

Organizational M&E Capacity Assessment and Action Planning Tool

Program data helps us make informed decisions about the services we deliver. However, to be useful, data needs to be of good quality (relevant, valid, accurate, complete, and timely). Moreover, processes must be in place to regularly analyze and act upon this data and to feed learning back into program design and service delivery. Switchboard proposes eight monitoring and evaluation (M&E) standards that can help your program or organization collect and effectively use quality data:

Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Standards

1. During preparation and design, we develop program strategies that have clearly articulated objectives and logical causality, are client-informed, and build on available learning and evidence.
2. During preparation and design, we put in place M&E plans that are appropriate and adequately resourced.
3. During planning/start-up, we establish detailed measurement frameworks, assign responsibilities, and create a schedule for monitoring and analysis.
4. During planning/start-up, we establish appropriate data collection and management methods that allow us to access and analyze data in a timely and efficient manner while safeguarding clients.
5. During planning/start-up, we apply appropriate data collection and management methods to collect reliable and relevant information; we make this information accessible to the right people at the right time.
6. We conduct regular and systematic data-informed analysis of project progress, quality, and appropriateness; we act on findings during implementation to improve programming.
7. During project implementation, we capture lessons learned from ongoing project monitoring and evaluation activities and critique, store, and share them.
8. At the end of the project, we capture, analyze, and share project knowledge for continuous refinement of best programmatic practice.

This tool can help your organization assess the extent to which you are currently meeting these standards and identify your priority areas for capacity building or action. Use this tool during team workshops or meetings as a starting point for reflection, discussion, and action planning related to your organization's current M&E capacities and processes.

Section I: Organization M&E Capacity Assessment

M&E Standard 1: During preparation and design, we develop program strategies that have clearly articulated objectives and logical causality, are client-informed, and build on available learning and evidence.

#	Benchmark:	Always or usually=2	Sometimes=1	Never or almost never=0	Should meeting this benchmark be a priority for your organization? (if yes, what support would be needed, if any)
1.1	For each project/program, we create a theory of change.				
1.2	We base theories of change on available evidence, available data, needs assessments, client preferences, aspirations and expectations, & learning from past projects.				
1.3	Before developing logframes and M&E plans, we identify what we want to learn from or during the project.				
1.4	We develop logframes with SMART objectives, outcomes, and outputs.				
				Total score for this standard:	



M&E Standard 2: During preparation and design, we put in place M&E plans that are appropriate and adequately resourced.

#	Benchmark:	Always or usually=2	Sometimes=1	Never or almost never=0	Should meeting this benchmark be a priority for your organization? (if yes, what support would be needed, if any)
2.1	Our logframes include indicators that are specific .				
2.2	Our logframes include indicators that are measurable .				
2.3	Our logframes include indicators that are attainable .				
2.4	Our logframes include indicators that are relevant .				
2.5	Our logframes include indicators that are timebound .				
2.6	Our logframes include indicators that allow us to assess program quality.				
2.7	We have clear plans for calculating our indicators (e.g., numerators and denominators have been defined where applicable).				
2.8	During project planning, we determine how data will be collected, managed, analyzed, and used based on our indicators.				
2.9	During project planning, we consider how demographic, culture, literacy and other factors may influence data collection processes.				
2.10	If/when we plan program evaluations, we clearly define the purpose/intended use of the evaluation and write clear, relevant evaluation questions that are feasible.				
2.11	We allocate sufficient resources for project monitoring and evaluation activities and personnel in each project budget.				
Total score for this standard:					



M&E Standard 3: During planning/start-up, we establish detailed measurement frameworks, assign responsibilities, and create a schedule for monitoring and analysis.

#	Benchmark:	Always or usually=2	Sometimes=1	Never or almost never=0	Should meeting this benchmark be a priority for your organization? (if yes, what support would be needed, if any)
3.1	For each program/project, we establish outcome and output measurement frameworks that outline: (1) indicators and data elements required to calculate the indicators; (2) how data will be disaggregated; (3) how indicators will be calculated; (4) what data collection tools will be used; (5) when data will be collected; (6) who will collect the data; and (7) the purpose of the data/how it will be used.				
3.2	We have a flow chart mapping the flow of data and describing roles and responsibilities in relation to its collection, entry, sharing, and analysis.				
3.3	We make sure project staff are informed of their responsibilities related to the collection, management, analysis, and use of data, including their monitoring and evaluation responsibilities (with responsibilities included in job descriptions and performance objectives where appropriate).				
3.4	We include appropriate monitoring and evaluation activities in our project workplans (including data collection activities, regular analysis and action planning meetings, data quality audits, activities related to reporting or sharing information with donors and other stakeholders, end of project evaluations) <i>or</i> we create stand-alone M&E workplans for each project.				
		Total score for this standard:			



M&E Standard 4: During planning/start-up, we establish appropriate data collection and management methods that allow us to access and analyze data in a timely and efficient manner while safeguarding clients.

#	Benchmark:	Always or usually=2	Sometimes=1	Never or almost never=0	Should meeting this benchmark be a priority for your organization? (if yes, what support would be needed, if any)
4.1	We develop data collection tools and program electronic data collection methods in a timely manner, when applicable.				
4.2	We pilot new data collection tools before use.				
4.3	A data management/performance tracking system is in place that allows for real-time (or near real-time) review and analysis of data.				
4.4	We document possible ethical and security risks related to the collection and storage of data; we document plans for mitigating risks, including processes for obtaining informed consent and protecting confidential information.				
4.5	We have systems to prevent or deal effectively with issues of double counting of clients.				
4.6	We have systems to assess and document client eligibility for services.				
				Total score for this standard:	



M&E Standard 5: During planning/start-up, we apply appropriate data collection and management methods to collect reliable and relevant information; we make this information accessible to the right people at the right time.

#	Benchmark:	Always or usually=2	Sometimes=1	Never or almost never=0	Should meeting this benchmark be a priority for your organization? (if yes, what support would be needed, if any)
5.1	We train staff in data collection, management, and analysis. Staff understand how we will use the data we collect.				
5.2	We include staff members' fulfillment of monitoring responsibilities in performance reviews.				
5.3	Staff enter data into our data management system in a timely manner in accordance with roles and responsibilities mapping.				
5.4	Supervisors review data on a regular basis.				
5.5	For each project, we conduct data quality audits on a regular basis.				
5.6	We regularly review and update M&E workplans or M&E tasks included in general project workplans.				
5.7	We supervise and support staff to strengthen their performance on tasks related to project monitoring and evaluation.				
				Total score for this standard:	



M&E Standard 6: We conduct regular and systematic data-informed analysis of project progress, quality, and appropriateness; we act on findings during implementation to improve programming.

#	Benchmark:	Always or usually=2	Sometimes=1	Never or almost never=0	Should meeting this benchmark be a priority for your organization? (if yes, what support would be needed, if any)
6.1	We schedule and conduct data analysis and action planning meetings on a regular basis.				
6.2	We document action taken based on analysis of data and include progress reports on action points as a standing agenda item in analysis and action meetings.				
6.3	If/when we schedule formal evaluations at key points during project implementation, we carry them out as planned and use findings to refine the project as needed.				
Total score for this standard:					



M&E Standard 7: During project implementation, we capture lessons learned from ongoing project monitoring and evaluation activities and critique, store, and share them.

#	Benchmark:	Always or usually=2	sometimes=1	Never or almost never=0	Should meeting this benchmark be a priority for your organization? (if yes, what support would be needed, if any)
7.1	We provide reports to donors and stakeholders in accordance with the workplan.				
7.2	Our reports provide accurate, up-to-date information about project activities and progress towards project outcomes and objectives. The data we report aligns with indicators included in project logframe/performance management plan.				
7.3	We make time for project staff and stakeholders to systematically reflect on evaluation results (where relevant) and document knowledge gained, lessons learned, and potential resulting actions.				
		Total score for this standard:			



M&E Standard 8: At the end of the project, we capture, analyze, and share project knowledge for continuous refinement of best programmatic practice.

#	Benchmark:	Always or usually=2	Sometimes=1	Never or almost never=0	Should meeting this benchmark be a priority for your organization? (if yes, what support would be needed, if any)
8.1	We conduct end-of-project learning reviews/internal evaluations for each project, store the results in a location that is easily accessible to current and future staff, and share the results with donors and stakeholders.				
8.2	We share formal project evaluation documents and final reports to donors with appropriate stakeholders and store them in a location that is easily accessible to current and future staff.				
8.3	When lessons learned have implications for refinement of best programmatic practice, we document, store, and share them for reference during the process of future project design.				
Total score for this standard:					

Overall Score (out of 82 possible):	
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Section 2: Action Planning

After assessing your capacity against the M&E standards, what are the top three to five action areas/benchmarks that you see as priorities for improvement in your organization or program?

Priority # 1: Benchmark/action area where improvement is needed:			
Explanation of improvement needed:			
What steps need to be taken to make improvements in this area?		By whom:	By when:
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			



Priority # 2: Benchmark/action area where improvement is needed:			
Explanation of improvement needed:			
What steps need to be taken to make improvements in this area?		By whom:	By when:
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			



Priority # 3: Benchmark/action area where improvement is needed:			
Explanation of improvement needed:			
What steps need to be taken to make improvements in this area?		By whom:	By when:
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			



Priority # 4: Benchmark/action area where improvement is needed:			
Explanation of improvement needed:			
What steps need to be taken to make improvements in this area?		By whom:	By when:
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			



Priority # 5: Benchmark/action area where improvement is needed:			
Explanation of improvement needed:			
What steps need to be taken to make improvements in this area?		By whom:	By when:
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			

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