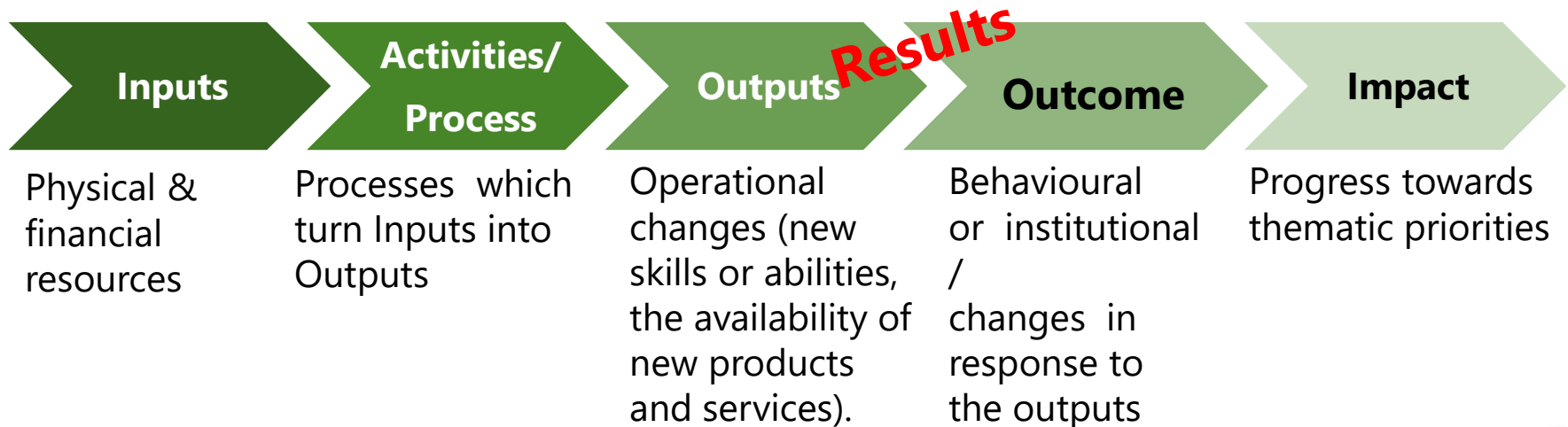


- Create a clear statement of your overall outcome
- Understand what needs to change (and in what sequence) to reach your intended outcome
- Start to form a plan on what you'll need to keep track of as your project becomes live (monitoring plan)
- State any assumptions you're making around your project design
- Identify who else will influence the change process
- Build common understanding across your team
- Select the right solution to an identified problem

Results Chain



Management control diminishes



External factors become more important

Logical Framework

- A tool to improve the planning, implementation, management, monitoring and evaluation of projects
- A way of structuring the main elements in a project and highlighting the logical linkages between them
- They:
 - Provide a clear statement of overall objective
 - Articulate the activities which you'll deliver and help set a framework for monitoring them (targets/baselines)
 - Set out risks and assumptions
 - Can be a communication tool to help explain your work to other people
- Limitations of logframes:
 - They can oversimplify the project process and let people think that change is linear
 - If not used as a project management tool, they can be seen as lacking flexibility



Logframes - Impact

- The higher-level objective that your project is **contributing** to

“Marine resources and coastal fisheries of Island X are secured, supporting food security, enhancing resilience, and serving as a scalable model for other Small Island Developing States”



Logframes – Project Outcome

- The end state that **you** are trying to achieve (and are accountable for)
- The project's overarching objective

“Introduction of sustainable management regulations for marine resources, improved enforcement, and awareness raising activities, increases incomes for local fishers whilst building ecosystem resilience to climate change”



Logframes – Project Outputs

- The key results you need to achieve your project's overall objective
- The specific direct deliverables of the project
- Tangible services, products and other immediate changes that lead to achievement of Outcome

"Sustainable fishing regulations including no take zones and quotas agreed and implemented through a participatory approach"



Logframes - Activities

- The specific tasks that sit beneath each Output
- The discrete actions you will have to carry out to produce products or services
- The processes through which you turn inputs (financial, material, HR) into Outputs

“Carry out marine surveys in project locations based on approved methodology”



Other key terminology



Indicators: the quantitative or qualitative measure to track change in a project output or outcome. Indicators should be SMART.

Means of Verification (MoV): the sources of evidence (databases, surveys, reports etc.) you will use to track and demonstrate achievement of your indicators.

Assumptions: The situations, events, conditions or decisions which are necessary for the success of the project but are largely outside of the project's control.

Project Summary	SMART Indicators (including disaggregated targets)	Means of Verification	Important Assumptions
Impact: (Max 30 words)			
Outcome: (Max 30 words)	1 2 etc.		
Outputs: 1.	1 2 etc.		
2.			
3.			
4.			
Activities (Each activity should be linked to the output that it will contribute towards, for example 1.1, 1.2 and 1.3 are contributing to Output 1. Each activity should be on a new line and be no more than approximately 25 words.)			
1.1			

Develop all project summaries **first**, starting from impact

Develop indicators and MoVs **last**

Develop assumptions **second**

Project summary		Important Assumptions	
Impact: The protection and sustainable use of Region X's temperate grassland and biodiversity through an integrated, collaborative management approach			
Outcome: Transformation of Region X's National Park System from paper park status to an effective, financially-sustainable network based on already-tested collaborative management approaches		Executive Council continues to support the co-management of Region X's National Parks National Park stakeholders continue to be willing to cooperate on management of National Parks and their resources	
Output 2. Effective and sustainable co-management structures and tools are in place for the integrated management of Region X's National Park System		Government of Country X upholds its commitment to improved management of National Parks National Park stakeholders continue to be willing to cooperate on improved management of National Parks and their resources	

IF

THEN

AND

```
graph LR; IF[IF] --> AND[AND]; AND --> THEN[THEN]
```

Group Exercise



- You will be divided into Breakout rooms – click “Join Breakout room”.
- Once in a group introduce yourself with a quick synopsis of your project (i.e. 5-10 mins max for everybody)
- Click on the Miro link we have shared (breakout room 1 = Room 1 on Miro, etc)
- Keep a note of group discussion on Miro or however you would like
- Feedback thoughts to the plenary

See separate handout for the same instructions



Group Exercise



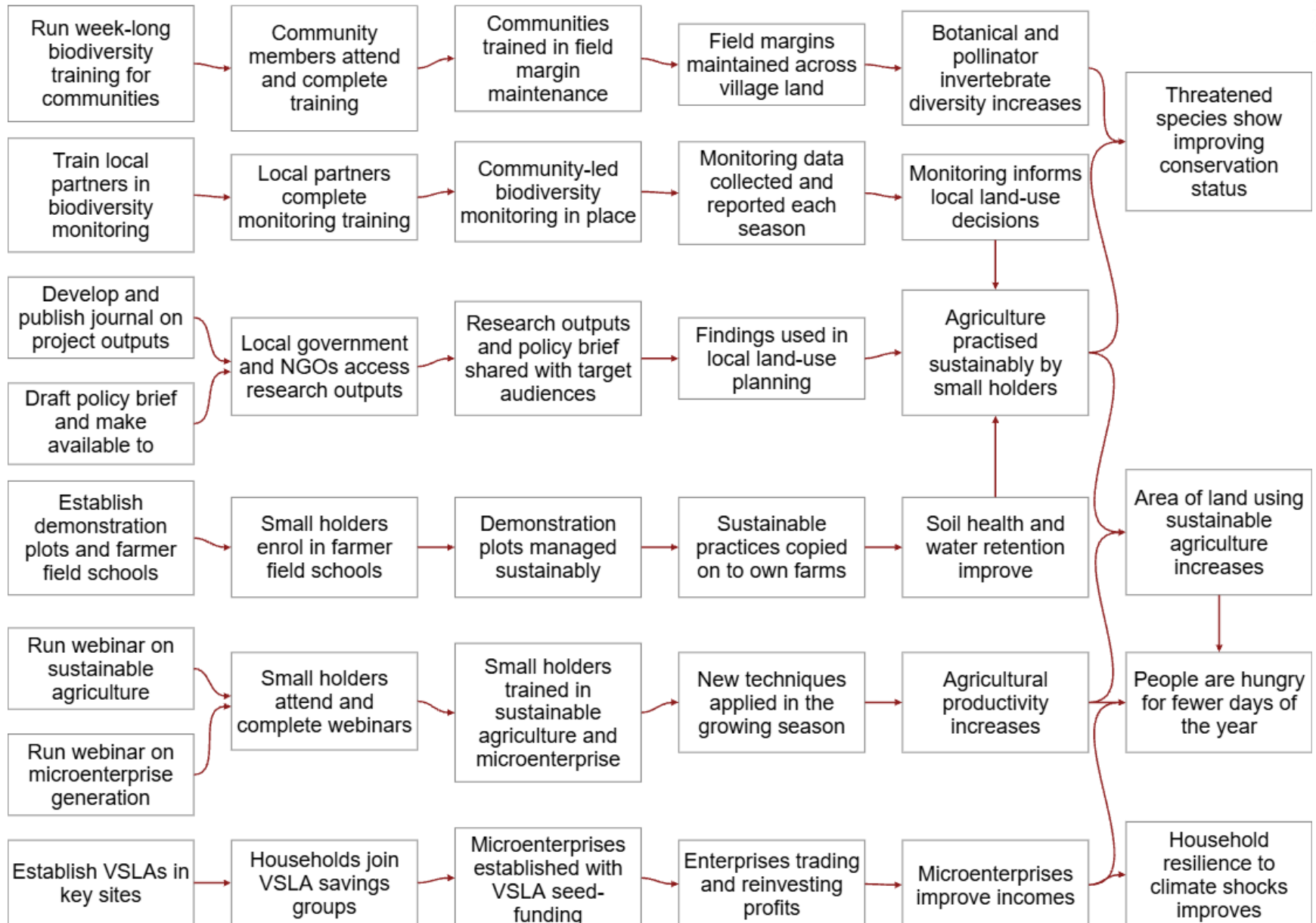
- In breakout groups review the Theory of Change diagram (provided as handout)
- Suggest:
 - An impact statement
 - An outcome statement,
 - Outputs,
 - Activities,
 - Any key assumptions

These will give you the results chain for a logframe
Do not worry about indicators / Means of Verification yet.

What Miro Will Look Like



Complex Theory of Change



Take from here!



PROBLEM STATEMENT

Unsustainable agriculture in District 7 is destroying diversity and threatening key invertebrate species



IMPACT STATEMENT

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OUTCOME STATEMENT

OUTPUTS (4 to 5)

KEY ACTIVITIES (4 to 5)

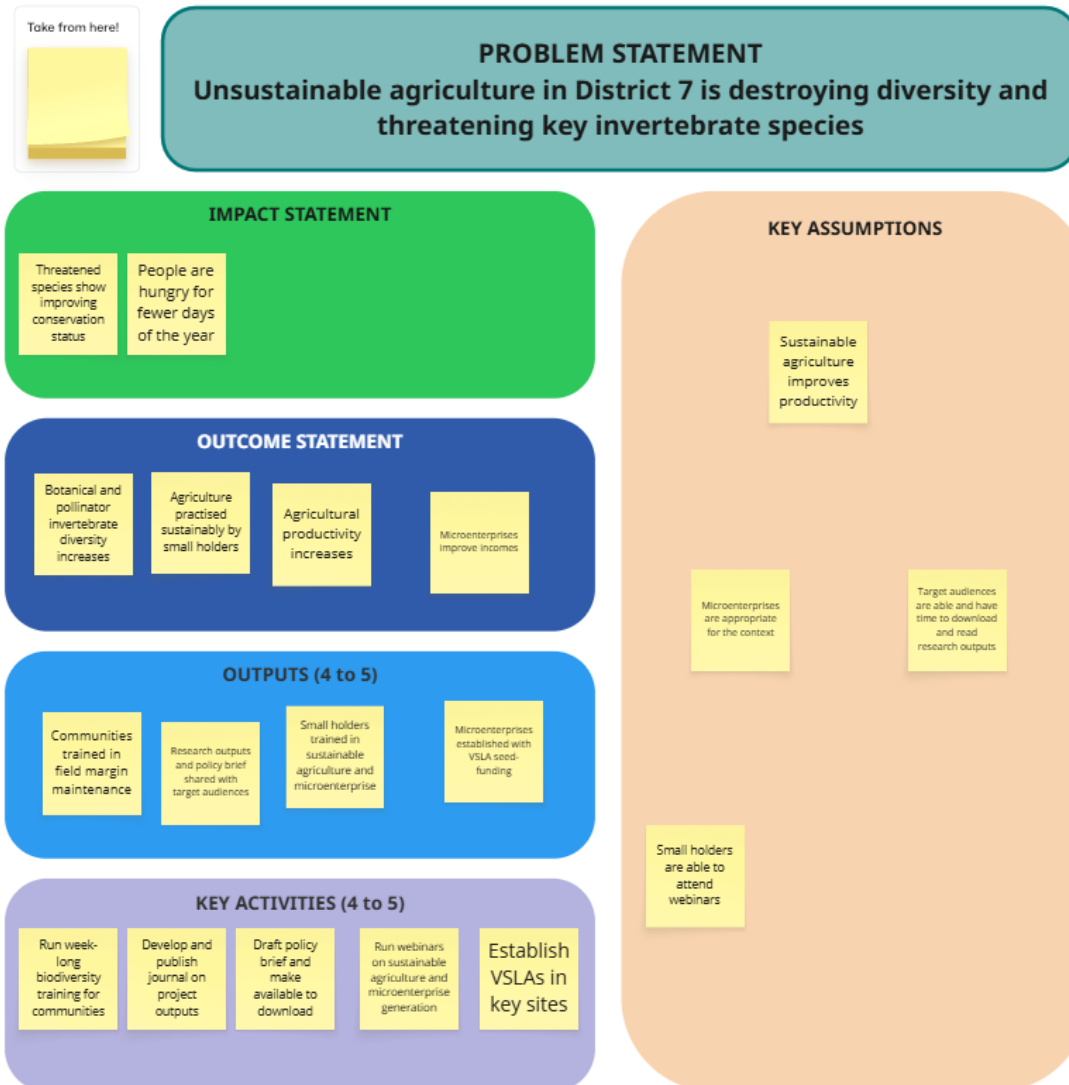
KEY ASSUMPTIONS

Key learning from Exercise 1



- **Start with the change, not the activities:** first clarify the impact and outcome, then work backwards.
- **Distinguish between levels:**
 - impacts are long-term contributions usually outside the timeframe of the project,
 - outcomes are project-level changes,
 - outputs are tangible deliverables, and
 - activities are the work undertaken.
- **Test the logic chain:** check whether each level plausibly leads to the next.
- **Make assumptions visible:** identify the external conditions that need to hold true for the project to succeed.
- **Accept that there is no single perfect answer:** the aim is to develop a coherent and explainable logic, not to find one fixed solution.

Suggested solution for Exercise 1





15 Minute Break until 13:32pm



The Importance of Good Evidence and Appropriate Indicators



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs



Objective of the Session

- To discuss:
 - Why evidence matters
 - SMART Indicators
 - Project vs Standard indicators
 - Means of Verification
- Group Exercise
- Other Resources

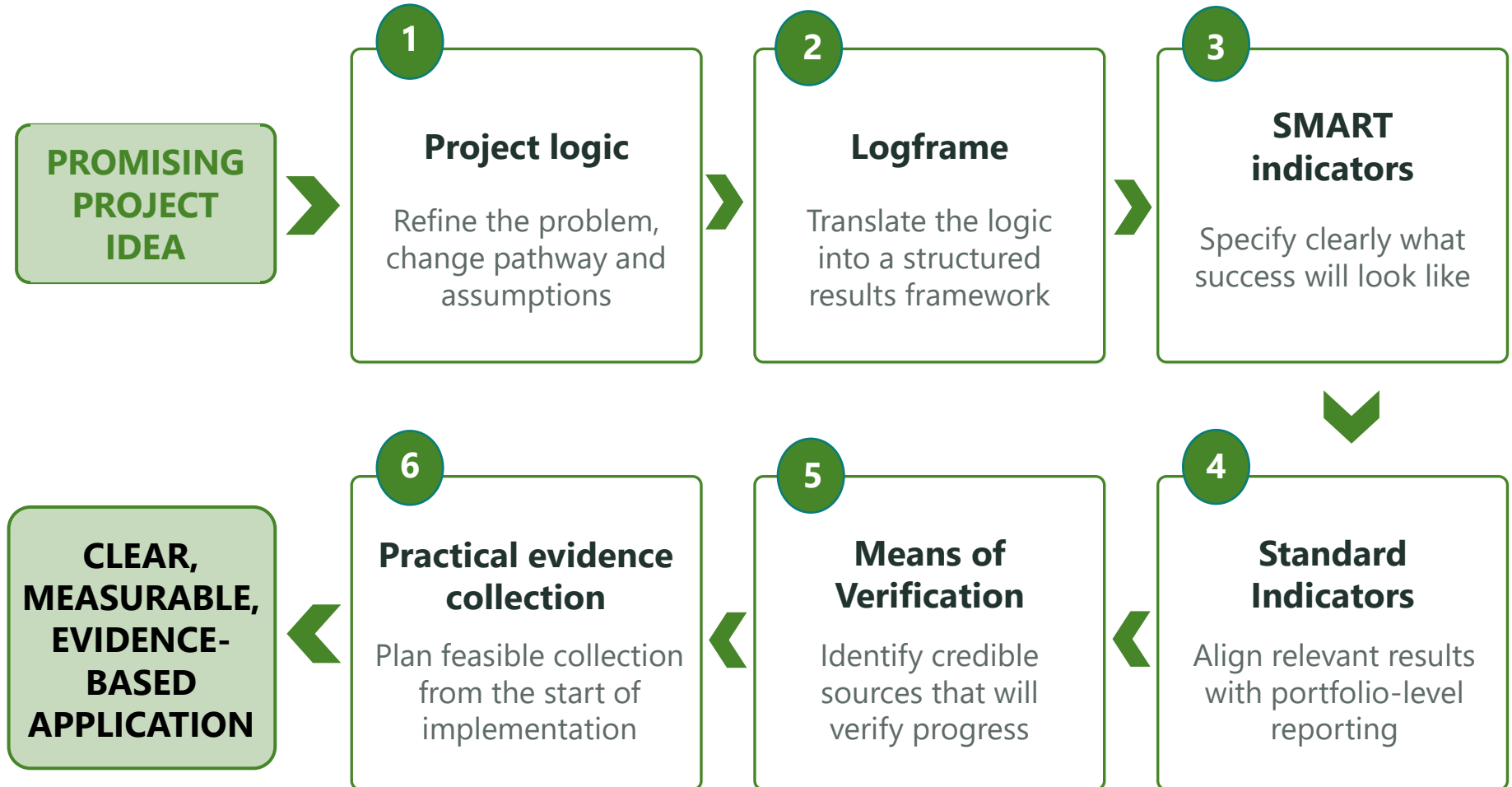


Project Logic: Stage 1 to Stage 2



Support you to build the application through six connected design components.

Each component builds on the previous one, helping you move from project idea to evidence-based application.



Indicators



An indicator is a piece of information to understand if change is happening.

Indicators create **evidence** & **accountability**

- Are we doing what we planned to do?
- Are we doing the right thing?



SMART Indicators



S – Specific



M – Measurable



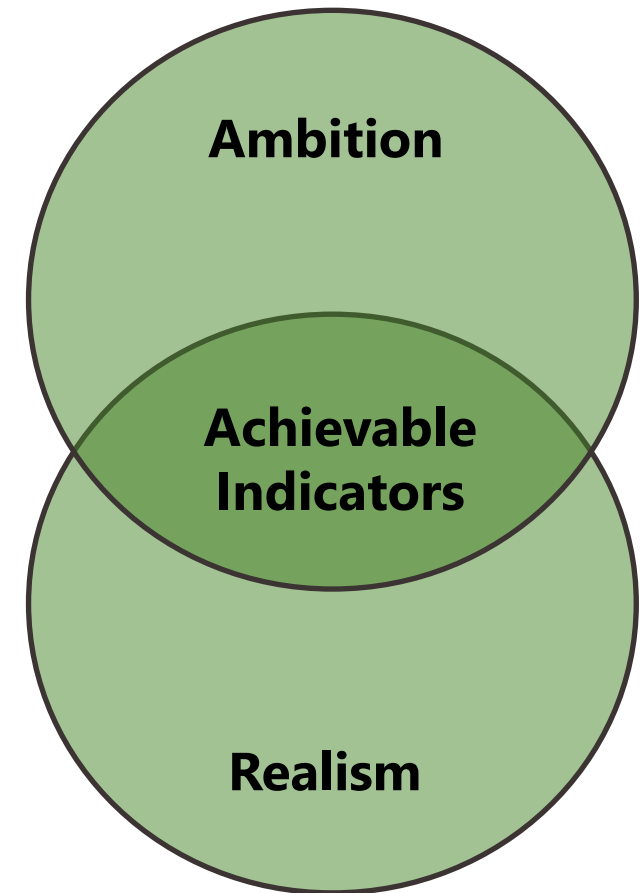
A – Achievable (*Attributable*)



R – Relevant (*Realistic*)



T – Time-bound



SMART Indicators



Starting point: Hectares of habitat under sustainable management practices

S - Specific

500ha of temperate grassland under sustainable rangeland management (Baseline:200 ha)

M - Measurable

You should ensure you can demonstrate achievement of this

A - Achievable

Ask yourself - is improved management on an additional 300 ha actually achievable within the project?

R – Relevant

Ask yourself – does this indicator reflect progress towards the stated Outcome?

T - Time-bound

500 ha of temperate grassland under sustainable rangeland management practices *by project end*

Remember baselines and targets!

Standard Indicators

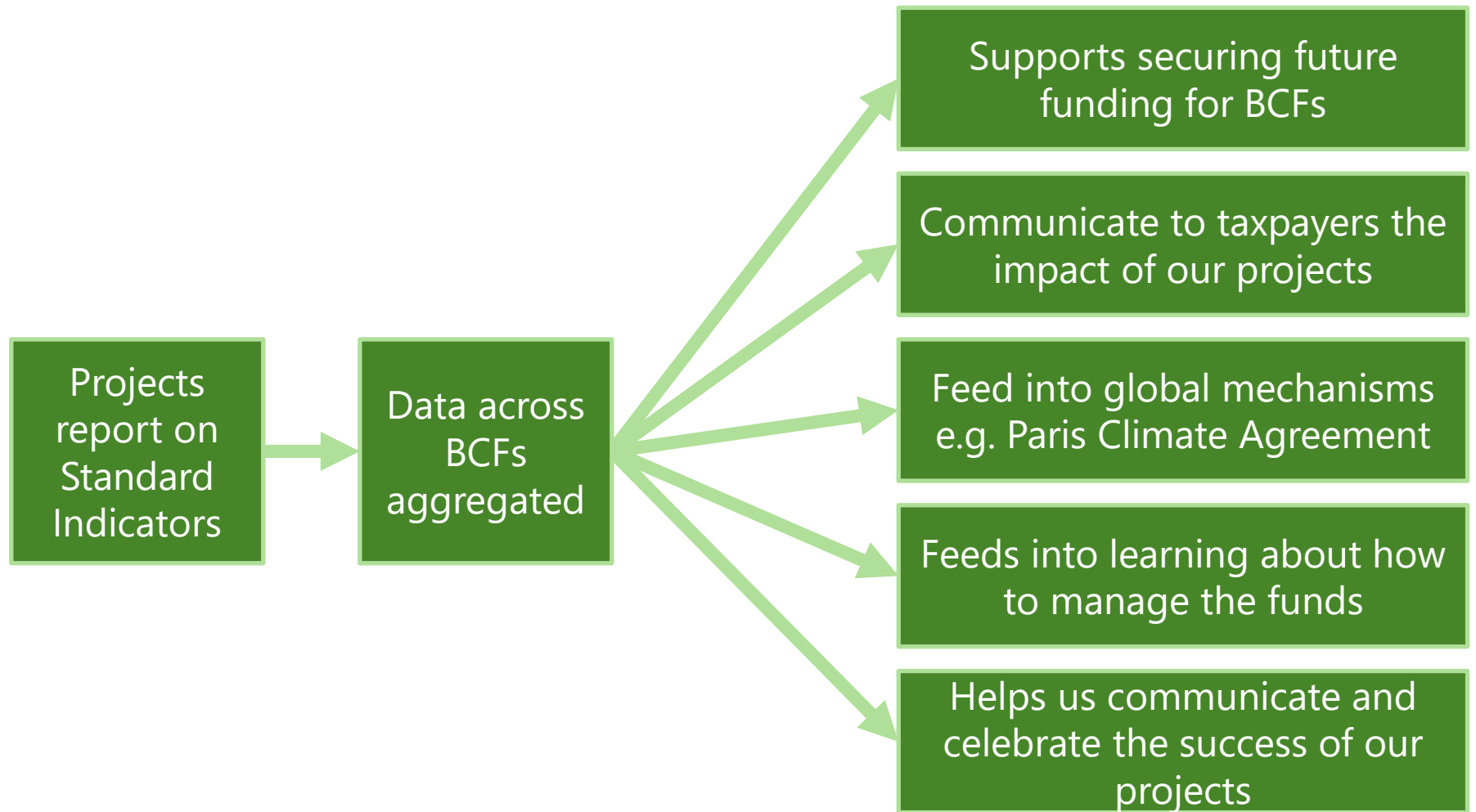


Standard Indicators are a **defined set of pre-worded indicators**.

They are **general and standardised** and must be used **exactly as worded** in the guidance.



How are they used?



Q25b. Standard Indicators

[illegible]

Standard Indicators (ii)



Watch our Standard Indicator video on the [Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning page](#) under Resources on the website!

The video thumbnail features a dark background with the following elements:

- Top Left:** Logos for the UK flag, Biodiversity Challenge Funds, Darwin Initiative, Illegal Wildlife Trade Challenge Fund, and Darwin Plus.
- Center:** The title "Biodiversity Challenge Funds (BCFs)" in large white text, followed by "Standard Indicators" and "March 2026" in smaller white text.
- Right:** A circular inset showing a man with glasses and a blue shirt.
- Bottom:** A horizontal strip of five images: a fisherman with a net, a crocodile, a white orchid, a bird chick on a nest, and a colorful butterfly.
- Bottom Left:** Logos for the UK flag, Biodiversity Challenge Funds, and the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs.
- Bottom Right:** The UK International Development logo with the tagline "Partnership | Progress | Prosperity".

Disaggregation

Always ensure **sensitive collection** of disaggregated data

Compulsory for all people-focused standard indicators

- Sex
- IPLC status
- Country

Always check the **guidance** for compulsory disaggregation



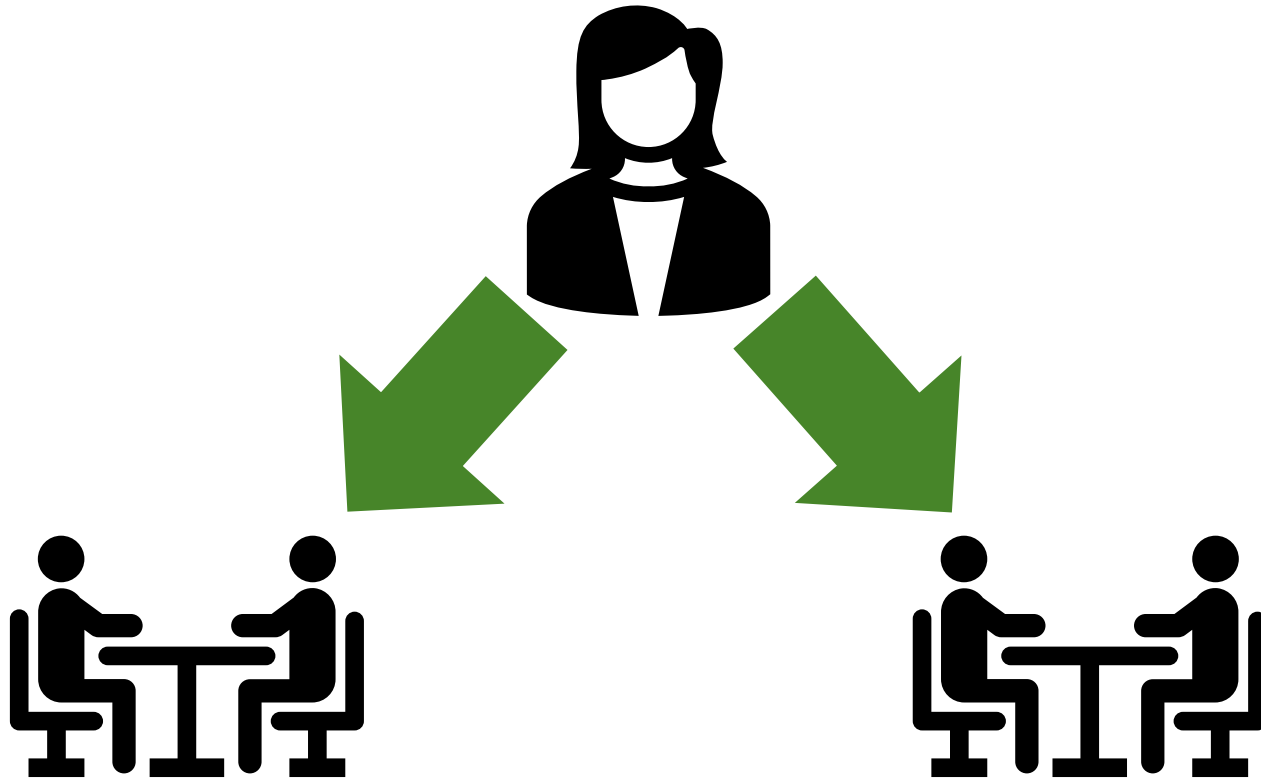
Sex / Gender

Previous guidance
disaggregation is **gender**

Moved to **sex**



Double-counting



Demonstrating Progress



- **Means of Verification** – this is how you will evidence achievement of (or progress towards) an indicator
- Consider both primary and secondary data
 - Is this data available from somewhere else?
 - Is this data reliable/objective?
 - If you need to collect data – who will do this/when should you do it/how much will it cost?
- Will these data show Outputs/Outcomes have been met?
- Is the evidence independent and objective?

Logframe extract example



Results chain	SMART Indicators	MoV	Assumptions
Outcome: An integrated approach to invasive species Y control that uses all appropriate techniques, has strong public support, and is sustainable within current resource capacity	0.1 Integrated control strategy produced in Y3Q2 and implemented in Y3Q4 0.2 Support of at least 66% of the public who respond to engagement activities and participation of at least 10 volunteers in control strategy by Y3 Q3	0.1 Copy of strategy incorporation into Government workplan 0.2 Record of public engagement events. Record of participation in volunteer events.	There is scope for improving current control techniques without jeopardising native species or public support Public engagement activities are successful in creating interest and ownership of the problem.

Indicators and Evidence: Key Considerations



In your applications, please consider that...

- **Indicators must be relevant to the result they are measuring** – make sure your indicators actually demonstrate achievement towards stated results.
- **Evidence and Indicators should be linked** – we often see applications where sources of evidence are put down that bear little resemblance to the information needed to verify progress against an indicator.

Indicators and Evidence: Key Considerations



- **Indicators are not activity outputs.** They need to be independently or objectively verifiable and linked not to activities, but to the results (i.e. Output or Outcome).
- **Unsubstantiated claims are not acceptable**
"we think that this progress is adequate" ☹️✖

Group Exercise 2



In groups, review part of a logframe based on the example in exercise one (Impact and outcome level).

- Find where:
 - Indicators are not SMART
 - MoVs are not clear
- Suggest an alternative



What Miro Will Look Like

Suggest
alternatives...



Project summary	Measurable Indicators	Means of Verification/Source	Important Assumptions
Impact: Agriculture is managed sustainably at the national level with resultant increases in biodiversity and welfare of people			
Outcome: Roll-out of sustainable agriculture and micro-enterprises in 7th District resulting in increased access to food during the hungry months for 12,000 people, reduced land clearance for agriculture and increased biodiversity.	0.1 People in 7th District experience better resilience during the dry season.	0.1 Project staff observations and informal feedback from community members.	Enterprises continue to be registered by the Local Government and records remain open to scrutiny Increases in agricultural productivity does not correlate with a decrease in price for agricultural commodities in 7th District Reduced pesticide use and improved field margin management lead to an increase in beneficial invertebrate populations
	0.2 Micro-enterprises in 7th District increase income significantly.	0.2a Enterprise information, if available. 0.2b Success stories from selected businesses.	
	0.3 Botanical and pollinator invertebrate diversity improves in all places where agriculture is practised.	0.3 Photos of project sites and anecdotal reports from field visits.	
	0.4 Agricultural productivity doubles across all farms within three months of the project starting.	0.4 General project reports submitted at the end of the project.	

Suggested solution:

Project summary	Measurable Indicators	Means of Verification/Source	Important Assumptions
Impact: Agriculture is managed sustainably at the national level with resultant increases in biodiversity and welfare of people			
Outcome: Roll-out of sustainable agriculture and micro-enterprises in 7th District resulting in increased access to food during the hungry months for 12,000 people, reduced land clearance for agriculture and increased biodiversity.	0.1 The people in 7th District (c.12,000 people including 6,500 women and 5,500 men) report a reduction in the average number of days they go hungry during the dry season (baseline of 15 days per month (2022), Project target 50% reduction in average days/month) 0.2 Micro-enterprises registered in 7th District record a higher average income per person per month (baseline national average of £4 per month, Project target £17 per month)) 0.3 Botanical and pollinator invertebrate diversity in project areas increases annually (baseline to be established in the first year, Project target 10% annually) 0.4 Agricultural productivity, tonnes per hectare, increases (Baseline of 3 tonnes per hectare in 2022, Project target 4 tonnes per hectare in 2025). (disaggregated by male and -female headed households)	0.1 Household survey reports for 2023, 2024 and 2025 0.2a Local Government registrations of new enterprises in 2023, 2024 and 2025 0.2b Survey of enterprise income generation in 2023, 2024 and 2025 0.3 Quarterly botanical and invertebrate surveys carried out in fixed sample plots on field margins. 0.4 Survey of agricultural productivity in 2023, 2024 and 2025.	Enterprises continue to be registered by the Local Government and records remain open to scrutiny Increases in agricultural productivity does not correlate with a decrease in price for agricultural commodities in 7th District Reduced pesticide use and improved field margin management lead to an increase in beneficial invertebrate populations

Key Learning



Indicators must be SMART and result-focused

- **One target per indicator** — when there are multiple targets within one indicator, it makes progress impossible to track cleanly.
- **Targets must be specific and measurable** — terms such as resilience can cause confusion if it is not clear what is meant and how to measure it.
- **If you can measure outcomes, not just outputs** — attendance at a workshop is okay; but if you can show change in knowledge or practice – that's better!
- **Build in disaggregation and GESI** from the outset rather than retrofitting it.

Means of verification must genuinely evidence the claim

- **Name the actual source**, not a vague "record of events" — it should be clear what is recorded, by whom, and how it demonstrates the result.
- **Evidence should be independent and objective**, and sufficient to show the outcome was met.
- **Think practically** — who collects the data, when, and at what cost; check whether reliable secondary data already exists.

The connecting insight

Weak indicators produce weak evidence. Tightening the indicator is what makes a clean, verifiable line from result to evidence

Bottom line: groups should leave able to look at any logframe row and ask "could I prove this happened, with this indicator and this evidence?" — and rewrite it when the answer is no.

Any final questions?

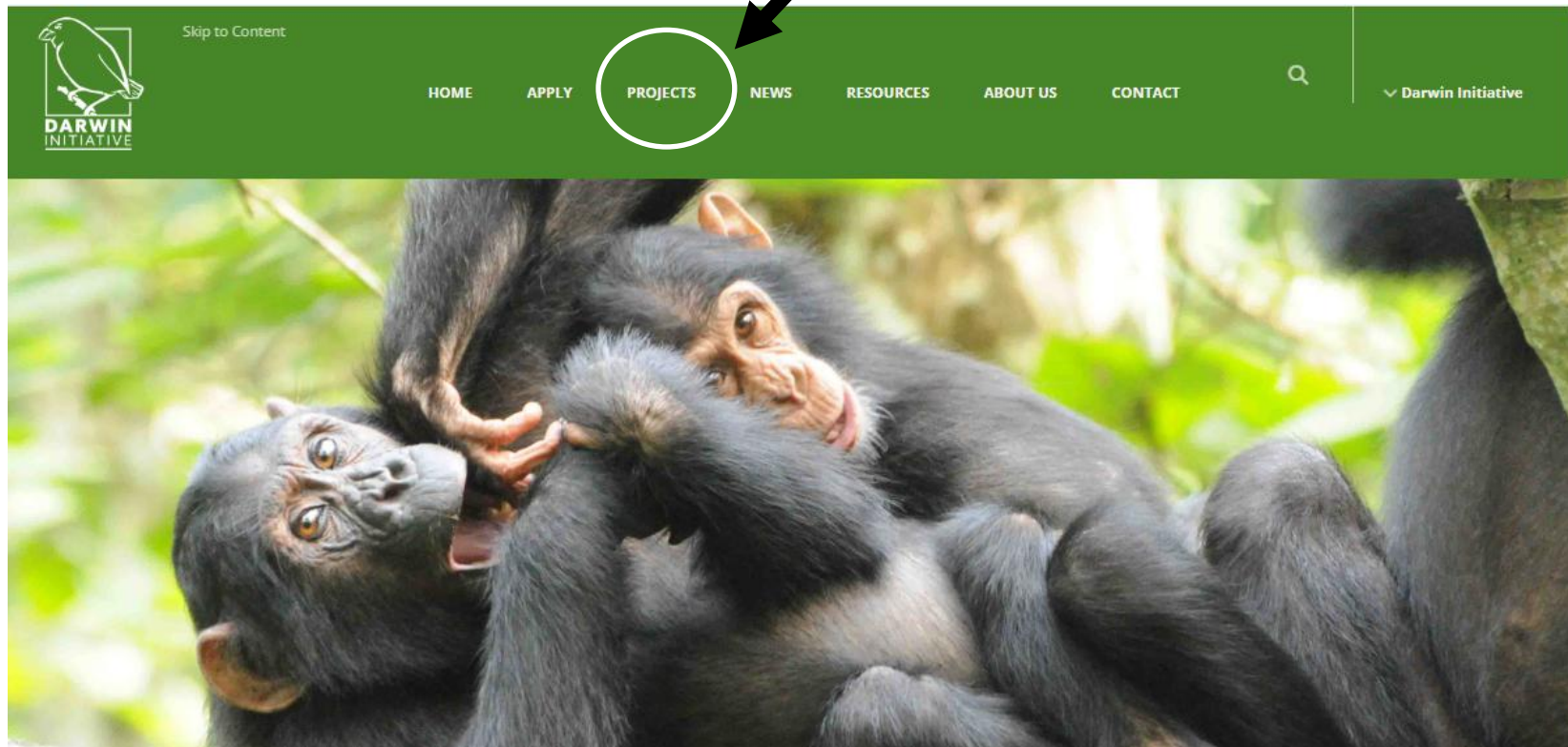


Example logframes



Logframes of funded projects on Darwin Initiative website:

<https://www.darwininitiative.org.uk/>



Other Resources



Monitoring, Evaluation & Learning Resource page:

<https://www.darwininitiative.org.uk/resources/monitoring-evaluation-and-learning/>

Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning

Guidance

- [BCFs Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Guidance](#)
- [Darwin Initiative Standard Indicators Guidance](#)
- [How to develop SMART Indicators](#)
- [Supplementary Logframe Guidance](#)

BCFs Standard Indicator Guidance Video:

In March 2026, our team created a video to briefly explain the Biodiversity Challenge Funds guidance for Standard Indicators:



Wrap-Up



- Thank you!
- We'd love to hear your feedback so we can improve future workshops. On the Miro board you will note we have a space for feedback, at the top on the right – please grab a sticky note or two and let us know:
 - What went well?
 - What could be improved?
 - Any other feedback?
- We will be sharing the slides on the Darwin Initiative website as soon as possible in the next week.
- And if anything else comes to mind after the session, please don't hesitate to get in touch!
- Good luck with your applications!