

Project Design

Moment in Project Life	Design Tasks
Initial design phase	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Assess feasibility, scope and rationale of project. - Determine the goal and objectives. - Outline main project outputs and key activities. - Outline project implementation process and structures. - Develop the budget and specify staffing levels.
Start-up phase	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop understanding of project goals and objectives with key stakeholders. - Review and revise the initial design. - Design and plan work in sufficient detail to allow for implementation. - Develop a detailed operational system.
Annual review of the work plan and budget	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Check if the outputs, purpose-level objectives and goal remain relevant; adjust. - Decide what activities and tasks are necessary to deliver outputs.
Supervision (recurrent)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Discuss overall progress of the project. - Decide on changes that should be made in the annual work plan. - Assess any potential changes in the overall design.
End of the early implementation phase	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Review overall project strategy in light of early implementation experience. - Develop recommendations for the work plan in the next phase. - Negotiate any significant changes to project design for the next phase.
Mid-term review (or reviews between phases if the project has a flexible lending mechanism)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Review achievement of outputs and progress towards the purpose(s) and goal. - Assess appropriateness of the overall strategy. - Redesign the project as necessary.
Beginning of the phase-out period	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identify the priorities of final activities in order to maximise impact. - Review and adjust strategies with a view to sustained impact.

Good Practices for Project Design

There are six good practices in any design process of a development intervention. They are critical during formulation and start-up and when any revision of the project is undertaken, such as during annual and mid-term reviews.

1. Involve all relevant stakeholders in participatory processes of project design.
2. Undertake a thorough situation analysis, together with primary stakeholders, to learn as much as possible about the project context as a basis for designing a project strategy and implementation processes that are relevant.
3. Develop a logical and feasible project strategy that clearly expresses what will be achieved (goal and purposes) and how it will be achieved (outputs and activities).
4. Agree and focus on cross-cutting issues of poverty, gender and participation.
5. Plan for long-term capacity development and sustainability to ensure that the project contributes to the empowerment and self-reliance of local people and institutions.
6. Build in opportunities and activities that support learning and enable adaptation of the project strategy during implementation.

One of the options: Using the Logical Framework Approach

This process was originally developed in the 1970s to improve the quality and clarity of project design. The LFA process is based on participation of key stakeholders, including primary stakeholders. The project design that results from the LFA process is summarised in a table that is referred to as the logical framework matrix, or logframe. While the LFA has become widely accepted as useful for project planning, it also has some clearly recognised problems. So the standard LFA planning process has been improved in different ways over the years. Flexible and critical use of the LFA means:

- valuing outcomes (achievements between tangible outputs and long-term impacts) by making them explicit in the logframe;
- avoiding over-simplification of large projects or programmes by using multiple purposes, a cascading logframe or a five-layer logframe;
- including people's visions and aspirations and identifying opportunities during the planning rather than focusing only on problem analysis;
- recognising that quantifiable indicators and qualitative information, such as opinions and stories of change, are needed for applicant;
- guarding against bureaucratic control by reporting more on outcomes, (interim) impacts and planned improvements – and less on activities and outputs;
- avoiding token use of the logframe matrix by ensuring it represents the shared vision for the development intervention, by using it as a management tool and by keeping it updated;

[*The Logframe Handbook. A Logical Framework Approach to Project Cycle Management.*](#)

Note that a project can be designed well in different ways – and that the LFA is **only one** of these ways. Also, using the LFA is certainly no guarantee of ending up with a good project design. You need to be both critical and creative to achieve a design process that is appropriate for the context.

Good project design requires questioning, sharing and negotiation. This happens when good information is available and when differing perspectives between community people, scientists, NGO staff and government officers are discussed openly and negotiated.