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FAMENET

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The approach and methodologies proposed do not constitute legal interpretation and are not binding. They are considered recommendations by technical experts to enhance exchange among stakeholders and to enrich the body of knowledge on EMFAF implementation.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This working paper serves as a resource for those involved in Community-Led Local Development (CLLD) within the European Maritime, Fisheries, and Aquaculture Fund (EMFAF), supporting them in building capacity for rigorous and participatory evaluations. The tools and recommendations provided can be adapted across regions, enabling effective impact measurement and helping demonstrate the added value of CLLD in fisheries and coastal areas across the EU.

It serves as a practical framework for fisheries Local Action Groups (LAGs), Managing Authorities (MAs), and Intermediate Bodies (IBs) to evaluate CLLD under the EMFAF. Building on past experience from previous programme cycles, the document offers a structured approach to assessing CLLD impact, including tools, methodologies, and templates designed to streamline evaluation processes, enhance stakeholder engagement, and ensure effective local development.

Key areas addressed in the working paper include:

- **Evaluation framework:** A common impact model is introduced, outlining the impact, evaluation questions, judgment criteria, and pathways through which CLLD activities contribute to social, economic, and environmental change. This model assesses the effectiveness of LAGs and their local development strategies.
- **Monitoring and data collection:** Support is provided on integrating robust monitoring practices with the Infosys database system, ensuring consistent data collection across EU levels and aiding the aggregation of results for a comprehensive evaluation of CLLD activities.
- **Participatory assessment:** The paper outlines a participatory evaluation approach, enabling LAGs to engage stakeholders meaningfully through workshops and focus groups. This participatory process enhances local ownership of evaluation outcomes and builds capacity for continuous improvement.
- **Reporting and visualisation:** A template for evaluation reporting is included, designed to facilitate consistent and transparent reporting across LAGs. Methods for visualising findings are also recommended, making complex impact pathways clearer for stakeholders.
- **Adaptability and customisation:** The framework allows for adaptation to the unique contexts of individual LAGs, balancing standardised evaluation metrics with flexibility for local needs and priorities.

LIST OF ACRONYMS

ARI	Additional result indicators
CAP	Common Agricultural Policy
CI	Context indicators
CRI	Common result indicators
CLLD	Community-led local development
CPR	Common Provisions Regulation (EU) 2021/1060
EMFAF	European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund
EMFF	European Maritime and Fisheries Fund
EAFRD	European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development
EGESIF	Expert group on European Structural and Investment Funds
EQ	Evaluation questions
EU	European Union
FI	Financial indicators
FTE	Full-time equivalent
GES	Good environmental status
IB	Intermediate body
JC	Judgement criteria
LAG	Local Action Group
LDS	Local development strategy
M&E	Monitoring and evaluation
MA	Managing Authority
MEF	Monitoring and evaluation framework
MS	Member State
ND	No data

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background

Community-led local development (CLLD) under the EMFAF plays a vital role in empowering fishing and coastal communities to drive their own development through bottom-up strategies.

As part of the third programme period supporting CLLD in fisheries and coastal areas, it is essential to ensure that evaluation practices are robust, practical, and aligned with both local and EU-level objectives. CLLD in fisheries areas was first introduced in 2007 under the European Fisheries Fund (EFF).

Many LAGs lack experience in evaluation and have limited resources to conduct thorough assessments. Therefore, practical, hands-on, and effective evaluation tools are needed to ensure meaningful and feasible evaluations at the local level.

1.2. Objectives and target audiences

This working paper provides a structured evaluation framework and practical tools for assessing CLLD activities under EMFAF. It outlines key principles, addresses specific evaluation challenges, and offers efficient methodologies for use by LAGs, MAs, and IBs at local and programme levels. Specifically, this working paper aims to:

- Support informed decision-making processes at the local and programme level.
- Facilitate the aggregation and analysis of CLLD results at regional, MS, and EU levels.
- Highlight the broader value of CLLD activities beyond immediate project outcomes.

By standardising monitoring and evaluation approaches, this paper assists LAGs and programme-level stakeholders in clearly demonstrating the impact of CLLD initiatives, improving strategy design, and ensuring relevance for future policy and programming periods.

The primary target audience for this working paper are:

- Fisheries LAGs.
- MAs and IBs involved in monitoring and evaluating CLLD.
- Evaluation experts.

2. USING THIS WORKING PAPER

To effectively utilise this working paper, two key tools have been developed to guide users through the evaluation process clearly and systematically:

- **The roadmap in Figure 1** provides a structured overview, directing users to essential sections and illustrating how the components interconnect.
- **Annex 2** offers a detailed, step-by-step illustration of the evaluation approaches proposed for CLLD.

Together, these tools ensure that LAGs, MAs, and IBs can efficiently access relevant methodologies and templates for evaluating CLLD under the EMFAF.

Figure 1: Working paper roadmap

Regulatory requirements	• Monitoring and evaluation obligations under the CPR • Key regulations and evaluation timeframes • Challenges specific to evaluating CLLD
Understanding the impact of CLLD	• Theoretical overview: Key concepts of the Theory of Change approach • Developing a CLLD impact model: Pathways, conditions, and goals • External conditions and an overview of the 'accountability ceiling'
From impact model to evaluation framework	• Evaluation questions and judgement criteria • Indicators for measurement (resource, output, result, impact) • Timing and application of evaluations (early, mid-term, ex-post)
Application of the evaluation framework	• Timing of the evaluation process • Evaluation framework (evaluation questions, judgement criteria and indicators)
Information sources	• Data collection: LAG-level, programme-level and EU-level • Common result indicators and additional indicators
Evaluation reporting template	• Step-by-step guide: How to use the evaluation report template • Reporting steps and timeline • Participatory assessment: Stakeholder engagement • Self-assessment and external moderation • Visualisation of findings
Annexes	• Glossary of key terms used in this working paper • Step-by-step illustration of evaluating CLLD • CLLD impact model (detailed view) • Information sources, references, and methodology

3. REGULATION REQUIREMENTS

The effective monitoring and evaluation of CLLD is not only essential but also mandated by regulations for programmes funded under the EMFAF (i.e., all EMFAF-funded activities must be evaluated). Monitoring and evaluation are, therefore, compulsory components of CLLD, as the EMFAF falls under the Common Provisions Regulation (EU) 2021/1060 (CPR), as mandated by Articles 32 and 33.

Article 32(1)(e):

> CLLD strategies must outline M&E arrangements, proving that the LAG has the capacity to implement the strategy.

Article 33(3)(e) and (f):

> LAGs must monitor progress towards strategy objectives and evaluate strategy implementation.

Evaluating CLLD is particularly important because:

- It involves higher costs due to the 20% overhead required for implementing CLLD. Given the administrative and participatory demands of CLLD, justifying expenditure is critical.
- It must align with the Local Development Strategy (LDS) and local needs. Evaluation ensures that the projects funded under CLLD genuinely contribute to local objectives rather than being disconnected interventions.

Many LAGs have limited evaluation experience and constrained resources for conducting detailed assessments. As a result, there is a clear need for practical, user-friendly, and efficient evaluation tools to enable meaningful and achievable assessments at the local level.

Furthermore, despite its importance, evaluating CLLD is complex and requires the evaluation of both:

- Enabling processes (e.g., strategy development, governance, partnerships, networking, and animation).
- Project outcomes (e.g., effectiveness, long term sustainability, impact on local communities).

At the programme level, Member States (MAs) must evaluate EMFAF Priority 3, including an impact evaluation by 30 June 2029 (Article 44 CPR).

At the EU level, the European Commission must conduct:

- A mid-term evaluation by end-2024.
- A retrospective evaluation by end-2031 (Article 45 CPR).

These evaluations must assess how CLLD contributes to the EU's goal of "a Europe closer to citizens", promoting sustainable and integrated development (Article 5(1) CPR).

Summary:
Monitoring and evaluation of CLLD under EMFAF is both essential and a legal requirement. As per CPR (EU) 2021/1060, LAGs must implement a clear monitoring and evaluation framework to track progress and assess the effectiveness of their local development strategy.

4. UNDERSTANDING THE POTENTIAL IMPACT OF CLLD

Effective policymaking and performance review require a clear understanding of an intervention and its expected outcomes. A solid understanding of CLLD's anticipated impacts helps make evaluations more targeted, efficient, and insightful, ensuring they measure what matters and provide valuable insights.

To do this, FAMENET proposes an impact model for CLLD evaluation. FAMENET applies the *Theory of Change*[1] approach, which maps out how an intervention should work, including key steps, assumptions, and broader contextual factors. This process considers inputs (resources used), the causal chain leading to outputs (deliverables), outcomes (short- to medium-term results), and ultimately, impact (long-term effects).

Developing a Theory of Change typically involves considering the proposed inputs (the resources being used) and the causal chain that leads from those inputs through to the expected outputs (what is delivered or produced), outcomes (the early or medium-term results) and, ultimately, impact (the long-term results). It explains how CLLD activities are expected to lead to desired outcomes. A well-defined impact model does the following:

- The goals of the CLLD concept and local development strategies.
- The steps it uses to achieve those goals.
- The expected changes in the coastal / fisheries community.

A clear impact model helps identify key evaluation areas and relevant data for CLLD. Designed for all LAGs, it can be used as-is or adapted (see Section 5.2). It also improves communication among stakeholders and evaluators, ensuring a shared understanding of the CLLD approach with an emphasis on consistency, comparability, as well as providing a visualisation of the concept.

4.1. Approach and methods

The working paper presents a common evaluation tool designed for local development strategies and enabling processes, such as delivery and animation. This comprehensive tool encompasses all essential aspects of evaluation and offers flexibility, allowing it to be used as an "off-the-shelf" solution or adapted to meet specific needs and contexts.

Fisheries LAG monitoring relies on Infosys data, including common and additional indicators collected by LAGs. EMFAF common result indicators are flexible and can be applied to various CLLD operations. Evaluation then builds on LDS and project monitoring, ensuring common results (see Section 6.2) while incorporating tailored indicators specific to the LDS.[2]

The proposed approach addresses the specific needs of LAGs while streamlining the evaluation process, reducing the need for each LAG to develop its own methodology. This enables broader implementation of evaluation activities, which was previously challenging due to resource constraints.

Integrated with the Infosys database system, the common evaluation tool simplifies workload and ensures consistent data collection. It supports evaluation across all three levels – EU, Member States, and fisheries LAGs

[1] The Theory of Change is a framework that outlines how and why a specific intervention is expected to achieve its desired outcomes. It maps the logical sequence from inputs (resources) to outputs, outcomes, and long-term impact, considering key assumptions and external factors.

[2] See Annex 1 for a detailed explanation of monitoring and evaluation and related terms.

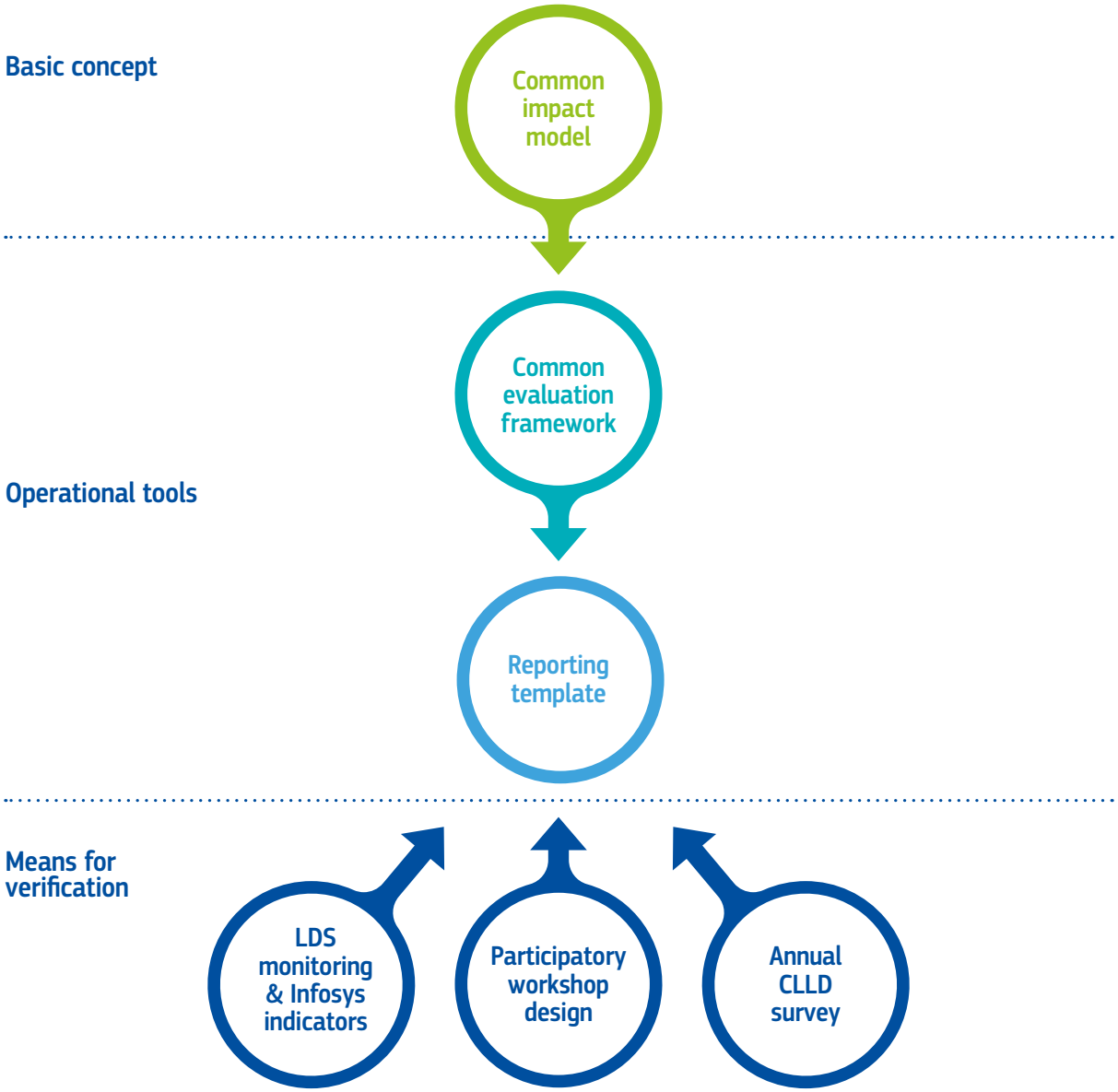
– facilitating a reporting chain from LAGs to the European Commission, backed by the standardised collection of 10 common result indicators relevant to CLLD.

Data gathered through the annual CLLD survey can also feed into the common evaluation tool, ensuring continuity and efficiency. Together, monitoring, evaluation, effective communication, and stakeholder engagement form the foundation of the CLLD system, enhancing understanding of its value and impact.

4.2. Rationale of the common impact model

The common impact model (see Figure 2) formulates conditions for success in a logical chain (along pathways) which are necessary to achieve longer-term objectives and make a change. Pathways are a logically and chronologically ordered sets of (interim) outcomes, in which some outcomes must occur before the other.

Figure 2: Tools to simplify the evaluation tasks



Source: FAMENET 2024.

The impact model is structured into four levels:

Level 1: Establishes the foundational preconditions for success, including the organisational and planning capacities of LAGs.

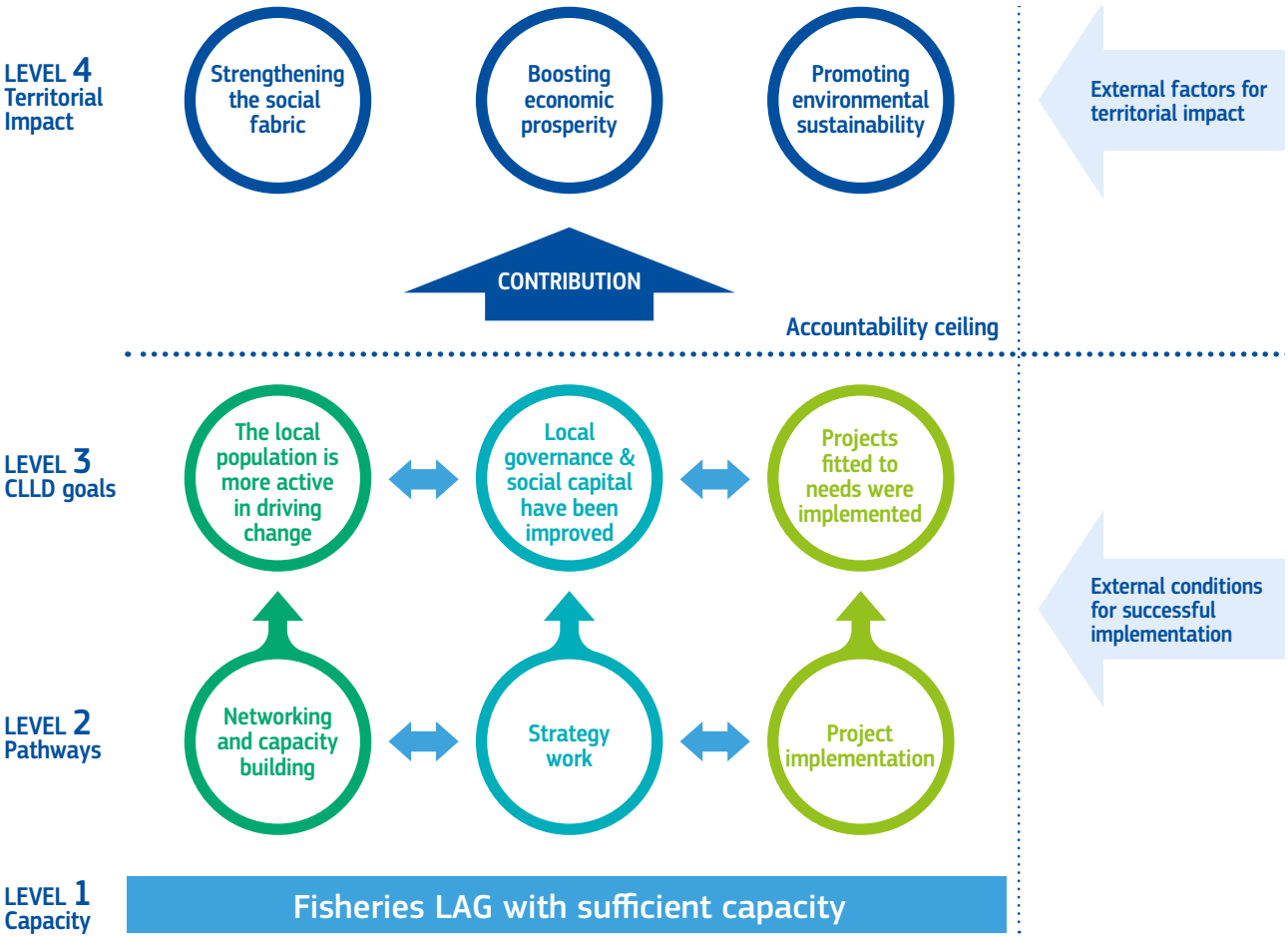
Level 2: Defines three key pathways: networking and capacity-building, strategy development, and the implementation of local projects.

Level 3: The interaction of these pathways leads to three core CLLD goals:

- Greater community participation in driving local change.
- Improved local governance and strengthened social capital.
- Implementation of projects tailored to community needs.

Level 4: Achieving these goals contributes to broader socio-economic and environmental improvements, promoting economic prosperity and sustainability in local areas.

Figure 3: Common impact model for CLLD



Source: FAMENET 2024. Available in full detail and landscape format in Annex 1

The **accountability ceiling** (or accountability limit), represented by a dashed line in the model illustrated in Figure 3, marks the boundary where LAG influence ends, and external factors begin to shape outcomes. While LAGs are responsible for achieving the three CLLD goals, they are not fully accountable for the territorial impacts that result, as these are also influenced by factors such as market conditions, political shifts, and other funding mechanisms.

Despite the challenge of assessing territorial impacts, they remain a vital evaluation focus. LAGs are not only responsible for achieving the CLLD goals but also for contributing to broader territorial development.

Even within the accountability ceiling, external conditions for success – such as government support, streamlined procedures, and enabling policies – play a critical role. These conditions, though outside LAG control, must be considered when evaluating CLLD effectiveness and impact.

The common impact model focuses on three key areas:[3]

- Strengthening social capital.
- Enhancing local decision-making.
- Implementing projects tailored to local needs.

Given that many LAGs funded by EMFAF collaborate with, or are integrated with, LAGs supported under the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) (around two-thirds, according to EGESIF (2018), it is logical for evaluations of both LAGs under the EAFRD (approximately 2,800) and LAGs under the EMFAF (around 350) to focus on common aspects such as social capital, local governance, and locally tailored projects.

The common impact model, presented in Figure 2, serves as the foundation for the detailed evaluation framework, comprising evaluation questions, judgement criteria, indicators, and data sources, discussed in the following chapter.

[3] According to the European Court of Auditors (2022) and the Evaluation Helpdesk for the CAP (2024), these represent the core benefits of CLLD policy.

5. FROM IMPACT MODEL TO EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

This section presents FAMENET's proposed evaluation framework for CLLD, built around four key elements: evaluation questions, judgement criteria, indicators, and data sources.

- **Evaluation Questions:** These focus the evaluation on a limited number of critical areas, ensuring that findings are targeted, relevant, and high-quality.
- **Judgement Criteria:** Also known as assessment criteria or success factors, these define the conditions for meeting each evaluation question. They are established before selecting indicators to avoid relying on pre-existing but potentially inadequate data. Judgement criteria are framed positively, and progress is later assessed based on how well each condition has been fulfilled.
- **Indicators:** These verify the achievement of judgement criteria using both quantitative and qualitative data. The framework distinguishes between different types of indicators: resource, financial, output, common result, impact, and context indicators (see Section 5.4 for details).
- **Data Sources:** Indicators are supported by data from both internal and external sources, including LDS monitoring, the Infosys database, studies, surveys, interviews, focus groups, and official statistics.

While the framework centres on evaluation questions and judgement criteria, indicators play a vital role in providing the evidence needed to assess progress effectively.

5.1. Overview of proposed evaluation questions and judgement criteria

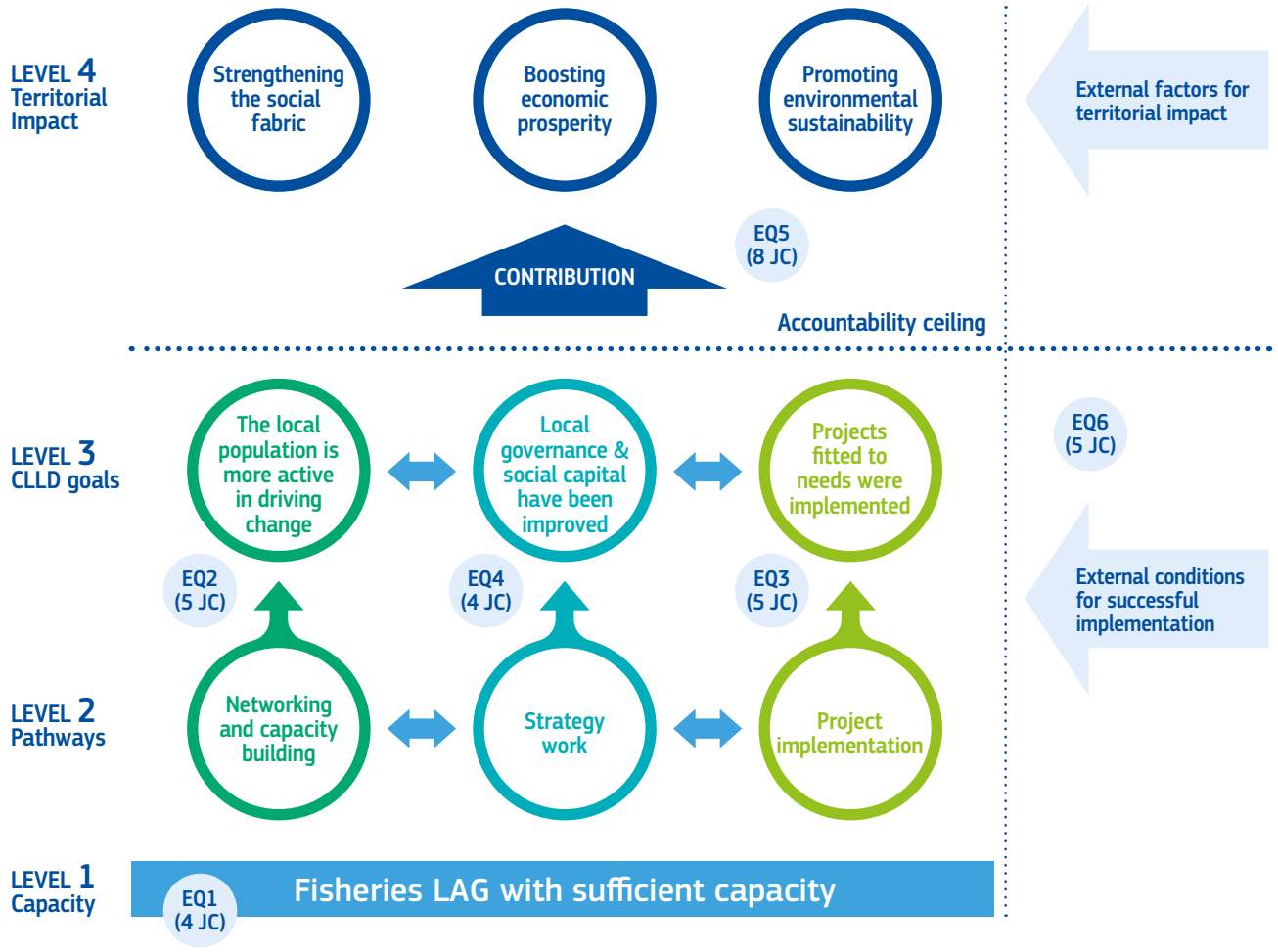
FAMENET proposes an evaluation framework with a total of six evaluation questions (EQs) and 28 judgement criteria (JC), covering all aspects of the common impact model as outlined in the Table 1 and Figure 3.

Table 1: List of EQs and JC in the CLLD impact model

EQ1: To what extent are effective LAGs operational?	
JC 1.1	A LAG has been established which is representative of the local community
JC 1.2	A local development strategy (LDS) has been prepared in a bottom-up, participative manner
JC 1.3	The LAG is adequately staffed with experienced people
JC 1.4	The LAG members are active in supporting the local development process
EQ2: To what extent has the fisheries LAG stimulated participation in local development?	
JC 2.1	Communication and animation activities carried out to reach the local public
JC 2.2	Local stakeholders, including under-represented groups, have a better awareness of opportunities to access EU funding for local development
JC 2.3	Local awareness and knowledge regarding the area's challenges and potential solutions have been developed
JC 2.4	Local stakeholders, including under-represented groups, have been mobilised to propose actions that contribute to the area's development

EQ3: To what extent does the fisheries LAG enable citizens to implement projects fitted to local needs?	
JC 3.1	An effective system was set up to select and fund projects that benefit the area and its citizens (calls for proposals, selection of projects, etc.)
JC 3.2	Local stakeholders have obtained advice and support to undertake projects that respond to local needs
JC 3.3	Members of the local community have gained access to funding from EMFAF, and potentially other funds
JC 3.4	Projects responding to local needs have been implemented
EQ4: To what extent has CLLD led to improved local governance, the coordination of local activities, and participative decision making?	
JC 4.1	The LAG collaborates actively with other development stakeholders
JC 4.2	Connections and trust between local stakeholders have been developed
JC 4.3	The LAG has supported tangible collaboration between different stakeholder groups
JC 4.4	Local governance has been improved, including coordination of local activities and more participative decision-making linked to local resources and/or activities
EQ5: To what extent have LAGs supported a positive change in socio-economic and environmental dynamics in the local area?	
JC 5.1	The LAG has supported local stakeholders to introduce new ways of working, new services, and new products to address the area's needs
JC 5.2	Jobs and/or businesses have been created and/or maintained
JC 5.3	Short supply chains have been developed and/or strengthened
JC 5.4	The fisheries/marine sectors and their contribution to the local area have become more visible / better integrated into the local community
JC 5.5	Local businesses have developed new sources of income through diversified activities
JC 5.6	Local businesses have increased their revenue
JC 5.7	Actions to protect and/or restore the area's environmental resources have been put in place
JC 5.8	Actions to transition towards a low carbon and more resource efficient economy have been put in place
EQ6: To what extent do external conditions outside the control of the LAG support or hinder the implementation of local development?	
JC 6.1	Useful support is provided by national/regional governments
JC 6.2	The administrative rules set by the MA or IB facilitate the implementation of local projects and development work
JC 6.3	There is enough local potential for project development
JC 6.4	Local development work was unaffected by external shocks and changing context

Figure 4: EQ and JC related to the common impact model for CLLD



Source: FAMENET 2024[4]

[4] See Annex 3 for a full detail version of the CLLD impact model

6. APPLICATION OF THE EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

The evaluation framework can be applied either as an "off-the-shelf" solution or with some modifications. This flexibility ensures the framework meets both standardised evaluation needs and local requirements.

- **Standard application:** LAGs can adopt the framework as designed, using the proposed elements and the reporting template outlined in Chapter 7.2.
- **Customised approach:** While core elements remain unchanged, LAGs can tailor specific details, particularly the judgement criteria for the three pathways and the selection of additional indicators (see Table 2).

Table 2: Fixed and variable elements

Structure of the impact model	Evaluation framework		
	Evaluation questions	Judgement criteria	Indicators
Level 1: Capacity	All EQs are recommended	Recommended	Additional indicators are free to choose Common result indicators are mandatory
Level 2: Pathways		*Conditions for success (= judgement criteria) within the three pathways are variable*	
Level 3: CLLD goals		Recommended	
Level 4: Territorial impact		Recommended	

Source: FAMENET 2024

Certain elements are mandatory to ensure findings can be aggregated at higher levels, such as evaluation questions and common result indicators. Any changes to judgement criteria formulation within the three pathways should be limited and justified. If specific criteria are not applicable to a LAG, this can be noted in the reporting form, though such cases are expected to be rare. The use of additional indicators to assess judgement criteria is entirely optional, except for the mandatory common result indicators.

6.1. Timing of the evaluation process

Timing is a critical factor when conducting an evaluation, as it determines the scope and focus of the assessment. While monitoring is an ongoing, internal process of data collection, the type of evaluation conducted depends on the implementation status of the LDS.

The following evaluation types are distinguished based on LDS progress:

- **Process evaluation:** Conducted during the early stages, this evaluation assesses LAG capacity, delivery systems, stakeholder involvement, communication, and enabling factors.

- **Implementation evaluation:** Typically performed as an interim assessment, it focuses on outputs and immediate results without evaluating long-term impacts.
- **Impact evaluation:** Conducted once sufficient implementation has occurred, this ex-post evaluation measures changes for the target group or sector against a baseline situation.

Table 3 outlines which evaluation questions should be addressed at each stage, as the various evaluation types build upon one another.

Table 3: Scope of the evaluation

Evaluation Questions (EQs)	Implementation status of LDS		
	Early	Moderate	Well advanced
EQ1: Capacity of LAGs	X	X	X
EQ2: Networking and capacity building		X	X
EQ3: Strategy work		X	X
EQ4: Project implementation		X	X
EQ5: Territorial impact considering external factors			X
EQ6: External conditions for success	X	X	X

Source: FAMENET 2024

6.2. From judgement criteria to indicators

The judgement criteria outlined in Section 5.1 are further clarified through various indicators, which provide measurable, objective insights into evaluation outcomes. These indicators encompass both quantitative and qualitative aspects, such as stakeholder perceptions, ensuring a comprehensive assessment.

Indicators are designed to support evaluators – whether internal or external – in objectively assessing the judgement criteria. However, evaluation goes beyond merely listing indicator values; it involves interpreting the data to draw meaningful conclusions.

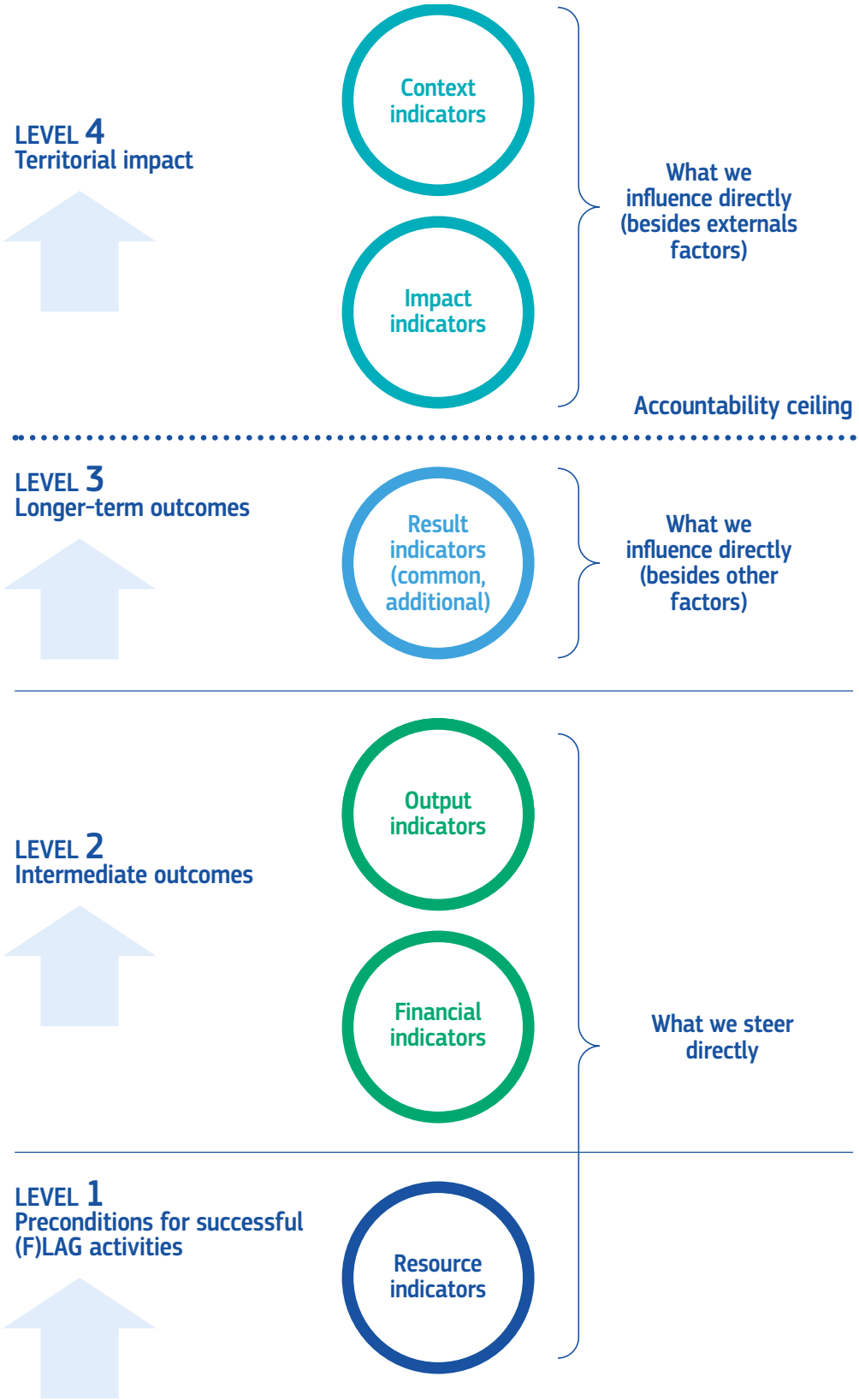
Within the evaluation framework (see Section 5.5), a specific set of indicators is proposed for each judgement criterion, aligned with corresponding evaluation questions. To maintain consistency across evaluations, the core set of judgement criteria and common result indicators should remain unchanged. However, LAGs may incorporate additional indicators to address their specific context and evaluation needs.

Table 4 outlines the types of indicators proposed. Some indicators are easy to collect through the monitoring system, as they are directly linked to LDS implementation, such as resource, financial, and output indicators. Others are readily available from official statistical sources, including context indicators. Figure 5 illustrates these indicator types across the impact chain, reflecting outcomes within and beyond CLLD influence.

Table 4: Proposed indicator types

Indicator Type	Description
Resource	Evaluate the availability of human and financial resources required for LAG operations.
Financial	Measure financial input and performance, including allocated, committed, and spent funds.
Output	Assess activities directly delivered through interventions, projects, or activities. These outputs represent the first step toward achieving operational objectives, with minimal external influence and easily accessible monitoring data.
Common result	Predefined indicators across thematic categories, as outlined in Annex I of the EMFAF regulation. Note: The common result indicators are discussed in Section 6.2 and are highlighted in the evaluation reporting template with an asterisk (*).
Additional result	Evaluate the direct and immediate effects of an intervention, project, or activity.
Impact	Measure broader, long-term changes in the area compared to a baseline. In local development, impacts are often challenging to attribute solely to LAG activities due to external influences.
Context	Provide insights into external environmental factors that may affect the design and performance of CLLD policies.

Figure 5: Indicators across the impact chain, within and beyond CLLD influence



Source: FAMENET 2024

Examples:
Creating new jobs within a company often depends on multiple factors. Business growth typically requires increased revenue, market share, or product/service demand, supported by a stable economic environment and strong consumer confidence. While EMFAF-funded investments can contribute to job creation, they represent just one of many influencing factors. To ensure accurate result measurement, the FAMENET working paper on the EMFAF monitoring and evaluation framework[5] provides clear definitions for reliable data collection.

Assessing impact is even more complex and extends beyond the accountability ceiling, as the positive development of the fisheries sector relies on numerous external factors that EMFAF can only partially influence. These include investments in advanced, selective fishing gear to reduce waste and bycatch; promoting fair trade practices to ensure fishers receive fair compensation; encouraging sector diversification to reduce reliance on single markets or species; and implementing effective quotas and regulations to prevent overfishing and protect marine ecosystems, among other factors.

6.3. Evaluation framework with evaluation questions, judgement criteria and indicators

Below, for each of the six evaluation questions proposed for fisheries LAGs and the corresponding judgement criteria, we provide examples of common EMFAF (marked with an *) and additional indicators that can be used to indicate the extent to which the judgement criteria have been met.

EQ1: To what extent are effective LAGs operational?

Judgement criteria	Examples of indicators
JC 1.1 A LAG has been established which is representative of the local community	• Number of people on the LAG decision-making body • Number of different interest groups represented on LAG decision-making body • Number of women on LAG decision-making body • Number of young people on LAG decision-making body • Mechanisms exist for new members to join the LAG
JC 1.2 A local development strategy (LDS) has been prepared in a bottom-up, participative manner	• Number of different sectors and interest groups involved in developing the LDS • Number of people mobilised to provide input to the LDS • Number of young people consulted for developing the LAG strategy • Perception of local stakeholders of their views being reflected in LDS
JC 1.3 The LAG is adequately staffed with experienced people	• Number of staff in FTEs • Number of years of relevant experience of LAG manager • Perception of local stakeholders on accessibility and competence of staff
JC 1.4 The LAG members are active in supporting the local development process	• Average number of days dedicated annually to LAG work per LAG member (e.g. on strategy work, project selection, thematic discussions, mobilising stakeholders, etc. (Result). • % of LAG members participating in each project selection

[5] FAMENET (2023) Working paper: EMFAF MEF 2021-2027: https://oceans-and-fisheries.ec.europa.eu/publications/working-paper-emfaf-monitoring-and-evaluation-framework-2021-2027_en

EQ2: To what extent has the fisheries LAG stimulated participation in local development?

Judgement criteria	Examples of indicators
JC 2.1 Communication and animation activities are being carried out to reach the local public	• Number of staff (in FTEs) dedicated to community outreach, including animation, communication, etc. • Number, type and frequency of communication channels used • Number of meetings organised by the LAG • Number of people attending meetings organised by the LAG • Approximate number of individuals that had bilateral meetings with the LAG, e.g. to discuss a project idea
JC 2.2 Local stakeholders, including under-represented groups, have a better awareness of opportunities to access EU funding for local development	• Number of beneficiaries that would not have accessed EU funding without the LAG • Number of female project promoters • Number of small-scale fisheries project promoters • Number of young project promoters
JC 2.3 Local awareness and knowledge regarding the area's challenges and potential solutions have been developed	• Approximate number of individuals that attended awareness-raising activities supported by the LAG, e.g. related to the fisheries/aquaculture sector, marine litter, local resources, etc. • Number of young people mobilised for awareness-raising or educational activities • Number of different thematic working groups to increase knowledge and quality of responses to local needs • Number of datasets/advice made available* • Number of stakeholders from LAG area that have exchanged with stake-holders from other areas thanks to the LAG • Perception of local stakeholders of LAG
JC 2.4 Local stakeholders, including under-represented groups, have been mobilised to propose actions that contribute to the area's development	• Number of project ideas presented • Number of project ideas presented by under-represented groups • Perception of local stakeholders regarding whether the local population is more active

EQ3: To what extent does the fisheries LAG enable citizens to implement projects fitted to local needs?

Judgement criteria	Examples of indicators
JC 3.1 An effective system was set up to select and fund projects that benefit the area and its citizens (calls for proposals, selection of projects, etc.)	• Number of projects submitted to the LAG • Satisfaction rate of local stakeholders regarding the: - Application process - Project selection criteria - Project selection process - Monitoring of project progress - Process for grant request • Speed of each of the processes above

JC 3.2 Local stakeholders have obtained advice and support to undertake projects that respond to local needs	• Average number of project ideas discussed with the LAG annually • Approximate number of individuals that received project development support • Number of projects submitted to the LAG thanks to specific LAG actions (e.g. outreach activities, direct contact with potential beneficiaries, guidance, etc.) • Number of local project promoters accessing European funds for the first time
JC 3.3 Members of the local community have gained access to funding from EMFAF, and potentially other funds	• Number of individual beneficiaries • Number of first-time beneficiaries • Number of projects funded from other EMFAF measures with support from the LAG • Number of projects funded from other EU funds with support from the fisheries LAG
JC 3.4 Projects responding to local needs have been implemented	• Number of projects implemented by local stakeholders • Budget allocated to local projects • Number of persons benefitting from LAG-funded projects* • Perception of the extent to which projects meet local needs

EQ4: To what extent has CLLD led to improved social capital and local governance, including better coordination of local activities and more participative decision making?

Judgement criteria	Examples of indicators
JC 4.1 The LAG collaborates actively with other development stakeholders	• Number of actions to improve coordination with other relevant strategies and agencies in the area • Number of technical meetings or thematic discussions organised by other territorial actors in which the LAG participated • Perception of local stakeholders of the LAG as an access point to other relevant organisations in the area
JC 4.2 Connections and trust between local stakeholders have been developed	• Number of networks created or strengthened by the LAG • Number of people benefiting from new or strengthened networks • Approximate number of new contacts that local stakeholders have made, thanks to the LAG • Perception of local stakeholders, e.g. - To what extent have connections between local stakeholders increased, thanks to the LAG? - To what extent has trust among local stakeholders increased, thanks to the LAG?
JC 4.3 The LAG has supported tangible collaboration between different stakeholder groups	• Number of cooperation activities between stakeholders* • Number of cross-sectoral projects implemented (involving partners from different sectors or interest groups) • % of projects supported that involve more than one sector • Budget allocated to cross-sectoral projects
JC 4.4 Local governance has been improved, including coordination of local activities and more participative decision-making linked to local resources and/or activities	• Number of actions to improve governance capacity* • Perception of LAG and examples of improved local governance, e.g. - To what extent has the local coordination been improved, thanks to the LAG? - To what extent has decision-making linked to local resources and activities become more participative, thanks to the LAG?

EQ5: To what extent have LAGs supported a positive change in socio-economic and environmental dynamics in the local area?

Note: for *each* indicator, assess the **influence** of external factors on the results achieved by the LAG *and* the background of the overall context in which the results were achieved (e.g. employment trends, migration, marine environment situation, etc.).

Judgement criteria	Examples of indicators
JC 5.1 The LAG has supported local stakeholders to introduce new ways of working, new services and new products to address the area's needs	• Number of innovations enabled* • Number of new and/or improved activities and services offered in the area • Entities increasing social sustainability* • Qualitative examples, e.g. described in mini-case studies
JC 5.2 Jobs and/or businesses have been created and/or maintained	• Number of businesses created* • Number of jobs created* • Number of jobs maintained* • Overall trend of the employment situation in the region
JC 5.3 Short supply chains have been developed and/or strengthened	• Number of new channels to purchase local fish • Number of existing outlets which have started offering (or significantly increased) local fish products • Number of local entities benefiting from promotion and information activities* • Qualitative examples
JC 5.4 The fisheries/marine sectors and their contribution to the local area have become more visible / better integrated into the local community	• Number of projects implemented by or for small-scall fishers • Number of entities linked to local fisheries or aquaculture benefiting from promotion and information activities • Number of fish-related businesses that have developed new sources of income through diversified activities • Number of cross-sectoral projects and related budgets involving the fisheries or aquaculture sector • Perception of integration/visibility
JC 5.5 Local businesses have developed new sources of income through diversified activities	• Number local businesses that have developed new sources of income through diversified activities
JC 5.6 Local businesses have increased their revenue	• % of revenue increase of local businesses implementing for profit projects
JC 5.7 Actions to protect and/or restore the area's environmental resources have been put in place	• Number of actions contributing to Good Environmental Status* • Qualitative examples
JC 5.8 Actions to transition towards a low carbon and more resource efficient economy have been put in place	• Number of entities improving resource efficiency* • Qualitative examples

EQ6: To what extent do external conditions outside the control of the LAG support or hinder the implementation of local development?

Judgement criteria	Examples of indicators
JC 6.1 Useful support is provided by national/ regional governments	• Influence of governmental support/non-support on the functionality of the LAG and the implementation of its strategy.
JC 6.2 The administrative rules set by the MA or IB facilitate the implementation of local projects and development work	• Resources needed by the LAG to fulfil the administrative requirements involved in candidates presenting projects for selection and for payment compared to the use of resources for outreach and capacity-building activities • Administrative burden for project promoters
JC 6.3 There is enough local potential for project development	• Opportunities and limitations for implementing projects arising from the socio-economic potential of the region • Needs for a revision of the local development strategy based on the implementation experience
JC 6.4 Local development work was unaffected by external shocks and changing context	• Influence of external shocks and changing macro-economic context on the achievement or non-achievements of the local development strategy (e.g. Covid-19, war in Ukraine, natural disasters)

7. INFORMATION SOURCES

7.1. Overview

Effective evaluation relies on identifying information sources and planning data collection to ensure LAGs have the necessary evidence for assessing indicators and judgement criteria. Key information sources include:

- **Beneficiary data:** Collected during funding applications and project evaluation forms prior to payment.
- **FAMENET annual survey:** Conducted for all 2021–2027 LAGs, providing insights into LAG activities, stakeholder mobilisation, project support, and local knowledge-building.
- **Participatory evaluation:** Facilitated workshops with representative stakeholders (see Section 7.3).
- **Targeted surveys and case studies:** Conducted by LAGs or external experts.
- **Regionalised statistical data:** Contextual information accessible to LAGs and local experts.
- **Infosys:** Recorded project data, results, indicators, and progress related to EMFAF implementation.

Some data is available in real-time, such as financial information, while other sources, like case studies, are collected at specific milestones. Common Result Indicators (CRIs), gathered through Infosys for each CLLD operation, offer standardised, high-quality data but cover a limited thematic scope.

7.2. Common result indicators reported under CLLD

The EMFAF introduced 22 CRIs to standardise reporting across MSs. Managing MAs can select any CRI for operations during programming, ensuring flexibility for diverse activities. While no indicators are explicitly designated for CLLD operations, most MSs prioritise those most relevant to their programmes. At the EU level, Table 5 outlines 10 CRIs are the most commonly used. This list is not mandatory, but using these 10 common result indicators allows LAGs to collect data that is consistent and comparable with other LAGs.

Table 5: 10 most commonly used CRIs

Indicator Code	Description
CRI 03	Businesses created
CRI 06	Jobs created
CRI 07	Jobs maintained
CRI 08	Persons benefitting
CRI 11	Entities increasing social sustainability
CRI 10	Actions contributing to a good environmental status (GES), including nature restoration, conservation, protection of ecosystems, biodiversity, animal health, and welfare
CRI 13	Cooperation activities between stakeholders
CRI 14	Innovations enabled
CRI 16	Entities benefiting from promotion and information activities
CRI 19	Actions to improve governance capacity

Full list of 22 CRIs:
The complete list of common result and output indicators for EMFAF monitoring and evaluation is available in Annex 1 of the EMFAF Regulation (EU 2021/1139). The FAMENET working paper on the EMFAF monitoring and evaluation framework (MEF) 2021–2027[6] includes a detailed fiche clarifying each indicators, their definition, calculation method, measurement unit, and required inputs. All 22 CRIs in the evaluation reporting template in Section 5.5 are highlighted with an asterisk (*).

[6] FAMENET (2023) Working paper: EMFAF MEF 2021-2027: https://oceans-and-fisheries.ec.europa.eu/publications/working-paper-emfaf-monitoring-and-evaluation-framework-2021-2027_en

8. EVALUATION REPORTING TEMPLATE FOR CLLD

8.1. How to use the evaluation report template

The working paper proposes a common evaluation tool for CLLD, which includes a reporting template comprising six evaluation questions (EQs) and 28 judgement criteria (JC). The reporting template can be completed directly by the fisheries LAGs or an external expert.

The evaluation can be carried out at different points in the implementation cycle. As a rule, a LAG should conduct an evaluation twice: at the middle and end of the implementation cycle. The implementation status should be clearly stated (e.g. end 2026). An assessment of all six evaluation questions is only possible at a well-advanced stage of implementation.

The judgement criteria under each evaluation question are evaluated semi-quantitatively. The template is structured in such a way that evaluation profiles can be created which, due to their visual nature, are very suitable for working in participatory workshops.

To fill in the "justification" part of the template, the common and additional indicators proposed in the evaluation framework can be used.

Figure 6: Evaluation profile for EQ 1 (To what extent are fisheries LAGs operational, representative of the local community, and have sufficient human and technical resources to drive forward the strategy work, networking and capacity building processes, and project implementation?) – *fictional, for illustration purpose only*

Outcomes to be achieved, thanks to the LAG	Progress achieved at a specific point in time						Justification
	ND	0	1	2	3	4	
JC 1.1 A LAG has been established which is representative of the local community							e.g. 12 different people sit on the LAG decision-making body (nine men and three women), representing eight different interest groups.
JC 1.2 A local development strategy (LDS) has been prepared in a bottom-up, participative manner							e.g. The LDS was developed by a technical expert in a very short period due to the overarching framework conditions and submitted to the MA. It was not fully possible to involve the coastal community in public consultations, focus groups, workshops and surveys. The coordination of the LDS with the local community should be made after the approval of the strategy.
JC 1.3 The LAG is adequately staffed with experienced people							e.g. Two full-time equivalents are employed by the LAG with combined expertise in community outreach, economic development and the management of EU funds. Each has over eight years of relevant experience. Experience in local fisheries and aquaculture is less strong.
JC 1.4 The LAG members are active in supporting the local development process							e.g. Some LAG members are more active than others, but most attend the project selection meetings.

Source: FAMENET 2024

The assessments are first prepared for each judgement criterion and then summarised in a concluding answer to EQ1. If necessary, recommendations are derived from the conclusions.

Concluding answer to EQ1 and deriving recommendations

- Regarding the capacity of the LAG, moderate to substantial progress was achieved at the time of the internal evaluation.
- A LAG has been established that is generally representative of the coastal community that the strategy is targeting. The main sectors are represented but gender equality on the decision-making board could be improved. The LAG is well staffed, even though knowledge of the fisheries and aquaculture sectors is less strong. LAG members are not as engaged as they should be in supporting the local development process. Recommendations include organising specific actions to engage the less active members of the LAG.
- Tapping into the experience of the LAG members from the fisheries and aquaculture sectors could help to support the staff in engaging these sectors and to build up their knowledge of the sectors.
- Consider replacing LAG members that cannot be motivated further with relevant female candidates.

Source: FAMENET 2024

For the assessment of the judgement criteria, the following scale is proposed:

Table 6: Scale to assess the progress achieved

Scale	Explanation
N/A: Not applicable	Judgement criteria not relevant for the LAG.
0: No achievements	Based on the available sources of information, there are no recognisable achievements
1: Low achievements	The expected outcomes were only achieved to a limited extent. Less than 25% of the expected outcomes were achieved. There are considerable difficulties and setbacks.
2: Moderate achievements	Achievements are satisfactory. Between 25% and 50% of the expected outcomes were achieved. There are some difficulties and setbacks.
3: Good achievements	The achievement of the expected outcomes is above average. Between 50% and 75% of the expected outcomes were achieved. There are only a few difficulties and setbacks.
4: Very good achievements	In this category, achievements are well above average. Between 75% and 100% of the expected outcomes were achieved or even exceeded. There are hardly any difficulties or setbacks.

Source: FAMENET 2024

When assessing the judgement criteria, it should be noted that these build on each other, as shown in the common impact model. For example, no successes can be reported in communication, networking and capacity building activities (EQ2) if clear deficits have been identified in the capacity of the LAG (EQ1). The plausible interaction of the various conditions along the impact pathways should be taken into account.

8.2. Evaluation report template

Key facts about the LAG

LAG name and FAMENET code (see list in CLLD factsheet for your Member State)

text

Context information regarding:

- Programming period the fisheries LAG was first launched;
- Implementation model: close integration with LEADER vs. "independent fisheries LAG", mono- or multi-funded approach;
- Any other information relevant for the evaluation.

text

Timing of the evaluation and implementation status:

- Very early date => assess only evaluation question 1 and 6
- Moderate implementation status => assess evaluation questions 1, 2, 3, 4, and 6
- Well advanced implementation status => assess all evaluation questions 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6

text

Answering the evaluation questions:

EQ1: To what extent are effective fisheries LAGs operational?

Outcomes to be achieved, thanks to the LAG	Achievements at a specific point in time (insert date)						Justification
	ND	0	1	2	3	4	
JC 1.1 A LAG has been established which is representative of the local community							
JC 1.2 A local development strategy (LDS) has been prepared in a bottom-up, participative manner							
JC 1.3 The LAG is adequately staffed with experienced people							
JC 1.4 The LAG members are active in supporting the local development process							

Concluding answer to EQ1 and subsequent recommendations

text

EQ2: To what extent has the fisheries LAG stimulated participation in local development?

Outcomes to be achieved, thanks to the LAG	Achievements at a specific point in time (insert date)						Justification
	ND	0	1	2	3	4	
JC 2.1 Communication and networking activities are being carried out to reach the local public							
JC 2.2 Local stakeholders, including under-represented groups, have a better awareness of opportunities to access EU funding for local development							
JC 2.3 Local awareness and knowledge regarding the area's challenges and potential solutions have been developed							

JC 2.4 Local stakeholders, including under-represented groups, have been mobilised to propose actions that contribute to the area's development							

Concluding answer to EQ2 and subsequent recommendations

text

EQ3: To what extent does the fisheries LAG enable citizens to implement projects fitted to local needs?

Outcomes to be achieved, thanks to the LAG	Achievements at a specific point in time (insert date)						Justification
	ND	0	1	2	3	4	
JC 3.1 An effective system was set up to select and fund projects that benefit the area and its citizens (calls for proposals, selection of projects, etc.)							
JC 3.2 Local stakeholders have obtained advice and support to undertake projects that respond to local needs							
JC 3.3 Members of the local community have gained access to funding from EMFAF, and potentially other funds							
JC 3.4 Projects responding to local needs have been implemented							

Concluding answer to EQ3 and subsequent recommendations

text

EQ4: To what extent has CLLD led to improved social capital and local governance, including better coordination of local activities and more participative decision making?

Outcomes to be achieved, thanks to the LAG	Achievements at a specific point in time (insert date)						Justification
	ND	0	1	2	3	4	
JC 4.1 The LAG collaborates actively with other development stakeholders							
JC 4.2 Connections and trust between local stakeholders have been developed							
JC 4.3 The LAG has supported tangible collaboration between different stakeholder groups							
JC 4.4 Local governance has been improved, including coordination of local activities and more participative decision making linked to local resources and/or activities							

Concluding answer to EQ4 and subsequent recommendations

text

EQ5: To what extent have LAGs supported a positive change in socio-economic and environmental dynamics in the local area?

Note: evaluating territorial impacts should be done in conjunction with the achievements against evaluation questions 1-3. If few achievements are identified in the previous evaluation questions, no impacts can be determined as a result.

In addition, external influences (outside EMFAF support) might have contributed to the achievement (e.g. other funding instruments, market prices, etc.) and should be taken into account. An influence matrix should be filled in for this purpose (see **working step 2**, below).

Working step 1: Define the progress achieved (gross effect)

Outcomes to be achieved, thanks to the LAG	Achievements at a specific point in time (insert date)						Justification
	ND	0	1	2	3	4	
JC5.1 The LAG has supported local stake-holders to introduce new ways of working, new services and new products to address the area's needs							

JC 5.2 Jobs and/or businesses have been created and/or maintained							
JC 5.3 Short supply chains have been de-veloped and/or strengthened							
JC 5.4 The fisheries/marine sectors and their contribution to the local area have become more visible / better integrated into the local community							
JC 5.5 Local businesses have developed new sources of income through diversified activities							
JC 5.6 Local businesses have increased their revenue							
JC 5.7 Actions to protect and/or restore the area's environmental resources have been put in place							
JC 5.8 Actions to transition towards a low carbon and more resource efficient econ-omy have been put in place							

Concluding answer to EQ5 and subsequent recommendations

text

Working step 2: Determine the influencing factors for the achievements (rate with 1 to max. 3 stars or insert "–" if no influence is given)

Outcomes to be achieved, thanks to the LAG	Influencing factors		Justification	
	LAG activities	Other factors		
JC 5.1 Jobs and/or businesses have been created and/or maintained	***	*		
JC 5.2 Short supply chains have been developed and/or strengthened	–	***		
JC 5.3 New and/or improved activities and services are offered in the area, ensuring more inclusive communities, improving access to cultural activities, and promoting cultural heritage				

JC 5.4 The fisheries/marine sectors and their contribution to the local area have become more visible / better integrated into the local community				
JC 5.5 Local businesses have developed new sources of income through diversified activities				
JC 5.6 Local businesses have increased their revenue				
JC 5.7 Actions to protect and/or restore the area's environmental resources have been put in place				
JC 5.8 Actions to transition towards a low carbon and more resource efficient economy have been put in place				
JC 5.1 Jobs and/or businesses have been created and/or maintained				

Concluding answer to EQ5 on influencing factors and subsequent recommendations

text

EQ6: To what extent do external conditions outside the control of the LAG support the implementation of local development?

Note: EQ6 deals with the assessment of external conditions that are not within the LAG's sphere of influence but can facilitate or hinder the LAG's work and the implementation of its LDS. The scale is slightly different from the others.

Enabling conditions for outside LAG control	Level of agreement						Justification
	ND	0	1	2	3	4	
JC 6.1 Useful support is provided by national/regional governments							
JC 6.2 The administrative rules set by the MA or IB facilitate the implementation of local projects and development work							

JC 6.3 There is enough local potential for project development							
JC 6.4 Local development work was unaffected by external shocks and changing context							

Scale:
ND: No data available to make a statement
0: Strongly disagree
1: Disagree
2: Neither agree nor disagree
3: Agree
4: Strongly agree

Concluding answer to EQ6 and subsequent recommendations

text

Summarised assessment of all evaluation questions

Overall conclusions and recommendations on the progress made on networking and capacity building, strategy work and project implementation

text

Indication of information sources to answer the evaluation questions

Please list the sources of information used for the evaluation

- Text
- Text

Follow-up procedure:
LAGs and local evaluators are requested to submit completed reporting templates to FAMENET for internal use only. Evaluation results will be summarised by FAMENET and published exclusively in anonymised form. FAMENET also plans to share findings with LAGs through online workshops. If LAGs choose not to share their evaluation results, they are still asked to confirm that the evaluation has been completed. For further information, contact: **info@famenet.eu**.

8.3. Participatory assessment

Participatory evaluation tools, such as focus groups, are commonly used for LAG evaluation and were recommended by the Evaluation Helpdesk for Rural Development in 2010[7]. The participatory workshop design proposed in this working paper follows this established approach and was developed in 2023 as part of an evaluation support study, successfully tested across 13 LEADER LAGs in various MSs.[8]

To ensure a robust evaluation, it is recommended that the process involves not only experts but also a broad range of stakeholder perspectives. Participatory workshops are an effective way to achieve this, provided they meet specific design criteria. Optimal outcomes depend on three key elements: diverse participant composition, impartial facilitation, and thorough workshop preparation.

If all six proposed evaluation questions (with 28 judgement criteria) are to be addressed, particularly from an ex-post perspective, two workshops are advised to avoid participant fatigue. The first workshop can cover EQs 1 to 4, while the second can focus on EQs 5 and 6.

Ensuring representative participation

To capture a balanced range of views, the workshop should include 8–12 participants, representing various stakeholder groups:

1. Up to 2 members of the fisheries LAG partnership.
2. Up to 3 direct beneficiaries of supported projects.
3. Up to 3 stakeholders representing the territory but not involved in the LDS.
4. Up to 2 stakeholders who applied for LAG project funding but were not financed.
5. Up to 2 LAG staff members, including the LAG manager or director.

Workshop structure and timing

The workshop should last approximately four hours to ensure a structured process. The methodology follows the Nominal Group Technique, facilitating consensus through several steps.

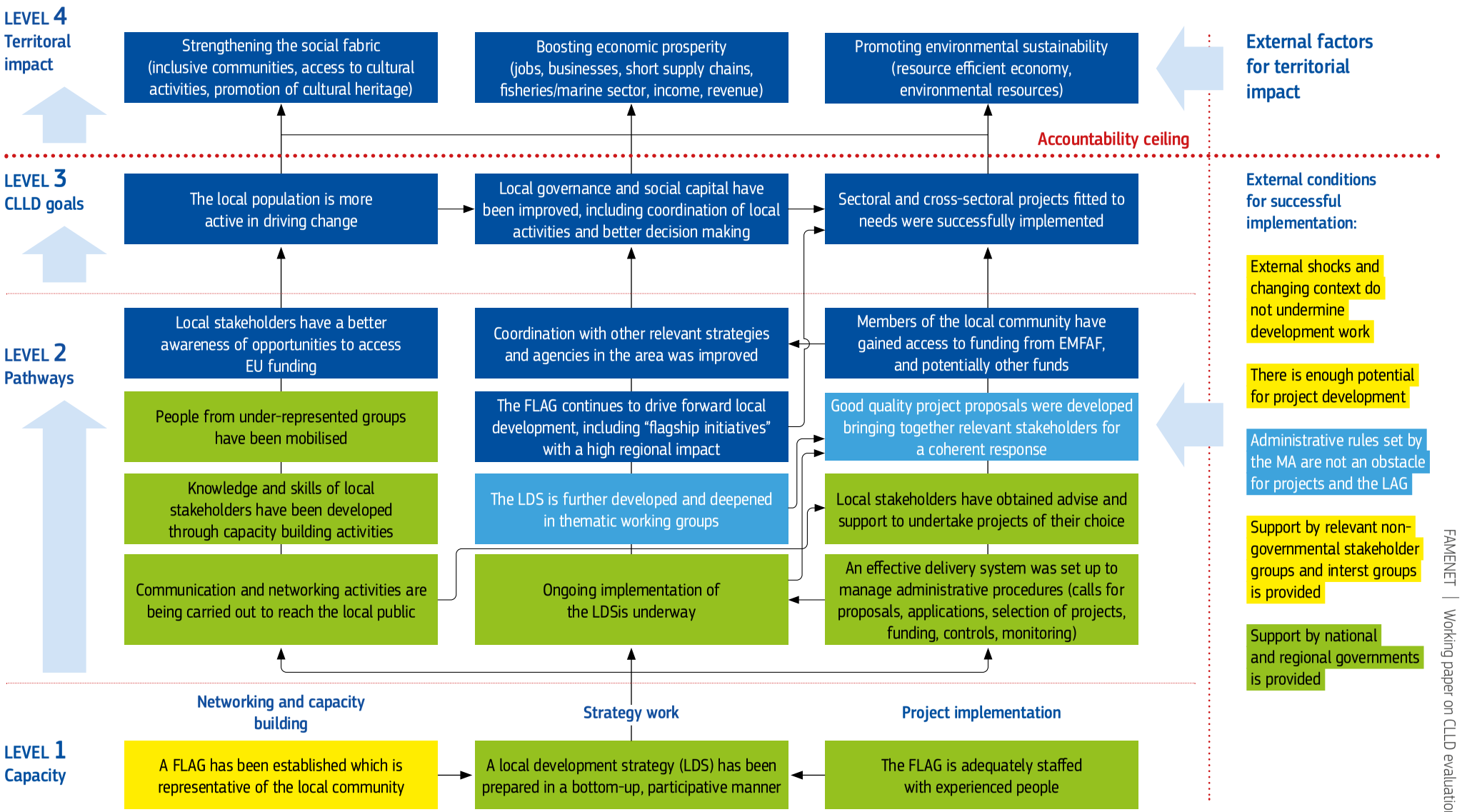
Introductory session (60 minutes):
The LAG manager, or a designated facilitator, provides an overview of achievements to date, covering networking and capacity-building efforts, strategy development, and project implementation.

8.4. Visualisation of findings

To clearly demonstrate progress along the causal pathways outlined in Chapter 5, evaluation results from the template can be visualised using a colour-coded graphic model. A well-designed visual representation simplifies complex relationships between preconditions and outcomes across different stages, providing stakeholders with a shared understanding of the evaluation findings. The illustration highlights that while basic conditions have been met, implementation remains in its early stages. It also reveals challenges related to external conditions, particularly issues arising from imposed administrative procedures.

[7] European Evaluation Network for Rural Development (2010): Working paper on Capturing impacts of Leader and of measures to improve Quality of Life in rural areas.
[8] Agrosynergie, Ecorys and Metis (2023): Evaluation support study of the costs and benefits of the implementation of LEADER; commissioned by the European Commission (DG AGRI).

Figure 7: Visual assessment of the impact model (Fictional, for illustration only)



Colour codes for the visual assessment of the impact model:

- No progress achieved
- Low progress achieved
- Moderate progress achieved
- Good progress or very good progress achieved

Source: FAMENET 2024

9. ANNEXES

Annex 1: Glossary of key terms for understanding this working paper

The following key terms are important for understanding the methodological approach of the working paper. The terms are based on EU regulations and guidance documents for LEADER/CLLD (listed in Annex 4) and have been simplified and adapted to the European Maritime Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund (EMFAF) context in the sense of "working definitions".

Community-led local development (CLLD) was introduced by the EU in the 2014-2020 programming period, broadening significantly the scope of what was known as the 'LEADER approach' introduced by the EU for rural areas in the early 1990s. Through this broader concept, it was made possible to support a local development strategy (LDS) in various geographic areas by several EU funds including the EMFAF. The LEADER approach and later CLLD has been supported in fisheries and coastal areas since 2007.

Community-led local development strategies (LDS) are defined in Article 32 of the Common Provisions Regulation (EU) 2021/1060. Each LDS must contain certain minimum elements, which are listed in Article 32. The monitoring and evaluation arrangements are compulsory elements of an LDS. Local action groups shall design and implement the strategies.

CLLD method is based on the seven principles of the LEADER method and defined by closely interlinked key features that include a bottom-up approach, an area-based focus, local partnerships, integrated and multi-sectoral strategies, and a focus on cooperation, networking and innovation.

Added value of CLLD is defined as the benefits that are obtained through the proper application of the CLLD method which manifests itself in improved social capital, improved local governance and projects better fitted to needs.

Social capital refers to the networks, relationships, and shared norms of trust and reciprocity within a community that enable effective collaboration toward common goals. It encompasses structural connections, such as community organisations, and cognitive elements, like shared values and trust. In Community-Led Local Development (CLLD), strong social capital enhances local governance, promotes civic engagement, and ensures projects are responsive to community needs.

Governance relates to local and multi-level processes and mechanisms that ensure effective and transparent decision-making and relations between different actors involved in CLLD implementation, contributing to bringing the EU closer to citizens. Local governance is driven by the LAG to ensure participatory, transparent, and inclusive decision making and strong community engagement in strategy development and implementation. Multi-level governance involves different levels of stakeholders, from national to regional and local, working together to tackle issues and implement policies. This collaborative approach helps foster a sense of ownership and increases the likelihood of success.

Projects fitted to needs are those that can be achieved with the CLLD method e.g. increased local ownership through bottom-up animation work. Projects fitted to needs are coherent with the strategic themes defined in the LDS and selected by the local decision-making body. The increased expenses for CLLD animation work are justified by projects that are sustainable, tailored to local needs, involve new project promoters, build on endogenous resources and synergies between projects, and introduce innovative elements in the local context[9]

[9] The conceptual term "enhanced project results as compared to the implementation without the CLLD-method" as it is used in the Evaluation Helpdesk Guideline (2024) is not applied in this working paper because at the level of the individual LAGs the difference between bottom-up and top-down measures (e.g. increased leverage, more sustainable projects, more innovative projects, etc.) is difficult to measure. The LAGs usually do not have a counterfactual method at their disposal to reflect the with-CLLD and without-CLLD situation.

Delivery mechanism refers to the set of rules, procedures and administrative arrangements in place to ensure that the objectives of CLLD are translated into the implementation of projects by local beneficiaries. Delivery mechanisms are generally developed by the MA based on the EU-legal framework, and sometimes by the IB. Except for project selection criteria and procedures which should be developed by the LAGs.

Enabling processes are a basic precondition for being able to develop and implement an LDS at all and include delivery mechanism and administrative arrangements to implement CLLD on the ground and animation and capacity building activities to empower the local population in driving change.

Evaluation at the programme-level is entrusted by the responsible body, the MA, to internal or external experts who are functionally independent from the implementing bodies (MA, IB, LAG). Evaluations are related to one or more of the following evaluation criteria: effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, coherence and Union added value, with the aim to improve the quality of the design and implementation of programmes (see Article 44 CPR 2021/1060).

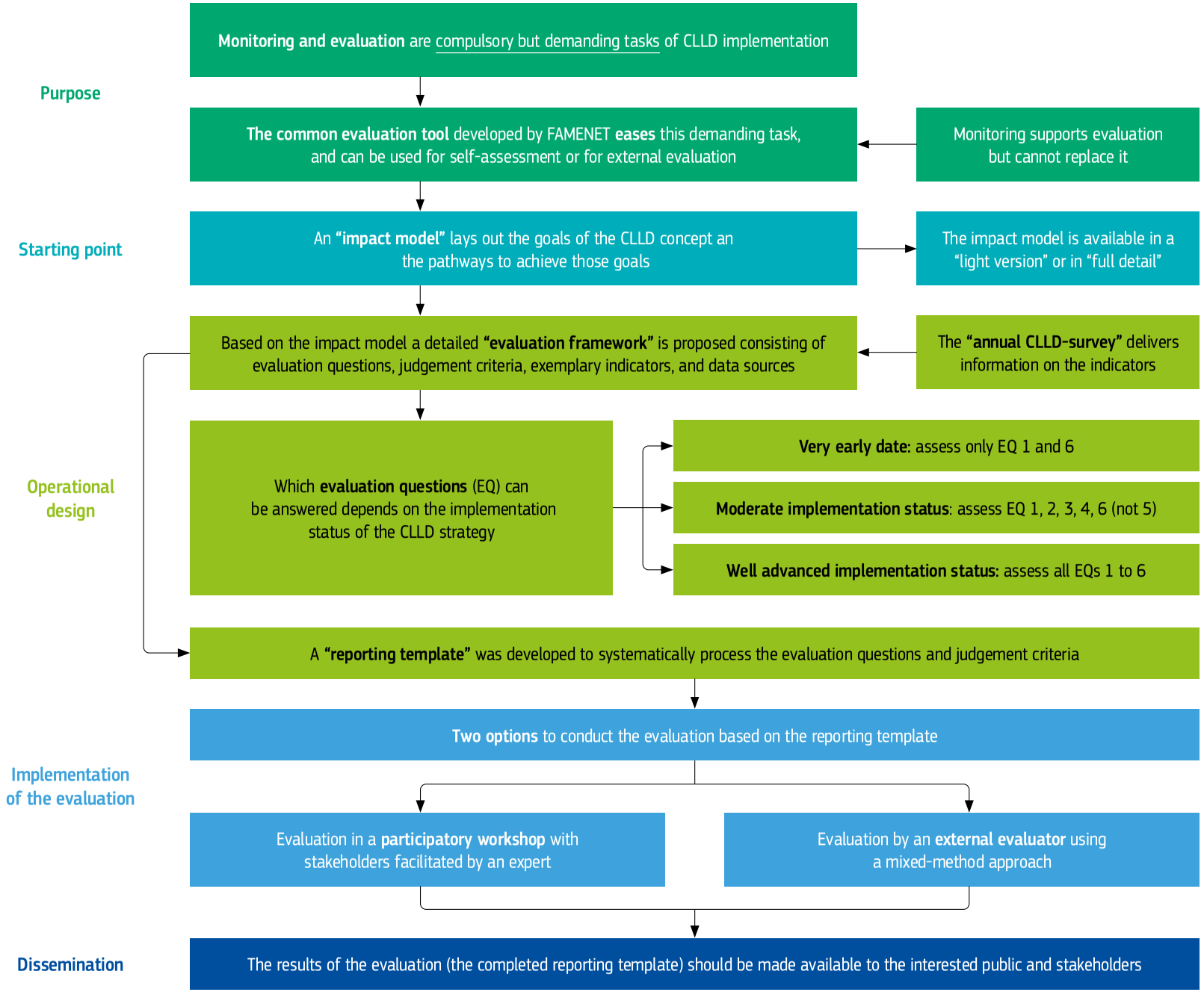
Evaluation at the local level is implemented through a **self-assessment** done by the LAG, namely by those who are involved in / responsible for the design and implementation of the strategy (LAG members, decision body, LAG management, etc.). The self-evaluation of the LAGs is a key instrument in capacity building and for steering the LDS. A self-assessment is considered a credible evaluation approach when an external expert is involved to lead and facilitate the process of self-assessment. This expert may have just a moderating role, but s/he may also act as an expert and provide judgement and advice. Otherwise, a self-reflection without external input is considered a monitoring exercise.

Monitoring is an internal management task of the implementing body (MA, IB, LAGs) and is about the collection of reliable data on the implementation of operations and on the progress made to fulfil operational targets. The monitoring is closely connected to reporting tasks e.g. annual implementation reports.

Monitoring by LAGs is based on Infosys data including the common indicators and additional indicators collected by the LAGs. Under the EMFAF, any common result indicator can be selected for any CLLD operation. The indicators are designed to be flexible to various types of operations, and applicable to a wide range of operations.

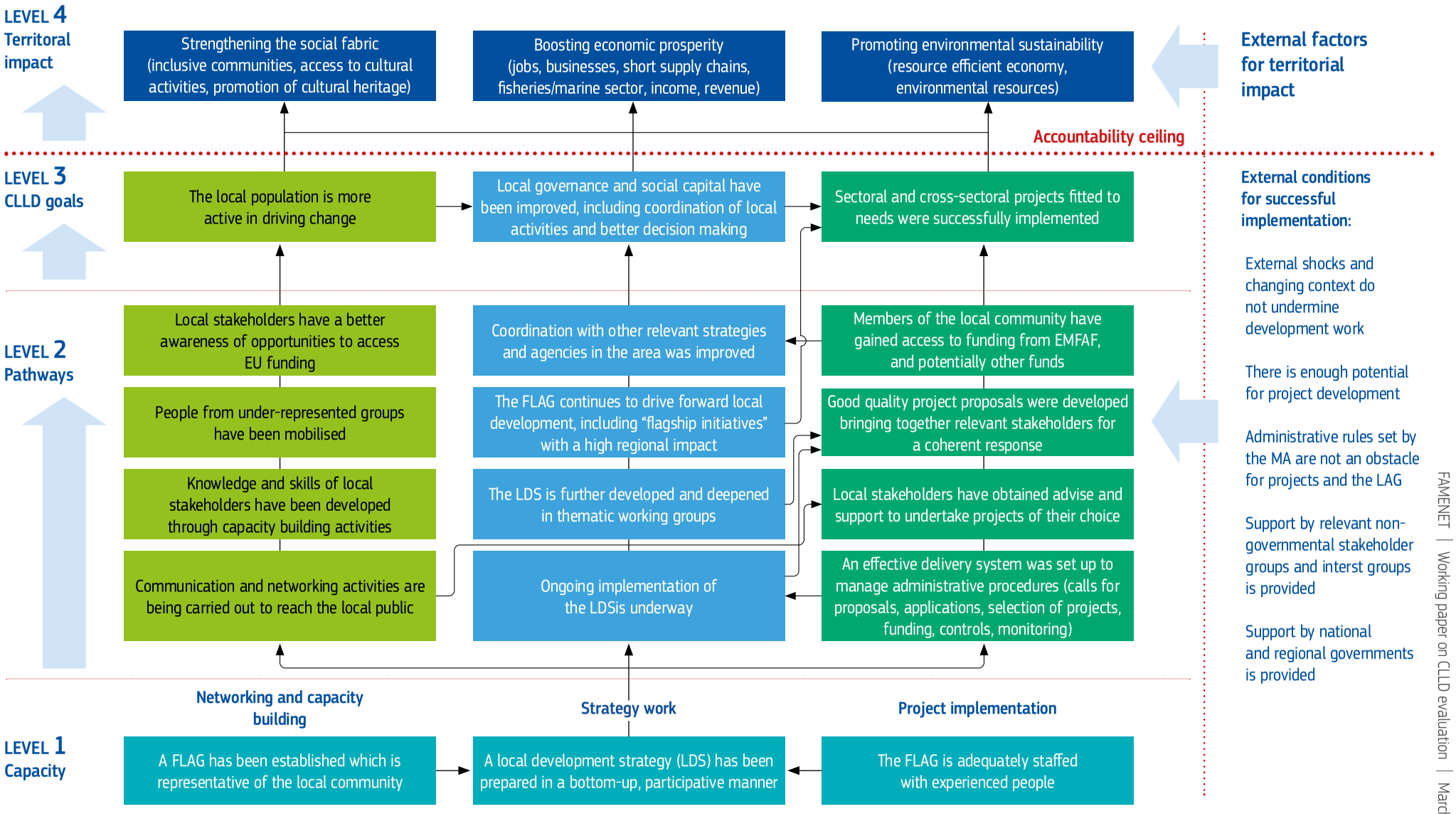
Infosys is an EMFAF-specific reporting format used at the programme/Managing Authority level to collect and report data related to the EMFAF implementation. Every project funded by EMFAF is included in the national Infosys reporting, delivered twice a year. It is a crucial tool for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of EMFAF-funded operations.

Annex 2: Step-by-step approach to evaluating CLLD



Source: FAMENET 2024

Annex 3: CLLD impact model



Source: FAMENET 2024

Annex 4: References

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Annex 5: Methodology

The working paper was developed throughout 2024, following the concept note approved by DG MARE in March. The process involved the following key steps:

Step 1: Desk research

The available documents related to CLLD evaluation were screened to gain a better understanding of the requirements for CLLD evaluation at the LDS level.

- EMFF evaluations of the 2014-2020 programming period.
- Evaluation plans for the EMFAF in the programming period 2021-2027.
- Evaluation concepts developed by fisheries LAG to assess their LDS where available.
- Evaluation guidance developed by FARNET and the Evaluation Helpdesk for the CAP.

From the screening it could be deduced which topics are already very well covered and where there are significant gaps. There are very few existing evaluations on the topic of CLLD in the EMFF/EFAF. The few that do exist are incomplete. A good evaluation culture in the EMFF/EFAF in relation to CLLD is still lacking.[10] Existing guidelines for CLLD evaluation are very technical and demanding (Rural Development) or the guidelines describe the evaluation approach in general terms only (FARNET).

Step 2: Development of a conceptual model of potential impacts of CLLD

Although CLLD has been practised for many years, up to now there is no fully developed impact model of how CLLD generates its effects. Such a model was therefore developed in close collaboration with experts within FAMNET and with the help of literature research.

This meta-model is intended to have general validity and is not tailored to the circa 350 individual LAG areas and strategies (which is not possible). It is intended to reflect the basic mechanisms of CLLD.

Step 3: Development of an evaluation framework, indicators and a template

A simple evaluation model with evaluation questions, judgement criteria and different types of indicators was developed, which can be evaluated semi-quantitatively in discussion within FAMENET experts and based on an exchange with external evaluation experts.

The technical part – which is the core part of the working paper - should be made available as a **template** that can be edited directly by the fisheries LAGs.

The development of the indicators has benefited significantly from FAMENET's preparatory work for the CLLD survey.

Step 4: Preparation of the working paper document

The working paper should be kept short and should only contain essential statements and recommendations. The working paper was reviewed internally by several people to correct errors and ambiguities.

Step 5: Consultation on the draft working paper with DG MARE and stakeholder

After a first draft of the working paper and the attached templates have been prepared, a consultation is to take place via written procedure and online meetings.

[10] With respect to the EMFF, four evaluations with a CLLD focus were identified in four MS during that period (FR, IT, UK, ES), none of which were accessible to the public. This means that only a small share of the MS is covered by evaluation activities. In addition to these four evaluations, there are probably others in other MS that are difficult to access.

The following activities are foreseen:

- Presentation of the working paper and collecting internal feedback within the FAMENET team.
- Presentation of the working paper and collecting feedback from DG MARE.
- Presentation of the working paper and collecting feedback from MAs and selected fisheries LAGs.

The working paper and templates will be revised based on the comments received. The FAMENET core team and selected thematic experts ensure that all deliverables and outcomes that FAMENET prepares are fit for purpose for the target groups involved in EMFAF evaluations and are in line with available resources.

Step 6: Presentation and dissemination

It is planned to present the working paper at online events and to publish it on the FAMENET website. The working paper can also be used at workshops in the MS to train stakeholders. In addition to the working paper, there will also be a ppt version of the working paper on LDS evaluation to facilitate dissemination activities.

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