
QUICK REFERENCE

MONITORING, EVALUATION, AND LEARNING

Follow these steps to develop a monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) system that clearly demonstrates to USAID how you are implementing and improving your activity.

1 UNDERSTAND EXPECTATIONS

Review your award's MEL requirements and deadlines. Usually, a MEL plan must be completed within 90 days of signing the award agreement. Work with your Agreement Officer's Representative (AOR) or Contracting Officer's Representative (COR) to determine what information will best meet both USAID's expectations and your organization's needs.

2 PREPARE YOUR MEL PLAN

In your MEL plan, explain your activity and its overall objectives and results. Describe how you will collect and maintain data, analyze that information, and integrate what you learn into activity improvements. Once the plan is approved, update it regularly.

3 MONITOR RELEVANT INDICATORS

Focus on the information that needs to be collected to track progress toward your activity's objectives:

- **Output indicators** measure immediate results that can be directly attributed to your work, such as the number of farmers trained in production practices.
- **Outcome indicators** track longer-term changes that you may influence but do not directly control, such as improved crop yields based on the use of new farming technology.

4 GATHER THE EVIDENCE

Use two main types of data from your MEL system for progress reports:

- **Quantitative data** is information presented as numbers to show amounts, such as workshop participation rates or number of households reached.
- **Qualitative data** includes information presented as words and pictures to convey contextual details about selected approaches, as well as feedback such as stakeholder interviews and staff insights about activities.

5 ENSURE DATA QUALITY

Information you collect for each indicator needs to be entered carefully into your system so that you can trust it for analysis and use. Take steps to make sure your data is valid, free of bias or error; precise, reliable, and timely.

6 ASSESS YOUR PROGRESS

Use the information in your MEL system to review what is working well and what you need to adjust. As you adapt your approach, review earlier decisions about activity planning and data collection to ensure that they continue to be effective.

7 ADAPT TO IMPROVE

Incorporate collaborating, learning, and adapting (CLA) practices to strengthen the way your team learns from experiences. These practices motivate staff to seek feedback from each other and from participants to improve.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

[How-To Note: Activity Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning \(MEL\) Plan \(PDF\)](#)

[USAID Learning Lab's Monitoring Toolkit](#)

[USAID Learning Lab's Evaluation Toolkit](#)

[USAID Learning Lab's CLA Toolkit](#)

[“Preparing Progress Reports” module](#)