

**An Introduction to
Learning by Monitoring**

An Integrated
System
for Enhancing
Workplace
Partnership
in the Health
and Local
Authority Sectors

User Guidelines

The National Centre for Partnership and Performance was established by the Government in June 2001 to support and facilitate change through partnership in the Irish workplace.

The NCPP's mission is to:

- *support and facilitate Irish organisations in the private and public sectors, to respond to change and to build capability through partnership*
- *bring about improved performance and mutual gains*
- *contribute to national competitiveness, better public services, higher living standards and a better quality of work life*
- *develop a vision for the workplace of the future.*

Contents

1. Introduction	1
1.1 Welcome	1
1.2 The benefits of Learning by Monitoring	2
2. The Learning by Monitoring process	3
2.1 Introduction	3
2.2 Overview of the Learning by Monitoring process	4
2.3 Step-by-Step through Learning by Monitoring	5
– Registration	5
– Process I – self-evaluation	6
– Process II – review & planning	8
– Process III – implementation and monitoring	9
The transition to second-generation partnership	10
2.4 The technology of LBM	11
3. The starting point for Learning by Monitoring	12

1. Introduction

1.1 Welcome

Welcome to Learning by Monitoring (LBM), an exciting innovation for partnership organisations in the Health and Local Authority sectors. LBM is supported by the National Centre for Partnership and Performance (NCPP), the Health Services National Partnership Forum (HSNPF), and the Local Authority National Partnership Advisory Group (LANPAG).

Learning by Monitoring provides practical tools and resources that support organisations in developing partnership into something that is an integral part of the way the organisation does business, rather than just something that the organisation 'does'.

This evolution of partnership represents a substantial challenge for organisations, and is sometimes referred to as the move from first-generation to second-generation partnership. The motivation for the development of Learning by Monitoring lies in the need to create a suitable framework for this to take place in.

The current version of Learning by Monitoring is a prototype which will involve a pilot phase of six months duration during which monitoring and evaluation of the tool will take place. Plans are in place to publish Learning by Monitoring Version II once the pilot phase is completed towards the end of 2003.

Documentation

This document is the first of two in the Learning by Monitoring series. It describes the Learning by Monitoring system, highlighting the benefits of using it within an organisation and offering guidelines for its use. The second document in the series, the *Learning by Monitoring Self-Evaluation Questionnaire*, contains a copy of the paper-based questionnaire and instructions.

As organisations begin to use Learning by Monitoring, real-life examples of the application of LBM tools and resources will be published. These examples, as well as a full range of support documentation, training materials and technical support will become available to organisations following registration as a Learning by Monitoring user.

1.2 The benefits of Learning by Monitoring

Learning by Monitoring is a framework which provides tools and resources that can help organisations to make improvements through the enhancement of workplace partnership. Outlined below are the benefits of Learning by Monitoring.

Performance feedback

The provision of reliable information about the performance and impact of partnership in the organisation is one of the key features of the Learning by Monitoring tool. Learning by Monitoring allows organisations to conduct systematic evaluations of partnership in the workplace.

Stakeholder consultation

When it comes to organisational change, the partnership approach increasingly recognises the importance of consulting with stakeholders as widely as possible. Learning by Monitoring technology will allow partnership groups to consult stakeholders through the use of custom designed surveys. These surveys can be used to incorporate viewpoints of internal and external stakeholders about any aspect of service provision. Examples include employee surveys, customer satisfaction surveys and patient satisfaction surveys.

Action planning

Another important feature of organisational change is the ability to develop action plans that are focussed on key priorities for the organisation. Learning by Monitoring provides a framework whereby self-evaluation data inform the development of strategic action plans for partnership.

Project management

The capacity to effectively track initiatives or projects that arise out of action planning is central to the work of partnership groups, particularly in the Health and Local Authority sectors, where complex organisational structures are commonplace. Learning by Monitoring offers partnership groups a facility to do just that, using web-based technology to facilitate more effective communications and project management.

Shared learning

Partnership groups find that accessing relevant examples of good practice in other organisations can be quite a complex process. Using learning networks supported by a web-based database of good practice, Learning by Monitoring provides a framework for more effective shared learning within and across sectors. This framework has the capacity to eventually facilitate trans-national shared learning.

2. The Learning by Monitoring process

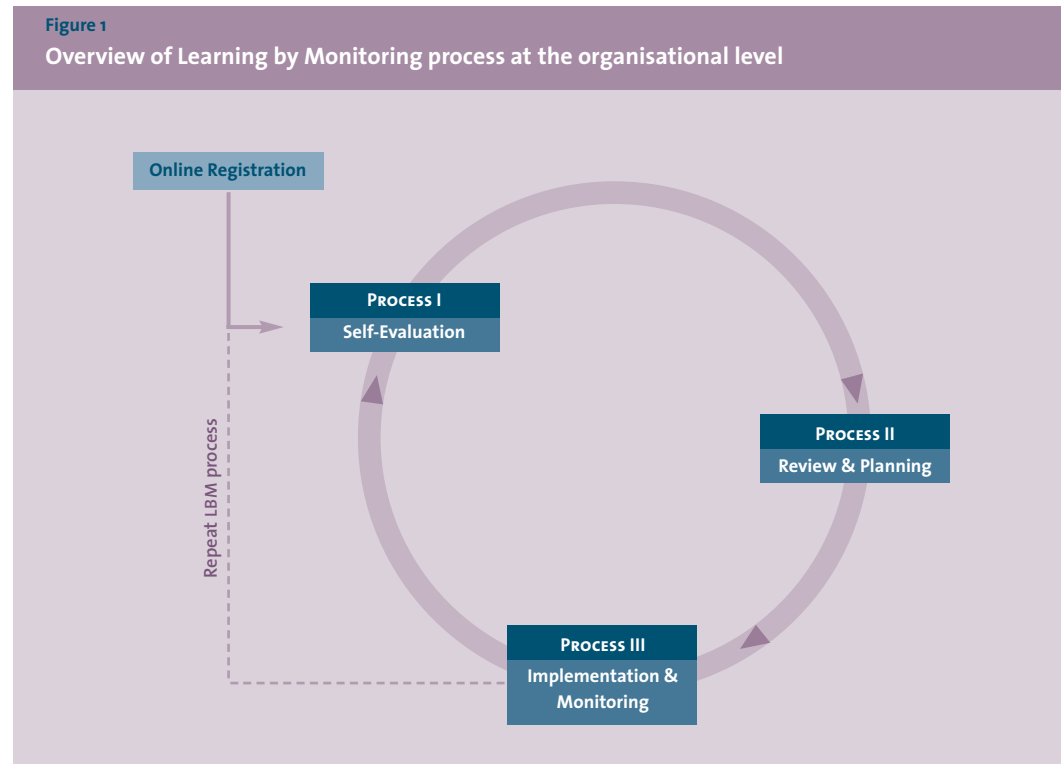
2.1 Introduction

This section presents an overview of the Learning by Monitoring model and offers a step-by-step account of how organisations should proceed through the process. Before looking at the detail of Learning by Monitoring, let's look at some basic considerations:

- The framework outlined in this document represents the pilot phase of Learning by Monitoring. An integral feature of this pilot phase is that the framework will be monitored and adapted over the coming months through the analysis of feedback received from users. It is envisaged that the ongoing redevelopment of Learning by Monitoring will lead to the construction of LBM Version II in late 2003. This will be a highly functional model of the tool that is of practical value to those involved in partnership in the public sector. At this stage the range of organisations using LBM will be extended beyond those in the Health and Local Authority Sectors.

Additionally, the tool itself makes use of information that is inputted by users of the system. Its capacity to generate learning examples for users will improve as data is inputted using one of two facilities:

- online submission of responses to the questionnaire
- online submission of examples of good practice.

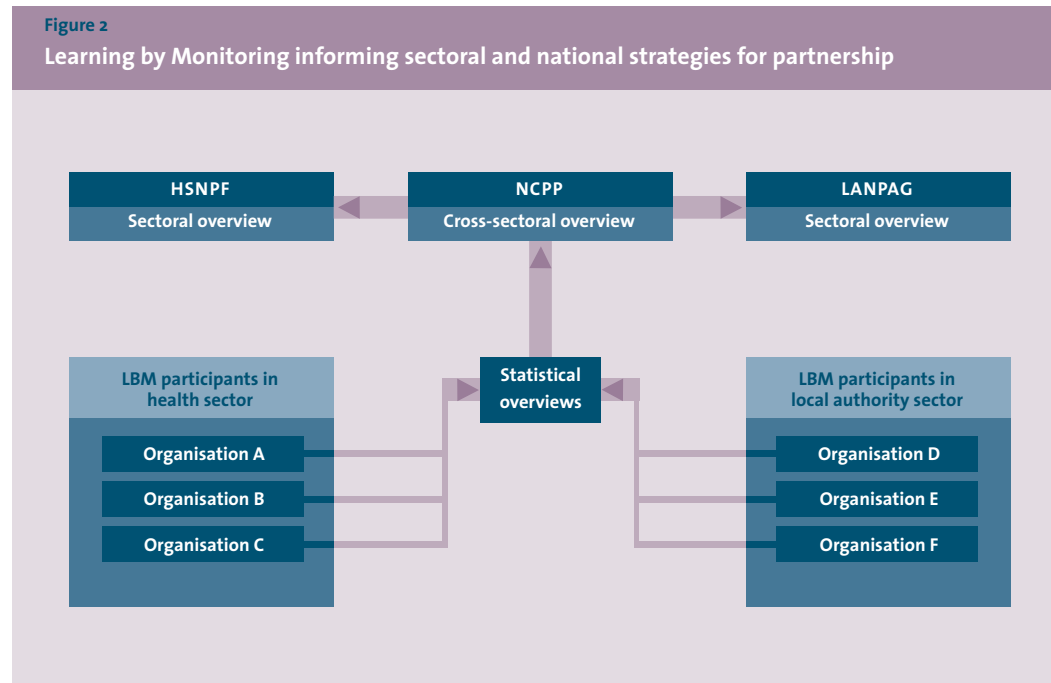


- Learning by Monitoring is a people-driven process that is supported by the use of information and communication technology. The success of Learning by Monitoring rests with the people and organisations who are prepared to experiment with the system as a means of improving the quality and rate of organisational change through partnership.
- Learning by Monitoring recognises the significant expertise and know-how within Health and Local Authority sector organisations, and aims to empower these organisations to identify appropriate ways forward for themselves.

2.2 Overview of the Learning by Monitoring process

Learning by Monitoring combines three processes, as Figure 1 (see previous page) illustrates, in a way that allows organisations to improve their capacity to change through partnership. The three processes draw on disciplines that many partnership groups are already familiar with, such as action learning, change management, project management and knowledge management.

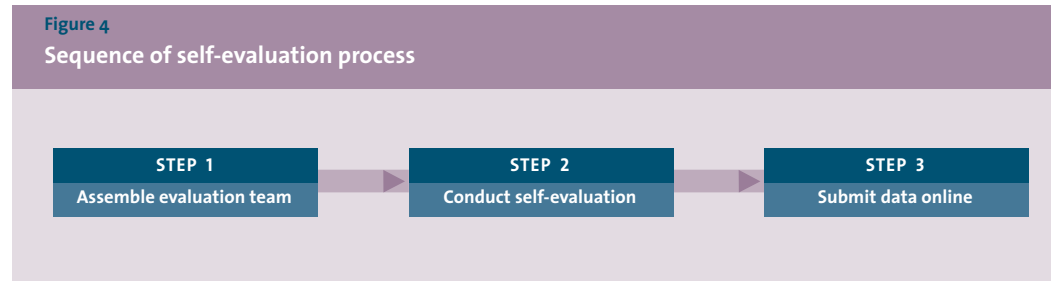
In addition, as Figure 2 illustrates, the cumulative effect of Learning by Monitoring will provide statistical information to NCPP, LANPAG and HSNPF so that information can be generated regarding emerging trends at sectoral and national levels.



Process I – self-evaluation

When an organisation has registered, it will then be required to go through the LBM self-evaluation process. This is described in more detail in *Document II – The Learning by Monitoring Self-Evaluation Questionnaire*. Here we summarise the process, which is illustrated in Figure 4.

The process is centred around the completion of a self-evaluation questionnaire, which is structured in three sections, each with a number of sub-section headings, as described in Figure 5. The questionnaire generates data that reflects the views and opinions of the evaluation team on the strengths and challenges for partnership in the organisation, and it is recommended that the evaluation team consists of a cross-section of stakeholders in the organisation.



The self-evaluation process, which can be completed in a number of ways, is designed to generate interaction and debate among the evaluation team, and prioritises the learning that can take place through such a process, rather than the generation of scores. In all cases, the process is co-ordinated by an evaluation team leader, who submits the data from the questionnaire to the LBM website. Once the data has been submitted, the LBM website then sends a feedback report to the organisation. It is this feedback report that forms the basis for Process II – the action planning process.

The data will remain confidential to the specific organisation conducting the self-evaluation exercise. However, all organisations will be asked to contribute to the database of good practice, with a particular emphasis on those areas in which they score themselves highly. The work of the evaluation team leader will be supported by the NCPP, through the implementation of a training plan for LBM, as well as the development of learning materials.

Figure 5
Map of the Self-Evaluation Questionnaire

Learning by Monitoring
Organisational Self-Evaluation

MODULE 1

Foundations of Partnership

- A The Partnership Agreement
- B The Partnership Agenda
- C The Partners

MODULE 2

The Partnership Process

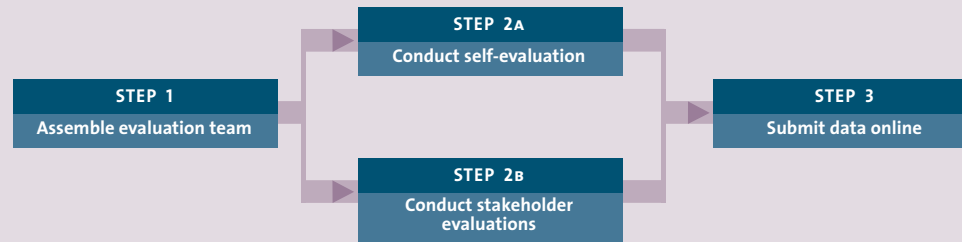
- A Communications
- B Working Relationships
- C Leadership
- D Partnership in the Organisation
- E Managing Partnership

MODULE 3

The Outcomes

- A Employee Outcomes
- B Organisational Outcomes

Figure 6
Role of stakeholder surveys in LBM model



The LBM self-evaluation questionnaire is structured in three sections, each section representing a broad theme that is central to the development of partnership in the organisation. These three sections are further divided into ten subsections, each of which represents a more specific element of good partnership practice. This is illustrated in Figure 5 left.

Enhancing the Evaluation Process

The self-evaluation questionnaire is the starting point for an evaluation of partnership and organisational change. Learning by Monitoring offers

organisations an additional facility, as illustrated in Figure 6 above, with which partnership groups may conduct other surveys of stakeholders.

While this is not a core part of the initial Learning by Monitoring model, it is a facility that should be of increasing relevance and interest to partnership groups. It enables an organisation to become better informed of stakeholder views. For example, it will enable surveys of employees in the organisation, or of patient or customer satisfaction.

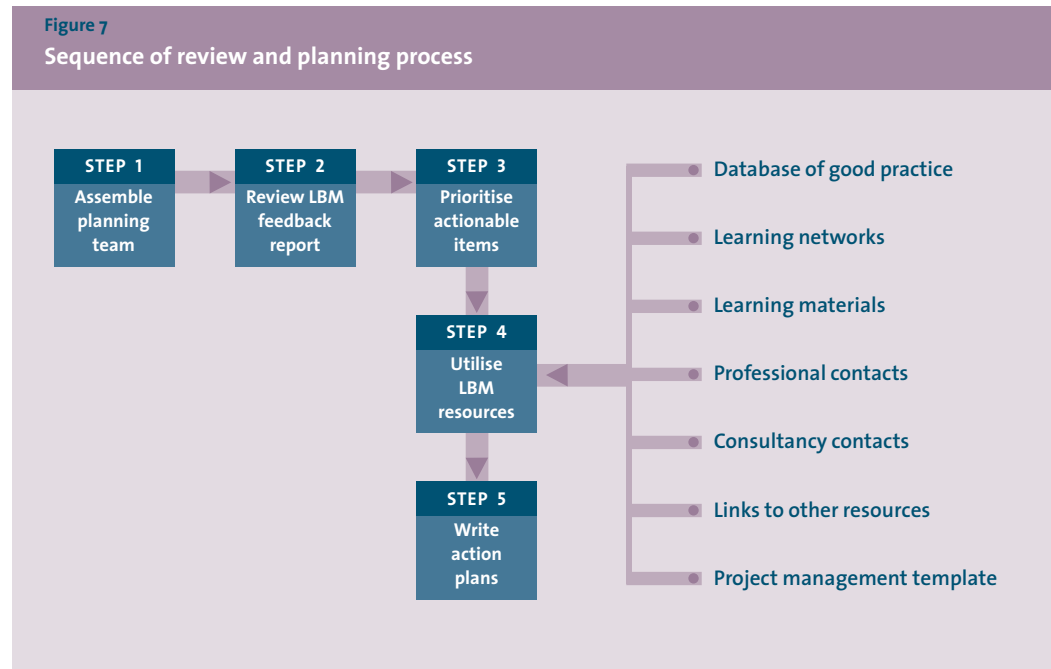
Process II – review & planning

Figure 7 opposite illustrates the steps involved in the Review and Planning process. Once the self-evaluation data is complete, a feedback report is returned to the organisation. A planning team then reviews the report and makes decisions about issues that are identified as priorities for the organisation and the partnership group.

Once these priorities have been identified, the planning group can avail of a range of online resources that will assist in the development of appropriate action plans, including:

- database of good practice
- learning networks
- learning materials
- useful contacts and links
- Action plan templates

The planning team should develop the action plans so as to address issues of strategic importance that emerge through the self-evaluation process. Each action plan should contain Key Performance indicators, which will be essential to Process III - Implementation and Monitoring.

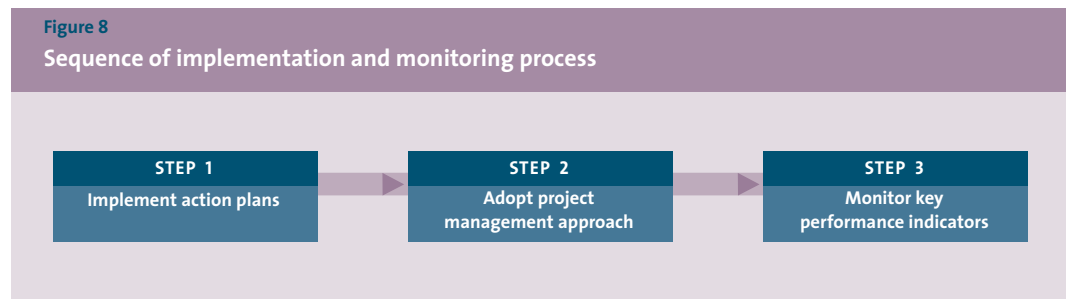


Process III – implementation and monitoring

Once Action Plans have been drawn up, the challenge for organisations is to implement these plans successfully.

Learning by Monitoring assists in the management of Action Plan implementation. A partnership group can securely post their action plans onto the LBM web server. These can be viewed by anyone within the organisation who has been given authorisation and a password to do so. Plans can be subsequently updated as required and progress indicators can show how the implementation of the plan is progressing.

These facilities will enable more effective communication between project / working group members and provide a basic project management facility to those engaged in the development of partnership in the organisation.



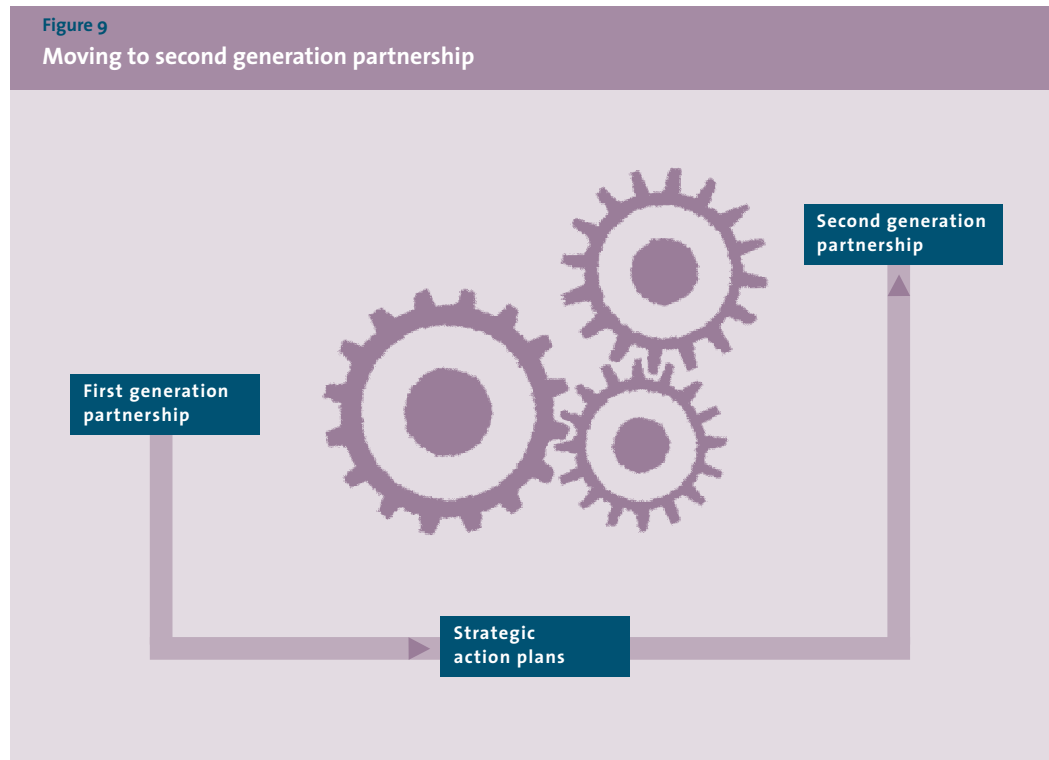
The transition to second-generation partnership

The Learning by Monitoring process is designed to provide organisations with an informed base from which to lever the move from first-generation to second-generation partnership. This evolution of partnership requires organisations not to simply improve the quality of what they do through partnership, but to deliberately ‘shift the goalposts’ for partnership – making it the core way in which the organisation operates, rather than simply something that the organisation does.

The three stages of Learning by Monitoring are designed so that this repositioning can be mapped out by the organisation based on key considerations.

The identification of key performance indicators during the action planning process serves two important functions. Firstly it enables the effective management of action plan implementation; secondly it assists in this repositioning effort.

In this sense, Learning by Monitoring relies not on static metrics from a self-evaluation process, but rather on a developmental process that seeks to shift the agenda for partnership upwards (see Figure 9). In other words, the data being generated place an upward pressure for partnership to evolve by influencing the strategic decisions being made (the Action Plans), which in turn become the basis for self-evaluation in the next round of Learning by Monitoring.

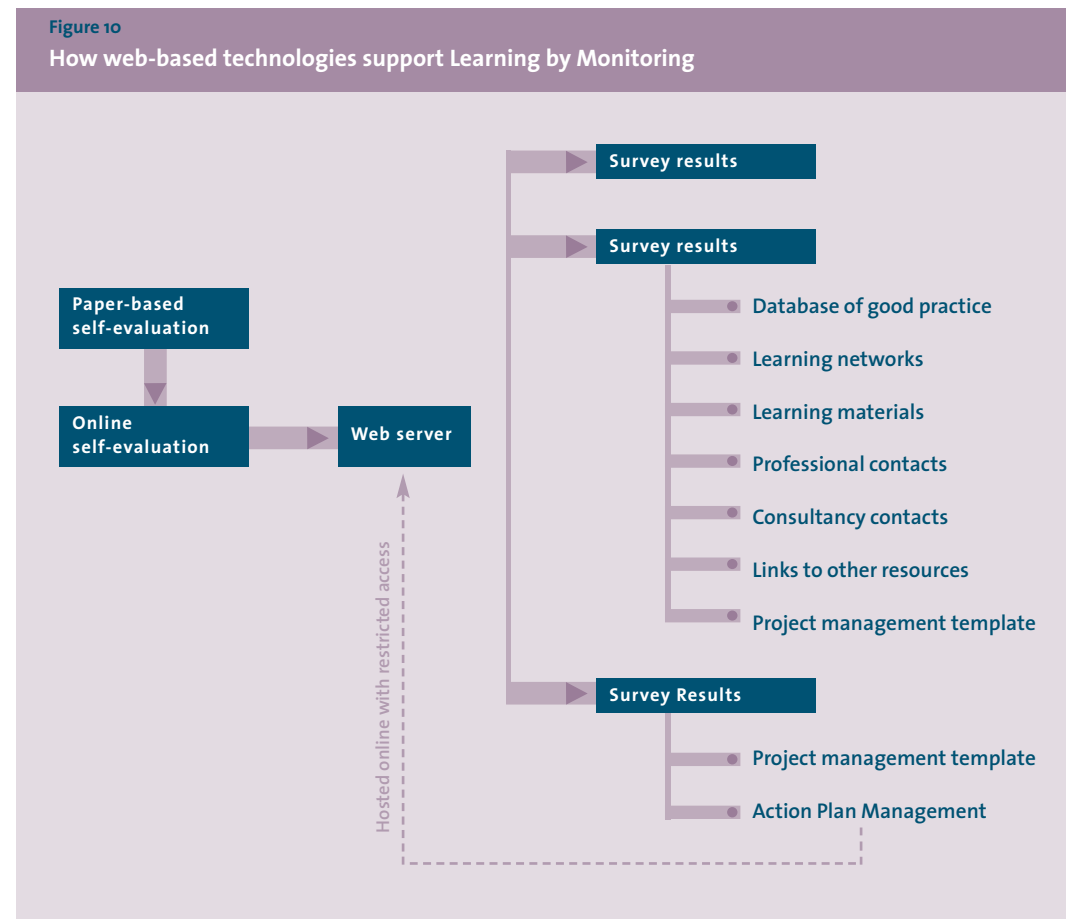


2.4 The technology of LBM

Learning by Monitoring makes extensive use of web-based technology, as illustrated opposite in Figure 10.

However, the model is sufficiently flexible to allow participation using minimal technology. Limited access to the internet is required in order to:

- download and print the relevant documentation
- submit relevant data to the LBM website (for example, responses to the questionnaire)
- retrieve the evaluation report
- utilise online resources provided on the website (for example, the database of good practice).



3. The starting point for Learning by Monitoring

The release of this Learning by Monitoring prototype represents the starting point for a process that will engage many organisations over the coming months. This engagement will be supported by the involvement of the NCPP, HSNPF and LANPAG. It is hoped that the Learning by Monitoring process will make a significant input into the efforts of these organisations to mainstream partnership.

Importantly, it is also hoped that each of the participating organisations will have a significant input into the improvement of Learning by Monitoring. Each participating organisation will be asked to complete an evaluation of LBM itself – both the LBM self-evaluation questionnaire and the wider process. This feedback will be centrally informative in the development of LBM Version II, the release of which is planned following the completion of the pilot phase in late 2003. Over the course of the pilot phase, the LBM website will be regularly updated to keep participating organisations informed of examples of LBM in operation.

The benefits of using Learning by Monitoring will increase exponentially in the medium term. The inclusion of examples in the online database of good practice will provide ample learning opportunities for organisations engaged in partnership. Ongoing evaluation and subsequent redevelopment of the tool itself will increase its usefulness to stakeholders in the partnership arena. It will also encourage the development of original and innovative approaches to achieving organisational change through partnership. Learning by Monitoring process will also seek to dovetail with other change initiatives that are being implemented throughout the Health and Local Authority sectors.

In the meantime, much can be accomplished using Learning by Monitoring. We at the NCPP welcome any comments or feedback from organisations engaged in the pilot phase, or interested in becoming involved at a later stage. We can be contacted via www.ncpp.ie, or at the following address:

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