

Setting Targets

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In your M&E plan, you will also need to set targets for your indicators. That is, you will need to determine the size or amount of the intended change. In this lecture, I'll talk about how to set targets.

A target is the desired end point for an indicator, a specific, planned level of a result to be achieved within a specific timeframe with a given amount of resources. Setting targets is often a requirement for performance-based funding.

For example, if your indicator is "Percentage of households vaccinated" and your target is 90% coverage (by the end of Q4), then you have a benchmark (90%) to use for assessing your progress during the project. It's important to set targets because tracking progress toward that end point assists with resource allocation and improves project management. It helps you (and other stakeholders) determine whether progress is being made according to originally envisioned expectations.

In some cases, project targets may already be determined by your donor. However, in cases where you need to set your own project targets, you should consult with stakeholders so that everyone understands what the project is committed to accomplishing. The process of setting targets will orient stakeholders to the tasks you expect your project to achieve and can help motivate those involved.

When actual data substantially deviate from an established target, it should trigger adjustments in expectations for results, or adaptations in project implementation or design. For instance, if you reach the end of Q2 and you only have 30% of target households covered by your vaccination campaign, you may decide your original 90% target is unrealistic. Perhaps there is resistance to the vaccination, or severe weather has made travel difficult, or you face a

stockout issue, or the deliverable is consuming more of your budget than you'd initially anticipated. When this occurs, you will need to discuss the situation with stakeholders and decide on the best way forward based on your actual data, your experience, and availability of remaining resources.

As you set project targets, it can be helpful to consider past trends, expert opinions, research findings, client expectations, and what has been accomplished elsewhere. Just like the selection of your indicators, with targets you will also need to think about what the potential achievements might be given your time frame, resources, opportunities, and constraints. This will help you balance your targets so that they are realistic and feasible, but still appropriately ambitious and in line with similar interventions in your field.

There are different approaches that can be followed when going through the process of setting targets. One common approach is to establish a final target and then plan your progress in between. In this case, you would work with stakeholders to determine the final targets you expect the project to achieve, then decide on specific targets to be achieved at specific time

periods or intervals/stages (e.g., 'end of Q2') throughout the life of the project. Another method is to establish annual or intermediate targets. This means that you would reset new targets each time based on the progress your project has made. No matter which approach is used, it is critical that stakeholders regularly review progress and readjust targets, if necessary. This might occur annually or during a mid-project review.