



Improving Proximity Responses for the Adaptation of Vocational Education and Training

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Guide 3: HOW TO PROGRAMME VET



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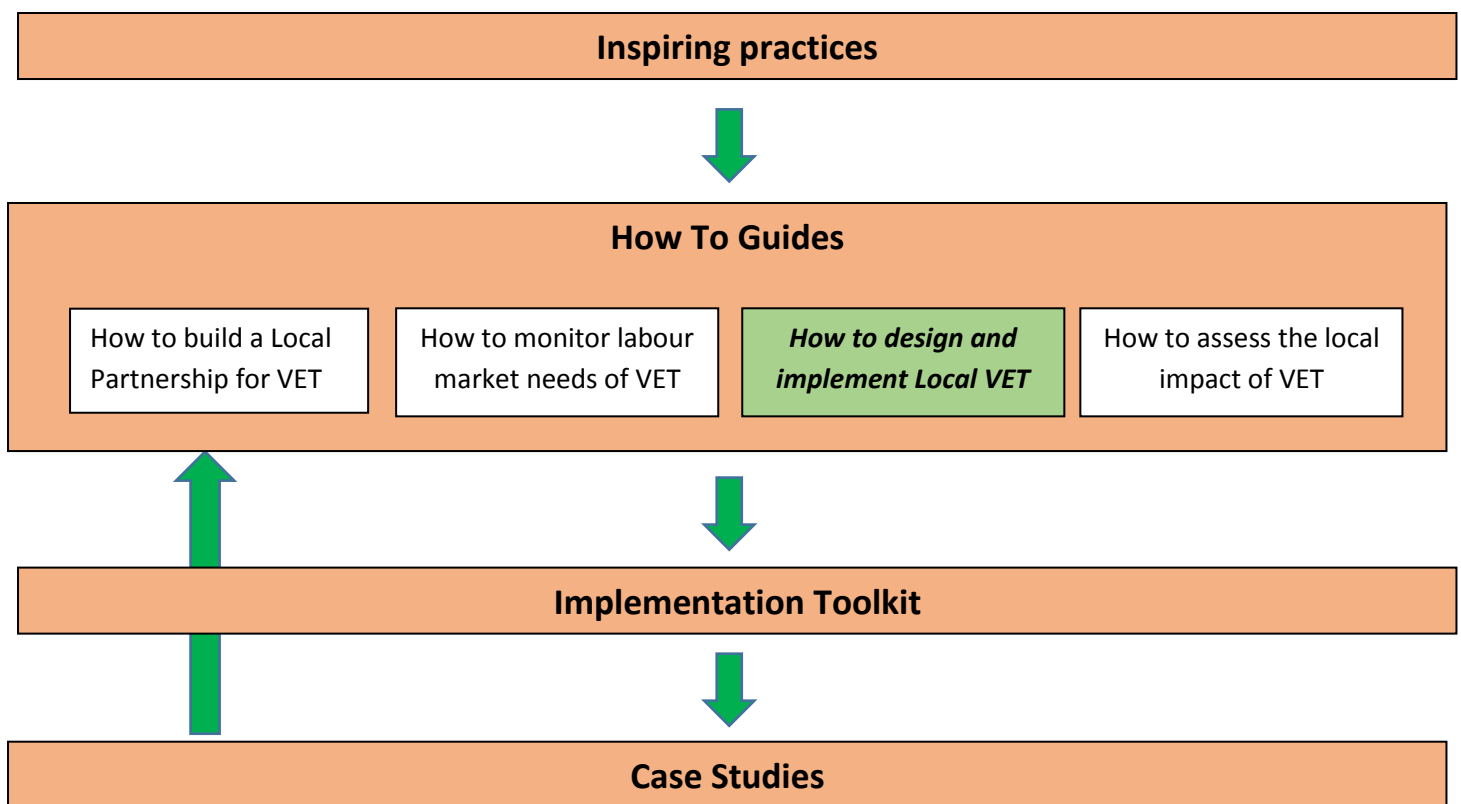
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INTRODUCTION

This “How to Guide” has been developed in the framework of the Project “Improving Proximity Responses for Vocational Education and Training – ImproVET” funded by ERASMUS+, Key Action 2 under the contract 2015-1-ES01-KA202-015976. General information on the project and an overview on the structure of the Intervention Model can be found in the introduction part of the Intervention Model.

This is the How to Guide number 3 out of 4 within the Intervention Model. Each one of the Intervention Model elements can be read separately, but partners strongly encourage the reader to keep in mind its internal coherence as shown in the following diagram.



In this diagram, the *How to Guide* you are about to read has been highlighted in green. Along the following pages, this Guide will provide tools, methodologies and tips that will help local agents involved in Vocational Education and Training, both from public and private sectors, to design and implement a local VET program adapted to the real labour market needs of their territories.

PREVIOUS CONSIDERATIONS

The basis for the development of a local VET program is the needs analysis. After analysing the needs you will have to make sure, that these needs can be satisfied through Continuous Vocational Education and Training (C-VET) offers, or if they might need to be addressed through Initial VET or in a different way.

In a next step you have to establish a priority list, which needs are the most important for your territory and should be on top of the list and which ones can be addressed in a later stage. This will also help you to develop a timescale and how long it will take in order to address all the needs you wish to work on. A third important question you will have to discuss within the local partnership is which needs can be addressed through one training and identify groups of needs to be addressed together in a training. In general, keep in mind, that not all needs can be addressed at once. In addition you should make sure that the trainings you would like to offer fill a gap and are not already offered in the territory.

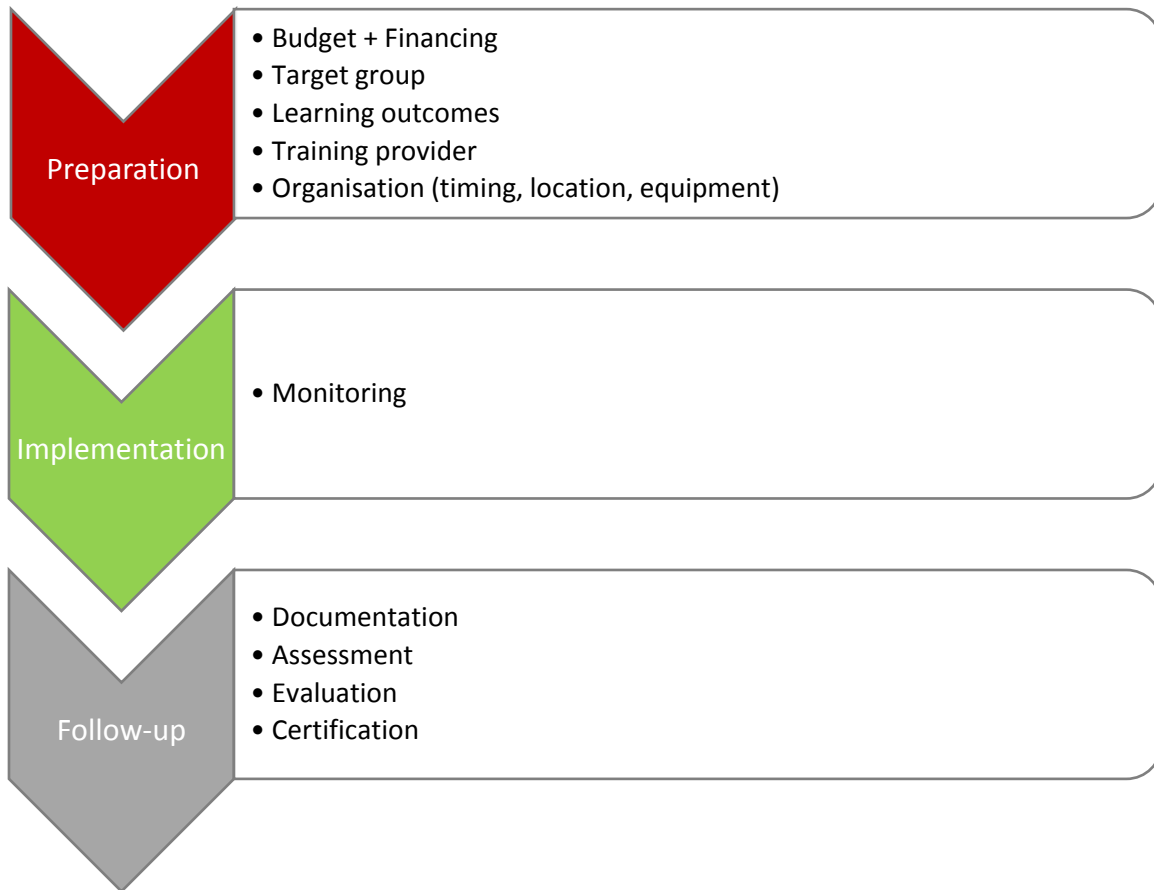
After you identified the most important needs to be addressed through training, this guide will help you to define which factors to consider and which steps to take in order to develop a local C-VET program. In general, you should make sure that one organization or person is responsible for the coordination of the development and the different actors involved. This does not mean that this organization or person will be responsible for every single step or activity. You should share those responsibilities among the partnership. But it is important that one organization or person pulls all the strings to make sure that the whole process works properly and to ensure a good and constant communication.

AN OVERVIEW OF THE PROCESS

In order to develop a C-VET program for your territory there are certain things you have to keep in mind. This document will guide you through the process, which is not finished with the development of the program. Therefore, the guide is structured in the following three steps of a training: Preparation, Implementation and Follow-up. The result of this 3-step process is the local C-VET program. You will also have to think about the activities within each step already from the beginning and prepare them in advance. Therefore, all three steps are part of the overall planning.

The first step 'Preparation' covers the whole development of the program taking into account among other things the definition of the target group and the learning outcomes, the calculation of the budget, the decision who will be responsible for the implementation of the trainings as well as the general organisation regarding for example the timing of the program. This step is the most time consuming due to all the details in the planning to be discussed and decided among the partnership. Within the second step 'Implementation' the main activity is to decide if the implementation of the program has to be monitored and to define in which way and with which kind of tools the monitoring will take place. The general evaluation and the documentation of the program are part of the third step 'Follow-up'. In this step, also the decision in which way the new acquired knowledge, skills and competences are assessed and what kind of certificate or confirmation the participants of the different trainings will receive, are integrated.

Depending on the amount of needs you would like to address at once and the amount of different trainings necessary to do so, you will have to consider some of the proposed activities for every single training.



DESCRIPTION

Step 1. Preparation

Description

Context

The overall context of the VET program is given by the priority list of needs or the groups of needs for the different trainings. In order to contextualize the program further, the following questions should be discussed and answered:

- Which impact do you want to achieve at a territorial level related to the identified training needs?
- Which actors/sectors will benefit from this impact? Which actors should be involved in the program development?
- Which knowledge, skills and competences should be acquired?
- How will the work life or also personal life benefit from the training?
- How can the participants use the new acquired knowledge, skills and competences in their work life (personal life)?
- What should be different after the training and how will this be visible?
- What resources can you count with in order to develop a training program?

After considering the aforementioned questions for the whole program, they can also be helpful for the contextualization of every single training. Especially the learning outcomes – knowledge, skills and competences to be acquired through the training – have to be identified to establish the general content of a training. When defining the learning outcomes you should think about including the development of soft skills and basic skills (job application training) besides professional skills to the trainings.

When you established the context and the general contents of the trainings, you should think of a title for each training. A title needs to be short, but meaningful, as well as easy to remember. It should definitely make clear what the training is about, but should also sound interesting and appealing. You may also have to consider the portfolio of the national bodies in your country regarding VET when naming the trainings, in case you would like to get accreditation for a training.

Target group

Although every single training might have a more specific target group for example regarding the VET field, you have to think about the general target group you would like to address with your local C-VET program. Will the program mainly be interesting for companies in the territory or will it also be available for the general public? Is the program addressed to companies/ people in general or in a specific field?

In case you have a more specific target group in mind be sure that you are aware of the characteristics, motivation and current situation of this target group. These might affect the organization of the training with regard to the type of training or the timing.

In general, you should make sure that the program and the single trainings it consists of are accessible for everyone regardless of age and gender in order to create equal opportunities. Therefore you need to ask yourselves constantly if the training program is open for everyone including for example women, disabled people or long-term unemployed people.

Type of training

Teacher-centred instructions face-to-face are not the only possibility for a training. A training can have the form of a workshop, a seminar/ lecture, coaching/ mentoring or can be carried out as on-the-job training. In addition, internships can be added to trainings in form of a workshop or seminar.

Apart from these possibilities of face-to-face or offline trainings, there is the possibility to develop online-trainings. Through online courses especially theoretical knowledge can be transmitted, whereas practical activities or exercises have to take place face-to-face. If you would like to combine the acquisition of knowledge and practical training there is also the possibility to organize blended learning courses, where part of the training takes place face-to-face and another part takes place online. Maybe in your territory an online learning platform that can be used already exists or if you would like to carry out the majority of trainings online, you can think about establishing a local learning platform. Please be aware that online training solutions can also be cost-intensive due to the programming work that has to be done.

In order to decide which type of training is appropriate you will have to think about the target group – When are they available? How flexible are they? With which kind of training are they familiar? For example for people 50+ who don't regularly use computers an online training might not be the best solution, whereas for people with a limited amount of time who would like to do a training independently and in their own speed, an online solution could be the best option.

Timing and scope

Another important factor within the development of a local C-VET program is the timing. First of all you need to agree on a timescale for the whole program. You need to decide if you would like to develop a program every year or if you would like to plan for the next two to five years in advance. This will also depend on the amount of needs you would like to address and how many trainings will be organized. Planning for one year has the advantage that you can adjust the program easier when the needs change, but therefore you will have to carry out the needs analysis more regularly. To develop the program for a longer period means a bigger workload at the beginning, but also a clear and structured future plan for the territory. You also will have to decide how often a training will be organized in order to meet the needs. Some trainings will only address a small target group, whereas other trainings could be interesting for a wider audience. Therefore specialized trainings will only take place once a year or even less and other trainings should be offered more often or on a regular basis. This will also depend if you need to limit the amount of participants to a maximum and/ or minimum number per training due to the methods used in the training or the equipment available.

For a successful implementation of the program you also have to take into account the time of the year when a training should take place. Companies in certain fields are very busy in a certain time of the year and therefore would not agree to continuous training for their employees in this period. Some practical trainings for example in the field of agriculture can also just be done in a limited timeframe each year.

Another factor for establishing the timing is again the profile of the participants. Participants in full-time employment have a very limited amount of time and the company has to exempt them for the time of the training. Participants in part-time employment might be more flexible and unemployed people might be obliged by the employment office to take part in a training in order to get them into employment. For participants who are single parents it might be more difficult to attend a training in the afternoon or evening when they don't have someone to care for their children.

Based on this considerations and the content of the trainings you need to decide how long each of the trainings will last. The total amount of hours for a training should be discussed and decided with experienced training providers, who might already be part of the local partnership. Starting from the total amount of hours the timeline for a training can be established. You have to think about if it is appropriate to provide the training on several days after each other or in smaller parts spread over several weeks or months.

Infrastructure

Regarding the infrastructure, you need to know if the necessary equipment to implement a training is available in your territory. This refers for example to machinery or other kinds of technology. Moreover, if the equipment is available in the territory, but the access is very limited or this special equipment is rare to be found in companies, you will have to decide if a training on this equipment will have the expected impact. For participants it might not be

useful to learn how to use special equipment if it is not available in their company and the company is not willing to invest in this kind of equipment for the time being.

Training provider

A training provider can be a training center or educational institute as well as individual freelance teachers, consultants or trainers. You might already have qualified training providers in the partnership who are able to implement a training. Nevertheless, you should check the public regulations and laws regarding procurement if you need to advertise for bids or organize a tender procedure. The following questions will help you to choose the appropriate training provider for each training:

- Is the training provider accessible for the participants in terms of location?
- Is the training provider in any way certified or accredited?
- Does the training provider have the necessary infrastructure for the training (facilities, equipment, etc.)?
- What is the professional and pedagogical qualification of the trainers?
- Does the training provider offer consultations before and during a training by skilled staff?
- Does the training provider conduct evaluations of the offered trainings and what is the success rate?
- What are the terms and conditions of the training provider?
- Does the training provider provide insurance for the participants during a training?
- How can participants register for a training and how are participants selected?
- Are the costs of a training transparent and what kind of payment terms are offered by the training provider?
- Does the training provider offer the termination of a contract or the withdrawal from a contract?
- Does the training provider offer additional services such as childcare, breakroom or a cafeteria?

Promotion of the training

How will the target group know about the C-VET program? On the one hand, you can leave the promotion of the single trainings and the acquisition of participants to the training providers. On the other hand, it might be more effective and reach a wider audience if you summarize the whole training program in global promotion activities. A simple way of promoting is for example the publication of an annual event calendar, which can be printed and distributed within the territory and published in the internet to be accessible for every interested company or individual. In the calendar the interested parties would see what kind of training is taking place when. It can also be useful to publish some more details on each of the trainings: content, target group, requirements, costs if applicable and how to register for

the training. Or you can link each training to the website of the respective training provider for more information. In case the trainings are only offered to a specified and fixed group of people, there might not be a need to promote it in the public. Depending on the financing sources, you might have to follow specific rules when advertising the program. The most common practice here is to include the logo sometimes together with a disclaimer on all online and offline promotional materials.

Calculation of costs

One of the most important steps in developing a C-VET program is the calculation of costs. Make sure that you carefully consider all necessary cost items needed for the implementation of the whole C-VET program. You should also prioritize which cost items are absolutely necessary and which cost items could be reduced or deleted in case you don't get enough funding. Here is a list of cost items you should consider:

- Costs for the single trainings to be paid to the training provider (including payments for the staff carrying out the training, rents for rooms and/ or equipment, administration costs, materials for the participants, etc.)
- Additional costs for the participants of each training (e.g. travel costs to the location of the training, subsistence costs (accommodation and meals) during the training if applicable)
- Staff costs and additional costs like office rent, costs for a work station etc. for the organization or person coordinating, managing and administrating the development of the C-VET program
- Marketing costs for the promotion of the program (e.g. printed and online materials)
- Possible costs for the certification or accreditation of the trainings

Financing

When you calculated the costs of the whole program carefully and realistic, you will have to think about how to cover those costs in order to be able to implement the program. Knowing the economic situation in your territory you should be able to say if the companies in the territory are able and willing to pay for the further education of their employees and if yes up to which amount per employee per year they would consider to be appropriate. In case companies are not able or willing to pay for further education or if the amount is not enough to cover all the costs, you need to research alternative funding opportunities. Funding for VET programs could be available from local authorities, regional or national bodies, the European Union through the Erasmus+ program or the European Social Fund, or private foundations. In any case, you need to make sure that your training program meets the requirements for funding. There is also the possibility that the whole program with various trainings in different VET fields does not fit into any of the available funding schemes. In this case, you need to check if funding might be available for a single training or for a specific VET field.

In addition you could consider to levy a fee from each participant taking part in the training. Of course you need to know first if the target group would be able or willing to pay it. However, a limited fee could have the effect that the participants will take the training more seriously. As can be seen the funding for a local C-VET program could come from different sources, which can also be combined in order to cover all costs. Please check carefully if different funding sources are mutually exclusive or if it is possible to combine them. Moreover, you need to follow the principle of no double funding.

Key questions and critical points

- For all activities within the step 'Preparation' make sure that the planning is realistic.
- You don't find enough funding to carry out the program: In a worst case scenario you might have to cancel the whole program. But before you do this, think about which trainings you could carry out with the funding you have and postpone the others or extend the program to a longer period (e.g. from 1 year to 3 years) so that you will have more possibilities to look for and apply for funding.
- Despite of your promotional activities you don't get a lot of feedback from the target group and don't get a lot of participants for the training: Think about in advance in which case a training will not be carried out and determine a minimum amount of participants. When the number of participants is under this limit, either postpone the training so you have more time for promotion, or cancel the training when you find out that there is not a lot of interest for it.

Inspiring experiences and useful tools

- Attached to this guide you can find a template for a Training Plan
- Useful tools for managing a program:
 - Example for a timetable: Project timetable spreadsheet for strategic partnership projects within the Erasmus+ program of the European Union – to make an overview of the activities in relation to the timing (<https://www.erasmusplus.org.uk/apply-for-vocational-education-and-training-partnership-funding>)
 - Online management tools (e.g. Huddle, Asana, Teambox etc.) – to work together and have an overview of the program: establishing a timeline with deadlines, allocating tasks and responsibilities, uploading documents, working together on documents
- Practical training centres with the participation of all stakeholders (Best Practice: LACETANIA_ES)

- All members of the network accept common quality criteria for their courses and trainings (regarding e.g. management, further education for their own staff, quality of courses in terms of didactics and methods, premises, certificates, transparency). Publishing an event calendar for C-VET in the region with a checklist how to find the best training provider. (Best Practice: Network for continuous vocational education and training Pforzheim_GE)
- Web platform which supports educators in developing, implementing and evaluating programmes in C-VET (Best Practice: German Institute for Adult Education_GE)
- Linking professional training with job insertion pathways and adding training on soft skills to professional trainings. Considering individual barriers for finding a job and individualising the training offer (Best Practice: Flexible Routes_UK)
- Including measures to ensure that training reaches all groups (conciliation, awareness, support measures...). Including online training in the VET offer. Including apprenticeships/ internships in VET (Best Practice: Kaleidoscope_PL)

Results and outputs for the Step

- Training Plan for employment, including:
 - Time plan - **What kind of training** is provided **when, where, about what, for whom, by which training provider?**)
 - Financial plan – **How much money** is needed and **from where** can we receive it? (see the parts ‘Calculation of costs’ and ‘Financing’)
- Dissemination plan - **How do people know about the program?** (see the part ‘Promotion’)

Step 2. Implementation

Description

Monitoring

The VET partnership should have a supervising role for the C-VET program both at a program and at an individual action level.

Regarding the program level monitoring the VET partnership should ensure that all scheduled activities are taking place fulfilling the foreseen requirements of the Training Plan. Information methods and tools should be designed and implemented in order to keep the partnership informed of plan development and gathered in a Monitoring Plan. It is very important that information provided to VET partners (and especially to those partners in a closer position to training monitoring) is relevant and allows the design of corrective actions. A Dashboard is a useful tool to provide only the necessary information for those in charge of identifying deviations and allow further research on causes when necessary. A Dashboard example is provided attached to this Guide.

At the individual action level you will need to decide if it is necessary to monitor the progress for every single training in order to adapt the implementation of the training timely, or if the information on the assessment and evaluation at the end of a training is sufficient enough. Some funding sources might require a more closely monitoring, whereas for others the final results are the most valuable.

As distinct from evaluation, where the relevance, effectiveness and impact of the implemented activities is measured, monitoring refers to a continuous assessment to get detailed information about the progress or delay of the activities in order to apply measures to correct deviations as quick as possible.

Monitoring should happen throughout a training on a regular basis in order to make adjustments. It depends on the length of a training if monitoring is applicable. For a 2-day training course, you will not need an update on the progress in the middle of the training, whereas for a long-term training of 6 month you might need to know if the training runs successfully. For the most part the monitoring is in the hands of the training provider, who could inform you about the state of the art from time to time. Depending on your needs, you could get an update on the progress of a training informally through a regular meeting or telephone call with the training provider or formal through interim reports. Another possibility is to do a monitoring visit to the training and observe a session to get a better insight.

Key questions and critical points

- The number of participants drops dramatically throughout a training: In this case it will be important to analyze the reasons why participants are dropping out. This could for example be due to the timing, the training provider/ trainer or the contents of the training. To avoid a situation like this you could sign contracts with the participants before the training including what will happen if they drop out (e.g. they have to pay for the training themselves).
- In general make sure to think about critical points in the implementation from the beginning: What happens, if...; and implement risk assessment of the program as a whole.

Inspiring experiences and useful tools

- You can find a template for a Monitoring and Evaluation plan and a Dashboard example in the Toolkit

Results and outputs for the Step

- Monitoring plan – **When, how often and in which form** will monitoring take place throughout the implementation of the program?

Step 3. Follow-up

Description

Documentation

The documentation of the overall program depends on the financing, since the funding bodies want to have proof for the activities carried out often in form of reports. Keep in mind that each funding body might need different documents or wants different questions to be answered within a report. In case you managed to get funding for the whole program from one funding body, it will be easier for you to follow the requirements and reporting schedule. In case you get funding from different sources and sometimes only for one specific training, you will need to have a good overview when to report what to whom. Thus, we advise you to establish a calendar with the reporting deadlines and insert which documents are needed for which source of funding.

Documentation you should keep or ask from the training providers include:

- Sign-in sheets to proof that the participants took part in the training regularly and copies of the certificates/ confirmations to proof that they finished the training
- Report on the training with an overview of the content, the methods used, the assessment and the evaluation of the training (this might also include presentations or other materials used during the training)
- Financial records (e.g.: invoices from the training providers, invoices for purchased equipment, timesheets, etc.)
- Pictures from the training which can be used for marketing purposes (keep in mind that the trainings provider or you need a signed release form or permission from each participant in order to publish pictures)

To be able to compare the outcomes of the different trainings you can think about preparing templates for the reporting with questions to be answered and statistics of the trainings you would like to have.

Assessment

In order to see if the C-VET program has been implemented successfully you will have to assess if the participants learned what they were supposed to learn. Did they reach the learning outcome and therefore gained new knowledge, skills and competences? To get an overall picture every training needs to be assessed individually. This will most likely take place at the training provider, but you should inform them in advance what kind of data you need from them after the training. For you the success rate is probably the most important factor, so that you will be able to adapt the program for the next term.

In addition it might also be interesting for you in which way the training provider assessed the acquired knowledge – through a test or formal examination at the end of the training or also smaller tests in between, through practical exercises of individual participants or in a group, through essays, through group discussions or through observations from the trainer. The decision on which method to use depends above all on the VET field and the contents of the training. A training on basic IT skills has to be assessed different from a training on intercultural competences. The assessment methods might influence the results of the assessment and therefore the success rate as well. The assessment is also important when it comes to the certification or confirmation for the participants.

Please keep in mind that this assessment is different (despite closely related) from the overall plan assessment. The plan assessment includes the evaluation of the impact at a long term and includes individual activities assessment as a part. The ImproVET How to Guide on impact assessment (Guide 4) will give you recommendations on this issue.

Evaluation

As distinct from the assessment, the evaluation does not ask if the participants learned what they were supposed to learn, but relates to the framework of the program: Have the needs been satisfactorily addressed? Broken down to the single trainings the program consists of, the question how satisfied the participants were with the overall training/ methods/ trainer needs to be answered. Evaluation aims at identifying lessons learned in order to adapt the program and also apply them to other projects or programs. Again, it is up to the training providers in which way to evaluate the single trainings, but you should communicate to them what kind of data you will need for your documentation and therefore possibly prepare a template for statistical data to be filled by the training provider. In addition, the training provider should also be able to let you know which evaluation method(s) they used, because this can vary from formal evaluation through questionnaires to feedback rounds after each session or supervised group discussions at the end of the training. This information will help you to see how the participants perceived the trainings, to decide if you will cooperate with trainings provider in the future and to adapt the training program based on the feedback from the participants.

For an evaluation of the whole C-VET program, you can also generate a general evaluation questionnaire, which every participant of a training has to fill in regardless of the training they took part in. This questionnaire could include questions about the overall satisfaction, how they got aware of the program and if they feel that their needs have been addressed in a way that they can use the newly acquired knowledge, skills and competences in their daily work.

Certification

At the end of a training, the participants should receive some kind of confirmation that they took part in this training. For some trainings, a simple confirmation could be enough, whereas for other trainings it might be more useful for the participants to get an official certificate, which also states their involvement in the training based on the assessment. This needs to be discussed with the training providers and if they have the possibility to give official or accredited certificates for a specialized course, which is recognized by companies or authorities.

Key questions and critical points

- The communication with the training provider is not sufficient and you don't get the documents or data you need: Before you decide on a training provider make sure they are regularly available, keep deadlines and answer e-mails/ letters/ calls within an appropriate time range. You should also communicate to the training provider what you expect from them and possibly list the requirements (documents, data, etc.) in the contract with the training provider.

Inspiring experiences and useful tools

- Online tools for assessment and evaluation (e.g. SurveyMonkey to develop online questionnaires easy to be analysed and sent to participants)
- Involving research institutions for the external evaluation of the program (Best Practice: COLFASA_RO)

Results and outputs for the Step

- Assessment and evaluation plan – In which way is the progress of the participants assessed and how is the overall program evaluated?
- Statistics and data to be analysed for the adaptation of the program in the future, as well as for publishing the results of the program and reporting to funding bodies
- Possibly templates for the reporting for the training providers

CHECKLIST

When developing a local C-VET program for your territory, make sure you have considered the following items:

Consideration	Y	N
Did you establish a context for the C-VET program?		
Did you define the target group?		
Did you decide on the type of training?		
Did you establish a timeline for the overall C-VET program as well as for the single trainings?		
Did you consider the infrastructure available in your territory?		
Did you decide which training provider(s) will carry out the training(s)?		
Did you define the promotion activities for the C-VET program?		
Did you calculate the costs for the program carefully and realistic?		
Did you clarify how the program will be financed?		
Did you decide whether you want to monitor the trainings and if yes, did you choose which method to use?		
Do you know in which way you would like to document the implementation of the program?		
Did you decide in which way to assess the achievements of the participants after the training?		
Did you decide how the trainings will be evaluated?		
Did you clarify what kind of certificate or confirmation the participants will receive after finishing a training successfully?		