

Monitoring

Tools for Shared Agendas, No. 10

September 2026



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Tools for Shared Agendas is a series of practical instruments designed to support collective work on place-based challenges under conditions of complexity. The tools build on established frameworks in systems thinking and transformative innovation policy and are adapted for use within Shared Agenda processes.

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1. Why monitoring matters in Shared Agendas

Monitoring is key in Shared Agendas to understand whether the systemic changes needed to advance towards the desired vision of the future are taking place.

It also helps us understand how the actions developed through the Shared Agenda may be contributing to these changes, and how developments in the wider landscape may be influencing them.

Bringing this evidence together provides a shared basis for collective interpretation. It allows participants to examine how different developments relate to one another, whether contribution assumptions remain plausible, and whether the Theory of Change and systemic portfolio need to be revisited as the Shared Agenda evolves.

2. What this tool is used for

This tool is designed to support a workshop in which participants begin to define a shared monitoring system, building on the Theory of Change for Shared Agendas. It is used to:

- define signals associated with the desired vision of the future;
- define signals associated with facilitators and inhibitors;
- define observable outputs for the actions of the Shared Agenda;
- make explicit the assumptions about how these outputs may contribute to specific signals;
- identify relevant developments in the wider landscape, define evidence or signals for monitoring them, and explore how they may influence the systemic changes being monitored.

Signals help make relevant systemic developments observable. The evidence used to monitor them can be quantitative, qualitative or semi-structured, depending on the nature of what is being observed. It may include quantitative indicators and datasets, but also observable developments such as new coordination arrangements, changes in regulation or administrative procedures, evolution of formal or non-formal training provision, research projects addressing identified challenges, emerging alternatives or new investment mechanisms.

The workshop provides a starting point for developing a monitoring system that can be further refined and operationalised as the Shared Agenda evolves. New signals and evidence can be incorporated, existing ones refined, and the

relationships between outputs, contribution assumptions, wider landscape developments and systemic change revisited as new evidence becomes available.

We recommend reading the [Guide for working with theory of change in Shared Agendas](#) beforehand, as it provides the conceptual framework and definitions used in this tool.

3. Working with the tool

The tool uses a single working template. The template starts from elements already defined within the Shared Agenda:

- the desired vision of the future and its defining characteristics;
- the facilitators and inhibitors;
- the actions of the Shared Agenda.

These elements provide the reference for developing the monitoring system.

The template has four main working areas:

- Signals associated with the desired vision of the future
- Signals associated with facilitators and inhibitors
- Outputs and contribution
- Wider landscape developments and influence

The four areas are interconnected. They can be worked on in different orders and revisited as the monitoring system develops.

3.1. Define signals associated with the desired vision of the future

Participants start from the desired vision of the future and its defining characteristics and define signals that can be used to monitor progress towards that vision.

For each defining characteristic, the discussion can focus on:

- What would we like to see more of?
- What would we like to see less of?
- What signals could help us observe these developments over time?
- What evidence could help us monitor these signals?

The output is a set of signals associated with the defining characteristics of the desired vision of the future, together with relevant evidence for monitoring them.

3.2. Define signals associated with facilitators and inhibitors

Participants work with the facilitators and inhibitors identified in the Theory of Change and discuss how the most relevant ones could be activated, strengthened or reduced.

For each facilitator or inhibitor, the discussion can focus on:

- What would indicate that this facilitator is becoming stronger or that the influence of this inhibitor is being reduced?
- What evidence could help us observe or measure this?
- What changes would we expect to see?
- What evidence could help us observe or measure these changes?

The output is a set of signals associated with selected facilitators and inhibitors, together with relevant evidence for monitoring them.

3.3. Define outputs and explore contribution

Participants work with the actions of the Shared Agenda and define their expected observable outputs.

For each action, the discussion can focus on:

- What direct, observable results do we expect from this action?
- Which of the signals identified in 3.1 and 3.2 do we expect these outputs to influence?
- What assumptions are we making about how these outputs may contribute to those signals?

The outputs are connected to specific signals, making explicit the contribution assumptions linking the actions of the Shared Agenda with the systemic changes being monitored.

3.4. Monitor relevant wider landscape developments and explore their influence

Participants identify relevant phenomena and developments in the wider landscape that may influence the systemic changes being monitored.

These may include policy and regulatory developments, technological change, market and investment dynamics, environmental pressures, emerging

alternatives or other developments taking place beyond the actions of the Shared Agenda.

For each relevant phenomenon or development, the discussion can focus on:

- What development in the wider landscape is relevant to monitor?
- What evidence could help us monitor this development over time??
- Which of the signals identified in 3.1 and 3.2 could it influence?
- What assumptions are we making about how it may influence those signals?

The output is a set of wider landscape developments and signals, connected to the systemic signals they may influence and to the assumptions about these relationships.

4. Connections with other Shared Agendas tools

This tool can be used alongside other Tools for Shared Agendas that support different elements of the Theory of Change.

The **Theory of Change tool** provides the overall structure connecting the desired vision of the future, system conditions, portfolios of actions, contribution assumptions, outputs and system-level signals.

The **Facilitators and Inhibitors tool** can support more detailed work on selected system conditions, including what may need to change, adapt or strengthen and which developments should be observed over time.

The **Systemic Portfolios tool** supports the articulation of actions around specific challenges and the formulation of contribution assumptions linking these actions to facilitators and inhibitors.

The tools can be used and combined according to the needs of each Shared Agenda process.

5. The template

A. Signals associated with the desired vision of the future

ID	Defining characteristic	More / less of what?	Signal	Evidence to monitor the signal
A1				
A2				
A3				

B. Signals associated with facilitators and inhibitors

ID	Facilitator / inhibitor	How could it be activated, strengthened or reduced?	Signal	Evidence to monitor the signal
B1				
B2				
B3				

C. Outputs and contribution

ID	Action of the Shared Agenda	Observable output	Related signals from A/B	Contribution assumption
C1				
C2				
C3				

D. Wider landscape developments and influence

ID	Wider landscape phenomenon / development	Evidence / signal	Related signals from A/B	Assumption about influence
D1				
D2				
D3				



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6. Example of monitoring in practice

The following completed template shows how the questions can be applied to a territorial food-system challenge. It provides a practical reference for defining a monitoring system that connects signals associated with the desired vision of the future, facilitators and inhibitors, outputs from the actions of the Shared Agenda, and relevant developments in the wider landscape.

A. Signals associated with the desired vision of the future:

A more sustainable, fair and resilient territorial food system, with stronger local production and consumption, shorter and better coordinated food circuits, less food waste, healthier food practices and greater social inclusion.

ID	Defining characteristic	More / less of what?	Signal	Evidence to monitor the signal
A1	Stronger local production and consumption	More locally produced food reaching regular consumption channels	Greater presence of locally produced food in everyday consumption	Share or volume of local food purchased through selected public or collective channels; evolution of local food sales through selected territorial channels
A2	Shorter and better coordinated food circuits	More stable and direct relationships between production, distribution and consumption	Consolidation of territorial food circuits	Recurring supply relationships between local producers and buyers; continuity of these relationships; emergence of new territorial distribution arrangements
A3	Less structural food waste	Less avoidable food discarded across production, distribution and consumption	Reduction of avoidable food waste	Kg or proportion of avoidable food waste in selected settings; evidence of changes in planning, purchasing or distribution practices that prevent surplus
A4	Healthier and more sustainable food practices	More regular access to and consumption of healthy, sustainable and local food	Greater integration of healthy and sustainable food practices into everyday life	Evolution of purchasing or consumption patterns; incorporation of agreed food criteria in collective menus; qualitative evidence of changing food practices
A5	Greater social inclusion	More opportunities for people in vulnerable situations to participate in food-related economic and community activity	Greater participation and continuity in food-related economic and community pathways	Participation in training, employment or productive activities; progression into paid work; continuity over time; emergence of inclusive food initiatives

B. Signals associated with facilitators and inhibitors

ID	Facilitator / inhibitor	How could it be activated, strengthened or reduced?	Signal	Evidence to monitor the signal
B1	Facilitator: Institutional commitment and public support	Strengthen sustained policy, regulatory, funding and implementation support	Institutional support becomes more embedded and sustained	New or strengthened policy commitments; budget allocations; funding mechanisms; incorporation of territorial food priorities into public plans; continuity of institutional mandates
B2	Facilitator: Education, research and training capacities	Strengthen the capacity of education, training and research to respond to identified food-system challenges	Education, training and research increasingly respond to territorial food-system challenges	Progressive expansion or adaptation of formal and non-formal training provision in relevant areas; research projects addressing identified challenges; new collaborations connecting research, education and food-system practice
B3	Facilitator: Producer, community and social networks	Strengthen relationships and collective capacity across different parts of the food system	Stronger and more sustained collaborative relationships	New coordination spaces; formal or informal collaborations; continuity of coordination arrangements; emergence of shared initiatives involving different parts of the food system
B4	Inhibitor: Fragmented coordination	Reduce fragmentation between production, distribution, public institutions, education and consumption	More integrated coordination across the food system	Creation and continuity of cross-sector coordination spaces; shared planning mechanisms; joint agreements or protocols; evidence of decisions increasingly connecting several parts of the food system
B5	Inhibitor: Economic fragility of local production	Improve conditions for producers to sustain their activity	Greater economic stability and predictability for local production	Evolution of producer income or margins where available; recurring purchasing arrangements; stability of demand; continuity of producers in activity; reduced dependence on one-off markets

ID	Facilitator / inhibitor	How could it be activated, strengthened or reduced?	Signal	Evidence to monitor the signal
B6	Inhibitor: Logistics and infrastructure limitations	Improve access to logistics, storage, processing and distribution capacities adapted to territorial circuits	Logistics and infrastructure become less constraining for territorial food circuits	New or adapted logistics arrangements; changes in available storage, aggregation or processing capacity; evidence of reduced bottlenecks; improved access to relevant infrastructure
B7	Inhibitor: Administrative and regulatory barriers	Reduce administrative and regulatory constraints affecting territorial food initiatives	Regulatory and administrative conditions become more enabling	Legislative proposals addressing identified barriers; simplified or accelerated procedures; changes in procurement rules; new guidance or interpretations; removal or adaptation of specific constraints
B8	Inhibitor: Weak integration of local and sustainable food into everyday consumption	Increase regular availability, familiarity and access across everyday consumption channels	Local and sustainable food becomes more embedded in regular consumption	Expansion of regular points of sale or collective purchasing channels; repeated purchasing rather than occasional consumption; changes in menus, procurement practices or household purchasing patterns

C. Outputs and contributions

ID	Action of the Shared Agenda	Observable output	Related signals from A&B	Contribution assumption
C1	Develop coordinated local supply arrangements between producers and collective buyers	Recurring supply or coordinated purchasing arrangements established	A1, A2, B4, B5	Stable purchasing arrangements may strengthen demand predictability for producers and create more sustained relationships between territorial production and consumption
C2	Introduce sustainability and proximity criteria into public procurement	Procurement procedures incorporating agreed sustainability and proximity criteria	A1, B1, B5, B7	Changes in procurement practice may create more stable opportunities for territorial production and translate institutional commitment into purchasing decisions
C3	Develop shared logistics and distribution solutions	Shared logistics, aggregation, storage or distribution mechanisms established and operational	A2, B4, B6	Shared logistics may reduce distribution constraints and make territorial supply relationships easier to sustain
C4	Develop food-waste prevention mechanisms	Prevention protocols, planning mechanisms or food-management procedures implemented	A3	Better planning and management may reduce avoidable surplus before it requires recovery or redistribution
C5	Integrate food and agroecology into educational provision	Food and agroecology content incorporated into educational programmes and practical learning activities	A4, B2, B8	Continued exposure to food-system knowledge and practice may contribute to greater familiarity with healthy, sustainable and territorial food practices
C6	Develop training and employment pathways linked to the territorial food system	Training pathways connected to placements, employment or productive activities established	A5, B2	Connecting training with practical opportunities may strengthen sustained participation in food-related economic and community activity

D. Wider landscape developments and influence

ID	Wider landscape phenomenon / development	Evidence / signal	Related signals from A&B	Assumption about influence
D1	Changes in public procurement regulation	New legislation, regulatory guidance, court decisions or procurement frameworks affecting sustainability and proximity criteria	A1, B1, B5, B7	More enabling procurement rules may expand the possibilities for public demand to support territorial production
D2	Evolution of food prices and production costs	Food-price trends; evolution of relevant input costs; changes in the price differential between local/sustainable and conventional food	A1, B5, B8	Increasing cost pressure may weaken producer viability or reduce accessibility of local food even when other conditions improve
D3	Technological developments relevant to territorial food circuits	Emergence or diffusion of new storage, processing, traceability, logistics or distribution technologies	A2, B6	More accessible technologies may reduce infrastructure and coordination constraints affecting territorial circuits
D4	Emergence of territorial food initiatives outside the Shared Agenda	New food hubs, producer networks, cooperative purchasing schemes, distribution initiatives or other alternatives	A1, A2, B3, B4	Expansion of complementary initiatives may strengthen the wider ecosystem of alternatives and create new possibilities for coordination
D5	Changes in agricultural and food-policy support	New funding instruments, subsidies, strategic programmes or public investment priorities	B1, B5, B6	New policy instruments may alter the resources and capacities available for territorial food-system development
D6	Climate and environmental pressures affecting production	Drought conditions, water availability, extreme-weather events, production losses or other relevant environmental developments	A1, B5	Environmental pressures may constrain territorial production independently of improvements in demand, coordination or institutional support
D7	Changes in social demand and food culture	Consumer trends, survey evidence, growth of local-food purchasing initiatives, changing narratives or public attention	A4, B8	Changing preferences and social expectations may alter demand and the legitimacy of local, healthy and sustainable food practices