



Annotated Guidelines for Entry/Credit Proposals in Vocational Skills Development (VSD)



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→ Purpose of this document

One of the key tasks of the SDC's Focal Point e+i is to ensure (jointly with SDC's Q&A team) the quality of existing and new Vocational Skills Development (VSD) projects and programmes at different stages (such as project identification, planning, implementation and monitoring/evaluation). Experiences from the past show that VSD project proposals might be hampered by weaknesses related to inadequate planning and/or unrealistic objectives stated in Project Documents and Entry and Credit Proposals.

Responding to the need for a better structured and guided project application and assessment process, in which specific VSD challenges are properly addressed from the very beginning, the e+i network developed these guidelines. Their goal is to provide additional support and ensure **high quality in the development of entry and credit proposals**. They are complementing existing SDC guidelines for entry proposals [[Field Handbook, internal](#)] and credit proposals [[Field Handbook, internal](#)] as well as VSD key documents [[Shareweb](#)]. The typology of prototypical VSD approaches should be of particular use [[VSD Typology](#)].

These guidelines are addressing two target groups:

- a) Cooperation Office staff, including National Programme Officers (NPOs) and HQ Country Desks, in charge of **writing** VSD specific proposals; and
- b) Decision makers **assessing** the proposals during Operational Committee (Opcom) meetings.

Besides providing VSD-specific guiding questions, the guidelines also indicate the most relevant key documents and/or data sources for each topic. The guidelines also facilitate a structured dialogue between these target groups and the e+i Focal Point and its backstoppers.¹

Further background readings can be found on the e+i Shareweb [[Link](#)] and in the library of the Donor Committee on dual Vocational Education and Training (DC dVET) [[Link](#)]. Inspiring examples of former and ongoing SDC projects can also be found on the Shareweb [[Link](#)].

¹ Do not hesitate to contact the e+i experts at headquarters – they are always ready to support you. The earlier you get in touch with them, the better! Contacts can be found on the Shareweb too [[Link](#)].

→ VSD-specific questions to be answered in Entry Proposals / Credit Proposals for Vocational Skills Development (VSD) projects

Topic	VSD-specific Guiding Questions <i>(in addition to the existing guidelines for Entry and Credit Proposals)</i>	VSD key documents & data sources	Respective chapter in Entry Proposal	Respective chapter in Credit Proposal
Context and Relevance	Does the context analysis make a convincing case that there is some degree of economic and/or social demand for the specific skills or support mechanisms provided by the project?	SDG4 Monitoring data ILO Key indicators Analysing VET systems	1. Context 2. Relevance	1.1. Strategic orientation / Context 1.3. Strategic orientation / Relevance
Coherence with SDC's Education Strategy / e+i Orientation; Contribution to the SDGs, Alignment with national strategies	<p>Does the intervention aim at one or multiple of the following objectives of SDC:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strengthening the country's education and training system? - Broadening access to VSD? - Promoting the relevance of VSD? - Increasing the permeability and interplay between the different educational offers? - Supporting access to employment and income? <p>Is there reference being made to SDG 4 and SDG 8; and possibly also to SDGs 1 and 10?</p> <p>Are existing national strategies for VET and VSD taken into account?</p>	Education Strategy e+i Medium Term Orientation	3. Coherence with strategic framework	1.2. Strategic orientation / Coherence
Involvement of the private sector	<p>Is the intervention aiming to improve the involvement of the private sector (i.e. representatives of companies, employers' associations or federations) into key aspects of VSD (e.g. policy making, development of skills standards/curricula, assessment and certification provision of training, financing)?</p> <p>Is workplace-based skills training an element to be supported through the intervention?</p> <p>Is a financial (or in-kind) contribution of the private sector foreseen?</p>	Role of the private sector in VSD	5. Intervention Strategy <i>(or 13. Open issues to be clarified before submitting the Credit Proposal)</i>	1.4. Strategic orientation / Private Sector

<p>Beneficiaries</p>	<p>Are poor and vulnerable groups the primary (ultimate) beneficiaries of the project? Are these groups and their needs being described adequately?</p> <p>Is a gender analysis available focusing on gender-specific obstacles in access to VSD and jobs (including gender wage gap)?</p> <p>Is there a particular focus on youth/young adults?</p> <p>If there is no particular focus on youth but on adults: Does the intervention have a clear objective of improving these adults' access to employment and income?</p>	<p>Gender and VSD</p>	<p>6. Beneficiaries and outreach</p>	<p>1.5. Strategic orientation/ Target groups</p>
<p>Stakeholder assessment</p>	<p>What is the governance structure of the current VSD systems?</p> <p>Have the key stakeholders been clearly identified and does the stakeholder assessment suggest that key stakeholders have a genuine interest in improved VSD?</p> <p>Does the proposal convincingly show that key stakeholders could, after a successful implementation of the intervention, have a genuine interest to stay engaged in VSD.</p>		<p>7. Partnerships</p>	<p>2. Stakeholder assessment</p>
<p>Objectives</p>	<p>Does the intervention have the objective of ultimately improving access to employment and income?</p> <p>Which of the following outcome dimensions is/are at the core of the project?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Contribute to systemic change in the education and training (VET) system - Facilitate VET access and inclusion of disadvantaged groups, including through catch-up basic education - Provide selected industries with tailor-made training programs - Promote quick labour market integration of the unemployed or other clearly defined beneficiaries 	<p>VSD Typology</p>	<p>4. Objectives</p>	<p>3.1. Objectives</p>
<p>Impact hypothesis: Outputs and Outcomes</p>	<p>Is there a plausible causal relationship between planned activities/outputs and the overall objective (impact) of improved employment and income?²</p> <p>Is reference being made to Outcomes as defined in the VSD Typology and the Common Outcome Indicators for VSD?</p>	<p>VSD Typology</p> <p>COI</p>	<p><i>As far as possible on Outcome level (4. Objectives)</i></p>	<p>3.2. Objectives / Impact hypothesis</p>

² The e+i focal point highly recommends illustrating this relationship in form of a results chain or matrix.

<p>Intervention Strategy</p>	<p>Which stakeholders will be involved into the implementation of the project? What will be their roles?</p> <p>What kind of trainings/courses will be offered (if any)? Are they rather short-term or long-term? Are they part of the formal education system, non-formal courses or informal on-the-job training?</p> <p>Is there a strategy of how (different groups of) beneficiaries will be addressed (outreach) and adequately supported to get access and to successfully complete the programme?</p> <p>Does the project make use of the Swiss comparative advantage in VSD?</p> <p>Does the project make sufficient use of synergies with other Swiss e+i / Education projects and/or of complementarities with VSD projects of other donors?</p> <p>Are the potential and the strategies for scaling-up, systemic change of VET systems and sustainability of the interventions described adequately?</p> <p>In case of pilots: Is there a strategy that defines a) what is to be piloted, b) how long the pilot will be implemented, c) who decides whether the outcome of the pilot is convincing or not, and d) who might replicate the piloted activities?</p>	<p>Analysing VET systems</p> <p>SDC brochure on VSD</p> <p>Guide on VSD and MSD</p>	<p>5. Intervention Strategy</p> <p><i>(or 13. Open issues to be clarified before submitting the Credit Proposal)</i></p>	<p>4. Intervention Strategy</p>
<p>Cost-Benefit</p>	<p>Do the expected benefits (in terms of higher incomes for graduates and other benefits) significantly exceed the costs of the project?</p>	<p><i>CBA Toolkit (coming soon)</i></p>	<p><i>Estimation (in 5. Intervention Strategy)</i></p>	<p>5. Resources</p>
<p>Monitoring and Results Measurement</p>	<p>Is reference being made to the Common Outcome Indicators?</p> <p>Does the proposed Monitoring and Results Measurement (MRM) approach include baselines at the level of beneficiaries (including, e.g., their access to training and to employment and income prior to the intervention) and does the MRM approach thus allow for an impact evaluation at the end of the intervention?</p> <p>Does the intervention plan include feedback mechanisms that allow for constant improvements of activities in the implementation process?</p> <p>In case the intervention aims at improving quality of VSD: Does the proposed baseline study have the objective of measuring VSD quality before the intervention?</p>	<p>COI</p> <p>Tracer studies in VSD</p>	<p>10. Baselines</p> <p><i>(or 13. Open issues to be clarified before submitting the Credit Proposal)</i></p>	<p>7. Monitoring and steering</p>