

IMPACT FRAMEWORK FOR MEDIA PROJECTS

The impact framework provides a suite of tools and guidelines to help set targets, track, and measure the impact of activities in media projects in a clear and structured manner. It enables media project teams to assess risks, monitor progress towards defined targets, and, if needed, make timely corrections.

Originally developed by [International Media Support \(IMS\)](#) for the [Local Media for Democracy \(LM4D\) programme](#) – implemented from February 2023 to July 2024 – the impact framework has since been adopted as a core element of IMS approach in the [Pluralistic Media for Democracy \(PM4D\) programme](#), both co-funded by the European Union. In total, over 70 local, regional, investigative, niche, and community media organisations across 17 EU member states have utilised this framework to plan and deliver their projects more effectively, maximising impact on their target audiences.

This methodology promotes a user-centric approach, directly connecting project activities to key performance indicators (KPIs) and outcomes. It facilitates the identification and collection of both quantitative and qualitative data from project inception to conclusion, while also enabling risk assessment and mitigation. Importantly, it goes beyond simply monitoring “what” and “how many”, offering a deeper understanding of real impact.

Impact refers to a measurable change brought about by project activities within the intended audiences and communities, in the reach and effectiveness of public interest media products and services, or in the business sustainability of media organisations.

IMPACT HYPOTHESIS

The process starts with formulating a project’s impact hypothesis statement, summarising what the project seeks to achieve, for whom, and why. This hypothesis forms the outline of the impact plan, which tracks whether the intended change materialises. Each statement should be specific, focused, and manageable. For projects with multiple objectives, separate hypotheses can be created.

Impact Hypotheses Structure

Use the following template to clarify your project’s purpose from the user’s perspective:

OUR	[content/product/service]
WILL	[change delivered]
FOR	[audience/user segment]
BY	[verb – e.g. reducing a user pain]
AND BY	[verb – e.g. increasing a user gain]
WE WILL TRACK OUR PROGRESS	[KPIs]
BY USING	[data sources]

*Adapted from Strategyzer’s [Value Proposition Template](#) and the Solutions Journalism Network’s [Impact Tracking Guide](#)

Hypothesis Statement Guide

Examples of products and services:

- new website
- section on an existing site
- local journalist network
- thematic content series
- multimedia formats (video, podcasts, data visualisation)
- mobile apps
- eNewsletters
- new distribution channels (e.g. social media)
- crowdsourcing modules
- marketing campaigns
- public events
- training
- crowdfunding or member clubs, etc.

Examples of user pains:

- feeling excluded
- being uninformed
- wasting time
- frustration
- information overload
- not knowing who to trust, etc.

Examples of user gains:

- access to information
- new access points to quality journalism
- feeling heard or connected
- empowerment
- increased community engagement
- reduced stress
- convenient content consumption, etc.

Example hypothesis statement (Structure Version):

OUR	[new section on the website]
WILL	[provide original, quality local content]
FOR	[residents of Mir]
BY	[reaching them and reducing their frustration about lack of local media coverage]
AND BY	[publishing daily news updates, weekly features, and a monthly event calendar]
WE WILL TRACK OUR PROGRESS	[100 original pieces by local reporters and monitoring reader engagement]
BY USING	[data sources]

Example hypothesis statement (Text Version):

The new section on our website will provide original, quality local content to residents of Mir by publishing daily news updates, weekly multimedia features, and a monthly event calendar, reducing frustration at the lack of local media coverage. We will monitor progress by producing 100 pieces of local content and tracking engagement through Google Analytics and audience surveys.

IMPACT MEASUREMENT PLAN

Refine your hypothesis statement until it clearly encapsulates the intended change. Once finalised, use it as the foundation for your impact measurement plan, which should also detail target groups, the desired change for each group, main activities, and a data measurement plan. This helps clarify existing data, set KPIs, identify new data to collect, plan logistics, and estimate required resources.

About project:

Organisation	
Country, region, city	
Project name	
Project team (names and roles)	

Hypothesis Statement:

Insert your project hypothesis here

Impact Framework

1. Key Activities	2. Target Groups	3. Change Sought
What are your key project activities? (i.e. what does your project or product comprise, and what steps are required to implement it?)	Which groups will be affected by these activities? (Be as specific as possible, including demographic and psychographic characteristics.)	How will these groups be affected? What changes do you hope to achieve?

Measurement Plan

4. Key Activities	5. KPIs	6. New Data
What data do you already possess? Have you established systems for collecting relevant information? (e.g. web and social media analytics, surveys, interviews, research, etc.)	Which indicators will you use to capture and measure changes? (Be specific and, where possible, set measurable targets.)	What new types of data (both quantitative and qualitative) will you need to collect? What resources will you require for this?
7. Logistics	8. Challenges	
What are the essential steps involved in collecting data and conducting the associated analysis? Who within the team will be responsible for these tasks? Within what timeframe will the data be gathered and the analysis completed?	What challenges, both internal and external, might you anticipate when collecting this data? What strategies will you put in place to mitigate these risks?	

** The impact measurement plan was developed from the [Future News Pilot Fund](#), which sought to identify and showcase innovation within public interest news in the UK

The Impact Measurement Plan should be developed at the outset of the project and consistently referenced by project team throughout implementation. This ensures that activities and outputs are delivered as intended, and that relevant data is collected and analysed in a timely manner to keep projected KPIs on track. By adopting this approach, you will be able to identify significant milestones on the journey towards your desired outcomes and promptly detect any deviations, signalling when adjustments or a change of direction may be necessary. This enables you to make informed decisions without wasting time or resources.