

C4D: Develop planning documents (evaluation plans and M&E frameworks)

What is it?

To undertake this task you need to bring together all the decisions made (manage, define, frame) and develop the documents that reflect these decisions.

This task covers two types of planning documents:

- Evaluation (or Research/ Study) Plans (for a single, discrete activity)
- Monitoring and Evaluation Frameworks (a framework for monitoring, evaluating and learning through a range monitoring and evaluating activities)

An Evaluation/Research/Study Plan specifies: what will be evaluated; the purpose and criteria for the evaluation; the key evaluation questions; and how data will be collected, analysed, synthesised and reported.

A Monitoring and Evaluation Framework outlines the overall R,M&E plan for monitoring and evaluating across an entire program, or across different programs. It should specify the monitoring strategies, any studies, reviews or evaluations to do, with details about data sources, timing, management processes, as well as an overall program theory/logic model.

General Information

Evaluation/Research Study Plan

The [Manager's Guide to Evaluation](#) provides a comprehensive guide for creating an Evaluation (or study/research) Plan, covering management, scoping, and commissioning processes. The specific steps that support the development of the evaluation planning documents are:

- [Scope the Evaluation](#)
- [Manage the development of the evaluation methodology](#)
- [Manage the development of the Workplan including logistics](#)

M&E Framework

BetterEvaluation provides some information on [developing an M&E Framework](#) (it is also possible to follow the Steps listed above as a guide to developing M&E Frameworks, though some steps will be skipped). Another resource is a practical book by Markiewicz and Patrick [Developing Monitoring and Evaluation Frameworks](#); the [companion website](#) includes a downloadable template that can be used as the basis of an M&E Framework (see also an [abbreviated guide on the authors' website](#)). This resource suggests the use of OEAC/DAC Evaluation Criteria as the basis of key questions, and this influences the construction of the template.

The pages above are recommended background reading before considering methods to apply to C4D.

In the section below specific to C4D we provide adapted versions of these templates with additional guidance with reference to C4D specific examples.

Applying the C4D Principles

Participatory

Partners, community groups and others with roles in planning and implementing C4D should be involved in the development of the M&E Framework or the Evaluation/Research Plan. This ensures that these documents respond to local needs, questions and contexts.

Complex

C4D is generally integrated into a program. Because of this, M&E Frameworks for C4D should ideally be developed as part of the broader program's M&E Frameworks. Where there is a need for changing C4D action based on new insights, rapid, flexible cycles of evaluation will be most appropriate. Evaluation contracts will need to take this into account.

Critical

It is important to reflect on power imbalances in the development of these strategic documents. Who has control over the creation and any adaptations to documents? How accessible are documents? Some types of strategic documents, such as Logical Frameworks, reflect Western styles of thinking and planning.

Learning-based

Learning events, structures and processes (inclusive of all partners and community groups involved in implementation) should be built into M&E Frameworks and Evaluation/Research Plans. M&E Frameworks should be flexible enough to accommodate emergent issues. Some organisations are starting to refer to 'Monitoring, Learning and Evaluation Frameworks' to emphasise the importance of considering how frameworks can support learning in addition to producing information.

Recommended methods and adaptation

M&E Framework

- [C4D: Develop planning documents \(evaluation plans and M&E frameworks\)](#)

Results Framework/Logical Framework: A Results Framework is associated with Results Based Management. It places an emphasis on monitoring progress using largely quantitative indicators with indicators set for each level of the causal chain (inputs, outputs, outcomes, processes). Results Frameworks have some advantages in terms of accountability and equity, but they can be limiting in terms of some of the other principles in the C4D Evaluation Framework.

Outcome Mapping Performance Monitoring Framework and Evaluation Plan: The Outcome Mapping process works towards setting up a realistic, learning-based Performance Monitoring Framework to understand changes in behaviour, relationships, actions and activities in the people and groups who are connected with the program. This process is compatible with most principles in the C4D Evaluation Framework, but some adaptations may be required to meet accountability requirements in some cases.

- [C4D Hub: Create a questions-led M&E framework](#)

A questions-led M&E Framework starts with thinking about the information needs (questions) of the primary intended users, and builds a plan for answering those questions.

Evaluation plan

- The BetterEvaluation website includes several methods that can be adapted to suit C4D, including:

- [Evaluation plan](#)

This method sets out details of what, how and when evaluation tasks will be undertaken.

- [Evaluation work plan](#)

This method is more specific about timeframes, deliverables and milestones.

- [Inception report](#)

An inception report may be a first milestone or deliverable, which sets out the conceptual framework, key questions and methodology, and timeframe after some initial scoping work, either desk-based or in the field.

Example

- [Articulating mental models](#)

Retrospective analysis of ODF in Nadia District, India - example of participatory process to develop key questions informing the research plan.

In this study the researchers used articulating mental models to seek the inputs of key stakeholders in the development of the research plan (the research design and key questions). This was process undertaken during a scoping phase. A range of stakeholders, including relevant UNICEF teams, District and local administrators, Faith-based-organisations, health extension workers, community-level committees and individuals were asked their views about:

- The role they played in their local context,
- The triggers which encouraged their participation in the project
- The enabling factors which facilitated the actualisation of the success of the project
- The manner in which the project has impacted lives within the local context
- The sustainability factors
- their theories of change

The findings were combined and used as the basis for further exploration.

C4D Hub: Develop an M&E Framework

A Monitoring and Evaluation Framework outlines the overall RM&E plan for monitoring and evaluating across an entire program, or across different programs. It should specify the monitoring strategies, any studies, reviews or evaluations to do done, with details about data sources, timing, management processes, as well as an overall program theory/logic model.

Groundwork tasks

The M&E Framework should be informed by several other important decisions and tasks. The C4D Evaluation framework approach would suggest consideration of the following aspects as preparation for undertaking this task:

Participatory

Have you identified and engaged with stakeholders? Will they be involved in developing the M&E Framework or Evaluation Plan?

- [Understand and engage stakeholders](#)

Complex:

Have you reviewed aspects of the C4D initiatives that are simple, complicated and complex, and considered the implications? Have you developed a Program Theory that includes possible intended and unintended changes?

- [Complexity](#)
- [Develop program theory/logic model](#)
- [Identify potential unintended results](#)

Holistic

Have you carefully considered the key M&E questions? Do these relate to the primary purpose for the M&E Framework, paying attention to context? Do they relate to the Program Theory?

- [Specify the key Research/M&E questions](#)
- [Decide purpose](#)
- [Develop program theory/logic model](#)

Realistic

Have you determined what resources are available?

- [Determine and secure resources](#)

Learning-based

Have you considered the capacity-building needs and planned for these?

- [Develop RM&E capacity](#)

Deciding on which method to use to create an M&E Framework

Three methods for developing an M&E Framework are recommended for C4D.

1. A questions-led M&E Framework

A questions-led M&E Framework starts with thinking about the information needs (questions) of the primary intended users, and builds a plan for answering those questions. This is a good method for C4D and is consistent with the C4D Evaluation Framework in the following ways:

Participatory

The potential uses that stakeholders, especially the primary intended users, have are the focus of the M&E. These stakeholders and users should be involved in deciding on the purpose and questions, and selecting options for answering questions

Holistic

The [key M&E questions](#) drive the direction of the framework. These questions should go beyond 'what happened' and also question the causes, how good programs and results are, and what to do next.

Critical

A questions-led M&E Framework encourages mixed methods to build a rich understanding of what is working, and what is not working, for different groups.

Realistic

A questions-led M&E Framework prioritises efforts around the questions that matter most to users. It does not try to measure everything. If primary intended users want to know about impact of C4D initiatives, that implies certain types of strategies, and should be planned for as part of the M&E Framework. If there are lots of uncertainties about what might work, an M&E Framework can be built to allow for trialling and comparison of different strategies that are investigated through smaller studies and inform an emergent approach.

Learning-based

A questions-led M&E Framework takes learning from RM&E seriously, beyond a list of recommendations at the end. If key users priorities understanding how to make improvements during implementation, this implies certain strategies. Further, learning structures, events and processes (such as committees, annual reviews etc.) can be built into the M&E Framework.

Accountable

A questions-led M&E Framework supports a true accountability, beyond compliance-oriented reporting against indicators, through building a rigorous, mixed-methods M&E Framework that can be designed to answer questions about effectiveness, impact, relevant and other quality standard criteria.

Complex

A questions-led M&E Framework is much easier to design around complicated and complex types of C4D initiatives and problems. Depending on the framing of key questions, a Questions-Led M&E Framework can be designed to support emergent and responsive implementation using methods and strategies suited to understanding uncertainty. The focus on questions means it remain realistic, rather than trying to measure every single thing that might possibly be measured.

Resource

Create a questions led M&E framework

This approach represents a new innovation in the way C4D M&E Frameworks can be created.

Example

National program for child protection communication

The Vietnam CO and RMIT University researchers followed these steps with counterparts to co-develop an M&E Framework and Plan for the VAC campaign. Matrices were used to document their decisions

2. Results Frameworks

Results Frameworks are common in agencies using Results-Based Management approaches. A Results Framework uses a Logic Model as the basis of selecting or creating indicators for inputs, outputs, outcomes. A Results Framework brings the following benefits:

Accountable

Results Frameworks are designed for upwards reporting against agreed performance indicators. It is easy for managers to aggregate these and get a quick, composite picture of progress.

Critical

Results Frameworks can specify the data disaggregations that will be required to enable an understanding of results for different groups, including marginalised groups. Further, Results Frameworks generally include targets, which can specify if improvements in indicators for specific groups or geographical locations should be targeted, and the expected targets of more challenging groups compared to easier to reach/engage groups.

There are a number of weaknesses to understand about Results Frameworks. These include:

Participatory

Logical Frameworks and Results Frameworks can be inaccessible, foreign and difficult to understand, especially for local NGO partners, who are usually not part of the process of designing the frameworks.

Holistic

Results Frameworks mainly rely on the selection of indicators to provide an indication of what is happening. A Results Framework generally does not set programs up well to understand the causes or contributions of changes in indicators. If you are using a Results Framework, ensure that you consider methods and strategies that help you understand contributions and causes, how good the program is, and how it can be improved.

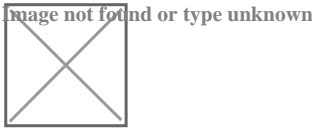
Complex

A Results Framework is based the assumption that change happens in linear ways (inputs leads to outputs, lead to outcomes). Complicated and complex change trajectories (e.g. if something gets worse before it gets better, thing improve and suddenly decline) and other contradictions and uncertainties remain largely invisible.

Learning-based

Results Frameworks are premised on a high degree of upfront planning followed by implementation of that plan. Although it is sometimes possible to adjust Results Framework at certain times, it is generally not easy to build a Results Framework in such a way that allows for adaptive and learning-based implementation.

Results Frameworks can be adapted to be more in keeping with the C4D Evaluation Framework by considering what additional monitoring might be needed, and what additional small research, studies, evaluations and reviews can be included.



Tasks

Specify C4D inputs, outputs, outcomes at each level of the Program Theory

- [Develop program theory or logic model](#)

Select indicators and other monitoring strategies

- [Use measures, indicators or metrics](#)
- [Sample](#)
- [Collect and/or retrieve data \(methods\)](#)
- [Analyse data](#)

Resource

[ESARO Results-based management training PPTX](#)
[1.18 MB](#)

These easy-to-follow slides provide detailed steps on developing a Results Framework. It includes particularly useful guidance on problem analysis, outcome chain (or program theory), and strategies, risks and assumptions, which are built into the Results Framework.

It is consistent with the C4D Evaluation Framework in the following ways:

- **Accountable:** Results Based Management is typically accountability focused mechanism, used to guide upward reporting and ensure a results focus
- **Holistic or complex:** This particular training package includes several useful processes for creating a robust Theory of Change, taking into account assumptions, risks, priorities, and an explicit change theory, which is used as the basis for a Results Framework.

Example

[Monitoring and Evaluation of Participatory Theatre for Change \(PTC\)](#)

[Summary and review of the Monitoring and evaluation of participatory theatre for change \(PTC\)](#)

Table 2 on page 17 includes a sample monitoring plan. This guide is demonstrates how a strong theory of change can inform the design of monitoring and evaluation plans. Although it is written with reference to Participatory Theatre, the resource can be easily adapted to a range of C4D approaches, especially participatory C4D approaches.

This resource is consistent with the C4D Evaluation Framework in relation to this task in the following ways:

- **Complex:** the strong use of a theory of change, which is based on three high level principles, which can be adaptively applied to suit emerging conditions.
- **Realistic:** the 'Reach, Resonance, Response' framework is simple enough to understand, useful as a guiding framework, and captures the important aspects of C4D outputs and outcomes.

3. Outcome Mapping to Develop an M&E System

The Outcome Mapping process includes the development of a Performance Monitoring Framework and an Evaluation Plan. Outcome Mapping was developed as an alternative to the kinds of M&E Frameworks associated with Results Based Management, and is particularly intended for social and behavioural change and social transformation initiatives. The Performance Monitoring Framework sets out how actions and progress towards goals will be monitored, building on the progress markers (based on what you would 'expect to see', 'like to see', and 'love to see' in boundary partners), the strategies and organizational practices (all mapped out in the intentional design, similar to theory of change, stage). Not everything is monitored, and there are 'light' methods. There are three main data collection tools for monitoring: an outcome journal, a strategy journal and a performance journal. The Evaluation Plan in Outcome mapping is based on the identified uses of primary intended users and their questions. This approach is consistent with the C4D Evaluation Framework in the following ways:

Participatory

Outcome Mapping is based on a participatory approach, with much of the planning and mapping decisions intended to be made in workshop settings.

Complex

Outcome Mapping focuses on changes in the behaviours, relationships, actions or activities of the people, groups, and organizations with whom a development program works directly, rather than focusing on the development impact of a program in terms of changes in the state or situation such as poverty alleviation, or reduced child marriage etc.

Learning-based

Outcome Mapping builds a monitoring and evaluation system for continual learning and improvement.

Realistic

Outcome Mapping uses group processes to prioritise what will be monitored, recognising that the resources for monitoring and evaluation are limited. In Outcome Mapping, the available resources are channelled into efforts to better understanding of the influences of a program's work on change and use this to improve its performance.

It is important to keep in mind:

Accountable

While Outcome Mapping resources point to ways to use Outcome Mapping for accountability and reporting, mutual learning and improvement is more of the focus. The monitoring methods used are generally based on self-assessment and reporting, which may not be considered rigorous enough in some contexts. Some

adaptations to use alternative methods could be used to address this problem.

Resources

[BetterEvaluation page on Outcome Mapping](#)

This page includes a concise overview and relates the approach to the Rainbow Framework tasks.

[Outcome Mapping Learning Community](#)

A hub of information on Outcome Mapping, including guides, manuals, video tutorials, and examples.

C4D Hub: Create a questions-led M&E framework

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The potential uses that stakeholders, especially the primary intended users, have are the focus of the M&E. These stakeholders and users should be involved in deciding on the purpose and questions, and selecting options for answering questions.

Holistic

The key M&E questions drive the direction of the framework. These questions should go beyond 'what happened' and also question the causes, how good programs and results are, and what to do next.

Critical

A questions-led M&E Framework encourages mixed methods to build a rich understanding of what is working, and what is not working, for different groups.

Realistic

A questions-led M&E Framework prioritises efforts around the questions that matter most to users. It does not try to measure everything. If primary intended users want to know about impact of C4D initiatives, that implies certain types of strategies, and should be planned for as part of the M&E Framework. If there are lots of uncertainties about what might work, an M&E Framework can be built to allow for trialling and comparison of different strategies that are investigated through smaller studies and inform an emergent approach.

Learning-based

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Accountable

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Complex

A questions-led M&E Framework is much easier to design around complicated and complex types of C4D initiatives and problems. Depending on the framing of key questions, a Questions-Led M&E Framework can be designed to support emergent and responsive implementation using methods and strategies suited to understanding uncertainty. The focus on questions means it remain realistic, rather than trying to measure every single thing that might possibly be measured.

Steps:

Step 1. Recommended preparation tasks: a checklist

The M&E Framework should be informed by several other important decisions and tasks. The C4D Evaluation framework approach would suggest consideration of the following aspects as preparation for undertaking this task:

Participatory:

Have you [identified and engaged with stakeholders](#)? Will they be involved in developing the M&E Framework or Evaluation Plan?

Complex:

Have you reviewed aspects of the C4D initiatives that are [simple, complicated and complex](#), and considered the implications? Have you [developed a Program Theory](#) that includes possible [intended and unintended changes](#)?

Realistic:

Have you [determined what resources are available](#)?

Learning based:

Have you considered the [capacity building needs and planned for these](#)?

Step 2: Specify the key questions, and analyse them by type.

[Specify the key questions](#), and [analyse them by type](#).

Different types of questions require different types of methods and strategies to get answers. The four main types are:

- Descriptive
- Causal
- Evaluative
- Predictive and Action

Step 3: Download a matrix template to fill in as you make decisions:

[C4D Matrix Template](#)

[DOCX](#)

[22 KB](#)

Step 4: Sort Questions by Type

1. Start by sorting all the smaller questions by their type. This means making a new list of all the descriptive questions, all the causal questions, all the evaluative questions, and all the action/predictive questions (it is helpful to keep the numbers, i.e. 1.1, 1.2 etc. for resorting according to the Key Question later).
2. Identify any questions that are the same or similar, and if possible adjust the wording of very similar questions slightly to avoid unnecessary duplication, making sure not to lose the essence of any questions.
3. Paste the list of questions under each of the headings (Descriptive, Causal, Evaluative, Action/Predictive) in Matrix Template document the space provided.

Step 5: Decide how to answer descriptive questions and compile a matrix

In your matrix template add all the descriptive questions to the first column:

| Descriptive Question (DQ) | What will be described | Existing data | Additional data collection/ retrieval | Sampling/ disaggregation (equity) | Analysis Timing |
|---------------------------|------------------------|---------------|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------|
|---------------------------|------------------------|---------------|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------|

DQ x.x

DQ x.x

DQ x.x

In the second column make a clear statement about what will be described (e.g. types of/number of communication activities undertaken, or levels of knowledge on a specific topic). A theory of change can be very helpful here. (see here for more on [Develop a Theory of Change](#)).

In the third column list any existing or accessible data that could be used to answer that question, and assess their quality and relevance (see [Determine and secure resources](#)). There are often statistics available that can be used for C4D indicators. Other existing data that might be useful can come from previous research and evaluation studies, official records and publicly available statistics.

Finally, make selections for additional data collection/retrieval, sampling and analysis, and add these to the matrix. More information on options for these is below:

- [Sample](#)
- [Use measures, indicators or metrics](#)
- [Collect and/or retrieve data](#)
- [Manage data](#)
- [Combine qualitative and quantitative data](#)
- [Analyse data](#)

Step 6: Decide how to answer causal questions and compile a matrix

The matrix for answering causal questions is slightly different. Often a matrix to answer causal questions will refer to descriptive data and will use analysis strategies that investigate causal relationships between variables.

| Causal relationship | Comments | Strategy 1: Scope for a credible counterfactual? | Strategy 2: Scope for checking consistency of evidence? | Strategy 3: Scope for ruling out other alternative explanations? |
|---------------------|------------|--|---|--|
| Variable 1 | Variable 2 | | | |

First we need to identify the variables. Looking at each of your causal questions try to identify what the variables are. A very simple example might be:

Variable 1: Exposure to communication materials

Variable 2: Level of understanding of a specific topic

In a question about bottleneck and barriers, Variable 1 might be 'the presence of a barrier' and variable 2 the intermediate outcome. Your theory of change can be useful for clarifying variables (see [Develop program theory or logic model](#)).

Use the comments column to note any important information e.g. the treatment of groups of variables, or use of answers from descriptive questions.

There are three main strategies for answering questions about the causal relationships between variables.

- [Compare results to a counterfactual \(strategy 1\)](#)
- [Check the results support causal attribution \(strategy 2\)](#)
- [Investigate possible alternative explanations \(strategy 3\)](#)

Review these strategies, note whether or not a credible counterfactual will be feasible; and the list selected strategies for checking the consistency of evidence and for ruling out alternative explanations. It is recommended that you include multiple strategies of different kinds.

Examples

- [National program for child protection communication M&E plan](#) (page 20-22): Matrix for answering causal questions as filled in by Vietnam CO and their counterparts with variables identified

Resources

- [Watch a webinar on Answering causal questions and investigating C4D contributions](#) . Use the password *evaluatingC4D*

Step 7: Decide how to answer evaluative questions and compile a matrix

The matrix for answering evaluative questions needs to show the processes you will use to select and apply criteria, standards and weighting. Each evaluative question in your list might need its own processes, or a group of evaluative questions might be answered using the same processes.

| | | |
|------------------------|--|---|
| What will be evaluated | Criteria Standards Synthesis/Weighting | Process for developing agreed standards, criteria and synthesis |
|------------------------|--|---|

Begin by making a statement about what will be evaluated (that is, what will be judged or valued). This might be particular activities, particular C4D approaches, particular sites, or particular outcomes.

To judge and value something we can apply criteria, standards and then we would synthesise and weight those to come to conclusions.

- [Determine what 'success' looks like](#)
- [Synthesise data from a single evaluation](#)

Once you have made your selections, add these to the matrix and describe the processes to be used.

Step 8: Decide how to answer Action/ Predictive Questions and compile a matrix

Answering action questions in a credible way often requires a process of identifying and assessing options for action. It is often useful to have a wider group of people involved in this process than simply an external evaluation team.

Action/Predictive Questions (AQ) Process and participants for answering Action/Predictive Questions

AQ x.x

AQ x.x

AQ x.x

Begin by listing the Action/Predictive questions in the first column.

The material on how to [generalise findings and decide on actions](#) indicates some methods for answering action/predictive questions

Once you have made your selections add these to the second column. Note: you may use the same process to answer all questions and in these cases you may simplify the matrix to indicate this.

Step 9: Develop a summary evaluation matrix with all planned data collection and analysis, including use of existing data

The next step is to compile a matrix that summarises how you will answer each of the Key Questions and associated smaller questions. This is intended as a summary table; in most cases the more detailed matrixes for answering descriptive, causal, evaluative and action questions will remain in the final document.

| KQ | Data source / method / analysis 1 | Data source / method / analysis 2 | Data source / method / analysis 3 | Data source / method / analysis 4 |
|----|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
|----|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|

1 [add KQs]

1.1 [add sub questions]

1.2

1.3

1.4

2.

2.1

2.2

3.

3.1

3.2

3.3

4.

4.1

4.2

Add the Key Questions into the shaded rows, the associated sub or smaller questions underneath. You may need to add or remove rows. Add short descriptions of the data source or method in the corresponding boxes. Where possible, make note of timing, (i.e. baseline + every six months; baseline, midline, endline; ad hoc or as triggered etc.)

You can either rename the column headings (e.g. Existing data; Data Collection and Analysis methods; Causal Analysis methods; Stakeholder workshops), which makes it easy to see all the additional data collection in one column; or you could leave the headings as listed and fill in from left to right in the corresponding rows. This makes sense where there are a high number of different methods being used.

Step 10. List required tasks, studies, events, processes

The final step is to extract a list of the tasks, studies, events and processes that are outlined in the matrix, and the associated methods (e.g. baseline studies, bottleneck analysis studies, evaluations, workshops, expert analysis or review processes etc). This list will later be used as the basis of a cost estimate and a workplan.

If who is doing the evaluation had not yet been decided, [decide who will conduct the evaluation](#)