



RIST
RURAL INDIA SUPPORTING TRUST

Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Principles

Rural India Supporting Trust

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1 Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning Framework

1.1 Our Approach and Principles

One of the single most important questions that our foundation faces is how do we create powerful partnerships in a way that helps us alleviate poverty in India. For this, we believe that it is essential to evaluate, reflect and learn regularly by studying the findings of our funded programs and research projects. To thus accomplish our goals, we deeply care about how we do grant-making and what our grants have achieved. The below principles act as guideposts of our monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) framework and determine how we collaborate with our grantees to monitor, evaluate, and learn.

- **Engagement and Feedback Loops** We believe in building feedback loops to systematically collect data and act upon it. We work together with our grantees to build monitoring, evaluation, and learning frameworks and encourage inclusive practices where grantee partners, foundation staff and those impacted by our work are actively engaged in design, implementation and reflection of our combined efforts.
- **Sustainability and Resilience** In an uncertain future, it is essential that we remain resilient and adaptable. To achieve this resiliency, we look towards our program designs to achieve sustainability as well as account for continuous “learning by doing”. Together we must ensure that information flows in a way that helps different stakeholders involved check that their efforts are proceeding as planned, and to refine and guide their responses if changes are needed.
- **Using Data for Adaptive Management and Tracking Progress** Using evidence and data collected on a regular basis, we aim to understand progress, identify problems, make adjustments in a timely manner, and make increasingly well-informed investments in future grant cycles
- **Collaboration** We remain sensitive of the funder-grantee power dynamic and work towards leveling or balancing it to create strong, candid relationships to increase our individual and collective capacity. We will foster discussions to improve evaluation approaches and results through exchange of ideas and perspectives to cultivate a learning culture
- **Informing Our Strategy** Evaluation that encourages evidence based prac-

tices is a critical part of our process which will not only enable informed decision making but will also lead to better stewardship of resources. It will also help us render judgement, provide accountability and inform our decisions related to grant-making.

- **Share Learning** We share what we learn with others, including our grantees, partners, field and foundation staff, and beneficiaries. It is an ongoing process to build and rebuild on learnings and, together with our partners, better understand our contexts, outcomes and contribution over time.

1.2 What does monitoring and evaluation mean for us?

What is Monitoring?

Monitoring is the continuous collection of data on specified indicators to assess for a development intervention (project, program or policy), its implementation in relation to activity schedules and expenditure of allocated funds, and its progress and achievements in relation to its objectives¹.

What is Evaluation?

An evaluation is an assessment, as systematic and objective as possible, of ongoing or completed aid activities, their design, implementation and results. The aim is to determine the relevance and fulfillment of objectives, developmental efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability².

What is Learning?

Learning involves the synthesis and application of information and insights from multiple sources (monitoring data, evaluation results about progress, your Theory of Change, engagement with impacted communities and experts) to build knowledge. Learning occurs incrementally and iteratively over time and is used to reflect on how a project is meeting its intended and unintended changes. Learnings from your project helps the organizations to understand what is and is not working and assist in determining if your solution is effective and remains relevant. Learning should be broadly shared to inform others working on similar problems³.

¹Adapted from: <https://www.oecd.org/development/evaluation/dcdndep/47069197.pdf>

²Adapted from: <https://www.oecd.org/development/evaluation/dcdndep/47069197.pdf>

³<https://www.100andchange.org/monitoring-learning-evaluation-guidance>

Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL), thus describes a group of activities and indicators which we will use and refer to measure a project’s ongoing success in relation to clearly defined outputs and objectives. It allows RIST and its partners to ensure that the project is accountable, transparent and is actively identifying appropriate use of funds. It is essential to incorporate a MEL Framework into the program design from the beginning so we can together assess progress and achievements in line with the objectives laid out.

1.3 Theory Behind Our Process

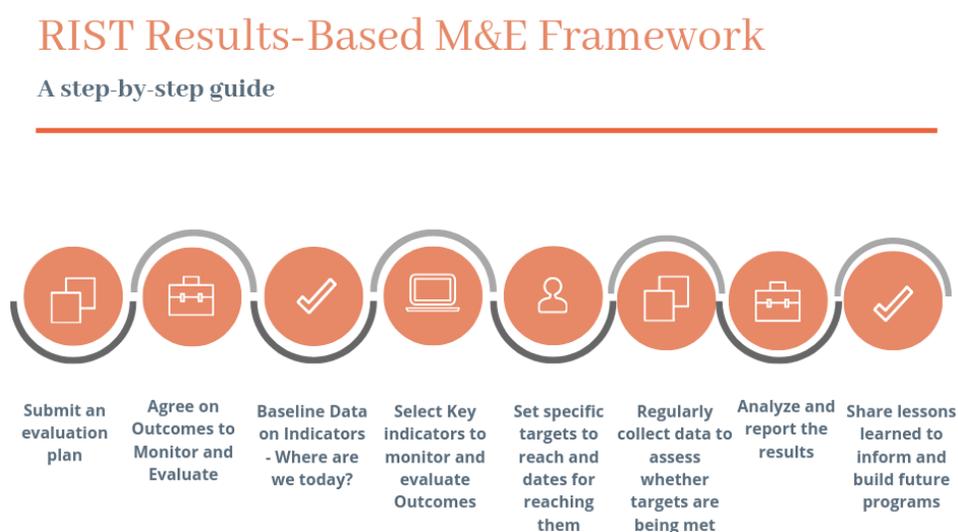


Figure 1: Step by Step Core Process

The monitoring and evaluation plan should thus have the following **core components**:

- The ability to check on the **progress** of development interventions against pre-defined objectives and plans
- Clear and agreed **objectives, monitoring targets and milestones**
- Adequate **resources** to achieve the objectives and goals
- Clearly identified **project/program beneficiaries**
- Monitoring progress towards results with the use of appropriate **indicators**

- The ability to answer specific questions related to the **relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability** of the completed development activity
- Defining **impact** in terms of intended and unintended, positive and negative effects, and whether these can be attributed to the project or other forces operating in the same context
- Evaluation will take place continuously during a project to ensure we can course correct
- Overall, evaluations will uncover **wider lessons** that can be applied elsewhere as well as allow us and our partners to improve and adapt