

Results Management Framework (RMF) – Policy

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Contents

1 Introduction	4
2 Rationale	4
3 Process for developing the RMF	5
Step 1: Development of the NDF <i>Theory of Change</i>	5
Step 2: Selection of NDF aggregate results and process indicators.....	7
4 Scope and structure of RMF.....	8
5 RMF Timeframe, baseline, and target-setting	11
6 Use of RMF	12
7 Commitments.....	12
8 Governance and accountability	13
Annex 1: Definitions.....	14
Annex 2: NDF Theory of Change	15

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RMF Indicator framework and RMF indicator technical notes – Guidelines

1 Introduction

The purpose of the Nordic Development Fund (NDF or Fund) is to advance Nordic leadership in addressing climate change and development challenges through financing, knowledge and partnerships while contributing towards the delivery of the 2030 Agenda and commitments in the Paris Agreement. Together with strategic partners, NDF develops, launches, and scales projects to support developing countries and the most vulnerable people affected by climate change.

NDF recognises the importance of results-based management in delivering on its purpose. The NDF Results Management Framework (RMF) consists of a Policy and Guidelines in accordance with NDF's defined document categories (the Policy and the Guidelines are collectively referred to as the RMF).

The RMF facilitates results-based management, learning and performance improvement. It provides the basis for results and evidence-based monitoring and reporting on NDF's operational and organisational performance, and communication with NDF stakeholders and partners about progress and achievement of expected results.

The RMF is aligned with NDF's purpose, as well as with the Statutes of NDF, according to which NDF was established as an organisation to promote economic and social development. The RMF is informed by Strategy 2025 (Strategy)¹ and supports its implementation. The RMF design builds on existing policies and frameworks and the selection and design of the most suitable indicators to track the main activities and measure the aggregate project level results in the NDF's *Theory of Change (ToC)*.

The timeframe for assessing performance in RMF is aligned with the Strategy period to enhance comparability over time and allowing more time to observe changes in performance. The NDF annual result reporting based on the indicator framework will serve as a key platform for analysing performance trends, identifying underlying issues, and reflecting agreed actions with stakeholders, such as the NDF Board, and strategic partners. The findings will inform NDF's operational directions and resource planning.

NDF keeps its RMF flexible and sees it as an 'emergent' process, adaptable and reflective of changing contexts to allow for adaptive management that entails refinements based on lessons learned and to accommodate for revisions in the indicator framework in the future.

This Policy provides an overview on the process that led to the development of the RMF, its scope and structure as well as its use. The RMF indicator framework and the RMF indicator technical notes serve as operational documents and are considered as Guidelines for this Policy.

2 Rationale

A comprehensive evaluation² of NDF, conducted in 2019, identified the need for strengthening efforts in corporate results monitoring, evaluation, and learning. In April 2020, NDF launched its Strategy and successfully obtained a capital increase. These developments called for a corporate-level Results Management Framework (RMF) to facilitate the assessment of NDF's operational and organisational performance in implementing the commitments articulated in the Strategy and the overall purpose and mandate. Based on these requirements and recommendations, NDF embarked on strengthening the results-based management (RBM) functions and developing the critically needed RMF.

¹ [NDF Strategy 2025 \(2020\)](#)

² [NDF Evaluation 2019](#)

In June 2020, the department for Quality Assurance and Reporting (QAR) was established, where the oversight and advisory functions of NDF's corporate results management, including planning, monitoring, evaluation, and learning are placed.

3 Process for developing the RMF

During the development of the RMF, the guiding principle was to ground the work on existing frameworks and in a participatory process for the product to be "owned" by the people who would use it the most. An internal RMF working group was formed to allow for the design to be embedded in the strategic and policy context, existing diverse portfolio of projects as well as knowledge and learning. The development of the Policy and the Guidelines was to some extent done in parallel.

The RMF design work is based on an in-depth NDF project portfolio analysis, review of policy and operational documents, as well as benchmarking with the industry standards and best practices. It builds on the key priorities and objectives of the Strategy that focus on the nexus between climate change and development in lower-income countries and countries in fragile situations. Likewise, the work is grounded on existing NDF policies and frameworks.

Considerable efforts also went into holding internal and external consultation rounds, including with the NDF Board, as well as in engaging with the entire NDF staff around the design work of the RMF to build consensus and ownership around it.

Step 1: Development of the NDF *Theory of Change*

The first step for developing the RMF is the design of NDF *Theory of Change*. NDF RMF derives from a logical pathways approach used in the Theory of Change (ToC). It uses a results chain logic to describe the inputs and activities undertaken to attain first level of results (outputs) and to contribute to the intended higher-level results: outcomes and impacts. ToC logic is further elaborated in a RMF where the progress towards each level of results will be assessed by results indicators and the supplementary information requirements. Process indicators are used to assess the delivery of activity and input levels of the ToC.

The NDF ToC³ follows a logical flow of a results chain; starting from the bottom with the strategic activities and all the way up, where the contribution to the longer-term impacts is described. It forms an integral part of this Policy.

The ToC captures NDF's diverse and broad portfolio of projects. It comprises the current project portfolio and is geared towards accommodating the future NDF funded projects.

Assumptions (*risks⁴ turned into positives*) and drivers (*factors that NDF-funded projects can influence*) that complement the results chain logic are also illustrated in the annexed simplified ToC. Assumptions and drivers will be monitored as part of the RMF.

Strategic activities

Strategic activities describe the *main NDF processes and activities*, as outlined in the Strategy, that NDF will undertake to fulfil its purpose and enable the portfolio of projects to deliver on the intended results. The support to the organisational development is not explicitly articulated in the Strategy; however, this area of work complements implementing the identified strategic activities.

³ See Annex 2

⁴ Risks pertaining to both internal and external factors are further elaborated in the *Risk Management Framework*.

The metrics around this work will focus on delivery of the targets set in the Strategy along with assessing NDF commitments in creating a conducive environment for work to thrive.

Aggregate outputs

At the output level are the identified *aggregate products and services* delivered by the portfolio of projects to the intended beneficiaries. This type of clustering of results areas came about from identifying groups of synergistic projects contributing to a common outcome. Three bigger outcome areas were identified from the current portfolio of projects. From these, the intervention logic was worked to identify the specific aggregate outputs for each outcome area.

It is important to note that in the NDF ToC, the outputs are viewed from the perspective of the *intended beneficiary or user* of the output rather than the *provider* to increase the likelihood of realisation of outcome level result. The level of results ambition is thus greater than assessing the delivery of products and services (i.e., *deliverables*).

At the aggregate output level, the portfolio of projects shows attribution to the results and project implementation can directly influence the progress. Moreover, outputs are designed to *empower women and girls as agents of change* to increase *gender equality* and to support *vulnerable groups* as per the *“leave no one behind”* principle.⁵

In addition, the enabling outputs are types of support that aggregate some of the additional outputs that are slightly lower in the results hierarchy, partly subsumed in the broader aggregate outputs and are common to each immediate outcome area. These are considered strategic for NDF to monitor and thus have been purposefully elevated as separate outputs, e.g., *additional climate finance mobilised, full-time (equivalent) jobs created/supported, increased capacity development and awareness*.

Immediate Outcomes

At the level of immediate outcomes, the focus is on the uptake/adoption/application of the products and services that the NDF-funded projects deliver to the intended beneficiaries. At this level, the shift from the results attribution turns into contribution. This means that the success of the results is increasingly a collective one and influenced by other actors and factors that should be acknowledged (*assumptions*).

To ensure that the focus of development results remains *centred on improving lives of people, especially the most vulnerable, e.g., women and girls*, most of the outcome-level metrics will focus on qualitative measures on individuals (both women and men, including aspects related to *inclusiveness and vulnerability*) benefiting from NDF-funded support.

End of Project Outcomes

The end of project outcome (or the *short-term impacts*) level assesses how NDF’s portfolio of projects contribute to these higher-level results and, more specifically, what is the likelihood of realisation of the impact at an individual level on *reduced poverty and increased resilience, adaptability to climate change as well as the overall aggregate climate change mitigation efforts*.

⁵ RMF indicator technical notes provide guidance on mainstreaming gender equality and vulnerable groups in the results.

Impact

On the top of the results chain are the expected longer-term impact areas. These are the long-term results that NDF's support ultimately contributes towards, as articulated in the Strategy. It also reflects NDF's commitments on the [2030 Agenda, Paris Agreement and more broadly on the global development policy space](#) and sets the backdrop for NDF operations while enabling us to tie the results narrative to country/region/country cluster-specific development context.

As per the best practice⁶, annual revisions of ToC should take place so that it is seen as an 'emergent' process, adaptable and more reflective of changing contexts, rather than being written at the outset and seldom returned to.

Step 2: Selection of NDF aggregate results and process indicators

A set of criteria to select and design the most suitable indicators to track the main activities in the ToC and measure the aggregate project level results is used. The actual indicators together with the technical notes are part of the Guidelines.

The following criteria apply:

a) Indicators consistent with institutional documents – NDF Strategy, policies, and guidelines:

As a foundational principle, the aim is to build on existing frameworks and select indicators focused on NDF priorities to fulfil the primary purpose of guiding actions to improve performance. The indicators should be fully aligned with the Strategy and corporate decision-making.

b) Indicators broad enough to capture a significant portion of the current portfolio and the expected pipeline of projects prioritised:

To achieve this aim, the proposed indicators use units of measurement and comprehensive disaggregation that are common across different sectors and types of projects.

c) Data availability, cost-efficiency and SMART⁷ indicator principle:

All the selected indicators⁸ were analysed on their applicability, SMART principle, and cost-effectiveness in terms of data availability and collection by developing per indicator a rigorous methodology including clear definitions, rationale and reliable data sources that are described in the RMF indicator technical notes.

d) Integration of the SDG indicators (either direct use or proxy):

Together, the indicators in the RMF Levels⁹ 1-4 cover all 17 SDGs, disaggregating the data as needed (e.g., by female and male, age, disability, rural and urban), to provide a more complete and nuanced narrative on the NDF's contribution on country/regional progress towards the SDGs.

⁶ See e.g., [Better Evaluation](#).

⁷ *Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound*.

⁸ The RMF, however, includes a few provisional indicators that are strategic but currently lack definitions and robust data collection methods (*indicated as TBD in the Guidelines*).

⁹ See chapter 4. *Scope and Structure of RMF*.

Direct use: The RMF makes direct use of official SDG indicators wherever possible. This approach is applied especially in the higher results levels (e.g., impact).

Proxy: Indicators are considered proxies if they relate to overall SDG objectives but do not expressly relate to an official SDG indicator formulation.

Adapted from Asian Development Bank

e) *Harmonisation among partners with broad-based relevance to NDF stakeholders:*

The RMF indicators are harmonised as much as possible with those of Multilateral Development banks (MDBs), [UNSDG](#), development partners, international and development finance institutions (IFIs and DFIs). At the same time, NDF remains mindful of the value of innovation and recognises that the RMF is primarily a tool to manage strategies and challenges that are specific to NDF.

f) *Fewer but more strategic set of indicators:*

While the challenge is that the RMF should cover the largest possible portion of the portfolio with the smallest number of indicators, NDF has streamlined its approach by selecting in the RMF a manageable number of strategic, high-level indicators to aggregate results across varied types of projects using a single indicator.

g) *Indicators focus on measuring the change at the beneficiary level:*

To ensure that the focus of development results remains *centred on improving lives of people, especially the vulnerable, women and girls, as the end beneficiaries of the projects*; the emphasis will be placed on qualitative and quantitative outcome level indicators: immediate and end of project outcomes will be measured by the benefit of use, uptake or application of outputs by the intended beneficiaries (*contribution*), rather than delivery of outputs to the intended beneficiaries (*attribution*). End of project outcome indicators assess the co-benefits of the results uptake, e.g., the likelihood of improved wellbeing, standards of living and reduced vulnerabilities.

4 Scope and structure of RMF

The RMF's five-level structure is based on the results chain concept deriving from the NDF *Theory of Change* (ToC). It measures NDF's performance in executing the Strategy and the results articulated in the ToC and is organised around key measurement areas. These measurement areas and the overall logic underpinning the RMF are presented in *Figure 1*.

NDF's organisational systems, processes, and capacity determine its performance in managing its internal resources and processes (Level 5). The effective management of internal resources and processes leads to better selection, design, financing, and implementation of operations. Efficient and effective operational performance, in turn, leads to achievement of results in key priority areas of the Strategy and increases the performance of the quality of completed operations of the projects (Level 2-4). Level 1 tracks development progress in the countries, regions or clusters of countries as articulated in the Strategy.

Figure 1: Scope and structure of the NDF Results Management Framework 2020–2025

Following the NDF Theory of Change¹⁰ model:

<p>Level 1 Country/regional/country cluster development progress based on SDG indicators resulting from collective development efforts at the country/regional/country cluster level - Impact</p>
<p>Level 2 - 4 Aggregate results from NDF-supported operations based on achievement of aggregate results on operational priorities and performance in successfully completing project level operations.</p>
<p>2. Level (NDF Strategy 2025 – aggregate end results from completed operations at the project level) - End of Project Outcomes</p>
<p>3. Level (aggregate results from uptake of delivered outputs by end beneficiaries at the project level) - Immediate Outcomes</p>
<p>4. Level - (aggregate results from delivered outputs to the intended direct beneficiaries at the project level) - Aggregate Outputs (including enabling outputs)</p>
<p>Level 5 NDF’s organisational and operational effectiveness</p>
<p>5. Level - (NDF’s performance in managing internal resources and processes supporting the operations. NDF’s performance in selecting, designing, financing, and implementing operations, guided by the Strategy) - Activities and Inputs</p>

Level 1: Country/regional/country cluster development progress

Level 1 provides the country/regional/country cluster context and information on the long-term development progress of NDF-funded projects.

NDF uses SDG indicators in Level 1 to monitor long-term development progress (*impact*) in the NDF focus countries/region/country clusters resulting from collective development efforts, including those of governments, the private sector, academia, civil society organisations, and development partners in addressing the climate change and sustainable development challenges. As such, indicators at this level do not monitor NDF’s contribution to country/regional/country cluster development progress. Purpose is to assess whether performance on these indicators has improved, stayed constant, or regressed¹¹ and reflect that in continuous monitoring and adaptive management efforts.

Level 2-4: Aggregate results from NDF-supported operations

This level assesses NDF’s contribution to development results through its completed operations in the projects. It embodies a shift from attaining outputs to contributing towards outcomes, the change in behaviour/condition. Measurement at this level focuses on the interrelated areas of adaptation, resilience and mitigation in climate change, poverty reduction, support for disadvantaged and vulnerable groups, and improving gender equality.

Results at this level will be captured from both the active portfolio and future approvals.

¹⁰ See Annex 2 for NDF Theory of Change.

¹¹ Progress data will be sourced, e.g., from the country/regional [SDG VNRs/VRRs](#).

Moreover, results at the output level (Level 4) must be attributed to NDF-funded projects and at the outcome level (Level 2-3) contribution should be shown, and the intervention logic should embody the NDF *Theory of Change*.

Level 2 reflects short-term impacts, the co-benefits of the results uptake, e.g., the likelihood of improved wellbeing, standards of living and reduced vulnerabilities by the end beneficiaries. This will be assessed at the project level through qualitative impact studies, project evaluations, end of project assessments/reviews. This level also captures the aggregate data on GHG emissions reduced/avoided/sequestered collected as a cumulative figure from all the outcome areas.

NDF Level 2-4 indicators will be cascaded into the NDF-funded project level logframes and results frameworks by direct use or tagging the tracking indicator to facilitate monitoring, data collection and reporting at the aggregate portfolio level.

Level 5: NDF's Organisational and operational effectiveness

NDF aims to manage its internal resources and processes effectively and efficiently to successfully support the operations. Level 5 measures, with a set of process indicators, NDF's performance in delivering on the Strategy in two areas: organisational systems and processes, and organisational development.

5 RMF Timeframe, baseline, and target-setting

The timeframe for assessing performance in RMF is aligned with the Strategy (2020-2025) to enhance comparability over time and allowing more time to observe changes in performance. Since this is a first corporate level results management framework with aggregate indicators capturing data from the entire NDF project portfolio, a midterm review will be conducted to generate learning and recommendation for the Strategy implementation period.

To function as an effective management tool, the RMF should have targets that are ambitious yet realistic. Historical data obtained through the baseline assessment and management forecasts, combined with staff assessment of expected NDF performance, should guide the determination of target attainability. The extent of NDF's control over specific performance areas also informs target-setting. In general, the more control NDF has over performance, the more ambitious the target should be.

NDF keeps its RMF flexible to allow for refinements based on lessons learned and to accommodate other indicators and improvements in the future. For example, the RMF indicator framework and the indicator technical notes that serve as operational documents and are considered as Guidelines for this Policy, include a few provisional indicators that are strategic but currently lack definitions and robust data collection methods (*indicated as TBD in the Guidelines*). This flexibility is particularly important for areas where, e.g., global agreements are expected, self- and independent evaluation studies are planned to generate lessons relevant to results management, and provisional indicators need to be tested before they are formally integrated into the RMF. Periodic reinforcement will enable NDF to strengthen the RMF as a management tool and to increase the relevance and credibility of performance assessment.

6 Use of RMF

In the NDF performance management realm, results information will be used to improve organisational performance and to achieve better results. In this instance, results information is used for planning, tracking progress, learning, accountability and improving evidence-based decision making. NDF will apply adaptive management approaches, feed-back loops, and periodic check-ins to judge the need for course correction to improve its RBM in all stages of the project cycle.

The RMF indicator framework and the indicator technical notes that serve as operational documents and Guidelines for this Policy, steer the application of RMF. The indicator framework will be cascaded into and/or aligned with the existing and new institutional documents, and project level logframes/results frameworks, to the extent feasible to ensure consistency of metrics and shared accountability for meeting corporate and strategic objectives.

Performance against the indicators and targets in the NDF RMF will be reported through an annual review. The annual review process will serve as a key platform for analysing performance trends, identifying underlying issues, and reflecting agreed actions with the stakeholders, such as the NDF Board, and strategic partners. The findings will inform NDF's operational directions and resource planning. Actions undertaken to address findings in previous years will be reported in subsequent reviews.

The RMF information represents a consolidated picture of NDF's corporate performance and is not expected to demonstrate NDF's contribution to specific country outcomes. However, during reporting, to give context to the progress narrative, reflections on NDF focus country/region/country cluster progress will be presented (Level 1 in the RMF). This information will be sought from [SDG reports](#)¹² and national, regional as well as global progress reports on development commitments.

More detailed performance at the country/regional level, however, will be communicated through individual project level monitoring and reporting.

7 Commitments

The RMF indicator framework and the indicator technical notes serve as operational documents and Guidelines for the Policy and support its implementation. These documents provide the complete metrics, measurement guidelines and references for each selected indicator and specify indicator level definitions, rationale, specific calculation formulas, limitations, disaggregation, gender equality considerations, among other aspects.

Through its global networks and the strategic partnerships, NDF seeks to advance and promote the principles of results-based management broadly amongst its partners. NDF's commitments at the institutional and at the operational levels, respectively, are presented as follows.

Institutional level commitments:

- NDF will ensure that the staff will have sufficient knowledge and understanding of results-based management and the RMF in order to successfully support the application and use of RMF, including the Guidelines during the entire project cycle of the NDF-funded projects and activities.
- Staff capacities will be further developed through training, as needed.
- NDF will ensure that the resources needed for implementing the Policy are available.

¹² *SDG reporting refers to the act of publishing and disseminating data and statistics on the SDG indicators for key stakeholders - [SDG National Reporting Initiative 2021](#).*

Operational level commitments:

- The use of RMF is required in all NDF-funded projects and at all stages of the project cycle.

8 Governance and accountability

The Policy entails the following responsibilities within NDF. The Board of Directors (Board) shall assess the appropriateness of the Policy and its alignment with the prevailing strategy and other relevant circumstances. NDF's Managing Director (MD) shall have the overall responsibility to ensure the implementation of the Policy including sufficient resourcing. The Director, Quality Assurance and Reporting has the responsibility for the day-to-day monitoring and implementation activities of the Policy, including capacity of staff.

NDF staff shall ensure that NDF-funded projects adhere to this Policy and the Guidelines and are expected to liaise with relevant stakeholders and partners on issues relating to the RMF and results-based management, as well as to participate in relevant networks, in accordance with their roles within the organisation.

9 Policy review

As knowledge and recommended practices around results management constantly develop, this Policy will be regularly revised and updated as deemed relevant. NDF Management will periodically assess and recommend when a revision of the Policy and the Guidelines is relevant.

Annex 1: Definitions¹³

Activity: action taken, or work performed, through which inputs are utilised to realise specific results.

Assumption: assumption is a significant external factor or condition that needs to be present for the realisation of the intended results but is beyond the influence of the project and its partners. Assumptions are often positively formulated risks. (see also *Driver*)

Attribution: can be claimed when comprehensive evidence proving the cause-and-effect relationship between the project and the observed results is presented.

Contribution: can be claimed when compelling evidence is presented that supports a cause-and-effect relationship through which intended collective results are achieved by the combined efforts of more than one project.

Driver: is a significant external factor that, if present, is expected to contribute to the realisation of the intended results of a project. Drivers can be influenced by the project and its partners. (See also *Assumption*)

Effect: is a change which is a consequence of an action or other social, economic, political, or environmental cause. These changes can be intended, unintended, positive, or negative.

Evaluation: is the systematic and objective assessment of an on-going or completed project, programme, strategy or policy (i.e., 'entities'), its design, implementation, results and likelihood of impact.

Impacts: are long-lasting results arising, directly or indirectly from a project. In NDF's projects, impacts are intended and positive long-lasting changes and must relate to NDF's mandate and purpose.

Impact Pathway / Causal Pathway / Results Chain: these all describe cause and effect relationships between inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes and impacts and are the basis of a programme/project's "Theory of Change".

Indicator: is a quantitative or qualitative measure that provides a simple and reliable means to assess results. Attributes of good indicators is that they conform to the 'SMART principles (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-Bound)

Inputs: the financial, human, and material resources required for project implementation.

End of Project Outcomes: are changes (i.e., changes at the outcome level beyond the Immediate Outcome(s)) that are required to contribute towards the achievement of the intended impact of a project.

Lessons learned: reflect the new knowledge or understanding gained by the experience of implementing a project that is applicable to, and useful in, other similar contexts.

Logical Framework (or logframe): is a tool for summarising a project or programme's intended results. It specifies project results, indicators and their baseline and target values. The format or content of a logframe may vary from one organisation to the other.

Mid-Term Review/Evaluation: is a formative evaluation performed towards the middle of the period of implementation of a project or a programme.

Monitoring: is a continuing function that uses the systematic collection of data on project /programme implementation (e.g., completion of activities and results (outputs and outcomes), rate of expenditure,

¹³ The definitions take into consideration NDF's own practice and different sources (e.g., [UNSDG](#) and [OECD DAC](#)).

emergence of risks, meaningful participation of intended beneficiaries, etc.) to provide management with indications of the extent of progress against plans, targets as well as learning for adaptive management.

Immediate Outcome(s): is the use (i.e., uptake, adoption, application) of an output by intended beneficiaries, observed as a change in institutions or behaviours, attitudes or conditions.

Output(s): is the availability (for intended beneficiaries/users) of new products and services and/or gains in knowledge, abilities, and awareness of individuals or within e.g., institutions, companies. (*Outputs are viewed from the perspective of the intended beneficiary or user of the output rather than the provider*).

Portfolio: group of projects and/or programmes that share a common characteristic relevant to the organisation's strategic objectives and/or a group of synergistic projects contributing to a common outcome(s) and managed in a coordinated way to obtain benefits not available from managing the projects individually.

Project: is a time-bound intervention with a specific funding envelope that addresses a defined set of results within an identified implementation context and geographic area. The main components of the project must be interlinked/interdependent to achieve the project outcome(s).

Qualitative Indicator(s): are verifiable indicators that use categories that can be ranked or compared to assess changes such as judgments, opinions, perceptions, or attitude. This can be quantified, and it can include statements that are answered with yes or no.

Quantitative Indicator(s): are verifiable indicators that can be measured numerically e.g., numbers, percentage, rate, and ratio.

Results-Based Management (RBM): is a management strategy by which all actors contributing directly or indirectly to achieving a set of results, ensure that their processes, products, and services contribute to the desired results (outputs, outcomes, and impact).

Results Management Framework (RMF): is a tool to facilitate results-based management (RBM), learning and performance improvement and provides the basis for results and evidence-based monitoring and reporting.

Annex 2: NDF Theory of Change

Theory of Change – Nordic Development Fund

