

Final Reporting: A Systematic Approach

E-book summary

Final Reporting: A Systematic Approach is a practical e-book that helps project teams, coordinators, monitoring and evaluation staff, program directors, and consultants produce a clear, honest, verifiable final report that supports accountability and discussions about future funding.

The e-book is based on one central idea:

The final report should help the funder understand what changed compared with what was promised, how this is known, and what decision should come next.

Its Donor-Lens approach means writing for the person assessing the project and justifying decisions within their institution. The process helps readers organize results, evidence, deviations, and learning in a document that people can read, verify, and use.

1. The problem this e-book addresses

Many organizations do valuable work, but their final reports do not clearly show the results or help readers assess what should continue, change, or expand.

Problems arise when the team:

- Presents lists of activities as evidence of change.
- Adds pages while making the main results difficult to find.
- Includes figures without an identifiable source, method, or means of verification.
- Reports achievements that are disconnected from the agreed indicators and targets.
- Hides deviations or partial results for fear of losing credibility.
- Collects testimonials and photographs without connecting them to project evidence.
- Writes without identifying who will read the report and what decisions they need to make.
- Ends with thanks, without explaining the next steps or making the case for a follow-up discussion.

The e-book helps turn scattered information into a report organized around results and decisions.

Readers learn to show achievements, acknowledge unfinished work, and support recommendations with traceable evidence.

2. What you will build

By the end of the process, readers will have a Model Final Report comparing results with commitments, supported by verifiable evidence, explanations of deviations, a narrative of change, and lessons learned. They will also create short materials to present results and open discussions about continued support.

The main deliverables are:

Deliverable	Status
1. Review of your previous report — assessment of the starting point	☐ Complete
2. Reader and Decision Map	☐ Complete
3. Strong Report Outline — structure, targets and results table, draft executive summary, and annex plan	☐ Complete
4. Matrix Results with Verifiable Evidence	☐ Complete

Deliverable	Status
5. Deviations and Lessons Register	☐ Complete
6. Narrative of Change — initial situation, intervention, and results, including participant voices	☐ Complete
7. Reuse Toolkit — one-page results summary and short presentation to request continued funding	☐ Complete
8. Complete Model Final Report reviewed using the Skeptical Donor Checklist	☐ Complete

The process includes two individual sessions. The first, at the end of Week 3, reviews the structure and evidence matrix. The second, at the end of Week 6, reviews the full report and provides guidance on seeking further funding.

The outcome is a report with essential information in the main text and verification materials in traceable annexes. Its components can be reused to communicate results to the current donor and present the organization's experience to other funders.

3. How IGROW guides the process

IGROW structures the report's development step by step. Donor-Lens guides which information to prioritize and how to present it to support reading, verification, and decision-making.

IGROW stage	How it applies in this e-book
I — Intention / Issue	Identifies weaknesses in current reports and clarifies the intended readers and the decision the report should support.
G — Goal	Defines the output of each stage: assessment, reader map, structure, evidence, narrative, and complete report.
R — Reality	Reviews a previous report to identify evidence gaps, unclear results, omitted deviations, and opportunities for improvement.
O — Options	Apply templates, matrices, exercises, and checklists to compare targets and results, explain deviations, and build a narrative supported by evidence.
W — Way Forward	Connects each deliverable to the next, completes the report, and prepares reusable materials for discussions about continuation or expansion.

4. What this e-book promises

This e-book does not guarantee further funding. That decision also depends on the donor's priorities and resources, as well as the project's results and needs.

After completing the process and exercises, readers will have a final report that explains what was promised, what was achieved, how it was verified, and what was learned. They will be able to explain deviations honestly and support a recommendation for next steps.

The e-book turns project closeout into an accountability process that supports decisions, with traceable results and a sound basis for discussing continuation, adjustments, or expansion.

This helps readers move from saying:

"We submitted a report with everything we did, but we do not know whether the donor understood what changed or why continuing would make sense."

To say:

“Our report shows what we achieved against our commitments, where the evidence is, and what we learned. Readers have the information they need to assess the results and decide what should happen next.”