



Seven Steps to Developing a Monitoring and Evaluation Work Plan

If these elements have not already been developed, these steps may help to create a monitoring and evaluation plan.

1 Identify Program Goals and Objectives

The first step requires writing a clear statement that identifies country (site) program goals and objectives (and sometimes sub-objectives) and describes how the program expects to achieve them. A program logical model or results framework can then be easily diagrammed to establish a monitoring and evaluation plan.

The country evaluation matrix in the appendix illustrates a results framework (with sample goals, objectives, activities, indicators, sources of data and methods, periodicity, and persons responsible) to gather monitoring and evaluation data at the country level.

This framework illustrates how the role of national governments in monitoring and planning HIV prevention and care activities complements the strengths of individual projects at the local level. For example, individual projects do not often conduct impact evaluations because the results are hard to separate from those of other projects that work toward the same goals. Impact evaluation, most appropriately measured in large geographic areas, examines whether the collective efforts of numerous projects are producing the desired effect. These impacts can be measured through sero-surveillance systems (which monitor trends in HIV and STI prevalence) and through repeated behavioral risk surveys. Local organizations in direct contact with target groups should evaluate the program's implementation, rather than its outcome or impact. This demands greater concentration on quality inputs, such as training and the pre-testing of communication messages.

This framework also illustrates the time required to show progress at various levels, ranging from several months for process-level accomplishments (the training of staff) to several years for outcome- and impact-level goals.

2 Determine Monitoring and Evaluation Questions, Indicators, and Their Feasibility

In this step, monitoring and evaluation specialists and program managers identify the most important evaluation questions, which should link directly to the stated goals and objectives. Questions should come from all stakeholders, including the program managers, donors, and members of the target populations. The questions should address each group's concerns, focusing on these areas: "What do we want to know at the end of this program?" and "What do we expect to change by the end of this program?"

Framing and prioritizing monitoring and evaluation questions is sometimes difficult, especially when resources, time, and expertise are limited and where multiple stakeholders are present. Monitoring and evaluation questions may require revision later in the plan development process.

3 Determine Monitoring and Evaluation Methodology—Monitoring the Process and Evaluating the Effects

This step should include the monitoring and evaluation methods, data collection methods and tools, analysis plan, and an overall timeline.

It is crucial to clearly spell out how data will be collected to answer the monitoring and evaluation questions. The planning team determines the appropriate monitoring and evaluation methods, outcome measures or indicators, information needs, and the methods by which the data will be gathered and analyzed. A plan must be developed to collect and process data and to maintain an accessible data system.

The plan should address the following issues: What information needs to be monitored? How will the information be collected? How will it be recorded? How will it be reported to the central office? What tools (forms) will be needed? For issues that require more sophisticated data collection, what study design will be used? Will the data be qualitative, quantitative, or a combination of the two? Which outcomes will be measured? How will the data be analyzed and disseminated?

4 Resolve Implementation Issues: Who Will Conduct Monitoring and Evaluation? How Will Existing Monitoring and Evaluation Results and Past Findings Be Used?

Once the data collection methods are established, it is important to clearly state who will be responsible for each activity. Program managers must decide: How are we really going to implement this plan? Who will report the process data and who will collect and analyze it? Who will oversee any quantitative data collection and who will be responsible for its analysis? Clearly, the success of the plan depends on the technical capacity of program staff to carry out monitoring and evaluation activities. This invariably requires technical assistance. Monitoring and evaluation specialists might be found in planning and evaluation units of the National AIDS Commission, National AIDS and STD Control Program, Census Bureau, Office of Statistics, multisectoral government ministries including Ministry of Health, academic institutions, non-governmental organizations, and private consulting firms.

It is important to identify existing data sources and other monitoring and evaluation activities, whether they have been done in the past, are ongoing, or have been sponsored by other donors. At this step, country office monitoring and evaluation specialists should determine whether other groups are planning similar evaluations and, if so, invite them to collaborate.

5 Identify Internal and External Monitoring and Evaluation Resources and Capacity

Identifying monitoring and evaluation resources means identifying not just the funds for monitoring and evaluation, but also experienced personnel who can assist in planning and conducting monitoring and evaluation activities. It also means determining the program's capacity to manage and link various databases and computer systems.

6 Develop the Monitoring and Evaluation Work Plan Matrix and Timeline

The matrix provides a format for presenting the inputs, outputs, outcomes, and impacts—and their corresponding activities—for each program objective. It summarizes the overall monitoring and evaluation plan by including a list of methods to be used in collecting the data. (An example of a matrix is presented in the appendix.) The timeline shows when each activity in the Monitoring and Evaluation Work Plan will take place.

7 Develop Plan to Disseminate and Use Evaluation Findings

The last step is planning how monitoring and evaluation results will be used, translated into program policy language, disseminated to relevant stakeholders and decision-makers, and used for ongoing program refinement. This step is not always performed, but it should be. It is extremely useful in ensuring that monitoring and evaluation findings inform program improvement and decision-making. A mechanism for providing feedback to program and evaluation planners should be built-in so that lessons learned can be applied to subsequent efforts.

This step often surfaces only when a complication at the end of the program prompts someone to ask, “How has monitoring and evaluation been implemented and how have the results been used to improve HIV prevention and care programs and policies?” If no plan was in place for disseminating monitoring and evaluation results, this question often cannot be answered because monitoring and evaluation specialists have forgotten the details or have moved on. The absence of a plan can undermine the usefulness of current monitoring and evaluation efforts and future activities. Inadequate dissemination might lead to duplicate monitoring and evaluation efforts because others are not aware of the earlier effort. It also reinforces the negative stereotype that monitoring and evaluation are not truly intended to improve programs. For these reasons, programs should include a plan for disseminating and using monitoring and evaluation results in their overall Monitoring and Evaluation Work Plan.