## CHAPTER 1

# Introduction to Developing Monitoring and Evaluation Frameworks

*This introductory section clarifies the purpose and function of a Monitoring and Evaluation Framework and the essential features of the approach used in this text. A close and articulated relationship between monitoring and evaluation functions is identified as fundamental to the approach adopted, with monitoring situated within program evaluation rather than positioned as separate to it. An overview is subsequently presented of the different sections of the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework and of how guidance to its development is structured within the text.*

## WHAT IS A MONITORING AND EVALUATION FRAMEWORK?

A Monitoring and Evaluation Framework is both a planning process and a written product designed to provide guidance to the conduct of monitoring and evaluation functions over the life span of a program or other initiative. The use of Monitoring and Evaluation Frameworks is becoming increasingly important to establish program- and initiative-level progress and results; to subsequently inform management and decision-making processes; to support accountability; and to guide organizational learning for program improvement. Monitoring and evaluation functions are integral to the effective operation of programs and initiatives and increase the overall value derived from them.

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A Monitoring and Evaluation Framework represents an overarching plan for undertaking monitoring and evaluation functions for the life of a program and includes a step-by-step guide to its operationalization and application over time. Monitoring and Evaluation Frameworks are ideally developed concurrently with, and inform, a program plan or design. Alternatively, an outline of the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework may be developed during the design stage and elaborated on at an early stage during program implementation.

The Monitoring and Evaluation Framework defines the parameters of routine monitoring and periodic evaluation that will take place over the life of a program or initiative. Typically, these parameters include a focus on evaluation domains, particularly those of appropriateness, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability. In some contexts, additional or alternative domains may be used as the focus for investigations through monitoring and evaluation, such as *gender* and other crosscutting issues. The Monitoring and Evaluation Framework shows how data are collected, aggregated, and analyzed on a regular basis in order to answer the agreed evaluation questions. The data generated by the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework should also support formative and summative evaluation processes.

## WHY INVEST?

The need for Monitoring and Evaluation Frameworks is highlighted in the contemporary policy context where the "achievement of results" has become a heightened and primary rationale for program funding and operation. Management strategies such as Results-Based Management (RBM) have strongly influenced the approach adopted by many organizations and placed strong expectations on planning and monitoring and evaluation functions. Under a unifying concern with identification of results, a more integrated relationship between these functions is required. This involves overcoming barriers between planners and those responsible for monitoring and evaluation who traditionally work at different points of the program cycle. The development and implementation of coherent and widely accepted plans are important to the success of programs and initiatives of all types and sizes.

Investing in developing Monitoring and Evaluation Frameworks is an essential step in ensuring that a program is monitored and evaluated over its life span and that informed decisions can be made in order to steer implementation and guide decision making about a program's future. In turn, effective programs have a better chance of delivering outcomes that will potentially improve

the circumstances for which the program was developed. These could be located across a range of areas including social, economic, health, psychological, educational, environmental, and cultural areas.

### Practice Example

## Using Monitoring and Evaluation to Inform Program Planning

A program's investment in developing a Monitoring and Evaluation Framework is particularly worthwhile where that program is committed to learning what works for its intended beneficiaries and to adjusting its delivery model based on those learnings. The evaluator worked with a state-based community education program aimed at reducing substance misuse amongst young people living in regional and remote communities. The program was uncertain whether its behavior-change strategies were effective in achieving the intended outcomes for this particularly hard-to-reach target group. The program invested in the development of a Monitoring and Evaluation Framework. After 12 months of implementation of the Framework, including structured data collection and analysis, the program was able to determine that the awareness-raising strategies it had been using up until that time were not as effective as anticipated. The monitoring and evaluation activities undertaken within the parameters of the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework identified positive alternative delivery approaches that were likely to be more effective, such as working in collaboration with other youth-focused organizations that had established relationships with the target group. As a result, the program redesigned its delivery model and specific strategies used including adopting an enhanced focus on partnership building. The program developed new staff position descriptions, undertook training of its personnel, and put these into operation in a new program phase. The Monitoring and Evaluation Framework was also subsequently updated in line with the new program model and approach. This example illustrates the benefits of investing in monitoring and evaluation for achieving the most appropriate program design and also the manner in which planning and monitoring and evaluation functions can operate in a constructive, mutually supportive manner.

## WHAT FUNCTIONS DOES A MONITORING AND EVALUATION FRAMEWORK SERVE?

With a sharpened focus and concern with results, Monitoring and Evaluation Frameworks have evolved to make assessments that extend beyond tracking implementation, and a traditional concern with activities and outputs, to focus on outcomes. Similarly, as the nature of programs and other delivery mechanisms become more sophisticated, designs for Monitoring and Evaluation Frameworks have emphasized versatility and ability to adapt to different program circumstances.

Other expectations placed on monitoring and evaluation are to encompass and competently assess a range of areas of program performance such the appropriateness of the design and efficiency of delivery. While increasing sophistication is required, approaches to monitoring and evaluation are also expected to be readily comprehensible and promote the active participation of a broad range of stakeholders. Further, for the results and products of monitoring and evaluation to be of value, they need to be effectively disseminated and actively used. Such expectations and needs place considerable onus on Monitoring and Evaluation Frameworks to effectively encompass and guide a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation process.

In summary, Monitoring and Evaluation Frameworks can address a range of different purposes, including the following:

- **Results.** Using approaches and tools that anticipate and provide a basis for identifying and assessing results, both expected and unexpected
- **Management.** Providing a guide to tracking progress in program implementation against program plans, performance indicators and targets, and a basis for correcting the relationship between program inputs, activities, and outputs where needed
- **Accountability.** Accounting and reporting on the use of resources allocated and results achieved to a range of stakeholders such as government, funders, organizational governance and management personnel, members of the public, and program beneficiaries
- **Learning.** Generating and disseminating knowledge about good practice, learning from experience as to what works and what does not, and why a program was successful or not, in its particular context
- **Program Improvement**. Improving the design and performance of a program during its implementation and making overall judgments as to the quality, value, effectiveness, and importance of a program

- **Decision Making**. Using the results generated by monitoring and evaluation to inform decisions such as on program design, resource allocation, program direction, and program continuation

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**Practice Example**

### Multiple Purposes for Monitoring and Evaluation Frameworks

A Monitoring and Evaluation Framework was developed for a large regional family violence prevention program that was funded to operate for 10 years. The Framework which was developed in the program's first year of operation was designed to support a range of purposes. Different purposes were more critical at different stages of the program's life cycle. In the shorter term, the emphasis of the Framework and its respective monitoring and evaluation functions was placed on the learning aspect. This entailed providing data to identify whether the program design and its strategies were in fact appropriate to its context and effective in maintaining and developing the support of allied partners and services. Also in the short term, an emphasis was placed on establishing how well the program was being implemented. This involved placing a priority on the delivery of timely performance information to management. In the medium term, the Framework emphasized generating sufficient data for accountability and program improvement purposes. The program was required to report against different accountability-related milestones at various intervals, the first of these being 3 years after its commencement. Program improvement was to be informed through identifying results, determining the degree to which they were effective, and deriving associated learning. For the final years of the program, the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework emphasized identification of longer term results that the program had contributed to, both expected and unanticipated. Results areas included reduction in levels of family violence, improved gender relations, and increased capacity of local government and community-based organizations to sustain the initiative. Such results were expected to inform decision making about the future direction of the program.

## WHAT GAP DOES THIS TEXT INTEND TO FILL?

The development of Monitoring and Evaluation Frameworks is a core skill area in evaluation practice, but it is not always well addressed in evaluation education and professional training. Specific knowledge and skills are required in order to design the framework, including using participatory processes to engage stakeholders and then moving to implementation. These skills include the ability to foreshadow outcomes and subsequently identify and measure results achieved. The use of program theory and logic is advanced in this text as a key means to this end.

To equip the reader for these tasks, the text provides an appropriate grounding in key concepts used, and for this purpose, draws on evaluation theory and the broader literature. This literature relates to monitoring and evaluation practice in both developed and developing country contexts. While there are some differences between the two settings, the similarities are sufficient to provide generalizable principles for application to both settings.

The intent of the text is ultimately to support practice, and considerable focus is given to providing a clear structure and guidance for the development of a Monitoring and Evaluation Framework. Practical stages and steps in this process are identified, with accompanying information on developing the different sections of the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework. A range of plans and other tools are introduced, and completed examples are incorporated to aid the application of new material.

The approach of the text is to illustrate and promote the critical role of monitoring and evaluation for both a program and the broader organizational context in which it may operate. All too frequently, monitoring and evaluation appear as an add-on or as a discretionary activity for programs, while organizations fail to use what monitoring and evaluation have to offer to support learning and improve decision making and practice. This text, therefore, advocates for the early planning for the monitoring and evaluation of a program. Experience suggests that the earlier this is undertaken, and a Monitoring and Evaluation Framework is prepared and implemented, the more readily results will be known, adjustments can be made, and learnings derived.

This text should provide a useful and informative resource for educators and students, program managers, and commissioners and practitioners of evaluation. It aims to equip those responsible for, or involved with, monitoring and evaluation functions with the knowledge and skills to develop and implement a Monitoring and Evaluation Framework. The text should be applicable to those working in a range of settings, in both developing and developed country

contexts. It provides practical guidance as to how to plan for monitoring and evaluation processes in a participatory, logical, systematic, and integrated way.

## KEY FEATURES OF THE APPROACH

The text draws on and is consistent with a contemporary, purposeful planning approach known as *Results-Based Management*. This approach links together planning, monitoring, and evaluation processes with an emphasis on integration and interdependence between these functions. The type of Monitoring and Evaluation Framework advanced is intended to actively counter a tendency to split off evaluation as a separate activity, with little relationship to monitoring. In contrast, the approach of this text may be regarded as evaluation-led in that a critical role is accorded to evaluation questions to focus the investigations undertaken. The approach taken in this text should achieve an improved balance between monitoring and evaluation functions with both contributing to more effective management, accountability, learning, and program improvement.

The following key principles of the evaluation-led approach are adopted in this text:

- Evaluation is seen as the overall discipline and endeavor that provides the point of reference for a Monitoring and Evaluation Framework. Monitoring is regarded as a subset of evaluation and guided by its theoretical and practice conventions. This orientation averts monitoring being accorded greater prominence due to a perceived more immediate link to management and accountability functions. In an evaluation-led approach, learning and program improvement are placed in a central position.

- The Monitoring and Evaluation Framework incorporates a range of areas of inquiry. Identifying and measuring outcomes is emphasized similar to many other approaches to monitoring and evaluation. Assessment of the change arising from a program, or impact, is only one of five evaluation domains, however, and complemented through investigation of a program's appropriateness, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability. These include forming judgments about program quality, value, importance, fidelity of implementation, and on issues of attribution. In the approach adopted here, the use of program theory and logic provides clarity and definition to assessment of impact and also suggests linkages to investigations related to the other domains.

- One set of evaluation questions provides a common and unifying focus for both monitoring and evaluation functions and the respective plans that are generated to guide these areas. Integration of monitoring and evaluation is therefore promoted.
- A range of performance measures are used to assess performance. The Monitoring and Evaluation Framework does not "institutionalize" performance indicators, baselines, and targets as the sole measures employed but rather uses them judiciously alongside other measures. More balanced assessments are thereby produced, drawing on results produced by both monitoring and evaluation.

Key steps involved in the approach include development of the building blocks of program theory, program logic, and evaluation questions. This is followed by generation of integrated monitoring and evaluation plans and strategies for data collection, management, and analysis. A strategy for learning, reporting, and communication is identified, followed by planning for implementation. All steps emphasize stakeholder participation and capacity development in the manner that they are undertaken. The overall approach reflected in the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework is consistent with and follows three central steps inherent to Program Theory-Driven Evaluation. These are developing a program theory, formulating and prioritizing the evaluation questions against that theory, and answering the evaluation questions using the evaluation method considered most fit for purpose (Donaldson, 2007).

This approach to developing Monitoring and Evaluation Frameworks has been shown to be suitable and effective in application with a variety of programs operating in both the government and nongovernment sectors, in a range of country contexts. Particular strengths of the approach identified are as follows:

- It is simple, easy to comprehend, and follow.
- It provides practitioners with a method they can apply to a range of different program contexts and to programs of different size and structure.
- Its utility lies in its structured, systematic approach, progressing from identifying desired results through to generating evaluation questions and using these questions to guide linked monitoring and evaluation processes.
- It meets the range of different end purposes (management, accountability, learning, program improvement, decision making).

- It achieves a balance between monitoring and evaluation functions by showing how the two processes are interrelated in practice, not just in theory.

## PROGRAM-LEVEL FOCUS

This text concerns an aspect of *program evaluation,* which is a well-recognized term that identifies and demarcates evaluation practice that is focused on programs. This text is not, for example, concerned with evaluation of personnel within an organization, which represents a separate practice area. Developing Monitoring and Evaluation Frameworks for programs means that the focus is broadly placed on social interventions. This represents the most common focus of programs, across an array of areas such as education, health, justice, and human rights. A program can be defined as a set of planned, systematic activities and services directed to the achievement of goals and objectives through working toward results.

From a more operational perspective, our focus on Monitoring and Evaluation Frameworks for programs involves a demarcation from several broader social constructs. These include the sector (e.g., health sector) and systems level (e.g. government agencies operating in particular setting). Specific types of designs are used for Monitoring and Evaluation Frameworks for organizations, sectors, and systems for which this text does not provide particular guidance. Further specification of the nature of a program is obtained in its distinction from a project. The terms are often used in a synonymous manner, but as Bamberger, Rugh, and Mabry (2012) observe, "a program is usually understood to include a number of different projects and is intended to produce broader and possibly longer term outcomes and impacts" (p. 619). Despite these differences, the principles and broad parameters of Monitoring and Evaluation Frameworks as outlined in this text are likely to be transferable to other strata such as systems and policies.

Monitoring and Evaluation Frameworks operating at different levels may be developed so that they collect related information and so that the results of one may usefully inform the other. For example, a program-level Monitoring and Evaluation Framework may share related questions and outcome areas with subsidiary project-level Monitoring and Evaluation Frameworks. This arrangement where frameworks at different levels (system, program, project, etc.) inform others is known as *cascading*. Cascading Monitoring and Evaluation Frameworks may be vertically integrated across levels, as well as horizontally integrated across related projects or programs. This is depicted in Figure 1.1.

**Figure 1.1**    Cascading Monitoring and Evaluation Frameworks
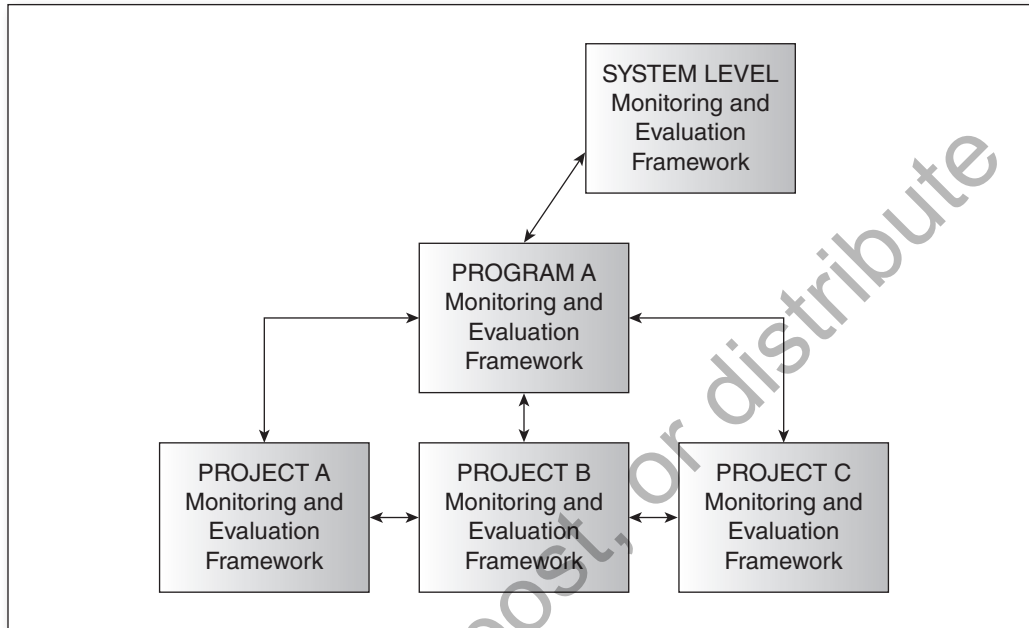


## Practice Example

### Cascading Monitoring and Evaluation Frameworks

A Monitoring and Evaluation Framework was developed for a state-based program aimed at reducing the rate of homelessness across a range of targeted communities. Consideration was given to related requirements for assessment of performance at the national and local levels. The state-based program was cofunded through a national homelessness strategy and had funded a large number of discrete local-level projects across the state. The development of the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework needed to consider how to identify outcomes that could be reported at both the state and national levels against respective performance benchmarks. The source of much of this information was the results of local-level projects. The evaluators examined a Monitoring and Evaluation Framework already developed for the

national strategy and identified a range of outcome areas and indicators used. They then used these to inform the development of a Monitoring and Evaluation Framework for the state-based program, and on a simplified basis, for application to the individual projects funded within the state. In doing so, they checked on the availability of, and ability to collect, data at the state and local levels. Three Cascading Monitoring and Evaluation Frameworks were therefore in operation, including a preexisting framework for the national level and two related Frameworks developed with the assistance of the evaluator for the state and local levels, respectively.

Although the two Frameworks developed were considered useful, once implemented, some issues were experienced. Unexpected constraints arose as to the availability of data at the state level, and it appeared that some partner organizations had exaggerated their ability to collect and analyze it. State-level personnel, together with the evaluators, therefore discussed these matters with national-level personnel and negotiated some changes in the number and scope of performance indicators to be used. This outcome was seen as particularly productive at the state level with personnel feeling more empowered to enter into constructive dialogue with national-level staff. Previously, performance indicators were perceived as imposed from outside, often creating unrealistic data burdens for funded projects. Data gathered were also viewed as not always relevant or useful. The net result was a set of cascading and agreed Monitoring and Evaluation Frameworks that linked the national-level strategy, the state-level program, and the range of funded state projects.

## WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN MONITORING AND EVALUATION?

Program evaluation represents an area of professional practice concerned with the evaluation of programs. As a broad practice area, and as reflected in the approach taken in this text, it encompasses the two specific functions of monitoring and evaluation. These functions, both individually and in a mutually reinforcing manner, contribute to the effectiveness of program evaluation. Monitoring and evaluation functions are unified in both employing social research methods to undertake systematic investigations and, as advanced in this text, serving to answer a common set of evaluation questions. Despite this commonality, the role and functions of monitoring and evaluation are distinct, and careful differentiation is

required to maintain clarity and efficacy within a monitoring and evaluation system guided by a Monitoring and Evaluation Framework. The predominant focus of monitoring is on tracking program implementation and progress, including program activities and processes, outputs produced, and initial outcomes achieved. Monitoring focuses on both what is being done in a program and how it is being done, serving as a means to identify any corrective action that is necessary. Predetermined performance indicators and targets are often used as an important point of reference for monitoring. Monitoring is primarily used to support management and accountability purposes.

Evaluation, by contrast, moves beyond the tracking focus of monitoring. Its predominant orientation is on forming judgments about program performance. Evaluation functions are undertaken periodically and sometimes more episodically. The analysis conducted as part of evaluation is usually based on the synthesis of a range of data, including that gained through monitoring. Evaluation is concerned with identifying a deeper and nuanced understanding of change and issues associated with a program and developing explanations for what is identified. Based on these assessments, evaluation commonly involves making judgments in relation to the program and also formulating conclusions and recommendations for the future. Evaluation aims to inform policy and program development based on reflection and learning. Monitoring and evaluation functions take many different forms in practice and are adapted for application to a range of different contexts.

For the purpose of this text *monitoring* is defined as

the planned, continuous and systematic collection and analysis of program information able to provide management and key stakeholders with an indication of the extent of progress in implementation, and in relation to program performance against stated objectives and expectations.

Definitions of evaluation abound in the literature and continue to evolve. To avoid redefining the term evaluation, the text has drawn from the foundation work of Scriven (1991), drawing from his classic definition of evaluation. In this text, *evaluation* is defined as

the planned, periodic and systematic determination of the quality and value of a program, with summative judgment as to the achievement of a program's goals and objectives.

The process of evaluation builds on monitoring information to identify the degree to which outcomes and longer term impacts have resulted and objectives

have been achieved. Evaluation identifies approaches that worked well and those that did not, reasons for success or failure, and learning from both. Evaluation undertakes broad inquiry into the processes of implementation, determining its level of success and any associated issues. The evaluation process also provides a level of judgment in relation to the program overall.

Evaluations can take place formatively or summatively or both. An evaluation is considered formative when it adopts a focus on program processes and implementation with the aim of improving program design and future performance. In contrast, summative evaluations are particularly concerned with making judgments about a program's overall performance and are thus more focused on the identification of program results, usually at the end of a program's life. However, evaluations may also be constructed to be more or less formative or summative and carried out at different stages of a program's life cycle, depending on the context and need for specific types of information. In this text, both formative and summative evaluations are regarded as aspects of the broader construct of program evaluation.

The key differences between monitoring and evaluation are summarized in Table 1.1.

**Table 1.1**  Monitoring and Evaluation Functions

|  | *Monitoring* | *Evaluation* |
|---|---|---|
| **Main Agents** | • Managers and program staff | • Evaluators working with key stakeholders including program staff |
| **Main Interests** | • Support management decision making<br>• Internal and external accountability | • Learning for policy and program improvement, including for more strategic decision making |
| **Timing** | • Continuous, timely | • Periodic, less timely, and less regular |
| **Scope** | • Implementation, including day-to-day activities, what the program produces (outputs), and immediate outcomes<br>• Whether the program is implemented to plan (fidelity)<br>• Use of funds and other program resources, including staff | • Achievement of objectives<br>• Changes at outcome and impact levels and levels of attribution to program<br>• How well program resources were used<br>• Program fit to context, stakeholder needs, and policy environment |

*(Continued)*

**Table 1.1**   (Continued)

|  | *Monitoring* | *Evaluation* |
|---|---|---|
|  | • Level of engagement and immediate responses of stakeholders to program<br>• Immediate developments in program policy context and environment<br>• Performance against indicators and targets | • Stakeholder engagement and reactions<br>• Overall quality and value of program<br>• Likelihood of continuation of benefits from the program |
| **Resourcing** | • Embedded as part of management processes | • Usually requires dedicated resources as part of overall program budget |
| **Measures** | • Indicators and targets<br>• Often uses only one method to measure each variable | • Criteria and standards<br>• Generally multimethod in approach within a more rigorous methodological design |
| **Reasons for Progress or Change** | • Not able to explain why or why not performance areas were achieved | • Attempts to explain reasons for achievement or nonachievement of performance areas (including those covered by indicators and targets) |
| **Attribution** | • Does not deal with issues of attribution | • Attempts to identify contribution |
| **Conclusions** | • Program progress and performance issues | • Lessons learned, what has worked and what has not, with recommendations for program improvement |
| **Reporting** | • Regular reporting (e.g., quarterly, annually)—often based on funder requirements<br>• Simpler reporting formats used such as tables and charts | • Reporting at agreed intervals including midterm and end term<br>• Detailed evaluation reports |

**Practice Example**

### Designing a Monitoring and Evaluation Framework to Guide Routine Monitoring and Periodic Evaluation

A Monitoring and Evaluation Framework was designed for a national community health program delivering services to Indigenous communities. In this program, a range of monitoring data was routinely collected. Such

data included demographic patterns and trends in the Indigenous com-munities, administrative data related to service delivery and utilization, and accountability data related to delivery of program outputs. However, the comprehensiveness, analysis, and use of the monitoring data were limited. The development of a Monitoring and Evaluation Framework involved determining program theory and program logic, which then informed identification of the evaluation questions. The existing monitor-ing data were aligned against the evaluation questions. This provided clarity for the program in highlighting how existing monitoring data could be used, while also identifying gaps in both existing data and associated knowledge about program performance. Significant data gaps identified included limited available information on service user characteristics and satisfaction with service delivery. These gaps would be filled by monitoring and complementary evaluation activities. Greater focus would be placed on the collection of monitoring data related to service user characteristics. Evaluation would particularly add value in providing explanations and deeper understanding about the issues experienced by service users and their satisfaction with services used. The Monitoring and Evaluation Framework that was developed provided focus for this complex community health program and enabled it to better track implementation, assess results, and use learning to adjust program design.

## WHAT ARE THE COMPLEMENTARITIES BETWEEN MONITORING AND EVALUATION?

Promoting a fit between monitoring and evaluation makes perfect sense. Orga-nizations that manage and implement programs benefit from the information that monitoring provides about progress in implementation of a program and initial outcomes produced. Monitoring results can be compiled into progress reports for senior managers, funders, and other stakeholders. The complemen-tary role of evaluation is to inform program development and support learning. Deeper investigations and assessments made against agreed criteria, which are intrinsic to evaluation, will show how the program model can be improved and highlight the reasons for success or otherwise in a range of performance areas.

Despite the compelling rationale for complementarity, historically there has often been an uncomfortable fit between monitoring and evaluation functions. Organizations striving to produce an integrated approach to monitoring and

evaluation have been challenged by practice barriers where the personnel who undertake monitoring and evaluation may derive from different disciplinary backgrounds and often work separately. The historical separation of monitoring and evaluation into two camps can appear to be reinforced by the different epistemologies and end purposes of these practices, often depicted as the difference between trying to prove or to improve. While the results of monitoring have immediate application in the context of program implementation, evaluation "has a deeper heuristic and penetrating nature" (Nielsen & Ejler, 2008, p. 176). Evaluation has the bolder, but necessary, role of questioning the context, the manner in which implementation is undertaken, and the value of results achieved.

Given the earlier, it is unsurprising that some discontent and critique punctuate the relationship between monitoring and evaluation. Monitoring is a process that often disappoints evaluators. Good monitoring requires sustained organizational capacity for the production and use of performance information. Where this is absent, underdeveloped monitoring systems compromise the validity and reliability of the information collected. A compounding problem occurs in the case of overengineered monitoring systems with overambitious or too numerous indicators that overextend the organization's capacity and resources to collect the requisite data. This may reflect a top-down orientation in the development of monitoring systems that are out of sync with timelines and those involved with providing, collecting, or ultimately using the desired information (Chen, 2005; Nielsen & Hunter, 2013). Such trends reinforce a need to not only improve the quality of monitoring undertaken but, for evaluators, to also question data quality in performance management, to test data validity, and to provide a complementary understanding of program benefits (Nielsen & Hunter, 2013).

Evaluations, by contrast, can disappoint managers as they are not always able to provide timely, readily available, and usable information to guide operational decision making. Evaluation reports and findings are not necessarily produced in an accessible format. Evaluations are often conducted retrospectively and not well synchronized with significant program milestones, budget cycles, or other decision points (Nielsen & Ejler, 2008). Evaluations are therefore often considered to provide "too much information, too late to inform and improve management programming decisions" (Nielsen & Ejler, 2008, p. 180). Furthermore, undertaking evaluations can pose a cost burden for smaller scale programs that are not able to develop discrete budgets for evaluation. Managers may thus prioritize monitoring over evaluation functions.

Efforts to address constraints in the use of evaluation have focused on refining its practice so that it is more compatible with management practices and information needs. Related initiatives include focusing evaluation to address

emerging organizational strategic needs (Dudding & Nielsen, 2013); promoting an organizational culture where monitoring and evaluation results are shared amongst managers; and development of accessible, reliable databases which are a common reference point for both monitoring and evaluation functions (Boll & Høeberg, 2013).

Overall, the literature identifies a need to explore the different ways that monitoring and evaluation functions can effectively complement each other, and on this basis, look for means to enhance their interaction. Analyses of complementarity between performance measurement and evaluation have covered the public, not-for-profit, and international development sectors including a focus on organizational and policy dimensions (Boll & Høeberg, 2013; Dudding & Nielsen, 2013; Nielsen & Ejler, 2008; Nielsen & Hunter, 2013; Rist, 2006). Across these analyses, five different types of complementarity have been identified, as summarized in Table 1.2.

**Table 1.2**   Complementarity Between Performance Measurement and Evaluation

| *Types of Complementarity* | |
|---|---|
| Sequential | • Monitoring generates questions to be answered in evaluation, and evaluation studies identify areas that require future monitoring. |
| Informational | • Monitoring and evaluation draw on the same data sources but ask different questions and frame different analyses. |
| Organizational | • Monitoring and evaluation data operate in collaboration with both sources of information used, often channeled through the same administrative unit. |
| Methodological | • Monitoring and evaluation share similar processes and tools for structuring and planning, obtaining data, analyzing, and making judgments. |
| Hierarchical | • Performance data are used at various levels of the delivery chain, at times for monitoring and at times for evaluation. |
| Integrative | • Monitoring and evaluation functions are integrated through a focus on answering a common set of framing evaluation questions. Information from both monitoring and evaluation is combined to answer the evaluation questions. This unity of focus avoids the development of parallel, unrelated systems.<br>• Monitoring and evaluation approaches are designed at one time and unified within a shared Monitoring and Evaluation Framework.<br>• Monitoring and evaluation draw from a pool of common methods, tools, and analytical skills, with choices made according to need, timing, expertise, resources, and feasibility. |

As identified earlier, the forms of complementarity between monitoring (performance measurement) and evaluation are diverse. Some are functional and others contextual in orientation, with some particularly applicable to larger organizational and geographic units. Drawing on the preceding, this text supports the need to identify a form of complementarity that more closely aligns to the development of an overarching Monitoring and Evaluation Framework that includes both monitoring and evaluation functions, integrated by their reference to a common set of evaluation questions and the use of common data collection methods, tools, and skills. The resultant form of complementarity is distinguished by its integrated and synergistic characteristics.

This integrative approach, as advanced in this text, is consistent with calls for mutual reinforcement between the two practices. As Nielsen and Hunter (2013, p. 121) note, "complementarity is a two-way street; monitoring practices may inform evaluation studies and *vice versa*." For assessment of a program, monitoring provides an inadequate source of information on its own. However, when appropriately robust, and correctly aligned, monitoring provides the necessary basis for evaluation. Nielsen and Ejler reflect this intent:

> Indeed, monitoring and evaluation studies should be seen as closely interlinked and complementary; monitoring providing data for evaluation and thus constituting one of several data sources, and evaluation being the necessary add-on to monitoring in order to focus on causality and deeper explanations conducted from time to time to qualify monitoring data. (2008, p. 181)

The alignment of both practices is strengthened by a common focus on answering evaluation questions. By adopting this integrated approach, functions of accountability and learning may coexist more comfortably. This approach averts the rift in practice between accountability through monitoring alone and program development based on evaluation learnings occurring as an afterthought or add-on to monitoring.

An integrated approach to the use of monitoring and evaluation functions represents a significant bonus to the development of a broader performance management system. This is evidenced in more direct and efficient harnessing of different kinds of performance information and improving synergy with other performance management functions, such as program planning. These relationships are highlighted in Figure 1.2.

**Figure 1.2** Performance Management
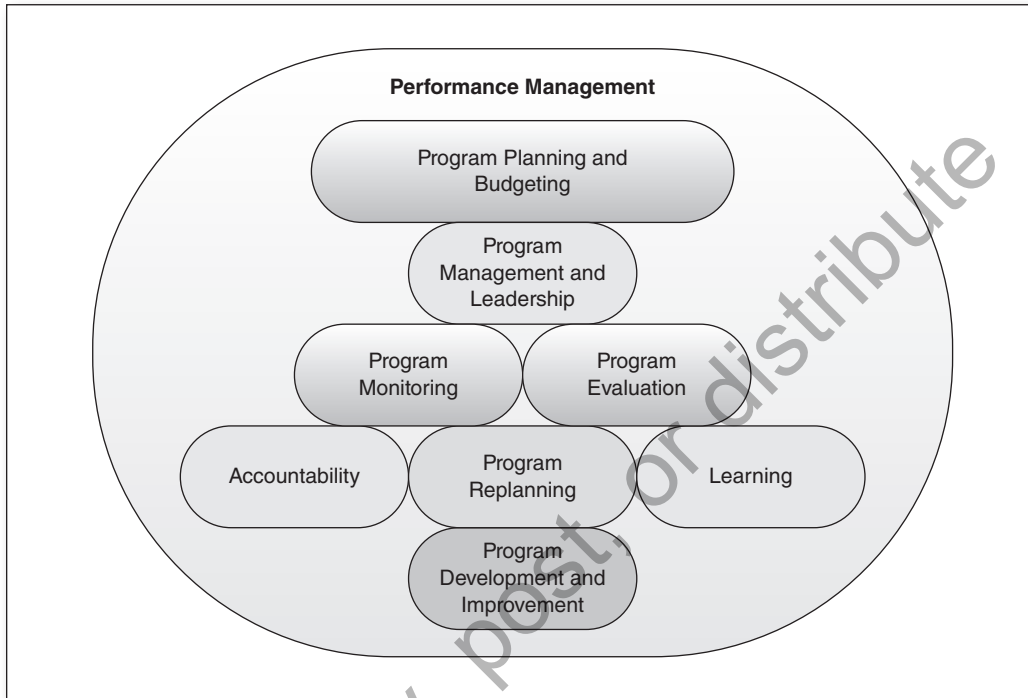


## WHAT IS INCLUDED IN A MONITORING AND EVALUATION FRAMEWORK?

The following reflect the major content areas of a Monitoring and Evaluation Framework and also represent the basis for a Table of Contents to guide its development:

1. *Introduction to the Framework* sets out the context and background to the program, providing a profile of the program and its aims and objectives. The Introduction should identify the parameters and functions of the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework and the approach adopted to promote participation of stakeholders.

2. *Program Theory and Program Logic* indicates the intended causal connections and relationships between a program's efforts and the intended

results. In practice, some variations in approach and terminology are found in this area, which may have implications for the degree and manner in which a Monitoring and Evaluation Framework is expected to foreshadow the results of a program.
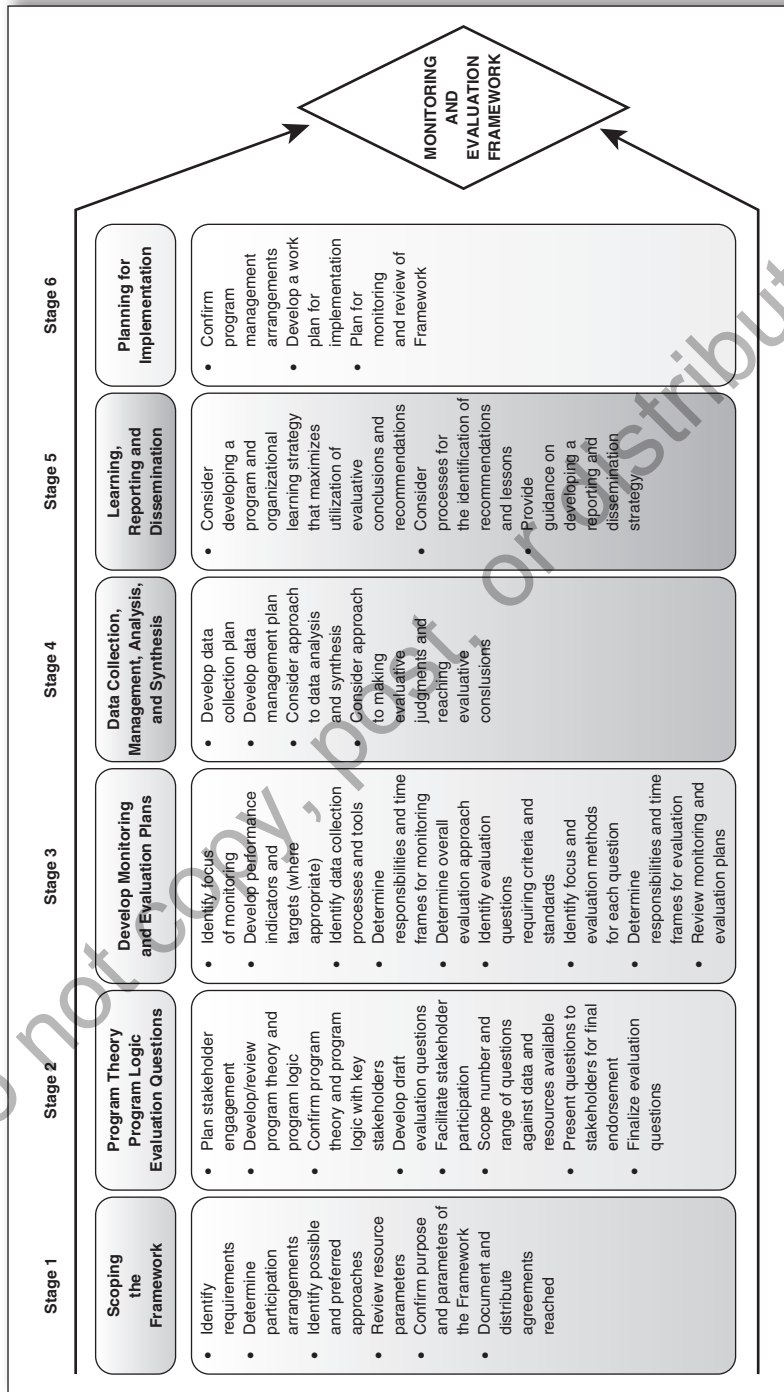
3. *Evaluation Questions* outline the areas of investigation that will structure the monitoring and evaluation functions, usually classified under domains, typically those of appropriateness, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability.

4. *The Monitoring Plan* outlines what is to be monitored, and how, against the agreed evaluation questions.

5. *The Evaluation Plan* outlines what is to be evaluated, and how, in reference to the evaluation questions. It should articulate with and refer to the Monitoring Plan.

6. *Data Collection, Management, and Analysis* comprises a data collection plan, data management plan, and guidance for data analysis and synthesis.

7. *Reporting and Communication Strategy* details the approach to producing and disseminating monitoring and evaluation reports for accountability and learning in order to guide program implementation and inform decision making.

8. *Implementation* identifies how the framework will be put into practice through development of a work plan.

9. *Data Collection and Reporting Formats* includes the tools and proformas that have been developed for data collection and reporting, usually included as appendices to the main document.

## FORMAT AND LAYOUT OF THE TEXT

The six main stages involved in developing a Monitoring and Evaluation Framework each involve associated steps, as shown in Figure 1.3. Together these provide a structure for the text as detailed in Table 1.3. One or two chapters are devoted to each stage. Additionally, two initial chapters provide an introduction and outline foundation concepts.

**Figure 1.3** Stages in Development of a Monitoring and Evaluation Framework

| Stage 1 | Stage 2 | Stage 3 | Stage 4 | Stage 5 | Stage 6 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Scoping the Framework** | **Program Theory Program Logic Evaluation Questions** | **Develop Monitoring and Evaluation Plans** | **Data Collection, Management, Analysis, and Synthesis** | **Learning, Reporting and Dissemination** | **Planning for Implementation** |
| • Identify requirements<br>• Determine participation arrangements<br>• Identify possible and preferred approaches<br>• Review resource parameters<br>• Confirm purpose and parameters of the Framework<br>• Document and distribute agreements reached | • Plan stakeholder engagement<br>• Develop/review program theory and program logic<br>• Confirm program theory and program logic with key stakeholders<br>• Develop draft evaluation questions<br>• Facilitate stakeholder participation<br>• Scope number and range of questions against data and resources available<br>• Present questions to stakeholders for final endorsement<br>• Finalize evaluation questions | • Identify focus of monitoring<br>• Develop performance indicators and targets (where appropriate)<br>• Identify data collection processes and tools<br>• Determine responsibilities and time frames for monitoring<br>• Determine overall evaluation approach<br>• Identify evaluation questions requiring criteria and standards<br>• Identify focus and evaluation methods for each question<br>• Determine responsibilities and time frames for evaluation<br>• Review monitoring and evaluation plans | • Develop data collection plan<br>• Develop data management plan<br>• Consider approach to data analysis and synthesis<br>• Consider approach to making evaluative judgments and reaching evaluative conclusions | • Consider developing a program and organizational learning strategy that maximizes utilization of evaluative conclusions and recommendations<br>• Consider processes for the identification of recommendations and lessons<br>• Provide guidance on developing a reporting and dissemination strategy | • Confirm program management arrangements<br>• Develop a work plan for implementation<br>• Plan for monitoring and review of Framework |

**MONITORING AND EVALUATION FRAMEWORK**

**Table 1.3**  Text Structure

| Introduction and Foundation Concepts | | Chapters 1&2 |
|---|---|---|
| Introduction | | Chapter 1 |
| Foundation Concepts | | Chapter 2 |
| *Stage 1: Scoping the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework* | | *Chapter 3* |
| *Steps* | | |
| 1 | **Identify requirements** | • Examine documentation that provides context and background to the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework.<br>• Clarify with the core program team their expectations, needs, and priorities.<br>• Elicit views as to the purpose of the Framework and its focus.<br>• Clarify audiences and information needs of key stakeholders.<br>• Clarify time frames for development and implementation of the Framework, including for main deliverables such as reports. |
| 2 | **Determine participation arrangements** | • Identify stakeholders who should be involved in the development and implementation of the Framework or involved as audiences for its results.<br>• Determine roles for key stakeholders.<br>• Plan for participation and how it is to occur.<br>• Brief key stakeholders on context and background to the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework.<br>• Elicit stakeholder requirements and expectations.<br>• Identify and address stakeholder needs for evaluation capacity development. |
| 3 | **Identify possible and preferred approaches** | • Elicit the preferred (and often differing) evaluation approaches of all involved parties, including the paradigms, values, and methods they would ideally like to see reflected in the Framework.<br>• Consider the merits and limitations of possible approaches and methods canvassed.<br>• Reach consensus as to the preferred approaches, paradigms, methods, and values to be considered and agreed upon following the development of the agreed evaluation questions. |
| 4 | **Review resource parameters** | • Assess system capabilities for generating and managing both routine monitoring and periodic evaluation data.<br>• Scope budget and other available resources.<br>• Reconcile scope of the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework to budget and available resources and data. |
| 5 | **Confirm purpose and parameters of the Framework** | • Confirm the purpose, focus, and scope of the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework.<br>• Document and distribute agreements reached. |

| Stage 2: Foundations for the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework | | Chapters 4&5 |
|---|---|---|
| Develop Program Theory and Program Logic | | Chapter 4 |
| Steps | | |
| 1 | **Plan stakeholder engagement strategy** | • Establish a process for engaging key stakeholders in development of the program theory and the program logic, such as convening a stakeholder workshop, forum, or other arrangement. |
| 2 | **Develop program theory** | • Convene appropriate participatory arrangements with key stakeholders.<br>• Identify sources of information to be used in developing the program theory, such as literature, research, studies, practice experience, and other evidence.<br>• Identify key assumptions to be tested during the evaluation.<br>• Develop draft program theory in conjunction with key stakeholders. |
| 3 | **Develop program logic** | • Convene appropriate participatory arrangements with key stakeholders.<br>• Identify the key assumptions and outcome areas to be tested during the evaluation.<br>• Develop program logic with key stakeholders and with reference to the program theory. |
| 4 | **Confirm program theory and logic with key stakeholders** | • Present the program theory to key stakeholders to determine its<br>   ○ plausibility and consistency with the evidence base, and<br>   ○ coherence, logical flow, and the clarity of its communication.<br>• Confirm the program theory and the program logic as key reference points for developing the evaluation questions for the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework. |
| Develop Evaluation Questions | | Chapter 5 |
| Steps | | |
| 1 | **Develop draft evaluation questions** | • Draw on prior clarification as to the purpose of the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework.<br>• Review documentation that provides context and background to the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework.<br>• Develop an initial set of evaluation questions using the five evaluation domains to prompt areas of investigation and categorize questions generated. |

*(Continued)*

**Table 1.3**  (Continued)

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | | • Consider the relative significance of each domain given the purpose of the Framework.<br>• Use the program theory and the program logic and other available materials to assist in identification of the evaluation questions including those that focus on achievement of critical results areas. |
| 2 | Facilitate stakeholder participation | • Facilitate broad stakeholder engagement in selecting and agreeing on evaluation questions. This ideally will involve a Monitoring and Evaluation Planning Workshop held at an early opportunity. |
| 3 | Scope number and range of questions against data and resources available | • Scope data availability to respond to proposed evaluation questions.<br>• Scope the number and range of questions proposed against the resources available, including budget, staff availability, and capacity for monitoring and evaluation. |
| 4 | Present questions to stakeholders for final endorsement | • Re-present evaluation questions to the key stakeholders involved in Step 2 for final endorsement. |
| 5 | Finalize evaluation questions | • Develop a final agreed set of evaluation questions for inclusion in the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework. |

| | |
|---|---|
| *Stage 3: Develop Monitoring and Evaluation Plans* | *Chapters 6&7* |
| *Develop the Monitoring Plan* | *Chapter 6* |

| *Steps* | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | **Identify focus** | • Identify focus of monitoring in order to provide answers for evaluation questions. |
| 2 | **Develop performance indicators and targets** | • Develop performance indicators and targets where these are appropriate to the questions.<br>• Identify relevant baselines, as appropriate for conditions to which indicators refer. |
| 3 | **Identify data collection processes and tools** | • Identify data collection processes and tools that will require development. |
| 4 | **Determine responsibilities and time frames** | • Determine responsibilities and time frames for the implementation of monitoring activities. |

| *Develop the Evaluation Plan* | | Chapter 7 |
|---|---|---|
| *Steps* | | |
| 1 | **Determine overall evaluation approach** | • Select the most suitable approach and methods to be adopted from the range of options available.<br>• Consider evaluation principles and standards for guidance.<br>• Identify ethical issues that may emerge during the implementation of the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework. |
| 2 | **Identify evaluation questions requiring criteria and standards** | • Identify evaluation questions that require criteria and standards.<br>• Identify the headline evaluation questions that relate to determining a program's quality and value.<br>• Develop criteria for determining quality and value.<br>• Develop standards against the criteria.<br>• Develop an evaluation rubric that includes the criteria and standards. |
| 3 | **Identify focus of evaluation and methods for each question** | • Consider types of evaluative processes that will augment monitoring conducted in order to answer the evaluation question.<br>• With reference to each evaluation question, identify the focus of evaluation and the types of evaluation methods to be used.<br>• Identify the parameters of selected methods, specifying the breadth and depth of the inquiry to be conducted. |
| 4 | **Determine responsibilities and time frame** | • Determine responsibilities for undertaking evaluation activities and whether they will be internally or externally conducted.<br>• Identify agreed intervals and time frames for implementation of the Evaluation Plan. |
| 5 | **Review the Monitoring and Evaluation Plans** | • Reassess capacity for data collection across the Framework in its entirety, including routine monitoring and periodic evaluation. |
| *Stage 4: Data Collection, Management, Analysis, and Synthesis* | | Chapter 8 |
| *Steps* | | |
| 1 | **Develop data collection plan** | • Confirm data needs for implementation of the Monitoring Plan and the Evaluation Plan.<br>• Determine which data are already collected by the program.<br>• Identify additional types of data collection methods to be used.<br>• Identify the focus of each method, sampling approaches, implementation requirements, and any potential ethical issues.<br>• Determine specifications for the development of data collection tools. |

*(Continued)*

**Table 1.3** (Continued)

| 2 | Develop data management plan | <ul><li>Identify the range of data to be managed.</li><li>Identify requirements for database systems.</li><li>Determine how data analysis will be undertaken.</li><li>Consider required data reports and their contents.</li><li>Consider and plan for the development of staff capacity for data management.</li><li>Plan for regular reviews of the data system.</li></ul> |
|---|---|---|
| 3 | Consider approach to data synthesis | <ul><li>Consider how monitoring and evaluation data will be integrated and who will be responsible for undertaking data synthesis.</li><li>Consider how synthesized data will be used to assess performance against indicators and targets, and against criteria and standards, and determine who will be responsible for undertaking such synthesis.</li></ul> |
| 4 | Consider approach to making evaluative judgments and reaching evaluative conclusions | <ul><li>Consider how synthesized data can be used to form evaluative judgments and who will be responsible for undertaking this.</li><li>Consider how evaluative judgments made translate to the identification of evaluative conclusions.</li><li>Ensure that the range of evaluative conclusions developed can lead to an overall conclusion in relation to the program.</li></ul> |

| *Stage 5: Learning, Reporting, and Dissemination* | | *Chapter 9* |
|---|---|---|
| *Steps* | | |
| 1 | Consider developing or refining a learning strategy for the program that maximizes use of conclusions, recommendations, and lessons | <ul><li>Consider developing or refining a learning strategy for the program that guides the learning process, identifying when and how learning is expected to occur.</li><li>Ensure that the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework identifies and promotes opportunities for reflection and learning. This includes attention to<ul><li>○ linking learning to program improvement and to redesign where required,</li><li>○ identification of transferable recommendations and lessons for the benefit of other programs and contexts, and</li><li>○ increasing opportunities for the use and influence of conclusions, recommendations, and lessons.</li></ul></li></ul> |
| 2 | Consider processes for the identification of recommendations and lessons | <ul><li>Consider how to translate conclusions into recommendations and lessons that will be useful and used.</li><li>Scope the need for recommendations, their nature, and number.</li><li>Consider how to best engage stakeholders in identification of recommendations and lessons without compromising independence or objectivity.</li></ul> |

| 3 | Provide guidance on developing a reporting and dissemination strategy | <ul><li>Develop a reporting and dissemination strategy that best supports potential use of evaluative conclusions, implementable recommendations, and useful lessons.</li><li>Provide guidance for the production of reports and effective reporting processes.</li><li>Give consideration to different types of reports and their audiences.</li><li>Consider best methods for communicating messages to different audiences.</li></ul> |
|---|---|---|
| *Stage 6: Planning For Implementation of the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework* | | *Chapter 10* |
| *Steps* | | |
| 1 | Confirm program management arrangements | <ul><li>Provide guidance regarding program and organizational elements required for effective operation of monitoring and evaluation functions, as identified in the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework. These include the areas of management of key stakeholder relationships, personnel management, financial management, information technology, and administrative systems.</li><li>Identify any specific areas of program or organizational capacity development required to implement the Framework.</li><li>Provide guidance regarding any necessary adjustment or development of program guidelines and procedures to support implementation of the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework.</li></ul> |
| 2 | Develop a work plan for implementation | <ul><li>Develop a work plan for implementation of the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework. This should identify required activities, when they are to be undertaken, and who is responsible for them. Use a Gantt chart or similar planning tool for this purpose.</li></ul> |
| 3 | Plan for monitoring and review of the Framework | <ul><li>Determine how the implementation of the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework will be monitored and reviewed. Include arrangements that will examine the relevance of the content and organization of the Framework as well as the effectiveness and efficiency of its implementation.</li><li>Build arrangements for ongoing monitoring and periodic review of the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework into the work plan. Include arrangements for periodic updating of the Framework and continued focus on developing program and organizational capacity for monitoring and evaluation as required.</li></ul> |