Local and Regional Action Plans for Social Inclusion

(VP/2004/004 - 2005 Budget line 04040202)

End year one report

Economic Development and European Policies Directorate
City of Venice

Part three: OUTPUTS

1.1. Methodology

Suggested Steps for developing a Local or Regional Action Plan for Inclusion

Introduction – the planning cycle

Experience of a range of strategies and action plans suggests that a number of steps need to be taken in a systematic way for Local Action Plans to be successful. What is set out below is a comprehensive approach to developing a Local or Regional Action Plan for Inclusion. Because of pressures in the real world it is rarely possible to pursue all stages in the detail that is needed. Time is frequently the main enemy, because of a real or perceived need to get into the implementation stage and stop being just a talking shop.

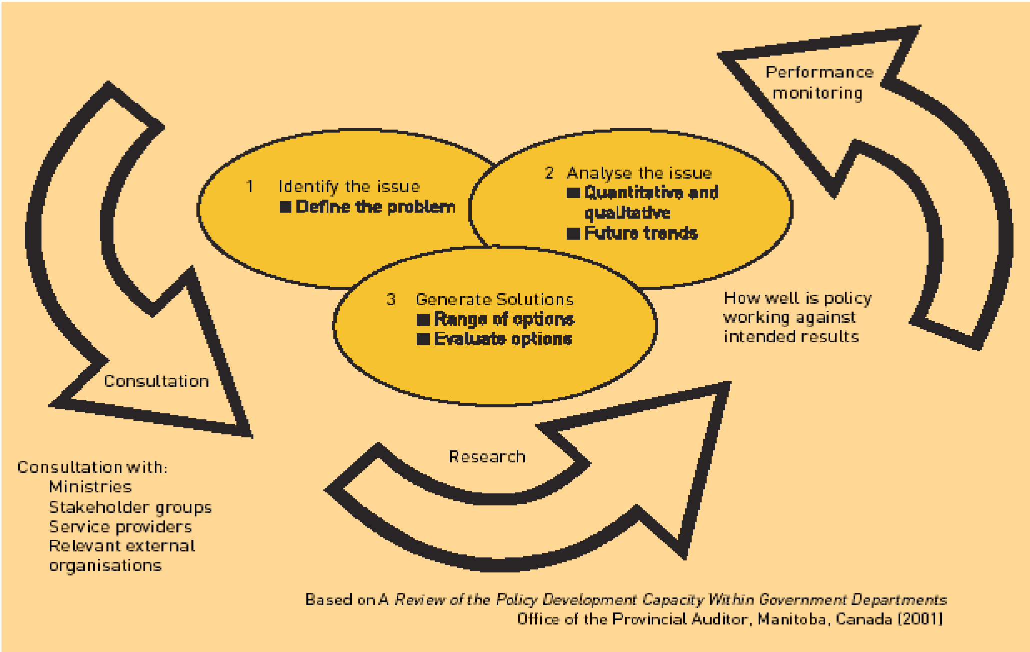
The Planning Cycle brings together all aspects of planning into a coherent, unified process. By planning within this structure, you will help to ensure that your plans are fully considered, well focused, resilient, practical and cost-effective. You will also ensure that you learn from any mistakes you make, and feed this back into future planning and Decision Making.

Once you have devised a plan you should evaluate whether it is likely to succeed. This evaluation may be cost or number based, or may use other analytical tools. This analysis may show that your plan may cause unwanted consequences, may cost too much, or may simply not work. In this case you should cycle back to an earlier stage. Finally, you should feed back what you have learned with one plan into the next through a review or evaluation process

The Steps are listed below and described in more detail in the sections that follow:

- Step 1 Building the evidence base
- Step 2 Stakeholder analysis
- Step 3 Problem and option analysis
- Step 4 Option analysis and strategy formulation
- Step 5 Intervention logic – going from themes to activities
- Step 6 Adding indicators, setting targets and working out means of verification
- Step 7 Risks and assumptions
- Step 8 Bringing it all together and achieving coherence by using an adapted logical framework
- Step 9 Formal signing of the inclusion framework by all the partners

The diagram below illustrates the circular nature of the project cycle:



Performance
monitoring
1 Identify the issue
■ Define the problem
2 Analyse the issue
■ Quantitative and qualitative
■ Future trends
3 Generate Solutions
■ Range of options
■ Evaluate options
How well is policy working against intended results
Consultation
Research
Consultation with:
Ministries
Stakeholder groups
Service providers
Relevant external organisations
Based on A *Review of the Policy Development Capacity Within Government Departments*
Office of the Provincial Auditor, Manitoba, Canada (2001)

Step 1: Building the evidence base

Purpose of the step: to find evidence to find out what is happening to target groups affected by the problems
Main technique: desk research

This phase involves desk research to find out as much as possible about the nature of the problems facing the target groups that you are thinking of tackling.

Policy mapping

Identify what agencies are already doing to address the problems and map it out to look at coverage. Policy mapping needs to identify all the actions by possible stakeholders that affect the situation of target groups. These actions may be quite tangential. For example in a strategy to increase school staying on rates it may be important to look at private and public sector recruitment practices. Young people may be leaving because they think that qualifications will make no difference in a labour market where discrimination is not curbed.

Identify what is working and what is not working

Much delivery focuses on doing the things that have always been done. The discussion with partners works much better if there is some externally generated evidence (for example evaluations or reviews) that inform discussion and provide an evidence base so that criticism is not seen as one person's opinion but is firmly rooted. It is also helpful to map the level of coverage of existing actions. Often there are good practices but they only operate for some communities or as pilot projects. If possible the cost of different approaches should be identified.

Summary of key questions to help build the evidence base:

- What does the quantitative evidence base suggest have been the trends of the relevant target groups in relation to social exclusion in your local area or region over the past few years and beyond?
- What appears to be the nature of the social exclusion in your local area?
- How does your chosen goal represent an opportunity for tackling this form of exclusion?
- What are the barriers (or market failures) underlying these trends that are holding back the target groups in your local area or region?
- What previous policy efforts have been tried and tested? Which did and did not work and why?

Step 2: Stakeholder analysis

Purpose of the step: to identify who the stakeholders are and what are there interests
Techniques: desk research and analysis

Stakeholders can be defined as all those that have an interest (or stake) in an activity, project or programme – in our case the action plan. This includes intended beneficiaries, and intermediaries, winners and losers and those involved or excluded in the decision making process ***(DFID 2004)***.

Stakeholders are frequently divided into primary stakeholders who are affected by the policy – either positively or negatively and secondary stakeholders – those that have an intermediary role including delivery agencies, policy makers, and field workers. Some versions limit the number by defining some of each group as Key stakeholders otherwise the potential numbers can be limitless.

Stakeholders have different interests so it is useful to define what their involvement is with the project and how their interests differ. By systematically analysing the stakeholders it is also possible to see whether there are any missing voices. The exclusion of the client group is perhaps the most frequent missed voice. It is also important to assess the capacity of different stakeholders to engage in the process. A common failure of consultation exercises is to assume that one size fits all and fail to adapt approaches to particular groups. For example the private sector finds very long agendas and meetings frustrating and attendance drops away. Women are often not consulted even when the subject is highly relevant to them Sometimes special meetings are necessary to capture the voice of a particular group. Table 3 below sets out a format for analysing different stakeholder interests.

Table 3 Stakeholder interests for a hypothetical local employment project

Stakeholders	Interests and how affected by the problem	Capacity and motivation to bring about change	Possible actions to address stakeholder interests
Primary stakeholders			
Potential employers	Believe that grants may be available	Important to understand barriers and solutions	Meetings with employers to discuss incentive mechanisms
Local unemployed and inactive people	The direct beneficiaries who should access work as a result	Important to test whether new approaches work and to secure "buy in" of users	Focus group meetings and research to deepen understanding of barriers
Representative organisations of the unemployed	Their members are affected directly	Important consultees	Strategy meetings
Secondary stakeholders			
Employment agencies	Threatened by criticism, looking for funding	Resistant to change	Implementation of new outreach policies
NGOs interested in employment creation projects	Possible implementing bodies, looking for funding	Important for future delivery of plan and policy innovations	Commission pilot projects
Local government	Possible implementing body	Statutory responsibility for economic and social benefit. Local knowledge but limited involvement in	Engage as commissioning body

		employment	
Government ministries	Funder and policy maker	Interested in 'what works' but little local knowledge	Create long term funding mechanism

Step 3 Problem analysis

Purpose: to identify all the problems and the way that they are linked to causes and effects
Techniques: Summarise evidence from step 1 followed by stakeholder meetings and analysis (stakeholder meeting may be combined with step 4)

The LAP should include a clear outline of the nature and scale of the problem in the LAP area. A fresh and comprehensive understanding of the existing situation and the problems that exist is essential to enabling the right solutions to be found.

Stakeholder involvement in this stage will expand the way that the problem is perceived and ensure that problems are not merely 'agency' views. It is particularly important to involve the users or beneficiaries (the primary stakeholders) in problem and needs analysis.

The action plan needs to recognise that problems facing the groups are complex, intractable and inter-connected. No simple solutions are likely to work and 'business as usual' approaches by existing agencies need to be challenged because it is the nature of the problems facing the groups combined with the inadequacy of social policy responses that have created the problems found today.

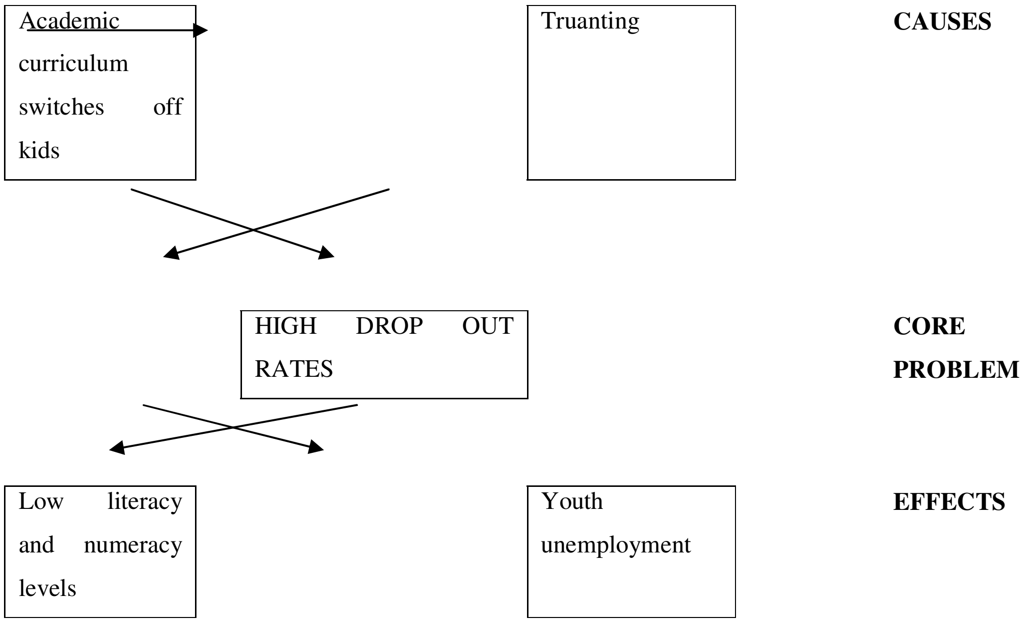
There are many different ways of viewing the same problem. Depending on the perspective different solutions will be deployed. For example in the UK over the past 30 years the consensus on the causes of poverty moved away from being the result of a 'culture of poverty', to being seen as being caused by economic forces acting on communities in the transition from an industrial to a service economy. Different interpretations of the problem lead to different solutions. Under the social pathology model policy focused on the normalisation of deviance. With the economic model intervention has focused on helping individuals to access jobs and on making work pay. The choice between different options is assisted by research evidence.

One well established technique for working with problems in a group setting is to make a problem tree. This is a simple graphical representation of the problems, their causes and effects.

Stages in drawing up a problem tree

- List all the problems that come to mind. Problems need to be carefully identified: they should be existing problems, not possible, imagined or future ones. The problem is an existing negative situation, it is not the absence of a solution
- Identify a core problem (this may involve considerable trial and error before settling on one).
- Determine which problems are "Causes" and which are "Effects." Arrange in hierarchy both Causes and Effects, i.e., how do the causes relate to each other - which leads to the other, etc.

Figure 3 Example problem tree on School drop out



Bring evidence to the stakeholder meeting

Understanding the problem needs evidence to inform the discussion. This evidence can be from statistics and studies that you have commissioned and collected at the start of the work in step 1. There may be a need to commission fresh research, although the long lead times for research may make this unfeasible. Normally it is best to commission an outside consultant or one of the partners to do a quick review of available and relevant published studies and 'grey' literature – reports that have not been published.

It is also useful to analyse data on the problem and to look at existing data in new ways – for example by breaking it down into small spatial units to see where the problems are concentrated geographically. Data should also be presented to illustrate the relationships with demographic characteristics, economic circumstances and other issues that affect the target groups.

Table 4 Problem and solution table for High School drop outs

Problems	Possible Solutions	Where is best or good practice?
Too many young people dropping out of school at 16 because inflexible curriculum	Make curriculum more interesting	Finland – most successful education system with low drop out and high average achievement
Lack of teachers able to teach new curriculum	Train existing teachers and recruit new ones.	Not known
Many students truanting in final years and not reachable by school	Develop outreach programme and offsite provision	Not known
Drug and alcohol abuse is affecting students	Work on drug prevention programmes	Netherlands
Teenage pregnancies are	Better sex education,	Netherlands

making girls drop out	outreach provision so that girls can stay in touch during pregnancy and after	
Teenage counter culture and 'cool' street culture do not encourage students to work hard at school	Work with role models to challenge slacker culture	Nowhere yet

Step 4 Option analysis and strategy formulation

Purpose: to identify the different strategy options that may be available and then to make choices between them in order to fix on a strategy.
Techniques: Stakeholder meetings and analysis (stakeholder meeting may be combined with step 3)

Be explicit about the options available

Strategy development involves making choices between options. Even if the only counter example is the 'do nothing' option or retain the status quo. It helps in drawing up the action plan to be explicit about policy options and to look for evidence based ways to select between them. However, it should be noted that the evidence-based approach is often better at rejecting options than selecting them.

A range of solutions can solve any problem. For example reducing unemployment can be addressed by increasing the 'employability' of the unemployed, and/or by creating jobs for people to go into. Often a combination of different supply side and demand side measures are needed to create long-term change.

Strategy is about deciding the particular policy mix and balance of resources that best addresses the problems in a particular area. Sometimes less is more – concentrating resources on a few effective actions is better than spreading the jam too thinly by supporting too many under funded initiatives. Many partnership based strategies fall into the trap of doing too much and supporting too many actions by trying to satisfy all the stakeholders. This is a particular risk in partnerships where

The strongest partners are horizontal stakeholders that supply of services to the target groups and have a vested interest to use the action plan to lever resources.

Examine research to find out what has worked elsewhere

Because exclusion is so intractable fresh ideas are needed to tackle it. There is some truth in the adage 'there is nothing new under the sun' Most solutions have been tried somewhere – sometimes in other parts of Europe sometimes in the USA or the developing world. These approaches should be examined and where appropriate adapted for use in your locality or region

Step 5 Intervention logic – going from goals to actions

Purpose: to work on the goals, objectives, outputs and activities of the action plan and to ensure that the intervention logic connecting them is explicit and clear.

Techniques: This step is best done with the stakeholders in a facilitated meeting

The step is set out in four sections:

a) From themes to Objectives
b) From Objectives to Outputs
c) From Outputs to Activities
d) Activities

The broad theme of the action plan is probably already fixed and will be based on one of the five themes from the European level.

a) From themes to Objectives

The next stage is to define an objective that the action plan will focus on. The Objective should be achievable over a known time period.
It will be a more limited and more specific version of the theme. One way of thinking about the Objective is to vision the changed situation that you would wish to see at a future time. We suggest that the plan should focus on a 5-year time horizon but you can make it longer. The Objective may also be more specific, for example by only focusing on one target group or on one service.

Table 6 shows some examples of possible objectives based on the five themes.

	Theme	Examples of possible objectives
1	Employment	X% of current numbers of long term unemployed and inactive people are in permanent work by 2011
2	Access to services	Full access to primary care medical services for Y% of the Roma community by 2011
3	Education to work transition	School drop out rates are reduced to Z% of current levels
4	Social exclusion and children	Child poverty among children of single parents is reduced by W%
5	Immigrants and ethnic minorities	Somali refugees have the same unemployment levels as the host community

b) From Objectives to Outputs

Here we focus on what outputs need to be delivered by the action plan partnership in order to deliver the objective. In our child poverty example the outputs could be achieved by raising of parental incomes as a result of helping single parents into work and ensuring that the tax and benefit system supports this move. Some changes might be outside the control of the action plan partnership – for example tax changes by central government. These will be built into the plan later as assumptions and risks.

c) From Outputs to activities

The final stage moves us from outputs (what we want to achieve) to activities (how we will achieve the outputs). This is the crucial place where incoherence can creep into plans as partners try to ensure that their projects are included as activities regardless of whether they contribute to critical outputs. Activities that do not contribute to outputs can be excluded or revised now or later when the indicators are drawn up.

d) Defining activities

The key is to ask what activity is required to deliver each output

Working out the actions to be pursued is not entirely a top down activity. Partners have ideas about the activities that they wish to pursue in order to meet the action plan objective. What is needed is an iterative and at times negotiated process to bring appropriate activities into the activities table while excluding those that do not make significant contributions to the objective. An activities is set out below in table 7 below:

Table 7 Activities table

Lead partner	Description of activity	Intended outputs	Timescale start and end	Resources
Benefits office	Improving welfare to work pathways for single parents	Changes to local benefit rules to ensure that work is incentivised	Start at end of Year 1 ongoing	€400000
Training organisation / colleges	Training and coaching for young parents in basic and vocational skills	Number of training places	Year 2-5	€200000
Community based NGO	Job link organisation to place residents in jobs	One stop shop for training, advice and guidance and job placement	Up and running by end of year 1 Ongoing	€500000 Secondee from govt training agency
Business one stop shop	Encouraging self employment among young parents	Training programme, awareness raising, business support	Up and running by third quarter ongoing	€200000

Step 6 Adding indicators, means of verification and setting targets

Purpose: to add indicators, means of verification and set realistic targets to be achieved
Techniques: The development of indicators is a technical task carried out by analysts in close consultation with stakeholders

The next step is to attach indicators to the objective, outputs and activities. As well as identifying the indicators the sources of data to verify that the target has been reached are also identified in the third column: means of verification

These can either be from the 18 Common indicators developed at European level and discussed above or from the tertiary indicators that you can obtain at local level and should develop in the context of the intervention logic table.

In general we would suggest using local data where available as this may have shorter time lags to publication than national data as well as being more suited to the local objectives.

Where possible it is best to adapt existing data collection systems that agencies. However some one-off surveys carried out by research institutes or foundations may be necessary despite being expensive to implement.

Our suggestion is that for the Action plan objective and the outputs you identify indicators and means of verification. This means that you do not need to work on indicators at the level of themes or activities.

For each indicator you should identify sources of information that enable you to verify that the Objective has been achieved or that the outputs have been delivered. The table below summarises what the indicators are trying to do.

Table 8 Summary of how to relate indicators to intervention logic

Intervention logic	Indicators	Means of verification
Overall theme: Superior strategic theme for the action plan (based on one of the five themes)		
Action Plan Objective: The changed situation which the action plan is trying to bring about	How to recognise that the action plan objective has been achieved by qualitative and quantitative judgements	Sources of information to show progress towards objective
Outputs: Products services and other deliverables generated by the action plan partnership to deliver the objective	What kind and quality of outputs and by when will they be produced?	Sources of information and methods used to show delivery of outputs

Table 9 below illustrates how the indicators can be build into the table using a worked example of reducing social exclusion among refugees and ethnic minorities

Table 9 Worked example of indicators for measuring reduction of social exclusion among refugees

Intervention logic	Indicators / reference targets	Means of verification
Overall theme from themes: e.g. Reducing social exclusion among refugees and ethnic minorities		
Action Plan Objective: To raise the income levels of refugees by increasing their employability and helping them start enterprises	How to recognise that the action plan objective has been achieved by qualitative and quantitative judgements Refugees have higher levels of income because of higher	Sources of information to show progress towards objective Ideally survey data on the refugee community – but this might be too

	employment and self employment	expensive - some proxy might be needed
Outputs: improved language skills, vocational skills, job placements,	What kind and quality of outputs and by when will they be produced? Language and vocational qualifications by refugees, Quality courses delivered, numbers placed into jobs.	Sources of information and methods used to show delivery of outputs Number of courses completed by refugees, one to one business advice sessions, Analysis of Monitoring data of employment agency and business start up agency showing job placements and enterprise starts
Activities language classes, training programmes, enterprise advice, incubation centre focused on refugee community	This space is used for resources, inputs and timescales (see activities table)	

Quantifying the indicators

Once the indicators and means of verification have been defined and agreed the next stage is to quantify the indicators and decide how much progress the plan aims to achieve. These are the explicit quantitative or qualitative achievements to be achieved by the action plan. They should be achievable but challenging at the same time. There is a danger with quantified indicators, which is that they can induce ‘perverse’ behaviour. For example in the UK in order to achieve a government target for family doctors of seeing 80% of patients within 2 days of seeking an appointment some doctors surgeries refused to allow patients to book appointments more than 2 days in advance. This was inconvenient for patients that had to work and organise appointments around a busy schedule.

In some policy areas quantified indicators can be very political. Setting an over ambitious target and then failing to achieve it can have serious effects.

You may wish to relate the quantified indicators to ‘reference targets’ that appear in some NAPs Inclusion at national level.

Summary on indicators and methods of verification

Indicators are essential but painful. The advantage of the indicator matrix is that it forces you to link your indicators to your intervention logic. At the same time it allows considerable freedom to select indicators that are relevant to what you want to measure rather than those available from the 18 common indicators of the European level.

- Use as few indicators as possible – they are expensive to collect and process.

- Use a variety of indicator types and remember to measure quantitative and qualitative change – qualitative change can be more useful
- Find indicators that relate directly to the outputs and objectives, this will often mean creating local indicators rather than using the 18 from the EU common framework.

Step 7 Risks and assumptions

Purpose: to identify the risks that may affect the action plan and the assumptions on which the plan depends
Techniques: Analysis checked in consultation with the key stakeholders

Action plans partners can only control their own behaviour. Inevitably the action plan is at risk from other partners not delivering, from changes in the external environment including other higher levels of government making changes that worsen conditions for the target groups. An example of an external risk would be where refugee status is changed so that social security benefits, the right to work or the right to remain in the country are weakened. This would be a national change that would impact negatively on the position of refugees in a local community
It is possible to identify three types of risk

- Internal risks that you can control (e.g.design, management systems, performance)
- External risks others control (e.g. national legislation)
- External risks no one controls (e.g. natural disasters)

Table 10 Connecting the Assumptions to the Objectives, outputs and activities

Intervention logic	Indicators	Means of verification	Assumptions
Overall theme: Reducing social exclusion among refugees and ethnic minorities			
Action Plan Objective: To raise the income levels of refugees by increasing their employability and helping them start enterprises			Refugee status is not changed by the government – refugees are able to work and claim benefits and tax credits
Outputs: improved language skills, vocational skills, job placements,			Partners are able to resource activities and deliver
Activities language classes, training programmes, enterprise advice, incubation centre focused on refugee community			Refugees can be recruited on to courses and programmes

Key questions to uncover the assumptions

If the partnership successfully delivers all of the activities what are the assumptions about external risks that need to be made if the outputs are to be delivered?

If the partnership successfully delivers all of the outputs what assumptions about external risks need to be made if the objective is to be delivered?

Risk management

Identifying the assumptions on which the action plan depends is a passive exercise. The next step is to identify whether some of these risks can be managed. In risk management there are three ways of handling risk:

- Risks are transferred – this can be done by forms of insurance – so that another agency bears the risk (insuring parties against rain is a common way of dealing with bad weather in the UK)
- Risks are tolerated - if it is difficult to do anything about the risk, then it may be best to take no action – especially if the cost of action is disproportionate
- Risks are treated - usually the intention is to contain the risk at an appropriate level.

Step 8 Bringing it all together and achieving coherence by using an adapted logical framework

Purpose: to ensure that the action plan is coherent – i.e. that the actions will lead to the outputs, the outputs will lead to the objectives and the objectives support the theme
Techniques: This can be done either as a technical exercise or as a participative exercise with the stakeholders.

The final act is to assemble all the parts that you have been working on above and put them together in a single matrix, which is called the Logical framework.

The table below shows a Logical framework or log frame that has been adapted for use with an action plan containing a number of activities rather than for a single project. Log frames are helpful in developing action plans that are coherent with their objectives. However, the traditional approach can be daunting for a group that is not trained in their use.

If you have gone through all the steps above then you can combine all of it into a single log frame that looks like the one in table 11 below.

Table 11 Adapted version of Logical framework table for LAPS RAPS inclusion

Intervention logic	**Indicators**	**Means of verification**	**Assumptions**
Overall theme: Superior strategic theme for the action plan (based on one of the five themes)			
Action Plan	How to recognise that	Sources of information	Matters

Objective: The changed situation which the action plan is trying to bring about	the action plan objective has been achieved	to show progress towards objective	outside the action plan which must happen if the objective is to be achieved
Outputs: Products services and other deliverables generated by the action plan partnership	Major characteristics of the outputs	Sources of information and methods used to show delivery of outputs	Matters outside the action plan which must happen if the Outputs are to achieved

Activities table

Title of activities to achieve the outputs	Lead partner	Brief Description of activity	Intended outputs	Timescale start and end	Resources

Step 9 Signing the Accord

Purpose: to signal to the outside world that the action plan has been agreed at high level, to gain publicity
Techniques: Hold a reception and invite the 360 degree stakeholders that have contributed to the plan

It is important that the completed plan should be signed off at the highest level by the partners involved. This event should be high profile and include a press release and an appropriate ceremony and reception.