Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Guidance

A guide for Partnership Grants

January 2024

Ocean Community Empowerment and Nature

UK International Development

Partnership | Progress | Prosperity

Contents

1. Purpose of this guidance

This guidance note is to support applicants to the Partnership Grants with their Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) when developing your application or when refining your MEL tools during project delivery. It is structured in the following sections, excluding appendix and annexes:

- What is Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL)
- MEL Requirements for Partnership Grants
- MEL in Project Design
- MEL in Project Delivery

All guidance is available from Flexi-Grant (https://ocean.flexigrant.com/) and from our website (https://oceangrants.org.uk/). Required templates also can be downloaded from Flexi-Grant and our website. We also run MEL focused training webinars which you can sign up to through our website or watch later via YouTube (https://www.youtube.com/@OCEAN_BPF).

We recommend reading all sections of this guidance note as well as additional guidance materials such as the Application Guidance, Finance Guidance and the Flexi-Grant Guidance.

1.1. Who is this document for?

In this document we explain OCEAN's approach and requirements for Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning for Partnership Grants. We recommend reading this document:

a) **If you are interested in applying for an OCEAN Partnership Grant**:
   - To understand the MEL requirements at the application stage.
   - To provide support in creating a Theory of Change diagram and Project Logframe that supports the response provided in the "Pathway to Change" section on the application form. In this document we explain what these are and suggest ways to develop them.

b) **If you are an OCEAN Partnership Grantee:**
   - To understand your overall monitoring and reporting responsibilities and expected contribution to evaluation and learning.
   - This document can be used as a reference guide and starting point for refining your project design in response to lessons and insights emerging during project delivery.

Contact us

If, after reading this guidance, you have any further questions and you require any assistance, contact us on helpdesk@oceangrants.org.uk.

2. What is Monitoring, Evaluation & Learning (MEL)?

Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) is an important part of effectively delivering projects, demonstrating results, and learning from your activities and experiences to understand what works and what does not.

Monitoring	The systematic and routine collection of data on project resources, activities and results. This includes the routine monitoring of progress towards a project's targets, expected outcome and impact.
Evaluation	The assessment and analysis of project resources, activities and results that can assure or inform a project's design and decisions to help it achieve impact.
Learning	The process through which evidence and information is reflected on and used to address evidence gaps and identify what works or doesn't, helping to continuously improve the ability to achieve results by the project and others.

OCEAN will provide you with tools to support your project MEL from the application stage, all the way through to the end of your project. These tools are designed to help you to design, communicate, monitor, evaluate and learn from your project. They provide evidence to the OCEAN Expert Committee, who will assess your application, that you have adequately considered the relevant people, risks, assumptions and activities needed to reach your project goals.

In this guide we will explain these tools and suggest the best ways you can apply them to design an impactful project, deliver it successfully, demonstrate your results, and learn from your experiences.

You can also sign up to the mailing list and check our website for dates of upcoming MEL webinars and training: https://oceangrants.org.uk/

If you would like further support on how to apply MEL in your project or application, get in touch with the OCEAN helpdesk – we are happy to help! We can arrange a follow-up call if you would like to discuss MEL in your application or project. helpdesk@oceangrants.org.uk

3. Overview of Requirements

3.1. Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) Tools for Partnership Grants

Table 1 summarises the MEL tools you will use to present your project design when you apply for an OCEAN Partnership Grant. We describe each of these tools and how to develop them in more detail in the Project Design section below.

The Ocean Expert Committee will review your Pathway to Change, Theory of Change diagram and Logframe as part of the assessment of your application to understand your proposed approach and assess the strength of your project design. **However, we know that the Theory of Change and Logframe take time to develop and get right, and we expect that you will continue to develop them over the course of a project.**

Table 1. Project design & MEL tools submitted in OCEAN Partnership grant applications

Partnership Grants – MEL project design tools to submit as part of your application		
Tool	**Description**	**Who**
Pathway to Change	A narrative description of how your project activities will lead to a desired change in marine environment and a reduction in multi-dimensional poverty. This is a written question in the application form and will be submitted as your answer to the "Pathway to Change" section on Flexi-Grant.	All Partnership Grants
Theory of Change diagram	A visual depiction of how the project will lead to a desired change by outlining the problem, the drivers, enabling conditions and/or potential barriers to project success. It will show how activities, outputs, outcome and impact are linked, and illustrate the narrative in your Pathway to Change.	All Partnership Grants
Logframe	A monitoring tool to measure progress along a chain of actions and results (i.e. Activities to Outputs to Outcome to Impact). It sets out planned and actual results using indicators, baselines, and targets, and specifies the sources of evidence.	All Partnership Grants

We recommend joining our webinars for an introduction to these tools at application stage. You can also check our website for upcoming learning events or recordings of past events www.oceangrants.org.uk, or get in touch with our Helpdesk if you have any questions helpdesk@oceangrants.org.uk.

3.2. Progress Reports for Partnership Grants

Reporting is a key part of Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning. Below is a summary of the progress reports you will be required to submit to the OCEAN Grant Administrator as part of the monitoring and evaluation of your project if you are awarded a grant.

You will receive feedback on your reports on an annual basis to support your learning. Your Annual Report and Final Report will be reviewed by a MEL Expert selected by the Grant Administrator, who can provide recommendations to strengthen your approach or MEL systems where needed.

Table 2. Progress reports to submit during an OCEAN Partnership project

Partnership Grants - Progress Reporting Requirements			
Reports	**Description**	**Feedback provided**	**Grant Size**
Half Year Report	A short 2-3 page update on progress, highlighting any changes to your plans, or any challenges or lessons learned from the past 6 months of project delivery.	No	All grants
Annual Report & logframe	A more detailed report (10-20 pages max), reflecting on the past year of project delivery. Progress will be measured against the indicator targets you set in your logframe, and you will provide evidence to show what has been achieved so far. You will reflect on your assumptions, and whether your theory of change still holds true.	Yes	All grants
Final Report & logframe	A detailed report to submit within 3 months of your project closing (10-20 pages max). You will report on the extent to which you achieved your objectives, as well as your contribution to a wider impact. Success will be measured against the indicators you set out in your logframe, as well as the changes you have observed since the project began.	Yes	All grants

You may also be asked to provide more information to support the OCEAN Independent Evaluator. Example reporting templates are available on the OCEAN website and further instructions about the reporting requirements associated with your grant will be circulated upon grant award.

3.3. In-Person Reviews of Partnership Projects

Some projects will also be selected for in-person reviews organised by the OCEAN Grant Administrator. OCEAN reviews are designed to provide in-person support to your project MEL, as well as validating the information you have provided in your written reports.

If your project is selected for review, we will provide a detailed terms of reference so that you know what to expect, and what we require from you. The main aim of these reviews is to support learning within your project, and to help us to learn from you so that we can provide additional support to you where you need it. Below is a summary of the types of review.

Table 3. Types of in-person reviews that can take place during Partnership projects

Partnership Grants – In-person MEL Reviews			
Review Type	**Description**	**Visit duration**	**Required for**
Monitoring Review	A reviewer selected by the OCEAN grant administration will visit the project team for 2-3 days to learn more about the work and provide support if needed. They will share a short report summarising the visit.	2-3 days	Selected projects
Mid Term Review	A reviewer selected by the OCEAN grant administration will visit the project team for 5 days, visit at least one project site, and provide MEL support where needed. They will provide a report on progress, challenges and learnings.	5 days	Selected projects
Independent Evaluator Visit	An independent researcher visit to discuss a topic in more depth and understand how the programme is working from yours and your communities' perspective.	Variable	Selected projects

Projects may also be asked to host a visit by the OCEAN Independent Evaluator. The role of the Independent Evaluator is to understand how effectively OCEAN is operating as a grant programme and what impact the programme is having overall. They will help us understand particular topics or themes in more depth to be able to better develop the programme. A visit by the Independent Evaluator is a good opportunity to share your experiences of OCEAN and explain what is working well and what you think the programme could do better to support you.

4. Project Design

4.1. Understanding the challenge your project will address

In your application you will be asked to describe the current situation and problem your project is trying to address, using evidence to support your answer. It is there recommended that you should first take time to understand the challenge your project will address before addressing the MEL requirements.

All projects should explain the need or the challenge that they are trying to address, and engage with the relevant stakeholders on how they will deliver change. Consider how your project could contribute to wider programme objectives (see section 5.1.2)

When designing a project, as a first step it is best practice to review the existing evidence on:

- What are the key drivers or root causes of the problem?
- What has or has not worked in the past, or in other similar contexts?
- Who is affected by the problem, and does it affect different people in different ways?
- What are the evidence gaps?

It is essential to also engage with your partners, the communities you wish to work with, and wider stakeholders to get more information. The below questions can help to guide these discussions:

- What is the specific problem your project will address?
- Who are the main stakeholders?
- Are different groups of people affected differently?
- What do you think is the best way to address the problem?
- How will the project achieve this? What activities need to be carried out?
- How will the project promote equitable participation and benefits for persons of different gender and social characteristics? See section on GESI for further guidance.
- What resources, people, and equipment will you need?
- What potential problems or risks may affect your delivery?
- How can you mitigate and manage these problems or risks?
- How will the progress and ultimate success of the project be demonstrated and measured?

Together this will ensure that you are aware of the challenge that your project will address and capable to designing suitable MEL systems to monitor and evaluate the activities your project will implement to address this. This will help with the first step of the process - Developing a Pathway to Change.

We recommend joining our webinars to help you with your project design at application stage. We will cover the best practices for the key design tools described in this guidance. Check our website for upcoming learning events or recordings of past events: www.oceangrants.org.uk

4.2. Developing a Pathway to Change

In your application, you will be asked to describe your project's "Pathway to Change". This is a narrative description of how your planned activities will change the current situation and address a marine environment challenge that is linked with multi-dimensional poverty.

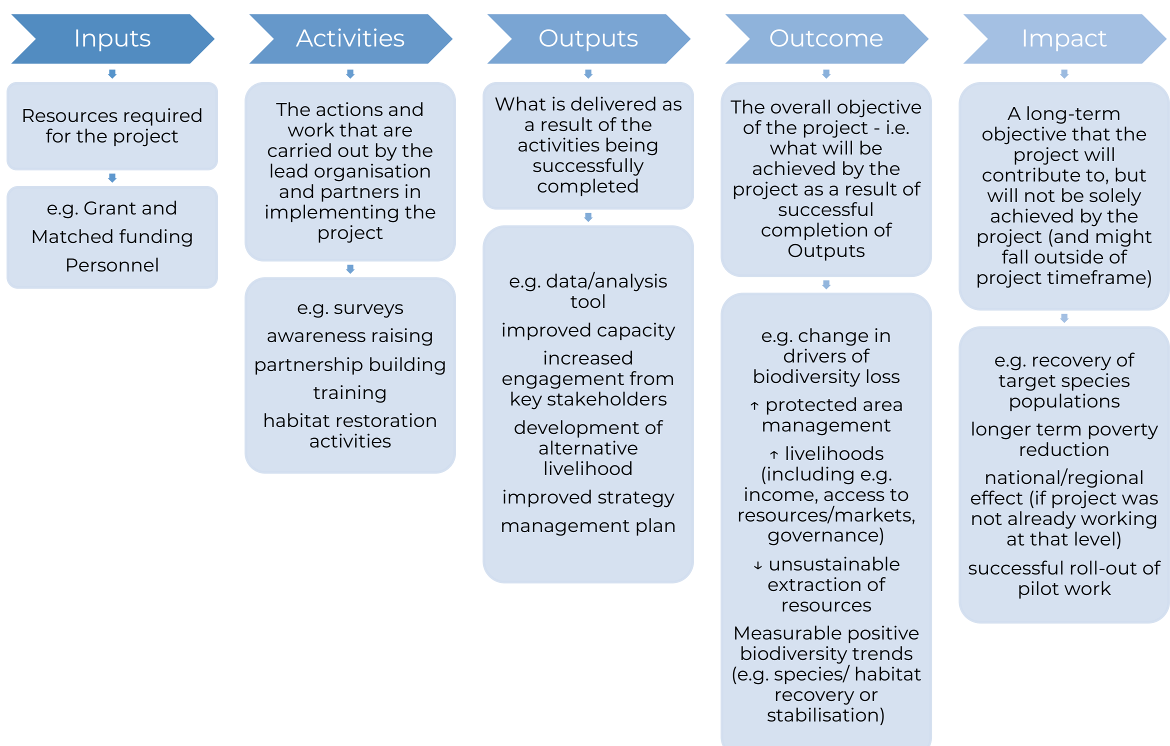
The Pathway to Change is essential to communicate to the OCEAN Expert Committee and to other key stakeholders **HOW** and **WHY** your approach will lead to a desired change.

Key questions to consider:

- How and why will your project activities lead to change?
- What assumptions are you making that are critical to the success of your project?
- How will the project activities lead you to achieve your end of project goal?
- How will the project contribute to marine environment & poverty reduction beyond its lifetime?
- How you will the project contribute to promoting equality between persons of different gender and social characteristics? See Section 6 on Gender Equality and Social Inclusion.

Before writing your Pathway to Change, it can help to plot out the logical steps, or chain of events that lead to the desired end result. In other words, how your inputs and activities lead to results and eventually achieve impact. This is called a results chain and an example is provided below.

Figure 1. A results chain - contains the key elements of your pathway to change, project logframe and theory of change



The results chain is the logical and linear relationship (a chain) between the project's actions (inputs and activities) and results (Outputs, Outcome and Impact).

The results chain will form the basis of your i) Pathway to Change ii) Theory of Change and iii) Project Logframe that you will submit as part of your application. **You do not need to submit a results chain as part of your application, as it will be clearly presented in the other three tools.** It has been highlighted here as a potential tool to support your thinking about your project design.

4.3. Developing a Theory of Change Diagram

The results chain is a simplified model of how a project intends to deliver change. But in reality it is often more complex than a linear pathway. To illustrate more complex change pathways, it is best to develop a Theory of Change.

A Theory of Change (ToC) is a comprehensive tool to describe how change is expected to come about through a project. In OCEAN we ask that you provide a Theory of Change diagram, to illustrate the narrative you have written in your Pathway to Change section.

A Theory of Change diagram is required for all Partnership Grants applications. You can continue to use and develop this tool during the lifetime of the project to support adaptive management, communication and learning.

A good ToC is flexible and able to capture the complicated and real-world nature of projects. This has made it a popular tool for those working in complex and changeable contexts. A ToC for a project takes our assumptions about what we want or expect to happen and tests those assumptions to see if they hold true.

The ToC is often laid out in a diagram showing the connections between activities, outputs, outcome and impact. But more than this, it makes clear that these connections rest on a set of assumptions. These assumptions will vary in how much evidence exists to support them, so should be revisited regularly. If new information or evidence appears to challenge an assumption, you should consider how this will affect your ToC and whether or not you should revise it.

We encourage project teams to reflect and review their ToC at project start-up and then regularly (at least annually) throughout the lifetime of the project. It can be helpful to do this when preparing your Annual or Half Year Reports and logframe data. This supports continuous learning and adaptation as the project progresses and can help to strengthen your approach, enhance performance and increase your ability to deliver the desired impact.

Partnership grant applications include a Theory of Change diagram. OCEAN does not have a Theory of Change template – we encourage applicants to be creative and develop something that works best for their project, partners and other stakeholders.

4.3.1. Why do we need a Theory of Change?

A ToC for a project takes our assumptions about what we want or expect to happen and tests those assumptions to see if they hold true. A ToC can be used as a:

Strategy tool

- To assist teams to work together to achieve a shared understanding of a project
- To make projects more effective by understanding outcomes and their causes
- To identify any hidden assumptions and their importance (or lack of)

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) tool

- To determine what needs measuring (and what does not) to support evaluation activities
- To encourage teams to think about evidence in a more focused way
- To act as the basis for claims about attribution
- To prompt critical reflection and re-thinking of approaches.

Communication tool

- To provide a quick visual or narrative summary of the project's aims
- To give confidence to external parties (e.g. expert assessors) that the project team understands the pathway to change, and has identified the assumptions that they are making
- To highlight and describe the process of change
- To improve partnership-working through development of a shared understanding.

4.3.2. How Theory of Change complements the Logframe

While the ToC describes the process of change and our assumptions, they are best used alongside a logframe. A logframe is a tool to monitor and evaluate performance – they are used to track actual results against what was planned, by using indicators, baselines and targets.
The ToC plays an important role in the development of the logframe. Ideally the ToC should be created before your logframe, because it encompasses the wider context in which the project is based.

The ToC takes the intended project impact as the starting point, and then looks at what approaches are required to achieve it – i.e. it is a backwards mapping exercise. Logframes usually start with a designed project and then outline the key components.

The ToC is often less rigidly structured than a logframe, making it easier to demonstrate how the different components are linked within your project design. Any ToC diagram should be accompanied by a narrative that explains the context, what the logic is based on, and how success will be measured – i.e. your answer to the Pathway to Change question in your application form.

The key advantages of developing a ToC before the logframe is that it allows you to:

- identify specific causal links among outputs and outcomes, with evidence ;
- describe the causal pathways through which interventions are expected to have effect and identify indicators to test their validity over time; and,
- be explicit about assumptions about these causal pathways, which includes an analysis of barriers and enablers as well as indicators of success.

A good Theory of Change (ToC) will be:

Meaningful	Represents action that's valued and worth doing; influences the design, management and MEL
Plausible	Makes good sense; is logical, comprehensive, clear and understandable
Feasible	It can actually be carried out; it's practical and focussed
Testable	Causal pathways and assumptions can be verified. Evidence gaps are noted.

4.3.3. Theory of Change Examples

There is no one best way to design or present a ToC, so we suggest looking for examples online from projects similar to yours for inspiration. You can use colours, numbers, symbols, letters and directional arrows to show and label causal pathways. Presented below are some examples of how to visually present a theory of change:

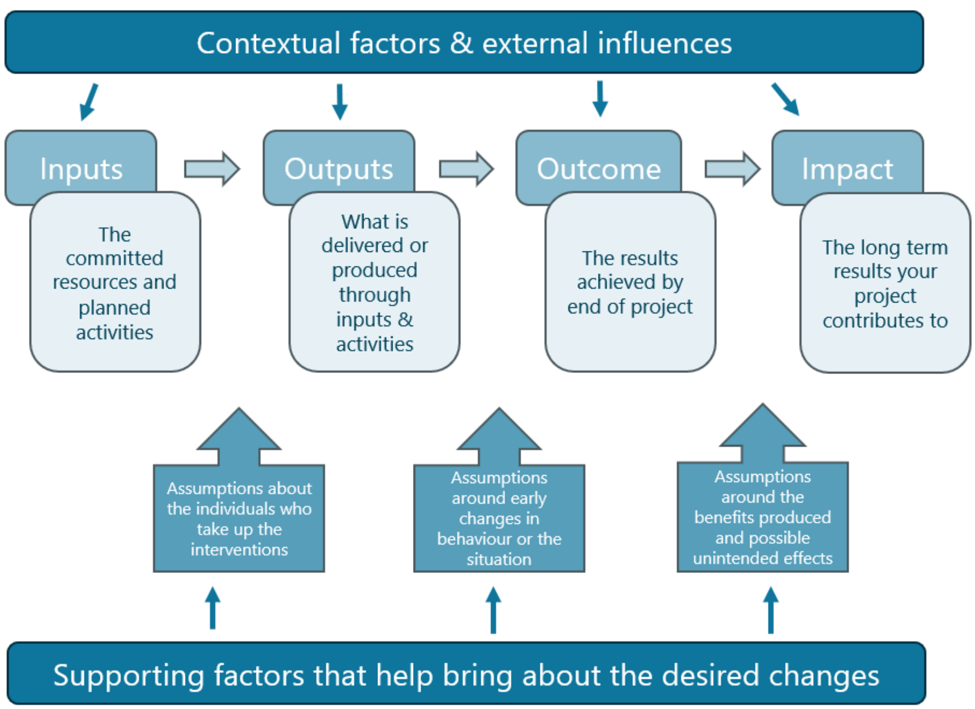


Figure 2. A simple Theory of Change diagram for projects with a linear results pathway. Adapted from ToC template in HM Treasury Magenta Book : https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5e96cab9d3bf7f412b2264b1/HMT_Magenta_Book.pdf

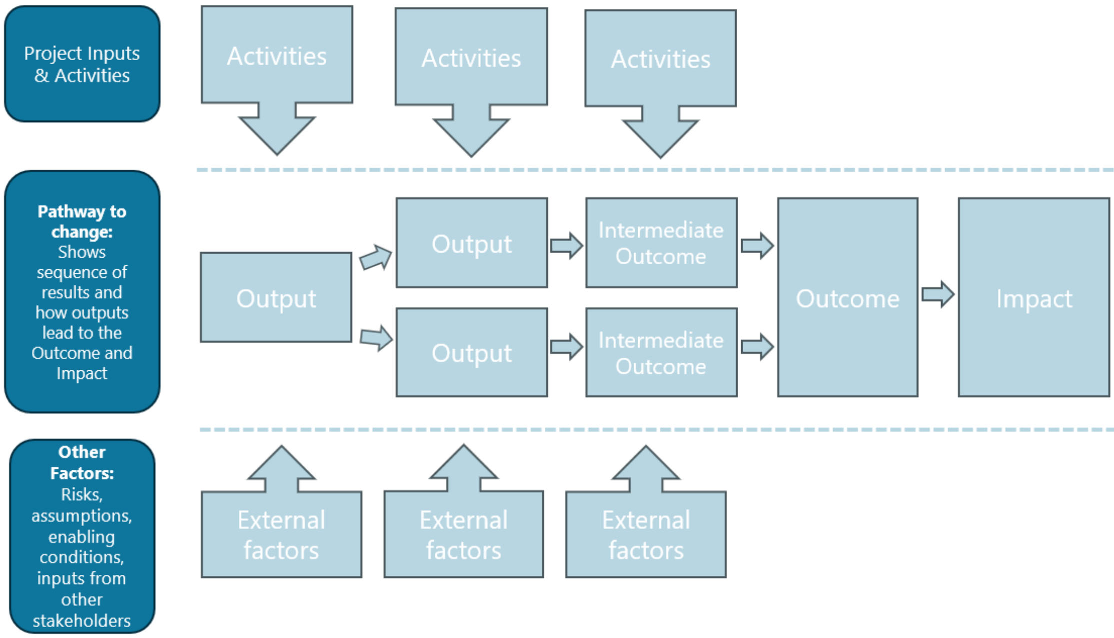


Figure 3. A triple row (or column) theory of change diagram can be useful for more complex pathways. It shows the sequence of activities and results that occur along the results chain, and where in the sequence external factors, risks and assumptions can have an effect. You can also include your expected intermediate outcomes where appropriate. Adapted from: https://www.betterevaluation.org/frameworks-guides/managers-guide-evaluation/scope-evaluation/describe-theory-change

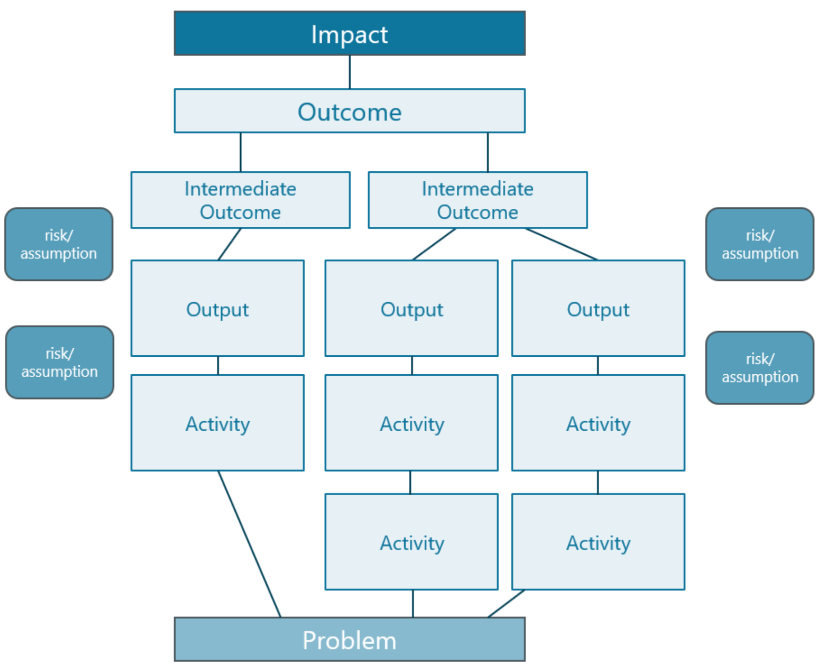


Figure 4. A tree diagram can be helpful to show how you are addressing a problem through different approaches or pathways. If you expect to see some intermediate outcomes, as a result of different sets of activities, you could illustrate it in this way. See an example in: https://www.thegrassrootscollective.org/theory-of-change-development.

Additional information on how to develop different types of Theory of Change can be found in Section 7 Further Reading.

4.3.4. Theory of Change Requirements

Partnership grant applications require a Theory of Change diagram, ideally presented on a single page PDF. If yuoOCEAN does not have a fixed Theory of Change template – we encourage applicants to be creative and develop something that works best for their project, partners and other stakeholders. You can use digital tools like Powerpoint, Word, or online tools, or you can create something offline on paper, as long as you take a picture to upload as a PDF with your application. If you do it this way, make sure it is easy to read once digitised.

Theory of Change Checklist:

- ✓ Partnership grant applications must include a Theory of Change diagram
- ✓ Developed in collaboration with partners and communities?
- ✓ Includes activities, outputs, outcome and impact?
- ✓ Corresponds with the contents of the Project Logframe?
- ✓ Corresponds with the Pathway to Change narrative?
- ✓ Includes problem drivers, enabling conditions, assumptions and risks?
- ✓ Arrows and lines clearly mark how the elements of the project link to each other?
- ✓ Shows how your activities will address root causes and lead to change?
- ✓ Fits on 1-2 pages A4 PDF?

4.4. Developing a Project Logframe

Once you have outlined the logical steps needed for your project to make a change happen (in your Pathway to Change and Theory of Change), it is good practice to set up a framework to monitor your progress and set realistic milestones and targets. The most common tool is a logical framework, also known as a logframe.

The logframe is a table based on the logical steps needed to achieve your projects end goal (see Figure 1 in Developing a Pathway to Change, and Table 5 below). It includes your activities and results (Impact, Outcome and Outputs), and ways to measure progress (indicators, milestones, and means of verification). It also includes the key assumptions that underly the project's success. We define these different logframe elements in the section below.

All Partnership Grants applicants will submit a logframe using the OCEAN templates in either Word or Excel format. Partnership projects will measure progress against their logframe in their Annual Reports and Final Report. Once a grant has been awarded, you can continue to refine your project logframe to ensure that it accurately captures your project.

OCEAN will provide support in developing your logframe at the application stage through a specific Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning focused webinar. This will include participative elements to help design an effective logframe.

Once a grant has been awarded, you can continue to refine your project logframe to ensure that it accurately captures your project. Make sure to inform OCEAN of any significant changes to the logframe though, as these will need to be reviewed and approved by the OCEAN team via a Change Request.

When developing your logframe, we recommend you think about how you can measure change for different social groups (see Section 6 on Gender Equality and Social Inclusion), and how you will measure your contributions to wider programme goals (see Section 5.1.2).

Table 4. Key elements of a Logframe and their definitions. OCEAN grantees do not need to report against impact indicators since they may not have results to report within the project lifetime.

Logframe element	Summary	Indicators	Means of Verification	Assumptions
Impact	The ultimate result to which the project contributes to			
Outcome	The change that occurs if the project Outputs are achieved; the primary purpose of the project	Quantitative ways of measuring and qualitative ways of judging progress towards the project's Outcome.	Sources of information and methods used to verify progress against the indicators	External factors and conditions necessary for the project impact to be achieved
Outputs	The specific, direct deliverables produced by undertaking project activities	Quantitative ways of measuring and qualitative ways of judging progress towards the Outputs.	Sources of information and methods used to verify progress against the indicators	External factors and conditions necessary for the Outcome to be achieved
Activities	The specific tasks to be carried out in order to produce the expected Outputs			

OCEAN provides a logframe template in both Excel & Word format (see Annex). In developing your logframe, we recommend using the Word format – when working with partners on agreeing wording and targets in the design phase, it can make it easier to track changes, annotate with comments, or print out to make written notes. You may prefer to use the Excel format once the logframe is agreed, as it can be easier to enter or extract data for reports as you progress towards your targets. We will accept either format in your application and reports.

Your logframe will be the main tool you use to monitor and report your results. You will update it regularly to determine if you are on track to achieve your objectives. Below we provide more explanation of the differences between the results statements at Impact, Outcome and Output, and activity level.

4.4.1. Impact, Outcome, Outputs, Activities

The logframe should contain specific results statements for each step in your results chain.

IMPACT: The Impact Statement is a shared vision of your project's long-term objective, as a contribution to a wider advance on, for example, marine conservation and poverty reduction. Note that the Impact:

- will not be achieved solely by the project.
- will (often) be achieved outside of the timeframe of the project.

For OCEAN grants there should be only one Impact statement, and it is not necessary to provide Impact indicators, means of verification or assumptions.

OUTCOME: The Outcome Statement is a project's objective; what overall change do you expect to achieve as a result of and within the timeframe of this project?

For OCEAN grants there should only be one project Outcome. It should identify what will change, and who will benefit. There should be a clear link between the Outcome and the Impact. You will use indicators to measure progress towards the project Outcome.

OUTPUTS: Outputs are the specific, direct deliverables of the project; they are tangible results from the completion of more than one activity. Their delivery is totally attributable to your project; they would not happen without your project.

Outputs will provide the conditions necessary to achieve your intended Outcome; if the Outputs are achieved (and the assumptions hold true) then the logic is that the Outcome will also be achieved. The logic of the results chain from Output to Outcome therefore needs to be clear.

Most projects will have three or four Outputs in order to achieve the intended Outcome. More than five Outputs for a project is likely to be excessively complex, so should be avoided. You will use indicators to measure progress towards project Outputs.

ACTIVITIES: Activities are the actions you take to deliver the Outputs of your project. For example, running a workshop or a training course could lead to the Output of increasing the knowledge or skills of the participants.

Activities do not need indicators. Only summaries of the main activities are required in the logframe, numbered against the Output that they relate to.

Do not confuse activities with Outputs or Output indicators. For example: the number of participants in a workshop is an input, the number of workshops held is an activity, and the Output is what those participants are now capable of as a result, e.g. higher quality practices, increased knowledge and understanding, etc.

4.4.2. Developing SMART Indicators

Indicators are the tools that are used to measure the changes and progress your project is making in the logframe. After developing your theory of change and results statements, you will have a better idea of what indicators you will need. Indicators can be quantitative or qualitative.

Quantitative	Quantitative indicators are reported as numbers, such as units, prices, proportions, rates of change and ratios.
Qualitative	Qualitative indicators are reported as words, in statements, paragraphs, case studies and reports.

All projects are required to provide Outcome and Output indicators as part of their logframe. You should aim to design indicators that are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound (SMART).

We recommend using two to four indicators to monitor each Output or the Outcome. Too few indicators may not provide enough evidence of progress, whereas too many can take up too much time and resources. It is best practice to develop **SMART indicators**, these are:

- **S**pecific
- **M**easurable
- **A**chievable
- **R**elevant, and
- **T**ime-bound

In other words, your indicators should be specific to your activities, relevant to the Output or Outcome you are trying to measure, and should include achievable targets and milestones. It is best to avoid indicators that are too difficult, time-consuming or costly to measure.

SMART Indicator Best Practices:

- Prioritise indicators that are best suited to measure the specific changes attributed to the activities of your project.
- Use your experience from other projects and adapt indicators accordingly.
- Keep your indicator as straightforward (pragmatic and clear) as possible.

- Do not try to measure multiple elements within an indicator or combine indicators to a single indicator. An indicator should only be measuring one part of the intervention.
- Make sure your indicators can be measured objectively or independently verified.
- Make sure you are clear on how you will measure progress towards the indicators and recognise any known limitations (e.g. indicators might not be able capture the full picture).
- Make sure the indicators are relevant measures of your progress toward Outputs and Outcome.

4.4.3. Measuring progress with SMART Indicators

To measure progress towards SMART indicators it is helpful to establish baselines, targets and milestones, and decide on the means of verification.

Baseline	A measure of the condition before the project or activity starts to compare with the result at the end of project
Target	The measure that the project is aiming to achieve for the indicator by end of project
Milestone	A measure to set intermediate targets and track annual progress toward the end of project target.
Means of Verification	The means of verification are the sources of evidence you will use to track and demonstrate achievement of your indicators.

Baselines: The baseline is where your indicator started from, a snapshot of the current situation before your activity starts. This can be used as a benchmark to compare on an annual basis, or at the end of the project to show the effect your activities have had. You should aim to have a baseline for each of your indicators. You might not have this information already at design phase, and this is fine, but you should plan to collect that information early in the project so that you can use it as evidence of your progress.

Targets and milestones: Targets are the end result you are hoping to achieve for your indicator. You should provide a target for each indicator in your logframe so that it is clear what and how much you will try to achieve within the lifetime of your project. Remember, it is best to be realistic about what you might be able to achieve, base your targets on what evidence you have and try to avoid being overly optimistic or too conservative.

For some indicators it can be helpful to set annual **milestones**, to plan how much progress you aim to make each year towards your end of project target. This will help you assess if your progress is on track when you are preparing your annual report.

Remember to consider when the information on your indicators will be available – if you are using data sources external to your project (e.g. global remote sensing data) it may not be available at the time you would wish to report on it, and so you may not be able to use it as evidence until a later date

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

There is no need to include means of verification in the wording of a SMART indicator, but you should assess the quality of the means of verification to make sure your indicator is fit for purpose, and you understand the limitations. Does your means of verification:

- ✓ Specify the **data sources** and **data collection method?**
- ✓ Specify the **frequency** of data collection consistent with the milestones and targets set?
- ✓ Provide the relevant **disaggregated data**? Remember to disaggregate by gender, or other social characteristics (See Section 6).
- ✓ Specify **who is responsible** for data collection and reporting?

> If you think you need to revise the targets and milestones in your logframe, please get in touch with the OCEAN helpdesk (helpdesk@oceangrants.org.uk). Any significant changes will need to be justified and approved via the Change Request process.

4.4.4. Assumptions and risks

Project achievements will often be dependent on external conditions (**assumptions and risks**) outside the control of the project. Projects should identify, reflect and monitor these risks and assumptions, using evidence to inform their understanding. Risks can include unintended positive or negative consequences of the project; where risks occur they should be captured and reported.

In the logframe template, there is space to write the key assumptions and risks under the Impact, Outcome, and Outputs. Output risks and assumptions are more likely to be within the project's ability to mitigate than risks and assumptions at Outcome and Impact level.

If the external context or situation evolves, assumptions and risks may need to be reassessed, and the project's approach may need to be changed.

4.4.5. Logframe and Indicators Checklist

- ✓ Are you using the correct template? OCEAN logframe templates may differ between funding pathways and funding rounds. Using an incorrect template can result in an ineligible application.
- ✓ Is the results chain clear and logical?
- ✓ Do the Outcome indicators measure what will change and who will benefit?
- ✓ Do the Output indicators measure the tangible results of your activities that will be delivered by the project?
- ✓ Are all indicators relevant to the results chain?
- ✓ Are all indicators clearly defined and measurable (SMART)?
- ✓ Have you checked that your assumptions still hold true?

- ✓ Do your indicators collect data on how your project affects different groups of people (i.e. are they GESI aware, is data disaggregated for men and women)?

Any changes to project logframes after the award of the grant need to be agreed with the OCEAN Grant Administrator via the change request process (submitted to reports@oceangrants.org.uk).

4.5. Checking the logic of your project design

1. If your **Activities** are delivered as planned, then the tangible results of your activities that will be delivered at the **Output** level.
2. If your **Outputs** are delivered, and the **Assumptions** that you have made hold true or risks effectively mitigated, then the change that you are targeting at the **Outcome** level should occur.
3. If the **Outcome** is delivered, and the **Assumptions** that you have made hold true, then the project will contribute to the ultimate result (**Impact**) that you hope will be achieved.

5. Project Delivery

5.1. Monitoring your project

Project monitoring is the routine collection, analysis and use of information about project progress and results being achieved.

Effective monitoring is critical for good project management, learning and accountability. Better monitoring leads to improved outcomes, enabling project teams to make informed management decisions based on good quality information about project performance, and adapt to change.

All OCEAN grantees are required to monitor their projects, and OCEAN provides report templates to regularly submit monitoring information.

5.1.1. Types of monitoring

Effective project management requires monitoring of the different aspects of each individual project, including:

- **Results monitoring** (Outputs, Outcome and Impact). Tracks whether the project is on track to achieve results, i.e. the milestones and targets defined in the logframe. It also identifies any unintended results (both positive and negative).
- **Activities monitoring** (Processes and workplan/timetable). Tracks the progress of planned activities and processes against a predefined work plan or timetable. Tracks

the use of funding and resources in how activities are delivered, and if they are running to schedule. It identifies if there are delays, or any changes needed to the workplan.
- **Compliance monitoring.** Track that the project delivery is in accordance with local, national government laws, and within donor requirements, including meeting all safeguarding and ethical standards.
- **Situation/context monitoring.** Examines the project's operating environment, monitoring risks and assumptions, as well as political and institutional factors that may influence project progress.
- **Financial monitoring.** Tracks how project funds are used to deliver the project. Monitors value for money, accurate forecasting of costs and budget monitoring, clear and audited accounting procedures, and adequate safeguards to prevent fraud and corruption.
- **Organisational monitoring.** Tracks the capability and capacity of institutions involved with the project, including project partner organisations, to use and manage the project funds as planned, and to remain compliant with agreements, laws and donor requirements.

You will be asked to reflect and report on these areas in your Annual Reports and Final Reports.

5.1.2. Contribution to OCEAN and Blue Planet Fund Objectives

As part of the Blue Planet Fund, the OCEAN Grants Programme will be tracking its contribution to the seven Blue Planet Fund objectives in Table 6 below. OCEAN grantees will be expected to monitor their contribution towards OCEAN and Blue Planet Fund objectives.

Table 5. The seven key objectives of the Blue Planet Fund

Blue Planet Fund Key Outcomes	
Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) and Other Effective Conservation Measures (OECMs)	Countries have increased willingness, capacity, and access to sustainable finance to establish and sustainably, effectively, and inclusively implement and manage MPAs and OECMs within national and international waters.
International and Large-Scale Fisheries	Management of regional and national fisheries and aquaculture is strengthened to deliver sustainable fish stocks and healthy marine ecosystems provide inclusive livelihoods, and reduce overfishing, including by removing or repurposing environmentally harmful subsidies.
Critical marine habitats for coastal resilience	Locally inclusive approaches that protect, sustainably manage and restore marine ecosystems are demonstrated, scaled, and financed with private sector support, leading to improved biodiversity, ecosystem services and climate resilience of coastal communities.
Sustainable Aquaculture	Sustainable, inclusive aquaculture approaches that help restore and avoid harm to the environment are

	demonstrated and increasingly adopted with private sector support.
Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing (IUU)	IUU fishing activities are more effectively monitored, prevented, and deterred and international enablers of IUU are increasingly minimised.
Solid waste and other forms of marine pollution	Waste management systems are strengthened and move towards circular economy approaches that reduce solid waste and other forms of pollution – including ghost gear – entering the marine environment, while supporting inclusive poverty reduction and women's empowerment.
Small scale fisheries management	Local communities have improved fisheries management knowledge, capacities and incentives, supporting more climate resilient, inclusive and sustainable livelihoods.

The Blue Planet Fund MEL team is developing Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to track progress of these outcomes (See Annex 2), and will share a list of Standard Indicators and methodologies that can be used by OCEAN grantees in their monitoring systems.

To do this, the OCEAN team will support grantees to select Standard Indicators relevant to their project. Grantees will be asked to incorporate Standard Indicators into their project logframe at Stage 2.. The Standard Indicators are being developed for use in late 2024.

By asking projects to monitor their contribution to these Standard Indicators, we aim to increase our contribution to the global evidence base for activities that support marine biodiversity protection & restoration, poverty reduction, and capability & capacity development in developing countries.

5.2. Evaluation and Learning

Evaluation and Learning is the process through which the evidence generated by projects is analysed and used to continuously improve a project's ability to achieve results, and refine best practices. OCEAN will support grantees in this process, through providing guidance documents, facilitating networking with the OCEAN community, organising learning events and answering questions through the OCEAN helpdesk: helpdesk@oceangrants.org.uk.

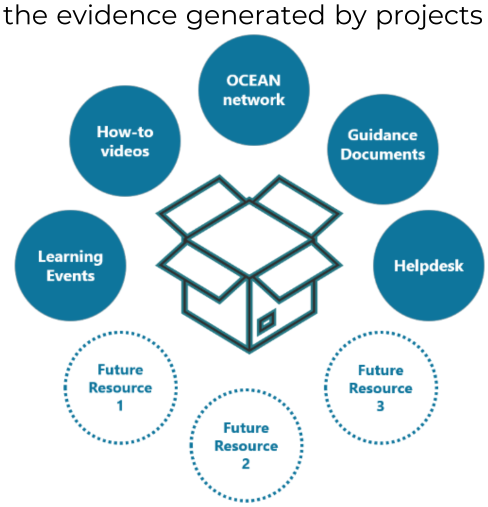


Figure 2. Overview of OCEAN support to project and grantee learning. You can let us know via the helpdesk and webinars what future resources you would like us to develop.

We plan to develop further resources in future according to demand, so let us know if there is something you would find helpful.

5.2.1. Why do we need Evaluation and Learning?

Evaluation can improve project delivery: OCEAN grantees will self-evaluate their progress in their regular MEL reports. In their Annual Report they will self-evaluate progress in the past year, and when the project ends they will self-evaluate overall progress in the Final Report.

Selected projects may also undergo in-person reviews (see Table 3) or be contacted by the OCEAN Independent Evaluator as part of the evaluation and learning process of the OCEAN Grants Programme as a whole. Evaluation can help you make the most of the data you collect during your project monitoring to help you adapt and manage your project, make improvements, and share learning.

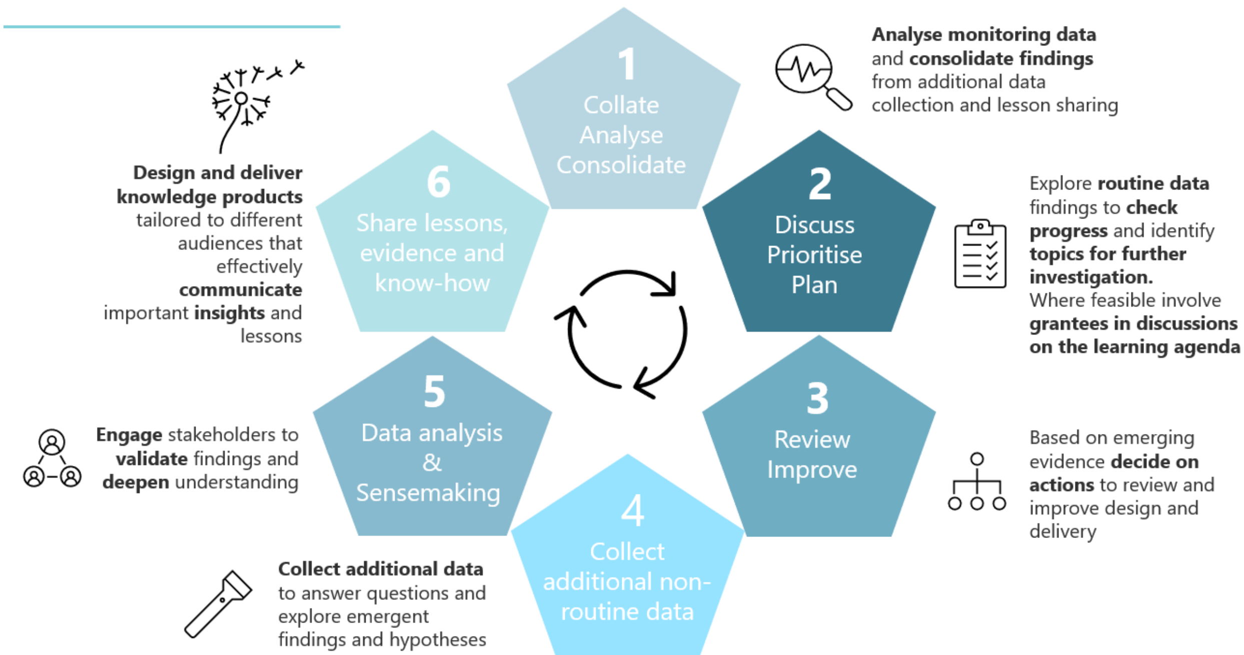


Figure 3. A typical evaluation and learning cycle that can take place during a project to improve its delivery.

Transparency and accountability: All OCEAN grants are funded by UK public money (raised through taxation), so it is important to be able to clearly communicate how public money is being used, including making lessons learnt, evidence, and best practices widely and freely available. For this reason, we aim to make OCEAN project reports publicly available on our website. If you have sensitive information in your reports, you can highlight to us and we can exclude it from publication.

Shared Learning: Projects should look for opportunities to share learnings via their own communication platforms (websites, social media, workshops, publications), and the communication platforms of others, including the OCEAN Community platforms.

Building the global evidence base: Building the available and accessible evidence on project delivery, what works and what does not, including sharing best practices, will allow future projects to use proven approaches, fill evidence gaps, and deliver greater impact towards the objectives of OCEAN and the Blue Planet Fund.

All projects should aim to proactively share and promote lessons learnt and best practices in their reports, with the OCEAN Community and beyond.

6. Gender Equality and Social Inclusion

Gender equality and social inclusion considerations should cut across all project design, monitoring, evaluation and learning.

When designing and delivering your project, you should consider how you will contribute to promoting equality between persons of different gender and social characteristics, with activities that can deliver equitable net benefits for all.

What is gender equality? What is social inclusion? Why are they important?

Gender Equality is about addressing inequalities and transforming the distribution of opportunities, choices and resources available to girls, women and non-binary individuals so that they have equal power to shape their lives and participate in the process thereby increasing equality between people of all genders.

Evidence from the *Ecosystem Services for Poverty Alleviation* (www.espa.ac.uk) programme demonstrates that individuals access resources differently depending on their gender and social background. In addition to the strong evidential basis, regard for and a prioritisation of gender equality and social inclusion is clearly set out in amongst others: the International Development (Gender Equality) Act 2014, UK's International Development Strategy (2022) and UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Remember that **stakeholders are not homogenous groups**, and have additional layers of diversity and social identity including gender, ethnicity, caste, age, religion, sexuality, disability status, and income that need to be considered within the design and delivery of projects.

Social Inclusion refers to the process of improving the terms for individuals and groups to take part in society, and the process of improving the ability, opportunity and dignity of people disadvantaged and historically excluded from decision making and spheres of influence on the basis of their identity to take part in society.

To shape and inform all marine protection and poverty reduction actions, it is **vital to understand** gender and social characteristics in differentiating marine protection practices, knowledge acquisition and usage, as well as inequalities in control over resources.

As no action is neutral, by not giving due consideration to gender equality and social inclusion (GESI), projects could unintentionally exacerbate inequalities, reinforce barriers or cause harm to already disadvantaged groups. Projects that have successfully considered or even mainstreamed GESI appropriately into their design at an early stage, including assessing the implications for everyone, are considered to result in more equitable outcomes because they understand and reflect their community needs.

All projects are expected to report **indicators disaggregated by GESI** where applicable and to provide **at least one GESI related risk as part of their risk framework**, both at the application stage and at the project implementation stage. Some questions to consider early on:

- What are the prevailing gender and social norms in the implementation country in relation to division of labour, access and control of resources, and ability to participate in decision making?
- How do these prevailing norms affect the project, in terms of what it can achieve, how will it engage with stakeholders and how it needs to be designed?
- How will the project impact (positively and negatively) girls, boys, women and men in their domestic, economic and community roles and responsibilities and in term of access to and control over assets?
- How will the project ensure equitable opportunities for all to influence and participate in decision making?
- Does the intervention address underlying barriers that exclude certain groups from accessing opportunities created?
- How will risks and unintended negative consequences be identified, avoided or mitigated against, and monitored?

Some additional guidance on GESI

For help on how to integrate gender and social equity into your project, please refer to Integrating Gender & Social Equity into Conservation Programming.

7. Further Reading

If you would like to learn more about project design and MEL you can explore the following resources:

- https://www.conservationleadershipprogramme.org/grants/project-manuals/
- https://conservationstandards.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2020/10/FOS-ME-Design-How-to-Guide-v.-2019-02.pdf
- https://conservationstandards.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2020/10/Audubon-toolkit.pdf
- https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5e96cab9d3bf7f412b2264b1/HMT_Magenta_Book.pdf
- https://www.betterevaluation.org/
- https://www.thegrassrootscollective.org/theory-of-change-development (in English and Spanish)
- https://pm4ngos.org/methodologies-guides/theory-of-change/ (in English, Portuguese, Spanish, Arabic)
- https://www.betterevaluation.org/frameworks-guides/managers-guide-evaluation/scope-evaluation/describe-theory-change (in English and French)
- https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5e96cab9d3bf7f412b2264b1/HMT_Magenta_Book.pdf (see page 25, in English)

8. Glossary

Activities	The actions carried out by the project to effect the desired change and lead to outputs, outcomes and impact in the results chain.
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.
Biodiversity	"Biological diversity" is the variability among living organisms from all sources including terrestrial, marine and other aquatic ecosystems, and the ecological complexes of which they are part; this includes diversity within species, between species and of ecosystems.
Blue Planet Fund	OCEAN is a part of the Blue Planet Fund, the UK's £500 million programme supporting developing countries to protect the marine environment and reduce poverty.
Capability & Capacity	Capability refers to the types of ability (skills and knowledge) required for a task; Capacity refers to the amount of ability at a point in time to deliver a task.
Country	Normally refers (unless otherwise stated) to any country on the eligible country list, and not countries such as the UK.
Defra	OCEAN is a programme of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), UK Government.
Enabling conditions	The prerequisite conditions for the effective and efficient implementation of a project. At any given site, a series of enabling conditions influences the likelihood that the project's activities will result in the desired outcome.
Evidence	Ranges in format, quality and relevance and includes documented and undocumented experiences, data, studies, policies, best practices etc. but is particularly valued when it is quality assured, accessible and applicable.
GESI	Gender Equality and Social Inclusion
Indicators	An indicator is the quantitative or qualitative measure to track change and the achievement of a project output or outcome.
Impact	The Impact is your project's long-term objective, and is often a contribution to a wider advance in the field, for example, in conservation and poverty reduction. Note that the Impact will not be achieved solely by the project and will often be achieved outside of the timeframe of the project.
Inputs	Inputs are what you put in to a project (e.g. time, money, resources) to gain your expected outputs (e.g. increased knowledge, skill, awareness)

	and achieve your outcome (e.g. behaviour change and improved livelihoods).
Lead Organisation	The grantee organisation who will administer the grant and coordinate the delivery of the project, accepting the Terms and Conditions of the Grant on behalf of the project.
Logframe	Logical frameworks, commonly known as Logframes, are a monitoring tool to measure progress against the Results Chain (Activities -> Outputs -> Outcome -> Impact), comparing planned and actual results using indicators, baselines, and targets.
Matched Funding	Additional finance that is secured to help meet the total cost of the project, including public and private sources, as well as quantified in-kind contributions.
Multidimensional Poverty	Poverty is multidimensional and not solely about a lack of money; it encompasses a range of issues that hinder people's abilities to meet their basic needs and better their life with dignity including a lack of income, land, or other means of access to the basic material goods and services needed to survive with dignity, or a deficiency in healthcare, security, education or necessary social relations.
OCEAN Expert Committee	An independent panel of experts selected by Defra to assess your application. The OEC will provide recommendations to Defra on which projects to fund, and will provide feedback to applicants on how to improve their proposals for future submissions.
OCEAN Grant Administrator	The OCEAN Grant Administrator is NIRAS and is the first point of contact for projects and applicants.
OCEAN Independent Evaluator	The OCEAN Independent Evaluator supports the independent monitoring, evaluation and learning of the OCEAN Grants Programme.
Outcome	The Outcome is a project’s main objective. It is the change you expect to achieve as a result of and within the timeframe of this project. There can only be one Outcome for a project. It should identify what will change, and who will benefit. There should be a clear link between the Outcome and the Impact.
Outputs	Outputs are the specific, tangible results from the completion of more than one activity. Their delivery is totally attributable to your project; they would not happen without your project. Outputs will provide the conditions necessary to achieve your intended Outcome. Most projects will have three or four Outputs in order to achieve the intended Outcome.
Partner(s)	Have a formal governance role in the project, and a formal relationship with the project that may involve staff costs and/or budget management responsibilities.
Pathway to Change	Pathway to Change refers to a written section in the application form. The Pathway to Change describes how your planned activities will change the

	current situation and address a marine environment challenge that is linked with multi-dimensional poverty.
Results Chain	A tool to show the linear process of what a project is doing and why, through describing or visualising the steps in which inputs and activities lead to the desired change (i.e. through outputs, outcomes and impact).
Scale	The ability to take a proven approach and evidence to deliver greater impact either through larger grants or through uptake by stakeholders or other mechanisms.
Stakeholder	A person, organisation or group of people who have an interest or concern in the project and its impact. They are consulted, engaged and/or participate in project activities. They can also be partners, but if not, they would not have a budget management, or a formal governance role, within the project.
Standard Indicator	A Standard Indicator is an indicator that can be used across multiple projects to allow us to aggregate our results across all OCEAN projects. Our Standard Indicators are tightly linked to our fund-level Theory of Change and logframe and will allow us to track the achievements of the programme as a whole.
Theory of Change	A comprehensive tool to describe how a project will lead to a desired change by outlining the problem, the drivers, and the assumptions underlying the project activities and their expected outputs. Its explicit about the causal pathways, links between interventions, outputs, outcome, and impact. Includes an analysis of barriers and enablers as well as indicators of success. Often set out in a diagram and narrative form.

9. Annex 1. Logframe Template

Summary	Indicators	Means of Verification	Baseline (the status of your indicator before starting your activities)	Milestones (the progress on your indicator you aim to achieve each financial year)	Target (what you aim to achieve for each indicator by end of project)
Impact: One impact statement only. This is the wider objective your project will contribute to in long term (can be beyond the project lifetime).					
Outcome: One outcome statement only – this is what you aim to achieve by the end of your project.	0.1 0.2 0.3 etc.	0.1 0.2 0.3 etc.	0.1 0.2 0.3 etc.	0.1 0.2 0.3 etc.	0.1 0.2 0.3 etc.
Assumptions & risks: The key assumptions, risks, enabling conditions or barriers that affect your project's ability to achieve its Outcome.					
Output 1: A tangible result achieved as a result of your activities	1.1 1.2 1.3 etc.	1.1 1.2 1.3 etc.	1.1 1.2 1.3 etc.	1.1 1.2 1.3 etc.	1.1 1.2 1.3 etc.
Assumptions & risks: The key assumptions, risks, enabling conditions or barriers that affect your project's ability to achieve Output 1.					

Output 2: A tangible result achieved as a result of your activities					
Assumptions & risks: The key assumptions, risks, enabling conditions or barriers that affect your project's ability to achieve Output 2.					
Output 3:					
Assumptions & risks: The key assumptions, risks, enabling conditions or barriers that affect your project's ability to achieve Output 3.					
Activities: (each activity is numbered according to the output that it will contribute towards, for example 1.1, 1.2 and 1.3 are contributing to Output 1) 1.1 1.2 1.3 etc.					

- You can delete the guidance text in the table, but remember to clearly number and label your Activities, Outputs and Indicators.
- You can additional Outputs if needed. We recommend between 2-5 outputs.
- Try to make your indicators SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Timebound)
- If you don't yet have baseline data, tell us when and how you plan to collect it.
- Remember to disaggregate your results by the effect on different groups (e.g. men and women; national and regional stakeholders; mammals, fish, birds).
- An excel template is also available on the resources page of our website: www.oceangrants.org.uk

10. Annex 2. Draft Blue Planet Fund KPIs

Draft Blue Planet Fund (BPF) Key Performance Indicators as of February 2024.

BPF Portfolio Headline KPI	Sub-Indicators
1. Volume of finance mobilised for purposes which match BPF objectives (£)	a. Private finance b. Public finance
2.1. Number of people with improved climate outcomes due to BPF finance (#)	a. Ability to adapt to the effects of climate change b. Climate resilience
2.2. Number of people with improved socio-economic outcomes due to BPF finance (#)	a. Income
3. Increased effective and equitable representation and participation of coastal resources stakeholders in management (score)	a. Increased representative and effective systems of co-management b. Increased capacity of all resource users to participate in co-management c. Increased and/ or improved community organising
Disaggregation for 2.1, 2.2, 3 (and all sub-indicators): Gender – focus on Number of women and girls affected by marginalisation; Age; Location; Disability (TBC)	
4. Extent of activity to detect and prevent IUU fishing, including monitoring, data collection, and use of legal frameworks and policies, with the aim of increasing transparency (score)	[**Potentially** Increase in monitoring & data collection for compliance; Increase in new or improved legal & policy instruments, etc.]
5. Net change in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions – GHG emissions reduced or avoided due to BPF finance (tonnes CO2e)	a. GHG emissions prevented b. GHG emissions sequestered / absorbed
6. Area of marine ecosystems protected, enhanced or under sustainable management practices due to BPF finance (ha)	a. Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) b. Area under sustainable management
7. Amount of waste removed from and prevented from entering the marine environment, and losses avoided in marine-related value chains due to BPF finance (tonnes)	

BPF Portfolio Secondary KPIs
1. Food security
2. Employment access and job security, and/or economic resilience
3. Health and wellbeing
4. Natural resource access rights and empowerment
5. ICF KPI 10 (Value of ecosystem services generated or protected) and or natural capital accounting (NCA)