



BIODIVERSITY
CHALLENGE FUNDS



Darwin Plus
Standard Indicator Guidance 2.1

September 2024

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1. Introduction to Version 2.1 of the Standard Indicators Menu

In 2023, the Biodiversity Challenge Funds (BCFs¹) initiated a pilot phase in the roll-out of Standard Indicators. These were intended to facilitate aggregated reporting across the portfolio of funds. During the first year of the pilot phase, applicants and grantees have provided us with much appreciated feedback on their experience of using the Standard Indicators. We have used this feedback to develop a second version of the Standard Indicator Menu.

Major updates between Version 1.0 and Version 2.0

1. Version 1.0 of the Standard Indicators included 60 Standard Indicators. For Version 2.0, the number of Standard Indicators were reduced substantially, from 60 indicators down to 29.
2. Only the previous 'core' Standard Indicators were retained, with some exceptions, allowing for the 'core' designation to be removed from Version 2.0.
3. All discontinued Standard Indicators have been preserved in the [BCFs Indicator Library](#). This Library includes the current range of Standard Indicators, the indicators previously included in Version 1.0 (with some exceptions), as well as an extended array of indicators that can be adapted to be used by applicants and grantees as specific project indicators.

In September 2024, we published Version 2.1, with the following minor update:

1. New Standard Indicator added: DPLUS-A06 *Number of people participating in community events and activities*

¹ The Biodiversity Challenge Funds is the collective name for Defra's Darwin Initiative, Illegal Wildlife Trade Challenge Fund and Darwin Plus.

Project Indicators and Standard Indicators

Project Indicators are Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound (SMART) – see our BCFs MEL Guidance, available on our website, for more details <https://darwinplus.org.uk/resources/monitoring-evaluation-and-learning/>. Project Indicators enable rigorous project-level MEL, with each project team being required to select their own highly specific and relevant Project Indicators.

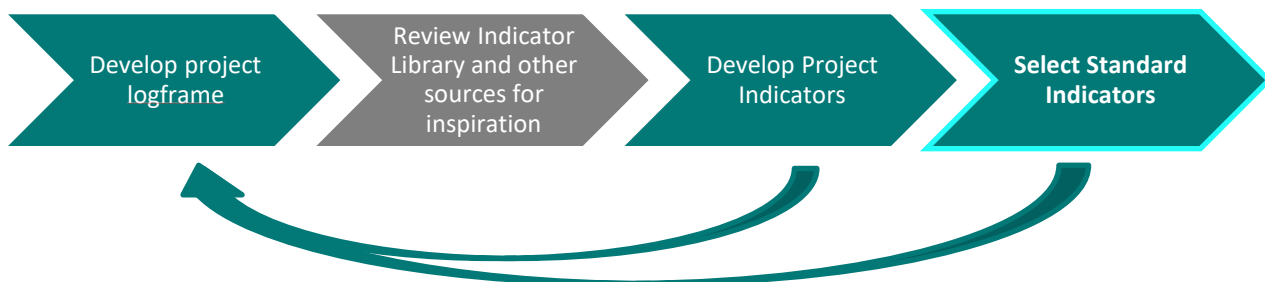
Standard Indicators are more general. In sacrificing some of the specificity and relevance of Project Indicators, Standard Indicators allow us to aggregate the results of a diverse array of projects. This enables a better understanding fund-level contributions to biodiversity conservation and poverty reduction, and to facilitate a collective contribution to the global evidence base.

The Darwin Plus Standard Indicators are closely linked to the Outcome and Outputs in Darwin Plus’s own fund-level Theory of Change and logframe. Some of the indicators will be used across the BCFs i.e. you will also find them in the Darwin Initiative Standard Indicators and IWT Challenge Fund Standard Indicators.

The diagram below provides an outline of an idealised process of indicator selection, and shows that your selection of Standard Indicators should be done as the final step in the process.

1. Using the MEL Guidance available on our website, first develop your project logframe (including your Impact statement, Outcome, Outputs and Activities)
2. Next, we recommend consulting the [BCFs Indicator Library](#) and other sources for inspiration and to assist you with developing SMART Project Indicators (see the MEL Guidance available on our fund websites).
3. Finally, we recommend that you select Standard Indicators using this guidance note and menu.

While we have presented these steps sequentially here, it can be helpful to revisit your logframe following your selection of Project Indicators and Standard Indicators, to ensure that you have alignment between the indicators and your Outputs and Outcome.



2. How to Select Darwin Plus Standard Indicators

The Darwin Plus menu of Standard Indicators is **designed to help you to select appropriate indicators according to the nature of your project**. The menu also provides guidance on which methodology, units and disaggregation measures to use to **help you plan your monitoring and evaluation** more effectively.

Browse the menu below: The menu is grouped by topic, which are determined according to the fund-level objectives for Darwin Plus.

Group A: Capability and Capacity

Group B: Policies, Practices and Management

Group C: Evidence and Best Practices

Group D: Sustainable Benefits to People, Biodiversity and Climate

- **Select at least three Standard Indicators:** Darwin Plus projects are required to report against a minimum of three Standard Indicators. If you can report against more than three Standard Indicators, this is strongly encouraged. Try to select indicators from as many groups as is feasible for your project and its context. We understand that certain types of projects may find it impracticable to meet this requirement. If this is the case please include an explanatory note in the relevant section of your Application and Reporting Documents (see the FAQs in [Section 5](#) for more detail).
- **Disaggregate your reporting:** Each of the indicators has compulsory disaggregation suggested in the tables below. You must disaggregate your reporting against these (for example, gender for many indicators and UKOT, if your project is working in more than one UKOT). In your Project Indicators you may include more resolution in how you disaggregate your targets and reporting (for example, you may be interested to demonstrate the participation of people with disabilities or youth through age disaggregation) but this is not required when reporting against Standard Indicators.
- **Ensure that you put in place appropriate plans to monitor these indicators:** Develop a Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) Plan to ensure that you are monitoring your Standard Indicators alongside your Project Indicators (see the MEL Guidance on our website for detailed guidance). In many cases you can use the same Means of Verification for both.

3. How to report on Darwin Plus Standard Indicators

Reporting process: You will report your progress against all indicators in your Annual Reports and Final Report. The report templates will include tables for you to report your progress on indicators (see Table 1 below for an example).

Table 1. Example reporting table showing disaggregated reporting of results and planned figures

DPLUS Indicator number	Name of indicator	Units	Disaggregation	Year 1 Total	Year 2 Total	Year 3 Total	Total to date	Total planned during the project
E.g. DPLUS-A01	E.g. Number of people in eligible countries who have completed structured and relevant training	People	Men	20			20	60
E.g. DPLUS-A01	E.g. Number of people in eligible countries who have completed structured and relevant training	People	Women	30			30	60
E.g. DPLUS-B01	E.g. Number of new or improved habitat management plans available and endorsed	Number of plans	New	1			1	2
E.g. DPLUS-B01	E.g. Number of new or improved habitat management plans available and endorsed	Number of plans	Improved	1			1	3

Timeframe: All indicators under Darwin Plus should be reported in line with the standard reporting timeframe of UK financial years (1 April – 31 March).

Indicator number: Where Darwin Plus Standard Indicators are used, you must always reference the indicator number e.g. [DPLUS-A01]. Please note that we have a few umbrella-type indicators which serve to aggregate a number of sub-indicators (see DPLUS-D01 and DPLUS-D04 for examples). For these indicators, we ask that you try to report against the individual sub-indicators (e.g. DPLUS-D01a or DPLUS-D01b), as well as provide an aggregate figure. In doing so, be careful to avoid double-counting. For example, in the table below the project team has reported that 30 people have improved food security as a result of the project. Additionally, the same 30 people also have enhanced access to water. For the aggregate number of people with enhanced wellbeing, we only sum the number of people reported in the sub-indicators when the people included are different. If you are reporting gains across multiple areas of wellbeing for the same people, then the aggregate figure is not the sum and therefore does not include double-counting. However, if the people with improved food security are different to the people with enhanced access to water, then you can add them together to calculate the aggregate figure.

Table 2. Reporting against sub-indicators

DPLUS Indicator number	Name of indicator	Units	Disaggregation	Year 1 Total	Year 2 Total	Year 3 Total	Total to date	Total planned during the project
E.g. DPLUS-D04	E.g. Number of people with enhanced wellbeing	People	Women	30			20	60
E.g. DPLUS-D04a	E.g. Number of people with improved food security	People	Women	30			30	60
E.g. DPLUS-D04b	E.g. Number of people with enhanced access to water	People	Women	30			30	60

Units and disaggregation: The menu provides guidance on what units to use when reporting your progress, and disaggregation measures. **You must disaggregate by gender** in all relevant indicators. You are encouraged to disaggregate in other ways as well, and the menu includes some guidance on both obligatory and optional disaggregation for each indicator.

Annualised results: Reporting against quantitative results should be in annual increments (i.e. Separate results reported for Year 1, Year 2, Year 3 etc.).

Table 3. Example of how to report results in successive years

DPLUS Indicator number	Name of indicator	Units	Disaggregation	Year 1 Total	Year 2 Total	Year 3 Total	Total to date	Total planned during the project
E.g. DPLUS-A01	E.g. Number of people in eligible countries who have completed structured and relevant training in sustainable livelihood skills	People	Men	20	20		40	60

No double counting: We ask that you pay close attention to the wording of the indicators. For example, for indicators that measure the number of people who have received training, do not include the same person more than once, even in cases where they have received multiple trainings on different topics. During instances where you are reporting improved capability and capacity, you may report on both the number of individuals as well as the number of organisations that have benefited. This is not considered double-counting.

4. The Darwin Plus Standard Indicator Menu

Group A: Capability and Capacity

Ref. no.	Darwin Plus Standard Indicator	Units	Compulsory Disaggregation
DPLUS-A01	Number of people in eligible countries who have completed structured and relevant training ² .	Number of people	UKOT; Gender (men, women, other)
DPLUS-A02	Number of people in eligible countries who have completed secondments or placements ³ .	Number of people	UKOT; Gender (men, women, other)
DPLUS-A03	Number of local or national organisations with enhanced capability and capacity.	Number of organisations	Organisation Type (public, private, other)
DPLUS-A04	Number of people reporting that they are applying new capabilities (skills and knowledge) 6 (or more) months after training.	Number of people	UKOT; Gender (men, women, other)
DPLUS-A05	Number of trainers trained under the project reporting to have delivered further training	Number of people	UKOT; Gender (men, women, other)
DPLUS-A06	Number of people participating in community events and activities	Number of people	UKOT; Gender (men, women, other)

² Where possible also show alongside the indicator the number of total training-weeks aggregated across all people trained. A training week is defined as one that involves at least 30 hours of tuition/ training per week. Below 30 hours, training weeks should be calculated on a pro-rata basis.

³ Minimum of 1 month placement/secondment per person. Please show career level and total placement months aggregated for all people.

Group B: Policies, Practices and Management

Ref. no.	Darwin Plus Standard Indicator	Units	Compulsory Disaggregation
DPLUS-B01	Number of new or improved habitat management plans available and endorsed ⁴ .	Number of plans	UKOT; Type (new, improved)
DPLUS-B02	Number of new or improved species management plans available and endorsed*.	Number of plans	UKOT; Type (new, improved)
DPLUS-B03	Number of new or improved community management plans available and endorsed*.	Number of plans	UKOT; Type (new, improved)
DPLUS-B04	Number of new or improved sustainable enterprises/ community benefits management plans available and endorsed*.	Number of plans	UKOT; Type (new, improved)
DPLUS-B05	Number of people with increased participation in governance.	Number of people	UKOT; Gender (men, women, other);Governance structure (New; Existing)
DPLUS-B06	Number of people with strengthened land tenure rights.	Number of people	UKOT; Gender (men, women, other);
DPLUS-B07	Number of policies with biodiversity provisions that have been enacted or amended ⁵ .	Number of instruments	UKOT; Type (enacted, amended)

⁴ * Endorsed by a third party to demonstrate an independent assessment has been made, and the plan is considered viable and ready for implementation. Implementation or Outcome can be reported under Group D Indicators.

⁵ With direct attribution to project's evidence or activities.

Group C: Evidence and Best Practices

Ref. no.	Darwin Plus Standard Indicators	Units	Compulsory Disaggregation
DPLUS-C01	Number of best practice guides and knowledge products ⁶ published and endorsed ⁷ .	Number	UKOT; Language
DPLUS-C02	Number of new conservation or species stock assessments published ⁸ .	Number	UKOT; Taxa (Flora/Fauna/Fungi)
DPLUS-C03	New assessments of habitat conservation action needs published.	Number	UKOT
DPLUS-C04	New assessments of community use of biodiversity resources published.	Number	UKOT
DPLUS-C05	Number of projects contributing data, insights, and case studies to national Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) related reporting processes and calls for evidence.	Number	UKOT; Information type (data, insights, case studies, other)
DPLUS-C06	Analytics for funded project-specific social media posts.	Number	UKOT; Analytic type (reach, impressions, engagement, other)
DPLUS-C07	Number of webinar attendees ⁹ .	Number	UKOT; Gender (men, women, other)
DPLUS-C08	Number of Media related activities.	Number of activities	UKOT; Media type (Internet, Print, Radio, Television, Podcast, Other)
DPLUS-C09	Number of records added to accessible databases.	Number of records	UKOT
DPLUS-C10	Number of decision-makers attending briefing events.	Number of people	UKOT; Gender (men, women, other)

⁶ Technical/programmatic guides, for example: working with marginalised communities, gender best practices, developing enterprises, programme management etc. Can include written and verbal best practices guides, webinars, briefings.

⁷ Endorsed by a third party to demonstrate an independent assessment has been made, and the plan is considered viable and ready for implementation.

⁸ Avoid double counting.

⁹ Please see our website for more focused guidance on how to communicate the findings of your project

Group D: Sustainable Benefits to People, Biodiversity and Climate

Ref. no.	Darwin Plus Standard Indicators	Unit	Compulsory Disaggregation
DPLUS-D01	Area of land or sea under ecological management ¹⁰ .	Number of hectares ¹¹	Aggregates the three indicators below.
	a Area under Sustainable Management Practices	Number of hectares	UKOT; Biome ¹² ; Management type ¹³
	b Area improved through restoration		
	c Area newly designated as protected areas or other effective conservation measures (OECMs)		
DPLUS-D02	Ecosystem Loss Avoided	Number of hectares	UKOT; Biome ¹⁴
DPLUS-D03	Number of people with enhanced livelihoods	Number of people	Aggregates the two indicators below
	a Number of people with Sustainable Livelihoods created or protected	Number of people	UKOT; Gender (men, women, other); Sector (Energy supply; Industrial processes; Business; Public; Residential; Transport; Agriculture; Fisheries and Aquaculture; Waste Management; Forestry; Land/sea Use or change; Water; Other)
	b Number of people with improved income		

¹⁰ You could draw inspiration from [ICF KPI 17 Methodology Note](#) "Hectares of land that have received sustainable land management practices".

¹¹ You can provide a % change figure as well, but we ask that this be accompanied by the absolute numbers in hectares, noting baseline values for clarity.

¹² Use the list of Biomes in the IUCN Ecosystem Typology (<https://global-ecosystems.org/>): Tropical-subtropical forests; Temperate-boreal forests & woodlands; Shrublands & shrubby woodlands; Savannas and grasslands; Deserts and semi-deserts; Polar-alpine; Intensive land-use systems; Subterranean lithic systems; Subterranean freshwaters; Anthropogenic subterranean freshwaters; Subterranean tidal systems; Palustrine wetlands; Rivers and streams; Lakes; Artificial fresh waters; Semi-confined transitional waters; Marine shelves; Pelagic ocean waters; Deep sea floors; Anthropogenic marine systems; Shoreline systems; Supralittoral coastal systems; Anthropogenic shorelines; Brackish tidal systems

¹³ Vegetation Management; Soil management; Water Management; Animal Management; Forest Management; Fisheries Management; Aquaculture; Coastal Management; Marine management; Freshwater Resources; Watershed/Freshwater management; Water Extraction; Restoration; Other

¹⁴ Use the list of Biomes in the IUCN Ecosystem Typology (<https://global-ecosystems.org/>) (see above footnote)

Ref. no.	Darwin Plus Standard Indicators	Unit	Compulsory Disaggregation
DPLUS-D04	Number of people with enhanced wellbeing	Number of people	Aggregates the seven indicators below
	a Number of people with improved food security	Number of people	UKOT; Gender (men, women, other); Indigenous status (Indigenous, other)
	b Number of people with enhanced access to water		
	c Number of people with improved health		
	d Number of people with improved education		
	e Number of people with improved security		
	f Number of people with improved social relations		
g Number of people with improved freedom of choice and action			
DPLUS-D05	Number of people whose climate and disaster resilience has been improved.	Number of people	Aggregates the two indicators below.
	a Number of people supported to better adapt to the effects of climate change	Number of people	UKOT; Gender (men, women, other); Indigenous status (Indigenous, other)
	b Number of people with improved resilience		
DPLUS-D06	Value of Ecosystem Services Generated or Protected	£	UKOT; Gender (men, women, other); Indigenous status (Indigenous, other); Ecosystem Service (Cultural; Provisioning; Regulation and Maintenance; Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) received (PES received; PES not received)
DPLUS-D07	Number of globally threatened taxa with improving conservation status	Number of taxa	UKOT; Kingdom (Animal, Plant, Fungi)

5. Frequently Asked Questions

Why should I use Darwin Plus Standard Indicators?

Our indicators have been designed to help you effectively monitor and report on the progress of your projects. They are aligned with globally recognised standards, and provide guidance on the most appropriate units and disaggregation measures to use. The data generated will feed into our fund-level collation of data, as well as to the global evidence base on the impact and effectiveness of biodiversity conservation and socioeconomic development interventions.

I cannot find three Standard Indicators that are relevant or feasible in my project – what should I do?

There are some projects teams who may not be able to find three relevant Standard Indicators to report against. If this is the case, please include a note to alert us in your Application Form, or in your Annual Report or Final Report, in the section where you are required to specify which Standard Indicators have selected/report progress against them.

I was reporting against and/or had adjusted my logframe to incorporate Standard Indicators that have now been removed from the menu – should I continue reporting against them?

If it is clear that these indicators help you to monitor the progress of your project, then we suggest that you continue to report against them as Project Indicators in your logframe. However, you do not need to include the reference (e.g. DPLUS-A10) within your logframe. You should instead report on Standard Indicators in the dedicated section of the AR and FR where we ask you to report against them.

The reference for a Standard Indictors I was using has changed in this new version of the guidance – which reference should I use?

The references in this version of the document are the latest version and should now be used. There is a table in the [BCFs Indicator Library](#) which helps cross reference between the old and new Standard Indicator references.

Can I edit the Darwin Plus Standard Indicators to be more tailored to my project context?

We previously did encourage project teams to do this, but no longer. We now require you to have two separate classes of indicator: Project Indicators and Standard Indicators. While the wording for these two indicator classes may be aligned, Standard Indicators should be worded exactly how they are in this guidance. Project Indicators, however, should be developed and worded specifically for your project.

Can I use my own disaggregation measure(s) if there is not an appropriate one listed in the Darwin Plus Standard Indicator?

Not for the Standard Indicators, which have clearly defined compulsory disaggregation as defined in this document. However, we do encourage you to use disaggregation in specific, meaningful ways when reporting against the Project Indicators in your logframe.

I plan to use the same indicator and same data across two different BCFs projects. How do I report without double counting?

Consider whether the change expected is attributable to the activities of both projects, and if so, whether an argument can be made for either project playing a more significant role. If the indicator is applicable to both projects, be clear on the proportion of the result that is attributable to each project in your reporting. One way of determining this proportionality is by using the relative amount of funding allocated to either project.

I have chosen an indicator where the preferred methodology is not yet described in the indicator menu. How should I proceed?

For some of our indicators, the preferred methodology is still under development. When finalised, we will publish in the latest guidance document updates. Please proceed with your chosen methodology in the meantime, and share details of the methodology in your report (e.g. in means of verification).

My project was developed before the Standard Indicators were introduced. Do I have to change my indicators?

For those projects that were funded prior to the introduction of Standard Indicators in 2023, there is no need to report against them, unless it is easy to do so anyway. For those projects funded in 2023 or later (i.e. Rounds 11 and 12), we require you to report against a minimum of three Standard Indicators. See the table below for a breakdown of the requirements by Round.

Round	Need to report against Standard Indicators?
10 and earlier	Encouraged to
11 and after	Required to

If you have any questions not covered in this section, please do not hesitate to contact the BCF team at BCF-DPLUS@niras.com.