

Resource type	Tool	Date created	2016–20	Last reviewed	2022
Resource series	Rebalancing grantee–donor power for better MEL				
Project	Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Toolkit for Grantmakers and Grantees				
<div>MANAGE an evaluation or evaluation system</div>					

Grantee MEL capacity assessment

This assessment is designed to be used to help donors and grantees evaluate strengths and potential gaps in their MEL systems in a discussion or interview.

It is intended to be used as a discussion or interview guide to provide information about areas for growth – it is not intended as a tool to score or rate organizations.

Grantee MEL systems questions

Theories of change

Benchmark: The organization has a logically articulated theory of change (or logic model, causal pathways, or logical framework) with relevant components

- 1.1. Does the organization have a practice of using a **logically articulated theory of change** or other variations, such as a logic model, causal pathways, or logical framework?

- 1.1.1. If yes, does the theory of change include **planned strategies/interventions, assumptions, operating environment, outcomes, and overall impact**?

- 1.2. Has the theory of change (or equivalent) been **utilized** and **updated regularly**?

- 1.3. Does the theory of change **logic seem sound**? Are there any gaps you note?

1.4. Is there a **visualization** of the theory of change?

Indicators & data collection

Benchmark: The organization regularly tracks and is able to report on indicators grounded in operational and strategic objectives and can report on a set of these to donor regularly.

2.1. Do indicators use language like “**number of**” and “**percent/proportion of**”, use a scale or rubric, or can they be answered with a simple “**yes**” or “**no**”?

2.1.1. Do indicators cover **programmatic** and **operational** goals?

2.1.2. Are the means of **verification** reasonable for indicators? Does it make sense to use them as a source for verification?

2.1.3. Do you **audit or review data** before reporting indicator data externally?

2.2. Does the organization set **benchmarks** or **targets** in regard to these indicators? If so, what is the **time horizon** of these target?

2.2.1. Do the indicators have time frames for **collection** and **reporting**? Are they clearly defined?

2.2.2. Do the indicators feed into the strategy and theory of change? Do the indicators seem like reasonably meaningful proxies for assessing progress?

- 2.3. Does the organization share the metrics reported from the indicators **externally** or with **other donors**?

Culture & commitment to learning

Benchmark: The organization builds in time and resources for active reflection and learning to design and redesign programs and activities.

- 3.1. Does the organization use **language** in its content around “**testing**,” “**redesigning**,” or “**changing**” in its strategy, operations, and activities?

- 3.1.1. Does the organization have **buy-in** to the learning plans from its executives?

- 3.1.2. Does the organization have a set of **learning objectives** or identified questions/needs?

- 3.2. Is there a **project cycle** or **strategy planning** process?

- 3.3. Are previously established, reasonably objective progress indicators used as a key basis for **periodic reflection** on progress?

MEL staffing

Benchmark: The organization has dedicated MEL staff.

- 4.1. If there is no **dedicated MEL person**, who in the organization has responsibility for collecting, managing, and reporting information?

Data & information management

Benchmark: The organization has a database for storing and managing information related its activities, indicators, and reporting.

5.1. How is **data stored**? If there is no database or data storage system, has this been discussed?

5.2. Who has **access** to the information stored in the database?

5.2.1. Who has **administrative privileges** to edit/change data within the database?

Evaluations

Benchmark: The organization has previously conducted evaluations and/or has plans for conducting one in the near-term (ideally under the grant agreement), which inform its strategy, activities, and program design.

6.1. How **frequently** do you conduct your own organization's or programs' evaluation?

6.2. Did evaluations rely mostly on **quantitative** or **qualitative** techniques (or mixed methods)?

6.2.1. Were evaluations **internal** or **external**?

6.3. Are previous evaluations **publicly available**? If so, where? Have they been shared externally?

6.3.1. How have evaluation results been **used in the past**? (To inform a donor of a project's efficacy? To determine a new strategy? To evaluate impact?)

Resources

Benchmark: The organization has resources and staff time budgeted for MEL activities.

- 7.1. Are MEL activities budgeted separately from other types of organizational activities and adequately budgeted given the scale and size of both the program activities and corresponding MEL design?

- 7.2. Do planned evaluations have clear budgets and timelines?