

How can we monitor and evaluate policy influence?

Toolkit N°2

Step One: where are we and where do we want to go

This toolkit is part of a series addressing the various steps to be followed in the process of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of policy influence.

The four stages of the M&E process

The design and implementation of an M&E system usually implies four stages:



1. **Diagnosis:** it consists of analyzing the specific capacities and needs of the organization to face this process. It is necessary, therefore, to look into existing institutional policies, and also inquire among its members regarding their own interests and positions with respect to the idea of initiating this process and reforming or enriching current practices.
2. **Design:** on the basis of the information gathered in the diagnosis, the moment for decision-making begins regarding which levels to monitor and/or evaluate; the methodology/ies and indicators to utilize, and who will be responsible and involved in the process.
3. **Implementation:** it is a periodic activity which must respect the timeline and actions established in the work chronogram, and must register, as best it can, the

results obtained. It includes monitoring activities and intermediate evaluations of the policy influence efforts.

4. **Reflecting and learning from the initiative:** it involves the analysis and discussion of the information gathered, operational and strategic decision-making, and reflection on how to generate and share lessons learned during the process.

Stage 1: Diagnosis

Before beginning to design a new M&E system, it is useful and valuable to clarify and achieve an internal consensus about the current state of the organization/program regarding capacities and interests in this field. For this, an internal research of the organization and its teams must be carried out regarding capacities, interests and positions with respect to the potential of the new M&E system.

There are several tools and methodologies to carry out a diagnosis: the development of a SWOT matrix (Strengths, Opportunities, Weaknesses and Threats); the production of questionnaires and/or personal interviews with key informants; desk review of existing policies, processes and routines within the organization that are linked to the M&E, and

which must be taken into account to design the new system, etc. As an example, in some organizations a media clipping, or annual work reports are produced. It is important to begin thinking how the new system will take advantage of existing M&E moments, and also consider that its implementation may imply their partial or total modification.

At the same time, this exploration will pave the way to the necessary political decision-making to face the internal process of changing current practices or introducing new ones.

An example of the SWOT matrix is shown below, applied to an organization's current capability for M&E.

Weaknesses	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members of the organization distrust the real purpose of the M&E. • Lack of formal internal processes linked to the M&E within the organizational culture. • Difficult decision to allocate resources to the design and implementation of an M&E process instead of prioritizing other issues. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficult access to the external actors linked to the project, and lack of cooperation of some • Probability grows that errors or scarce impact may be disseminated to third parties

Weaknesses	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is valuable and useful evidence of having achieved influence. • There are the required human resources with enough capacities to carry out the M&E process. • Good existing practices in accountability. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When sharing experiences we may learn policy influence from other organizations with a proven track record on the subject. • Two important donors have an interest in that we improve M&E practices and will support it in future projects. • Gain prestige and public recognition. • Many founders provide M&E training to the organizations they support. • Growing demand for evidence of quality from actors (decision-makers, communications media, other organizations, enterprise, etc).

For additional details on how to elaborate a SWOT, you may consult Page 4 of *Learners, practitioners and teachers. Handbook on monitoring evaluating and managing knowledge for policy influence* (CIPPEC, 2010).

If a consultation methodology through surveys and/or interviews with members of the organization and key informants is selected, the following questions to guide the exercise may be used.

Guiding questions. Where are we as an organization?

1. Why do we wish to carry out monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of our projects' influence on public policies?
2. Do we know about experiences of other organizations that have implemented these processes?
3. Have we established specific influence objectives within our institutional planning?
4. Have we included influence objectives in specific projects? Why?
5. Is the M&E of influence encouraged by leaders of the organization? Why? How?
6. Do we utilize some special methodology to formulate and implement projects? Which? Why? What motivated it?
7. Have we built or defined indicators for M&E since the formulation of the projects?
8. To what extent do we consider the results and impacts (in terms of influence) of finished projects when launching new projects?
9. Do we have procedures or systems to provide information and make it accessible (information infrastructure)?
10. When we carried out an M&E of the influence effectively accomplished, did we make the results public? How? Why?

What will we utilize this information for? Decision-making about the steps to follow

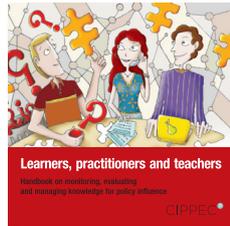
Once we have systematized all the information in our diagnosis, we count with a fundamental source to define the steps to be followed. It is advisable to carry out an exchange about the process with the directors and those who participated or will participate in the process. This will serve to validate what we have perceived and to further foster some debates that will be valuable for the design stage.

The diagnosis is highly useful to make decisions regarding the necessary and/or possible allocation of resources to design and implement the internal process of the M&E of influence. With this clear "inventory" it will be simpler to determine the scope of the process to be implemented for it to be viable and adequate to the real possibilities of the organization. We focus on this issue in **Toolkit 3** of the series.

I need help!

Recommendations for reading or consultations by CIPPEC's Civil Society Directorate for the M&E of policy influence.

- *Learners, practitioners and teachers. Handbook on monitoring, evaluating and managing knowledge for policy influence*, CIPPEC, 2010, pp 21-23.. Available at www.vippal.cippec.org.



- *Tools for Policy Impact: Handbook for Researchers*, Daniel Start and Ingie Hovland, 2004, pp. 31-32. Available at www.odi.org.uk.

Next Toolkit: Establishing the basis of the M&E strategy

If you wish to quote this document: Weyrauch, V. (2012). Toolkit N°2: Where are we and where do we want to go?. In: *How to monitor and evaluate policy influence?* Buenos Aires: CIPPEC.

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CIPPEC thanks GDNet for their support in producing this Toolkit.

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