

Multi-layered approach to monitoring and evaluation

We take a three-layered approach to monitoring and evaluation, to give us a comprehensive view as to whether the project is having the impact intended, and how we can continue to iterate and optimise our approach. This model is based around three questions:

- **Enabling** - are the projects enabling functions, including project contractual, financial and risk management, supporting the efficient and effective delivery of activities?
- **Impact** - are the activities resulting in the desired outputs and outcomes?
- **Policy** – are project-level impacts meaningfully contributing to the broader policy goal?

Our governance and project structures have been designed to dovetail with these levels of monitoring and evaluation.

Enabling: We envisage monthly meetings with project director, board level representatives from key consortium members and FCO project manager and procurement, to review risk register, results framework and budget variance and assess compliance with the contract.

Delivery: Following the research and inception phase, we will articulate the project in a detailed theory of change capturing not only all inputs, outputs, outcomes and impacts but also the assumptions underpinning the links between them. We will ensure our ToC takes gender and sexual minorities into account when considering the impact of our activities and any assumptions we make. Using this theory of change, we will refine the results framework, define our KPIs and data collection methodologies. We will ensure that the results framework aligns with the FCOs programmatic reporting requirements to enable aggregation and reporting of data.

In partnership with the FCO, we will then identify 3 – 5 KPIs which, collectively, give an accurate and insightful picture of how the project is performing. For these priority KPIs, we will invest in establishing a robust baseline using primary research as required, from which we can develop meaningful targets to track progress against. will be reported against on a weekly basis in a dashboard providing a quick, yet accurate view of project progress.

Our MEL Lead will be responsible for updating the results framework each week. On a monthly basis, the MEL Lead will use the results framework as the basis of an impact report. It will include the results framework itself, a narrative report assessing progress against targets and identifying reasons they have or have not been met, as well as recommendations for iteration and improvement, case studies and additional audience insight - for example focus groups or digital analysis. These impact assessments, including case studies and audience level data, will form the basis of our quarterly reports to the programme board and steering committee.

Policy: The ultimate policy goal of this programme is to increase societal resilience to disinformation in the Baltics. Although we can develop measures of how well we are helping to support independent media in the region, it remains a challenge to demonstrate how this is measurably contributing to achieving this broader goal and moreover to attribute changes to the policy level outcomes it to the project. To mitigate this, we propose conducting an annual 360 review of the media sector in the Baltics and running a poll to track resilience of audiences to disinformation. This poll would incorporate questions around media consumption and perceptions of the media as well as alignment with specific narratives and values, perceptions of security and wellbeing and social capital and trust. We will build an attribution model to link the results of this poll to project activities, for example using recall questions for key pieces of content produced or brand recognition of outlets. This activity will be supported by BCME who will bring together leading experts in media and disinformation in the region to conduct a mixed method review of the state of the sector. They will do this through interviews with key stakeholders such as CEOs of media brands, senior journalists, editors and commissioners and representatives for adjacent sectors such as tech and creative industries.

In-house structure with external checks and balances that enables real learning and rigour

Our In-house MEL Lead will be responsible for designing and overseeing our MEL approach, data collection and reporting. Having an in-house MEL Lead embedded with the project delivery team helps to ensure that learning will be actioned in real-time. Zinc has an extensive network of providers for key data collection methodologies including focus groups and interviews and polling. Zinc also has an in-house team of senior quantitative and qualitative researchers who will quality control our MEL methodology. We also have in-house digital researchers working in Russian and Latvian who will provide digital audience analysis using data from partners platforms as well as data collected through social listening and manual analysis.

On an annual basis, we will work with independent third-party M&E specialists to review our approach to M&E to ensure our frameworks, data collection and interpretation are robust.

Example of developing and managing programme evaluations and applying lessons learned:

In 2017, Zinc developed and managed the programme evaluation for the first phase of the Baltic Media Accelerator (BMA), as part of the FCO-funded Baltics Independent Media project. This strand was designed to equip smaller media outlets across the Baltics with the skills and tools to increase demand for locally resonant Russian-language content, through increasing audience share and brand loyalty among Russophone audiences. Media teams from Estonia (Radio 4), Lithuania (Nanook) and Latvia (HelloSolyanka) benefited from 4 months of intense and tailored mentorship. As a result, HelloSolyanka increased their monthly revenue by 202% from December after developing a new business plan for a new online and offline media product, Nanook received grants from the Lithuanian Ministry of Culture as well as Oregon University (US) for their innovative model to reach local minorities with

storytelling, and Radio 4 successfully pitched their new business and radio format (KISA FM) to the err.ee and secured funding and permission to take their product forward. **Lessons Learned:** A number of lessons around mentorship were identified during the evaluation of the first phase of the BMA that we will apply to this project, including: ♦ Creating an all-encompassing “experts” roster in advance of the start of the Accelerator activity, to allow for more flexibility in matching mentors with BMA participants and designing tailored support packages ♦ Creating a longer term mentorship period, as the previous mentorship phase ran for 3 months ♦ Engage with the organisations we worked with on the first phase of the Accelerator to encourage them to take a mentorship role to facilitate a more authentic and organic learning experience for media outlets.

Indicative results framework

We currently envisage measuring impact against 5 outcomes, each of which give us a different perspective into how the project is performing and collectively offer a comprehensive view of any impact achieved:

- Audiences: have the outlets, individuals and brands grown their audience share, particularly amongst those vulnerable to disinformation, and have they established any brand loyalty?
- Content: Has there been a measurable increase in the quality, quantity and diversity of content and moreover is it the right content i.e. will contribute to greater audience resilience
- Organisations: have the brands or organisations increased their earned income? (not only media outlets but verticals, media personalities, businesses in supply chain). Have they improved the way they work through new technology for example? Have they become more agile and innovative?
- Sector: has the sector become more resilient to changes in the market place? Is there evidence of more collaboration? Is it successfully attracting the right talent? Has the average cost of running a media brand been reduced?
- Individuals: do individuals working in the sector have the right skills and experience to continue to grow the sector and improve its offering in the long term?

During the project inception phase, our revised ToC will set out how we believe each of our activities will influence outcomes on each of these levels. See indicative example below:

Outcome	KPI	Method
Vulnerable audiences more likely to regularly engage and trust quality independent media and evidence-based reporting	Increased market share of supported outlets, and increase of penetration of vulnerable segments	Web analytics, social reach and engagement, viewing figures, search term and traffic capture
	Brand recognition and trust of quality outlets amongst vulnerable audiences	Polling with recall questions
	Vulnerable audiences report using a greater variety of sources, platforms and brands for media, including independent quality reporting	Polling and FGDS
Supported outlets, brands and personalities increasing audience growth and sustainability, through agility and innovation	New technologies, business models and innovations adopted	Survey
	Audience growth on digital platforms	Digital analysis
	Increased revenue from advertising, digital traffic, pay for content models as well as consultancy etc.	Survey
Improved quality of content and increase in relevancy for vulnerable audiences	Increased awareness on key issues amongst vulnerable audiences	Polling
	Editorial approach less divisive and more likely to appeal to diverse social groups including those hugely vulnerable to disinformation	Forced exposure focus groups
	Content covers more issues relevant to Russian speaking groups, includes more Russian speaking hosts, presenters and contributors	Survey and FGDS
Improved skills and adaptability of individuals working in media sector	Increase in Russian speakers in leadership roles in media	Survey
	Increased digital reach and media profiles of media personalities and journalists supported	Analytics
	Improved digital research, content production and marketing skills of journalists	Test and survey
	Increased innovation and leadership skills amongst media brand managers and board members	Test and survey
Increased resilience, sustainability and innovative amongst media sector, particularly Russian language media	Number of new collaborations formed	Survey
	Reduced cost base in the sector for technology, content production and marketing	Survey and polling
	Increased up-take of new technology and suppliers	Survey