Implementing Developmental Evaluation

A PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR EVALUATORS AND ADMINISTRATORS

SEPTEMBER 2019

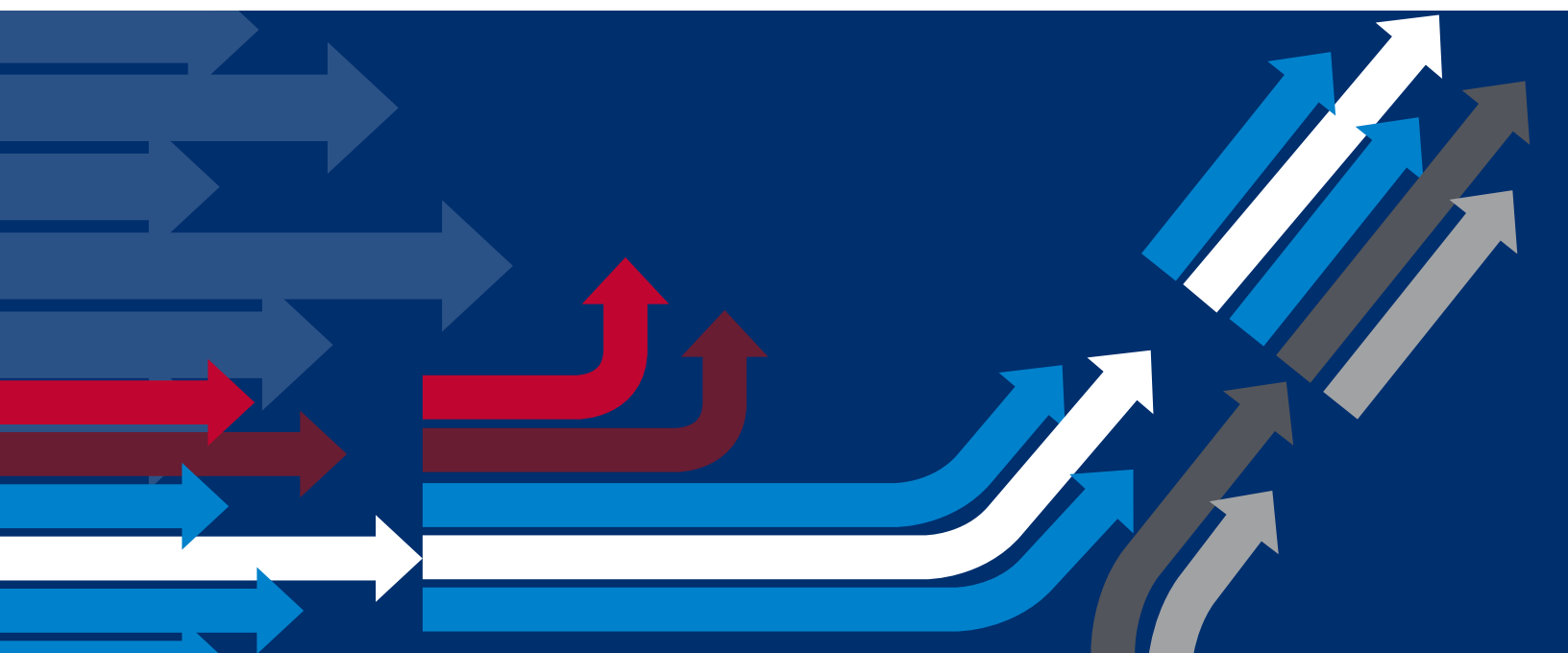**Updated July 2024**

USAID FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

SOCIAL IMPACT

WILLIAM DAVIDSON INSTITUTE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

SEARCH FOR COMMON GROUND

Table of Contents

Foreword

> *Developmental evaluation has been the most important development in evaluation in the last decade.*"
>
> — Professor **J. Bradley Cousins**, 2018 recipient of the American Evaluation Association Research on Evaluation Award

After almost a decade since publication of *Developmental Evaluation*, Developmental Evaluation (DE) is maturing. It has become a prominent approach globally, particularly for complex and innovative interventions. Examples of DEs are now described in dozens of published case studies and case narratives. Yet the practice of DE remains difficult for people to understand if their experience is only with other forms of evaluation. This challenge reflects the distinctiveness of the approach, including its emergent nature and adaptive responsiveness to context. The essential purpose of DE is to support the development of interventions that are innovative in engaging highly complex systems, or that are changing in response to changing conditions around them. In conducting a DE, Developmental Evaluators explicitly support the use of evaluation tools, empirical data, and critical thinking in frequent cycles, working in close collaboration with program actors in a process of adaptive learning. Evaluators facilitate a process of conceptualizing, designing, and testing interventions that are new or are adapting to major change.
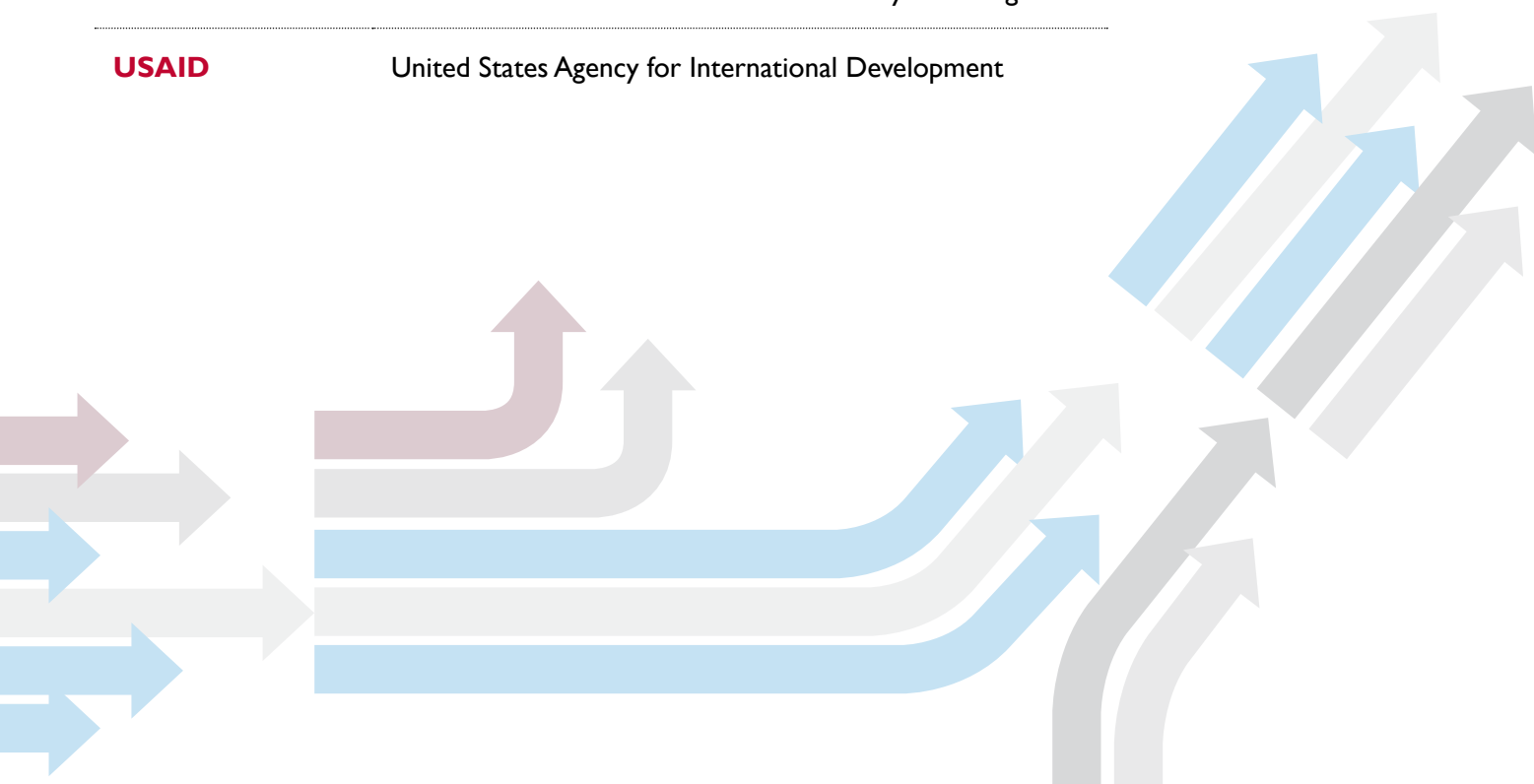
A complexity perspective informs and undergirds all aspects of DE. Complexity understandings inform how actors make sense of the problems they are targeting. The perspective carries assumptions of limited control and predictability, the need to change and adapt (both the intervention and the evaluation), and the need to attend to effects that may be unexpected in degree and in kind. The complexity perspective proves fundamental in recognizing that the world is becoming more interconnected and interdependent, and that these characteristics intensify the complexity of program contexts. Increasingly, multiple collaborating agencies and partners, including multiple Funders, implement and support development programs. This contributes to complexity. Many development initiatives target multifaceted issues, such as poverty, inequality, and climate change, which resist precise definitions, standardized models of intervention, and consensus on solutions.

What this all means is that DE poses special challenges for Funders, commissioners of evaluations, organizations supporting DE, and evaluation practitioners facilitating a DE process. These challenges include commitments to co-creation, context sensitivity, and complexity responsiveness that preclude standardized, routinized, and formulaic procedures for implementing the approach. This Guide takes on those challenges. The leading edge of DE implementation involves adapting it to the constraints of large-scale development organizations that already have existing evaluation protocols and models. Where DE is introduced into organizations with standardized planning, accountability, and oversight processes, certain tensions can be expected. Tensions do not represent problems that get solved. Rather, they are inherent to complex systems and must be managed rather than resolved. Here are five examples.

Acronyms

DE	Developmental Evaluation
DEPA-MERL	Developmental Evaluation Pilot Activity
LOE	Level of Effort
MERLIN	Monitoring, Evaluation, Research and Learning Innovations
PEA	Political Economy Analysis
PHO	Provincial Health Office
RCI	Residential Care Institutions
Search	Search for Common Ground
SI	Social Impact, Inc.
SOW	Scope of Work
WDI	William Davidson Institute at the University of Michigan
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

Glossary of Developmental Evaluation Guide Terms

Acculturation Workshop	A workshop that convenes Developmental Evaluation (DE) stakeholders to achieve the following objectives: 1) Educate participants about what DE is and its potential benefits for the project, program, or activity; 2) Give participants a clear understanding of the role of the Developmental Evaluator and how to achieve their full integration into the team; 3) Refine evaluation questions and begin development of an evaluation work plan; and 4) Establish common expectations for roles and responsibilities, and communication protocols among DE stakeholders to ensure everyone is on the same page. Thus, the workshop generates interest and buy-in for the DE, which are critical to its ultimate success.
DE Administrator	A person (or group of people) who provides managerial and/or technical support to the Developmental Evaluator. This person can execute various important functions, including providing technical guidance (especially in the Evaluator's areas of relative weakness), helping the Evaluator to maintain an appropriate level of objectivity and equity, providing extra support to carry out technical work as needed, and serving as an intermediary to help problem solve management challenges that arise.
DE Champion	DE Champions are stakeholders that are committed to a DE and are convinced of its value for their team/program. Potential champions can range from high-level leadership/decision-makers to lower-level staff carrying out DE recommendations. Ideally, there will be a mix across levels. Champions are knowledgeable about the context and can provide insights into stakeholder dynamics, facilitate access to key resources, and tailor messaging to various teams/individuals. They are important because they help legitimize the DE process and results, promote ownership of DE results, and, by extension, increase their sustainability.
Buy-In	Buy-in is a somewhat nebulous concept that we use to describe support for, agreement with, or even enthusiasm for the process and/or results of the Developmental Evaluation (DE). Buy-in for the DE process means that stakeholders believe in and are committed to the evaluation design (i.e., the questions and data collection and analysis methods), the person or people who carry out the evaluation, and the deliverables produced by the evaluation.
DE Stakeholders	Developmental Evaluation (DE) stakeholders include DE Funders, the program team(s) being evaluated, staff in the program team's broader operating unit or organization, the Developmental Evaluator, and the technical and management team supporting the Evaluator. The core group of stakeholders will change throughout the DE process as the Funder and program team scope the DE and onboard the Evaluator. For more details see Box 1.
Developmental Evaluator	This is the primary person (or persons) conducting the Developmental Evaluation (DE). They are "embedded," meaning they sit with the team being evaluated on a day-to-day basis. A Developmental Evaluator is also referred to as an "embedded evaluator." For the purposes of this Guide, we assume a one evaluator setup, though larger-scale DEs may employ several.
Funder	The person or organization funding the Developmental Evaluation (DE). This may or may not be a part of the program team being evaluated. As this Guide demonstrates, the Funder serves a vital role as a promoter, educator, and supporter of DE before, during, and after DE implementation.
Learning Culture	A learning culture exists when both leadership and staff are willing to accept (and learn from) both favorable and unfavorable performance data or program outcomes, when stakeholders can share uncomfortable information transparently without fear of repercussion from leadership, and, as one substantiation interviewee said, "where there is no fear of what recommendations will be made."
Quick Win	Opportunities to demonstrate the value-add of the DE to stakeholders such as developing short write-ups or presentations that leverage DE data or the Evaluator's skills to meet a practical, unmet stakeholder need. Examples may include developing templates, preparing a guidance note for a particular process, or facilitating a meeting about an unresolved issue. At times, they may not appear to be directly related to the DE purpose, but they can go a long way in cultivating interest in and enthusiasm for the DE.

DE Tensions

1 Ownership tension. DE works best when those engaged feel ownership of the process and can creatively adapt to local contexts. But the organizations within which DE is supported must ensure that the way DE is conducted is consistent with the organization's mission and policies. This is the classic tension between imperatives emanating from headquarters and the need for people in the field to exercise their prerogative in adapting to context.

2 Inclusion tension. DE works best with the sustained inclusion, participation, and investment of a broad cross section of stakeholders who are affected by an intervention. Having this cross section can generate conflicts in setting priorities and adapting as change occurs. Determining what stakeholders are involved in DE, in what ways they are involved, and what responsibilities they have can be an ongoing source of tension.

3 Standardization vs. contextualization tension. Large international organizations operating in many countries and conducting programs in many sectors need standardized procedures to ensure coherence and accountability. But DE thrives on local adaptability and contextual responsiveness. A core contribution of this guide lies in providing suggestions to manage this tension.

4 The long-term/short-term tension. Problems of poverty, poor education, low employment, and inequality have deep roots and take time to address. Recognition of this fact has led to large-scale, long-term investments and initiatives based on extensive planning. Organizations have set up procedures to manage and evaluate on a long-term basis. DE involves an ongoing series of short-term, real-time adjustments. The tension enters when deciding how to integrate the real-time orientation of and short-term decision-making in DE into the longer-term decision-making, planning, and accountability cycles of large organizations.

5 The control/complexity tension. The planning and traditional accountability procedures of large organizations are based on control, certainty, predictability, and stability. Complexity resists control, is defined by uncertainty, undermines predictions, and epitomizes turbulence. DE was developed under complexity assumptions. Large organizations operate under control assumptions. These diverse and contrasting orientations create tensions in funding, design, implementation, and reporting.

This Guide

This Guide addresses these tensions head-on. It is the first attempt to offer a way to navigate the dynamics and complexities of DE within the realities of a large-scale development organization. In the spirit of DE, the guidance offered must be adapted to context and the nature of the initiative being evaluated. But the organizational imperatives of mission fulfillment and achieving results call for DE to adapt to those organizational realities that may constrain adaptability and complete openness to emergence. How this Guide is used will, itself, be a developmental process and deserves DE. It is an enormously important opportunity, and I'll be watching what unfolds with great interest — as will, I feel certain, the whole development world.

Michael Quinn Patton

REFERENCES

Patton, M. Q. (2011). *Developmental Evaluation: Applying Complexity Concepts to Enhance Innovation and Use*. New York: Guilford Press.

Szijarto, B. & Cousins, J.B. (2019) Mapping the practice of developmental evaluation: Insights from a concept mapping study. *Evaluation and Program Planning*. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.evalprogplan.2019.05.001

Introduction and Overview

Increased interest in complexity-aware and utilization-focused evaluation has given DE greater currency among evaluators, donors, and implementing partners alike. Although DE has gained traction over the past few years in the evaluation community, and gained interest within the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), there is still limited use[1] of DE and a small practitioner base that is able to speak to operationalizing this type of evaluation. Likewise, there is little practical guidance available to help stakeholders interact with DE for the first time.

We geared this "Administrator's and Evaluator's Guide" specifically for people conducting DEs as a Developmental Evaluator and/or a person managing the overall process (the DE Administrator). We draw from our experience implementing DEs for USAID and from other contexts that may provide relevant learning to DEs within USAID. We also believe that many aspects of the learning shared here may be applicable to DEs outside the USAID context, but may require some adaptation. We organized this Guide into the following Modules:

MODULE 1: Understanding Developmental Evaluation

MODULE 2: Preparing to Start a Developmental Evaluation: Scoping, Resourcing, and Setting Expectations

MODULE 3: Onboarding Developmental Evaluators

MODULE 4: Planning the Acculturation Workshop

MODULE 5: Designing Developmental Evaluations

MODULE 6: Cultivating Buy-In with Developmental Evaluation Stakeholders

MODULE 7: Being Embedded

MODULE 8: Problem Solving in Developmental Evaluation

MODULE 9: Engaging Stakeholders with Developmental Evaluation Results

MODULE 10: Closeout and Handoff

WHO ARE WE?

In response to the growing interest and knowledge gaps in DE, the Global Development Lab and the Bureau for Planning, Learning and Resource Management (PLR) at USAID commissioned DEPA-MERL as part of a larger Monitoring, Evaluation, Research, and Learning Innovations (MERLIN) program to test innovations in monitoring, evaluation, research, and learning in the Agency context. DEPA-MERL is led by Social Impact, Inc. (SI) in partnership with Search for Common Ground (Search) and the William Davidson Institute at the University of Michigan (WDI). Since 2015, DEPA-MERL has implemented four DE pilots, assessed the potential of many other pilots that were not eventually realized, and managed a community of practice of Developmental Evaluators both within and external to DEPA-MERL.

We, as the implementers of DEPA-MERL (SI, Search, and WDI), have gleaned important lessons about implementing DE through experiential learning and adaptation during our pilots (including rigorous outcome harvesting of those efforts), as well as peer-to-peer learning through webinars with community-of-practice members representing over 12 unique DEs across seven countries. We believe our learning can be of use to those interacting with DE for the first time. We organized these learnings into two practical Guides for audiences interested in conducting DEs: one for Evaluators and DE Administrators, and another for DE Funders. Throughout the Guides, we cite examples and highlight quotes that have emerged through our work to help bring the guidance to life.

---

1. 10 Years of USAID Developmental Evaluation https://usaidlearninglab.org/system/files/resource/files/10_yrs_of_usaid_de_7.29.21.pdf

Our "Funder's Guide" contains guidance specifically for Funders or other people responsible for commissioning a DE. We understand that outside of the Developmental Evaluation Pilot Activity (DEPA-MERL) context, there is often overlap between the Administrator, Evaluator, and Funder roles. For simplicity, we have structured the Guides based on our experiences. Throughout these Guides, we make the following key assumptions, based on our own DE practice:

- **The DE is contracted by a Funder that is in some way removed from the day-to-day of the program being evaluated.** We recognize that the Funder's relationship to the DE may vary and indeed should be clarified at the outset of the evaluation, as recommended in Module 7.

- **The DE is looking at one "program."** We use the term "program" through the Guide for simplicity, though we recognize that a DE may look at one or more project, activity, or intervention.

- **The DE is conducted by an external person or team contracted through a competitive process.** We are aware of internally conducted DEs, but all of our learning has been gleaned implementing external DEs. This Guide is meant to share insights into the dynamics of an externally conducted DE.

- **At least one Evaluator is dedicated to conducting the DE on a full-time basis.** We are familiar with cases in which people conducted DEs part-time, as well as DEs conducted by a team of several full-time people. However, in our learning from practice examples, a full-time, external embedded evaluator conducted the DE over a minimum one-year period. See Module 4 for different tradeoffs to consider when deciding whether to hire an internal versus external evaluator, as well as considerations to keep in mind if you are thinking about staffing the evaluator remotely or part-time. See box 1 for a description of the different DE actors based on our assumptions.

- **The Evaluator has at least one Administrator providing managerial backstopping and/ or technical support.** We know that sometimes Evaluators undertake DEs on their own due to constraints in resources, but based on our learning from practice, the evidence points to the importance of having at least one Administrator involved, as described in Module 5 (please also refer to box 1 below).[1]

- **The Evaluator leads the data analysis and formulation of recommendations.** The original vision of DE was for the Evaluator to facilitate these processes with stakeholders. However, in our experience in the USAID context, the Evaluator is in the best position to lead these efforts, given their roles and expertise, involving stakeholders to the greatest extent possible.

In the spirit of utilization-focused evaluation, we acknowledge that DEs can and do take many different forms, so the guidance we provide may not be applicable to all readers — after all, DE is an intentionally adaptable and flexible evaluation approach. The Guides are not meant to be overly prescriptive, but rather to provide Evaluators with practical strategies and tools when they may not know how to proceed. We encourage readers to explore some or all of the Modules in both Guides and draw from them (or not!) in whatever way best suits their needs. We hope our readers will find these Guides to be a helpful starting point.

1. Esper, H. L., Fatehi, Y. K., & Baylor, R. (2021). Developmental Evaluation in Theory versus Practice: Lessons from Three Developmental Evaluation Pilots. *Journal of MultiDisciplinary Evaluation,* 17(40), 16–33. https://journals.sfu.ca/jmde/index.php/jmde_1/article/view/685/583

BOX 1: WHO'S WHO IN DE?

There are many different ways to conduct a DE. However, as noted in the aforementioned list of assumptions, we have developed this guidance based on structures that we have used implementing DEs through DEPA-MERL. Throughout the Guide, we refer to a few key actors whose roles are summarized below:

- **The Developmental Evaluator** is embedded within the team(s) that is/are subject to the DE. This person designs and carries out the DE on a day-to-day basis — collecting data, analyzing, and working with DE stakeholders to co-create and execute adaptations based on the evidence. This person is typically hired by the implementing partner who carries out the DE.

- **The** DE Administrator has two primary roles: being in charge of launching and overseeing the DE, and providing technical support to the Evaluator. Prior to the start of the DE, this person works with the Funder to develop a preliminary scope of work (SOW) and budget, and recruit an Evaluator. During the DE, the Administrator may primarily be responsible for the management of the DE, e.g., ensuring adherence to agreed-upon budgets, contracts, and timelines; liaising with the Funder; and navigating conflict. As the DE continues, however, the Administrator works with the Evaluator to carry out the DE technical tasks, e.g., serving as a sounding board for thinking through complex and emergent issues; providing technical

support; and conducting quality assurance. However, we understand that managerial and technical skills are distinct, and therefore these duties may be carried out by different people. This role is also filled by the implementing partner in most cases.

- **The DE Funder** is the person responsible for procuring and overseeing the DE from the client side. This person works with the DE Administrator and Evaluator to develop a preliminary SOW, budget, and contract. The Funder may also provide technical direction to the DE, review and approve deliverables, and adjudicate conflict as needed.

- **The DE Stakeholders** benefit directly or indirectly from the DE. In this Guide, we generally refer to stakeholders as the people whose work the DE examines and the teams with whom the Evaluator is embedded. We sometimes refer to the "program team" or "implementing partner" in the discussion of SOW development to specifically discuss groups of people responsible for conducting work examined by the DE.

At the end of Modules 2-10, we have included a basic matrix recapping how the Evaluator, Administrator, Funder, and stakeholders are involved in each of the steps outlined in each Module. We also included a glossary in the beginning of this document in which we define these terms and others used in the Guide.

Understanding Developmental Evaluation

An important first step in planning to conduct a DE is to develop a solid understanding of what a DE will entail. DE is a novel concept for many people, including experienced evaluators, and can thus be a confusing experience given how different it looks from more common evaluation approaches. Furthermore, we have found that the model of having a full-time, embedded evaluator is important to the success of the DE approach, and departure from the best practices outlined in this Guide may result in limited utility for stakeholders. DEs also require substantial resource investments. Therefore, it is critically important to take a thoughtful approach to scoping, resourcing, and managing expectations of a DE before deciding whether a DE is the right fit. Doing so can help ensure that the DE ultimately serves its intended purpose(s) and is successful for all stakeholders involved.

This Module provides an introduction to DE for people who would be responsible for setting up and/or eventually overseeing a DE (DE Administrators). It outlines what DE is and why it can be a useful tool.

What Is Developmental Evaluation?

Coined by Dr. Michael Quinn Patton, DE is an approach to continuous adaptation of interventions through the use of evaluative thinking and feedback. It includes having one or more evaluators embedded in program teams, ideally on a full-time basis; and working with teams to contribute to modifications in program design and targeted outcomes throughout implementation. Although there is no minimum or maximum length of time for DEs, they ideally span from the program design stage through closeout. We have found that those involved in DEs need a minimum of one year to develop the relationships and carry out the work required. It is preferable for the DE to cover as much of the program life cycle as possible.

DEs are methodologically agnostic and utilization focused. Deploying various data collection activities and methods on an as-needed basis, Evaluators facilitate real-time, evidence-based reflection and decision-making. General examples of how this can work include:

- Testing the program's logic (e.g., theories of change, underlying assumptions) and working with stakeholders to refine their strategies accordingly,

- Tracking the complexity of the program's context (e.g., changes in the political or natural environment) and helping stakeholders to pivot their approach in response, and

- Recognizing areas for institutional strengthening and building stakeholder capacity in those areas (e.g., developing a culture of learning and reflective practice or knowledge management systems).

DEs adjust as the program changes and deliver contextualized and emergent findings on an ongoing basis. Importantly, the more dynamic the context and the more innovative the intervention, the more the DE will be emergent and adaptive. Evaluators should keep the interdependency of the complexity of the environment, the design of the DE, and the implementation of the program front and center. As one shifts, so should the rest.

FIGURE 1: DEVELOPMENTAL EVALUATION, EVOLUTION OF PROCESSES AND OUTCOMES
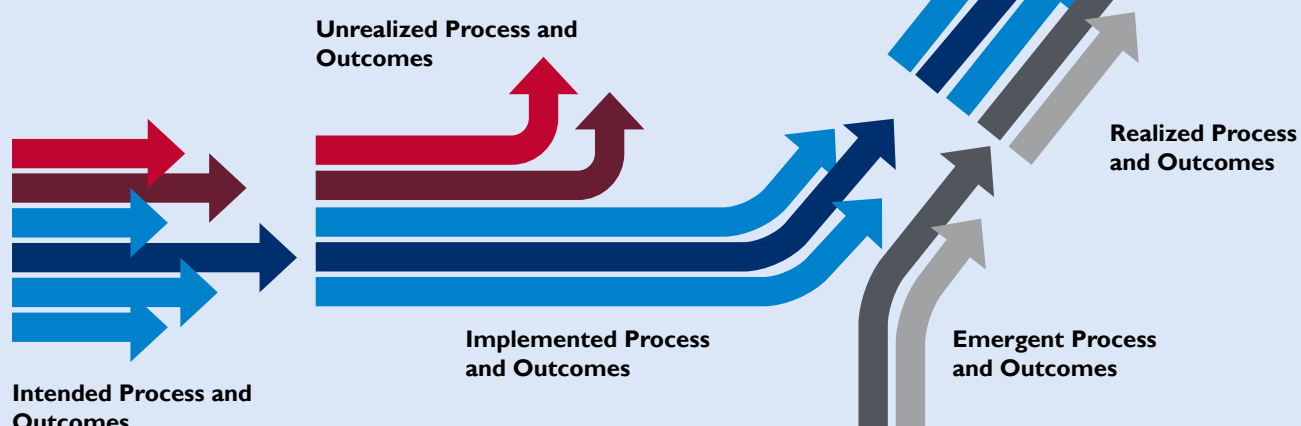
Mintzberg, H., Ghoshal, S., and Quinn, J. B. (1998). The Strategy Process. Prentice Hall, 1998.

DE is a highly versatile approach and is well suited for programs under flexible procurement mechanisms in which implementation is likely to change in response to emerging conditions on the ground. DE is particularly useful in programs with untested or incomplete theories of change, where objectives may shift in response to contextual changes and where implementers and/or program managers are "building the plane in the air." Given the innovation and complexity orientation, DE is best suited for organizations in which:

- There is a **culture** suited to exploration, inquiry, and innovation, and critical mass of staff with corresponding attitudes (see guidance here);

- There are financial and contractual **structures** to allow for adaptation of the process or intervention;

- There is a high degree of **uncertainty** about the path forward;

- There are **resources** available for ongoing exploration;

- Management and staff are in **agreement** about the innovation and willing to take risks; and

- There is an **iterative loop** of option generation, testing, and selection.[1]

TABLE 1: OTHER EVALUATION APPROACHES VS. DEVELOPMENTAL EVALUATION

	Other Evaluation Approaches	Developmental Evaluation
Purpose	Purpose usually defined at the outset. Often supports learning connected to improvement and accountability.	Supports development of innovation and adaptation in dynamic environments.
Standards	Methodological competence and commitment to rigor, independence, and credibility with external authorities.	Methodological flexibility and adaptability; systems thinking; creative and critical thinking balanced. High tolerance for ambiguity. Able to facilitate rigorous evidence-based perspectives.
Methodological Options	Traditional research and disciplinary standards of quality may dominate options. Options usually selected at outset and are not changed significantly over the course of the evaluation.	Utilization focused. Options are chosen in service to developmental use.
Evaluation Results	Detailed formal reports; validated best practices. May be generalizable across time and space.	Rapid, real-time feedback. Diverse, user-friendly forms of feedback.

1. Adapted from Gamble, J.A.A., and the J.W. McConnell Family Foundation. (2008). A developmental evaluation primer. Montreal, Canada. Retrieved from: https://www.betterevaluation.org/en/resources/guides/developmental_evaluation/primer

Why Developmental Evaluation?

For complex interventions or innovations, midterm and end-line evaluations can occur too late to aid in programmatic fine-tuning. Some evaluation approaches help interventions measure whether they have reached their predefined outcomes. However, complex systems change may require the redefinition of outputs and outcomes. For example, we have used DE for:

- Creating a collaborative, shared platform or process through which multiple stakeholders across different sectors contribute to a shared objective (e.g., our DE supported the collaboration of organizations seeking to increase the number of children living in safe, family-based care in a Southeast Asian country). See report here.

- Undertaking active learning to enable a large bureaucracy to get smarter about the viability of different approaches to scale and sustain innovations. See report here.

- Developing new knowledge management solutions and approaches within the context of organizational redesign, in which case the DE supports a pivot to on-demand research and technical assistance. See report here.

- Supporting learning and collaboration in the implementation of a new digital strategy across the agency. See report here.

DE provides an approach to evaluation that is quick and ongoing, and takes an iterative approach to data collection, analysis, and feedback. Evaluators work closely with stakeholders to co-create timely adaptations throughout the program cycle, allowing for system changes as well as changes in targeted outcomes. Ideally, **DEs serve as an *intervention* on programs, ultimately becoming an integral part of their functioning.**

In summary, DE:

- **Enables timely, data-based decision-making and adaptation**. DE makes evaluation quick, ongoing, and iterative in its approach to data collection, analysis, and feedback. These qualities contribute to timely changes throughout the program as unintended results make themselves visible.

- **Supports innovative, complex programming**. Funders frequently operate in rapidly changing environments that require innovative and dynamic programming, which may not have tested theories of change or fully developed designs. DEs monitor how environments evolve and work collaboratively with stakeholders to adjust program activities and objectives in response.

- **Focuses on learning**. DE provides an opportunity to systematically document decision-making processes and the ways a program, project, or activity evolves over time. This documentation in and of itself is unique and allows key policy- and decision-makers to create new policies and practices that draw from past experiences or revisit earlier decisions, rather than relying on fading memories and "institutional knowledge."

Is DE right for my program?

Do one of the following criteria apply?

My project/program/activity is …

- Operating in a rapidly changing or otherwise *complex environment*,

- Operating with an *undefined or untested theory of change*,

- Piloting highly *innovative* approaches that need further refinement,

- Seeking to achieve *complex outcomes* that may need to change over time, and/or

- Likely to require potentially *drastic modifications* to its approach.

If so, DE could be for you.

DE is not right for all situations. The success of DE depends on the conditions surrounding the program. Specifically, DE is unlikely to serve its intended purposes if:

- Key stakeholders do not or will not embrace a learning culture — e.g., they are not amenable to experimentation and/or reflection; are averse to failure or negative findings; are unable or unwilling to engage in routine discussions with the Evaluator due to lack of time or trust[2]
- There is limited or no flexibility (financial, contractual, or otherwise) to adapt the intervention based on iterative findings, and/or if certainty is required; and
- The primary motivation for evaluation is to measure outcomes or impact.

Who Uses Developmental Evaluation?

Although the use of DE is not yet widespread, there are several Funders that have some success implementing DE. With the current level of interest in DE, it is likely that demand for this evaluation approach will continue to increase. To help meet this increasing demand, several of the leaders in the evaluation field offer courses and other resources on DE to further professionalize its use.

> *DE takes a rigorous approach to understanding strategic and operational challenges, leading to better-informed options for adaptation and continuous improvement."*
>
> — DEPA-MERL Pilot Stakeholder

Want to read more about DE? Check out these resources:

- *Developmental Evaluation Exemplars*
- A Developmental Evaluation Primer, from the J.W. McConnell Family Foundation
- "What Is Essential in Developmental Evaluation?" article by Michael Quinn Patton

---

2. Patton, M. Q., McKegg, K., & Wehipeihana, N. (2016). *Developmental Evaluation Exemplars: Principles in Practice*. New York: The Guilford Press.

MODULE 2

Preparing to Start a Developmental Evaluation:
Scoping, Resourcing, and Setting Expectations

Developmental Evaluations (DEs) require substantial resource investment, given the long-term hire of a highly skilled Developmental Evaluator (a minimum of 12 months, as recommended in Module 1). However, stakeholders can think of this cost as an investment not just in evaluation, but also in program design, development, and implementation, as well as organizational capacity building.

It is critical for people who would be responsible for the DE (i.e., Funders, DE Administrators, and/or Evaluators) to take a thoughtful approach to scoping, resourcing, and managing expectations as early as possible. Doing so can help ensure that the DE is successful and serves its intended purpose(s). This Module provides guidance to the person (or people) responsible for setting up the DE prior to its actual inception, starting with the development of a preliminary SOW, which is a key tool for these actors to get on the same page about the DE's purpose, structure, and feasibility. Scoping typically occurs prior to the solicitation, but in some cases, implementers may co-develop an SOW with the Funder (i.e., if they procure the DE through a buy-in mechanism). This Module provides guidance that is most helpful for the co-creation scenario.

What Goes Into Scoping a Developmental Evaluation?

Module 1 discussed key differences between DE and other evaluation approaches. Likewise, both the process of developing a preliminary SOW for a DE and its eventual structure should differ from those of non-DEs. Be aware that DE can sound good to a lot of people when discussed in the abstract; however, the realities may not match what they had in mind! Without a thorough discussion of the DE's focus and implications up front, stakeholders may develop very different ideas of what the DE will actually entail, setting the stage for mismatched expectations. For this reason, a participatory and iterative process to develop a preliminary SOW is valuable.

We recommend the following four steps for developing a preliminary SOW:

STEP 1
The DE Administrator (see box 1 in Introduction) should hold a series of initial meetings with key stakeholders to assess their interest in (and readiness for) DE. Understand whether DE is a good fit for the program's context and needs, though ideally the Funder will have already done some of this research prior to requesting proposals (as suggested in Modules 2-4 in our Funder's Guide). Encourage candor in these discussions to get a true sense of whether a DE is feasible or appropriate. It is better to know that it is not a good fit well before making the investment! Table 2 displays key questions to consider during these consultations:

TABLE 2: QUESTIONS FOR INITIAL STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATIONS

Topic	Other Evaluation Approaches
Interest in DE	How well do stakeholders understand what DE actually is?
	Why do stakeholders want to conduct a DE? What is it that they actually want to learn from the DE?
	What other evaluation approaches have been considered?
Readiness for DE	To what extent does a culture of learning and adaptation exist among stakeholders? Can they describe specific instances in which they've adapted programming to new information?
	What are stakeholder expectations around DE?
	What (financial and human) resources are available to support a DE?
DE Fit	Is the program working in a complex context? Or is the program itself complex?
	What major changes are expected to happen?
	What innovation(s) or strategic direction(s) would a DE help inform?

The questions above are merely a starting point and should be adapted as needed. See Module 2 of our Funder's Guide for additional guidance and resources for assessing the DE readiness of stakeholders. If the DE Administrator is launching a DE that was already procured through a competitive process, the point of whether the DE should or should not occur may be moot; nevertheless, Administrators should undertake these process to ensure that Funders and program stakeholders establish similar and realistic expectations for the DE.

As you discuss the SOW consider the tradeoffs of having an internal versus external Evaluator, conducting the DE part-time or remotely.

Internal vs. External DEs: What Are the Tradeoffs?[1]

As noted previously in this Guide, DE is a resource-intensive undertaking. Funders often balk at the price, as it may seem high compared to what they have previously spent on other evaluation approaches. A common question we receive from Funders is whether it is possible to conduct an internal DE. Although none of our DEs have been internal, we are aware of internally conducted DEs, in which the implementing partner either deploys one of its own staff or hires a consultant (who ultimately reports to them) to conduct the DE. These are legitimate ways of conducting DEs. However, based on our interactions with practitioners who have carried out internal DEs, we are aware of a few noteworthy tradeoffs that Funders should keep in mind when considering internal versus external DEs:

	Internal DEs (Evaluator Reports to Implementing Partner)	External DEs (Evaluator Reports to Funder)
Credibility		
Perception	Funder, stakeholders, and beneficiaries may perceive evaluators as partial to the IP. IP may perceive evaluators as more trustworthy.	Funder, stakeholders, and beneficiaries may perceive evaluators as more independent and therefore trust results more for decision making. IP may hesitate to trust evaluators or see them as more focused on accountability rather than learning.
Objectivity	Decreases likelihood evaluators deliver negative findings to funder and stakeholders. May improve evaluator's access to the program team.	May bolster evaluators' abilities to be unbiased and deliver accurate data for decision making. Increases likelihood evaluators present both positive and negative findings to IP, funder, and stakeholders.

1. Thompson, C. (2023). The Tradeoffs of External Versus Internal Developmental Evaluation. https://usaidlearninglab.org/community/blog/tradeoffs-external-versus-internal-developmental-evaluation.

	Internal DEs (Evaluator Reports to Implementing Partner)	External DEs (Evaluator Reports to Funder)
Strategic Position	Potential conflict of interest in recommending significant changes to the program of which they are staff.	May fee less constrained to recommend significant changes to the program as they are independent.
Contract Administration		
Cost	Requires IP to cover costs of recruiting and managing evaluators. Potentially decreases administrative costs for funder.	Requires donor to fund evaluator's recruitment and management. Potentially increases cost for funder in terms of resources and time spent managing the DE contract.
Oversight	IP oversees evaluators, recruiting and managing them.	Funder overseas evaluators, managing their contract.
Quality Control	Relies on IP to ensure quality throughout the evaluation process. Evaluator may feel pulled into non-DE work or have less surge support available from IP.	Typically supported by a headquarters team providing technical and logistical support, quality assurance, and sometimes surge support for data collection or analysis.
CLA Concepts		
Resources & Reporting	Funders and stakeholders may receive DE reporting as part of traditional IP reports (e.g., quarterly, annually).	Funders and stakeholders receive independent, objective, and timely DE reporting.

Lessons from transitioning from a full time to part-time Evaluator

To extend the duration of a DE, we tested having the full time Evaluator transition to working 50% on the DE for the last 10 months of the DE after over a year of working 100% on the DE. Below are key lessons to help inform other DEs that may be thinking about or planning to undergo a similar transition.

Scope of Work: When revising the DE SOW to account for the reduced Evaluator LOE, include details on any changes to the focus of the DE and associated processes that account for what is realistic for the Evaluator to accomplish at a reduced LOE.

Delegating Time: Acknowledge that it is likely not realistic for the Evaluator to delegate certain days of the week or parts of each day such as mornings or afternoons for DE work since the Evaluator is often beholden to the meeting schedules of DE stakeholders.

Connection: Recognize that the Evaluator will not be able to be as proactive as they used to be when they were working full time on the DE. Additionally when an Evaluator transitions to 50% time, it may not be feasible to attend as many meetings as they used to. These changes may result in the Evaluator feeling less connected to people in the DE and the DE overall, as well as losing some situational awareness.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

• **Do not start a DE with the Evaluator working at 50%:** The complexity of learning about the program and the roles and responsibilities of those involved will take much longer if the Evaluator is working 50% at the start of the DE.
• **Do not extend a DE at less than 50% of an Evaluator's time:** If the DE extension had been scoped at 25% instead of 50% time, the DE would have likely fallen to the bottom of our Evaluator's to-do list for a good portion of the time, and would not have allowed enough concentrated time to make adequate progress on the DE.
• **Transitioning an Evaluator to less than full time allows for a thoughtful handover:** Overall extending the DE at 50% allowed the Developmental Evaluator to arrange for and then track the handover of learning and the uptake of various DE activities for longer than would otherwise have been possible.

Remote DE

In-person DEs are traditionally recommended given that it tends to be more difficult to build trust and relationships remotely which can threaten an Evaluator's ability to facilitate collaboration, reflection, adaptation and innovation during a DE. However, during the COVID-19 pandemic we found ourselves launching our first remote DE. At the same time, other DEs in progress within USAID transitioned to being remote. Further guidance on overcoming challenges with being remote from these DEs and a few other DEs that started as fully remote during the pandemic can be found in the Remote Developmental Evaluation: A Guide for Funders and Practitioners. A summary of challenges, proposed solutions and advantages of remote DEs are included in the below table:[1]

CHALLENGES, SOLUTIONS, AND ADVANTAGES OF REMOTE DEs

Challenges		Solutions	Advantage
Embeddedness	• Technical—access to systems Behavioral—integration with teams and people • Orienting others to DE	• Need immediate access to technology platforms • Push to include evaluator in as many remote interactions as possible, with champions who quickly incorporate the evaluator • Allocate sufficient time for orientation and provide ongoing; in-person can be better if possible	Embedding an evaluator remotely reduces costs considerably compared to in-person.
Trust	• Building trust remotely in the evaluator and the DE • Maintain awareness of the DE in a remote environment	• High volume of intentional and creative communications • Make effort to simulate informal interactions	Evaluators may be viewed by stakeholders as being more independent and trustworthy when not embedded in person.
Engagement	• Building strong communications • Balancing formality with relationship building • Maintaining participant focus remotely	• Adapt meeting structures to remote: shorter, more engaging • Use collaborative communication platforms, including social media • Leverage advantages of remote to invite broader participation	Remote DEs can engage a broader audience at minimal additional cost.
Data Collection	• Delays in data collection with remote coordination Maintaining same access to information • Ensuring data quality remotely	• Build flexibility into workplans and plan for delays • Establish quality control systems supplemented by capacity building	Easily reconnect with stakeholders, making data collection more collaborative.
Deliverables and Learning Products	• Delays in finalizing deliverables with stakeholder input • Finding the most useful form of deliverable	• Close communication with clients about deliverable use and timing • Creative deliverable approaches for remote access	Surplus resources from a remote transition may be reallocated to develop higher-quality and innovative deliverables.

Remote Developmental Evaluation: A Guide for Funders and Practitioners. USAID. https://usaidlearninglab.org/system/files/resource/files/remote_de_guide_13jan_1.pdf

EXAMPLE OF PRELIMINARY DE SOW

Preliminary DE SOW

I.   BACKGROUND

[Description of programmatic context and program]

II.   PURPOSE & USE

This particular DE will focus on *[purpose as agreed upon in initial meetings]*. Some of the high-level decisions that stakeholders may use the DE to inform are *[list of known decision points]*.

There are several stakeholders within *[organization(s)]* that could contribute to and benefit from this DE. Buy-in from as many stakeholders as possible is key for the success of the DE and *[the desired change]* more broadly. Based on initial meetings with stakeholders, the *[DE implementer]* understands that primary users of this DE will be *[list of teams and/or individuals]*.

Other evaluation stakeholders include *[secondary stakeholders].*

The DE cannot possibly meet every need of every stakeholder, however. The following primary users/uses and questions will guide DE planning:

Question	Motivation
1. **To what extent is the activity adhering to its core operating principles and achieving the right mix of technical focus areas?**	• Funder wishes to monitor implementation of the program approach. • Funder wishes to understand whether the program is using existing country evidence and knowledge generated by the project to determine the appropriate mix of technical focus areas.
2. **Partnerships, governance, and relationships: what's working and what can we improve?**	• Funder wishes to manage the program effectively. Similarly, it wants to find ways to support the "harmony" of the different pieces. It is particularly concerned that the program's governance structures function well and leverage stakeholders' strengths. • Funder wishes to assist the stakeholders in cultivating a culture of learning and reflecting.
3. **To what extent is the program making gains in technical focal areas?**	• Funder wishes to understand whether program's innovative approach yields different/better results than previous approach and, relatedly, to explore how to measure the success of this innovative approach. • Funder wishes to understand program's operating context to determine the appropriateness of the new approach. • Funder wishes to equip program team with the tools to learn, adapt, and improve quickly and effectively.

Utilization-Focused Evaluation practitioners will want to ensure this is in ANY evaluation SOW. The greater the specificity it gives, the better. Of course, in a DE context, we do not want to be super rigid. However, to the extent that it is possible to identify individual users and specific decisions the DE will inform, we would recommend doing so. Too often, we see evaluation SOWs that say that results will be used "to adapt future programming." What does this actually mean? This often signals that Funders haven't done the important work of figuring out how they will use the results, which can ultimately lead to collecting information that they cannot really use.

To this end, we recommend creating a table like the one at left.

This again helps set the utilization-focused tone (which helps prioritize the questions). At times, Funders may be particularly interested in knowing the particulars about the methodologies. While this is important, we do not think it is necessary to include in a DE SOW unless there are certain non-negotiables set by the Funder. Non-negotiables are a bit antithetical to DE, but we understand that they are sometimes unavoidable.

EXAMPLE OF PRELIMINARY DE SOW (CONTINUED)

It is important to note that these questions are in draft form and subject to refinement. Indeed, they must be discussed with key stakeholders during the start-up phase of the DE so that they can refine them and the Developmental Evaluator can obtain buy-in.

Although the focus of the DE may evolve over time, initial discussions have determined that the following areas are beyond its scope:

- The DE will not examine:
  [XYZ thematic, geographic, or technical areas]

- The Evaluator will not undertake the following tasks:
  [XYZ tasks, e.g., performing standard/routine monitoring and evaluation reporting requirements, developing reports on behalf of the program team, and carrying out Funder's management tasks]

> Saying things the evaluation will not do is not a feature of most evaluation SOWs, but given the great potential for ambiguity in DE, this is an important boundary to delineate.

IV.   DE TEAM STRUCTURE

The "DE team" is comprised of various parts, including **[the Evaluator, the DE Administrator, and other supporting staff if applicable]**. The proposed structure is as follows:

- Evaluator: Responsible for designing and carrying out the DE, including data collection, analysis, and facilitation of learning and adaptation based on evidence. Serves as the main point of contact with the Funder and DE stakeholders. Participates regularly in leadership activities and decision-making to track overall strategic direction and progress of program.

- DE Administrator: Manages relationship with Funder and ensures adherence to budgetary and contractual requirements as well as established timelines. Provides routine technical and managerial guidance to Evaluator and reviews deliverables for quality. As needed, supports Evaluator in carrying out technical tasks and/or deploys other human resources needed to complete work.

> Even if it is just one evaluator carrying out the DE, it is helpful to identify their primary responsibilities. Likewise, it is important to try and establish what roles the other stakeholders have with respect to the DE. It will require a time commitment from them after all!

V.   ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

For the Evaluator and DE Administrator to work effectively with the Funder and program team, the highest possible level of clarity is paramount. Hence, the following distinction of roles:

Task or Question	DE	Program Team	Funder	Notes
Answering agreed-upon DE questions	X			DE stakeholders may have their own highly technical learning agenda, which may fall beyond the scope of the DE. Although the DE can be flexible in the direction it takes, the DE's work will be guided by and in pursuit of answers to these evaluation questions and other questions that are developed and agreed upon throughout the course of the DE.

EXAMPLE OF PRELIMINARY DE SOW (CONTINUED)

Task or Question	DE	Program Team	Funder	Notes
Documenting how and why the program adapts	X	X		An important part of any DE is documenting the history of the program — noting any adaptations to original or revised plans, options not chosen, and the implications of actions taken (or not). Whereas the program team should be documenting its progress through quarterly and annual reports, the DE may focus on a lower or higher level of detail as determined useful by the Funder and stakeholders. The information documented by the DE should not be duplicative of that documented by the program team.
Refining the project theory of change	X	X		One of the first activities required for the program team is to develop a theory of change (TOC). While this is the responsibility of the program team, the Evaluator will observe and document the process. As program implementation occurs, the Evaluator will facilitate periodic reflections as to whether the TOC continues to hold true over time and determine what changes, if any, may be necessary. The Evaluator will not update the TOC, but rather support the program team to do so if and when deemed appropriate.
Ensuring use of data and evidence for decision making at the strategic level	X	X	X	The Evaluator will collect data on the overall implementation, which it will feed back to the program leadership and the Funder to inform the strategic direction of the program and the facilitation of desired adaptations. However, the Evaluator cannot conduct this work effectively without the full engagement of the program team and Funder.
Collecting data for standard, programmatic monitoring and evaluation		X		The implementing partner has monitoring and evaluation reporting requirements imposed by the Funder. These tend to be accountability-oriented measurements and are thus not aligned with the spirit or purpose of the DE. Thus, it is not the responsibility of the Evaluator to collect these data, though they may employ the data for their analyses if relevant.

EXAMPLE OF PRELIMINARY DE SOW (CONTINUED)

VI. RISKS

There are several risks worth considering that can affect the implementation of the DE or program itself. Risks include:

Risk	Root Cause	Mitigation Strategy
1. **Scope Creep**	An Evaluator stretched too thin (i.e., focused on tasks outside their mandate) cannot answer questions in a timely or complete fashion. Ambiguity with roles creates confusion or friction with stakeholders.	Document preliminary agreements on scope in scope of work. Educate as many stakeholders as possible in Acculturation Workshop* on what DE is, what it is not, and what the roles of the Evaluator will be. Reinforce this with simplified 1- to 2-pagers that can be shared with stakeholders when needed. Regularly keep stakeholders apprised of DE activities in meetings and brief written communications. Establish roles and responsibilities at the Acculturation Workshop. When the Evaluator feels that there is a misunderstanding or conflict surrounding roles, they will immediately discuss with the stakeholders and/or Funder to troubleshoot.
2. **Emergent, Fluid, and Flexible Nature of DE Confuses Stakeholders**	The emergent, fluid, and flexible nature of DE can be confusing to stakeholders. This may lead to frustration, dissatisfaction, and skepticism due to lack of understanding about DE or the intended role of the Evaluator.	
3. **Lack of Adequate Buy-In From Funders or Stakeholders**	Evaluator unable to perform their work effectively. Data and/or deliverables not useful or used.	The Evaluator will use the Acculturation Workshop as an occasion to understand the various DE stakeholders' needs and how the DE might serve those needs. Stakeholder input will be critical in selecting research questions and soliciting deliverables on an as-needed basis. However, the Evaluator will begin working with key stakeholders prior to the workshop to secure their buy-in beforehand. The DE will also find other ways to engage stakeholder input, as feasible and appropriate.
4. **Emergent Nature of DE Complicates Budget Management**	Lack of foreseen needs may prevent DE from pursuing desired, ad hoc activities, e.g., hiring consultants or performing certain data collection activities.	DE Administrator will work with Funder to structure an intentionally flexible budget that does not lock Evaluator into certain activities.
5. **Poor Relationship with Stakeholders**	The stakeholders may feel that the DE provides unwanted surveillance or they may misinterpret constructive critiques, which can be compounded by: 1) poor communication; and/or 2) negative findings. An adverse relationship with the Evaluator can come at the expense of needed buy-in.	The Evaluator will establish open and frequent channels of communication with stakeholders. They will endeavor to provide balanced, constructive feedback at all times. When negative findings arise, the Evaluator will share them with the stakeholders in a timely fashion, providing them an opportunity to respond and course correct. The Acculturation Workshop and relationship and communication with the Funder are also key facets of this engagement. The Funder and DE Administrator have committed to framing and using the DE such that it is not viewed as punitive.

Beware that listing significant risks may be off putting to the Funder. However, it is important that they understand threats to the DE's success as well as the many potential benefits.

* A workshop that convenes DE stakeholders to educate participants about DE, give them a clear understanding of the Evaluator role, refine evaluation questions and begin development of the work plan, and establish common expectations and communication protocols.

EXAMPLE OF PRELIMINARY DE SOW (CONTINUED)

VII. PHASES

- Pre-DE (estimated *[dates]*): In the three to six months prior to implementation, the DE Administrator will recruit the Evaluator and perform various administrative tasks for a prompt launch upon award of the DE contract.
- Start-up and acculturation (estimated *[dates]*): Once hired, the Evaluator will begin a literature review to get acquainted with the program. The Evaluator will develop an analysis framework, attend stakeholder meetings, conduct preliminary meetings and interviews with stakeholders, and begin developing preliminary findings and conclusions. After roughly four to six weeks, the Evaluator will facilitate an Acculturation Workshop for DE stakeholders to establish a firm understanding of DE and collaboratively refine the DE evaluation questions.
- Implementation (estimated *[dates]*): The Evaluator will begin working on answering the evaluation questions determined in the Start-up and Acculturation Stage. The Evaluator will work with stakeholders to update DE questions when deemed necessary and appropriate, throughout implementation.

Do not worry if the information is not totally complete — indeed, it is helpful to point out areas that need clarification or agreement if conflicting ideas arise in the initial meetings. The point is to get the ideas on paper and thus make it real for stakeholders, making it easier for them to engage substantively with the proposed plan. The content of a preliminary SOW, including the evaluation questions, should be revisited in the early stages of the implementation and during the Acculturation Workshop (see Modules 3 and 4).

STEP 3

The DE Administrator should circulate the draft SOW to potential DE stakeholders for their review and comments. Depending on the circumstances, the DE Administrator may want to get their feedback via email, in person, or both. Regardless, it is essential that key decision-makers have a chance to provide feedback. Do not proceed without obtaining their input! Doing so can lead to a myriad of challenges down the line — namely misunderstanding or disagreement regarding the intended use of the DE, which, in turn, influences which stakeholders the DE will support, what types of support the Evaluator may provide, and which questions the DE can answer.

STEP 4

The DE Administrator should revise the draft SOW by incorporating stakeholder feedback received during Step 3. At this stage, the DE Administrator may want to include additional information, such as illustrative methodologies or notional deliverables that would increase the DE's value for stakeholders. It can be advantageous to do more than one round of feedback and revision, but do not go overboard! Recall that the DE itself will have to be flexible and adaptive, so the SOW may not ever be "final." When stakeholders do reach a general consensus on the content, the DE Administrator should recirculate and "finalize" the SOW.

> *"After drafting a few DE scopes of work, the DEPA-MERL team learned to be comfortable with information gaps. We learned to use these to our advantage, explicitly pointing out areas that need clarification or agreement. Gaps make the DE real for stakeholders because, by addressing those, they can begin to engage in shaping the direction of the DE."*
>
> — DE Administrator

There is no right way to draft a DE SOW, but there are a few strategies to help make the SOW as useful as possible:

- **Ask DE-appropriate questions**. DEs are more oriented toward learning and adaptation than accountability. DE evaluation questions and objectives should generally not lead to judgments of success or failure. DEs often ask questions such as What did we do? What happened as a result? What could we do differently? For additional examples of appropriate types of DE questions, refer to the Development Evaluation Questions worksheet developed by the Spark Policy Institute.

- **Strike a balance with the level of specificity**. DEs are supposed to be flexible and adaptive, so it is antithetical to be overly prescriptive about the SOW. There should always be an understanding that things may change over time. However, too much ambiguity can pose a challenge later on if people cannot agree on the scope. Therefore, it is helpful to have a clearly stated purpose and parameters regarding what the DE will and will not cover, as noted above. Illustrative DE purposes could include:
  - Developing a desired framework or model,
  - Informing adaptive decisions about the strategic direction of a program,
  - Documenting the evolving history of a program, and
  - Facilitating learning and reflective practice.

  Please refer to the preliminary SOW template above for ideas on how to establish basic parameters from the outset — i.e., specifying what the DE will and will not cover.

- **Be mindful of stakeholder sensitivities**. During initial meetings, look for any issues or particular terms that may be "triggers" for DE stakeholders. For example, in negotiating one DE scope, we initially proposed a political economy analysis (PEA). However,

preliminary meetings with DE stakeholders revealed that that they had a previous negative experience with PEA, so we excluded it from the SOW in anticipation of an adverse reaction. Make sure to either exclude potential triggers or talk about them appropriately in the SOW to preempt any potential anxieties that team members have about engaging in DE.

- **Provide caveats as needed**. Given the inherent uncertainty of DEs, Evaluators should remind stakeholders that things are subject to change. In the SOW, specify particular elements that are unknown and/or likely to change throughout the course of the DE. For example, could an upcoming political election or an annual meeting influence DE stakeholder priorities? If so, plan for it! The DE Administrator may choose to establish milestones for when these caveats or other parts of the SOW should be revisited and updated, based on how the DE evolves. Potential milestones can be based on the DE timeline (e.g., quarterly), the DE workload (e.g., after the conclusion of work on a particular evaluation question) or on stakeholder decision points (e.g., during routine portfolio reviews).

RESOURCING DEVELOPMENTAL EVALUATIONS

Who Should Conduct a DE?

Hiring the right Evaluator is paramount to the success of DE. Once a draft SOW is in place, it is easier for the DE Administrator to understand the profile needed for the assignment. The skills needed for DE include strong interpersonal skills, to conduct interviews with a variety of stakeholders and effectively deliver negative findings, especially given the long-term involvement of the Evaluator and heightened exposure to sensitive information. Additionally, Evaluators are key drivers of adaptation, so they must be skilled facilitators of organizational change.

Here are some key competencies that DE Administrators should consider in recruitment efforts (see list of skills used by the Evaluator in our digital strategy DE on right):

- Diverse analytical toolbox, especially in qualitative research;

- Ability to communicate effectively with various audiences;

- Successful track record of facilitating meetings, workshops, and co-design processes;

- Interpersonal skills, including ability to navigate conflict, team dynamics, and cross-cultural settings;

- Sectoral or client-specific experience; and

- Perceived credibility among DE stakeholders.

Skills Used by Developmental Evaluator During the Digital Strategy DE

Technical Skills and Knowledge

-Primary and secondary qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis
-Network maps
-Process assessment
-Flowcharts
-Case studies
-Website design (flow and revisions)
-Social network analysis
-Stakeholder mapping
-Stakeholder engagement
-After action reviews
-Adaptive management
-Trained in CLA
-Familiarity with USAID

Verbal and Written Communication Skills

-Facilitation
-Communicate effectively with various audiences
-Strong digital communication and presentation
-Teach new skills to a variety of audiences
-Ability to explain what DE is via email and in meetings
-Coach/mentor
-Report writing
-Ability to network

Social Skills

-Leadership
-Strategic thinking and advising
-Co-design
-Active listener
-Navigate conflict
-Work with multiple stakeholders with competing priorities
-Project management
-Global fluency (respect diversity, inclusiveness)
-Conduct ethical research

Personal Skills

-Attention to detail
-Flexibility
-Energy
-Humility
-Willing to learn on the go
-Initiative

SAMPLE TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR A DEVELOPMENTAL EVALUATOR

Terms of reference

[Background information on organization that is hiring Evaluator and program to be evaluated]

OBJECTIVE:

[Organization] seeks a skilled evaluator to design and implement a Developmental Evaluation (DE) of *[program]*. The DE will facilitate *[main use/purpose of DE]*. The DE will help stakeholders evaluate and learn in real time and capture that learning into a more comprehensive report about the progress and effectiveness of their efforts. This will guide both current and future programming priorities, including *[examples]*.

Through the DE, various stakeholders would also be part of a kickoff/Acculturation Workshop and process, which would bring all the partners together to build buy-in to the DE process, a culture of learning and adaptability from the evidence collected throughout the DE, and familiarity with the Evaluator. These exercises will enable a good start to the process and provide a chance to bring the stakeholders together and on board with the DE scope, approach, and stakeholder responsibilities.

A DE will also ensure rigorous documentation of the learnings throughout the process, enabling them to be shared, replicated, and available for in-depth review for how decisions were made and adaptations executed. This documentation facilitates informed iterations within the program, revisiting decisions to try different approaches when desired, and supports other similar initiatives in their learning and approaches to collective impact and complex partnerships.

The DE will begin on *[date]* and last through *[date]*. *[Organization]* anticipates that the Evaluator would sit with *[organization/office location]* throughout the life of the DE, with travel as needed throughout to meet with partners or other stakeholders and/or collect additional data.

The Evaluator will have additional technical support from *[organization, if applicable]* throughout the implementation of the DE.

RESPONSIBILITIES:

Good candidates may not actually know what carrying out a DE entails. This can help them get a sense of whether they may be able to undertake the work.

The Evaluator will have overall responsibility for the design and implementation of the DE and for ensuring its quality. The Evaluator will be responsible for the following:
- Facilitate an Acculturation Workshop for DE stakeholders, which will help to collaboratively conceptualize and develop the DE design and approach (learning framework, methodology, work plans, reporting, etc.).
- Develop a living work plan for the evaluation, including an agreed set of deliverables (which may change over time, depending on the needs of the program).

SAMPLE TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR A DEVELOPMENTAL EVALUATOR (CONTINUED)

- Orient and manage other evaluation or data collection teams as they arise.
- Provide quality assurance of all deliverables, including regular intermediate report logs (that track details of DE and document all events that occur — i.e., planned, unplanned, and associated outcomes) and the final report of the evaluation.
- Facilitate regular meetings with program leadership and monitoring and evaluation staff to collect data.
- Conduct analysis of the data collected and present digestible analysis regularly to program staff and key partners through the data-review process and other participatory meetings.
- Track and communicate high-quality information to program staff, and clue partners in on the program's progress, which can inform timely and data-driven decision-making; regularly record decision-making, program changes, and/or changes in the environment in report log.

The Evaluator will be supported by *[people or organizations]* and report to *[relevant individual]*.

QUALIFICATIONS

Required:
- Programming and/or evaluation experience in *[name relevant sector here if applicable]*;
- Extensive technical knowledge, skills, and expertise in evaluation design, concepts, and approaches, and evaluating complexity in particular;
- Facilitation skills, particularly related to programmatic and organizational learning;
- Familiarity with DE, including skills such as
    - Respect for local stakeholders and partners, ethical research (maintains confidentiality and anonymity when required), flexibility, energy, humility, willingness to learn on the go, and ability to resolve conflicts;
- Strong analytical skills to support both qualitative and quantitative research;
- Excellent oral and written communication and report-writing skills in English;
- Keen attention to detail, especially related to documenting data and associated processes; and
- Graduate degree in social science, organizational theory/behavior/communications, international development, or related focus.

Strongly Preferred:
- Leadership and strategic thinking skills;
- Active listening, proactive learning, and time management skills, with readiness to be in a learning role;
- Previous experience and comfort with working for multiple stakeholders with competing priorities/interests; and
- Familiarity with *[donor]* organizational structure/context.

Although we do not consider this to be the most essential qualification, it may be necessary for certain sectors (e.g., health) in order for the Evaluator to be perceived as credible by DE stakeholders.

It is critical for the candidates to have this background in order to insert evaluative thinking and deploy a wide variety of evaluative tools to the program.

This is of equal importance as the technical evaluation skills. Without this, the Evaluator will not be able to help facilitate learning and adaptation, which is an important part of what distinguishes DE from other forms of evaluation.

Finally, given the embedded nature of the position, it is also important to find someone with the right personality for the DE stakeholders. Therefore, we recommend having top candidates interview with the Funder and/or at least one of the key stakeholders.

Unfortunately, finding one person with all of these credentials is exceptionally difficult and, at times, may feel impossible. For this reason, we strongly urge anyone involved in recruiting Evaluators to start the process early (i.e., two or three months prior to the anticipated start date), post the opportunity widely, and leverage personal and professional networks. Failure to identify a suitable Evaluator can jeopardize the DE's results. It is critical to do some initial research and recruitment prior to launching the DE to determine if strong candidates exist and to ensure that their salary expectations fit within the available budget.

Screening Developmental Evaluators

How do you determine whether people with impressive resumes can actually deliver? Do you need to choose between two or more top candidates? You may want to consider incorporating the following into the interview process:

- **Make sure to probe the depth of candidates' M&E "toolbox":** While specialized skills or experience with a particular method, software, or tool may look advantageous, it is the depth and breadth of an evaluator's toolbox that positions them well to be a developmental evaluator. Experience implementing quantitative, qualitative, and participatory methods, as well as working with both monitoring and evaluation in complex environments, will enable the evaluator to adapt, be flexible, and meet the needs of the developmental evaluation no matter how the evaluation evolves.

- **Put top candidates through a simulation:** A simulation can be as simple as laying out possible scenarios during an interview and asking how the candidate would handle them. Examples of potential scenarios include how to deal with uncooperative stakeholders, how to facilitate adaptation without being the decision-maker, and how to share politically

sensitive or negative findings with key stakeholders. If resources permit, an in-person simulation can be highly beneficial.

- **Seek and obtain approval by core developmental evaluation stakeholders:** Arrange for the top candidate(s) to meet and interview with the core stakeholders. Since interpersonal skills and relationships are key to securing initial buy-in for developmental evaluation as well as participation in the evaluation over time, it is helpful to gauge whether personalities match. A candidate interview also gives stakeholders a sense of ownership early in the process.

Such interview processes can take some time. You may want to factor in a few rounds of interviews into your recruitment plan.

What Goes Into a DE Budget?

Budgeting for DEs can be challenging, given their uncertain and ambiguous nature. Furthermore, there are many possible budget scenarios that directly affect how a DE can be operationalized. The process of budgeting should start concurrently with the SOW development. Whereas our DEs have been relatively well resourced, we often hear of evaluators trying to do a DE with tight budgets. Recognizing that the latter scenario is much more common, there are several areas that budgets should ideally cover to maximize the benefit of the DE. These include:

Level of Effort for Management Support

DE teams should budget for time for the DE Administrator or supporting staff to recruit and onboard the Evaluator. This process can require significant level of effort (LOE), especially since a suitable Evaluator may not yet be identified. Plan to set aside two to three months to identify, interview, recruit, and hire potential Evaluators. This line should also include LOE for the provision of technical and/or managerial support to the Evaluator. The DE Administrator can be one person if resources are limited, but ideally, the Evaluator is well supported with managerial and technical assistance, as well as surge support if necessary. Please see box 2, "DE Administrator as Additional Technical Support," as well as the accompanying "Funders Guide" for more details.

Workshop Expenses

DEs are supposed to be highly engaging and participatory, so it is likely that the DE will include one or more in-person workshops of varying sizes, depending on the Evaluator's approach. The most effective workshops contain an interactive element, so the Evaluator may need supplies that will encourage engagement among attendees. Examples include projectors, poster paper, markers, sticky notes, and possibly virtual tools such as Miro. Depending on the size and context of the workshops, it may be necessary to rent space, serve refreshments, or provide a travel stipend to participants. At a minimum, we strongly recommend holding an Acculturation Workshop (see Module 4). This is a formal kickoff event with the DE stakeholders, typically led by the Evaluator, to solidify acculturation to the DE process and establish the evaluation questions. Beyond financial resources, the Funder has an opportunity and responsibility to motivate the right people to show up to ensure the success of the DE.

Data Collection

Consider what kinds of data the DE will need (and what data sources are already available) to answer the evaluation questions in the preliminary SOW. If the questions require large data sets, the DE team may need to purchase secondary data from vendors (e.g., market research firms); hire a data collection firm to conduct ethnographic research, in-person surveys, or focus group discussions; and invest in data management tools (such as Tableau or Microsoft Power BI). If travel is required, include any associated costs in the budget. It may not be possible to know everything that will be needed up front, so it is useful to plan for discretionary data collection costs (3-4% of total DE cost). The team can use these funds when new data needs come up and as resources allow.

Data Analysis

Budgeting time and resources for analysis is important, as the Evaluator should have the right tools needed to do analysis well. This could mean qualitative (such as Dedoose or NVivo) or quantitative (such as Stata or MATLAB) analysis software or surge support provided by the DE Administrator for data cleaning or coding. For example, the Evaluator may need support for time-intensive qualitative coding of interview notes to identify trends.

Relocation and Travel

Prior to being hired, Evaluators may be based away from the program or organizational site. If this is the case, include a budget for their relocation. Furthermore, DEs may require the Evaluator to travel. For example, if the Evaluator is embedded with a project team located at the program's headquarters, they may need to travel to field offices throughout a country or region to understand the project fully.

Of course, there are many different factors that can affect the size of a DE budget, including the scope of the evaluation, length of the evaluation, Evaluator's profile, and, of course, the Funder's ability and appetite to support any costs they perceive to be non-essential. However, if the budget is insufficient to cover the five points explained above, the DE may ultimately fail to serve its intended purpose(s). Table 3 explains in greater detail what costs DE Administrators should plan for in their budgeting process.

TABLE 3: SAMPLE BUDGET CATEGORIES

Item	Description	
Recruitment		
Labor	LOE for DE Administrator to vet and hire suitable Developmental Evaluator candidate(s).	Although the Funder may not finance this process, remember that it can be a labor intensive undertaking!
Evaluation Kickoff		
Labor	LOE (or salary) for Evaluator and Administrator to get onboarded to program (e.g., initial meetings and literature review), facilitate Acculturation Workshop, and conduct initial data collection.	It may also be helpful to have time for the Administrator to participate in these processes.
DE Start-up Expenses	Cost of supplies, space rental, refreshments, etc., for Acculturation Workshop. Basic data collection supplies — e.g., laptop, notebooks, data analysis software (e.g., NVivo or Dedoose), and data management (e.g., Tableau or Microsoft PowerBI).	Some of these expenses may be recurring over the course of the DE (e.g., monthly subscriptions to Dedoose and supplies for workshops/other participatory activities the Evaluator may use to engage stakeholders with the DE).
DE Implementation		
Labor	LOE (or salary) for Evaluator to collect and analyze data, develop utilization-focused deliverables, and work with stakeholders to facilitate adaptations. LOE for DE Administrator or others to provide managerial backstopping or technical support the Evaluator may need.	The amount and type of assistance will vary based on the workload and the Evaluator's skills, and may require differing levels of involvement at different points in the DE.
Allowances/Living Expenses	Allowances, housing stipend, insurances, etc., for Evaluator (if applicable).	This may be necessary if the Evaluator relocates internationally for the position.
Travel Expenses	Travel expenses for Evaluator and/or DE Administrator — e.g., relocation, visits back to headquarters, etc. (if applicable).	This may be necessary if the Evaluator is based in a different location than the Administrator and/or if data collection will require travel to different sites.
Data Collection Expenses	Budget for Evaluator to conduct additional data collection — e.g., purchasing data sets, hiring enumerators, translation of surveys, etc.	Consider what kinds of data the DE will need in order to answer the initial research questions. If they require large data sets, it may be necessary to purchase secondary data or hire a data collection firm. Plan for discretionary data collection costs that the Evaluator can use when new data needs emerge as resources permit.
Workshop Expenses	Substantively engaging stakeholders is a hallmark of DE. Evaluators may choose to hold various types of workshops or other participatory events to share findings, build capacity, or co-create recommendations and/or action plans. Ideally, Evaluators will have the supplies needed to design sessions that are interactive — e.g., with sticky notes, flip charts, or include virtual elements like [Miro]().	

BOX 2: DE ADMINISTRATOR AS ADDITIONAL TECHNICAL SUPPORT

Many organizations have tried to conduct DEs on a shoestring budget — often with a single Developmental Evaluator who works on the DE only part time. For more information on tradeoffs conducting the DE part-time see Module 2. However, these arrangements are reportedly quite challenging, particularly for the Evaluator. Consequently, we recommend that for any DE, the Evaluator has at least one person who supports the process. For the purposes of this Guide, we assume the DE Administrator fills this role. In any case, this person (or group of people) can serve various important functions, including providing technical guidance (especially in the Evaluator's areas of relative weakness), helping the Evaluator to maintain an appropriate level of objectivity/equity, providing extra support to carry out technical work as needed, and serving as an intermediary to help problem solve management challenges that arise. DEs should contain some level of consistent support to the Evaluator as resources permit. Although this can increase

the cost of an already expensive evaluation approach, in our experience, having this kind of support has been invaluable in providing high-quality DEs.

"One [lesson I would share with other DE implementers] would be the importance of having some sort of support team. ... This doesn't have to be a full-time person, or someone in the field with them … as the Developmental Evaluator you're so in the weeds and often kind of isolated in a weird way, [working] between different teams and conflicting interests. It's great to have a [supporting] team member with some dedicated time to bounce ideas off of, to talk through what types of tools or approaches you're thinking of taking, and most importantly be your "anti-grock," someone to pull you out of the weeds once a week or so and help you see the bigger picture, re-orient to the DE research question, remind you when things are getting personal, etc." — DEPA-MERL Developmental Evaluator

Managing Expectations

Oftentimes, stakeholders are new to DE. They may need coaching about the differences between developmental and other types of evaluation and, by extension, how to interact with the Evaluator. This will be an ongoing process in which the Evaluator must carefully manage expectations. Stakeholders may be overly skeptical or optimistic about what the DE can deliver. To avoid scope creep and possible disappointment, the DE Administrator should clarify with stakeholders what is manageable for the DE, given the agreed-upon priorities and available resources, especially time and budget. The DE team should be clear about not only what the DE can do, but also what the DE cannot do within the time and budget allotted. Ideally, these expectations and limitations for the DE should be documented.

What Role Should the Funder Play?

Another important lesson: Establish expectations for the role of the DE Funder at the outset. Questions to ask of the Funder may include:

- Are they solely a Funder? Or are they a direct stakeholder and recipient of the findings?

- Who gets a say in decision-making? At what level do they need to be consulted or involved? Do all stakeholders' perspectives get equal consideration, or are some weighted more heavily than others?

- Who gets the findings first? If the Funder is not the subject/evaluand of the DE, should the Evaluator discuss the findings with the DE subjects first? Who must be consulted if sensitive findings emerge — for example, if the Evaluator delivers evidence that may lead to a significant shift in roles, responsibilities, or budget allocations?

- What happens if conflict (such as issues with team dynamics resulting from negative findings) arises and cannot be resolved?

Based on these discussions, DE stakeholders should have a shared understanding (or even written protocols!) for how the Funder wants to be involved in the DE. This understanding should cover when and how the Evaluator or stakeholders can take steps to escalate issues appropriately and effectively. Remember that other tips offered in this Guide — especially promoting a learning culture, maintaining objectivity, and cultivating DE champions — can help maintain a positive and

productive relationship with the Funder, especially when things get thorny. For more information on DE champions see Module 3.

MODULE 2 RACI MATRIX

The following table summarizes the steps outlined in this Module, as well as our recommendation for who is:

R responsible

A accountable

C consulted, and

I informed for each.

TASK	DE ADMINISTRATOR	DE FUNDER	DE STAKEHOLDERS
Participate in Preliminary Meetings	R A	C I	C
Draft Preliminary SOW	R A	C	C I
Review Preliminary SOW	I	R A	C
Revise SOW Based on Feedback	R A	C	I
Develop DE Budget	R A	C	I
Recruit Developmental Evaluator	R A	C	I
Develop Protocols for Funder Involvement	R	R	I

MODULE 3
Onboarding Developmental Evaluators
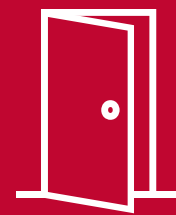
As noted in the previous Module, the success of the DE is highly correlated with the quality of the Developmental Evaluator. Accordingly, the Evaluator should take advantage of the first few weeks on the job to get the lay of the land. This Module describes steps Evaluators can take in the first few weeks of the DE to orient themselves to the teams they will work with and vice versa.

How Should DE Administrators Onboard Developmental Evaluators?

Administrators should ensure that incoming Evaluators are equipped with the tools they need to rapidly integrate into program teams, and that they also have the necessary support systems to conduct the DE over the long term. DE Administrators can use the following checklist to prepare for the Evaluator's start date:

- Aggregate available background materials on the program (e.g., organizational charts, program design documents, etc.) and DE (e.g., current and superseded versions of SOW, notes from scoping discussions with Funder, etc.).
- Develop a list of key contacts and stakeholders.
- Draft and/or prepopulate template for living work plan (more on this below).
- Determine, in consultation with program team and/or Funder, where Evaluator will sit during course of DE, and ensure that proper supplies are ready (e.g., desk, laptop, phone, etc.), as well as other relevant logistical aspects (e.g., setting up email addresses, access to electronic files, security clearance, etc.).

The DE Administrator should also plan to develop an adequate support system, ideally in consultation with the Evaluator. Make time for routine check-ins, brainstorming sessions, and provision of management or technical support. The DE Administrator should — to the greatest extent possible — help establish the systems, processes, and relationships necessary to build the communication channels between evaluation users that will serve as a foundation for the rest of the evaluation.

What Should Developmental Evaluators Prioritize Once Hired?

Getting Trained on DE

Most people (evaluators included) have never done DE before and may be trying it out for the first time. That is ok! To further prepare, we recommend checking out these four resources:
- The Art of the Nudge
- DE 201: A Practitioner's Guide to Developmental Evaluation
- Failing Forward Quickly as a Developmental Evaluator
- *Developmental Evaluation Exemplars*

The first priority for the Evaluator is establishing their role and key working relationships. This is necessary in situations where the Evaluator is externally hired, but perhaps even more so if the Evaluator comes from within the organization. For more information on considerations to keep in mind when hiring an Evaluator internally see Module 2. After all, most people (including Evaluators!) do not have previous experience with DEs and may not initially understand the unique relationship between the Evaluator and evaluand in these contexts. Objectives for the Evaluator in the early stages of the DE should be:

- ☑ **Get to know the DE stakeholders**, their work, and their team culture.

- ☑ **Start integrating into the teams** by attending regular meetings and getting included on relevant communications (e.g., emails).

- ☑ **Study the dimensions of complexity that constitute the dynamic developmental context**, e.g., political instability, technological change, new target populations, emergent challenges (disease, climate change, terrorism, distrust).

- ☑ **Collect data** on the potential evaluation questions and expectations across stakeholders of the DE.

- ☑ **Prepare for the Acculturation Workshop**. See Module 4 for an indepth look at the acculturation workshop.

- ☑ **Reinforce appropriate expectations among stakeholders** during initial meetings based on the preliminary SOW development discussions.

- ☑ **Look for "quick wins"** that the Evaluator can deliver to build interest and buy-in for the DE.

The Importance of "QUICK WINS"

As noted throughout this Guide, DE is new for most people. Given that achieving buy-in for the process is both a challenge and critical success factor for the DE, we recommend that Developmental Evaluators be on the lookout for opportunities to demonstrate the value-add of the DE to stakeholders. The types of quick wins will vary based on the context, but in general, they can include efforts such as developing short write-ups or presentations that leverage DE data or the Evaluator's skills to meet a practical, unmet stakeholder need. Examples may include developing templates, preparing a guidance note for a particular process, or facilitating a meeting about an unresolved issue. At times, they may not appear to be directly related to the DE purpose, but they can go a long way in cultivating interest in and enthusiasm for the DE. Look out for the quick win icon for suggestions on where the possibility for achieving quick wins may emerge.

GETTING TO KNOW THE TEAMS

Being present and listening attentively can help the Evaluator establish legitimacy early and acquaint stakeholders with their unique role. Engaging with stakeholders proactively also facilitates planning discussions, especially in preparation for the Acculturation Workshop (see Module 4) and the process of refining the evaluation questions. To receive a warm welcome and develop an understanding of the DE teams quickly and methodically, we recommend the following:

- **Conduct initial document review**. As with most evaluations, Evaluators should review key documents that will help orient them to the stakeholders and their work. These could include program design documents, organizational charts, quarterly reports, and/or previous evaluations. The

Evaluators should review the documents with an eye toward understanding stakeholder relationships, as well as any data that responds to the draft evaluation questions.

- **Conduct initial outreach and introductions**. Be thoughtful about who should introduce the Evaluator to the stakeholders to ensure that the stakeholders take these introductions seriously. The messenger matters! In a large or highly bureaucratic organization, it probably makes sense for this to come from someone internal to the organization and in a decision-making position. Consider the sequencing of introductions. If there are many stakeholders, it may help to meet with the leaders first and then attend a team meeting to be introduced to everyone else.

- **Use preliminary meetings with stakeholders strategically**. These meetings can yield valuable information on the stakeholders' backgrounds, history of any ongoing initiatives or program design, priorities, perspectives on issues highlighted in the DE SOW and the illustrative evaluation questions, and learning objectives. Make sure to document information shared during these preliminary meetings and add relevant notes to the DE data set. Analysis of this early data collection — e.g., developing a map of the program's network or complexity factors (more on this below) — can be a significant "quick win" to present at the Acculturation Workshop.

- **Develop a stakeholder map**. Using a range of sources (e.g., key document review and initial meetings/interviews), generate a map that displays relationships within and possibly even beyond the stakeholder group. Share an early draft with stakeholders and have them help refine it. Create the map using any of the tools mentioned in box 3. The Evaluator can regularly update the map and add to it over the course of the DE. Where possible and if data is sufficient, add in the strength of different relationships, any directionality in decision-making, and other information about culture and information flows.

The Evaluator's understanding of the DE stakeholders may be insufficient to build in these elements to a stakeholder map at this early phase, but they should start thinking beyond just who knows who. These maps can not only help the Evaluator understand important dynamics, but also capture the attention and interest of DE stakeholders. Oftentimes, teams will have familiarity with their partners on an individual basis but will not have systematically documented relationships. This documentation and visualization by the Evaluator can help stakeholders identify gaps and opportunities, creating a **QUICK WIN** to garner additional buy-in and help socialize how a DE can be useful early on.

- **(If helpful) Develop a complex issues map**. Work with stakeholders to understand how the programs' traditional silos of intervention interact and overlap in a dynamic environment — e.g., how do economic, political, gender, food, poverty, literacy, housing, and climate issues interact? Recall that complexity involves systemic interdependencies. Using diverse stakeholder perspectives to map the nature of complexity in the situation can help the DE work unfold.

BOX 3: TOOLS TO DO STAKEHOLDER MAPPING

A variety of tools exist to help create, visualize, and maintain stakeholder maps. Visualization can be a great way to make connections; identify key connectors in the network; stay up to date with the stakeholders' past, current, and prospective relationships; and identify gaps where stakeholders can expand their network. There are a lot of different templates and in-depth guidance available online, easily identifiable with a simple search, that can help Developmental Evaluators organize details about their stakeholders' network and identify potential new entry points. Having a digital database of a stakeholder map, even in Excel or Google Sheets, makes updating and maintenance easier along the way. A Google search for "stakeholder mapping" will yield different templates, but the following tools are also worth exploring for a more rigorous process.

- Kumu — For more creative visuals, Kumu can help build out a map that can incorporate the strength, interconnectedness, and types of stakeholders using color coordination. It also allows the user to build simple stakeholder profiles.
- ConceptDraw (Stakeholder Onion Maps) — ConceptDraw can be used to build out stakeholder maps. Users can jump into readily available templates, such as the "onion maps," which can help distinguish how closely connected one group of stakeholders is to another.

- Collaboration Mapping Excel worksheet — The Learning Lab at the USAID has developed a Collaboration Mapping Excel worksheet and guidance to facilitate identification and mapping of stakeholder relationships. This tool provides a template that helps draw out some of the nuance of the relationships and creates a visual representation.
- CLA Toolkit — This USAID-produced toolkit has two mapping tools on engaging stakeholders, including a net mapping tool.
- Gephi — Gephi is a great analysis and visualization tool built for larger networks, provides more data input on the relationships, and can be used for social network analysis if needed.
- The Systems Thinker — This workbook outlines step-by-step guidance for how to manually develop maps in a systems-oriented fashion.
- Net-Map — Net-Map, an interview-based mapping tool, helps people understand, visualize, discuss, and improve situations in which many different actors influence outcomes.
- Miro — A platform users can customize to meet their needs while collaborating digitally.

- **Start refining the evaluation questions.** Evaluators should utilize early conversations with DE participants and stakeholders, as well as document reviews, to start solidifying the potential evaluation questions for the DE. Often, draft questions will be documented in the preliminary SOW by this point. However, it is critical to a DE's success for all DE participants to feel included and have some sense of ownership over the evaluation questions selected. The Acculturation Workshop (See Module 4) is a great place to make final decisions on the questions, but those decisions will require preparatory work completed during the onboarding stage. It may be helpful to source additional questions from a broader

range of DE stakeholders and/or translate DE expectations and learning objectives that are shaped into possible evaluation questions. The Evaluator can then analyze the question input received prior to the workshop and conduct some preliminary grouping, assessing priorities based on different DE stakeholder needs, the context, and any other influencing factors identified during the preliminary data collection. Presenting this analysis back to stakeholders in the Acculturation Workshop (Module 4) helps to build the Evaluator's credibility and reinforce expectations for a transparent and learning-oriented relationship.

SOCIALIZING DE

DE is new to most people. As with any organizational change, this can lead to confusion, anxiety, or disappointment if DE is not introduced skillfully. However, DEs offer exciting opportunities to strengthen stakeholder teams, their strategies, and day-to-day work. Effectively communicating what DE is and how the Evaluator and DE process can support stakeholders can greatly facilitate the Evaluator's work throughout the DE. Although the Acculturation Workshop presents a key opportunity to socialize DE, we recommend strategies for mitigating common DE barriers and leveraging common DE enablers below.

How Can Evaluators Mitigate DE Barriers?

DEs face many of the same challenges as other evaluation approaches and adaptive management efforts. Try and mitigate these early in engagement with DE stakeholders to enhance comfort with DE and facilitate buy-in. Evaluators can use a range of strategies to confront common barriers:

- **Address perceptions about evaluation**. The word "evaluation" often carries a great deal of baggage, because people have either poor or no prior experience with evaluations. Although this challenge exists with most forms of evaluation, it is particularly important to address with DE because DE is so distinctly different from the accountability-focused methods that usually come to mind for people who are put off by "evaluation." To combat any resistance associated with negative perceptions, Evaluators and Administrators should make a concerted effort to educate stakeholders on what DE is and is not. Remind stakeholders in the early days of the DE that they are not being evaluated on their individual performance, and that the Evaluator would only use performance-related data to identify learning and potential adaptations. Further, stakeholders should understand that DE is not "just" an evaluation — it is also a program design and implementation approach, an adaptive management tool, and a program intervention unto itself that is meant to help the program (and program staff) reach their full potential.

  Utilizing initial meetings with stakeholders to quell any negative perceptions constitutes an important first step. The Acculturation Workshop is also an opportune time to explain DE. However, we have found that these are only the first steps — there must be ongoing DE education efforts to help stakeholders internalize and embrace the DE. See box 4 for language Evaluators and Administrators can employ to help clarify what DE is.

- **Build a learning culture**. Many organizations do not have institutionalized practices of pausing to reflect on how their work is going, revisiting key assumptions, and making fundamental shifts to their strategy based on data. These practices are part and parcel of DE, so in cases where such a culture does not exist, Evaluators may encounter resistance. However, in their efforts to promote DE, Evaluators can and should try to convince people of the benefits of such practices.

- **Assess barriers to adaptation**. The purpose of DE is to facilitate change. However, in any change management scenario, there are real and perceived barriers to changing the status quo. In bureaucratic organizations, there may be institutional rules/processes that preclude stakeholders from making even seemingly insignificant changes. However, resistance to change is natural. Evaluators should, in their initial introductions and research, determine what kinds of changes are feasible/off the table in their operating context, as well as the people and processes that must be involved in making different levels of change.

BOX 4: DE NORMS

- **Note that the term "Developmental Evaluation" can be a bit of a misnomer**. Many people associate the term "evaluation" with a judgment of success or failure. However, DE is much less concerned with making such designations. Instead, it focuses on helping teams navigate a path forward in the face of uncertainty. Remind stakeholders that DE leverages key advantages of evaluation practice (e.g., methodological rigor) but always in service of stakeholders' needs.

- **Focus on the DE stakeholders' needs**. As professional evaluators, it can be personally exciting to be working on this type of evaluation approach and get too technical when speaking to DE stakeholders. Focus instead on the DE stakeholders' needs and learning objectives rather than the DE itself. This will help stakeholders feel that the Evaluator has their practical interests and needs first and foremost in mind.

- **If needed, avoid the term "Developmental Evaluation" all together**. For the reasons noted above, sometimes the term can simply distract from the work or results. If stakeholders are particularly confused by or hung up on the name, the Evaluator may want to refrain from using the term "Developmental Evaluation" and instead use terms such as "learning," "data-driven decision-making," or "adaptive management. In one of our DE's the Evaluator used the title Senior Learning Advisor.

What Is a Learning Culture?

"A learning culture exists when both leadership and staff are willing to accept (and learn from) both favorable and unfavorable data or program outcomes. Stakeholders should be able to share uncomfortable information transparently, without fear of repercussion from leadership. During one DEPA-MERL pilot, one of the DE stakeholders said it best: 'a learning culture exists when there is no fear of what recommendations will be made.'" — DEPA-MERL Team Member

The United States Agency for International Development's Collaborating, Learning, and Adapting (CLA) Toolkit includes guidance on enhancing organizational cultures to become more learning oriented, tips on engaging stakeholders, and several other topics relevant to this Module. The complementarity of this Guide with the CLA Toolkit reinforces the point that DE is a comprehensive and concrete approach to operationalize the CLA in the Agency's context.

THE IMPORTANCE AND IDENTIFICATION OF DE CHAMPIONS

DE champions are stakeholders that are committed to a DE and are convinced of its value for their team/program. They are key persons who support the DE, educate stakeholders on the approach, and problem-solve with the Evaluator during moments of crisis. They can be internal to the team or external, and often, are persons of authority and/or influence. In addition to increasing stakeholders' understanding and buy-in, DE champions help facilitate interactions and data sharing between the Evaluator and key stakeholders. They also identify tangible ways to help properly embed the Developmental Evaluator. Although DE champions help enable the DE, they are not a required part of a DE (i.e. this role is not an official job or responsibility needed to have a successful DE).

From the very start, DE funder(s) and DE Administrators, as well as the Evaluator, should be encouraged to identify persons who can play the critical role of DE champions. Ideally, these persons should intimately understand team dynamics, be well-liked by others, have social capital, and believe in the value of adaptive management. DE champions should be individuals with either decision-making power or influence who can help integrate the Evaluator into the culture of the stakeholders and transparently share information relevant to the DE. They should understand the culture and informal norms of the team and help identify levers to address challenges and guide the Evaluator.

In programs that have teams at US headquarters (HQ) and worldwide, the Evaluator and DE Administrator should identify persons to serve as DE champions in

both locations. In such cases, these champions' role must also include helping facilitate increased timeliness and transparency of communication between HQ and local country teams. The Evaluator should interact with these DE champions regularly to keep them abreast of challenges in the HQ local country dynamics.

Champions are important because they help legitimize DE process and results, promote ownership of DE results, and, by extension, increase their sustainability. Look out for the champions icon for recommended opportunities to leverage DE champions.

DE can be a great opportunity to amplify the voices and perspectives across different groups of stakeholders beyond "the usual suspects." Make an effort to cultivate these potential champions. Try using different facilitation techniques, especially in cross-cultural settings. Evaluators can also provide less vocal or less powerful stakeholders with opportunities to share and participate in data analysis, or they can engage with these individuals in the co-development or workshopping of recommendations.

LEVERAGING ENABLERS

Evaluators should be attentive to opportunities/enablers to market DE, even once the DE is underway, to help bolster the understanding and buy-in stakeholders have for the DE. This will facilitate the Evaluator's work in the short and long term. Two other ways to leverage enablers include:

DEVELOPMENTAL EVALUATOR

DE CHAMPIONS
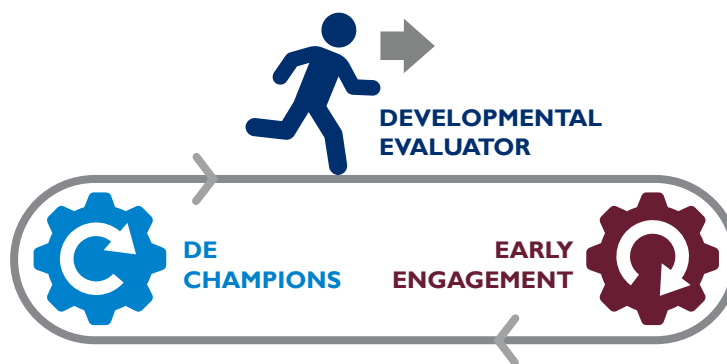
EARLY ENGAGEMENT

Working with DE champions. Work with DE champions to navigate institutional challenges, including resistance to DE (see Table 4).

Rewarding early engagement. When Evaluators do have breakthroughs with individuals or groups early in the DE (e.g., getting them to process DE findings or recommendations), they should elevate the success by mirroring it back to stakeholders. Without bypassing organizational protocols, report the success back to people in leadership positions in formal meetings, all-staff newsletters, or even hallway conversations to help reward the team and bring attention to the DE's tangible benefits. These benefits could include key findings, adaptations, or results of adaptations.

MODULE 3 RACI MATRIX

The following table summarizes the steps outlined in this Module, as well as our recommendation for who is:

R responsible

A accountable

C consulted, and

I informed for each.

TASK	DE ADMINISTRATOR	DEVELOPMENTAL EVALUATOR	DE FUNDER	DE STAKEHOLDERS
Onboard Developmental Evaluator	R A	C	C I	
Conduct Preliminary Desk Review of Program and Context	A	R	C I	C I
Conduct Initial Meetings and Data Collection	A	R	C I	C I
Integrate Evaluator into Program Team (i.e., invite to meetings, include on emails, etc.)	I	C	C	R A
Analyze Initial Data	A	R	C	C I
Begin Design of Acculturation Workshop	A	R	C	C I
Begin Design of Acculturation Workshop	A	R	C	C I

Planning the Acculturation Workshop
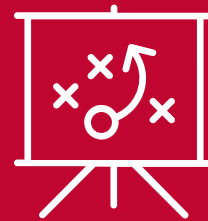
For a DE to be successful, those participating and interacting with the DE must be appropriately oriented and bought into the process and investment they are undertaking. We refer to this as "acculturation." This Module provides guidance on coordinating the logistics and determining the content for an Acculturation Workshop (a workshop that convenes DE stakeholders to educate participants about DE, give them a clear understanding of the Evaluator role, refine evaluation questions and begin development of the work plan, and establish common expectations and communication protocols).

Why Conduct an Acculturation Workshop?

Acculturation is the process by which DE stakeholders come to understand what DE is, how they should expect to interact with the DE, and the role of the Evaluator (the primary person conducting the DE). While acculturation is an ongoing process throughout implementation of the DE, we have found that conducting a few targeted acculturation efforts in the first two months of the DE creates a strong foundation.

An Acculturation Workshop, an event to formally kick off the DE, socializes DE and finalizes the DE questions.

It also serves as a great time to remind participants that DE is not emergent and developmental for the sake of it, but rather because the program being evaluated is itself emergent and developmental.

Before the workshop, some acculturation should be completed by the Evaluator during the DE onboarding process, covered in Module 3. Acculturation is an ongoing process, and guidance for ongoing, post-workshop activities can be found in Module 7.

What Does an Acculturation Workshop Look Like?

TIMING
The Acculturation Workshop should ideally be held within the first two months of finalizing a scope and budget, and greenlighting the DE. If possible, a four- to six-week interim should be reserved so the Evaluator can integrate with the DE stakeholders, conduct a document review, perform initial data collection, and prepare for the Acculturation Workshop. However, the Acculturation Workshop should be prioritized and delivered as soon as all essential stakeholders have availability in their schedules and the Evaluator feels they have sufficient knowledge of the DE participants or activity to be credible.

If delays in scheduling are encountered, it may be best to proceed with a shorter workshop with the core DE decision-makers, to refine the evaluation questions. Supplemental one-on-one or small-group workshops will then be necessary to ensure comprehensive ownership of the DE scope and full acculturation of all DE stakeholders. This is a suboptimal option but may be necessary in certain circumstances. When this is the case, each workshop should have a similar structure; and summaries should be shared with the broader group of DE stakeholders to ensure all participants have a common understanding of one anothers' priorities, perspectives, and the path forward for the DE.

ATTENDEES

Ensuring all essential stakeholders attend the Acculturation Workshop is paramount to establishing a strong foundation for a DE. There are often difficulties in securing sufficient time and scheduling across all stakeholders the DE plans to engage. The following prioritization hierarchy can help determine who must attend, who it would be beneficial to have attend, and which stakeholders are optional for the main workshop:

ATTENDEE ROSTER

1 **Those who will be the primary participants engaging with the DE;**

Those who will utilize data from the DE; and,

Those who will act on recommendations;

2 **Those who will make decisions about implementing adaptations (typically leadership);**

3 **Those who will be primary data sources for the DE and/or need to react to adaptations coming from the DE:**

Monitoring and evaluation staff;

Learning partners; and,

Implementing partners; and

4 **Any other parties connected to the potential DE scope or interested in the DE.**

LENGTH + FORMAT

Deciding how long the Acculturation Workshop should be is a balancing act. We have had Acculturation Workshops range from multiple days to just four hours. First determine what sessions are necessary for the DE stakeholders. Evaluators can use the following questions to establish a basic agenda and prioritize which sessions are must-haves and which sessions are optional.

- How well do the DE stakeholders know DE? At what level should the Evaluator present an overview of what DE is, and how long should that take?

- Do the DE stakeholders have a common understanding of why the DE was contracted and what decisions it is intended to inform? Do they have common definitions related to their programming work? What aspects of the DE and programming or strategy need to be aligned to set a common foundation?

- What is the history of learning activities among the DE stakeholders? Is there an existing practice of adaptive management? Have there been any embedded learning partners before? Are there any other previous functions that will aid in helping DE stakeholders understand the roles and responsibilities of an Evaluator?

- How much clarity is there regarding the anticipated scope and preliminary evaluation questions? How diverse are the illustrative questions? To what extent do these questions tie in with the intended purpose and expected decision points? Have priorities within these questions already been defined? What exercises might support further refinement and priortization or sequencing of the questions?

Lastly, identify the ideal dates and maximum availability of potential attendees, ensuring all priority stakeholders are able to attend. Aim to hold workshop(s) in-person and only change to virtual or hybrid if necessary. Balance the original ideal sessions and agenda for the Acculturation Workshop with the availability of stakeholders to reach a realistic time frame and agenda for the Workshop.

Below is a sample Acculturation Workshop agenda depicting session flow and timing.

Sample Acculturation Workshop Agenda

DAY ONE

TIME	ACTIVITY
8:30 am – 8:55 am	**Coffee**
9:00 am – 9:10 am	**Introductions**
9:15 am – 9:25 am	**Setting Workshop Objectives**
9:30 am – 10:30 am	**Overview of DE**
10:30 am – 10:45 am	**Coffee Break**
10:50 am – 12:00 pm	**Creating Common Understanding on DE Focal Topics**
12:00 pm – 12:45 pm	**Lunch**
12:50 pm – 1:00 pm	**Energizer**
1:00 pm – 1:45 pm	**Working with the Developmental Evaluator**
1:50 pm – 2:50 pm	**Exploring Evaluation Questions**
2:50 pm – 3:20 pm	**Coffee Break**
3:20 pm – 3:40 pm	**Grouping and Voting Exercises to Narrow Evaluation Questions**
3:45 pm – 4:15 pm	**Establishing Communication Norms**
4:20 pm – 4:30 pm	**Recap and Next Steps**
4:35 pm – 4:45 pm	**Feedback**
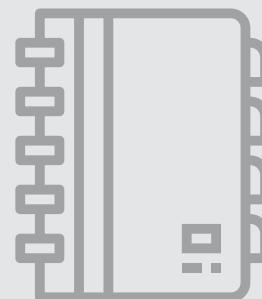
DAY TWO

TIME	ACTIVITY
8:00 am – 8:25 am	**Coffee**
8:30 am – 9:30 am	**Evaluation Question Prioritization Exercise**
9:35 am – 10:15 am	**Finalization of Evaluation Questions**
10:20 am – 12:00 pm	**Work Planning on Evaluation Question**
12:05 pm – 12:30 pm	**Recap, Next Steps, and Feedback**
12:30 pm	**Lunch**

LOGISTICS

Once the date and attendees are finalized, the Evaluator should prepare a facilitation agenda and the content for any presentations or interactive sessions, and arrange for other logistics. If the Evaluator has a DE Administrator, that person should assist with determining an appropriate venue (one with enough space and oftentimes blank walls for flipcharts) or considering virtual programming needs, setting up catering, and

coordinating with attendees who might be traveling to the event. For virtual or hybrid events, it is important to still have mechanisms in place for engagement - whether via virtual stickies, small group discussions, or other participatory tools. Make sure there is enough time to arrange all the details and that a coordinator is assigned and present at the Acculturation Workshop to ensure the event runs smoothly while the Evaluator is focused on interacting with the DE stakeholders and facilitating.

What Should an Acculturation Workshop Cover?

DE 101

One key objective for the Acculturation Workshop is to ensure DE stakeholders are clear on what DE is and what it is not. When dealing with stakeholders with limited previous knowledge of DE, it is best to start with a more familiar topic. An indirect approach may start by talking about learning. While there are many different ways to initiate this conversation, we have found that discussing feedback loops connects broader learning approaches directly to DE. Other entry points to learning include discussing adaptive management or collaborating, learning, and adapting if the DE occurs in the USAID context. Other angles include tying DE to complexity and/or tying DE to programmatic design and implementation. Regardless of the language, the workshop should clearly demonstrate that DE is intended to be iterative, adaptive, and useful; and should give examples to make the DE feel more tangible to stakeholders.

The exact language and approach the Evaluator chooses should depend on the audience. Regardless, we have found it helpful to send some introductory materials to participants in advance, such as the ones noted in Module 1.

Figure 2 below is a graphic we have used to broach the topic of learning at Acculturation Workshops. The graphic shows the relationships between single-loop learning, which is often what stakeholders are most familiar with, and double-loop learning. It may be useful to have some interactive conversations during this session, to allow DE stakeholders to share their experiences with single-loop learning processes and even double-loop learning if

Top DE Talking Points

Not sure how to explain DE in a clear, compelling way? Consider using the following points and tweaking them to appeal to the intended audience:

- **DE is about learning more than accountability**. The DE is a resource that stakeholders can use and embrace to support and adapt their programming. The Developmental Evaluator is a team member and collaborator who is as invested in the success of the program as everyone else. They are there to help, not to spy or to judge.
- **DE serves more than an evaluative purpose**. As noted in the previous Module, DE is also a program design and implementation approach, an adaptive management tool, and a program intervention unto itself. Practically speaking, this means the Evaluator will work with stakeholders to facilitate the learning and adaptation that others may not be able to undertake given other responsibilities. In so doing, DEs strengthen individual and organizational capacity.
- **DEs can help accelerate the pace of learning and improvement**. DEs continuously feed relevant data to stakeholders and work with them to make appropriate changes along the way.
- **DE is utilization focused**. DEs provide information that comes at useful times and in useful formats. The focus and activities of the DE are determined in consultation with stakeholders and will evolve to support their changing needs.

they have previously engaged in those types of activities. The connection can then be made between double-loop learning and DE. Share with stakeholders that DE leverages continuous double-loop learning to assess assumptions, strategies, and the context. Next, findings

are brought to DE participants for action. DE participants then reexamine the learning pathway to see if assumptions hold and how adaptations change results. DEs can also facilitate triple-loop learning, though this is a newer concept that may be harder for participants to grasp.

FIGURE 2: SINGLE-LOOP VS. DOUBLE-LOOP LEARNING

SINGLE-LOOP LEARNING
The most common style of learning is just problem solving – improving the system as it exists.

ASSUMPTIONS Why we do what we do	STRATEGIES AND TECHNIQUES What we do	RESULTS What we get

DOUBLE-LOOP LEARNING
More than just fixing the problem, this style of learning questions the underlyuing assumptions, values and beliefs behind what we do.

Valters, C., Cummings, C., & Nixon, H. (2016). *Putting learning at the centre: Adaptive development programming in practice.* London, ST: Overseas Development Institute.

Once the Evaluator has broached the subject of DE directly, it may be good to emphasize the principles of DE (see Module 1). If DE stakeholders have a history of interacting with other forms of evaluation, discuss how DEs are different and assuage concerns that the DE would be evaluating performance or serving any audit-like functions. Table 1 in Module 1 provides a few core comparisons that have been useful in orienting DE stakeholders to the learning and real-time feedback approach of DEs.

Next, it can be beneficial to provide some visualization of the DE process. Convey to DE stakeholders early on that DE findings may suggest stopping some activities and bringing on new activities to achieve the desired outcomes. These types of shifts are not guaranteed and do not always mean significant changes to programming, but it is important to lay out the possibilities up front. We have used Figure 3 to convey the potential evolution of outcomes over the course of implementing a DE.

FIGURE 3: DEVELOPMENTAL EVALUATION, EVOLUTION OF PROCESSES AND OUTCOMES
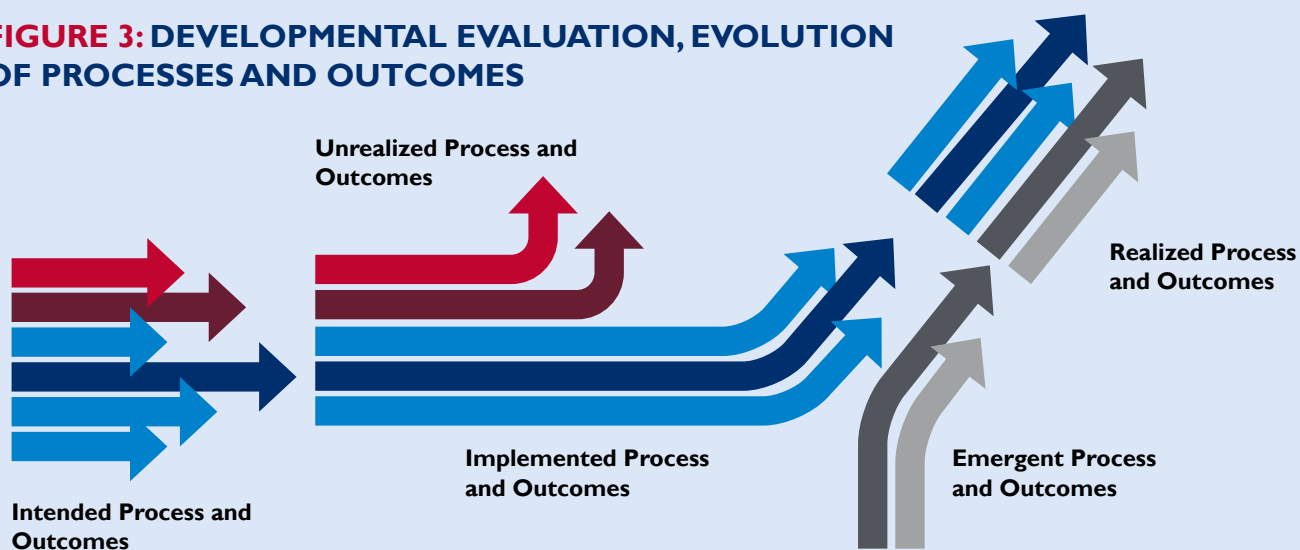
Unrealized Process and Outcomes

Realized Process and Outcomes

Intended Process and Outcomes

Implemented Process and Outcomes

Emergent Process and Outcomes

Mintzberg, H., Ghoshal, S., and Quinn, J. B. (1998). The Strategy Process. Prentice Hall, 1998.

USAID FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE — SOCIAL IMPACT — WILLIAM DAVIDSON INSTITUTE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN — SEARCH FOR COMMON GROUND

IMPLEMENTING DEVELOPMENTAL EVALUATION | 42

Finally, the DE 101 portion of an Acculturation Workshop can be a great opportunity to discuss DE fit. This includes discussing why and how their strategy, program, or activity is particularly well suited to be supported by a DE. It can also include making it clear what the DE will and will not cover. For example, the team may want to ensure clarity around which actors (not the DE!) will collect regular monitoring data, which decision points the DE is expected to feed into, and how the Evaluator will engage with other actors involved in collecting and analyzing data.

INITIAL FINDINGS OR REFLECTIONS

If the Evaluator has had sufficient time to embed prior to the Acculturation Workshop, it can be helpful to use the workshop as an opportunity to demonstrate some quick wins or value add. This often can engender buy-in for the DE itself in the earliest stages, setting the stage for more

engagement and ownership throughout. In these cases, the Evaluator can present some initial reflections, analysis, or examples from their short time being embedded thus far. Prior workshops we've seen do this effectively have used a variety of techniques - from showing an analysis of the type of language used in internal memos to presenting recommendations on how to more effectively document decisions based on an initial process map to validating a stakeholder map of key actors involved in a particular initiative relevant to the DE.

REFINING DE EVALUATION QUESTIONS

An Acculturation Workshop presents an important opportunity to co-design the evaluation questions for the DE. While in theory these activities do not have to be part of Acculturation, we find that the strongest workshops and strongest DEs start with a collaborative co-creation process to agree on some boundaries and

---

BOX 5: ACTIVITY SUGGESTION: REFINING THE DE EVALUATION QUESTIONS

Prepopulate a wall or board with all evaluation questions gleaned from meeting notes and interviews and conversations conducted with DE stakeholders prior to the Acculturation Workshop, the initial SOW, and any other relevant discussions and documentation. Depending on the number of questions, the Developmental Evaluator may want to pre-group the evaluation questions based on themes, similarities, or frequency. Any priority evaluation questions that have been identified as cross-cutting and most relevant should be in the center, with asterisks indicating which questions the Evaluator recommends. The Evaluator should note how various evaluation questions emerged and any identified patterns or themes. After starting the discussion, the Evaluator should conduct an interactive gap analysis to determine what evaluation questions of interest are not currently represented. Participants should be asked to write down these questions and place them on the board, either with a set of pre-grouped questions or separately.

A second exercise could consist of an "I don't like that" activity/discussion, walking through points of contention and phrasing difficulties (without getting into wordsmithing) and conceptual misalignment.

A third refinement exercise could consist of a facilitated group discussion around a final or prioritized group of

evaluation questions. Voting exercises can be used to build DE stakeholders' ownership over the evaluation SOW and help them achieve consensus on priority evaluation questions. In such an exercise, DE stakeholders at the Acculturation Workshop are given a specific and limited number of stickers and asked to vote on the evaluation questions that most interest them. This can serve as a great start to identifying common priorities in the room. It may be helpful to use different colored stickers: one for the evaluation question that is the highest priority for the DE and one for the evaluation question that is of most interest to each stakeholder. Differences highlighted by this exercise can demonstrate where there is alignment in priorities, and how priorities may differ from areas for which DE stakeholders have the most passion and might invest more time in responding to a question of interest. Lastly, remove any questions or groups that are no-gos (because of logistical, timing, or other constraints) but are still of interest to the DE stakeholders in the long run. Identify the final questions and engage with DE stakeholders in a round of wordsmithing to ensure ownership and agreement across DE stakeholders on the final evaluation questions.

initial lines of inquiry and prioritization of the evaluation questions. Having all the DE stakeholders together enables the Evaluator to better gauge reactions to proposed questions, facilitate conversations about different priorities, and build ownership across DE stakeholders around the final questions. The process of refining evaluation questions also presents an opportunity to further acculturate stakeholders to the DE process and ensure that the DE is grounded in stakeholders' needs. The process of refining evaluation questions can provide stakeholders with early insights into how the DE will ultimately work — the Evaluator will facilitate a participatory discussion to determine the direction of the DE with clear and actionable next steps and drawing on data (likely from pre-workshop interviews and document review in this case).

SHARING THE ORIGINAL DE EVALUATION QUESTIONS

It is best to start tackling the evaluation questions by making sure all DE stakeholders are on the same page. The Evaluator should make sure everyone knows which illustrative questions were outlined in the original DE SOW. Those present who helped write the SOW can discuss the history, politics, and thinking behind the development of the original questions. DE stakeholders should discuss key anticipated decision-points or barriers to adaptive decision-making to ensure the questions still make sense and further brainstorm or refine as needed. This is also a good time to have the Evaluator bring up some overarching directions for evaluation question refinement, such as ensuring questions are not too broad, are utilization focused, and address common problems or "unknowns" that affect the majority of DE stakeholders in some way. Tie the questions to intended uses, audiences, and spheres of influence for adaptations.

DISCUSSING OPTIONS

Once all DE stakeholders present have a common understanding of the initial questions raised, the Evaluator can present them with more options to ensure the final evaluation questions are the right ones to prioritize at this time. If the

Evaluator has had a few weeks of onboarding before the Acculturation Workshop, they should have additional questions to share with everyone based on findings from their interviews and document review. There are many ways to share additional questions, update context and prioritization information, and hear concerns from stakeholders about particular questions. We recommend ensuring that this process is as interactive as possible and ideally visual, to ensure all stakeholders follow along and see the trends being discussed. Box 5 presents a series of interactive exercises that can be useful in presenting different question options and then winnowing them to a select few to start the DE.

Once the final evaluation questions are selected, it will be important to conduct a light touch round of wordsmithing to ensure accurate interpretation of the questions by the Evaluator and the DE stakeholders. The Evaluator can use Post-it notes (paper or digital) or other participatory approaches to add, take away, or rearrange different wordings. A flip chart can also be useful for writing new versions of the questions, as necessary. Make sure everyone is contributing equitably to the evolution of the evaluation questions so there is joint ownership. This is particularly critical when facilitating virtually or in a hybrid environment, where it can be harder to gauge interpersonal dynamics and ensure equitable participation and engagement. Importantly, share with DE stakeholders that just because an evaluation question is not prioritized at the Acculturation Workshop does not mean that there will not be time to address the question later in the DE. **Once the questions are finalized, the DE scope is set and should require significant data input and discussions to change**.

DEFINING THE ROLE OF THE DEVELOPMENTAL EVALUATOR

A session on the roles and responsibilities of the Evaluator can ensure that everyone involved is ready to engage in the DE and has clear expectations of how they will interact. For this session, it can be beneficial to highlight some core aspects of who the Evaluator is supposed to be and to establish communication norms and boundaries.

The role of the Evaluator does not need to be a protracted conversation. Bringing up the following key points may be sufficient to orient DE stakeholders to the new "partner" working with them:

The Evaluator **works collaboratively with implementing teams** to conceptualize, design, and test new approaches in a long-term, ongoing process of adaptation, intentional change, and development.

The Evaluator **thinks and engages evaluatively**, questions assumptions, applies evaluation logic, uses appropriate methods, and stays empirically grounded — that is, rigorously gathers, interprets, and reports data. They do not just share their observations and opinions.

The Evaluator is **embedded to help teams manage their programs adaptively**. The more information they are able to collect, the more quickly they can provide action-oriented recommendations and support ongoing learning processes.

The Evaluator's goal is to **be utilization focused at all times**. If data or deliverables are difficult for stakeholders to engage, they should provide feedback to the Evaluator and request data delivery methods that best support decision-making.

Providing some tangible examples of what the Evaluator might do on a regular basis can help ground this session. A longer list of responsibilities to choose from can be found in Module 7 on being embedded. However, a few examples of Evaluator tasks are highlighted below:

An Evaluator **applies rigorous analysis** to a huge amount of data from very diverse sources **to give stakeholders a holistic picture of what is going on.**

They **track, document, and help interpret** the nature and implications of innovations and adaptations as they unfold.

They **facilitate ongoing, real-time, data-driven decision-making** in the developmental process.

They **provide accountability** for Funders and supporters of innovators, and help to refine their contributions to solutions as they evolve.

They **extract lessons and insights** from processes and outcomes to inform ongoing adaptive innovation processes.

Make sure DE stakeholders understand the embedded nature of the Evaluator. If the DE Administrator and stakeholders have not already determined where the Evaluator will sit on a day-to-day basis, the workshop a good opportunity to discuss this logistical question, as well as how DE stakeholders might work closely with the Evaluator to improve access to data and integration into their work.

ESTABLISHING COMMUNICATION NORMS

Discussing communication norms at the Acculturation Workshop can help set and manage the participants' expectations about the frequency and type of engagement with the Evaluator. The workshop also presents an opportunity for them to highlight what types of communication will best meet their needs. This discussion typically includes a brief overview of the resources and types of interventions that the DE offers, but more importantly, it includes examples of how the Evaluator might share findings. Determining if short memos, PowerPoint presentations, or other methods of data delivery are more likely to be read by DE stakeholders constitutes a critical building block for establishing utilization-focused practices as an Evaluator. This session should also cover how other support networks and short-term technical assistance personnel might engage in the DE.

Some key aspects of communication norms to cover in this session include:

- **Frequency of Engagement:**
  Who is responsible for ensuring the Evaluator is invited to recurring meetings and included on relevant email communications? Would DE participants like DE check-in meetings every week or every other week?

- **Inclusion/Exclusion Criteria:**
  What information should be shared with all DE stakeholders? Is there any sensitive information or

topics that needs to be restricted? What type of information should be shared only with participants engaging directly with the evaluation? Are there any clearance processes for sharing findings with broader audiences? Are there any limitations to the frequency with which information should be shared?

- **Desired Delivery:**
  What are the expectations around initial deliverables and timelines? Are there any events or deadlines for when data from the DE would be most useful? Are there any clearly identifiable utilization-focused products or delivery methods? Do DE participants have a preference for receiving quantitative data or hearing stories? Do they prefer narratives or visuals? What is the preferred breakdown of dissemination for written communication, in-person presentations, and workshop-style engagements with the data?

ESTABLISHING BOUNDARIES

The Acculturation Workshop should also establish boundaries. Importantly, from the start, the Evaluator should make clear the distinction among more traditional monitoring and evaluation responsibilities, DE data collection, and evaluative activities. Discussions concerning communication norms and roles and responsibilities may raise questions or offer opportunities to further clarify these differences.

Establishing boundaries goes beyond distinctions between monitoring and evaluation and the DE's roles and responsibilities. If the scope of the DE is not clear, the ensuing confusion can often lead to competing requests from DE stakeholders and scope creep. Determining effective reporting relationships can help protect the original scope and create clear decision-making pathways for when it may be necessary to adapt the DE scope. We have found that having an external DE Administrator to whom the Evaluator can report, and having one final decision-maker internal to the program under evaluation, can simplify communications, enable clearer expectations, and prevent delays in decision-making. See Module 2 for additional justification for having a DE Administrator.

DEs are flexible by nature, but it helps to establish boundaries and relationships early on so that flexibility remains a benefit of DE. These types of topics in the Acculturation Workshop are best discussed in an open forum, providing space for DE stakeholders to raise concerns, for the Evaluator to share lessons learned from other DEs about what worked and what did not, and for all stakeholders to come to a common understanding about what the boundaries are.

MODULE 4 RACI MATRIX

The following table summarizes the steps outlined in this Module, as well as our recommendation for who is:

R responsible

A accountable

C consulted, and

I informed for each.

TASK	DE ADMINISTRATOR	DEVELOPMENTAL EVALUATOR	DE FUNDER	DE STAKEHOLDERS
Finalize Design and Logistics for Acculturation Workshop	A	R	C I	C I
Deliver Acculturation Workshop	A	R	I	I
Participate Substantively in Acculturation Workshop (including refining evaluation questions, defining roles of Evaluator, and defining boundaries)	C	C	A	R

MODULE 5
Designing Developmental Evaluations

Once the evaluation questions have been decided by the stakeholders in the Acculturation Workshop, it is time to design the DE. As mentioned earlier, DE stakeholders should keep their understanding of the DE connected to their understanding of how the intervention is different. Designing a DE is about the interdependency and interconnection of an innovative intervention and an innovative evaluation.

Because DEs adapt throughout implementation, stakeholders may come away with the impression that DEs are less rigorous than other evaluations. Nevertheless, having a sound evaluation design that deploys fit-for-purpose methods can yield accurate, credible data and can go a long way in convincing DE stakeholders there is enough evidence to make a change. Likewise, a participatory evaluation process can precipitate buy-in for the evaluation findings and conclusions that eventually emerge. Designing a strong DE that is collaborative, participatory, utilization focused, high quality is crucial to success. This Module provides guidance on how to develop a strong yet flexible design that meets the DE's needs.

What Goes Into Designing a Developmental Evaluation?

CREATING AN EVALUATION DESIGN MATRIX

As with any evaluation, the methodologies should fit the evaluation questions. Although DE is methodologically agnostic and semi-structured, Evaluators should create evaluation designs for the overall DE as well as discrete evaluative activities that feed into the overarching questions. The Evaluator can use an evaluation design matrix for the overarching evaluation approach and supplement this with individual design reports for research-question-specific activities on a more iterative basis. Evaluators and Administrators should outline a plan to respond to each question using a matrix such as the one in Figure 3. The example evaluation design matrix also includes suggestions on when to define different parts of the design, since it does not always make sense to make a plan for everything at the outset, given the likelihood of shifts along the way.

DEVELOPING ACTIVITY DESIGNS

To tackle each of the evaluation questions, it may be necessary to design discrete evaluative activities (e.g., case studies that feed into the bigger evaluation questions). For example, in a two-year DE, we did a series of case studies that employed process tracing, positive deviance, appreciative inquiry, and outcome harvesting to generate responses to each of the evaluation sub-questions.

For each evaluative activity, we recommend that the Evaluator draft a brief design report:

FIGURE 3: SAMPLE EVALUATION DESIGN MATRIX

EVALUATION QUESTION	SUB-QUESTIONS	DATA COLLECTION/ANALYSIS METHODS	DATA SOURCES
EXAMPLE: How do different teams within the organization approach knowledge management? **WHEN TO IDENTIFY**: During Acculturation Workshop	**EXAMPLE**: What does the information flow currently look like? **WHEN TO IDENTIFY**: Immediately post-workshop	**EXAMPLE**: Internal document review, key informant interviews, process mapping, social network analysis **WHEN TO IDENTIFY**: Immediately post-workshop	**EXAMPLE**: Program documents, organization's staff **WHEN TO IDENTIFY**: Immediately post-workshop
	EXAMPLE: How conducive are these approaches to facilitating learning and evidence-based decision-making? **WHEN TO IDENTIFY**: Immediately post-workshop	**EXAMPLE**: External literature review, internal document review, key informant interviews, direct observation **WHEN TO IDENTIFY**: Immediately post-workshop	**EXAMPLE**: Program documents, literature on best practices, organization's staff **WHEN TO IDENTIFY**: Immediately post-workshop
EXAMPLE: What resources can the organization use to strengthen program design/development? **WHEN TO IDENTIFY**: During evaluation	**EXAMPLE**: What learning and evidence has the organization generated through evaluation/assessments/research? **WHEN TO IDENTIFY**: After stakeholders have engaged with first quarter results	**EXAMPLE**: Internal document review, key informant interviews **WHEN TO IDENTIFY**: After stakeholders have engaged with first quarter results	**EXAMPLE**: Program documents, organization's staff **WHEN TO IDENTIFY**: After stakeholders have engaged with first quarter results
	EXAMPLE: What knowledge-management-related capacity gaps exist in the organization? **WHEN TO IDENTIFY**: Based on emergent priorities	**EXAMPLE**: Program documents, organization's staff, organizational capacity assessment **WHEN TO IDENTIFY**: Once sub-question identified	**EXAMPLE**: Program documents, organization's staff **WHEN TO IDENTIFY**: Once sub-question identified

DEVELOPING ACTIVITY DESIGNS

To tackle each of the evaluation questions, it may be necessary to design discrete evaluative activities (e.g., case studies that feed into the bigger evaluation questions). For example, in a two-year DE, we did a series of case studies that employed process tracing, positive deviance, appreciative inquiry, and outcome harvesting to generate responses to each of the evaluation sub-questions.

For each evaluative activity, we recommend that the Evaluator draft a brief design report:

DE Evaluative Activity Design Report Template

I. **Purpose of Study**
As part of answering *[evaluation question]* under the DE regarding *[DE subject area]*, it is necessary to look at *[XYZ]*. This activity will contribute to *[evaluation question]* in the following ways: *[explain which sub-questions will guide the activity and how the data will feed into another, overarching question]*.

II. **Study Design:**
This study is using a *[methodology, e.g., outcome harvesting, social network, positive deviance]* approach. The Evaluator selected *[name of approach]* as an appropriate methodological component because *[justification]*. To execute the approach, the Evaluator will complete the following: *[list data collection methods/steps required to carry out methodology]*.

III. **Data Sources and Sampling:**
This study will employ *[sampling type, e.g., random, purposive, snowball, etc.]* sampling. The Evaluator selected this methodology because *[justification]*. The Evaluator anticipates interviewing *[list of names or position titles of expected respondents]*.

IV. **Inclusion/Exclusion Criteria of Participants:**
The Evaluator selected interview participants based on *[inclusion or exclusion criteria, e.g., role in program, demographic factors, etc.]*.

V. **Data Management:**
All interview notes will be taken in *[medium, e.g., transcribed Word files, Google Docs, or written documentation]* and uploaded to folders in *[location]*. These files will be accessible by *[personnel, e.g., Evaluator, Administrator, etc.]*.

VI. **Informed Consent:**
At the start of each interview, the Evaluator will explain *[purpose of the interview, process of information collection and analysis, expectations for hearing about the research process and/or receiving information from researchers, and timeline]*. The *[verbal or written]* consent protocol is *[state informed consent protocol]*.

> This template contains basic information that Evaluators would likely use in any evaluation design report. However, given that these details may not be known at the outset of the DE, it is important to document them as Evaluators become aware of needs and develop plans to respond accordingly.

VII. Limitations:
The Evaluator is aware of the following limitations to the evaluative activity: *[list known limitations, e.g., limited availability of data, recollection bias, etc.]*. To mitigate these biases, the Evaluator will *[list mitigation measures, e.g., strategies for triangulating data]*.

VIII. Analysis Plan:
The Evaluator will *[outline elements of analysis plan, e.g., data coding or cleaning, use of software if applicable, type of analytical framework]*.

IX. Deliverables:
The activity will generate the following: *[list deliverables, e.g., presentations, short reports, etc.]*.

X. Expected Timeline:
The activity will begin on *[date]*, with interviews occurring between *[dates]*, analysis during *[dates]*, and submission of deliverables on *[dates]*.

XI. Data Collection Protocols:
[include any tools, e.g., interview or observation protocols].

While not every DE stakeholder will need to see these details, producing such documents forces the Evaluator to be systematic and rigorous in their approach. In addition, this type of documentation provides an accountability mechanism that gives the DE Administrator (and the Funder) an opportunity to check for potential biases and provide extra quality assurance. Having a record of the design and its rationale proves helpful if conflict over findings arises and stakeholders question the methodologies.

ITERATING EVALUATION DESIGN
As the DE progesses, new evaluation questions or sub-questions may emerge, necessitating updates to the evaluation design and work plan. Be sure to practice what DE preaches — document everything and leave a paper trail! Documentation is not just for accountability purposes. DEs operate in complexity, and it can be easy to forget why, when, and by whom a decision was made if and when it is time to revisit that decision. When scope creep arises, do not be afraid to push back or call for time to pause and reflect. Part of the Evaluator's responsibilities includes managing the DE scope. While change is to be expected with a DE, that does not mean that every change is warranted or in the best interest of the DE stakeholders' learning objectives. Make sure that any shifts in scope are sufficiently supported by evidence and tracked in a pivot log, which documents basic information about scope changes. This log can be simple, like the example below:

EXAMPLE: **PIVOT LOG**

PIVOT LOG: Document Changes to the Activity Scope, Including Tasks, Timelines, and Deliverables			
DATE	**WHAT CHANGED**	**REASON FOR THE CHANGE**	**COMMENTS**
May 2017	Developmental Evaluator, DE Administrator, and Funder representative agreed to conclude work on Evaluation Question 1. Through collaborative process with program team, Evaluator will identify a new evaluation question to focus on during the next several months.	Group feels that DE has generated sufficient information (and related adaptations) for Evaluation Question 1. Additional data collection and analysis on this topic will yield diminishing returns.	Research on Evaluation Question 1 generated some sensitive findings that decreased buy-in for DE among certain stakeholders. Pivoting to a new question with more appreciative lens may help generate enthusiasm for DE work.

See more about maintaining DE scope in Module 8.

PLANNING AND MANAGING THE DE WORKLOAD

Given the emergent nature of DE, it does not make sense to develop plans at the day-to-day level. However, having an overarching plan enables Evaluators to make the best use of available time, manage scope, and change course when necessary. Planning and structure help to achieve the DE's objectives and make life easier for the Evaluator as the DE progresses. To assist with this process, we recommend the following:

- **Create a living work plan.** The Evaluator can organize the work plan differently depending on their needs, but at a minimum, we recommend that the work plan display the various evaluation questions and overall DE timeline to establish when and how the Evaluator will approach each (e.g., sequentially vs. simultaneously). If evaluation questions are being iteratively developed, outline in the work plan when the subsequent question is finalized and the evaluation approach designed or confirmed, and how and when stakeholders were involved or informed. To the extent possible, the work plan should include activities needed to respond to each initial evaluation question, as well as major events or decision points from the DE stakeholders and broader context that will influence the DE or vice versa. It is also helpful to including recurring tasks, such as monthly data quality assurance checks or regular meetings with DE stakeholders, to serve as reminders and track consistency of implementation. This planning helps the Evaluator understand what resources they need (especially time!) to complete the work. It also helps set expectations with DE stakeholders on when they are likely to receive substantial feedback on the evaluation questions versus the light touch feedback from continuous learnings. A DE work plan is a living document; it will evolve over the course of the DE according to the needs of the evaluation (see example below).

- **Make the work-planning processes and products accessible to key DE stakeholders.** This transparency helps interested stakeholders understand what the Evaluator is working on in the short and long term. It can also clarify why the Evaluator has prioritized certain activities over others and facilitate a conversation about re-prioritization, if needed. Not all stakeholders will be interested in engaging with the Evaluator's work plan, but it should be accessible should they want to understand the process in detail (e.g., by storing it on a shared site or sending regular updates via email).

- **Remember that the DE is supposed to be flexible and adaptive.** Nothing is fixed in a DE work plan. Do not get overly attached to the original plan or any particular routine. Things can and should change! When they do, update the work plan accordingly, document the change and data or rationale behind it in the pivot log, and move forward. Document any changes and rationale. Observing the DE process, evaluation questions, or prioritization activities can shed light on DE stakeholders' commitment to learning culture and ability to manage adaptively.

What to Include in a DE Living Work Plan

- Type of task
- Status of different tasks
- DE stakeholders needed or engaged with a task
- A RACI (responsible, accountable, consulted, informed) table if you are working with others to complete tasks
- Notes where you can capture important updates
- Gantt chart
- Adaptations by the evaluator to capture shifts made in the DE process and their influence
- A column to track associated deliverables

EXAMPLE: **DEVELOPMENTAL EVALUATION WORKPLAN**

Activity	Status	Notes	Responsible	Accountable	Consulted	Informed	Notes	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4
DE Activities RACI (spans Responsible–Informed); **Month** (spans Week 1–Week 4)											
Key Meetings and Input Events											
Develop interview sample	Complete		Evaluator	DE Manager	IP	Funder		▓			
Review and approve sample	Complete		Funder	Funder	IP	Evaluator, Manager			▓		
Send introductory email to stakeholders	Complete		Funder	Funder	IP	Evaluator				▓	
Schedule interviews	In Progress		Evaluator	DE Manager	IP	Funder				▓	
Evalution Question #1											
Document review of past QRs/ Portfolio Reviews	Complete		Evaluator	DE Manager	IP	Funder		▓	▓		
Finalize and send Workplan for Evaluation Question #1	Complete		Evaluator	DE Manager	IP	Funder		▓			
Working Session with Team X to establish partners map	In Progress		Evaluator	DE Manager	IP	Funder			▓		
Send digital copy of team Y partners map out to team for confirmation	In Progress		Evaluator	DE Manager	IP	Funder				▓	
Focus group design to understand team to team working relationships	In Progress		Evaluator	DE Manager	IP	Funder			▓		
Focus group with Team Y to understand working relationship with Partner 1	In Progress		Evaluator	DE Manager	IP	Funder				▓	
Design of KII Interview Protocol for Teams X and Y, and partners	In Progress		Evaluator	DE Manager	IP	Funder			▓		
KIIs with Team Y partners	In Progress		Evaluator	DE Manager	IP	Funder				▓	
Focus group with teams Y and Z working relationships	Pending		Evaluator	DE Manager	IP	Funder					▓
Development of survey for Partners 1,2, and 3	Pending		Evaluator	DE Manager	IP	Funder					▓

MANAGING DE DATA AND KNOWLEDGE

Good data and knowledge management is useful for any evaluation or learning effort. Even though a DE may require answering a variety of evaluation questions through different methods over the course of multiple years, meta-analysis of the data collected can provide additional findings worth sharing with DE stakeholders.

The Evaluator should establish a knowledge management system and use data analysis tools to manage data over the course of the DE. Tool selection may depend on the scope of the DE and expected data volume, Evaluator experience, and/or resource limitations. The following lists examples of what our teams have used:

KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

The system that captures, retains, and organizes information generated by the Evaluator:

Google Drive — free digital filing system that enables online file management, organization, and collaboration;

OneDrive — online and offline filing system connected to Microsoft Office Suite that enables document sharing and maintains Word, Excel, and PowerPoint formatting; and

Filing system — Evaluators can use offline file management as well if connectivity is an issue, but they should maintain backups of records to prevent data loss.

QUALITATIVE CODING AND ANALYSIS SOFTWARE

A tool to organize, review, and analyze data collected by the Evaluator. DEs tend to rely heavily on qualitative data, but when quantitative data is needed, Evaluators should collect and analyze it using appropriate tools (e.g., Excel or Stata):

Dedoose — a cloud-based monthly subscription application that enables data coding and provides some automated analysis reports;

NVivo — a license-based qualitative software that supports text-rich data and provides data visualization tools; and

Atlas.ti — a subscription-based software that enables coding of different media types and offers basic analysis tools.

MODULE 5 RACI MATRIX

The following table summarizes the steps outlined in this Module, as well as our recommendation for who is:

R responsible

A accountable

C consulted, and

I informed for each.

TASK	DE ADMINISTRATOR	DEVELOPMENTAL EVALUATOR	DE FUNDER	DE STAKEHOLDERS
Develop Evaluation Matrix	A	R	C I	C I
Develop Evaluative Activity Designs	A	R	C I	C I
Update Living Work Plan	A	R	C I	C I
Maintain DE Knowledge Management System	A	R		
Conduct Ongoing Analysis	A	R	C I	C I

USAID FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE · SOCIAL IMPACT · WILLIAM DAVIDSON INSTITUTE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN · SEARCH FOR COMMON GROUND

IMPLEMENTING DEVELOPMENTAL EVALUATION 54

Cultivating Buy-In with Developmental Evaluation Stakeholders

Evaluation literature across approaches and sectors emphasizes the importance of securing stakeholder buy-in, and **DE** is no different. Buy-in is a somewhat nebulous concept that we use to describe support for, agreement with, or even enthusiasm for the process and/or results of the DE. Buy-in for the DE process means that stakeholders believe in and are committed to the evaluation design (i.e., the questions and data collection and analysis methods), the person or people who carry out the evaluation, and the deliverables produced by the evaluation. It is critical to acknowledge that developing buy-in is not a binary outcome conducted by the Evaluator at the start of the DE. Rather, developing buy-in should be viewed as an ongoing process conducted by the Evaluator and DE champions throughout the period of performance of the DE. At different stages of the DE, varying levels of buy-in will be needed from decision-makers, such as funders and program managers, especially when making evidence-based changes to the program. For this reason, the Evaluator, in particular, will need to develop buy-in explicitly and implicitly for the DE approach throughout the course of the DE. This can be done by continuing to update key stakeholders on DE progress, identifying and developing quick wins, communicating success stories of the DE with various stakeholders, etc. Lack of buy-in for the process can result in small and large consequences for the DE e.g., delaying or complicating the data collection, even to the point of hindering the quality of the data.

Lack of buy-in for the process begets lack of buy-in for the results (i.e., use of the findings, conclusions, or recommendations for learning or improvement). At best, lack of buy-in for results means that the DE serves no purpose and is thus a waste of resources. Worse, it can result in harm to the program or beneficiaries if no corrective actions recommended by the DE are taken. In serious cases, there may be retaliation against the Evaluator or other stakeholders, especially if there are negative findings.

Thus, buy-in greatly facilitates data collection and analysis, and creates the conditions for use of recommendations. This Module explores what buy-in means in DE and offers insights on how Evaluators can generate, monitor, and manage buy-in throughout the DE.

How Does Buy-In Operate in Developmental Evaluations?

Many of the challenges related to buy-in encountered in most evaluation approaches are heightened in the DE context, given the continuous nature of the evaluation and embedded position of the Evaluator. The general lack of understanding about evaluation among non-evaluators can also be exacerbated when dealing with a lesser-known form of evaluation such as DE. This combination creates threats and opportunities for managing buy-in:

TABLE 4: DE BUY-IN THREATS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Threats to Generating DE Buy-In	Opportunities for Generating DE Buy-In
• Concern that significant expense of DE may detract too many resources from program • Negative perceptions of evaluation and/or fear that Evaluator will serve as an auditor or spy • Misunderstanding of DE • Lack of transparency in organization and resistance to sharing information or access with Evaluator • Lack of organizational learning culture*	• Leveraging Evaluator's intimate knowledge of context gained through being embedded • Working through negative findings to generate positive actions • Maintaining utilization focus for all deliverables • Developing iterative feedback loops • Building capacity for learning and adaptive management • Matching the evaluation approach to the programming and intervention approach • Updating key stakeholders on DE progress • Identifying and developing quick wins • Communicating success stories of the DE with various stakeholders

*   A learning culture exists when both leadership and staff are willing to accept [and learn from] both favorable and unfavorable performance data or program outcomes and when stakeholders can share uncomfortable information transparently without fear of repercussion from leadership.

RECOGNIZING BUY-IN

Few frameworks exist for measuring and monitoring buy-in, as it is an inherently subjective, relationship-based concept. However, any evaluator should be able to recognize signs of buy-in (or lack thereof!) to effectively manage it.

Buy-in manifests in three general ways:

• **Verbal support**. In an ideal scenario, stakeholders tell the Evaluator and/or the Funder that they support the DE process and will accept the outcomes of the evaluation from the very beginning. However, this support should not be taken for granted. We have seen examples of stakeholders who expressed great enthusiasm for the DE at the beginning but later undermined the process and credibility of the DE as it progressed. Likewise, we have seen examples of people who were skeptical or minimally engaged at the beginning but became outspoken champions of the DE once they saw the evaluation results' utility.

• **Resource commitment**. Truly enthusiastic stakeholders will back up their words with resource commitments. The Evaluator may not be able to collect data or facilitate use if stakeholders are unwilling to provide the resources needed to carry out the work. A budget is, of course, required to hire the Evaluator and cover related costs (e.g., flip chart paper, data analysis software). **However, once funded, the most important resources that stakeholders must contribute are time and access to data**. Practically speaking, this means granting time to the Evaluator to conduct interviews and discuss findings and workshop recommendations.

Access also means copying the Evaluator on emails, inviting them to meetings, and facilitating introductions to people who may be in a position to provide relevant information. Relatedly, stakeholders who are bought-in will help the Evaluator integrate as a true member of their team.

• **Actions**. Stakeholders that are sincerely bought-in will engage with the DE results. Depending on their roles, this could involve participating in collective analysis, attending briefings or workshops, reading deliverables, or making adaptations recommended by the DE. Other actions that are indicative of buy-in include working with the Evaluator to troubleshoot challenges as needed and advocating for the DE among other colleagues.

Buy-in can fluctuate considerably through the course of any evaluation, but especially DEs. Buy-in can vary regarding different components of the evaluation (e.g., the process and results), among individuals, and when different findings are shared. We have attempted to assess stakeholder buy-in via survey but have found that self-reporting by stakeholders can result in overly optimistic conclusions about the level of buy-in that actually manifests. We are only aware of one objective framework for measuring evaluation buy-in. It uses four qualitative indicators: timeliness of responses to evaluation team requests, quality and quantity of feedback received, interaction with decision-makers, and investment of in-kind contributions.

Although we have not used this or another formalized process to track buy-in, we recommend having a few

check-in points to informally assess buy-in at defined times over the course of the DE, such as prior to the launch or design phase, after sharing of the first findings and work on the first adaptations, following a major milestone, and as the DE concludes. Such a check-in could simply entail mapping out the signs of buy-in (or lack thereof) that stakeholders exhibit, if and how that has changed since the previous check-in, and strategies to boost or leverage their level of buy-in. If the DE is pursuing qualitative analysis of stakeholder communications, levels of stakeholder buy-in may be a

code that the Evaluator wishes to track over time to monitor context within the DE or how the release of DE findings, conclusions, or recommendations (positive or negative) may influence stakeholder buy-in over time.

BUILDING BUY-IN
One of the surest ways to build and sustain buy-in is to develop key relationships, namely with **DE CHAMPIONS** (as mentioned in Module 3). In addition to relationship building, the following can help generate buy-in quickly and effectively:

Building a bridge to buy-in

Assess and deliver what stakeholders need. The Evaluator can develop an Internet-based survey platform (e.g., SurveyMonkey) or simply discuss with stakeholders in-person what information they need in the short term and in what format. In one pilot, we created a brief survey to assess needs. It included a menu of options that helped stakeholders understand and prioritize the possibilities.

Provide routine updates. The Evaluator should make sure that stakeholders are aware of the DE's progress as well as any recent major milestones or victories. The Evaluator can provide such updates in routine meetings, via email, or through another format more appropriate for the DE stakeholders.

Find "QUICK WINS" early in the DE. The Evaluator can use findings to suggest operational improvements and help out with key challenges within the scope of the DE. For example, the Evaluator can identify small process changes (e.g., developing protocols for regular meetings), rather than starting with significant, strategy-level changes. Smaller changes may seem more manageable. The key is to base this on evaluative evidence and be very transparent with the stakeholders about the data sources and analysis. Doing so builds credibility and makes it less likely that recommendations will be perceived as the Evaluator's meddling based on their own opinions.

Be an active listener. The Evaluator should take notes and ask clarifying and probing questions when appropriate. Active listening can include other verbal signals (e.g., summarizing or reflecting on what stakeholders say), as well as nonverbal cues (e.g., making eye contact or mirroring facial expressions).

Be an adaptation cheerleader. The Evaluator should celebrate when stakeholders make adaptations based on DE findings or recommendations by reflecting the change back to those individuals and the wider stakeholder group. The Evaluator should also document and disseminate positive consequences of those adaptations when possible — it is easy to get absorbed in what needs to change, which can wear stakeholders down if they do not also see the benefits of adaptation.

WHAT CAN BE DONE IF BUY-IN IS LACKING?

The Evaluator should be mindful of a few telltale signs of nonexistent or diminishing buy-in. These include lack of inclusion in meetings or relevant correspondence, consistent or repeated delays in meetings or decision-making, or stakeholders who question the DE methodology in a hostile manner — especially people who had not previously engaged with the DE in a substantive way. When these or other difficulties arise, the Evaluator and the DE Administrator can take the following corrective actions:

Engage directly with stakeholders. If the Evaluator senses diminishing buy-in for the DE, they should set up a meeting with the stakeholders to explore and address the issue. The Evaluator should come to the meeting prepared to have an honest reflection of how the DE could better serve that individual or group. They should try to empathize with stakeholder concerns and respect their points of view. The Evaluator should discuss what actions each person — including themselves — can take to achieve better mutual understanding.

Bring in the DE Administrator. The Administrator can step in as a more neutral force (given their less direct involvement) and help mediate as necessary. Furthermore, if the Evaluator is in a situation in which saying "no" to certain requests or stakeholders will create a particularly uncomfortable and even disruptive situation, the Evaluator can leverage the DE Administrator as a "bad cop" who can be the one to say "no." See Module 8 for more detail.

Bring in stakeholder leadership. If conflicts cannot be resolved between the Evaluator and the individuals or teams in question, engage decision-makers (e.g., the stakeholders' leadership or the DE Funder) in discussions and conflict resolution. Engage leaders to help force decisions, explain the motivation behind continued engagement with the DE, build momentum for buy-in, and exemplify DE buy-in, if the leader is also a champion.

Bring in champions who have found value in the DE. Bring in stakeholders from other teams or program components (if applicable) who have found the insights from the DE valuable and who have acted on the information. DE champions can share their experiences with questioning individuals and teams in a way that makes sense and exemplifies bought-in behavior. For more information on DE champions see Module 3.

Know when to call it quits. As noted above, DEs need buy-in to serve their intended purposes. If there is little or no buy-in and the above strategies fail to generate it, it may not be worth continuing with a certain activity under the DE or even the DE at large. If this may be the case, it is best to have an open and frank discussion about this early on — perhaps collectively defining a trigger for that decision even before the DE begins.

Key Acculturation Themes

- Developmental Evaluation 101
- Understanding the DE Process and Expected Engagement
- Understanding the Role of the Developmental Evaluator

MODULE 6 RACI MATRIX

The following table summarizes the steps outlined in this Module, as well as our recommendation for who is:

R   **responsible**

A   **accountable**

C   **consulted,** and

I   **informed** for each.

TASK	DE ADMINISTRATOR	DEVELOPMENTAL EVALUATOR	DE FUNDER	DE STAKEHOLDERS
Develop Key Relationships	R A I	R A	C	C
Find and Achieve Quick Wins	A C	R A	C I	C I
Obtain Appropriate Level of Objectivity	A	R	I	I
Provide Routine Updates About DE	I	R A	I	I
Assess and Deliver What Stakeholders Need	A	R A	I	C I
Employ Relevant Troubleshooting Strategies When Needed	A C	R A	C I	C I

USAID FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE   SOCIAL IMPACT   WILLIAM DAVIDSON INSTITUTE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN   SEARCH FOR COMMON GROUND

Being Embedded

Being embedded as a Developmental Evaluator can take many different forms. The week-to-week responsibilities are not always consistent, depending heavily on the phase of the DE and how the Evaluator has chosen to tackle different evaluation questions. Some weeks are filled with analysis and deliverable drafting; others are filled with facilitation and workshops with DE participants. In an average week, the Evaluator is engaged in a mix of activities: attending meetings; reviewing, organizing, and coding data sources; conducting evaluative activities; engaging with DE participants in facilitating adaptations; and maintaining the DE scope. This Module provides a snapshot of the day-to-day of being embedded, tips for managing the workload, and some solutions to common problems.

What Does a Developmental Evaluator Do on a Day-to-Day Basis?

Providing a glimpse of the day-to-day happenings of an Evaluator, the calendar below depicts the weekly schedule of an Evaluator who is working with one team and two partners, four months into the DE.

	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
MORNING	Weekly team meeting Coordinate interviews for the rest of the week Work on facilitation guide for Thursday workshop	Interview #2 Answer emails Interview #3	Weekly meeting with Partner B Joint bimonthly meeting (team, evaluator, two partners, and any other relevant stakeholders *) Clean interview notes	Full-day workshop with team to share adaptation outcome data and determine next steps > Presentation of findings and conclusions, with discussion > Recommendations, discussions on feasibility, alternatives, resource requirements > Co-select adaptive actions and action planning	Check-in call with external support team Update work plan and refine analysis plan for DE Evaluation Question #2 Finalize next steps checklist from workshop and share with team
AFTERNOON	Meet with team lead to discuss ongoing adaptation Interview #1 Make quick revisions to the interview protocol Finish facilitation guide for Thursday's workshop	Weekly meeting with Partner A Attend call between team and Partner B Confirm catering for workshop, prepare materials, and finalize handouts	Pull qualitative data from emails and other shared documents for ongoing data collection efforts Interview #4		Clean interview notes Code weekly data in Dedoose Check schedule for next week and set aside time for analysis

* DE stakeholders include DE Funders (person or organization funding the DE), the program team(s) being evaluated, staff in the program team's broader operating unit or organization, the Evaluator, and the technical and management team supporting the Evaluator.

CONDUCTING EVALUATIVE ACTIVITIES

The calendar presents evaluative activities, broken down as day-to-day responsibilities. The Evaluator conducts evaluative activities to answer the evaluation questions set forth in the DE. These activities often look similar to other evaluation activities, such as interviews and focus groups, but also require a bit more maintenance given the longevity of a DE and the integrated relationship of an Evaluator.

Other evaluative activities include regular data quality assessments; documentation of methods; documentation of all data sources; and regular data cleaning, coding, and analysis. These activities may take up the bulk of the first three to six months of a DE — depending on the scope of the first evaluation question — and then typically become more balanced, with adaptive activities as DE participants begin implementing adaptations and requiring more facilitated support from the Evaluator. The Evaluator should be prepared to resume evaluative activities when starting on new evaluation questions or when analysis ramps up. Intensive evaluative activities may require surge support from the Administrator or external support persons (more information on surge support services can be found in Module 8 on problem solving). However, evaluative activities should never get in the way of ensuring data are utilization focused and "good enough" for decision-making, or being fully embedded with the DE stakeholders.

CONDUCTING ADAPTIVE ACTIVITIES

An Evaluator's job is not over when they share recommendations with the DE participants. An Evaluator facilitates action, change, and adaptation. Collecting data and sharing findings constitute only a small portion of the job. DEs require adaptive activities — facilitation and organizational change support to enable DE participants to implement adaptations. These activities are often minimal until the first evaluation question is answered and DE participants begin to make adaptations. However, an Evaluator should always be prepared to assist with adaptations, even if they emerge from learnings on "quick wins" or any regular probing the Evaluator does outside of answering the formal evaluation questions.

Checking Biases

The Developmental Evaluator should write down possible biases before beginning analysis. The Evaluator should keep the list nearby when coding and assessing findings.

Evaluators should double-check findings that align with biases or confirm observational trends identified before conducting analysis. Are the codes accurate? Is there another interpretation for the data? It is important to explore alternatives before confirming.

The Evaluator should bring the final analysis to an external support person and ask them to interrogate any finding that may be weak, assist with finding and recommendation alignment, and help identify if anything was missed in analysis.

ACTIVITY SUGGESTION: **WORKING WITH STAKEHOLDERS TO FACILITATE ADAPTATIONS**

- **Hold strategic learning debriefs, pause and reflect sessions**, or a similar approach to work with DE stakeholders hand-in-hand to understand evaluation findings and sort and prioritize adaptations.
- **Provide DE teams with adaptation checklists** to help them keep track of what they have agreed to work on.
- **Facilitate organizational change processes** with DE participant leadership or with whole teams through workshops, e.g., developing strategies, learning systems, or knowledge management frameworks.
- **Assist DE participants with translating evidence into talking points** to help convince leadership of prioritized adaptations.
- **Help DE participants revise their theory of change, indicators, processes, or activities** based on recommendations from the DE data.
- **Facilitate work-planning** for implementing adaptations.

The above types of adaptive activities require various resources and time allocations. A strategic learning debrief may take only a few hours with a handful of DE participants, or it could take multiple workshops with different groups of DE stakeholders. Organizational change processes and assisting DE participants with strategic shifts often take a series of workshops and ongoing facilitation. The Evaluator should scope out how long a particular adaptive action might take and make sure the relevant DE participants set aside sufficient time to engage.

The Evaluator also needs to document ongoing adaptation implementation. This responsibility represents both an evaluative and adaptive activity, since it is important to collect data on adaptation implementation and its effects, and then provide that feedback to the teams. This type of data capture is typically done through ongoing data collection efforts, such as taking notes at regular DE participant meetings, reviewing documentation, and occasionally requesting interviews with pertinent stakeholders. Evaluators should be able to disaggregate adaptation data within the broader DE data set and analyze those data separately. This disaggregation can help the Evaluator provide DE stakeholders with regular updates regarding adaptations, their progress, and outcomes. Capturing the effects of adaptation constitutes an essential part of double-loop learning and makes up a core part of a DE. Information on adaptations is often independent from information gathered for other concurrent evaluative work for an evaluation question.

Assessing a DE's contribution to change

A popular question from DE stakeholders, especially when deciding whether to extend a DE or start a DE in the first place, is what is the value-add or impact of DE?

In DEPA-MERL we used two different methods to assess a DE's contribution to change: 1) Outcome Harvesting and 2) Process Tracing.

Method	Description	DE Use Case	DE Data Sources
Outcome Harvesting	Involves collecting data of what has changed, and determining whether and how the DE contributed to those changes.[1] This involves capturing outcomes associated with the DE, relevant actions of the Evaluator and DE (such as providing documentation, collecting data, and/or developing recommendations, or promoting ideas and best practices) on the outcome, and the significance of the outcome to the program. It also involves substantiating outcomes with key DE stakeholders.	Useful in understanding how individual outcomes (related to behavior, relationships, policy, and/or practices) contribute to system-wide changes, particularly for complex programming with unclear cause and effect.[2]	1. Evaluator records of activities conducted on a monthly basis 2. DE status reports shared by the Evaluator 3. Email communications 4. Interviews with key DE stakeholders
Process Tracing	A case-based approach to causal inference between the DE and observed outcomes. It also involves exploring alternative explanations.	To assess factors that contribute to successful or unsuccessful outcomes.	

Examples of how DEPA-MERL as a DE Administrator used Outcome Harvesting in our DEs can be found here and here (with detailed methods here).

An example of how a DEPA-MERL Evaluator used Outcome Harvesting and Process Tracing as part of the DE can be found here.

1. Wilson-Grau, R. (2015) Outcome Harvesting. BetterEvaluation. Retrieved from http://betterevaluation.org/plan- /approach/outcome_harvesting
2. Gold, J., Wilson-Grau, R. W., Fisher, S., & Otoo, S. (2014). Cases in Outcome Harvesting: Ten pilot experiences identify new learning from multi-stakeholder projects to improve results. (Rep.). Washington D.C.: The World Bank

How Can Developmental Evaluators Build Trust, Boundaries, and Objectivity?

MANAGING RELATIONSHIPS AND SCOPE

DEs require maintenance above and beyond evaluative and adaptive activities. The relationships, scope, and integrity of an Evaluator all require active attention and continuous activities to ensure ongoing success of the DE. Basic DE maintenance involves persistent demonstration that the Evaluator is a use-focused learning partner and has the best interest of the DE stakeholders in mind — albeit from an objective, data-driven perspective! This often requires regular quick wins that reenergize participants regarding the DE and provide the attention and commitment needed to engage in more in-depth evaluative or adaptive activities. DE maintenance behaviors the Evaluator might perform include:

Continually setting boundaries around the DE scope and reminding DE participants of why the prioritized questions were important.

Asking probing questions during conversations (e.g., ask "Why?" five times in different ways to get to the root of the topic).

Being conscious of biases regarding various DE stakeholders, both in action and perception from other DE stakeholders. Recall that a perceived preference for a certain individual or team may create tension or resentment, which the Evaluator should avoid by all means. The Evaluator should spend equitable time with different stakeholder groups and encourage frank discussions if such suspicions arise.

Active listening in all meetings, interviews, and even passing conversations both in and outside of the work environment (see Module 6 for tips on how to be an active listener).

Quantifying qualitative data and transforming it into easy talking points for DE participants to use and bring to their leadership.

BUILDING TRUST AT THE INDIVIDUAL LEVEL

Building trust with individuals is important to overall DE implementation because it allows the Evaluator to gain increased access to the DE participants and their partners — not just to collect data, but also to share it back with them to support their strategy and decision-making. As noted throughout this Guide, most people have never had experience with DE and therefore will not know what to expect, especially regarding interaction with the Evaluator on a regular basis. It takes time for DE participants to get comfortable with treating the Evaluator as a member of their team. Ideally, the integration process entails inviting the Evaluator to meetings, copying them on relevant emails, being open to sharing information, and partaking in interviews. These practices take time with even the most receptive of DE participants. Despite the Evaluator's best efforts at socializing DE, some team members may still suspect that the Evaluator is evaluating their performance for the purpose of accountability. The Evaluator may need to remind them explicitly that the purpose of this integration is not to spy on DE participants, but rather to help them understand the nuances of their work and make sense of what is happening with the program and context, and how to adjust accordingly.

UNDERSTANDING THE CONTEXT

One way for the Evaluator to garner trust is to demonstrate they understand DE participants and their operating environment. In particular, the Evaluator should familiarize themselves with:

- **Work dynamics**. The Evaluator should understand the DE participants' external relationships, their funding sources, fiscal year, and the policies that govern their work. Initial meetings and interviews may reveal information about these dynamics, but the Evaluator should conduct additional, ongoing research to keep track of what is driving relationships and decisions, rather than relying on first impressions.

- **Constraints**. In any evaluation, the Evaluator should generate recommendations that are both actionable and feasible. As the Evaluator becomes embedded in a DE, they should immediately seek to understand what kinds of things are off the table or must be included so that they do not make recommendations that DE participants cannot implement. See box 6 for more information.

- **The program**. Though obvious, the Evaluator should truly understand what the program seeks to achieve as well as the complexity factors that affect its implementation. Doing so will help the Evaluator keep stakeholders engaged with the complexities of the environment. Part of the Evaluator's role involves helping to keep the program attuned to these external dynamics, rather than focusing on the internal ones.

Even just appearing knowledgeable about these factors, both internal and external, can help the Evaluator gain trust quickly. The Evaluator can make clear in their communications with DE participants that they truly understand the environment and how best to work within it (see Module 6 for more information on buy-in). Likewise, it helps for the Evaluator to be transparent and forthcoming about the "why" and "so what" of their efforts, especially whenever making a request, presenting a finding, or making a recommendation. Such requests are often better received when the Evaluator makes it clear what is in it for the stakeholder.

PROVIDING GUIDED SUPPORT TO STAKEHOLDERS

DE is very participatory and cannot work as intended if the Evaluator works in isolation. Ideally, the Evaluator engages DE stakeholders in making sense of the findings and in workshopping conclusions and adaptations. However, one of the most valuable roles that the Evaluator plays is helping to facilitate adaptations recommended by the DE. What this looks like in practice can vary according to the DE participants' capacity.

BOX 6: SIX THINGS TO LEARN AND MONITOR ABOUT A DE'S OPERATING ENVIRONMENT

By becoming knowledgeable about the operating environment and how it is changing, Evaluators can develop nuanced conclusions and suggest adaptations that will actually be feasible. Given the importance of the utilization-focus principle in DE, any recommendations suggested by the Evaluator must be actionable — otherwise, the DE will not serve its intended purpose. Furthermore, knowing about the environment and how it is changing will help the Evaluator better support stakeholders in responding to their dynamic contexts in a timely and appropriate fashion. Here's what Evaluators should learn:

Accountability. To whom are DE participants accountable for finances and delivering on results? What mechanisms for enforcement are in place?

Funding source. Where does funding for DE participants come from and how often is it available? What strings are attached to it?

Policies and laws. To which legal or institutional rules are DE participants beholden? What priorities are set forth through policies that DE participants are expected to adhere to?

Relationships. What are the office politics? Who has power or influence beyond what is reflected in titles or organizational charts? Who makes the decisions? Which people get along well and which are in conflict?

Appetite for change. Have there been multiple or large change efforts in recent history? If so, how have those gone and do DE participants feel change fatigue? What is their tolerance for more change and the risks and opportunities that come with change?

DE stakeholder biases. What negative experiences have DE participants had with certain people, organizations, or types of activities? How do they view evaluation, evidence, learning, and other associated disciplines? What terms or concepts automatically put people off as a result?

Finally, it can be personally beneficial for the Evaluator and/or DE Administrator to understand these factors for troubleshooting DE challenges (e.g., lack of buy-in) when they arise.

Examples of how this has worked in our own DEs include:

> **Relatively low engagement with stakeholders**: An Evaluator generates an "options memo" summarizing findings from a certain evaluative activity and then provides a written description of possible adaptations, including the implications and resources required;
>
> **Medium engagement with stakeholders**: An Evaluator facilitates a discussion covering the same topics in the options memo, helping stakeholders to arrive at a consensus on the best path forward and developing an action plan to implement the recommendations; and
>
> **High engagement with stakeholders**: An Evaluator builds the capacity of DE stakeholders to implement a recommendation (e.g., develop theories of change or exit strategies).

Regardless of which (if any) of the formats above the Evaluator employs to make recommendations, they should proactively offer to help DE participants implement the recommendations, especially at the outset. Doing so shows the DE's value-add early on, establishing **QUICK WINS** and subsequently building trust in the Evaluator. Of course, it is not sustainable for the Evaluator to bear the brunt of implementing recommendations throughout the DE. To create a learning culture and lasting adaptive capacity, the Evaluator can use a phased approach in which they build capacity and gradually and increasingly put the responsibility of adaptation work on the DE participants.

MAINTAINING OBJECTIVITY

In DE, Evaluators work closely with the participants and often the evaluands, which may naturally lead to the development of friendships and personal investment in the program's success. This personal investment can be an advantage to the program, because it can generate momentum for troubleshooting issues and making adaptations. However, Funders and stakeholders are often curious about how DEs can maintain objectivity — generally regarded as an evaluation best practice. Furthermore, maintaining some level of objectivity is important for keeping the DE focused and credible, and ultimately for the DE's long-term success. Objectivity is especially important given that through being embedded, Evaluators may become privy to details about people's personal lives or sensitive program dynamics that can inadvertently influence how they interpret what goes on in that context.

DE purists will argue that objectivity is not a core tenet of DE and that, instead, building trust through shared values is more important for implementing the approach effectively. However, in our efforts to implement DE in a bureaucratic context, we heard from many people who were particularly skeptical about DE given the potential for compromised objectivity. In response to these questions, we have generated the following guidance for establishing checks and balances to boost the (real or perceived) integrity of the data, to help other Evaluators and DE Administrators facing the same concerns.

> **Triangulate data and findings** not only from evaluation questions, but more regularly on day-to-day data sources, such as team meetings, adaptation data, and across DE stakeholders groups.
>
> **Bring in the DE Administrator**, possibly through a weekly check-in meeting, to be a less-integrated source of objectivity and help maintain boundaries on scope.
>
> **Check the Evaluator's biases** before and after analysis.
>
> **Revisit methods and questions regularly** to ensure each evaluative exercise is following industry best practice.

Relatedly — and critically — the Evaluator should establish clear and coherent boundaries between themselves and DE participants. We recommend considering some of the actions below to ensure that there is both real and perceived objectivity:

Be integrated, but not too friendly. Although relationship development is key to DE, Evaluators should resist the temptation of becoming overly close with team members. Doing so may compromise the Evaluator's ability to examine their work through a neutral lens. Equally importantly is the perception that others may have about the Evaluator's ability to remain objective. As such, beware of the optics of having casual interactions and attending social events outside of work. If attending social events is part of the culture with DE stakeholders and refraining would have an adverse effect on integrating into the team, make sure attendance with different DE participant groups is equitable.

Support DE participants equitably. When dealing with multiple participant groups, Evaluators will need to balance priorities. The Evaluator should be thoughtful about how this happens — not providing undue support to one group over another or neglecting a group that does not appear to need as much support. This means making sure the Evaluator can attend every DE participant group's regular meetings, including all groups in evaluative efforts and the sharing of findings, and providing the same deliverable options to different groups. Even if support needs are temporarily unequal — if, for example, one group is struggling and needs more attention — the Evaluator should make sure to intentionally check in with DE participants who do not need as much support, reminding them of the Evaluator's presence and support and/or being transparent about time-limited differences (e.g., Group A is getting more of the Evaluator's time this week, but Group B will be receiving intensive support next month).

Have an objective sounding board and regular check-ins. As previously noted, we strongly discourage having a one-person DE team. Ideally, the Evaluator should at least have a person who serves as backstop (the DE Administrator) to assist when management or technical issues arise. This person (or persons) can serve as a sounding board as the Evaluator works through the data. The sounding board can keep a lookout for potential biases, helping the Evaluator to identify and appropriately deal with those biases. If no such person is available, the Evaluator should seek out a peer or mentor with whom they can check in as the DE evolves.

Check biases at the door during analysis. Before undertaking analysis, work with the external support person to list likely biases and be mindful of these during analysis. While it is natural to develop feelings about certain programs or DE participant groups, as with any evaluation, the analysis should be rigorous, grounded in data, and free of personal opinions.

MODULE 7 RACI MATRIX

The following table summarizes the steps outlined in this Module, as well as our recommendation for who is:

R responsible

A accountable

C consulted, and

I informed for each.

TASK	DE ADMINISTRATOR	DEVELOPMENTAL EVALUATOR	DE FUNDER	DE STAKEHOLDERS
Develop Nuanced Understanding of Context	R	R A	C	C
Carry out Evaluative Responsibilities as Required by Evaluation Questions	A	R	C I	C I
Carry Out Adaptive Responsibilities Informed by Evaluative Activities	A	R	C I	C I
Employ Appropriate Strategies to Manage Scope and Relationships	A	R	C I	C I

Problem Solving in Developmental Evaluation
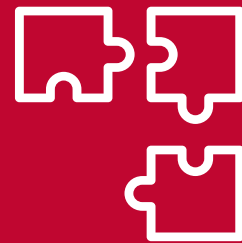
DEs are not immune to the problems and pitfalls faced by other evaluation approaches. For example, resistance to negative findings — especially by people who are outside of the process and unfamiliar with evaluation — serves as an example of a common evaluation challenge that can be exacerbated in a DE context, because, unlike other evaluation approaches, stakeholders must continue to engage with the Developmental Evaluator on a regular basis, even when there are disagreements. There may also be disagreements if and when stakeholders request non-DE products from the Evaluator, e.g., summative evaluation reports.

Situations can get even more uncomfortable if the Funder is also the subject of the DE — no one wants to "bite the hand that feeds them." While it is virtually impossible to preempt all the different pitfalls, this Module offers tips for how to address them at the outset and as they arise throughout the DE.

How Can Developmental Evaluators Preempt Conflict from the Start?

There are various types of conflict that can arise in a DE — some avoidable, some not. Conflict commonly arises when there are negative or sensitive findings, when stakeholders adopt changes that they are not bought into, and when stakeholders simply do not get along. The Evaluator should rely on their understanding of the context and key working relationships to develop a response to each type of conflict. The guidance below includes general tips that may be applicable to some or all of these types.

- ☑ Be open to ideas that challenge assumptions and/or the status quo.
- ☑ Communicate openly and frequently.
- ☑ Share data to strengthen collective learning.
- ☑ Ask questions. Stay curious.
- ☑ Don't make it personal.
- ☑ Embrace change.
- ☑ View "negative" findings as an opportunity to learn and improve programming.

CREATING GROUND RULES

As previously noted, the organization or team being evaluated must have a learning culture. At a minimum, Evaluators should create some ground rules for the DE with stakeholders. Ideally, these rules should be established at the Acculturation Workshop, though the Evaluator may need to reinforce them in subsequent meetings or workshops. Here are examples of such rules:

MANAGING RELATIONS WITH THE FUNDER

As noted in Module 2, it is helpful for the DE Administrator to establish with the Funder how they would like to handle conflict at the outset and to document that agreement. The Evaluator should refer back to any documented protocols from these discussions if and when conflict arises and remind others of the agreed process for handling it.

PRESENTING NEGATIVE FINDINGS

Negative findings can arise. Even in situations where the findings are not catastrophic, many people have a natural tendency to get defensive. However, Evaluators can employ strategies to soften the blow. Most of these tie back to the ground rules mentioned above:

Presenting Negative Findings

Focus on the data. Avoid telling anecdotes or sharing information that was not systematically collected for the purposes of responding to a particular evaluation question. Remind stakeholders of where the data came from and how it was collected and rigorously analyzed.

Offer alternate explanations. Based on understanding of the context, let stakeholders know what other explanations have been considered and rejected, as well as why.

Maintain a neutral tone. Recall that the point of DE is less about accountability and more about learning. Consequently, there is no burning need to judge things as a success or failure. Point out what has worked well and what does not seem to be best suited for the context.

Frame challenges as opportunities. In cases where things could be adapted to better suit the context, be prepared to help teams think about what adaptations they could make to facilitate progress toward a desired end.

Give stakeholders a preview. Depending on the nature of the findings and relationships cultivated with stakeholders (especially with the Funder), it could be helpful to share the results with a stakeholder — ideally a DE champion — prior to wider dissemination. This person could offer alternate explanations not considered by the Evaluator or help the Evaluator frame the findings in a way other stakeholders may be more receptive to.

Escalate when necessary. When conflicts occur, it is best to resolve them directly with the people in question. However, there are times when this does not work and mediation with leadership is necessary. Evaluators should work with their Administrators to determine when and how to approach these situations to minimize additional consequences.

Do not shy away from adverse findings. It is instructive for stakeholders to hear both the positive and the not-so-positive. Remember that failure on any scale offers great potential for learning!

RESISTING SCOPE CREEP

Scope creep is a common challenge for any project. It constitutes a particular risk in DE, given that the scope is intentionally vague. As stakeholders' needs evolve and their understanding of the DE's value-add increases over time, they may request additional support from the Evaluator. While there should be room for the DE to go in unanticipated directions (e.g., supporting new stakeholder groups), the Evaluator should not get so overstretched that they cannot meet the DE's intended purpose(s). To avoid this, the Evaluator should routinely cite the parameters noted in their SOW — to the extent that it is useful, keeping in mind the preliminary and flexible nature of the SOW — with the Funder to manage competing requests from different stakeholders.

ASKING FOR HELP

DEs are huge undertakings, especially for one person. This is part of the reason that we strongly recommend having a DE Administrator who serves as backstop for the Evaluator. DE Administrators provide invaluable support when Evaluators run into various challenges, such as:

- **Insufficient technical capacity**: Conducting DEs requires unique and diverse skill sets and it can be hard to find all of those skills in one person, even among seasoned evaluators. As noted in Module 2, don't expect the Evaluator to have all the skills needed

for the assignment. The DE Administrator should identify the Evaluator's areas of relative weakness at the outset and develop a plan for complementing the Evaluator's skills. The DE Administrator should encourage the Evaluator to be candid about areas in which they need additional guidance, both at the outset and throughout the course of the DE, as unexpected situations arise.

- **Lack of bandwidth**: Carrying out the work to conduct a DE and its myriad sub-activities may require more effort than one person can give at one time. If resources permit, the DE Administrator should avail themselves or deploy another person to assist the Evaluator with whatever tasks may be needed, from taking notes, to coding, to developing data visualizations.

- **Need for a "bad cop"**: Sometimes the Evaluator needs to say "no" in situations that can be uncomfortable (e.g., when the Funder makes unreasonable demands). Given that this can put the Evaluator in an awkward position, it may make sense to leverage the DE Administrator as someone who can decline the request on the Evaluator's behalf due to any number of reasons (lack of budget, outside of scope, etc.), so that the evaluator can remain the "good cop" who continues to help teams adapt.

How Does the Developmental Evaluator's Embedded Status Promote DE Progress?

Other approaches to evaluation often encounter issues with timing, location, or stakeholder access during data collection. DEs encounter those same problems, as well as a few others unique to being embedded. Below, we list three common challenges experienced by Evaluators and corresponding solutions.

1. **Conflicting Schedules:**
   When Evaluators work with different stakeholder groups, each group may have their own meetings and expectations for the DE. The Evaluator should divide time equitably across the DE stakeholders. However, in so doing, there will invariably be conflicting

schedules. To minimize this, Evaluators can try the following:

- **Have DE stakeholders share digital calendars** with the Evaluator at the start of the DE.

- **Discuss weekly recurring meeting schedules** at the outset of the DE. The Evaluator should try to attend each core DE stakeholder groups' weekly meeting. If there are any significant conflicts, see if one team might be willing to permanently reschedule their meeting time depending on the length of the DE.

- **Set up a 15-minute "triage session" each week with DE stakeholder group or team leads** to coordinate scheduling. The Evaluator can use this time to discuss and resolve scheduling conflicts with all core stakeholders present.

- **Set up 15-minute check-ins with each team individually** each month to solicit their perceptions about equitable access to the Evaluator, any emergent conflicts, etc.

- **Enlist the DE Administrator** to cover important meetings during which the Evaluator is already booked or otherwise unable to attend.

2. **Getting Time Commitments from DE Stakeholders:**
Seemingly endless possibilities exist for how the Evaluator could spend the time they have available for the DE. However, the Evaluator should make sure that there is sufficient time to facilitate adaptations and demonstrate the value of these adaptations to DE stakeholders. To secure the time commitments needed for the work, the Evaluator can:

- **Set expectations about roles and responsibilities and different possible time commitment requirements.** This will be most effective if started early, at the Acculturation Workshop, and iterated often.

- **Follow the quick win guidance in Module 3 to build trust and perceived value-add in the DE.** This will increase the likelihood that DE stakeholders will want to work with the Evaluator.

- **Make specific time commitment requirements known early and plan ahead.** Try to give DE stakeholder groups two to four weeks' notice when trying to schedule more intensive workshops.

- **Solicit the assistance of others.** Enlist DE champions, stakeholder leaders, or others to be a new voice expressing the importance of the request and reminding DE stakeholders of the commitment they made to the DE. For more information on DE champions see Module 3.

- **Use data to demonstrate inefficiencies or challenges to DE stakeholder groups.** Doing so may help create a sense of urgency to engage with the Evaluator, as long as the Evaluator can offer solutions based on the DE findings.

3. **Delivering "Bad" News:**
The Evaluator has a role in working with DE stakeholders to understand what is not working optimally, why, and what can be adjusted to better serve the program's goals or context. While Evaluators should never shy away from negative findings, they should deliver "bad" news in an understanding and approachable way to ensure that DE stakeholders are able to process the findings and focus on adaptive actions. We recommend the following checklist for delivering negative findings to DE stakeholders:

Bad news checklist

☑ Update DE stakeholders as soon as a negative finding is identified. Be transparent and proactively schedule conversations to discuss the finding.

☑ Do not share the finding and then leave. The Developmental Evaluator should ensure there is sufficient time to workshop next steps and demonstrate the utility of unearthing negative findings.

☑ If the findings are sensitive, it can help to go to each group individually, giving DE stakeholders time to process and speak frankly about their concerns or issues with the findings in a safe space.

☑ Use comedy or turn it into an opportunity for growth. A Developmental Evaluator often has to be frank, but they do not have to be mean.

☑ Create space to air assumptions.

☑ Remind DE stakeholders that this is not a performance evaluation and that the Developmental Evaluator is not there to judge them.

☑ Focus on identification of the problem in the system. Share the finding clearly and concisely. And then focus attention on the opportunity to respond to the finding in a data-driven, non-emotional way.

MODULE 8 RACI MATRIX

The following table summarizes the steps outlined in this Module, as well as our recommendation for who is:

R responsible

A accountable

C consulted, and

I informed for each.

TASK	DE ADMINISTRATOR	DEVELOPMENTAL EVALUATOR	DE FUNDER	DE STAKEHOLDERS
Establish Ground Rules for Engagement	C	R A	I	R
Request Technical and/or Managerial Support When Needed	I	R		
Mobilize Additional Resources for Developmental Evaluator When Needed	R			
Employ Relevant Strategies for Navigating Conflict	A	R		

Engaging Stakeholders with Developmental Evaluation Results

Given the large volume of data that DEs generate, the Developmental Evaluator should provide information to stakeholders in formats that they can understand and use. The purpose of DE is to support adaptive management, which can be based on evidence only if stakeholders are comfortable with engaging with the data. This gives Evaluators license to be creative in the development of deliverables. This Module discusses different types of deliverables and techniques that evaluators can consider for DEs.

## What Deliverables Are Best for Engaging Stakeholders?

We have noted that in the spirit of utilization-focused evaluation, DEs shy away from producing lengthy reports. The deliverable options below are just a few ways we have used to communicate DE results.

- **Memos**: Evaluators can save stakeholders time by summarizing information on findings or recommendations in short documents (ideally fewer than five pages). "Options Memos," a particularly useful tool we have used in DEs, summarize findings, possible paths forward and recommendations, and the implications of and resources required for each of the options presented.

- **DE Spotlights**: Evaluators can succinctly put findings or recommendations into one-page, visually appealing documents that can be shared physically or virtually with stakeholders. These documents should make use of bullets, infographics, icons, or other visual tools to convey key takeaways, which may even entice stakeholders to engage further with the DE.

FIGURE 5: OPTIONS MEMO TEMPLATE

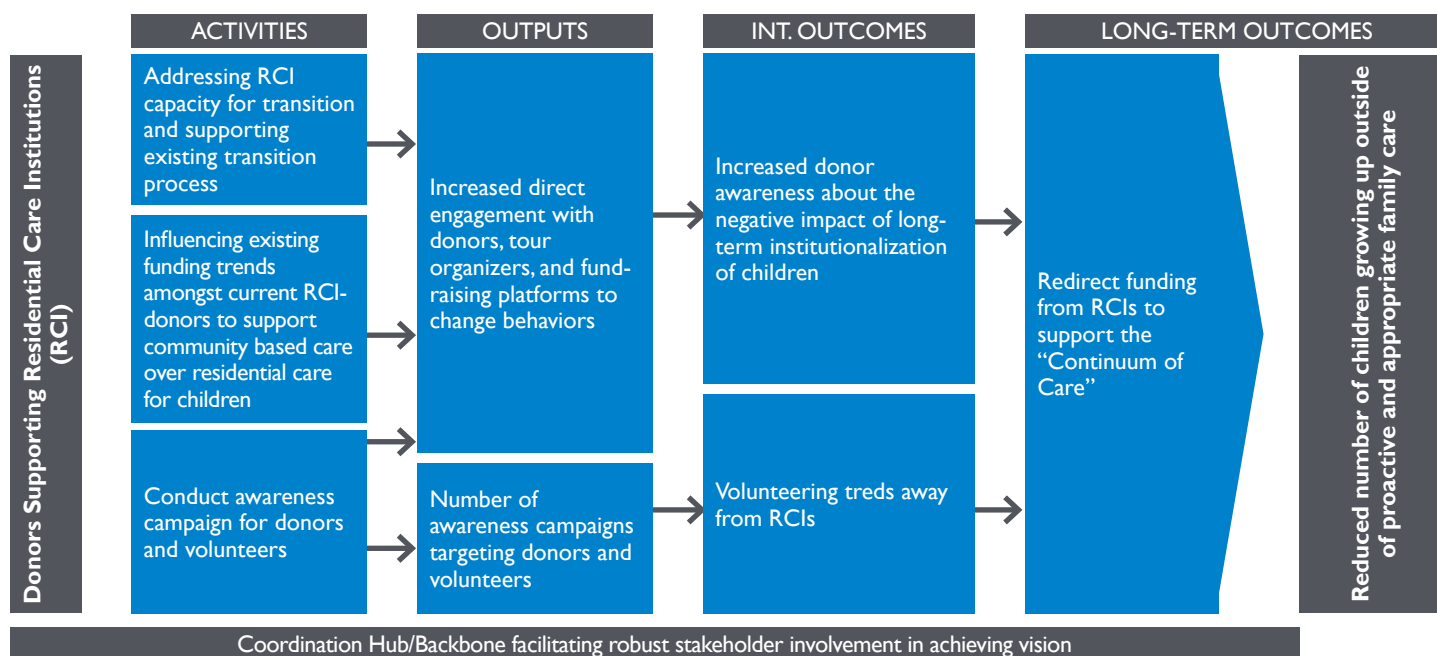|	Rationale for this Recommendation	Benefits to This Approach	Costs or Risks of the Approach
Option A			
Option B			
Option A+B			
Option C			

FIGURE 6: INFOGRAPHIC EXAMPLE
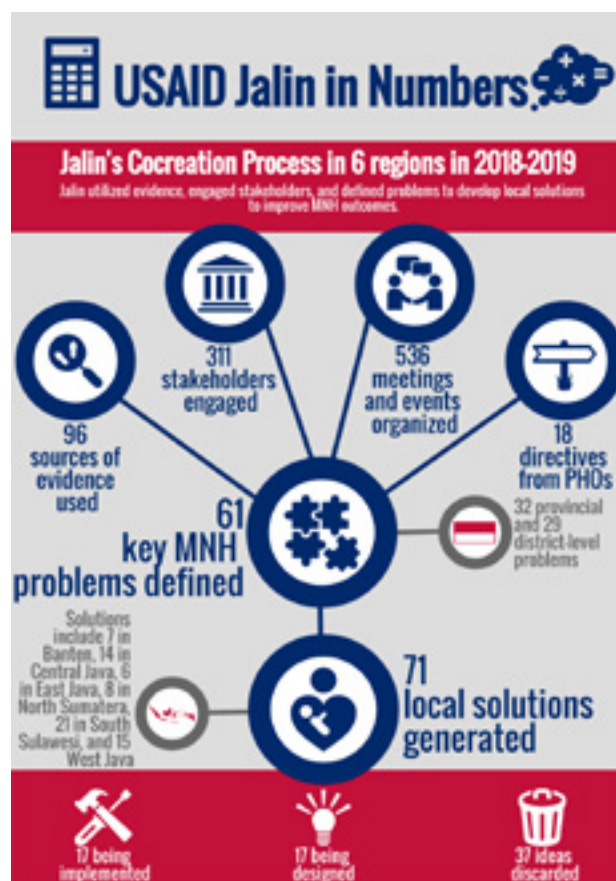
- **Theories of Change**: Many evaluators have had the experience of evaluating programs that did not have a stated theory of change. An appropriate function of DEs involves helping teams actually develop and articulate their theo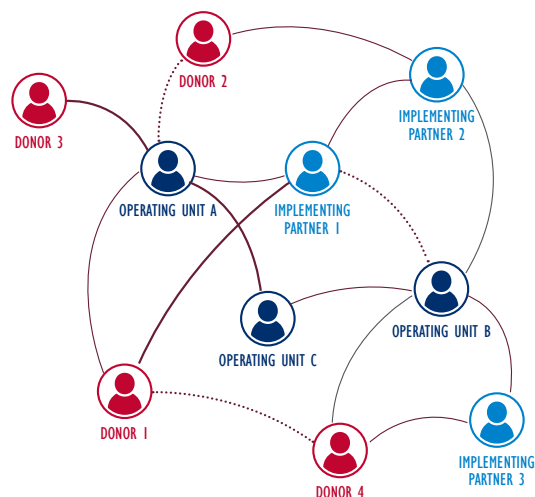ries of change and updating them as they evolve in the context of a DE. One way to do this is to create a program logic model, as the below example from one DEPA-MERL pilot illustrates. See USAID's How To Note: Developing a Project Logic Model for more examples.

FIGURE 7: EXCERPT FROM FAMILY CARE LOGIC MODEL

ACTIVITIES	OUTPUTS	INT. OUTCOMES	LONG-TERM OUTCOMES

Donors Supporting Residential Care Institutions (RCI)

Addressing RCI capacity for transition and supporting existing transition process

Influencing existing funding trends amongst current RCI-donors to support community based care over residential care for children

Conduct awareness campaign for donors and volunteers

Increased direct engagement with donors, tour organizers, and fund-raising platforms to change behaviors

Number of awareness campaigns targeting donors and volunteers

Increased donor awareness about the negative impact of long-term institutionalization of children

Volunteering treds away from RCIs

Redirect funding from RCIs to support the "Continuum of Care"

Reduced number of children growing up outside of proactive and appropriate family care

Coordination Hub/Backbone facilitating robust stakeholder involvement in achieving vision

- **Maps**: Maps present a great way to visually convey information. DE can produce many types of maps, some that could be relatively simple (i.e., created without needing to purchase costly software) include network maps, heat maps, and timelines.

FIGURE 8: NETWORK MAP EXAMPLE

DONOR 2

DONOR 3

IMPLEMENTING PARTNER 2

OPERATING UNIT A

IMPLEMENTING PARTNER 1

OPERATING UNIT C

OPERATING UNIT B

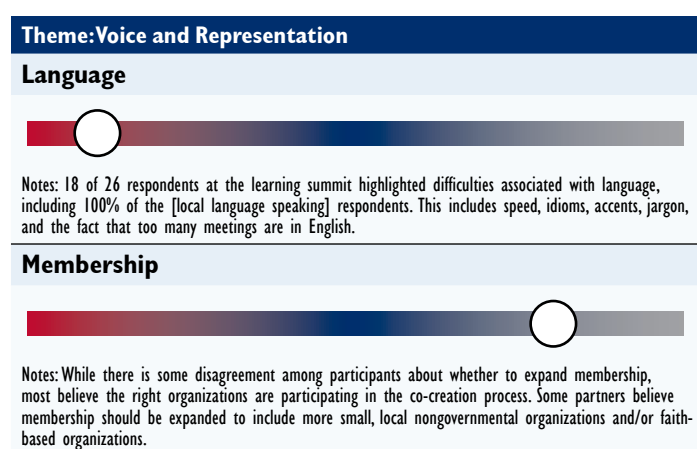DONOR 1

DONOR 4

IMPLEMENTING PARTNER 3

- **Case Studies**: Is the DE team examining bright spots? Places where implementation is not working? Examples of positive deviance? Illuminating why a decision was taken and how it was implemented? The DE team may create case studies based on qualitative and quantitative data collected and analyzed using transparent and high-quality methods. These can be presented in a variety of way, including on paper, video, or another medium. For example, InsightShare has developed guidance on the use of participatory video as a tool for monitoring and evaluation. Take care not to simply write up "success stories" that are not founded in evidence, which can undermine the credibility of the DE and are not helpful in facilitating evidence driven adaptation.

- **Toolkits**: Once an Evaluator has gathered initial learnings and implementation is on track, they may think about creating a simple toolkit for use in future activities or processes. Common questions include

What have you learned that others should replicate? What tips can you share for how to avoid common obstacles? Do you have specific tools, templates, or processes that all should follow moving forward? Document and disseminate!

- **Dashboards**: Dashboards can provide an easy-to-understand, real-time snapshot of progress along a set of indicators previously identified by the Evaluator, DE participants, and/or Funder. Dashboards are particularly useful for communicating how successful the implementation of adaptations suggested by the DE has been.

FIGURE 9: DASHBOARD EXAMPLE

Theme: Voice and Representation

Language

Notes: 18 of 26 respondents at the learning summit highlighted difficulties associated with language, including 100% of the [local language speaking] respondents. This includes speed, idioms, accents, jargon, and the fact that too many meetings are in English.

Membership

Notes: While there is some disagreement among participants about whether to expand membership, most believe the right organizations are participating in the co-creation process. Some partners believe membership should be expanded to include more small, local nongovernmental organizations and/or faith-based organizations.

- **Workshops**: Evaluators can get stakeholders to engage fully with the DE materials by discussing them in person. Workshops can have a variety of foci and formats, and as long as they have clear objectives, they tend to be more action oriented than written deliverables. For example, DEs might include workshops to collectively analyze findings, to generate and prioritize recommendations and develop corresponding action plans, to revisit theories of change; and/or to select new research questions as needs arise.

As noted in Module 3, workshops can be a great tool to facilitate participation and empower stakeholders who may not be decision-makers or "the usual suspects." It is incumbent on the Evaluator to ensure that all voices are heard equitably so that the DE can thus serve as an intervention in and of itself.

DATA VISUALIZATION

Data visualization can help engage stakeholders with the DE. Effective visualization will make deliverables more attractive, easier to process, and more likely to evoke a response. A plethora of resources exists online to help Evaluators create strong data visualizations:

- Resources on learning to create data visualizations: Evergreen Data and Depict Data Studio both offer courses, books, and coaching on this subject.

- Data visualization tools:
  - Canva — tool to create visually appealing one-pagers, infographics, convening materials, and reports.
  - Lucidchart — simple platform to create clear charts or diagrams.
  - Flaticon — library of free icons to help illustrate text.
  - The latest version of Microsoft Office Suite also contains icons available for free use.
  - The stakeholder mapping tools mentioned in Module 3 (e.g., Kumu and Gephi) can also help make compelling visualizations.
  - Miro — A platform users can customize to meet their needs while collaborating digitally

Consider how these can help communicate DE findings to reduce the reliance on text.

TIPS FOR COMMUNICATION

Making people pay attention to evaluations can be tricky. The table below presents common challenges in communicating evaluation results and possible solutions:

TABLE 5: CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS FOR COMMUNICATING EVALUATION RESULTS

Challenge	Possible Solutions
Stakeholders are busy with competing priorities	Create short communications (i.e., using bullets, tables, and visualizations, to the extent possible)
	Distribute information only when truly needed (i.e., avoid information overload)
	Schedule short meetings or workshops well in advance, so stakeholders will have time reserved when results come out
Stakeholders are generally uninterested in the DE	Tailor deliverables directly to those stakeholders' job functions and needs
	Avoid use of the word "evaluation"
	Leverage DE champions to generate enthusiasm for results
Stakeholders come from multicultural backgrounds	Avoid jargon and excessively technical language
	Use visualization frequently
	Employ culturally sensitive facilitation techniques

MODULE 9 RACI MATRIX

The following table summarizes the steps outlined in this Module, as well as our recommendation for who is:

TASK	DE ADMINISTRATOR	DEVELOPMENTAL EVALUATOR	DE FUNDER	DE STAKEHOLDERS
Develop Engaging Deliverables on Ongoing, Timely Basis	A	R	C	C

R **responsible**

A **accountable**

C **consulted,** and

I **informed** for each.

Closeout and Handoff

deally, DEs support programs throughout their lifetimes. However, the reality of many DEs is that there may only be enough resources for the DE to last through a given period, which may or may not align with the actual end of the program. If done well, the DE at that point will be an integral and perhaps indistinguishable part of the program. Consequently, the Development Evaluator should approach closeout processes thoughtfully to ensure the DE results are sustained over time. The "end" of DEs may differ from the ends of other evaluation approaches in that the culmination is not necessarily a final report, given that data collection and the presentation of findings and recommendations are continuous throughout the DE. This Module provides information on how to manage DE stakeholders' expectations about what successful closeout entails in their particular contexts.

How Should Sustainability Planning Occur?

To facilitate uptake of DE results, begin planning well before closeout. The Evaluator and DE Administrator should begin working with DE stakeholders to plan for the closeout approximately three months prior to the end of the DE. This may mean working with the key stakeholders to ensure that teams continue their learning culture after the DE.

Helpful processes may include:

- **Holding workshops prior to DE close to build capacity** in important areas identified by the Evaluator and stakeholders throughout the DE;

- **Scheduling quarterly pause and reflect sessions** or other adaptive-management-oriented events on stakeholders' calendars and providing the protocols and tools necessary to conduct these meetings;

- **Providing learning tools** as well as instructions for the tools' use;

- **Outlining a road map for implementation** of suggested adaptations over the coming months;

- **Ensuring knowledge management systems are in place** to enable information from the DE to be used or referenced; and

- **Transitioning key tasks and processes** (e.g., note taking, facilitation of reflective practice, etc.) identified as important by the Evaluator among existing staff who will be responsible for promoting and sharing learnings.

What Steps Should Be Taken to De-Integrate the Developmental Evaluator?

At the beginning of a DE, the Evaluator may join teams with "Evaluator" as their sole role. After months or years of engagement however, the Evaluator may even conduct tasks that become critical to the teams — having dedicated capacity to provide data-driven decision support is extremely valuable! For an effective DE closeout, these aspects should be transitioned to team staff. This challenge can be acute if the Evaluator was especially skilled or active. Strong integration requires strong de-integration to effectively close out the DE. To effectively prepare for a post-DE world, the Funder should work with the program team well in advance of closeout to take active steps to de-integrate the Evaluator from the stakeholder team(s).

Along with the program team, Evaluators should meet with stakeholders and create an action plan for de-integration. A closeout action plan could involve:

- Communicating the upcoming end of the DE. DE stakeholders should be made aware of the official end of the DE well in advance. As with any change management effort, this message should come from different sources (but especially from leadership) and in different formats (e.g., via email, in-person meetings, etc.) so that stakeholders understand that the Evaluator's support will no longer be available after a certain date.

- Creating capacity-building activities for participants and stakeholders. Stakeholders may need to develop skills to sustain the DE results. These could include technical areas that the DE finds to be areas of relative weakness. However, in all likelihood, the Evaluator would be best equipped to build capacity around evaluation, learning, and adaptive management. In any case, the Evaluator may need to schedule a series of workshops or one-on-one coaching in these areas to equip stakeholders with the necessary skills.

- Developing protocols for sustaining recommendations. To the extent that the DE makes operational or process-related recommendations, the Evaluator should help codify them into standard operating procedures or guidelines that teams can reference once the Evaluator is no longer around.

- Facilitating a learning event. Holding a final workshop to review DE results and next steps can help build a sense of finality or closure among DE participants and/or stakeholders.

- Final reporting. In the spirit of DE, it may be helpful to have a simple record of what the DE did. This could contain whatever information is most useful to stakeholders. Potential content for such a report includes research questions, key findings and recommendations, summary of DE milestones, and results of adaptations influenced by the DE.

> "It will always be difficult to close out. [The teams] are not doing anything wrong … it's just that the DE will end and [the Developmental Evaluator] won't see all the outcomes to fruition. DE still faces the same kind of struggles at the end, like any program on the sustainability of recommendations … the leaving of the Developmental Evaluator is not stopping change … it's just that [the Developmental Evaluator] won't see the extent of the impact. It's just the DE process."
>
> — DE Administrator

What Do Final Deliverables Look Like?

Closeout presents an opportunity for the Evaluator to transparently share findings, conclusions, and recommendations. It provides a chance to discuss questions and ideas as the program team looks to the future and to finalize plans for how to institutionalize the recommendations made by the DE.

To avoid a deadline crunch, the Evaluator should work with the DE Administrator and DE stakeholders well in advance of closeout to define what expected final deliverables look like. Some of these may overlap with the items in the above-mentioned closeout action plan. Depending on the needs of the different stakeholders, as well as the bandwidth of the DE team, these can include a final report, a dedicated learning event, or continued production of tools to support adaptations.

The Evaluator should obtain and maintain buy-in from all the major stakeholders in a program. During the DE itself, this will require triangulation among these stakeholders despite possible tension regarding their various needs. However, at close-out this triangulation no longer becomes an option. To conclude an effective DE, an Evaluator must respond to each of the major stakeholders' needs, even when those needs require significant demands on time. During one pilot close-out, for example, we produced a final evaluation report for the USAID while also holding a learning event to share findings with in-country partners. As with all steps of the DE, the Evaluator should ensure that each final deliverable is designed with users in mind, particularly thinking about their post-DE needs.

MODULE 10 RACI MATRIX

The following table summarizes the steps outlined in this Module, as well as our recommendation for who is:

R responsible

A accountable

C consulted, and

I informed for each.

TASK	DE ADMINISTRATOR	DEVELOPMENTAL EVALUATOR	DE FUNDER	DE STAKEHOLDERS
Develop DE Closeout Plan	A	R	C I	C I
Implement DE Closeout Activities (e.g., capacity building, learning workshops)	A	R	C I	C I
Produce DE Closeout Report	A	R	C I	C I

DEs carried out in their ideal format do not have a fixed end. Although the Evaluator may no longer be a part of the program team after a certain point, they leave behind a team more capable of engaging in evidence-based decision-making, navigating the unique complexities of their context, and employing reflective practice. There is no judgment of success or failure, but rather a strengthened sense of how the program has evolved and why.

There is no recipe for how DEs can be planned, implemented, or closed out, but through this Guide, we have attempted to demonstrate approaches that make sense for our context and offered tips we wish we knew when we undertook our DEs. As Dr. Michael Quinn Patton mentioned in his foreword, this Guide must be adapted to each DE's particular circumstances, and we too share his interest in how use of this Guide unfolds. Please get in touch and let us know how it goes.

Sincerely,

The DEPA-MERL team

Authors

Rebecca Baylor
The William Davidson Institute at the University of Michigan

Heather Esper
The William Davidson Institute at the University of Michigan

Yaquta Fatehi
The William Davidson Institute at the University of Michigan

Danielle de Garcia
Social Impact, Inc.

Shannon Griswold
USAID

Rebecca Herrington
Social Impact, Inc. / Headlight Consulting LLC

Marin O'Brien Belhoussein
Search For Common Ground

Gabrielle Plotkin
Social Impact, Inc.

David Yamron
Search For Common Ground