Developing Monitoring and Evaluation Plans:
A Guide for Project Design

August 2020

Project Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation – Learning Impact

Support better planning
and decision making

Support learning and
exchange

Provide accountability
to donors and citizens

Gather information for
reporting

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Environment Programme

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Our vision: A resilient Pacific environment sustaining our livelihoods and natural heritage in harmony with our cultures.

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Contents

Glossary

Term	Definition
Activity	The events, actions, initiatives that implementers 'do' to contribute to outcomes.
Data	Data are simply facts or figures, bits of information, but not information itself. Data is raw, unorganised facts that need to be processed and can be something simple and seemingly random and useless until it is organised.
End-of Project Outcome	Specific outcomes that are expected to be achieved by the end of the project funding period.
Evaluation	The systematic and objective assessment of an ongoing or completed investment or policy. It is an in-depth process which takes place on a periodic basis. Evaluation aims to provide credible evidence which can inform major program management and policy decisions and highlight important development lessons. However, thinking evaluatively is also a way of working and is particularly important when PacWastePlus is conducting activities through 'navigation by judgement'.
Gender Equality	Refers to equal access to resources or opportunities, regardless of gender. It does not mean that men and women are the same; rather that women and men enjoy the same rights and opportunities across all aspects of the economy and society.
Indicator Performance Measure	A quantitative or qualitative variable that forms a simple and reliable means to measure achievement, to reflect the changes expected from an investment, or to help assess the performance of a development actor.
Information	When data is processed, organised, structured, or presented in each context to make it useful, it is called information - a group of data that collectively carry a logical meaning.
Input	The financial, human, material, and intellectual resources used in the activity implementation.
Intermediate Outcome	The short and medium-term effects of an investment's outputs. Short term intermediate outcomes include changes in knowledge, attitudes, skills, while medium term intermediate outcomes often

	reflect changes in behaviour, practice, and decisions. They are steps along the way to end-of-project outcomes.
Monitoring	The ongoing systematic collection of data on specified indicators to enable tracking of investment progress. It is common to monitor expenditure, commitments, activities, the achievement of milestones and outcomes.
Monitoring and Evaluation	A systematic learning process providing data, information, and knowledge for: • Effective project management • Reporting • Accountability • Learning and improvement • Assessing project impact
Monitoring and Evaluation Plan	A stand-alone document prepared early in an activity that specifies arrangements for monitoring and evaluating the investment.
Outcome	Outcomes define: - an 'end state' when the outcome has been achieved; - who or what is expected to change; the type of change expected to occur; - potentially including knowledge (awareness of new ideas, techniques, or strategies); - action/ practice (behaviour change based upon new information/ideas); - or condition (organisational or societal conditions changes due to the stakeholder's actions); and - the time by which the change is expected to occur.
Output	The products, goods and services that result from a development investment.
Program Logic	The causal sequence for an investment that stipulates the proposed sequence to achieve desired objectives—beginning with inputs, moving through activities, outputs, and outcomes, and culminating in impacts. This is also sometimes referred to as a theory of change.
Social Inclusion	All groups participating fully in economic and social life through access to resources, opportunities, and decision-making processes.

Introduction

Building a Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) plan for a project assists to deliver the intended outcome, and if not, it should help you understand which elements should be modified to assist with delivering a successful project.

This publication provides guidance on how to develop a M&E plan for not only PacWastePlus country projects but can also be used as a resource tool during the development of other donor funded country projects as well.

The Components of Monitoring and Evaluation

	Program details	Introduces the project, its need, its objectives, any resources required, and detail of the activities to be implemented
	Data collection plan	Describes data sources and methods for data collection, analysis, and reporting. It may also include possible challenges for delivery. The data collection plan should also outline who is responsible for the data collection.
	Monitoring plan	Describes the components that will be measured, frequency of data collection, and the indicators that will be used to measure results. The monitoring plan should also include the responsibility for the different indicators and data collection.
	Evaluation plan	Describes components to be measured, indicators, targets, reporting frequency, means of verification, frequency of data collection, responsibility and descriptive information if needed for clarification purposes
	How the plan will be used	Describes all the stakeholders who will access the plan and use the collected data. It also includes where and how the data and findings will be stored, such as a report or dashboard.

Purpose of Monitoring and Evaluation Plans in the PacWastePlus Programme Context

The **PacWastePlus Programme M&E Framework** sets out the overarching approach that will be applied for monitoring and evaluation of the various elements of the programme.

The framework requires all PacWastePlus funded country projects include **an M&E plan**.

A quality M&E plan will ideally enable the collection of useful data and information to inform:

Implementation monitoring, learning and improvement → **Preparation of required and desired programme reports** → **Making judgements about the merit and worth (evaluation!) of priority aspects of the programme's work**

It will meet the needs of priority information 'users', enable their 'uses', and support implementation of the overall PacWastePlus Programme M&E Framework.

It could also specify how learning and adaptive management will be applied.

Essential Elements of a Monitoring and Evaluation Plan
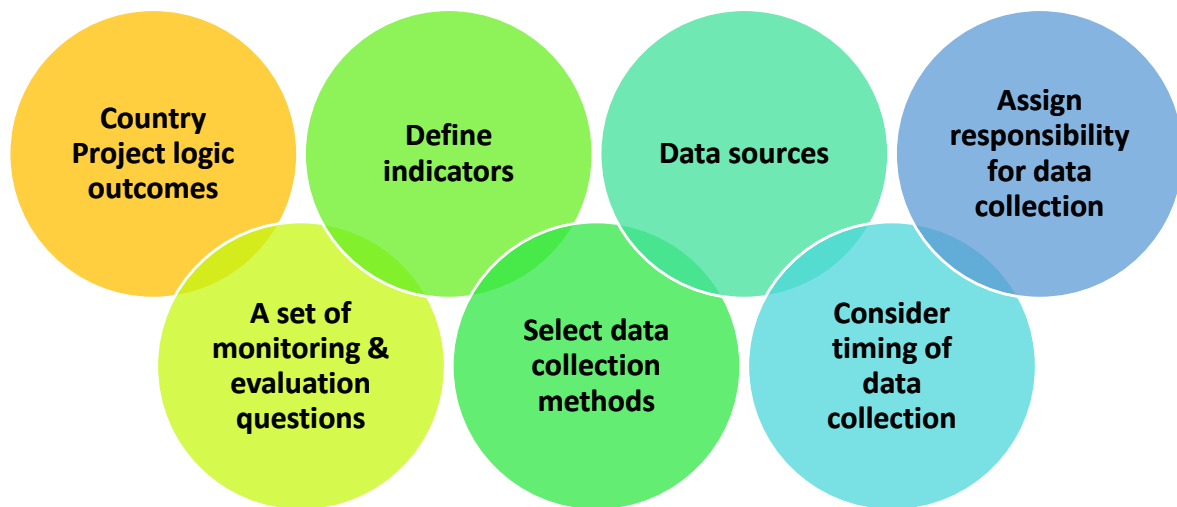
A simple M&E plan will include the following essential elements:

1. **Country Project Logic Outcomes – level and outcome statement**: *the outcomes that have been described and tested through participatory development of the program logic for the project.*

2. **A set of M&E questions**: *what do other priority information users and your team need to know about this outcome for monitoring or evaluation? What are the questions they want answered? What are their information needs?*

3. **Define Indicators (or Performance Measures):** *What is the unit (or units) of information that will answer the question(s)?*

4. **Select Data Collection methods:** *How will this data be collected, or does it already exist? For example, questionnaires, partner organisation's own data, or project reports.*

5. **Data sources:** *Where does data need to be collected from, and or accessed, does this need special permissions, or data clearance?*

6. **Consider timing of Data Collection:** *When is it appropriate to collect this data? Frequency (how often?) and timing (when?).*

7. **Assign responsibility for Data Collection:** *Who will take, or be given, responsibility for collecting the data?*

8. **Be clear about where the Data collected will be presented:** *What are the intended or required reporting or communication products for your team? What format will best meet the needs of those uses?*

The glossary provides some key definitions, in the PacWastePlus context, for terms that will be used in this document, while the next sections provide introductory guidance for building your project monitoring and evaluation plan.

Matters to Consider in

Developing your Monitoring and Evaluation Plan

Participatory Approach for Building a Monitoring and Evaluation Plan

It is always best to apply a participatory approach for building a M&E plan. Work with your team and, if possible, key counterparts and stakeholders with whom you will be implementing your project plan, and your priority information users. This way the final product will be understood and owned by the whole team and important counterparts and stakeholders. Plan to apply a workshop approach rather than, for example, working on a projected screen, so that everybody can contribute to, and see, the work as it progresses.

Users and Uses

Identify the key 'users', and their 'uses', of the information and data to be collected through the M&E plan. *What do they need to know and how will they use the information you ultimately collect through the monitoring and evaluation plan? What are their questions?*

Capture this information in a table, and make sure that your M&E plan will meet the needs of the priority users. Some examples are provided in **Table 1**, but you will need to build your own tailored list.

Table 1: Example monitoring and evaluation plan information users and their uses

(Example) Users – *Who needs information and evidence from your activities*	Uses – *Why do they need it and how will they use it?*
Counterpart Agency	Reporting internal progress - reporting against organisational/unit workplan
National Governments of Partner Countries (relevant ministries) **Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP)**	Performance management and work planning (decision making) - documenting evidence of changing context - reporting against project plans - learning about ways of working - lessons learned - reporting on progress of joint work
PacWastePlus Programme Team and Participating Partners (businesses, communities)	Reporting evidence of outcome achievements Consolidated Programme performance - case studies and lessons learned - shared success
Other relevant Projects / Programmes	Information about what is working, lessons learned and challenges.
European Union International Development Group, other Donors, Funders	Decision making - resource allocation - performance reporting

Gender Equality and Social Inclusion

Make sure that your monitoring and evaluation plan properly considers how you will measure your contribution to gender equality and social inclusion outcomes.

At a minimum this means:

In building your program logic, thinking about how outcomes might mean different things for women, men, girls and, boys, people living with disabilities, and other marginalised, or targeted groups.

Recording sex-disaggregated data, i.e. not just recording the number of people - but recording the number of women, number of men, number of girls, number of boys involved. Think about, and ask them, what their involvement means for them.

Capturing different perspectives of women, men, girls, and boys in collection of qualitative data, through implementing data collection methods that will authentically capture the different perspectives, or voices, of women, men, girls, and boys.

Providing safe and accessible inquiry spaces where views of women, men, girls, and boys, and people living with disabilities can be safely expressed.
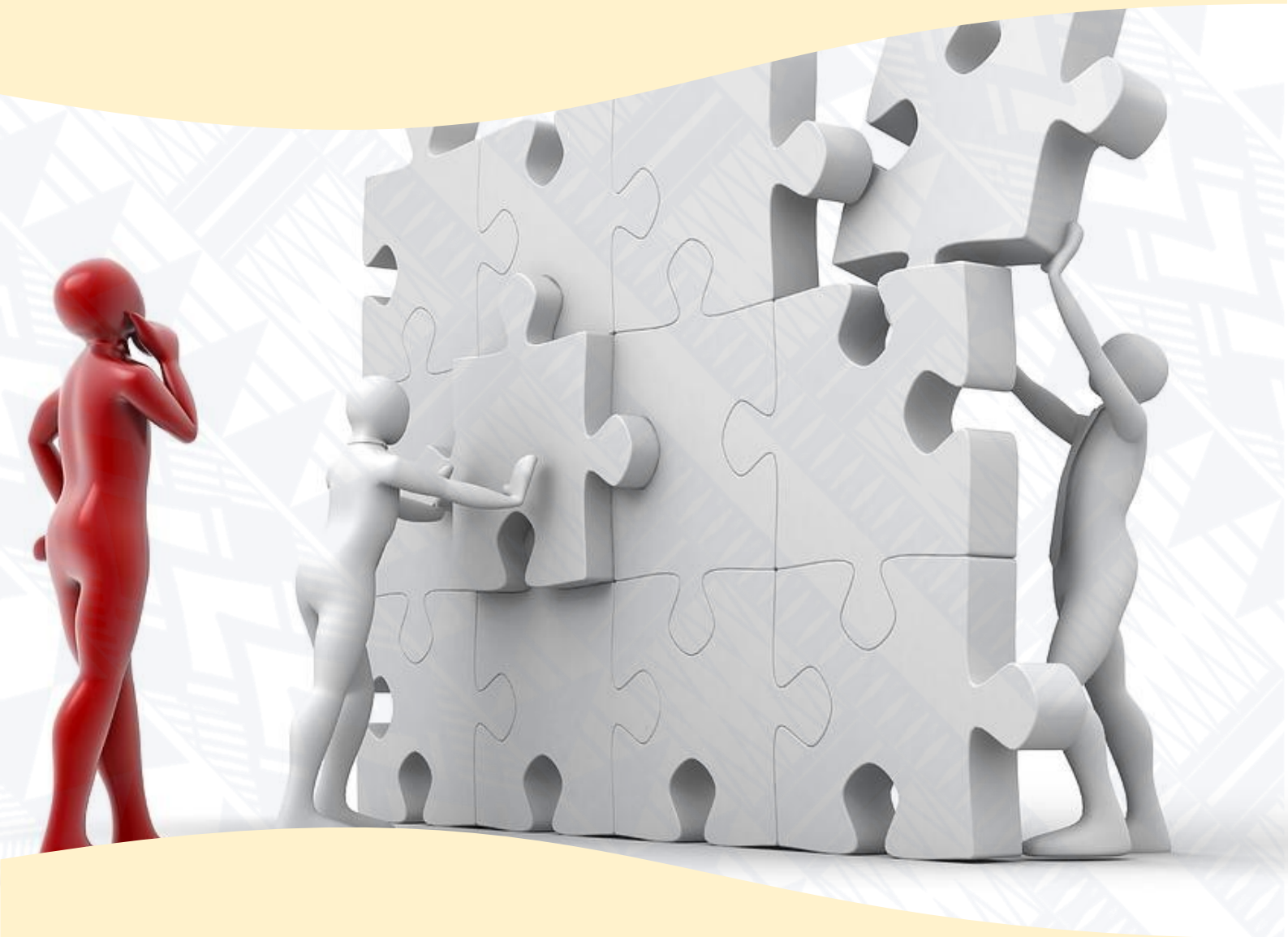
Apply ethical approaches.

Putting it all together
Monitoring and Evaluation Plan Elements

Monitoring and Evaluation Plan Elements

- **1** — **Element 1** Project outcomes
- **2** — **Element 2** Monitoring and Evaluation questions
- **3** — **Element 3** Define indicators (or performance measures)
- **4** — **Element 4** Identify data sources and select data collection methods
- **5** — **Element 5** Consider timing of data collection
- **6** — **Element 6** Assign responsibility for data collection
- **7** — **Element 7** Data Collection & Usage?
- **Putting it all together**

Element 1: Project Outcomes

Revisit your program logic. Check that it still reflects your project direction and effort as previously agreed. Update it if necessary. Have it up on the wall for the monitoring and evaluation planning discussion, so that everyone can see the whole logic. Make sure that the PacWastePlus high-level, and other, objectives are visible too. Do refer to the Program Logic Guide for additional guidance. When you are documenting the monitoring and evaluation plan each input, activity, output, and intermediate outcome will be listed in *Column 1* of the table provided in **Annex 1**.

Element 2: Monitoring and Evaluation Questions

Ask questions about each outcome. Think about your 'users' and the questions that they would ask about that outcome / activity? What do they need to know about that outcome/ activity? They may have several questions. Refer to **Annex 1** for example questions that can guide the development of your own specific questions. Every outcome should have at least one question against it. Monitoring and evaluation questions will be listed in *Column 2* of the table provided in **Annex 1**.

Element 3: Define Indicators (or Performance Measures)

For each monitoring and evaluation question that you have defined there will likely be one, or several, units of data that could potentially answer the question. These units of data are commonly referred to as **indicators** or **performance measures**.

A very simple example is '*Number of women and men trained'*. It is very important that indicators specifically relate to a question we need answered.

'*Performance indicators[1] are useful in that they can provide some simple quantitative information that can be easily aggregated. As a part of a suite of forms of 'evidence' to answer questions they can be very useful. However, when **used alone** they can be misleading and counterproductive. The limitations of indicators when used alone include:*

- **Goal displacement**: attempts to achieve stipulated performance indicators can put at risk the achievement of real goals.

- **Not about learning:** knowing that a program has achieved its target tells us nothing about what to do next e.g. Knowing that 'x' number of women and 'y' number of men are trained, does not tell us if they are doing their work more effectively.

Further, avoid including indicators that do not clearly relate to outcomes achievable through your project plan. Sometimes particular indicators are required to be included for political reasons, rather than their usefulness. Indicators or units of data will be listed in Column 3 of the table provided in **Annex 1**.

Finally, are the indicators that your team has selected: **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**chievable, **R**ealistic, **T**imely (**S-M-A-R-T**)? (Refer to the PacWastePlus SMART Objectives factsheet which can be downloaded from https://www.sprep.org/publications/a-guide-to-developing-smart-objectives-factsheet)

Element 4: Identify Data Sources and Select Data Collection Methods

Consider, is data already available or can it readily be collected to inform the indicator?

Existing data: Data needed to inform indicators may already exist e.g. it may be routinely collected through a partner agency or another process. *Who owns the data? How rigorous is their collection of the data? What is the quality of the data?* If you hope to access existing data you may need to negotiate a data sharing agreement with the 'owners' of that data and you will need to also consider the ethics and appropriateness of using that data, which has been collected for another purpose.

Collecting new data: If you are establishing data collection arrangements, a range of qualitative and quantitative data collection methods could be applied. There are many more available that could be potentially applied. Your choice of data collection method will depend on:

- The actual indicator - output level (usually data collection is simple at this level) or outcome level (this is where careful decisions need to be made).
- The importance of the indicator – how important is it to collect this data? For whom? What use?
- The resources required compared to those available to collect data or information – e.g. people with appropriate technical knowledge (internal/ external), funds, existing systems, and urgency of collection.
- The reliability of various methods.

Often a mixed or multi methods approach is most appropriate. BetterEvaluation.org is a great online resource for data collection methods. Also refer to the PacWastePlus guide on Investigative Questioning and Inquiry.

Chosen methods to collect needed data will be listed in *Column 4* of the table at **Annex 1**.

Element 5: Consider Timing of Data Collection

Timing of data collection will depend on **how often and when you need to use the data** and **how much the data normally varies over time**. For example: collecting road condition data is a complex task requiring significant resources and the data rarely changes rapidly – so collecting every two to three years is likely most efficient, while collating the number of (output level) workshops implemented for a learning program can be easily documented through routine activity management recording. Timing and frequency of data collection will be listed in *Column 5* of the table at **Annex 1.**

Element 6: Assign Responsibility for Data Collection

Responsibility for data collection will depend on who is best placed and skilled for that task. Data will typically be collected by team members but may be supported by the PacWastePlus monitoring and evaluation team, or institution partners, or sometimes external researchers. The plan needs to be very clear about who will be doing what, that they know what is expected from them, they know how to use nominated data collection tools and ensure that adequate resources are available to support data collection.

Data collectors will need appropriate data collection tools e.g. questionnaires to complete, interview protocols, instructions on to what data should be provided and details of quality assurance processes. Requirements for the form in which data should be provided should be negotiated and agreed. They will depend on the data being provided e.g. sometimes multiple data sets might be required with in-depth analysis completed; or data might be provided in a simple spreadsheet without prior analysis. Whatever the requirements are, they should be clearly defined in the plan. Assigned responsibility for data collection will be listed in *Column 6* of the table at **Annex 1.**

Element 7: Data Collection & Usage

Developing data management plan to support the M&E plan requirements, will assist with ensuring data is easily accessed and able to be utilised for regular reporting. When developing your data management system, consider where will data be stored, who will need access to the data, are there any Intellectual Property (IP) issues, how often data will need to be collected, and used, and what budget is required to support data management and monitoring activities.

Make a calendar of required and desired reporting products, and when data collection needs to start to be ready in time for collation of those reports. Think hard about all the places where data could be well used and considered informative. Collect once, use multiple times. These concepts will be listed in Column 7 of the table at **Annex 1**.

Putting It All Together

Ideally you will consider each of these elements for each outcome and put them all together into a table. Refer example provided in **Annex 1**. Make sure that you add extra rows to include any outcomes, questions, indicators, methods identified in your plan.

Developing the plan early, and ensuring sufficient budget is allocated to collect, analyse and report on the M&E plan will assist with the successful delivery of your project. Where regular reporting suggests that your project interventions may not be working, the data collected can assist with identifying project modifications to realign activities that will achieve your desired outcomes.

Beyond Reporting – Towards Reflection, Learning and Adaptive Management

One important use of the monitoring and evaluation data collected will be to underpin reflection, learning and improvement, that is, the practice of adaptive management.

Consider how your team will incorporate lessons into current and future practices, and how to best integrate information into reports and communication products, collect & integrate lessons into better practice. PacWastePlus teams would ideally allocate time for reflection on progress and opportunities to incorporate lessons into practice. It is amazing what can be achieved if this is done well.
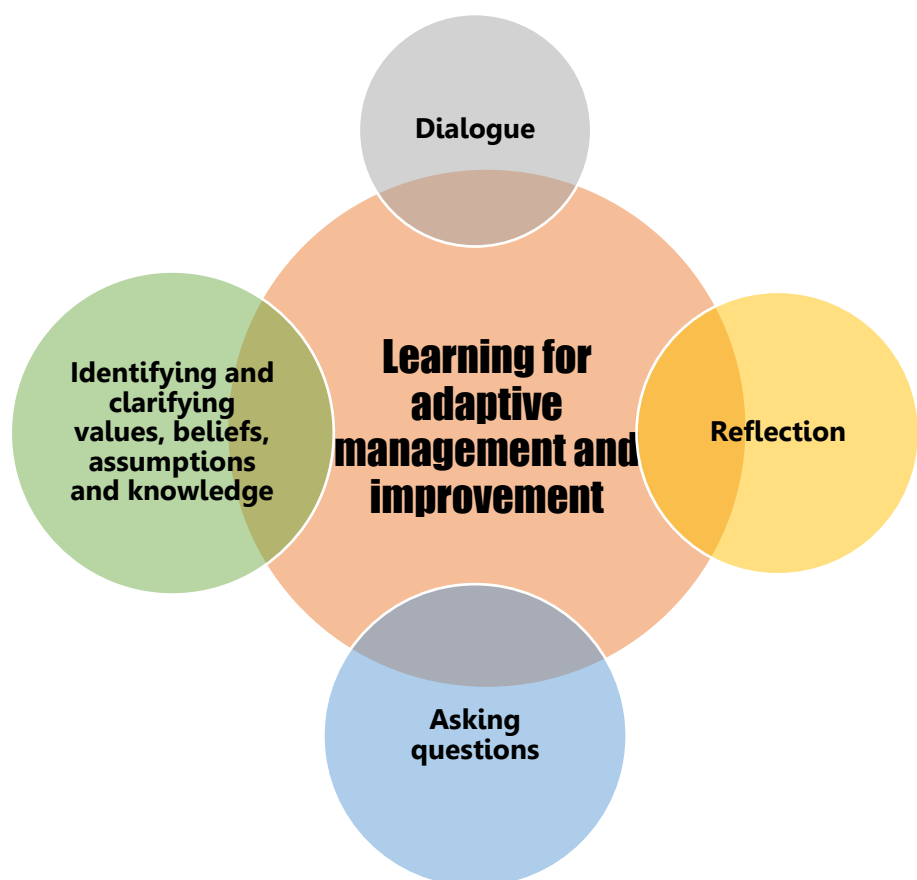
For effective learning and improvement, you will need to make time with partners and stakeholders for[2]:

Dialogue
- Brings to the surface multiple points of view that need to be addressed and negotiated
- Helps make individuals and hidden agendas visible
- Allows team members to develop shared meanings that are important for further inquiry activities
- Contributes to building a sense of community and connection
- Illuminates the programme's culture, policies, and procedures
- Increases the likelihood that learning at the team level will lead to learning throughout the organisation
- Enables 'undiscussables' to surface and be addressed
- Facilitates individual, team and organisational learning

Reflection
- Enables team members to think more deeply and holistically about an issue, leading to greater insights and learning
- Connects the rational decision-making process to a more affective and experiential learning process
- Challenges individuals to be honest about the relationship between what they say and what they do
- Creates opportunities to seriously consider the implications of any past or future action
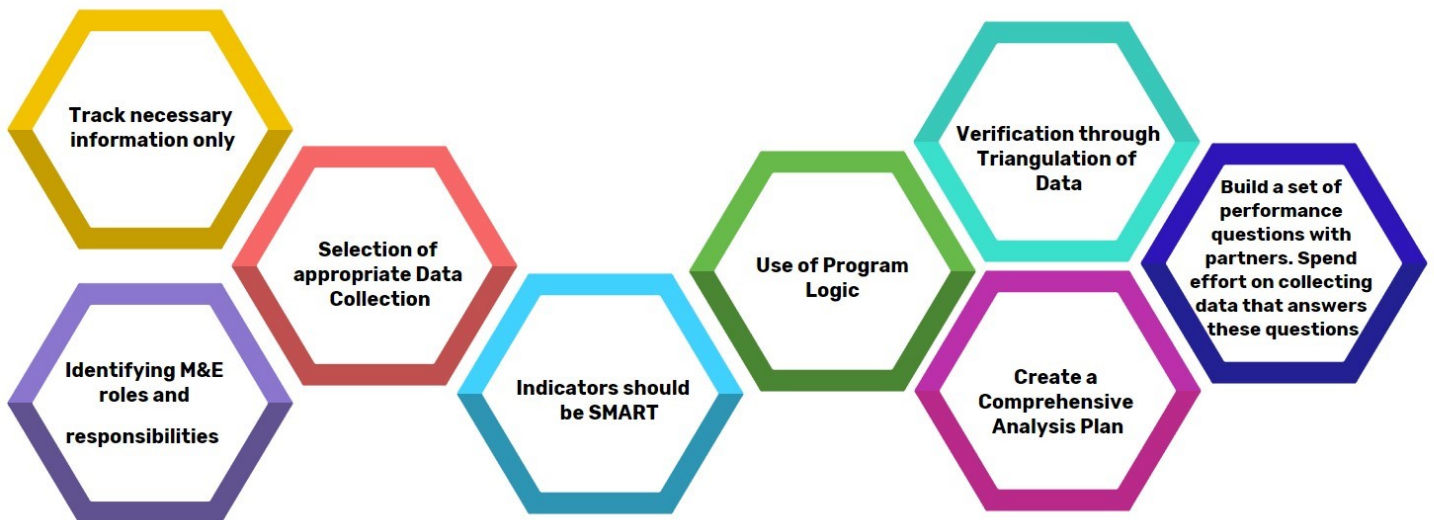- Acts as a safeguard against making impulsive decisions

Asking Questions
- Identifies issues of key importance to the work
- Acknowledges participants' prior knowledge
- Uncovers a broad range of issues on which to focus an inquiry
- Develops a culture of curiosity and a spirit of inquiry
- Challenges organisation members current knowledge and understanding
- Stimulates continuous learning
- Leads to deeper levels of understanding and knowledge

Identifying and Clarifying Values, Beliefs, Assumptions and Knowledge
- Facilitates a common understanding of key terms and phrases so that language is less likely to be a barrier to effective communication and learning
- Brings to the surface motivations, opinions, and attitudes, which leads to greater understanding among team members
- Helps individual team members accept change and modify their thinking and behaviours
- Helps mediate potential conflicts among team members more quickly and effectively
- Confirms that prior experiences and attitudes affect individuals' behaviour in the work environment

TIPS for Effective Monitoring and Evaluation

- Track necessary information only
- Identifying M&E roles and responsibilities
- Selection of appropriate Data Collection
- Indicators should be SMART
- Use of Program Logic
- Verification through Triangulation of Data
- Create a Comprehensive Analysis Plan
- Build a set of performance questions with partners. Spend effort on collecting data that answers these questions

Conclusion

Taking time to think through your monitoring and evaluation plan as a team, will help you more effectively monitor and evaluation your work, and result in having good information at hand for report preparation and learning.

MONITORING

COLLECTION OF DATA IS AT MULTIPLE POINTS IN THE PROGRAMME CYCLE

EVAUATION

COLLECTION OF DATA IS AT INTERVALS

Annex
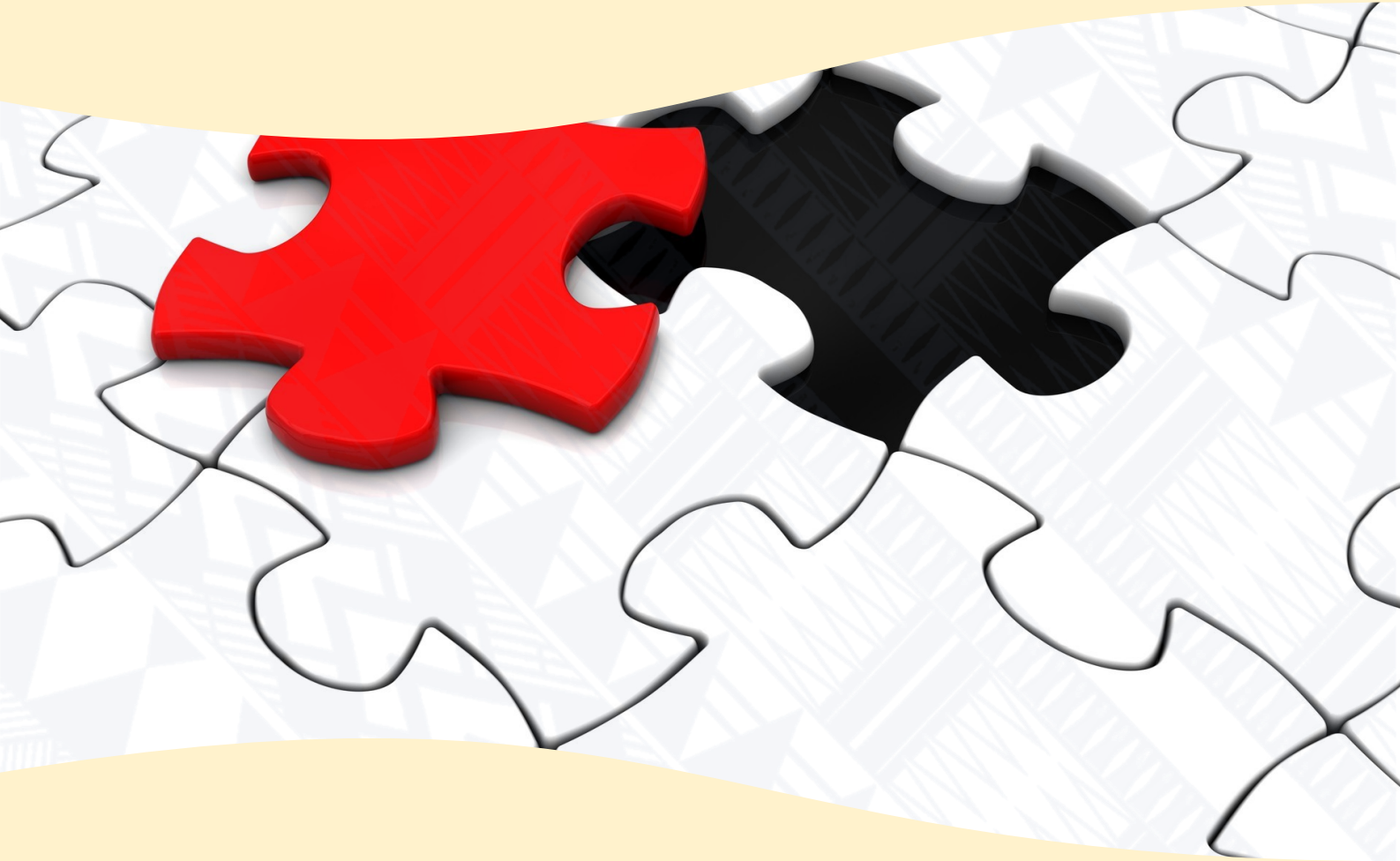
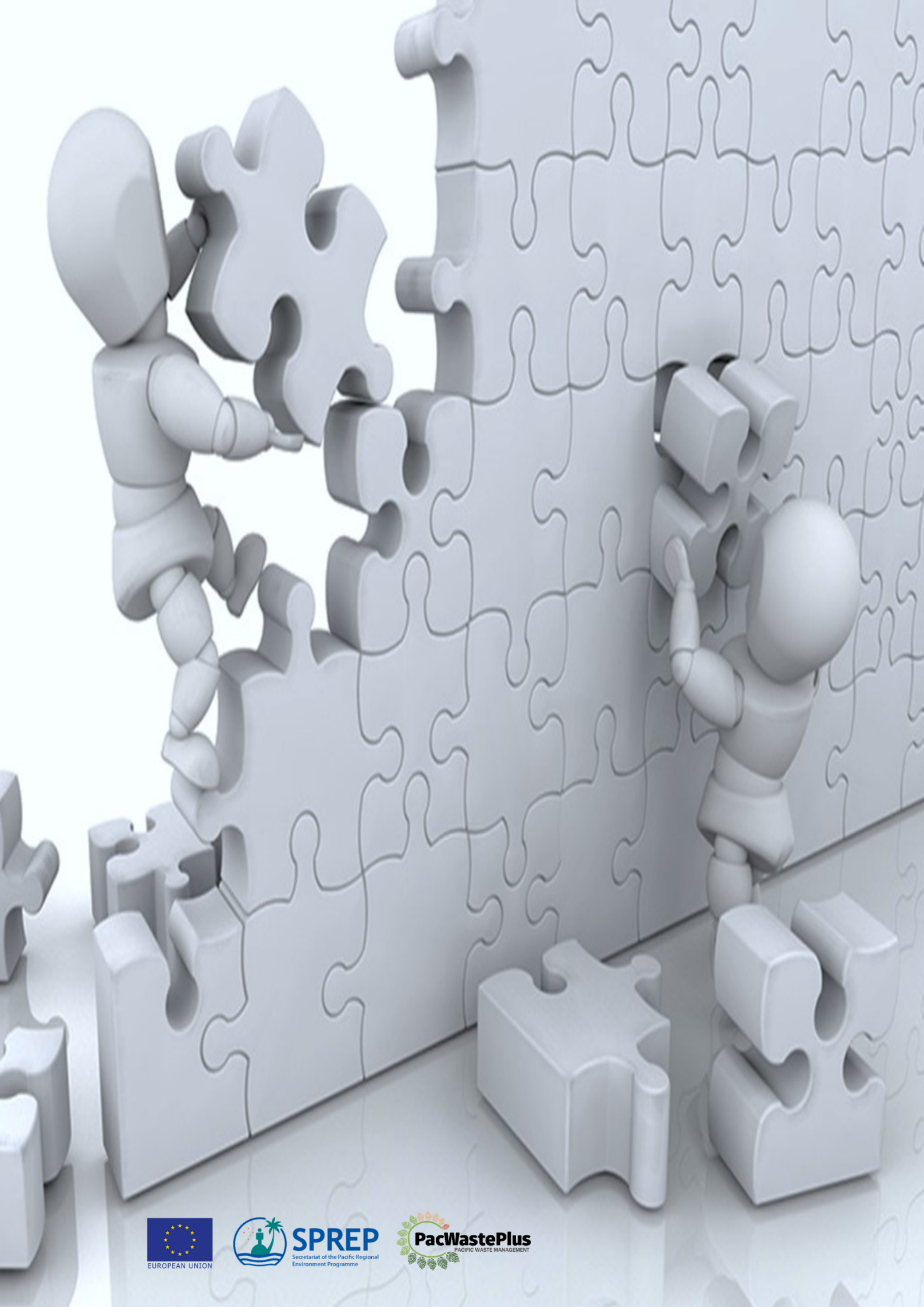# Annex 1   Template - Monitoring and Evaluation Plan

PL Ref	Column 1 Program Logic Level (Activity/ Output/ Outcome)	Column 2 Monitoring and Evaluation Question(s)	Column 3 Indicator (Unit of Data)	Column 4 Data Collection Method	Column 5 Data Sources	Column 6 Frequency and Timing of Collection	Column 7 Responsibility for Collection	Column 8 Where Data will be Presented (or used)
	Cut and paste outcome statement from program logic	Include relevant monitoring and / or evaluation question (s)	What is the data you could collect to answer the question (s)?	How will you collect the data?	Where does data need to be collected from, and or accessed, does this need special permissions, or data clearance?	When, how often and at what stage of the program will you collect the data?	Who will take or be given the responsibility of collecting the data?	Where will the data be used / presented?

References

[1] Commonwealth of Australia 2007 Training in Monitoring, Evaluation, Reporting and Improvement (MERI) – Notes prepared by Clear Horizon

[2] Preskill, H. and Torres, R.T (1999) *Evaluative Inquiry for Learning in Organizations* SAGE Publications Chapter 3 Evaluative Inquiry Learning Processes *pp51-69*