Booklet

Concept of "service"to implement Smart-Valleys approach or any other project

Summary

AFRIQU*e-learning*

About AfricaRice and Afrique-learning

AfricaRice:

AfricaRice is a leading pan-African rice research organization committed to improving livelihoods in Africa through solid science and effective partnerships. AfricaRice is a research center of CGIAR, which is part of a global research partnership on future food security. It is also an intergovernmental association of African member countries. Today, it has 30 member countries. The mission of AfricaRice is to contribute to poverty reduction and food security in Africa through research, development and partnership activities, aimed at increasing the productivity and profitability of the rice sector so as to guarantee the sustainability of the agricultural environment.

Afrique-Learning:

Afrique-learning is a Beninese cooperative which creates and manages vocational e-learning courses specially designed for African youth. Courses are tailor-made in collaboration with experts in the field with the aim of producing interactive, illustrated, interesting and easy-to-study courses that provide the student with important information in simple and appropriate language. Learning is done independently at the student's own pace, it is assessed and a course certificate is attained following a final test. Courses are available on computer, smartphone or android tablet. They only require a very modest bandwidth and are therefore within the reach of students. Registration and classes are free.

Acknowledgements

Images and graphics sources

[1] Developed by the training team

[2] Illustration produced by EUDOX BÉATITUDES

What is a service?

A "service" is a precisely defined task, resulting in the production of a "deliverable" : a product very clearly defined and which quality will be verified. Such a task is allocated to a person who is empowered to accomplish this task within a fixed duration, and with a fixed payment that will be made upon submission of the deliverable, of satisfactory quality.

This booklet will help to understand exactly what a "service" is, how to use this approach and what are benefits when managing a project using services especially for Smart-Valleys inland valleys development.

Definition of a service

- A service is first of all the definition of a task and the activities that are its components.

- A service will be performed by a service provider: an individual with capacity to perform this service.

- A service is defined in detail by various components: activity (ies) description, result (product, or deliverable) definition, a list of costs and fixed remuneration for the service.

- At the end of a service one or many products (deliverables) are to be delivered.

- Upon product delivery (submission of deliverable), and after quality verification, the service is paid.

- Each time that this service is performed, the service provider receives the fixed amount for the service.

- This amount comprises necessary expenses to perform the service plus a fee for the service provider, corresponding to the required work complexity and volume.

Advantages of services over traditional management systems

More targeted

- For each service, a clear objective and a specific product (deliverable) are defined - work becomes more focused and better understood by all, because the work is clearly defined.

- Detailed personnel planning and early definition of intermediate objectives allow a better reflection on the whole project and its objectives.

Superior work quality

- It allows targeted use of specialized workers mandated for a specific task - a directory of permanent employees can only cover a certain area of competence.

More flexible

- The use of services allows the division of work into smaller tasks, which give faster results allowing for earlier assessment of completed intermediate stages of the project - this allows for rapid adaptation during the project.

- Due to flexible assignment of specialists, necessary changes during the project can be made quickly.

More efficient

- The service provider is paid according to the actual effort - in the traditional employment system, some employees are sometimes paid even during periods of inactivity.

- Once defined correctly, a task can be performed multiple times according to the same pattern.

The ideal tool for scaling

Services are perfectly adapted for scaling - you need to define them precisely for a small-scale implementation, but once the work is done, transition to a large scale is very easy.

Define a work unit, with necessary services to enable it to accomplish its goals, then multiply it as many times as you want. In the following diagram, the basic unit is made up of a supervisor who is in charge of 4 technicians, each relaying the implementation of Smart-Valleys approach on five inland valleys. Supervisor and technicians are service providers, so you must create supervisor's services and technicians' services.

As the most important work is invested during the service definition, it is then easy to multiply the number of these units to simultaneously treat 10, 100 or 1000 inland valleys. It is often necessary, however, to add intermediate organizational units of management to facilitate large-scale operation.

Principle of scaling up a service:

[1]
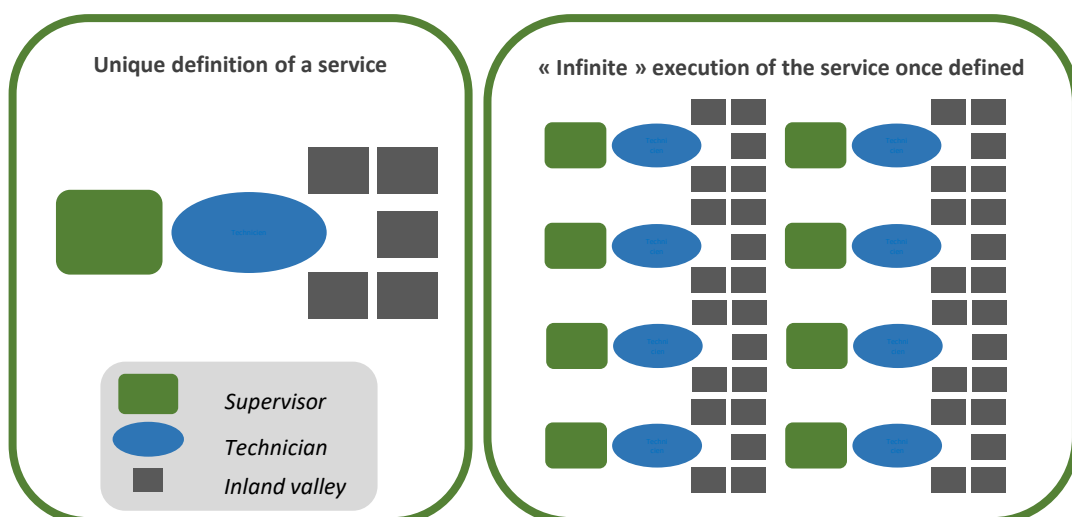
Overview of elements constituting a service

This is a descriptive list of elements constituting a service. All these elements must be defined in advance and must be shared with service providers so that they understand their role and responsibility.

Activities and instructions

- Description of the activities that must be performed by the service provider in order to complete the task.

- This includes a description of the methodology and rules that must be followed.

- These instructions must be followed rigorously.

Products to be delivered (deliverables)

- One or more product (s) which are the result of a service and must therefore be delivered by the service provider at the end of activities.

- For example: for the " inland valley identification" service, the product to be delivered is a list of suitable inland valleys for the following selection phase.

- These products are clearly defined in the service description, with a list of their qualities that will be used for verification.

- Each time this service is to be performed, the same product (or the same products) is to be delivered.

- An estimate of how long the service will take. This estimate will be used to establish an agreement with the service provider and record expected delivery date.

- The service provider is paid when (s)he delivers this product, on time and after it has been quality checked.

- Payment is made when delivered product is exactly as defined in the job description.

Service price: expenses and service fee

- Basically, the price of a service is determined by adding:

  - all necessary expenses to carry out the different tasks of the service: transport, casual work, small equipment, communications etc. These expenses can be refunded at the end or advanced at the beginning

  - service fee: the amount paid to the service provider once (s)he has completed the task and corresponding to the payment for the work performed. The service fee is determined according to the complexity of the work required (experience and level required for the service provider), and with an estimate of the workload that it represents.

- Prices are determined on the basis of local economy prices, and shared in a fully transparent manner.

It is therefore evident that this approach requires rigorous work in advance. On the other hand, once a service is properly defined, it is very easy and efficient to scale up and multiply the number of times this service is provided.

Steps in defining a service

When you define a service, follow these steps:

1. Define first the exact service objective, for example, selection of suitable inland valleys for the project.

2. Define then the specific product to be delivered, depending on the objectives of the service. In this case, it will be a list of suitable inland valleys and the criteria on the basis of which they have been selected. When you define the quality criteria for this product, you also define the verification phase of the service at the same time.

3. Then define the work steps that are necessary to achieve the desired objective. The work steps must be defined as precisely as possible. If some tasks are more complex, you will need to provide separate instructions for those tasks.

4. Estimate the time needed to complete each task and the service as a whole.

5. Define now the detailed list of necessary expenses for implementation of the service. It is always the service fee and associated expenses, which vary according to the task type: communication costs, transport etc. These costs must be based on local costs, real, and not on artificial calculations such as per diems.

6. You can finally define other details to facilitate the service implementation: a description of the required skills to be taken into account when recruiting the service provider, for example, can be very useful (it can also help in determining the service fee).

To keep the project flexible, you can adjust the service or redefine it later.

Example of an empty table to use for the definition of a service:

The "Template for the creation of a service" sheet is included in the *Smart-Valleys* toolbox. [1]

Service verification

The verification step is crucial - it ensures that the defined product has been delivered with the required quality. There are two reasons for this: on the one hand, you make sure that the service objective has been achieved, and on the other hand, you make sure that the service provider is paid on the basis of the delivery of the product, in time and of the quality agreed.

To perform the verification you will need to:

• Train one or more service providers to assess the quality of the desired product on the basis of precisely defined criteria. In your management processes, give them the necessary powers to reject a defective product and request a correction.

• Give the service provider in charge of the verification a tool with which he or she can assess the desired product. In the case of the inland valley selection service, this is a list of criteria that the selected inland valley must match.

• Please note that in the case of inland valley selection, you will also need to send supervisors to the sites to examine the selected areas.

See a checklist for the service itself (left) and a verification tool (right) :

Criteria of the exploratory phase

Lowland accessibility		
	Accessible	🟩
	Inaccessible	🟥

Area (ha)		
	At least 5 ha	🟩
	Inferior to 5 ha	🟥

Intensity of lowland development		
	High intensity	🟩
	Low intensity	🟥

Number of farmers		
	At least 7 farmers	🟩
	Less than 7 farmers	🟥

Current crops		
	Rice and other cultures	🟩
	Other cultures than rice	🟥

Floods		
	No floods	🟩
	Some parts of the zone are often flooded	🟨
	Large parts of the lowland are often flooded	🟥

Extract from the list of criteria and their values for the selection of inland valleys, which helps the technician to perform his job. [1]

A form to be filled out by the service provider in charge of verification in order to control the quality of the deliverable. [1]

Verify whether the technician has properly evaluated the data collected in the field. Verify the criteria on a case-by-case and select "yes" for assessing correctly and "no" for assessing wrongly.

Criteria of the exploratory phase

Lowland accessibility	Yes ☐ No ☐	Area (ha)	Yes ☐ No ☐
Intensity of lowland development	Yes ☐ No ☐	Number of farmers	Yes ☐ No ☐
Practiced cultures	Yes ☐ No ☐	Floods	Yes ☐ No ☐
Soil type classification	Yes ☐ No ☐	Transverse slope	Yes ☐ No ☐

Advices for managing services

Ensure the service provider's capacity

At recruitment time, you must ensure that the service provider is qualified: you must have confidence in his (or her) ability to deliver the product(s) on time and with the required quality.

However, depending on the task complexity, you may need to train the service provider to ensure that the service is performed as described.

While it is the service provider's responsibility to obtain sufficient information from you to deliver the desired product, you must also ensure that he or she has received all necessary informations. Also share with the service provider the context in which this service takes place, in order to allow him or her to make his (or her) own decisions if necessary.

Payment on product delivery

You must clearly explain to the service provider that (s)he will not be paid until he (or she) has delivered the product, within the agreed time limit, and with the quality described. If the verification shows that the product was not delivered as requested, the service provider must improve the product until it meets the specified requirements. It will only be paid after satisfactory delivery.

Example of services

Example of service description sheet :

II. Inland valley exploration

Activities

1. Transect walk through the inland valleys to assess the pedological and hydrological characteristics in order to complete the biophysical diagnosis sheet which takes into account the inland valley topo- sequence diversity.

2. Explore the inland valley, take pictures with GPS data and conduct interviews with some villagers to collect additional information on hydrology and inland valley soil type.

3. Take pictures of each inland valley which give a real impression of the situation.

Products to be delivered

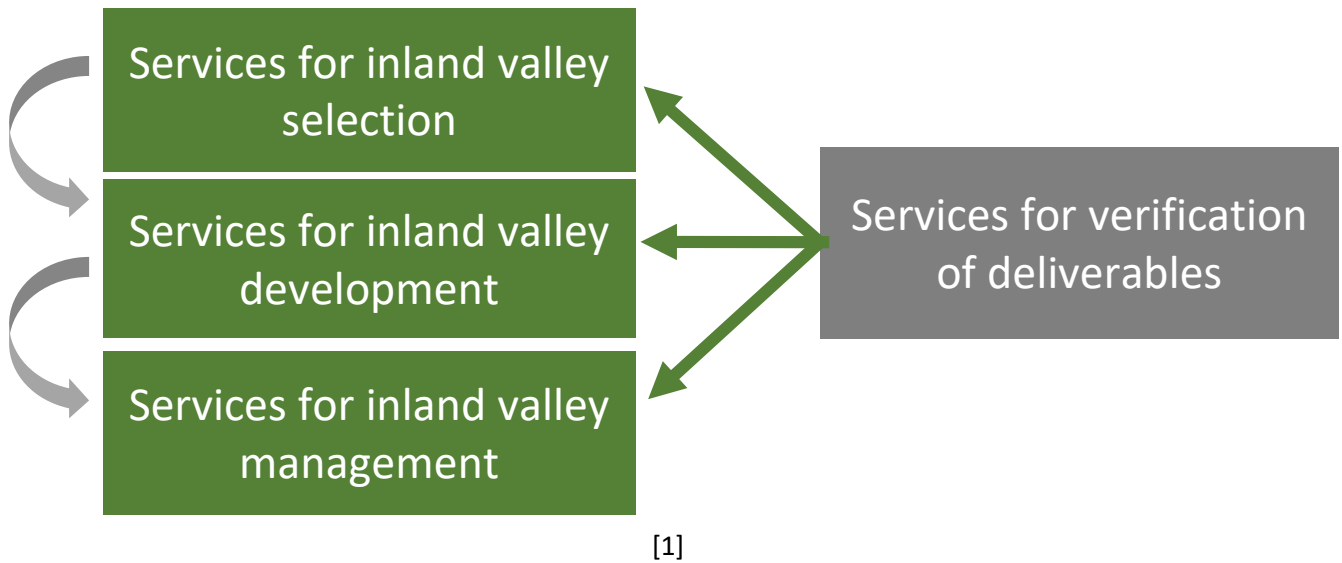| Products	Criteria of verification
Biophysical diagnosis *sheet* which takes into account the inland valley topo sequence diversity.	• The sheet must be completely filled. • The sheet must include the pedological and hydrological characteristics • The language used must be correct and understandable (grammar, spelling etc.)
Photos folder of the inland valleys	• 2 overview photos of the zone from different angles. • 1-2 photos showing the main vegetation. • 1-2 photos showing waterways. • 1-2 photos showing the soil. • Photos showing others aspects such as erosion etc.

Work tools

• Camera, hoe, notepad, diagnostic sheet and pens

Service costs

Transport costs	…
Communication costs	…
Service fee	…

[1]

An example of groups of services. Most important services of the Smart-Valleys approach:

| Services for inland valley selection |
| Services for inland valley development |
| Services for inland valley management |

Services for verification of deliverables

[1]

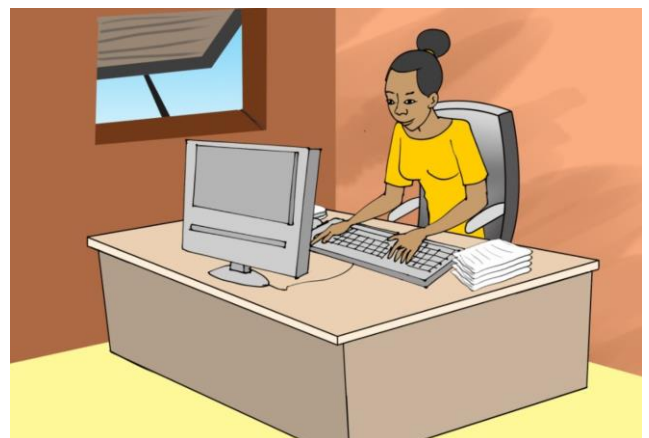*According to the need, these services can be required many times.*

Service: Identification of the inland valley [2]

Service: Exploration of the inland valley [2]

Service: Analysis of data and pre-selection of inland valley [2]

Service: Data verification [2]