

Develop the recommendations and action plans

The aim here is to outline action plans suggested by the Esteem process. This substep provides a systematic process for outlining action plans, as well as checklists that help to develop different kinds of plans. Depending on the needs of the project four kinds of plans can be needed:

- a) A short-term action plan (always necessary)
- b) A collaboration plan (necessary if many options were identified that require collaboration)
- c) A long-term monitoring and capacity-building plan (necessary in most cases)
- d) A communication plan (optional: depending on the needs of the project)

The consultant constructs a first version of each plan, and submits them together with the material assembled in the previous steps for discussion and completion together with the project manager. In due course, these actions should also be included in relevant parts of the project documentation (planning documents, timelines, budget, contract terms, staff instructions, strategic plans, Board agendas, etc.).

Short-term action plan

This plan is primarily based on activities classified as type (1) in terms of feasibility and capacity for action – i.e., actions that the project manager can take immediately and unilaterally. Planning is assisted by the checklist presented below. Before devising a plan, however, it is necessary to consider the totality of actions listed in this column: Are they alternative or complementary? Can all of these actions be taken simultaneously? Where necessary, activities should be prioritized before, during and after constructing the short-term action plan.

NB: the short-term action plan deals with actions that the project manager can launch unilaterally. They may not be the most urgent or important actions. Thus, there may be urgent actions also in the collaboration plan, and it may be necessary to launch both types of actions in parallel. Thus, short-term does not necessarily mean “most urgent”.

For this purpose, the consultant drafts and then finalizes together with the project manager a short-term action plan, which consists of a list of recommendations outlining the next steps to be taken toward its realization (see checklist below). This should include a list of actions to be taken, including sub-actions such as securing resources, allocating staff time, as well as necessary revisions to project documents and necessary interfacing with external stakeholders. It can also be helpful to list necessary revisions to project plans, necessary interfacing with external stakeholders, as well as timing (noted, e.g., an interval, a deadline or “continuously”).

Checklist for short-term action plan

Action (picked selectively from Column 1 in the Capacity for Action table)	Issue(s) that this action addresses		Necessary revisions to project plans	Necessary interfacing with external stakeholders	Timing

Collaboration plan

The collaboration plan incorporates actions classified as type (2) in terms of feasibility and capacity for action – i.e., actions that the project manager can only take in collaboration with others. The consultant drafts a first version of the collaboration plan and finalizes it together with the project manager, using the checklist below.

The issues listed in this table can imply actions such as collaborative projects together with other actors (e.g., through industry associations, in co-operation with the municipality), stakeholders to be involved, networks to cultivate, new actors to enroll, external activities to encourage. The consultant should identify the type of actions recommended for each category (where relevant), and where possible, also outline actions that can help in realizing the plan.

NB: the key words for actions in the first column are merely indicative: not every type of action may be relevant for each project, and some projects may require a different type of collaborative action.

For example, a “collaborative project to launch” could be a study on tourists’ views on wind turbines, and actions could be securing finance for the study, setting up a collaborative steering group, and contracting a research agency. Some collaboration actions may also imply revisions to existing practices, e.g., including a representative of an important stakeholder group on the Board of the project. These should be listed in the “sub-actions and revisions” column.

Even if none of the options for collaboration identified in the Step 4 appear acceptable or feasible in the light of information gained in Step 5 and substep 6.1 (i.e., were marked red), it is important to include all collaborations that might be crucial for the survival of the project in the collaboration plan. The consultant should try to think of ways to find new solutions for issues that threaten the project, and to discover ways in which the project manager can at least keep communication channels open with opposing stakeholders. It can also be helpful to make a note of with whom the action should be taken, necessary actions and revisions to existing practices, as well as timing (noted, e.g., an interval, a deadline or “continuously”).

Checklist for collaboration plan

Actions to be taken together with other stakeholders (picked from Column 2 of the Feasibility Table)	Issue(s) that this action addresses	Type of action recommended	With whom?		Timing
Collaborative projects to launch?					
Stakeholders to engage?					
Networks to cultivate?					
New actors to enroll?					
Links between actors to strengthen?					
External activities to encourage?					
Communication channels to keep open?					

Long-term monitoring and capacity-building plan (optional)

Depending on the type of project, it may be useful to also make a plan (or at least a list) of issues to monitor and capacities that are likely to be useful in the future for the project or the project managing organization, or for the organization managing the facility developed in the project.

The long-term monitoring and capacity-building plan is based on the issues identified as important, but for which there is no solution within the reach and resources of the project manager, and which cannot even be addressed in the near term through collaboration. It is important, however, to keep these issues on the management agenda: monitor, revisit at a later time, or minimize the damage or risks caused by these issues through communication efforts (see communication plan).

This long-term plan focuses on the monitoring of external dynamics that the project manager cannot influence, but needs to be aware of. The type of actions recommended in this table are different kinds of monitoring activities (e.g., through web searches, regular surveys or by participating in specific discussion forums). They can also be future alternatives which are not currently available, but could be explored for future use. They can also include pitfalls to avoid in the project in the future – i.e., behavior of the project manager that has led to problems in the project, problems in governance structure, or other issues that need revising in order to avoid problems in the future.

NB: the key words for actions in the first column are merely indicative: not every type of action may be relevant for each project, and some projects may require a different type of collaborative action.

It can also be helpful to make a note of necessary actions and revisions to existing practices, as well as an indicative timing (noted, e.g., as an interval, a deadline or “continuously”).

Checklist for monitoring and capacity-building plan

Monitoring actions	Issue(s) that this action addresses	Type of action recommended		Timing
Issues to monitor (e.g., controversies, organized groups, legislative developments, technical advances)?				
Issues to discuss with project partners?				
Alternative routes to reflect on?				
Future alternatives to explore?				
Potential opportunities for future development?				
Capacities to develop?				
Ambitions to abandon?				
Pitfalls to avoid?				

In due course, these supporting, long-term activities should also be made visible in the project documents, and most importantly, in the management and interaction practices and capacities of the project. Project managers should be encouraged to think about and list concrete ways in which such long-term, strategic activities could be made part of the routine (and formal) management of the project, for example, by allocating staff resources to specific activities, by providing training, by or by regularly including issues on the agenda of the project management team or Board.

Communication plan (optional)

The Esteem process is likely to bring up new communication needs. Some projects may have a well-elaborated communication plan, in which case it is worth reviewing the existing plan and adding new items where necessary. In some cases, where no suitable communication plan exists, the consultant can help the project manager by drawing up a communication plan. A third option is to include the communication plan into the three action plans (short-term plan, collaboration plan and long-term monitoring and capacity-building plan) by adding an additional column for “communications”.

The communication plan focuses on how the results of the ESTEEM process are communicated to external stakeholders (those involved in the Step 5 workshop and others). The communication plan is drafted by the consultant and finalized together with the project manager on the basis of the solutions reached in the short-term, collaboration and monitoring plans.

Proposed format

Hereafter we provide an indicative content (main message) of the type of communication plan under consideration:

Introduction

- Description of the project (e.g., summary project present vision from Step 2) and brief summary of stakeholder consultation and involvement engaged in until the present (Step 2 and Step 5)

Short-term plans of the project

- Communication of modifications and negotiation processes that the project manager is committed to launching (including timing and actions where possible)

Long-term plan

- Communication of issues that the project manager cannot deal with within the power, resources and structure of the current project. Brief discussion of potential future collaborations and monitoring activities to deal with these issues in the future.

Audience/target selection

The target groups and formats/media for the communication plan can be outlined using the following checklists:

Checklists for communication target groups and formats/media

Target groups	Formats/media
<p>Position vis-à-vis the project:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • close-by stakeholders • stakeholders with an affinity to the project • indifferent stakeholders • opposing stakeholders <p>Type of social actors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NGOs • public administration • private sectors companies • techno-scientific experts • non associated person (“those affected” as consumers, employers or neighbours) • the general public 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Face-to-face meetings (one-off or regular) • Public information and discussion sessions • Regular or upcoming local events to which project communications can be linked (e.g., presence at a local fair) • Regular or upcoming events pertaining to a specific community to which project communications can be linked (e.g., speech at an NGO sponsored seminar) • Local and national press, television, radio • Web communications

Using this checklist, the consultant picks out target groups and formats for communication. The recommended combination of target groups and formats/media can be summarized in a table (see example below), which also enables the consultant and project manager to make sure that all groups are adequately addressed. It may also be useful to make a note of the recommended timing or time span of the communication activity (noted, e.g., as an interval, a deadline or “continuously”).

Communication plan: table format example

Target group: position vis-à-vis stakeholders	Type of stakeholder	Format for communication	Timing/time span
close-by (partners)	private sector companies public administration	written and face-to-face communication at Board meeting	
stakeholders with affinity to the project	some of the local residents in x	participation in local events public meeting in x	
	national-level NGOs	article for NGO newsletter	

indifferent stakeholders	some of the local residents in x	public meeting in x participation in local events	
opposing stakeholders	some of the local residents in y	public meeting in y regular meetings with key representatives of the local opposition	
everybody	all	press release, Web information	

It is also important to note that the communication plan should not only be based on the preferred communication formats and media of the PM or consultant, but should also take into account the natural and preferred communication channels of the target groups. The communication should be brought as close as possible to the stakeholders, and face-to-face and interactive communications should be favored in the plan as an important complement to one-way, non-target group specific communications.

It is also important to list what communications should be available for everybody, and how the project can keep in touch and interact with specific stakeholders. Continuity of communications and establishment of regular formats for meeting and keeping in touch with the relevant stakeholders is essential.