

PLEASE BEGIN BY SPENDING 5 MINUTES READING THIS SCENARIO

Scenario 2: Methodology

The SuCIP programme includes 5 measures:

1. Grants for consultants to prepare ‘partnership feasibility plans’
2. Grants for Technology Transfer Workshops with networks of SMEs led by a specific large firm
3. Low interest loans for investment in digital equipment including AI supported systems
4. Training Subsidies for SMEs in quality management
5. Startup loans for advanced automation to enhance flexibility and communication in supply chains

Each SuCIP cluster will consist of different combinations of these measures depending on the priorities and capabilities of large-firm ‘leads’ and associated clusters of SMEs; and on sectoral/market/regional circumstances. No two ‘partnerships’ are the same.

You are being encouraged by the Ministry of Finance who are not convinced that this programme is a good investment, to conduct strong ‘impact’ evaluations *and* Value for Money assessments. SuCIP clusters are themselves keen that formative evaluations of programme implementation are conducted so that the cluster can get useful ‘real-time’ feedback and improve their management of what they realise is a complicated mix of measures.

There is also a ‘portfolio’ question: SuCIP is one of several programmes that offer support to SMEs. This has raised a question already anticipated in the Evaluation Plan - maybe the ‘unit of analysis’ for some evaluations should not be programmes but be cross-cutting – e.g. everything that concerns SMEs which in this case would include some but not all of SuCIP.

Your office is also concerned about the skills needed for such a complicated evaluation as well as whether the right contractor skills are available in the marketplace. One solution being proposed is to commission an evaluation design study from an international expert so that a tightly specified methodology can be included in the ToR. Another view is that ‘we should leave it to the market’ and see what is proposed.

Drawing on your experience please consider the following questions:

1. What do you think is the best approach to conduct ‘strong’ impact evaluations and Value for Money assessments for a programme like SuCIP – and what do you think are the likely pitfalls?
2. How far would you prioritise a formative/real time evaluation dimension and how could this be undertaken?
3. How far do you think the evaluation team has the skills to tightly specify the methodology for this evaluation *or* should you ‘leave it to the market’ *or* contract an external expert to conduct a design study?
4. What other ‘pitfalls’ would you expect when choosing the methods for an evaluation such as this – and how could these be avoided?