

# Step 6. Identify project outputs

Focus of this chapter: Go beyond monitoring and consider how the information retrieved can be used for advocacy and lobbying. Provide practical advice on issues such as how to write a final report or use online communication tools.

Content of this chapter:

- The importance of considering CFM project output
- Outreach approaches for advocacy and building public awareness
- Using websites, social media and infographics to visualise political finance data
- Developing a final monitoring report

## Why thinking about the output of CFM is essential

Collecting data about the financial activities of political actors and potential abuse of state resources by public actors or others is very important, as we have aimed to demonstrate throughout this guide. However, gathering data cannot in itself address the goals or desired outcomes of any CFM project, nor can it reduce any campaign finance problem identified in the project methodology (see *Developing a monitoring methodology in eight steps* on *Developing a monitoring methodology in eight steps* on page 6).

For any CFM project to have the desired impact, you must disseminate the results of the monitoring. This obvious fact is unfortunately given insufficient attention in the planning of many CFM projects, which may only offer a dense final report as their output, with lots of data but that no one will read (especially if the report is published a year after the elections). In cases like this, the projects may thereby have no impact on the goals and desired outcomes.

Therefore, consider what outputs will help achieve the goals and desired outcomes that you have set (see page 9 for additional information). If, for example, you aim to secure legislative changes on campaign finance, you will most likely want to focus on outputs that may be used to persuade members of parliament and political party leaders. This may include personal briefings of parliamentary staff or committees, or the drafting of legislative amendments that political parties or members of parliament may put forward for adoption. If your main desired outcome is to raise public awareness about the importance of money in politics, using social media and perhaps partnering with influencers may be more effective in getting your message through to average voters and citizens in the country in question.

Whatever approach you use, the nature of CFM means that you are unlikely to have all the data and findings ready until after the elections. Even so, you may wish to make use of the particular attention stakeholders pay to campaign finance ahead of an election. This can be done by publishing preliminary reports or by using social media in different ways (see further below). Timing is essential, and carefully considering what outputs you want to provide at which points in time can significantly increase the impact of the project.

Appointing a spokesperson for the project can be useful to ensure that the organization speaks with “one voice” about

the project and its results. If your organization has a dedicated media or communications team they might serve in this role, otherwise you may want to appoint someone from the core team (this is not necessarily the Project Coordinator, who may already have a lot to do (see page 98 for more detail)).

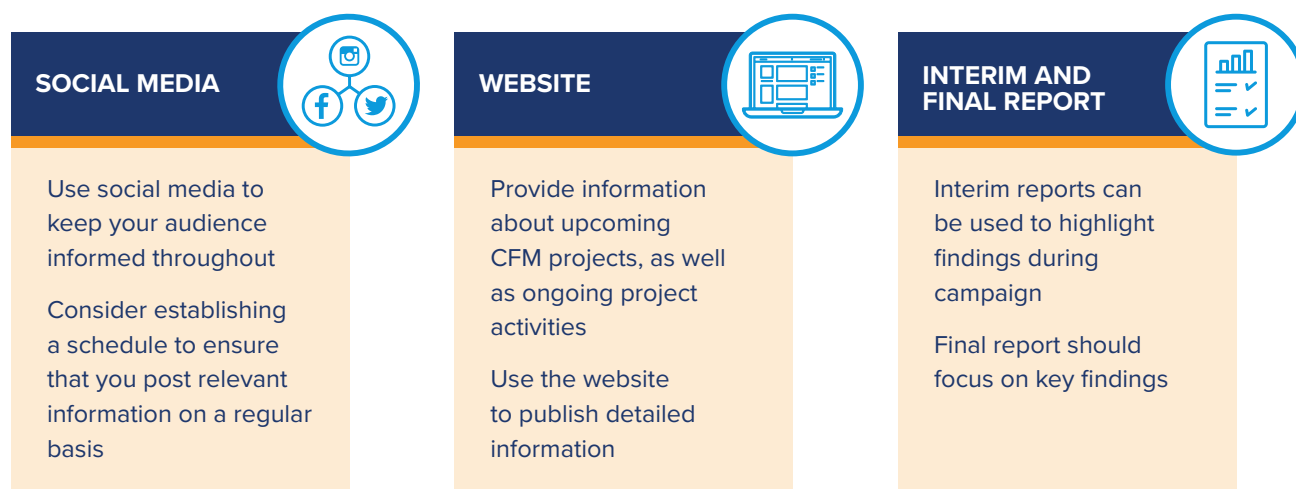


FIGURE 21. OUTPUT TOOLS TO GET YOUR MESSAGE ACROSS

## Using websites to present the campaign finance data

One approach is to produce accessible databases targeting the population at large and/or journalists interested in campaign finance who do not have the time to go through the raw information. Such databases can be useful both in cases where the regulator publishes its own database that is not easy to use, and where the political finance oversight institution does not publish the information at all. In many countries where submitted reports are public, the only way to access them is at the regulator's offices.

Table 17 below shows examples of how CSOs publish data from officially submitted financial reports, which the CSO has analyzed and presents in a more user-friendly way than the official oversight institution. CSOs also have the luxury of analyzing and presenting data in ways that could be seen as biased if done by the public oversight institution. Some groups that carry out their own monitoring of campaign finance also use their websites and similar approaches to spread information about their monitoring findings, without publishing final reports after elections. This has been the case of Transparency International Czech Republic since 2013, for example.

An interesting example of using databases, though more broadly in the field of anti-corruption, is the Integrity Watch Europe initiative by Transparency International, which gathers information from various existing databases developed by European CSOs.<sup>210</sup>

<sup>210</sup> See Transparency International (2021).

TABLE 17. WEBSITES OF CIVIL SOCIETY GROUPS ENGAGING IN CAMPAIGN FINANCE MONITORING

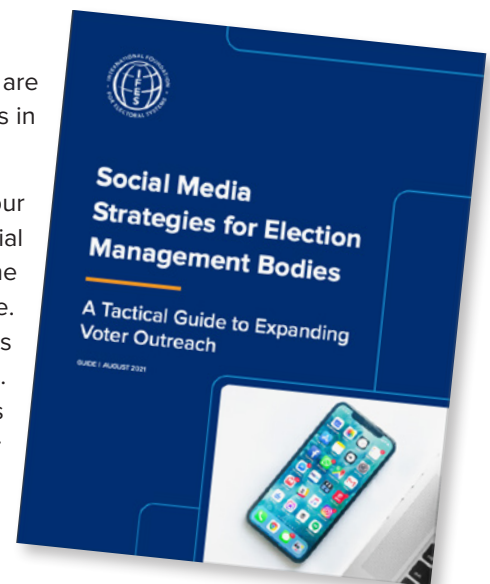
Country	Organization/ initiative	URL	Comment
<b>Czech Republic</b>	Transparency International Czech Republic	<a href="http://www.transparentnivolby.cz/">http://www.transparentnivolby.cz/</a>	In Czech
<b>Georgia</b>	Transparency Georgia	<a href="https://transparency.ge/politicaldonations">https://transparency.ge/politicaldonations</a>	In Georgian and English
<b>Hungary</b>	Transparency International Hungary	<a href="https://transparency.hu/en/kozszeaktor/valasztasok-part-es-kampanyfinanszirozasi/2014-2015-evi-orzaggyulesi-onkormanyzati-es-idokozi-valasztasok-kampanykoltesei">https://transparency.hu/en/kozszeaktor/valasztasok-part-es-kampanyfinanszirozasi/2014-2015-evi-orzaggyulesi-onkormanyzati-es-idokozi-valasztasok-kampanykoltesei</a>	In Hungarian (for 2014-2015 elections)
<b>Latvia</b>	Deputati Uzdelnas.Lv	<a href="https://deputatiuzdelnas.lv/">https://deputatiuzdelnas.lv/</a>	In Latvia, covers donations to parties
<b>Netherlands</b>	Integrity Watch Nederland	<a href="https://www.integritywatch.nl/">https://www.integritywatch.nl/</a>	In Dutch, covers donations to parties
<b>Romania</b>	Expert Forum	<a href="https://www.banipartide.ro/">https://www.banipartide.ro/</a> See also <a href="https://expertforum.ro/campanie-banipartidelor/">https://expertforum.ro/campanie-banipartidelor/</a>	In Romanian <sup>211</sup>
<b>Ukraine</b>	Chesno	<a href="https://zp.chesno.org/party-candidates-comparison/">https://zp.chesno.org/party-candidates-comparison/</a>	In Ukrainian

## Using social media

Apart from developing a final report and putting data on your website, there are many other tools that can be used to make sure that your CFM project works in favor of your determined goals and desired outcomes.

This includes using social media accounts to spread information about your project, findings and recommendations. The most effective approach and social media platforms to focus on depends on what is most commonly used by the target audience in the country in question, and it is likely to vary over time. Sometimes, even a sentence is sufficient to make a point and raise people's interest. On other occasions, you may think about visual or video presentations. Naturally, if the information you present relates to particularly sensitive issues such as abuse of state resources, take special steps to consider how your reporting could be misunderstood or misinterpreted.

The IFES 2021 tactical guide for the use of social media for Election Management Bodies (pictured above) offers ample inspiration regarding the use of social media.<sup>212</sup>

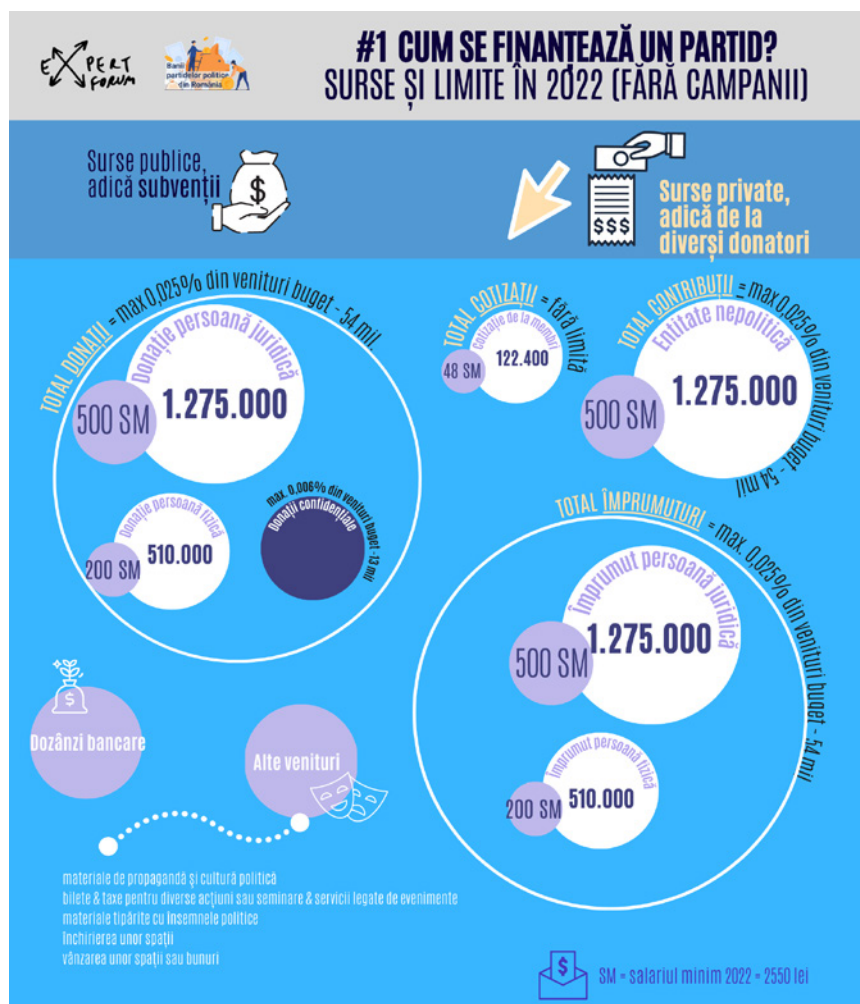


<sup>211</sup> The data presentation and analysis presented can be compared to the official site for financial reports at <https://finantarepartide.ro/>

<sup>212</sup> IFES (2021b).

Consider using varying approaches such as webinars, infographics, blogs and vlogs, considering what is the most effective medium for different target audiences. Figure 22 below shows an example of an infographic used by the CSO Expert Forum in Romania.<sup>213</sup>

FIGURE 22. EXAMPLE OF CAMPAIGN FINANCE INFOGRAPHIC



Also consider that while social media is increasingly used by many people (above all by youth) in many contexts and countries, some of the people you wish to reach may be less active on social media. You can identify the most important approaches to use by considering your desired outcomes and, related to this, your target audience. If you find that your target audience may not be receptive to social media outreach, consider how you can use traditional media or other tools to engage with these audiences.

## Developing a final report

There are many different possible outputs from a CFM project, and we encourage you to be innovative in thinking how you can use the data collected to achieve your desired outcomes and assist in reaching your goals. Producing a final report outlining the methodology, findings and recommendations from your project is a classic approach, but no less valuable, if done right. It also provides material that can be excerpted and used in diverse ways (e.g., on social media, or for targeted reports or presentations to stakeholders).

<sup>213</sup> This infographic was developed by Expert Forum in Romania, and is reproduced with kind permission. It can be found on <https://expertforum.ro/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/baniiipartidelor1a.png>.

Some things to remember when producing a final report:

- *Start planning the report while you are planning the project.* In many CFM projects the report almost seems like an afterthought. That is not necessary, and it often leads to an inferior result and a lesser chance of you reaching your goals. While you cannot know in advance what the findings of the report will be, you will know what issues you want to address in the monitoring. Create an outline of the report in advance, and make sure that during the monitoring you are collecting data that will inform your writing of the different sections. An outline example is included in Table 18.
- *Decide on a person in charge of developing the report.* This person does not necessarily have to write the entire text – rather, their main task should be to ensure that all sections are written and on time. The person in charge is often the Project Coordinator, but this need not be the case. While that person will be intimately familiar with the project and its findings, the Project Coordinator may have a lot to do both during and after the monitoring.
- *Emphasize your most important findings.* In too many CFM project final reports the main findings are deeply hidden in a mass of more or less valuable information. Use the goals and desired outcomes you have determined to guide you in what information should be included in the report, and which findings you should emphasize.<sup>214</sup>
- *Include an Executive Summary.* Few people will read a full CFM report, so if you do not include an Executive Summary where you include the main activities, findings and recommendations, there is a significant risk that you will not get through to the people you wish to reach.<sup>215</sup>
- *Provide information about your methodology, but do not let this take over the report.* The credibility of your project and its findings are well-served if you are clear in the final report about your methodology. However, some CFM project reports start with their methodology and make readers go through page after page before they get to any information about the project findings. To avoid this, consider putting the methodology section towards the end of the report or even as an appendix (see Table 18 for an idea). You may also decide to put the bulk of the details about your methodology on your website, and then offer a shorter summary followed by a link to where this information is located in the actual report.

**TABLE 18. EXAMPLE OF FINAL REPORT OUTLINE**

No	Section	Comment
1	Executive Summary	Many readers will only read this text - it should not be more than 2 pages and should include key findings
2	Recommendations	The recommendations would here be listed in summary format (bullet points). Those who want to know more about why you are making these recommendations are referred to sections 4-6. Depending on the situation, it may also be useful to categorize recommendations depending on recipients, and/or on short or long-term recommendations
3	Introduction	A quick introduction to the issue of campaign finance and why it is important. Briefly about the project and the delimitations made – for more details, refer to section 8.
4	Findings from monitoring of campaign spending (if this is carried out)	A presentation of the work done in this field and the findings, as well as the related recommendations (explicitly linked to the findings)

<sup>214</sup> If you are writing about abuse of state resources, see the section *Criteria for judging when abuse has occurred* starting on page 61.

<sup>215</sup> If the report is very long, it may also be valuable to have a brief summary at the beginning of each chapter.

No	Section	Comment
5	Findings from monitoring of abuse of state resources (if this is carried out)	A presentation of the work done in this field and the findings, as well as the related recommendations (explicitly linked to the findings)
6	Findings from monitoring of vote buying (if this is carried out)	A presentation of the work done in this field and the findings, as well as the related recommendations (explicitly linked to the findings)
7	Conclusions	In this section, the recommendations are put in context; related to the findings
8	Methodology	This could be an appendix; it should include key data such as the number of monitors and number of observations (submitted Checklists).

One question that is often asked is how long the final CFM report should be. There is no right answer to that question; it depends on your determined goals and desired outcomes, as well as on your monitoring and findings.<sup>216</sup> Consider the stakeholders that the CFM project focuses on – busy legislators may want quick digestible facts while media may look for quotes and infographics. Academics on the other hand are more likely to look for detailed and well referenced data.

<sup>216</sup> A review of 22 final reports from past CFM projects showed that they ranged from 20 to 220 pages.