Guide to initiating an antimicrobial stewardship program (ASP)

Target audience

This guide is intended for hospitals that have established few or no antimicrobial stewardship activities to date. It enables them to initiate antimicrobial stewardship activities and paves the way for implementing a more comprehensive antimicrobial stewardship program (ASP).

A six-step approach to the first antimicrobial stewardship activity

With this guide, we propose six steps to initiate a first antimicrobial stewardship activity:

Step 1: Identify a local priority and draft an outline of the first ASP activity

Step 2: Request approval from the hospital management for the first ASP activity

Step 3: Set up the ASP team

Step 4: Develop a project plan for the first ASP activity

Step 5: Implement the first ASP activity

Step 6: Evaluate the first ASP activity and define its continuation

Ready to establish an antimicrobial stewardship program?

If you have already carried out some activities and set up an ASP team, you can aim to establish a program (www.antimicrobialstewardship.ch).

Authorship

J. Bielicki, P. Eggimann, A. Egli, L. Elzi, D. Halbeisen, P. Jent, V. Jordan, A. Kronenberg, S. Kuster, L. Müller, C. Pluess-Suard, C. Quinto, L. Senn, S. Tschudin-Sutter and W. Zingg as members of the StAR-3 steering group, and M. Eder, P. Jent and V. Vouets as members of the StAR-3 project team

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Contact

contact@guidelines.ch

Step 1: Identify a local priority and draft an outline of the first ASP activity

Conduct exploratory interviews	Specify the goal and purpose of the exploratory interviews on local antimicrobial stewardship activities. Identify your interviewees from the fields of hospital pharmacy, infection prevention and control (IPC), clinical medicine, microbiology and quality management. Prepare questions on antimicrobial stewardship in an interview guide. Keep the guide short. Ask for the interviewee's views on the local situation regarding antimicrobial stewardship activities, antimicrobial use, guidelines, prescribing practices, and patient safety issues related to antibiotics. Ask them to name the main problems and underlying causes. Discuss with the interviewee what could be done as a first ASP activity and what he or she could contribute to it.
Collect and analyse existing data	Collect and analyse existing data on inpatient antimicrobial use across different departments (for example, based on ANRESIS) as well as other data, such as *C. difficile* infection rates and CIRS reports related to antibiotics. Review guidelines for accessibility, user-friendliness and up-to-dateness.
Identify main local problems	Based on the exploratory interviews and the existing data, identify the main local problems and discuss your conclusions with the interviewees. Jointly select the main problem and draft an outline for the first ASP activity. Find ideas for the first ASP activity in **Annex 1.** Estimate the approximate volume of resources (staff, time, finances) needed to conduct the first ASP activity. Identify the expected benefits, for example, reducing the use of broad-spectrum antimicrobials, improving patient safety, reducing the length of stay, and financial savings.
Finalise the outline	Adapt the outline of the first ASP activity accordingly.
Your output	Outline of the first ASP activity

Step 2: Request approval from the hospital management for the first ASP activity

Meet the hospital management	Inform the hospital management about the risks associated with the development of resistance. Also explain how antimicrobial stewardship programs (ASP) can help to minimise these risks. See Annex 2 for a template presentation. Present the outline of the first ASP activity. Describe the problems identified, the proposed measures, the resources needed, and the expected benefits. Explain how the ASP team will conduct this first activity. Discuss how the outline of the first ASP activity can be adapted to get the support of the hospital management.
Finalise the proposal	Adapt the outline of the first ASP activity according to the discussion above. If necessary, hold additional meetings with the hospital management and/or other committees.
Your output	Approval of the first ASP activity

Step 3: Set up the ASP team

Assemble the ASP team	Assemble an interprofessional team of 3 to 5 senior staff members covering the relevant fields of expertise (in particular, IPC specialist, physician with experience in infectious diseases or internal medicine, hospital pharmacist, and microbiologist). Consider involving the quality management and liaison staff from other relevant departments (IT, general medicine, and surgery). Make sure to involve motivated and solution-oriented people.
Designate a team lead	Designate one or two staff members to provide technical and operational leadership to this first ASP team.
ASP team kick-off meeting	Define each team member's role in the first ASP activity and their contributions to steering, planning, implementation, and monitoring.
Your output	Established ASP team

Step 4: Develop a project plan for the first ASP activity

Planning meetings of the ASP team	Based on the project outline, now develop a project plan for the first ASP activity. Establish a logical model (see Annex 3). First, define what the ASP team wants to achieve in the hospital. Focus on changes to be achieved within the target group (outcomes). Then develop the activities (outputs) that benefit the target group (e.g., workshops, implementation aids, training). Examine the assumptions on which your logical model is based and identify the factors that are crucial for achieving the results, e.g., sufficient participation or good feasibility in clinical routine. Identify the project risks and adjust your logical model accordingly. Finally, define work packages, estimate the costs and time needed, and define milestones and a timeline. For medium-sized and smaller hospitals: consider which resources can or should be provided externally, e.g., through collaboration with a regional hospital or hospital network.
Meet the hospital management	Present the project plan for the first ASP activity and discuss how it can be improved to gain support from the hospital management.
Finalise the project plan	Adjust the project plan for the first ASP activity according to the discussion with the hospital management. If necessary, hold additional meetings with the hospital management and/or other committees.
Your output	Approval of the project plan for the first ASP activity

Step 5: Implement the first ASP activity

Inform staff involved in the implementation	Present the project plan for the first ASP activity and discuss it with staff members of the relevant departments. Explain how the first ASP activity may affect their daily work. Make it clear what contribution is expected from the staff. Allow sufficient time for discussions. If necessary, adjust your project plan.
Implement and monitor progress **Progress meetings of the ASP team**	Conduct the first ASP activity according to the project plan. Within the ASP team, regularly discuss progress and challenges around the implementation. Understand concerns and obstacles as learning opportunities: look for appropriate solutions that align with the first ASP activity's purpose and objectives.
Reporting and information	Report regularly to both the hospital management and the heads of the departments concerned. Also inform the staff of the departments concerned.
Your output	A completed first ASP activity

Step 6: Evaluate the first ASP activity and define the continuation

Draft a report	Describe the implementation process (including challenges), the short- and medium-term results (outputs, outcomes), and possible long-term results (for example, reduction of medical complications, cost savings). Summarize the results of the first ASP activity in a written report.
Meetings of the ASP team	Discuss the report with the ASP team and recommend potential next steps. Finalise the report.
Meet the hospital management	Present the report and the plan for the continuation of the ASP activity. Discuss how the plan can be adapted to get the support of the hospital management.
Finalise the plan for the continuation of the ASP activity	Adjust the plan for the continuation of the ASP activity according to the discussion above. If necessary, hold additional meetings with the hospital management and/or other committees.
Your output	Agreement on the continuation of the first ASP activity

Annex 1: Ideas for the first ASP activity

Get inspired by the following list of ideas:

- Connect the hospital to the ANRESIS platform to monitor antimicrobial use.
- Regularly analyse local antimicrobial use and report the results to the prescribers (including recommendations for improving antibiotic use).
- Improve access to local epidemiological data on antimicrobial resistance and promote the use of these data.
- Improve access to existing local guidelines for antimicrobial therapy and promote their use.
- Audit antimicrobial treatment prescriptions based on a random sample of health records (e.g., 20 records).
- Organize a continuing education session on antibiotic prescribing.
- Organize antimicrobial stewardship (antibiotic) ward rounds with direct feedback to prescribers.
- Improve patient records/prescription charts so that all information about prescribed antimicrobials is available in one place.

Annex 2: Template for the ASP presentation

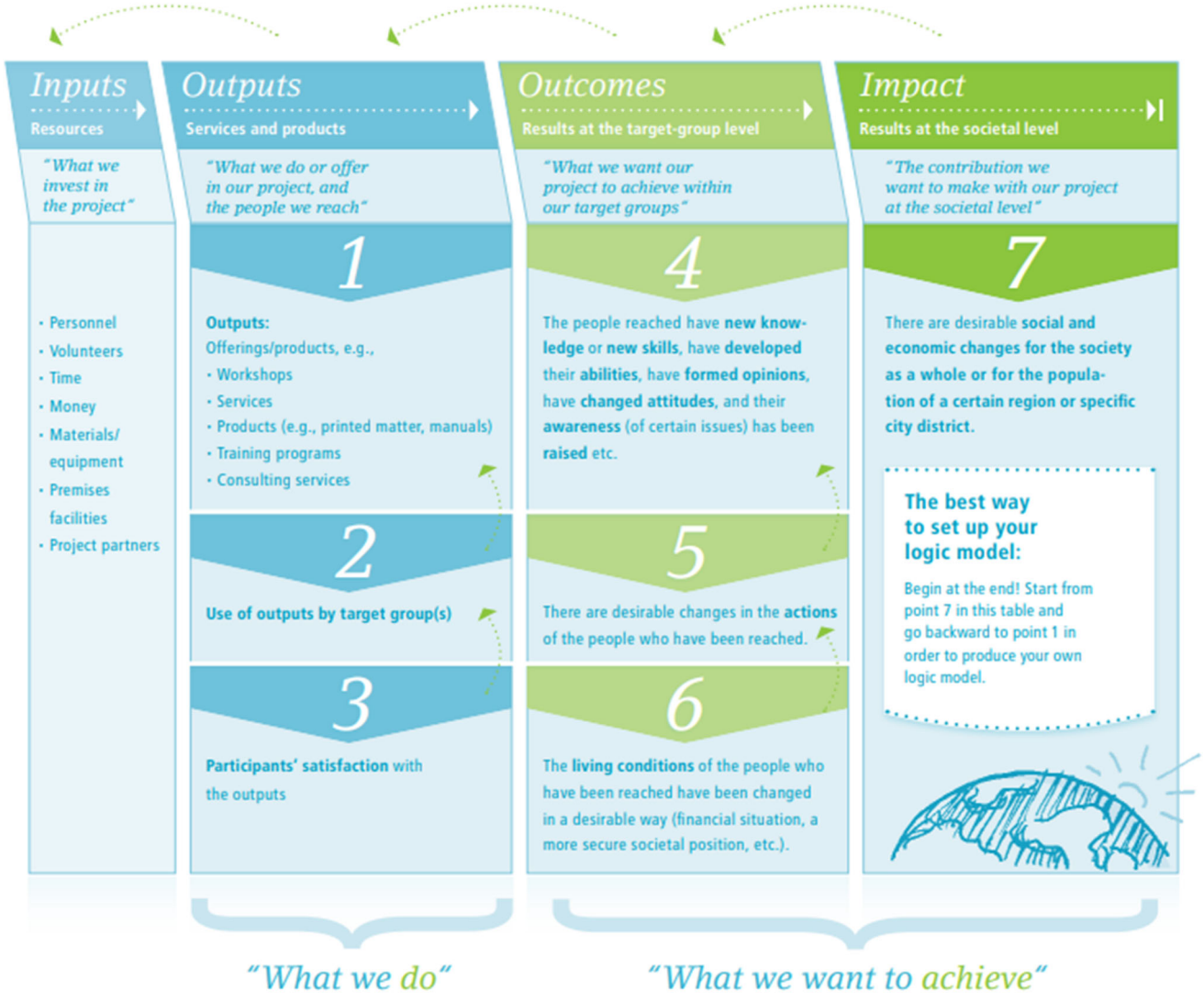
The template is available at www.antimicrobialstewardship.ch under "Governance and Strategy".

The template supports the ASP team in preparing a presentation for the meetings with the hospital management and the relevant committees at which approval for the first antimicrobial stewardship activity is requested.

The slide set contains slides on the risks of antimicrobial resistance for hospitals and for patients, and on the contribution of antimicrobial stewardship programs (ASP) to combating it. For the local problems and the project outline, it contains only slides to be completed with the content prepared by the ASP team.

Annex 3: Logical model

A logical model describes how change is theoretically expected to occur. It shows how the resources invested (inputs) and the services delivered (outputs) are logically linked to the effects (outcomes and impact), and it focuses on causal relationships. A clear understanding of the logical model of your first ASP activity is crucial.



The guidebook on the logical model is available in a German and an English edition.

Kursbuch Wirkung (D), see
https://www.swissfoundations.ch/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/PHINEO_KursbuchWirkung_CH_Schweiz.pdf

Social Impact Navigator (E) – the free guidebook, see
https://www.phineo.org/uploads/Downloads/PHINEO_Social_Impact_Navigator.pdf