

TOPIC 3:

STAGES IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF PROJECT PROPOSALS

In agriculture, as well as in other sectors, project funding implies knowledge about the project cycle/life of the project, i.e. about the stages during which a project, as a short-term venture of a certain scope and value, is created, implemented and finalised.

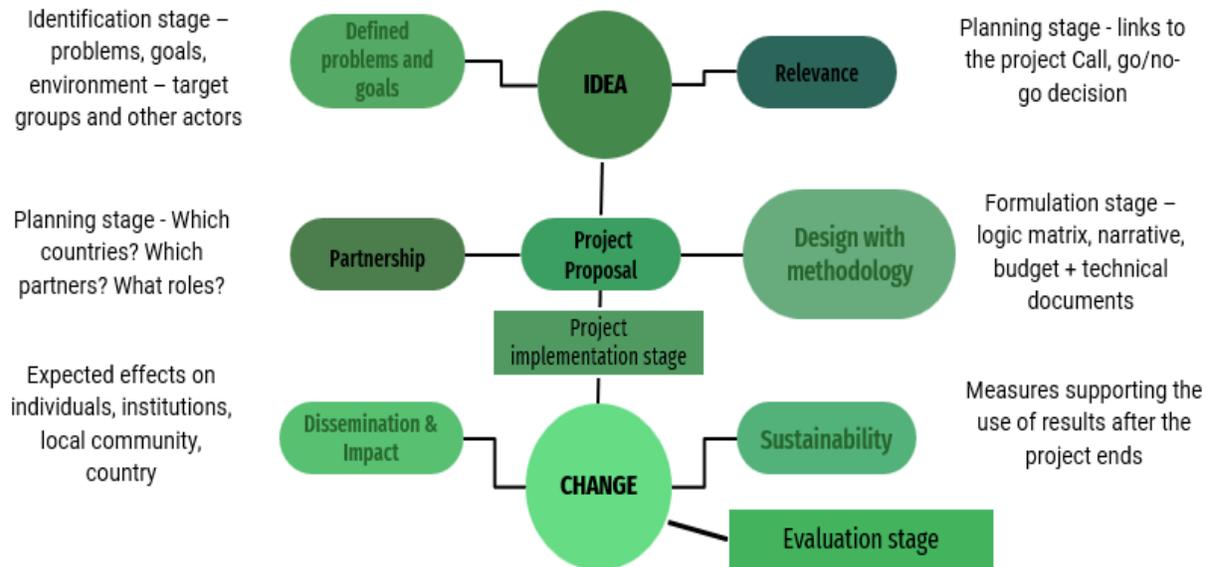
The project cycle is a topic of importance for both donors, and fund users. Thus, there are several different approaches to defining the stages of the cycle (the most frequently used explanations are those according to the PMI - Project Management Institute, and those according to the European Commission PCM - Project Cycle Management). In this Handbook, the authors' clarifications are mostly guided by the PCM methodology reinforced by an authentic interpretation of individual stages and associated elements relating to financing through the allocation of grants.

The project/programme cycle undergoes five different stages – identification, planning, design, implementation and evaluation. After the fifth stage, the available funds are re-programmed, and a new cycle is initiated. In this segment of the Handbook we consider in more detail the first three stages of the project cycle because they relate to the period of applying for project funds, i.e. the preparation of project proposals. The stages of implementation and evaluation are not the subject of our interest in this Handbook because they concern the period from obtaining project funds to the end of the project lifetime, i.e. they deal with project management (see the picture below).

Projects tend to be developed from the initial idea, through the project proposal to project implementation, in order to achieve a specific, desired change. During the identification and planning stages one is still in the domain of the project idea. However, during the design stage, the idea is formulated into a project proposal.

During the implementation stage, a change of the current state and/or behaviour occurs, which one can measure in the evaluation stage.

Figure 1: Stages in the Development of Project Proposals



2.1. Identification

What do we have in mind? The first or initial stage of the project cycle (hereafter: PC) is identification. In the context of the PC, identification most often refers to the questions *What is happening, to whom and why?* Within the identification stage, we usually talk about the following skills:

- The ability to recognise needs, problems, actors, and solutions for changing the existing conditions in a given context,
- The ability to recognise an opportunity for a change (for instance, identification of funding sources),
- The ability to see the context of events, i.e. the bigger picture within which the change should take place.

Identification can be internally motivated (personal, individual, authentic) or externally motivated - coming from another person. Commitment to the project idea is greater if identification is based on the internal motivation of an individual/organisation/community. Such motivation is based on specific values that an individual and/or community strives for, as well as on specific needs that should be addressed according to a rationally set order of priorities.

Discussion. During the stage of initial reflection about the project (forming the basic idea), which comes from an individual or an organisation, one performs an analysis of problems, solutions and relevance, as well as of direct users and other actors. In other words, we ask ourselves who our project idea will have an impact on, and how will stakeholders respond to our idea. The identification stage serves to better understand the priorities that appear to be in conflict, and this is achieved through a participatory discussion between the main actors under appropriate conditions.

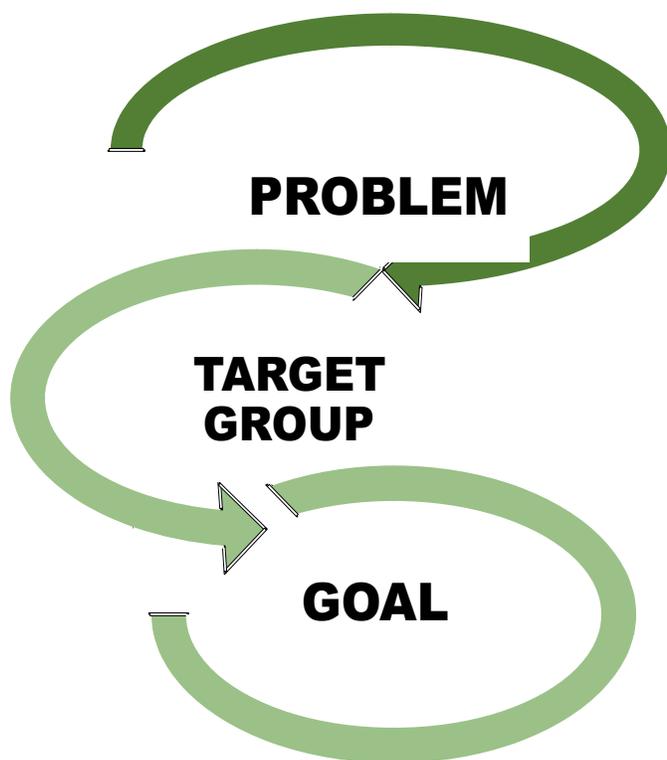


Figure 2: Identification– problem, target group, goal

The goal of the identification stage is to clearly define the main problem, as well as the secondary ones closely related to it in the given context (negative aspects of the current situation), and then to observe specific cause-and-effect relationships, i.e. the

effects that occur as a consequence of each observed problem, as well as those which are at the root of defined problems.

A graphical representation (visualisation) of such analysis is called a **Problem Tree**. The next step involves redefining the identified problems into goals, i.e. switching them from a negative value to a positive one in order to obtain a **Goal Tree** which reflects the future positive reality that we aim to reach by implementing our idea.

Steps in defining the **Problem Tree**:

1. Identify the main problem
2. Identify secondary problems
3. Analyse problems and establish their hierarchy
4. Identify several causes for each problem (below the problem)
5. Identify the consequences of each problem (above the problem)
6. Connect the causes and effects by using arrows (see example below)

Steps in defining the **Goal Tree**:

1. Redefine negative aspects into positive ones,
2. Goals arise from problems.

In defining the **Problem Tree**, as well as the **Goal Tree**, it is necessary to have in mind all participants involved in the project, i.e. stakeholders (interested parties). Stakeholders can be categorised as internal (consortium, i.e. project partners), and external (all actors who have or could have an interest, i.e. impact relating to the project idea).

Stakeholders' mapping and analysis can take different forms - from a simple tabular presentation of interested parties (mostly external relative to the initiators of the project idea; depending on the topic, internal stakeholders within the initiator's organisation may be relevant), and their needs and expectations, interests and the

influence, over graphs/matrixes to more complex forms of analysis and documents. Stakeholders' mapping and analysis usually involves the following steps:

1. Identifying stakeholders (consortium members, target groups, beneficiaries, other interested parties). In projects thematically related to the field of agriculture, the most frequently encountered stakeholders are as follows:

- Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development,
- Local self-government units,
- Agricultural faculties and institutes,
- Farms,
- Agricultural entrepreneurs,
- Associations of farmers, agricultural cooperatives,
- Agricultural pharmacies,
- Advisory services.

2. Description of stakeholders

- Number of members of each of the specified target groups and beneficiaries; relevance to the sector,
- The needs and challenges they face,
- How they are involved in the project,
- Selection method.

3. Grouping of stakeholders into categories according to their potential interests and impact on the project:

- Those that should only be followed – monitored,
- Those that need to be informed,
- Those whose needs need to be met,
- Those who should be actively engaged in the project.

At this step, it is necessary to group stakeholders into four categories relative to their interests and impact (see the matrix on the next page).

In the first category one can encounter stakeholders with a minor interest and impact, and these are marked as stakeholders that we do not need to pay too much attention to (just monitor).

The second category includes stakeholders with a major interest, but minor impact, that need to be informed about project results.

In the third category one encounters those with a minor interest, but major impact, and the project should respond to their needs.

The fourth category includes stakeholders who have a major interest and impact on the project, so it is necessary to keep them actively engaged throughout the project by seeking their opinions, arranging guest appearances related to project activities - including trips, and the like.

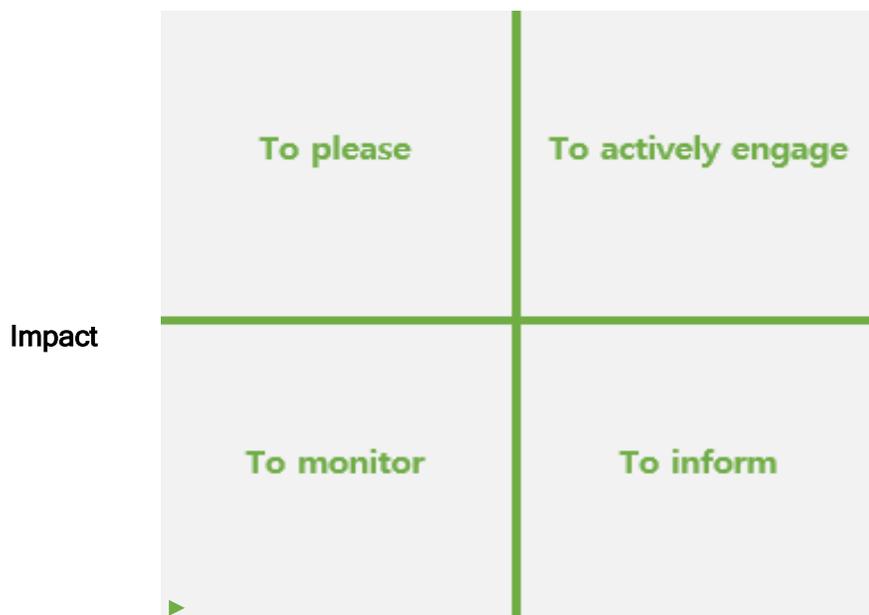
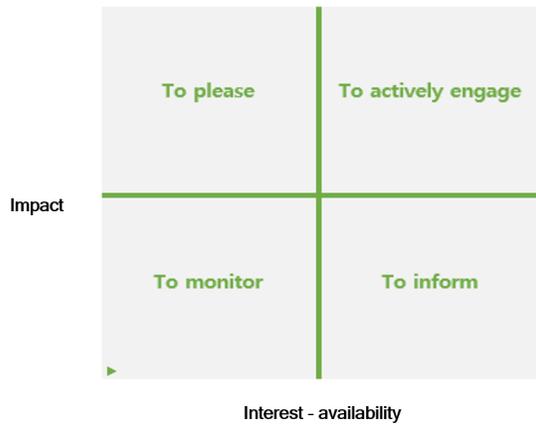
The goal of stakeholders' mapping and analysis is to better understand the problem, but also to assess the competition, and structure the consortia, i.e. partnerships.

Outcomes and examples. The main outcomes of the identification stage are *the mapping and analysis of stakeholders* (interested parties), and the construction of the *Problem/Goals Tree*.

Who are the stakeholders ?	Target groups and consortium members (project partners)	Beneficiaries
Identification	<i>The population directly affected by the project which is involved in project activities, and without which the project would not be possible.</i>	<i>The population that does not directly participate in the project, but they are expected to significantly benefit from it, especially in terms of medium and long-term impact.</i>
Description	<i>Number and description</i>	<i>Number and description</i>

	<p><i>Needs and shortcomings (challenges)</i></p> <p><i>How does the project meet their needs?</i></p> <p><i>How are they involved in the project?</i></p> <p><i>What is the method of selection of target groups?</i></p>	<p><i>Needs and shortcomings (challenges)</i></p>
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Table 2: Mapping and analysis of stakeholders



Interest - availability

Figure 3: Stakeholders' Grouping Matrix

Figure 4: Problem Tree



Figure 5: Objective/solution Tree



Having a good idea is always a good idea! However, in order to be sure that it can be turned into a project, a more detailed look at the environment is necessary. This is where the the planning stage begins.