



Knowledge Management and Monitoring & Evaluation: Proposed Collaboration Activities across the Program Cycle

Both Knowledge Management (KM) and Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) facilitate collaborative learning, and require intentionally working with others to be successful. Despite these similarities, some confusion exists about how these two sectors should work together for stronger programming; leading to many difficulties in day-to-day program activity and overall quality and impact.

A key challenge is that M&E and KM planning is seldom done together, with increasingly negative consequences. KM is often seen as more reactive and is hardly intentionally planned for and resourced, with KM activity largely siloed within programs. And while M&E considerations are deliberately embedded in all programs (between 5-10% of total program budget is usually allocated to M&E); KM is often brought in as an afterthought or at a later stage, leading to implementation constraints for this type of activity.

These teams often work as silos within many projects/programs, resulting in obstacles such as redundancy in efforts due to limited communication and information sharing. Many implementation issues are missed without a strong M&E/KM connection. Each function usually develops different indicators, tools and systems for reporting, and with limited coordination between them, systems are often not compatible. This lack of coordination leads to limited results flow and understanding gaps between the field and HQ level. And, as there is usually very little field-level KM, useful learning gathered from M&E activities is often not recognized or applied on a project.

These challenges have led to a growing need for sustained and coordinated collaboration between project-level KM and M&E functions, in order to achieve stronger program design and implementation that lead to better results.

This document aims to provide practical guidance on activities that can be jointly undertaken by KM and M&E program functions across a program's cycle to develop a highly coordinated and functional synergy between KM and M&E. This should help facilitate collaborative learning and ensure that knowledge formulated and shared is based on rigorous evidence. It will also inform management decisions and drive the application of these learnings to current project decision-making & future project design, ultimately contributing directly to meaningful programming.

This document is an accompanying resource to the ***Infographic on the Complementary Relationship between Knowledge Management and Monitoring and Evaluation***, which outlines the value that M&E and KM collaboration can bring to each sector, and to programming as a whole.

Figure 1: Suggested activities at various program cycle stages to drive collaboration between KM & ME program functions for stronger Collaboration

PROGRAM STAGES/COMPONENTS ⁱ	PROPOSED COLLABORATION ACTIVITIES
<p>COUNTRY/REGIONAL STRATEGIC PLANNING</p> <p><i>(Process to determine the best strategic approach in a given country or region. Based on U.S. development policy priorities, country and/or regional priorities, and USAID's comparative advantage and available foreign assistance resources, among other factors.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review previous relevant evaluations, lessons learned, recommendations etc. and collate relevant information to be included in new program design
<p>PROJECT DESIGN & IMPLEMENTATION</p> <p><i>(Process for defining how to achieve results to ensure that efforts are complementary and aligned in support of a strategy. Typically incorporates multiple activities organized around, and implemented to achieve, a common purpose.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review existing information/documentation to identify outstanding research questions from previous efforts that can be included in ongoing learning efforts/agendas Identify opportunities for regular program implementation reviews to highlight successes, challenges and promising practices and include these in the work plan Implement regular program implementation reviews/AARs/peer assists and other processes to ensure highlighted successes, challenges and promising practices/ new learning are documented, shared and implemented Outline an efficient, user-friendly information system that works to make information easily and quickly retrievable
<p>ACTIVITY DESIGN & IMPLEMENTATION</p> <p><i>(Process for further defining how to implement an activity contributing to a project. Activities implemented through a variety of mechanisms, such as a contract, direct agreement with the partner country government, grant to a local organization, or directly by USAID staff (e.g. policy dialogue or capacity development).</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work together to streamline suggested indicator list and ensure that only data to be used is collected Incorporate relevant and credible indicators that evaluate the effectiveness of KM efforts into monitoring plans to help increase integration of KM into programming Fully develop, test and refine data management and information systems and accompanying data collection tools that make information easily and quickly retrievable Develop taxonomies for documents and folders so information is easy to retrieve. Identify and work to resolve bottlenecks that are hindering M&E knowledge flow (to field, from field, to HQ, from HQ, etc.) Develop data visualization/information 'packaging' tools that transform heavy data into easily understood/assimilated resources Develop 'how to' guides that transfer easily to support institutional memory capacity
<p>MONITORING & EVALUATION</p> <p><i>(Monitoring: ongoing & systematic tracking of information relevant to USAID strategies, projects, and activities to support adaptive management and accountability structures at the Agency. Helps reveal whether implementation is on track & results are being achieved. Evaluation: systematic collection & analysis of information from above components as a basis for judgements to improve effectiveness & timed to inform decisions about current & future programming. Evaluation is distinct from assessment or informal reviews.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create regular reflection opportunities for continued learning and adaptation Develop and monitor post evaluation action plans to facilitate the use of relevant findings Frame evaluation findings and recommendations as actionable next steps and disseminate as relevant
<p>COLLABORATION, LEARNING & ADAPTING</p> <p><i>(Strategic collaboration among a wide range of internal and external stakeholders, continuous learning, and adaptive management connect all components of the Program Cycle. Sources for learning include data from monitoring, research findings, evaluations, analyses, knowledge gained from experience, and other sources.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Disseminate results of evaluation and ensure learning and recommendations are incorporated into back into program cycle Develop and structure targeted, high quality products that provide useful information, promote results and contribute to the evidence base Share information on failure, what didn't work and what has been learned through failure

ⁱ From ADS 201 chapter at <http://www.usaid.gov/ads/policy/200/201>