

MarinTrust Research Project Policy

When MarinTrust commissions or otherwise conducts research or outcome/impacts projects, this document will act as a code of conduct for the method of conducting and reporting on projects. If third parties conduct projects they may have their own code of conduct and policies in addition to those issued by MarinTrust. For additional information you may contact MarinTrust at standards@marin-trust.com.

Issuing Research Proposals

Monitoring and other relevant research projects will be carried out and/or commissioned by MarinTrust on at least an annual basis. This will be determined by management or relevant governance committees and budget agreed by the CEO.

Initial research specifically looking at Outcome and Impact evaluations will start with developing a suitable way of incorporating measurable metrics into the standard system to allow for evaluations on these at a standard level over time.

For third party projects, there are two potential scenarios:

- 1) A call for proposals will be issued and posted on multiple platforms for proposal submissions. This will include the scope of the work, the budget involved and a timeline. Following the deadline for submission, a shortlist will be created from the proposals and these will be invited to the next stage of the process to present their proposal. A decision will then be made on the most suitable project proposal.
- 2) If a third party is already determined to be the most suitable to carry out the specific project then there is no need to issue a call for proposals.

Terms of reference and/or a contract will be agreed to and signed by both a MarinTrust representative and the commissioned third party before work commences. This shall include the scope of the work, the agreed budget and timeframes and agreement that any statements or claims made as a result of the work are accurate.

Guidance for methodology and assurance of conducting projects

Those conducting projects on MarinTrusts behalf should carry out the work in a professional and honest way.

Those carrying out the work should ensure the following:

- The work is carried out in an independent and un-biased way.
- An understanding of the MarinTrust programme should be held as well as the context of the assessment being made.
- A commitment should be made to make the findings of the project publicly available following the completion of work.
- Where relevant, peer review of the work should be implemented.
- A baseline should be established when reviewing progress, improvements and/or change over time.

- When relevant, control groups or data should be used to validate findings.
- The results of the report to be made available and/or presented to those who took part in the project, other stakeholders the work may be relevant to, and applicable MarinTrust governance committees.
- Data behind the findings of the project should be made available on request (unless sensitive or commercially confidential) to allow for validation or replication of work by other parties.

For monitoring reports

All MEL monitoring reports should include at a minimum, the following:

- Overview/ aim of report
- If specific questions are being evaluated these should be included
- The author of the work and their affiliation if an external third party
- Methodology
- Limitations and/or assumptions
- Conclusions/ findings
- Recommendations

For other projects

The project should include, where relevant, the following aspects:

- An overview of the context of the work and what questions the project is aiming to answer. If in relation to Outcome and Impacts evaluations, this should also include the specific standard intervention being assessed.
- Any unintended effects (positive, negative and neutral) that may have resulted from the activities or processes as outlined above.
- If findings from the project can be attributed to the activity or intervention being assessed as outline in the first bullet point this should also be outlined.
- Any limitations or assumptions identified during the project that may have influenced the results.
- Recommendations for next steps or improvements to be made.
- If surveys or interviews are carried out as part of the project, sufficient steps are taken to ensure responses are kept anonymous and results are reported in an collated way.

Once the draft report is submitted to MarinTrust, the relevant staff member (i.e. the one leading the project on behalf of MarinTrust) is in charge of reviewing and validating that the information provided is in line with these guidelines as well as ensuring that any claims made are accurate.

Guidance for reporting on projects

Reports produced on behalf of MarinTrust will be shared with the relevant stakeholders. If it is an Outcome or Impact report, then at a minimum an executive summary (including the aspects outlined below) will be made publicly available on the MarinTrust website with the opportunity for those interested to request the full document.

Those conducting reports should also provide the following:

- Public summary of the report with an accurate overview of the main aspects of the report. This should include as a minimum:
 - The questions being researched/ reported on
 - The methodology used during the project
 - Any conclusions (both positive and negative)
 - Recommendations for future work or actions resulting from the project.