

NOTE #14

Action Plan design tools — the Action Plan template

By **Giovanni Caiati and Claudia Colonnello**



RRI IMPLEMENTATION IN BIOSCIENCE ORGANISATIONS

GUIDELINES FROM THE  STARBIOS2 PROJECT



Andrea Declich with the STARBIOS2 partners



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Organizing and designing an Action Plan within a project like STARBIOS2 is a difficult task. One of the main difficulties is that the 5 RRI keys, albeit related to a single framework, are also very different from each other in terms of objectives and activities. To assist the Action Plan in the design phase in this section a set of tools were suggested during the implementation of the project. Such tools – that as a whole constitute a detailed design template for the Action Plans – are described below.

The template is a tool that also serves to make the contents of the Action Plan intersubjective between the members of the Core Team. For this reason, it facilitates the control of the implementation of the envisaged actions through the identification of deadlines. The Template, obviously, is not a guide to the identification of the problems on which to intervene, the actions to implement and the subjects with which to implement them.

1. Streams of Action (SoA) Sheet

In order to draft the detailed Action Plan it is important to single out the **main thematic elements** which should constitute its “building blocks”. These elements may be called “**Streams of Actions**” (SoA). The planning process should result in a description of each Stream of Actions, in which the following components should be included: a premise (based on the needs of the individual institution/research organisation); a specific function within the project; and a set of expected outcomes in terms of structural change.

As the term itself implies, each SoA is made up of a mutually coordinated set of actions aimed to a specific purpose. Focusing on

the Stream of Actions limits the risk of working on many individual and mutually disconnected actions that could be ineffective, unable to continue after the project lifespan and to produce the expected long-term effects in terms of structural change. In some way, each SoA could be understood as a separate micro-project, with its own assumptions, objectives, actions and expected impacts somehow independent from other SoAs (albeit resonant with them).

Each Stream of Actions may be composed of the following items.

- **Code:** Attribute a code to the SoA using an upper-case letter (A, B, C, etc.).
- **Title:** Give a title to the SoA.
- **Area:** Specify one of the five RRI keys or the "transversal area"²⁸ the SoA refers to.
- **Context:** Provide a short description of the organisation's needs. This may be useful in order to frame the goal of the SoA in the specific context of the Action Plan.
- **Aim:** Describe the main aim of the SoA.
- **Target groups:** Specify the group of people, the institution/s or the organisation/s involved with or beneficiary of the SoA.
- **Duration:** Specify the duration of the SoA. SoAs may not last throughout the entire project lifespan.
- **Actions:** Provide a simple list of the planned actions included in the SoA. To better follow the Model of Structural Change, three different types of action can be distinguished.
 - **Detailed design of the action/s:** It could be necessary to focus the initial activities of the SoA to collect some additional information on the very specific issues connected with the concerned activity, also including literature or documentary reviews, internal consultations and other participative inquiries. This would also contribute in starting disseminating the initiative and collecting different points of view on its practical implementation. A set of activities should be scheduled in which the Core Team discusses and shapes

²⁸ This area focuses on those SoA pertaining to the Action Plan as a whole, such as the management, the periodic revision of the Action Plan, or any cross-cutting action affecting more than one RRI key.

each SoA. These activities, indeed, beyond their obvious practical aim, may represent the first step for creating a basis for consensus and involvement of internal and external stakeholders. Forms of participation and discussion could therefore be incorporated in the planning, from the Core Team to more extended groups of stakeholders, first of all including internal groups and offices active on RRI issues, when relevant.

- **Implementation action/s:** these are the main components of the SoA, which are of course different for the various types of measures, including the preparation of training sessions, the organisation of public events, negotiation processes, publishing activities, etc.
- **Reporting and follow-up actions:** It is convenient to foresee follow-up activities in which internal or external communication of results, as well as reporting activities and deliverable preparation can be envisaged. Furthermore, activities oriented to sustainability arrangements for the institutionalization of successful actions need to be foreseen, when possible.
- **Agency Mobilisation:** Indicate people, groups or institutions within the university that may be involved in the implementation of the activities and in their design. It is particularly useful to establish if and how the leadership of the organisation can be involved.
- **Coordination mechanisms:** Indicate the interactions of the SoA with other SoAs included in the Action Plan, other activities or initiatives already in place in the research institution or other actions developed within the STARBIOS2 project.
- **Sustainability / Structural impact:** Indicate how the stream of actions could have an impact beyond the project lifespan (it is an approximate description of the expected or desirable impacts as they can be established at the design stage).

A template and an example of SoA Sheet are given in the **Tool 1**. The example is drawn from the DoA/WP2 and therefore from the Tor Vergata Action Plan. The example below, however, is purely indicative and does not correspond to the real activities proposed by this partner.

The **number of Streams of Action** in each Action Plan may largely vary. In the STARBIOS2 project the SoAs of the Action Plans **ranged from 11 to 20**. These figures, like all other indications, are not binding but only indicative of the type of work required by an Action Plan.

2. Summary tables

Summary tables are a second important programming tool proposed during the STARBIOS2 project. They are useful to check the workload required by the AP as a whole (both in general and in any phase of the project). In addition, the summary tables can help understand the possible interactions between the different parts of the Action Plan so as to better assess its effectiveness. Two tables are suggested:

- The **Action Plan Summary Chart (Tool 2)**, that brings together all the SoAs and, within them, the individual actions, without showing when actions are planned.
- The **Action Plan GANTT Chart (Tool 3)**, that allows to view all the planned activities over time and to identify any work overload situation in any given period.

The detailed design of the Action Plan has been revised on an annual basis during the STARBIOS2 project.

ABOUT THE STARBIOS2 GUIDELINES

This guideline aims to help readers formalize and trigger structural change aimed at introducing appropriate RRI-related practices to their own organisations. This is not a series of prescriptions, but an itinerary of reflection and self-interpretation addressed to different actors within the biosciences. To support this itinerary of reflection and self-interpretation, the document provides...

- a description of a general RRI Model for research organisations within the biosciences, that is a set of ideas, premises and “principles of action” that define the practice of RRI in bioscience research organisations,
- some practical guidance for designing interventions to promote RRI in research organisations in the Biosciences, putting into practice the RRI Model,
- a set of useful practices in implementing the structural change process,
- and information on particular STARBIOS2 cases and experiences, as well as materials, tools and sources, are also provided in the Appendix and in the Annex.



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