

1.5. MONITORING & EVALUATION

1.5.1. Contract management

Communications with the Contracting Authority will be based around a regular reporting schedule, complemented by ad hoc updates as the situation requires. Weekly reports will include an assessment of past activities and a description of arrangements for upcoming events. Quarterly reports will detail progress against project objectives and will include measurements of outputs, using the agreed results framework as the key reporting tool. Ad hoc communications will focus on unforeseen challenges or changes in the operating environment which have a direct impact on delivery and the achievement of set milestones.

In this respect, Albany and its partners are committed to building lines of communication which legislate for rapid response and informed decision-making. Where necessary, meetings will be organised with representatives of the CSSF team to discuss perceived opportunities or setbacks. Where appropriate, success stories and examples of clear impact will be shared, thereby contributing to wider knowledge management around effective interventions and implementation methods. In addition, the dialogue will be supplemented by regular visits from the management team and thematic advisors which will facilitate an exchange of experience and legislate for dynamic problem-solving, when required.

The partners recognise the benefits of maintaining open channels of communication with other donors. These benefits include better coordination of cross-donor activities; better value for money; pooling of resources; the inclusion of additional funding streams from different donors; and the avoidance of duplication.

Engagement with local government stakeholders will be aimed at ensuring a high degree of ownership for the project outputs and addressing any concerns shared by key beneficiaries. Ad hoc meetings and briefing sessions will also play an important role in securing long-term buy-in for the project outputs and maximising participation in planned activities.

1.5.2. Performance management

The project design includes tools and approaches for bringing the intervention logic in line with intelligence gathered on the ground. This process will enable the project partners to regularly assess progress towards Key Performance Indicators KPIs and, if necessary, modify them to encapsulate data and insight which were not available at the beginning of the project. Effective monitoring tools will include:

- Detailed individual and team work plans: these are regularly reviewed and feedback is provided by Albany to the team. Any deficiencies are noted and resolved.
- Individual and project-wide KPIs: these are established to maintain momentum in the right direction and give project teams regular snapshots of progress.
- Regular performance reviews: these structured reviews look backwards as well as forwards, giving the implementation team a chance to reinforce positive achievements and address poor performance.

The following KPIs have been identified as being relevant to this initiative but the final formulation will be discussed and agreed with the Contracting Authority during the inception phase.

KPIs	Description
Timeliness of delivery	The consortium adheres to an agreed work-plan
Value for money	The consortium meets spending targets; implements cost-effective approaches
Quality of delivery	Training and production activities meet anticipated quality standards
Client satisfaction score	Based on the responsiveness of project personnel, a collaborative approach, robust knowledge management systems and the quality of interim reports

On a broad level, quality standards are maintained by providing detailed Statements of Requirements for partners, suppliers and individual contractors. Thereafter, performance is monitored and measured so that any trends or issues can be identified and mitigated before a non-conformity occurs. Where corrective actions are required, they are designed not only to address the root cause but also to prevent re-occurrence. In all cases, protecting the integrity and credibility of the programme is paramount.

The HR management approach is governed by the principles of transparency, fairness and proportionality which are applied across the workforce, regardless of seniority or contractual status. Appraisals identify strengths to be reinforced and deficiencies to be addressed as well as highlighting any personal development needs. Face-to-face meetings are organised as an initial step towards addressing poor performance and identifying underlying frustrations or grievances.

Dispute resolution begins with a meeting where evidence is presented and critical assumptions are challenged and defended. A combination of experienced management personnel, clear sight of the overall objectives and respect for the client-implementer relationship is usually sufficient to ensure that the interests of the project are prioritised over individual agendas but, where escalation is required, Albany is committed to implementing a transparent process which is properly documented and independently mediated.

This policy extends to complaints from third-parties who believe that they have been misrepresented or unfairly contextualised through project activities. Where possible, Albany draws up institutional agreements or MoUs prior to implementation, thereby clarifying roles and responsibilities and providing a reference point for disputes. At no point will any kind of leverage be used to persuade individuals to take part in processes with which they feel uncomfortable.

1.5.3. Knowledge management

As noted throughout this document, international efforts have generated a significant body of research and other evidence relating to the audiences targeted by Russian propaganda and the methods used to build their resilience or provide an alternative narrative. These findings are not always available to those who would benefit from them and there is a real risk – particularly as the Global Engagement Center unleashes its very considerable resources – that this work will be duplicated in future initiatives.

The project will, therefore, endeavour to build a community of best practice which captures and shares the results of programmes active in the target area. It is recognised that, in some cases, there will be sensitivities around publishing information and, in particular, revealing its sources. Part of the approach will, therefore, be dedicated to organising and hosting knowledge sharing meetings between key stakeholders, during which delegates will gain insight into what has worked and what has been less successful in the context of other initiatives.

Internal knowledge management will also be part of the consortium's ongoing operations. Secure dissemination tools will ensure that all personnel, including the CSSF team, have access to up-to-date information about project delivery and findings. These systems will ensure that staff and consultants can rapidly familiarise themselves with lessons learned on the project to date, thereby legislating for a consistent approach and enabling replacement personnel to hit the ground running in the event of force majeure changes to the implementation team.

1.5.4. Sustainability

The programme will focus primarily on supporting local partners and beneficiaries who already have a significant local presence, resources, credibility and experience in the target themes. These partners have proven track record to weather the vagaries of the local market and continue to offer related services and deploy resources to the benefit of local stakeholders.

Rather than creating new structures, the project will leverage existing networks linked to or associated with the consortium such as the Independent Association of Broadcasters (Ukraine), the Electronic Press Association (Moldova), the Alliance of Regional Broadcasters (Georgia), journalism unions, media freedom NGOs, associations of investigative journalists etc. This will ensure significant multiplier effects as project outputs are widely shared and effective methods adopted. This process will also be enacted on a regional level, thereby enabling exchanges between stakeholders operating in comparable environments. It will be assisted and facilitated by the presence of production funds in the region and new business models which can support cross-border productions.

When engaging with local beneficiary organisations, these networks will help to secure senior buy-in and establish sectoral road-maps. The buy-in is essential in ensuring that newly trained teams are supported in the workplace and are given the opportunity to apply theory to practice. In addition, stakeholders will be encouraged to foster a learning environment within their organisations, thereby ensuring that new skills and ideas are passed between peers.

It is anticipated that skills promoted through the project will have a direct impact on programme quality and, therefore, audience response. Beneficiaries will see the direct link between qualitative improvements in their productions and quantitative improvements in audience traffic and engagement initiated by the project's focus on energising social media engagement. Sustainable methodologies for extending outreach and audience footprint are likely to be particularly appealing to local independent media which struggle to reach major audiences and, thereby, attract advertising revenue.

The programming initiative at Ukraine's public service broadcaster is centrally concerned with establishing and supporting a production house which can continue to function beyond the end of grant-funding. UA:PBC's management has identified socially responsible drama as being a key area in which the channel can gain a competitive edge over private media and improve its market position. There is, therefore, good potential for building the production house into a sustainable business unit over the project lifecycle.

Across the project, the partners will focus on the development of lightweight solutions which are practicable against the backdrop of existing resources and market conditions. These processes will be underlined through the needs assessments and organisational audits which will promote strategies for building sustainable operations and, thereby, reduce dependency on external support.

1.5.5. Monitoring and evaluation framework

The monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework will inform overall project planning and management as well as reporting on the results achieved and identifying future targets. The framework will be clearly tied to the declared objectives and results described above and will provide a feedback mechanism for project staff, implementing partners and the donor. The partners will maintain up-to-date records of all the programme's activities and outputs, proactively sharing key lessons learned.

The M&E work will be led by a specialist based with Albany Associates who will be responsible for drawing together the data provided by the partners and coordinating specific activities aimed at gathering qualitative and anecdotal feedback from programme beneficiaries. From the outset, the M&E specialist will develop data collection questionnaires which will cover social media engagement and training activities. These questionnaires will be modified to reflect feedback and experience gained over the project lifecycle.

Albany will monitor project implementation on a quarterly basis, using all available data collected during the previous period to evaluate progress towards achieving objectives as well as the effectiveness, impact and sustainability of the intervention. The results will be used to correct and improve performance during the contract period and also to develop evidence-based recommendations for other work in the same field.

The immediate benefits of the training workshops will be measured by self-assessment questionnaires which participants will be invited to complete during the final session. The questionnaires will assess the extent to which the workshop met expectations as well as capturing perceptions of the training methodology and content. Trainees will also be asked to comment on the future application of lessons learned: i.e. the extent to which they anticipate applying their skills to practice in the workplace.

Content distributed online will be tracked through regular reviews of metrics and analytical tools which are readily available on leading social media platforms. Individual outputs will be tracked on a sustained basis to assess the level and nature of traffic generated. This analysis will consider indicators such as likes, views and comments, generating a clear body of evidence around which formats and approaches enjoy a positive reaction within the social media community.

Metrics around audience loyalty (return visitors) and demographics (male/female, age groups etc) will also be collated. This will help to measure the ability of content re-versioning and distribution to reach new identity groups and, in particular, to draw these groups out of existing echo chambers. In particular, the M&E specialist will be looking for evidence that the content has been accessed by groups which traditionally consume state-sponsored media. This may also be demonstrated through the profile of individuals engaging with content through discussion forums.

Enhanced audience engagement is a key indicator for success and, consequently, positive changes in social media engagement rates will be recorded. Engagement rates are calculated by dividing the number of likes, comments and shares by the total number of subscribers for a social media channel. It is expected that the emphasis on innovative programming which tackles pressing social problems will encourage audiences to interact with content, initiating an online discussion of issues raised as well as prompting a positive response to the formats themselves.

The proposed TV drama series and other media products will be tested with focus groups and this process will be used to shape and fine-tune the wider programming outputs. It will also assess the extent to which content is understood and is consistent with the project objectives. The response to specific stimuli will be carefully recorded whilst the various vehicles for messaging will be evaluated for effectiveness and credibility. The focus groups will enable project stakeholders to gather anecdotal evidence of the TV drama's ability to challenge entrenched attitudes and overturn stereotypical representations of specific identity groups (e.g. victims of domestic violence).

The emphasis will be on developing approaches which resonate with different age groups, appeal to both men and women and have the potential to stimulate discussion. The findings will also feed into the project's quality control systems, developing a set of guidelines for best practice which will be applied to all creative outputs. The guidelines will include recommendations on the use of terminology, imagery and web protocols (e.g. forum moderation), thereby ensuring coherence and consistency across the project.

The focus groups will help to explore ways in which the project can engage both at-risk communities and the wider public in a constructive debate around propagandistic messaging. Respondents will be asked to share their experiences of engaging online and explain what motivates them to participate in forum-based discussions. This feedback will inform the social media strategy and will help to develop tools for bringing individuals out of their current echo chambers and into a common arena which is conducive to constructive debate.

Sustained engagement with the representatives of other internationally funded projects in related fields will seek to assess the programme's positive impact on the wider development sector. Several ongoing and future projects focus on Russian-language content production and will, therefore, derive added value from enhanced content distribution efforts. In this area, the M&E specialist will look for anecdotal evidence of success as well as collating specific examples of complementarity.