

Implementing Developmental Evaluation

A PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR FUNDERS

SEPTEMBER 2019

Updated July 2024

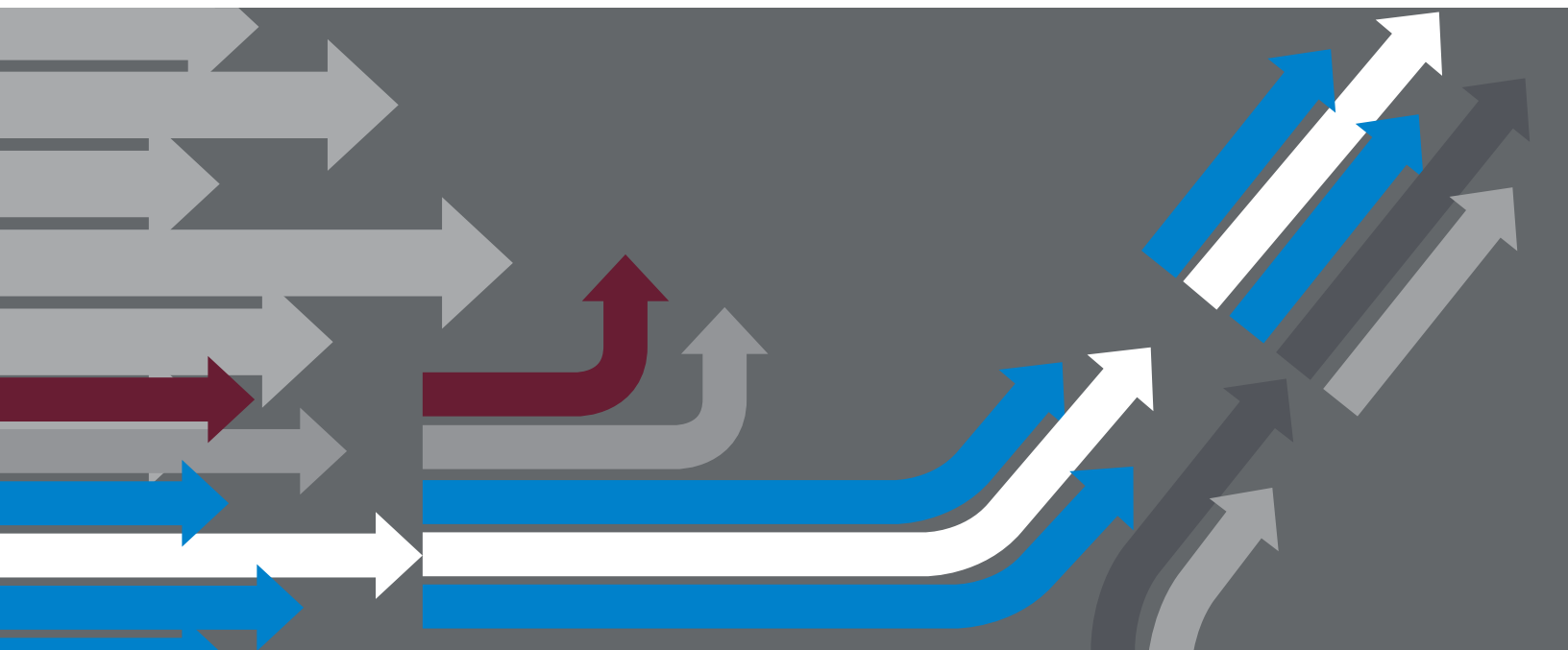


Table of Contents

Forward.....	1
Acronyms.....	2
Glossary of Developmental Evaluation Guide Terms.....	3
Introduction and Overview.....	5
<hr/>	
MODULE 1	
Understanding Developmental Evaluation.....	8
<hr/>	
MODULE 2	
Assessing Developmental Evaluation Appropriateness.....	12
<hr/>	
MODULE 3	
Assessing an Organization’s Developmental Evaluation Readiness.....	13
<hr/>	
MODULE 4	
Drafting a Scope of Work.....	16
<hr/>	
MODULE 5	
Budgeting for Developmental Evaluations.....	28
<hr/>	
MODULE 6	
Procurement Process.....	32
<hr/>	
MODULE 7	
Managing and Monitoring a Developmental Evaluation.....	40
<hr/>	
MODULE 8	
Developmental Evaluation Deliverables.....	46
<hr/>	
MODULE 9	
Developmental Evaluation Outcomes.....	50
<hr/>	
MODULE 10	
Closeout and Handoff.....	53
<hr/>	
Closing.....	57

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

CLA	Collaborating, Learning, and Adapting
DE	Developmental Evaluation
DEPA-MERL	Developmental Evaluation Pilot Activity
LOE	Level of Effort
MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning
MERLIN	Monitoring, Evaluation, Research and Learning Innovations
RCI	Residential Care Institutions
Search	Search for Common Ground
SI	Social Impact, Inc.
SOO	Statement of Objectives
SOW	Scope of Work
WDI	William Davidson Institute at the University of Michigan
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
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.

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

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.

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 of DE¹ 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 “Funders Guide” toward people responsible for commissioning a DE. 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 the Guide into the following Modules:

MODULE 1: Understanding Developmental Evaluation

MODULE 2: Assessing Developmental Evaluation Appropriateness

MODULE 3: Assessing an Organization’s Developmental Evaluation Readiness

MODULE 4: Drafting a Scope of Work

MODULE 5: Budgeting for Developmental Evaluations

MODULE 6: Procurement Process

MODULE 7: Managing and Monitoring a Developmental Evaluation

MODULE 8: Developmental Evaluation Deliverables

MODULE 9: Developmental Evaluation Outcomes

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 “Administrator’s and Evaluator’s Guide” contains guidance specifically for individuals or teams carrying out DEs. We understand that outside of the [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 2](#) 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 I 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 I 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. \[https://journals.sfu.ca/jmde/index.php/jmde_1/article/view/685/583\]\(https://journals.sfu.ca/jmde/index.php/jmde_1/article/view/685/583\)](#)

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 4-10, we have included a basic matrix recapping how the Funder, Evaluator, Administrator, and stakeholders are involved in each of the steps outlined in each Module. We also included glossary in the front of this document where we define these terms and others used in the Guide.

MODULE I

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 Development Evaluation (DE) for people who are considering funding or otherwise procuring a DE (“Funders”).

What Is Developmental Evaluation?

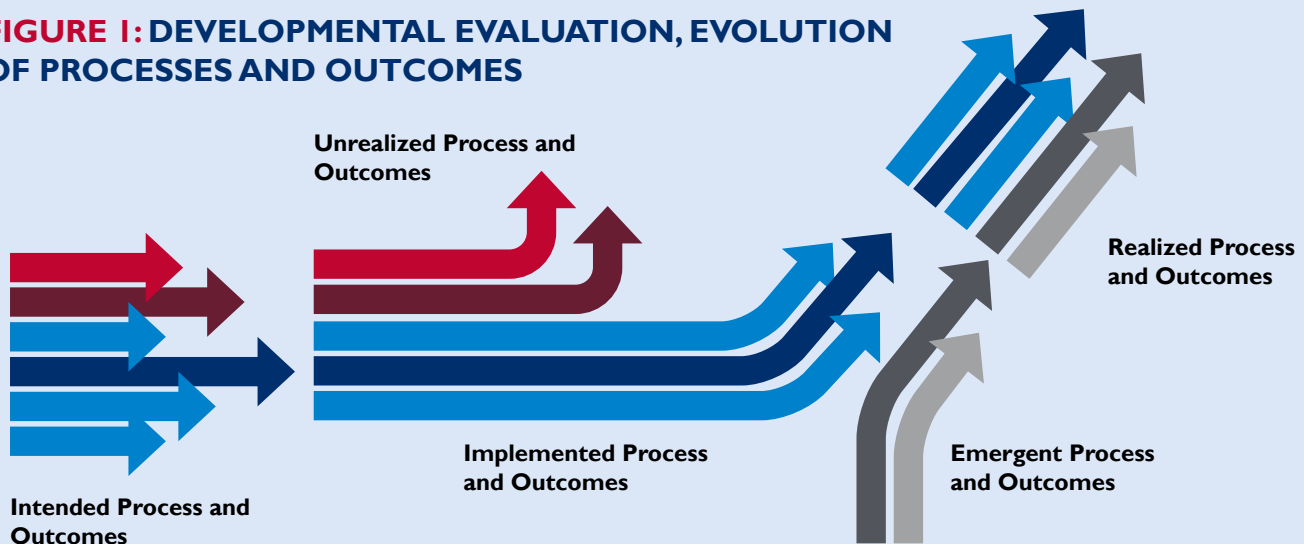
Coined by Dr. Michael Quinn Patton, DE is an approach to continuous adaptation of interventions through the use of evaluative thinking and feedback. It includes having one or more evaluators embedded in program teams, ideally on a full-time basis; and working with teams to contribute to modifications 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 a 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 of increasing the number of children living in safe, family-based care in a Southeast Asian country;
- Undertaking active learning to enable a large bureaucracy to get smarter about the viability of different approaches to scale and sustain innovations; and
- 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.

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 trust²;
- 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.

Suggestions for how to determine whether DE is appropriate can be found in the next Module.

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.”

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

Assessing Developmental Evaluation Appropriateness



Interest in DE is increasing among evaluators and Funders alike. However, it is not appropriate for all contexts. While DE originated to serve complex, innovative programs, it can only do so successfully when the organizational context is appropriate. For Funders considering conducting a DE, this Module provides guidance on the programmatic conditions that are favorable and unfavorable for DE. This Module addresses fit of the approach; budget and resource considerations are addressed in [Module 5](#).

When Is Developmental Evaluation Appropriate?

It is important to assess whether the contracting mechanism and scope of a program are amenable to DE and to assess whether another evaluation approach is more suitable. If the team or organization is not sufficiently ready, the DE may ultimately fail to serve its intended purpose(s). Initial questions to consider when determining if a DE is the right fit include:

- Are processes, implementation, or objectives expected to shift?
- Is the program operating in a complex environment? Or is the programming itself complex?
- Does/can the program procurement mechanism allow for flexibility in implementation?
- Does the timing of the program lend itself to the start of a DE?
- Is there sufficient buy-in for the DE from both the Funder and the implementing partner, including allocation of funding?

The type and context of the programming is particularly important when considering whether to implement a DE. Below is a checklist with some examples of when it is appropriate to fund a DE. DE could be appropriate if one or more of these examples apply.

At the start of an innovative program:

- Is there an untested theory of change that needs to be analyzed in real time?

- Is the organization pilot testing an innovation and uncertain about how it might evolve or what it might entail?
- Is this an intervention that did not work in the past and now the organization or program desires to tweak its approach?
- Will the program be working in a new context and thus need to be careful about implementation?

When an existing program is not working as intended:

- Do the monitoring and evaluation data say the program is not being effective but they cannot identify why?
- Is there shock or stress impacting the program's operating environment (e.g., a natural disaster interrupts the program's work or a conflict outbreak changes the development context)?

When an anticipated, significant change might affect an existing program, for example:

- Is an upcoming election introducing an element of uncertainty?
- Will newly passed legislation have an unknown effect on the program?

If you answered “yes” to the questions above, there may be programmatic conditions that make DE an appropriate fit. However, people and relationships also are critical to the success of a DE. In the next Module are considerations for determining whether key people are ready for a DE.

MODULE 3

Assessing an Organization's Developmental Evaluation Readiness



After assessing the appropriateness of a DE for your program, we recommend that Funders hold a series of initial meetings with key stakeholders (e.g., program managers, monitoring and evaluation staff, technical leads, and relevant organizational leaders) to assess their interest in DE, their readiness for DE, and whether DE is a good fit for the program's context and needs. These conversations can help determine if a DE might be useful to the organization and if the organization is ready to implement DE. This Module offers some key questions and tools to help guide this process.

Are Key Stakeholders Ready for DE?

Prior to the start of the DE, key stakeholders will likely include management and technical staff from the program engaging in DE, as well as program and Funder leadership. Table 2 displays key questions to consider during these consultations:

TABLE 2: QUESTIONS FOR INITIAL STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATIONS

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

If the answers to these questions are “no,” DE may not be a good fit. We also emphasize that these questions are illustrative; other lines of inquiry may better suit the particular context. In a program with multiple partners, for example, you may want to discuss whether all partners agree on the need for a DE. If they do not, you will want to understand why some partners object.

There are also more formalized processes that may be useful, such as the Spark Policy Institute's DE readiness assessment tool, in which a lower number indicates a higher level of readiness for DE (see Figure 2 below). The [CLA Framework](#) can help USAID Missions assess their readiness for adaptive management and thus for DE.

Similarly, we used a DE readiness checklist adapted from Tamarack Community Institute's [DE Diagnostic Checklist](#). This tool can help assess whether the contracting mechanism, organizational culture, stakeholder personalities, and program scope are amenable to program adaptation.

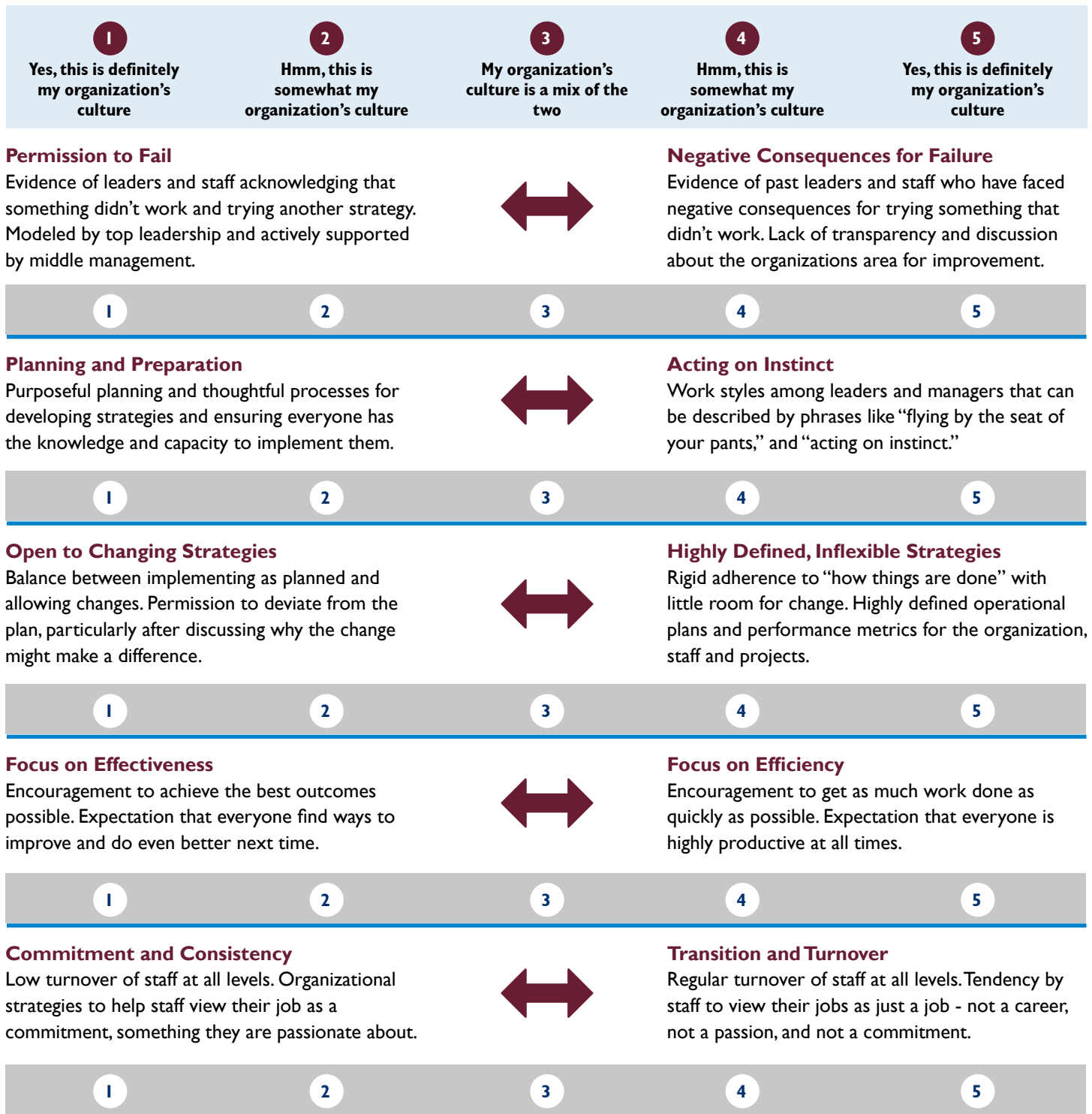
While these readiness checklists serve as useful tools, it is important to understand that self-reported information from stakeholders may lead to overly positive results.

In our experience, the Funder — as well as the DE Administrator and Evaluator, once they are brought

on board — plays a role in assessing and validating stakeholders’ readiness for DE.

FIGURE 2: SPARK POLICY INSTITUTE’S DE READINESS ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST*

Please select the number that best represents your organization or collaboration’s current culture.



* Adapted from the Spark Policy Institute. (2014). The developmental evaluation toolkit: Readiness for DE. Denver, CO.

Funders should understand from the procurement and organizational perspective what can and cannot be changed within the program. This includes assessing whether significant scope changes or smaller revisions would be financially and contractually feasible; whether the management team and other stakeholders would be amenable to these types of shifts; and whether the organization has the willingness and policies in place to enable these shifts.

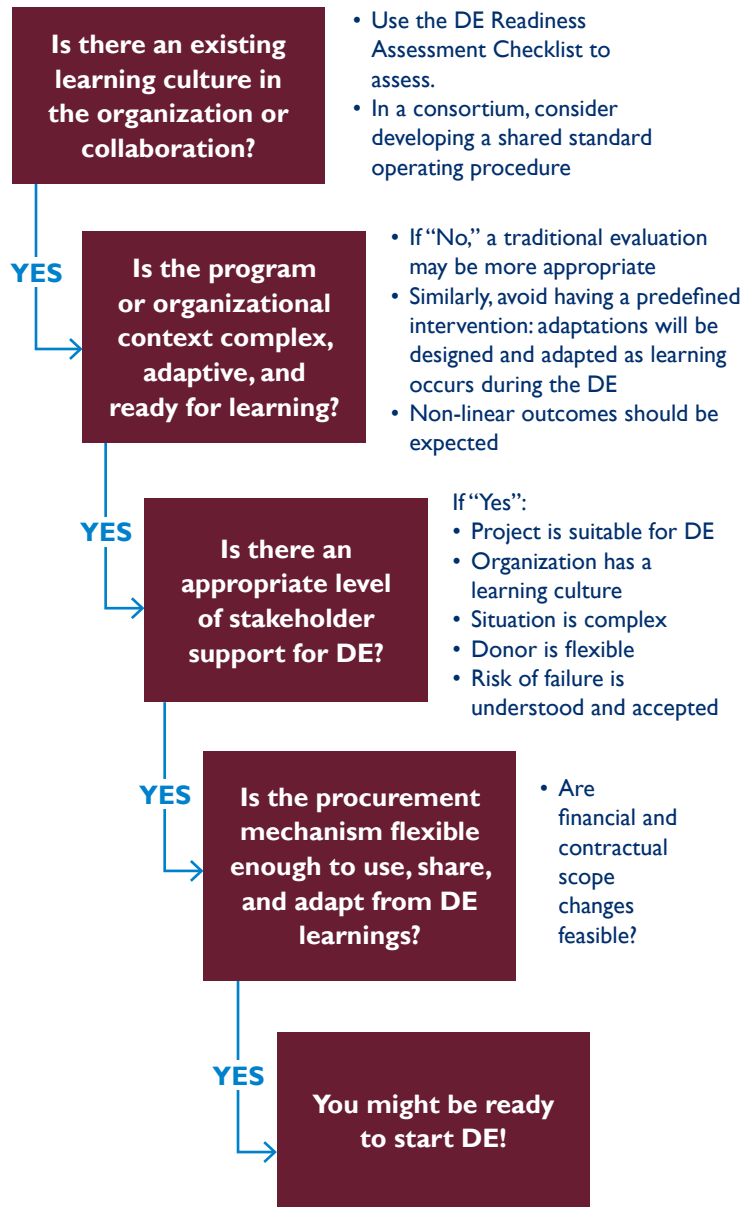
DE stakeholders’ adaptability and comfort with change are critical components to ensuring that the DE is able to be conducted effectively. Our findings corroborate existing literature stating that a culture of reflective practice and critical thinking at an organization is an essential condition for using the DE approach.

In a program with multiple implementing partners, possibly with a diversity of learning cultures, the funders should have organizations co-develop standard operating procedures to determine a shared learning culture. This step can help stakeholders set clear expectations of each other’s behaviors before a DE is implemented.

The flowchart to the right can also help determine if an organization and program are a good fit for a DE. Use it in concert with the tools and questions discussed in this Module.

If the context and program are appropriate for a DE and key stakeholders are ready for a DE, you may want to move forward with the approach. A next step would be to draft an initial SOW.

FIGURE 3: DE READINESS FLOWCHART



“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

MODULE 4

Drafting a Scope of Work



After making an initial determination that a DE is right for the program, it is time to begin formalizing the discussion on paper in a SOW. Due to their longer-term, full-time staff level of effort (LOE), and related costs, DEs require substantial resource investments. Remember also that the program should have a full-time, embedded Developmental Evaluator to facilitate evidence-based adaptations and that sacrificing key elements — such as a full-time external evaluator or complete embeddedness within the stakeholder team — may compromise utility of the findings and feasibility of recommended adaptations.

Therefore, Funders and other key stakeholders (e.g., program managers, monitoring and evaluation staff, technical leads, and relevant organizational leaders) should take a thoughtful approach to scoping, resourcing, and managing expectations of a DE before making a final decision on whether to procure a DE. Doing so can help ensure that the DE ultimately serves its intended purpose(s) and is successful for all stakeholders involved. This Module describes aspects to consider when developing an SOW.

Drafting an SOW may occur in co-creation with the evaluation firm or evaluator if you are using a preexisting buy-in mechanism, or independently if you are issuing a new procurement action. If the former, co-creation of the SOW is an early opportunity to set the tone of a trusting, collaborative relationship between the Evaluator and the program being evaluated. If the latter, be sure to keep the scope of evaluation questions and efforts as broad as possible to allow for further refinement during co-creation post-award.

SOW or SOO: Which Is Better for a USAID-funded DE?

One common question within the USAID is whether to use a SOW or statement of objectives (SOO) for DE procurements. Our recommendation is to use an SOW.

SOO procurements provide top-level objectives for a program and allow an offeror to propose their own approach to meet these objectives. While this flexible approach may seem ideal for a DE on its surface, SOOs present challenges for a DE. DEs are by nature adaptive, with the potential to influence adaptations of the program objectives, which would violate the terms of the SOO.

In contrast, SOW procurements outline processes and

approaches an offeror should use in crafting their project. This approach permits a Funder to define high-level project processes and task requirements, while not being bound by performance objectives that may become obsolete shortly after project start-up. A SOW for a DE should not be overly prescriptive (especially regarding evaluation methods, as these should be determined after co-creation of the evaluation questions), but should outline the overall structure of a DE while still allowing the DE to respond to the emergent needs of the project. (For a good discussion of what co-creation looks like, see page 14 of [USAID's Co-Creation Discussion Note](#).)

What Goes Into a Developmental Evaluation Scope of Work?

Both the process for developing an SOW for a DE and the structure of the SOW itself will differ significantly from SOWs for other evaluation approaches. Without a thorough discussion of the DE's focus and implications, the Funder and other stakeholders may come away with very different ideas of what the DE will look like. For this reason, we recommend a participatory and iterative process of SOW development. However, for the process to be iterative, Funders should understand that the evaluation design articulated in the SOW is preliminary and should be refined with stakeholder input at the DE launch, during the Acculturation Workshop, and throughout the DE as evaluation questions evolve (see [Module 4](#) in the Administrator's and Evaluator's Guide for more information on Acculturation Workshops).

Writing a SOW for a DE with emergent outcomes can be a challenge, even for experienced funders. Funders should understand that DE SOWs are typically much broader than SOWs for other evaluation approaches. The broadness allows for flexibility and adaptations, which a DE requires, and for the SOW to be revisited and refined as needed throughout the course of the DE.

“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

How Should a Developmental Evaluation Be Structured?

After having had a few collaborative discussions with key stakeholders, Funders should have a good idea of the basic scope of the DE. Now it is time to write an SOW. At a minimum, we suggest including the following sections, along with any information relevant to each section. Please note that we recommend a DE last for a minimum of 12 months for several key reasons: 1) the Evaluator needs time to gain trust and build buy-in, 2) the program team needs time to consider the Evaluator's recommendations and make changes, and

3) DE is resource intensive, so organizations typically prefer a longer period of return for their investment. As you discuss the SOW consider the tradeoffs of having an internal versus external Evaluator, conducting the DE remotely or part-time. Please take time to carefully review the tradeoffs between internal versus external DEs, challenges and solutions as well as advantages of remote DEs, and lessons on part-time DE over the next few pages before reviewing the template of a preliminary SOW.

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.
Strategic Position	Potential conflict of interest in recommending significant changes to the program of which they are staff.	May feel 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 oversees 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.

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

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 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technical—access to systems • Behavioral—integration with teams and people • Orienting others to DE 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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; inperson can be better if possible 	Embedding an evaluator remotely reduces costs considerably compared to in-person.
Trust <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building trust remotely in the evaluator and the DE • Maintain awareness of the DE in a remote environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building strong communications • Balancing formality with relationship building • Maintaining participant focus remotely 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delays in data collection with remote coordination • Maintaining same access to information • Ensuring data quality remotely 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delays in finalizing deliverables with stakeholder input • Finding the most useful form of deliverable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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.

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

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.

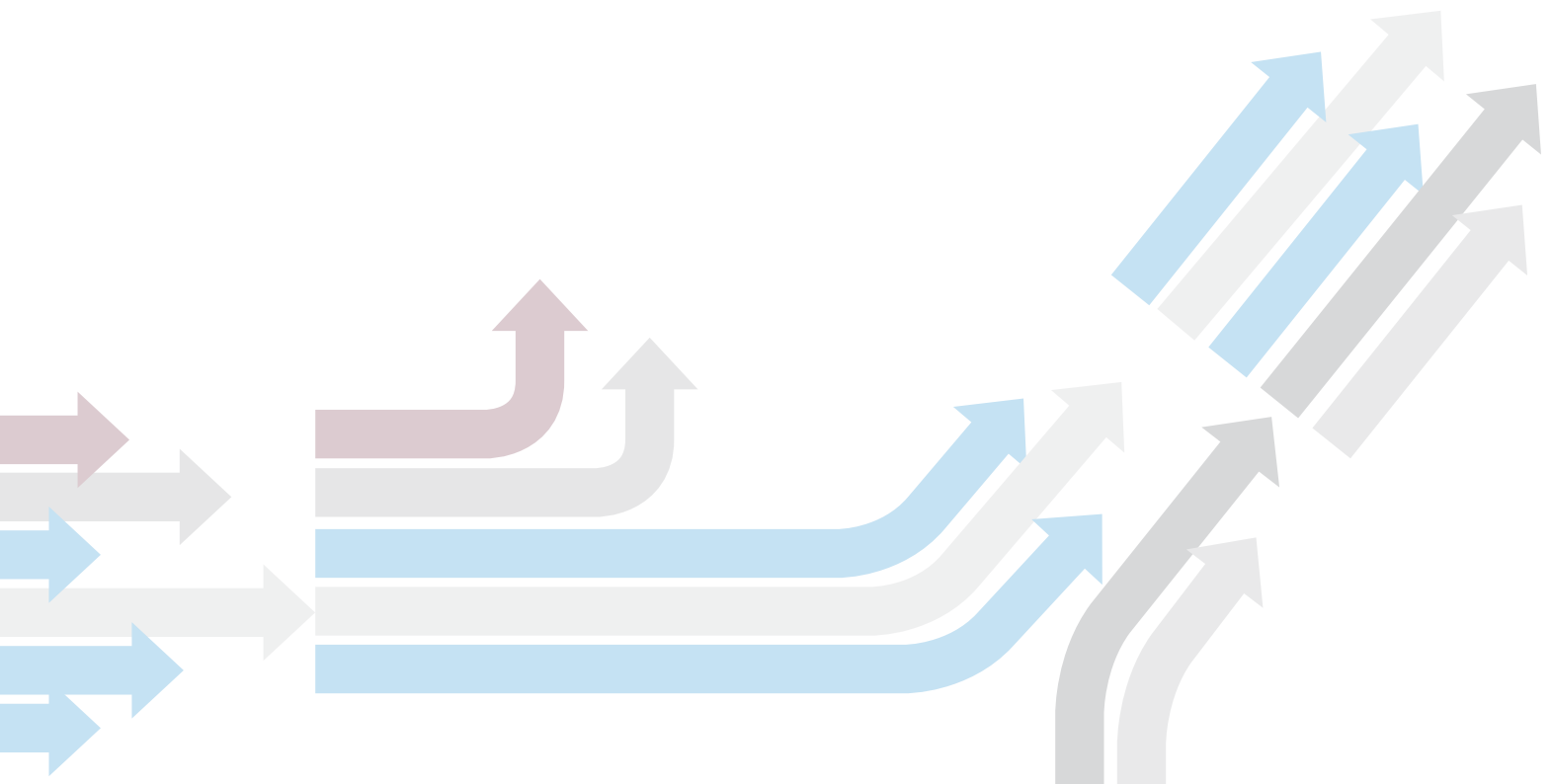
Scope of Work: When revising the DE SOW to account for the reduced Evaluator LOE, include details on any changes to the focus of the DE and associated processes that account for what is realistic for the Evaluator to accomplish at a reduced LOE.

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.



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?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 SOW. 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 [Module 7](#)).

Evaluation SOWs in the USAID Context

Funders writing a Developmental Evaluation SOW for the USAID should ensure that it meets the requirements laid out by the “[USAID Evaluation Statement of Work Requirements](#),” including the requirement for a written evaluation design, which should be created in collaboration among the Developmental Evaluator, the funder, and the team under evaluation.

“To keep the scope manageable during a 12-month period of performance, this DE will focus on only one of the new centers, the [Center X]. Within the [Center X], the DE will focus on a particular area that bridges between the current [Office Portfolios]. Such areas of focus could include market systems, food safety, or scaling the adoption of technologies and practices. These areas have many owners that need to coordinate knowledge flows effectively in order to deliver consistent and concise knowledge and learning to those in the field.”

— Illustrative Excerpt from DE SOW

To administer a successful DE, Funders should be prepared to address the challenges that arise from its implementation. Here are three areas to consider while drafting a SOW:

- 1 **Parameters:** *What changes can or cannot be made to the program during the period of performance?* Findings from a DE are often directed at developing processes to enhance innovation, and the SOW should acknowledge the limits of what is possible within the constraints at hand. For example, will the DE work be limited to a specific subject or team? See the draft language below from one of our DE SOWs for an example of scope limitation:
- 2 **Resource Allocation:** *How will resources — time, finances, etc. — be deployed?* DE is a resource-intensive approach, requiring investments in a full-time Evaluator, possible relocation expenses, management, and short-term technical assistance for the Evaluator. [Module 5](#) contains a list of general budget line items and related descriptions that we have used in our DEs. We consider these items to be essential for DEs. However, recall that because DEs are emergent, some unexpected (and therefore unbudgeted) needs may arise or the amounts of certain resources (e.g., management support) may ebb and flow over time. Therefore, it is important to ensure that budgets not only cover the basics, but also have the flexibility to shift as needed.
- 3 **Sustainability:** *How will the DE be closed out? What is the off-ramp strategy?* DE is different than other evaluation approaches that provide recommendations only at the end of the evaluation. In this approach, “the end” is not inherently defined by the production of a final report. Instead, data collection, findings, and recommendations are continuously delivered, and close-out deliverables can come in a variety of forms. For example, in one of our DEs, we commissioned a final “learning summit” with key stakeholders in the country of performance. The learning summit occurred in addition to a final summative DE report and helped stakeholders prioritize the steps they would take after the Evaluator was de-integrated from their team. Funder staff should be prepared to have a conversation about what a successful DE close will

look like, though this does not necessarily have to be described in the SOW. For more information on DE close-outs, please see [Module 10: Closeout and Handoff](#).

Questions about data management are also important to include in a DE SOW but likely will not be finalized until the Evaluator is onboarded and the DE begins. Here are two areas related to data management that Funders may want to start thinking about:

- 1 **Data Collection:** *How will data gathered during the DE be managed?* The Developmental Evaluator will constantly be collecting and generating massive amounts of data, which can include primary quantitative data collection at intervention sites, qualitative analysis of meeting notes, and written communications between DE stakeholders. The Funder should indicate in the preliminary SOW which data the DE should prioritize. The Evaluator will co-define the evaluation questions with program stakeholders, including the Funder, at the start of the DE and refine them after the Acculturation Workshop (see [Module 4](#) in the Administrator’s and Evaluator’s Guide).
- 2 **Data Sharing:** *Is there a plan for how to share sensitive information?* The Funder should plan to discuss how the Evaluator will navigate certain sensitive items — such as personal and budgetary data. Evaluators have intimate, honest interactions with stakeholders, which often make them privy to certain information that might not be appropriate to share with other stakeholders.

Another important lesson we learned is to establish expectations for the role of the DE Funder at the outset. Questions to consider, discuss with other stakeholders, and document in a standard operating procedure may include:

- Are you solely a funder? Or are you a direct stakeholder and recipient of the findings?
- Who gets a say in decision-making? At what level do you need to be consulted or involved? For example, if the DE recommends a change in staff responsibilities, do you need to provide input? Do all stakeholders’ perspectives get equal consideration, or are some weighted more heavily than others?

- Who gets the findings first? If you are not the subject of the DE, should the Developmental Evaluator discuss the findings with the DE subjects first? Who must be consulted if sensitive findings emerge? For example, if the Evaluator delivers evidence suggesting a realignment in partners in a consortium, should you be notified first?
- What happens if conflict (such as issues with team dynamics resulting from negative findings) arises and cannot be resolved?

Based on these discussions, Funders should establish protocols for involvement in the DE. Such protocols should include when and how the Evaluator or

stakeholders can take steps to escalate issues appropriately and effectively.

Once the SOW has been drafted, circulate it among the other key stakeholders (including potential implementing partners, if possible) involved in initial scoping discussions for feedback. The initial SOW for a DE may be very short — in some cases, only one to two pages. It likely will be sufficient, however, particularly if it covers the key sections outlined above. Allow room for the SOW to change. A brief, flexible SOW that can be rewritten with relative ease will be useful as a DE takes shape and the SOW changes over time based on what emerges from the DE and as the context changes.

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 FUNDER	DE STAKEHOLDERS
Participate in Preliminary Meetings	R A	C I
Draft Preliminary SOW	R A	C I
Review Preliminary SOW	I	R A
Revise SOW Based on Feedback	R A	C

MODULE 5

Budgeting for Developmental Evaluations



Part of developing the SOW will be determining the 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 budgeting process should start concurrently with SOW development. Whereas our DEs have been relatively well resourced, we often hear of evaluators trying to do a DE with tight budgets. Given that the latter scenario is much more common, we offer several areas that budgets should ideally cover to maximize the benefit of the DE.

What Goes Into a Developmental Evaluation Budget?

LOE FOR THE DEVELOPMENTAL EVALUATOR(S)

Whether the DE team is comprised of a full-time Developmental Evaluator or an internal staff member who conducts the DE on a part-time basis, it is essential to set aside budget for the activity. A full-time Evaluator can be costly but greatly facilitates the “embeddedness” that is central to the DE methodology. Additionally, the role of the Evaluator may evolve with time, and role-based or deliverable-based budgets may be even more challenging to write. Budgets should include LOE and other necessary expenses to:

- Plan and conduct any in-person DE kickoff exercises, including workshops (consider the cost of the venue as well as any materials, translation, or attendee transportation costs that may be required);
- Collect data;
- Analyze data;
- Prepare deliverables (including copyediting, graphic design, and, if necessary, translation); and
- Support the team in implementing recommendations as necessary and appropriate (this will likely only involve LOE but may include workshop venues and materials for in-person events, such as strategic learning debriefs, pause and reflect sessions, learning summits, action planning workshops, or theory

of change revision workshops to work with DE stakeholders hand-in-hand to understand evaluation findings and sort and prioritize adaptations).

LOE FOR MANAGEMENT SUPPORT

It is important to budget for time for the DE Administrator or supporting staff (or the Funder’s staff, if procuring the DE directly rather than using an existing buy-in mechanism) to recruit and onboard the Evaluator. This process can require significant LOE, especially because identifying a suitable Evaluator may take some time and also depend on the emergent scope of the DE itself. 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 during the DE implementation. 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, “Having a DE Administrator as Additional Technical Support” on the next page, as well as the accompanying “Administrator’s and Evaluator’s Guide,” for more details.

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. 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-grook,” 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

Workshop Expenses

DEs are supposed to be highly engaging and participatory, so it is likely that the DE will include one or more 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, and sticky notes. 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 in the EEs and Administrators Guide) even if it needs to be held virtually using interactive tools like Miro. 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.

To close this section, it is worth noting that a common challenge for DEs is addressing the processes and procedures for revising a budget or SOW once the contract is finalized. Given the uncertainties of DE, the Funder should, to the extent possible, attempt to provide expedited processes and procedures for reallocating funds, adding funds for emergent opportunities and needs, revising timelines, changing deliverables, and other items specified in the contract. Waivers of certain standard bureaucratic processes may be needed.

In other words, the Funder should make the case that adaptive and flexible contracting can be a key to DE success and that the lack of such flexibility is often a major barrier. For example, we have had success with using a Time and Materials contracting model in which the “labor” category encompasses several personnel and their LOE is flexible within that category as needs change, without requiring modification of the contract.

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 backstop 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.	

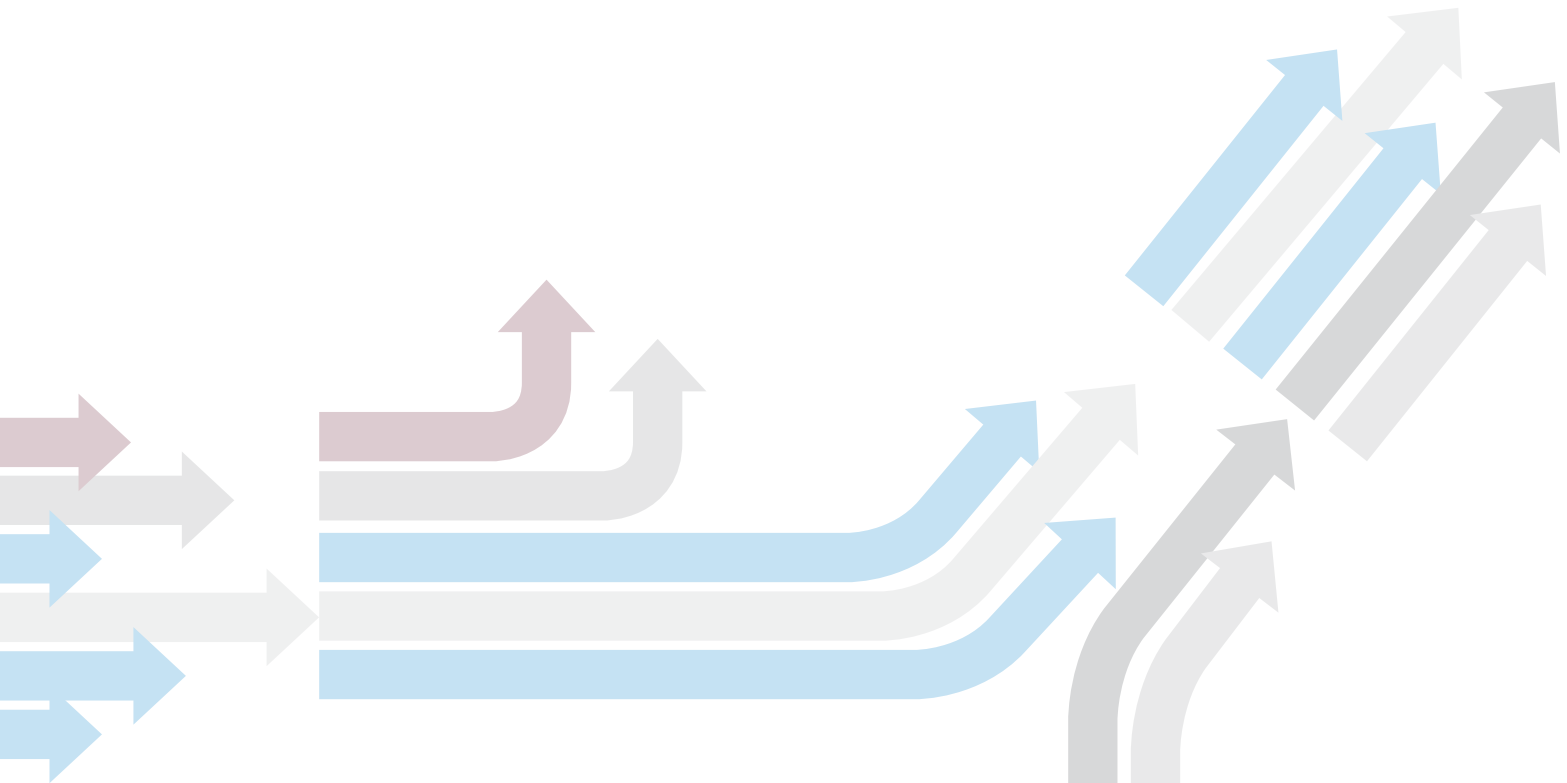
USAID staff developing a DE SOW should consult the [Independent Government Cost Estimate Guide and Template](#) to ensure their budget meets US government requirements.

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 FUNDER	DE STAKEHOLDERS
Participate in Budget Analysis Meetings	R A	C I
Develop DE Budget	R A	I



MODULE 6

Procurement Process



With the SOW finalized (for now), the team can draft the other parts of a procurement document. Due to a DE's need for flexibility and room to adapt, these other elements may be more broadly written than you are used to. This Module contains tips for a Funder to consider when procuring an external DE, so some sections may not be relevant for organizations planning internal or noncompetitively bid DEs. For more information on the tradeoffs between internal versus external DEs please see the related breakout box in [Module 4](#). Furthermore, these tips are based on the USAID procurement process and, consequently, can be adapted or disregarded as deemed helpful to your organization.

What Goes Into a Request for a Developmental Evaluation Proposal?

Generally, the request for proposals should be broadly similar to procurement documents produced for other evaluation approaches, with several key differences in the sections defining:

- SOW of the DE (see [Module 4](#)),
- Required deliverables,
- Instructions to proposal writers, and
- Evaluation factors provided to the technical evaluation committee for proposal evaluation.

CONTRACTS, DELIVERABLES, AND DUE DATES

Given the flexible, evolving, and utilization-focused nature of DE, it is difficult to include a prescriptive requirement for particular products, with the exception of a written (and periodically updated) evaluation design. For example, a good DE should prioritize tailored, need-based, on-demand deliverables that facilitate adaptation by the implementing team rather than accountability-focused quarterly reports.

However, some accountability will undoubtedly be required by the Funder. Consequently, we advise keeping contractually obligated standard reports to a minimum and recommend that the DE Administrators (a person who provides managerial and/or technical support to the Developmental Evaluator) be responsible for synthesizing any accountability-related documentation

USAID Risk Appetite Statement

“We have a HIGH risk appetite with regard to: Embracing flexible, iterative design and implementation. We will continually learn and adapt our programming in contexts that are changing rapidly, or in which evidence is incomplete to improve the likelihood of achieving intended results, while recognizing that such approaches can sometimes require additional resources, or add another layer of complexity in designing, implementing, and monitoring programs.”

— USAID Risk Appetite Statement

USAID Principles of Partnering: Connecting Design, Procurement, and Implementation

“USAID will integrate design, procurement, and implementation by structuring procurement processes to link design to implementation; focusing on adaptive management practices while reducing overly prescriptive USAID rules and policies; and making smarter use of data and evidence.”

— USAID Acquisition and Assistance Strategy

from the Evaluator's (the primary person conducting the DE) work, to avoid having the Evaluator's attention diverted from more learning-oriented efforts. Similarly, adaptations should be reported and explained in regular reports, but prior-approval requirements for changes in the work plan are inconsistent with real-time adaptability.

Procurement Instruments

Choosing and authoring an appropriate procurement instrument will be crucial to ensuring the necessary flexibility to allow for adaptation during implementation. This applies both to the activity being evaluated and the instrument for procuring the DE itself. For USAID staff, USAID's Acquisition and Assistance Strategy encourages the use of adaptive procurement. Work closely with the Office of Acquisition and Assistance to identify the right instrument for your needs, and remember that there is no one-size-fits-all instrument.

Here are some important principles to keep in mind:

- For **deliverables-based instruments**, such as milestone awards: It is fine to stipulate a few concrete deliverables with predefined deadlines (e.g., Acculturation Workshop, quarterly reports, annual strategic learning reviews). Just be sure to leave plenty of room for other on-demand deliverables due on an “as needed or requested by the funder/implementer” basis. Try not to be overly prescriptive in what these might be in order to give the Developmental Evaluator the room to respond to the programmatic needs without triggering a modification to the award. If using this type of instrument, keep a careful eye on the approval process for deliverables. In these cases, implementers and evaluators are usually reimbursed for costs or forward-funded for the next phase of work, contingent on “successful” completion of defined deliverables. If approval of those deliverables is delayed for any reason, stopping work on the DE, even temporarily, to wait for approval could cause severely disruptive delays.
- For **non-deliverables-based instruments**, such as time-and-materials contracts: With this type of instrument, evaluators or implementers are reimbursed for incurred costs on a recurring basis, allowing for the necessary flexibility as the DE evolves over time. The DEPA consortium has had success implementing DEs under this type of instrument, but that does not mean other options are less viable.

Innovative Solicitation Processes from USAID for Collaborating, Learning, and Adapting (CLA)

Just as a DE can be tailored to the needs of the program, Funders can also consider a tailor-made procurement process. Below are some examples of innovative solicitation processes being used in other parts of the USAID. Processes such as these can help USAID source or co-create activity designs with external stakeholders to reframe development challenges, reach new audiences, and spur new ways of solving problems.

- Conduct an iterative bid and review process: Another technique that fosters collaboration, learning, and adaptive management is that of incorporating a multi-step process into proposal preparation and review. This allows USAID to request and review early (but less well-developed) ideas about its proposed theory of change and resulting activity design, provide feedback, and then ask bidders to iterate a fuller proposal. This iterative design approach presents USAID's problem analysis and initial thinking, without necessarily locking in a set of development interventions from the start. This provides a more flexible, collaborative design process.
- Ask for in-person presentations: Similarly, the procurement process can incorporate an additional step whereby bidders are asked to conduct an in-person presentation as part of their final proposal. This can be particularly helpful for activities that will require a high degree of adaptability in the leadership position(s) for the award, which is more challenging to assess on paper only. This is especially useful if the proposed Chief of Party (and/or other key personnel) can participate in the presentation.

Table 4 includes four milestone deliverables we have used in our DEs: regular progress reports (generally either monthly or quarterly, depending on the reporting arrangement determined by key stakeholders), a final DE report, an Acculturation Workshop, and a Living Work Plan. Below Table 4 is draft language for each deliverable. These are geared toward USAID procurements but can be adapted for other organizations' procurement documents.

DE reporting is significantly different from performance reporting in other evaluation approaches. Effective DE reporting should not be standardized and prescribed from the outset. DE processes depend on having the flexibility to change how data is collected, used, and ultimately shared. Remember, DE aims to share

findings in the way that best facilitates adaptations by implementers. More detailed contract and reporting language may have the effect of trapping the DE and preventing needed adaptations. Thus, the specifications of both final reports and reports along the way should follow the principle of minimum specifications in the contract, to allow stakeholders to co-design deliverables according to their emerging needs. Though not included as a specific deliverable in the table below, Funders play an important role in monitoring DEs. For more information on monitoring, please see "How Can Funders Monitor Developmental Evaluations?" under [Module 7](#) in this guide. Please see [Module 9](#) for additional guidance on assessing a DE's contribution to change.

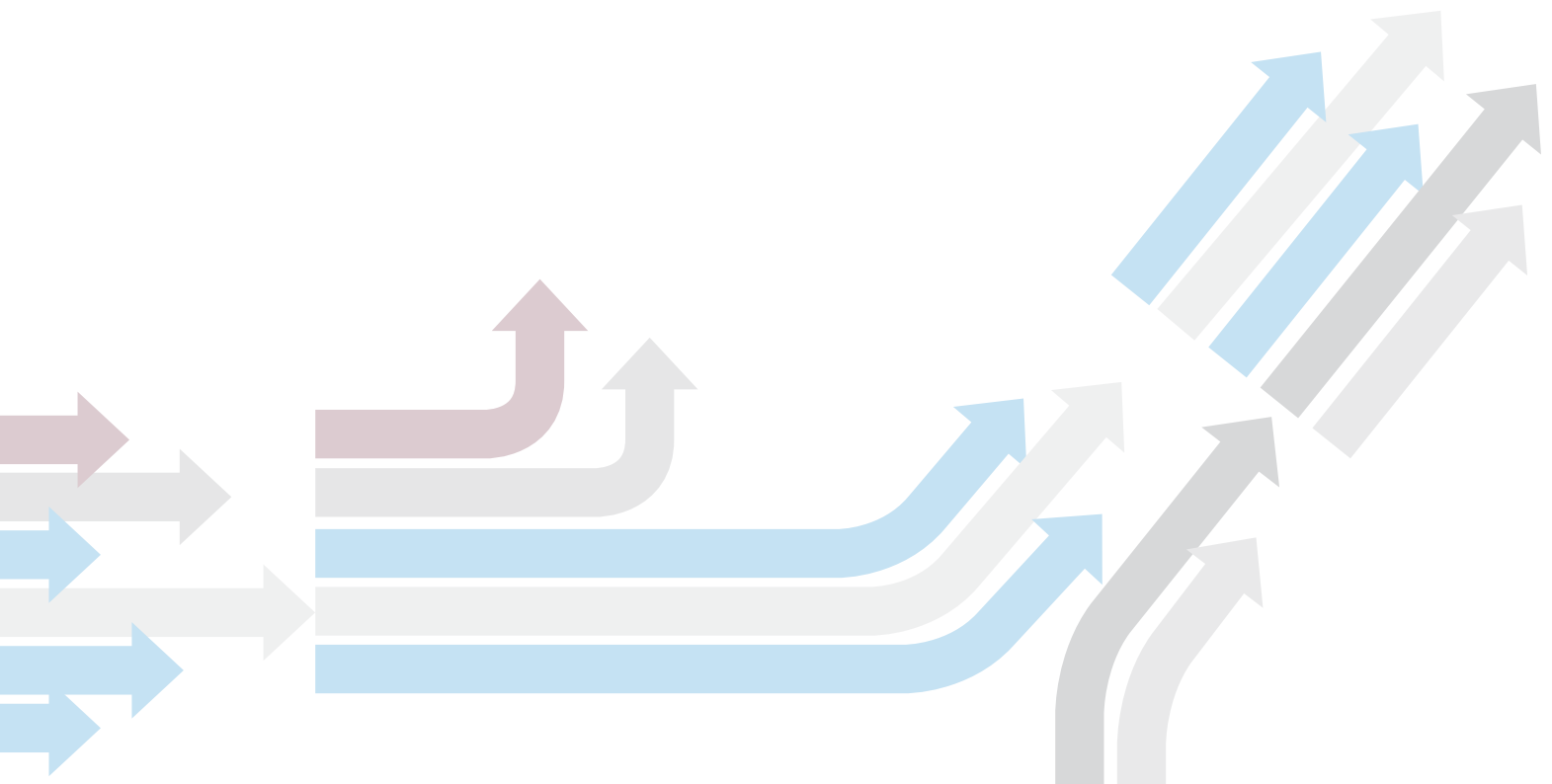


TABLE 4: ILLUSTRATIVE DE DELIVERABLE TABLE

Deliverable	Due Date
Written Evaluation Design	First deliverable after award. Developed in collaboration with the Funder and the DE implementing partner. May be included in the Living Work Plan.
Progress Reports	Monthly or quarterly, beginning three months after DE initiation.
Final Report	Thirty calendar days prior to contract completion date.
Acculturation Workshop	No later than 90 days after DE initiation.
Living Work Plan	Thirty days after the Acculturation Workshop, to be updated at mutually agreed-upon intervals. This may include the Written Evaluation Design.
Other Deliverables as Required	DE team and program team will co-design additional deliverables over the course of the DE in response to emergent needs.

Progress Report

The Developmental Evaluator or **[ideally]** DE Administrator will provide the Funder a **[monthly or quarterly]** report once every **[month or three months]**, beginning **[one or three]** months following the issuance of this DE contract. This report will summarize highlights, achievements, and major activities, as well as problems encountered and proposed adaptations or remedial actions. The reports will not make summative judgments or render accountability judgments. Their content should be emergent and flexible based on utilization-focused criteria for what will be useful to key stakeholders at the time of their submission. The Funder will develop a reporting schedule with the DE Administrator during the start-up phase of the project, to provide final guidance.

Final Report

The DE Administrator **[preferred]** or Developmental Evaluator will provide the funder a final report within 30 calendar days prior to completion of this contract. Depending on the timing of this report, the final report could take the place of the quarterly report, but this will be determined by the Funder once a reporting schedule is created with the DE Administrator or Developmental Evaluator during the start-up phase. This report will summarize the program context; DE highlights, achievements, and major adaptations; funds obligated and disbursed; summary of DE implementation; and problems encountered and how they were rectified. The final report will not make summative judgments or render accountability judgments. Its final content should be emergent and flexible based on utilization-focused criteria for what will be useful to key stakeholders at the time of its submission.

Acculturation Workshop

The Developmental Evaluator will organize and facilitate an Acculturation Workshop within 90 calendar days of the

contract start date. An Acculturation Workshop is a meeting of DE stakeholders that seeks to:

1. Educate participants about what a DE is and its potential benefits for the program;
2. Educate participants on how to integrate the Developmental Evaluator successfully into their teams;
3. Refine evaluation questions that the DE will explore and begin developing a Living Work Plan; and
4. Establish common expectations, roles, responsibilities, and communication protocols among stakeholders to ensure everyone is on the same page.

The Acculturation Workshop is intended to help the Developmental Evaluator and project stakeholders (e.g., Funders, management, project staff) to collaboratively conceptualize and develop the DE design and approach (e.g., learning framework, methodology, Living Work Plan, and reporting).

Living Work Plan

The Developmental Evaluator will submit a co-created draft Living Work Plan to the Funder within 30 days of the completion of the Acculturation Workshop. The Living Work Plan for the DE will include the various evaluation questions and objectives in an evaluation design matrix detailing proposed methods and data sources, as well as an overall DE timeline to establish when and how the Evaluator will approach each (e.g., sequentially versus simultaneously). To the extent possible, the work plan should include the tasks and subtasks needed to respond to each evaluation question and objective, as well as major events or decision points that will influence the DE or vice versa. This work plan will evolve during implementation, depending on the needs of the program. Since timely adaptability is critical to DE success, changes in the work plan should be permitted without prior approval by the Funder **[list any notable exceptions here]**, though any changes must be included in regular progress reports.

PROPOSAL INSTRUCTIONS

Funders should make clear to proposal writers how their proposals will be evaluated. This can be a difficult task, given that funding notices are typically (and often necessarily) designed prior to the hiring of an Developmental Evaluator and that the success of a DE to a large extent depends on the Evaluator's technical skills and ability to forge relationships with a program team. Given the uncertain nature of implementing a DE, we suggest including this example language indicating that the proposed technical approach must:

1. Demonstrate an understanding of the institutional and programmatic context;
2. Display a clear knowledge of what a DE is and how it is implemented in practice (for example, that an Developmental Evaluator should be embedded, that a DE is not a performance evaluation, and that DEs span a much longer time frame than other evaluations);
3. Describe a reasonable approach to hiring and supporting an Developmental Evaluator (including through organizational memberships, professional networks, or an experienced monitoring and evaluation unit within their organization); and
4. Reflect an appreciation for the likely problems to be encountered during a DE.

Funders may also consider requesting information about these other important factors related to DE: 1) past performance; 2) organizational capacity in adaptive management and monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL); 3) how the Developmental Evaluator will be sourced, vetted, and hired; and 4) experience successfully engaging with co-design processes.

- **Past Performance:** Instruct proposal writers to include a description of their organization's experience with DE or other adaptive management approaches, including as evaluators or evaluands. The descriptions should include specific examples of the evidence that triggered adaptation, the decision-making process and relevant decision-makers for arriving at the appropriate adaptation, the implementation of that adaptation, and outcomes (if known), as well as challenges and opportunities identified at any of the previous steps. Funders may consider requesting the evaluation report of previous efforts as an annex.

- **Organizational Capacity in Adaptive Management and MEL:** Performing a successful DE requires Evaluators with a wide range of skills in monitoring, evaluation, and adaptive management — a big evaluation toolbox! Due to the adaptive and flexible nature of DE, Funders should not request a log frame, which can be overly prescriptive, from offerors. Log frames are more suited to other evaluation approaches with objectives determined from the outset. One option to pursue instead of requesting log frames involves requesting that offerors submit a brief document describing their organization's approach to adaptive management or CLA (see [this link](#) for more details about what should be included in a CLA plan).

Requesting Adaptive Management Plans

The term “adaptive management” is becoming common in solicitations and proposals. How offerors interpret it, however, varies widely. Be sure to articulate what you mean by “adaptive management” and be clear about the level of specificity you are seeking from offerors in explaining their understanding and operating approach.

One way to encourage offerors to be specific about their approach to adaptive management involves asking them to describe their experience managing a past program adaptively, using specific examples, with a specific emphasis on the processes that triggered adaptations. This should include:

- generating theories of change,
- adapting approaches based upon monitoring and evaluation data, and
- adapting approaches to improve outcomes.

Plans should also outline how decisions will be documented. Be sure to ask about the offeror's capability to adapt and adjust not only to significant changes in the program context, but also to more standard shifts as well. What specific processes will they build into their effort to ensure that adaptations are based on evidence? Reviewers should focus on proposals' outlined speed of sensing and interpreting, and integrity of the overall approach to adaptation.

The plan should include real-world examples of how the offeror has implemented this approach in past programs. If there are specific methodologies (e.g., stakeholder analysis, pause and reflect sessions, or outcome harvesting) mentioned in the SOW, Funders can request that offerors demonstrate their organization's experience with them.

- **Sourcing, Vetting, and Hiring an Developmental Evaluator:** The success of a DE depends first and foremost on the capabilities of the Evaluator. Remember that the Developmental Evaluator's soft skills are as important as their technical expertise. Finding the right person for the job can be a challenge. Accordingly, offerors should submit a section describing their approach to identifying and hiring the Evaluator. Funders may also want to request a staffing plan, including a description of the evaluation capacities of the DE Administrator who will be backstopping the Developmental Evaluator. As the person responsible for hiring and providing technical support to the Evaluator, the role of the DE Administrator may require evaluation capacity as well.
- **Experience with Co-design or CLA Processes:** The success of a DE depends on the ability of a DE team to build rapport and effectively engage a program team. Organizations with limited background in co-design or CLA processes may struggle to hold an Acculturation Workshop or work collaboratively to

USAID: CLA in Proposal Instructions

By asking that CLA be represented in the technical approach and management approach of proposals, Funders help applicants or offerors think in more specific terms about how these practices will translate.

Ask for specifics on adaptive management capacity. To ensure they translate into action, Funders should also require bidders to include specifics on their approach to CLA management in their proposals as part of the technical quotation instructions. For example:

- Reiterate the interpersonal, leadership, and adaptive management skill requirements for key personnel;
- Refer to collaboration, learning, and adaptive management when describing management capacity;
- Ask for descriptions of past experience related to collaborative, learning-focused, and adaptive management of activities; and
- Request evidence of how the applicant or offeror values and cultivates learning, such as through training, incentives, etc.

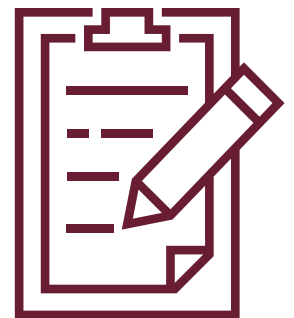
develop a set of evaluation questions. It may be useful to request a description of the offeror's organizational experience in this area.

How Should Technical Committees Evaluate Developmental Evaluation Proposals?

Funders should outline the key factors the technical evaluation committee will use to evaluate offerors' proposals. Here are some key questions for evaluation committee members to ask when evaluating technical proposals. This can help clarify whether a given DE proposal is a strong submission.

- **Does the DE proposal include a theory of change that is too linear or prescriptive?** DEs are not expected to adhere to a linear path, and their theories of change; MEL plans; and CLA plans should reflect their adaptive nature.

- **Does the proposal include descriptions of a DE's key components?** A strong proposal should mention a Developmental Evaluator and acknowledge that DEs are methodologically agnostic. It will also discuss an iterative and participatory process for developing utilization-focused DE evaluation questions. Weak proposals will, for example, prescribe a specific methodology or not mention an embedded Evaluator.



- **Are the objectives outlined in the proposal too rigid?** Strictly defining approaches and objectives of the DE, in advance of the evaluation, goes against the adaptive nature of DE. Good proposals will acknowledge the flexibility required to perform a good DE.
- **Is the proposed scope broad enough to work but flexible enough to be adaptive?** This is a judgment call but should still influence the technical committee's reading.
- **Has the offeror proposed a convincing approach to sourcing and onboarding a qualified Developmental Evaluator?** Good approaches will describe a broad search over several months through the offeror's MEL technical unit, personal networks, and job boards, emphasizing relational as well as technical skills.
- **Has the offeror described a thoughtful approach to adaptation?** Is this approach realistic, logical, and actionable? Quality proposals will acknowledge a need to tailor their strategy for different stakeholder groups and types of adaptation (e.g., operational versus strategic changes).
- **Does the offeror have the data collection, analysis, and facilitation skills necessary to do DE well?** Do they have experience with project, process, and activity design? Have they performed a successful DE before?

Please see the illustrative language in box 3 describing DE factors and review criteria from the USAID perspective.

Reviewing Adaptive Management Plans

Included in this box are examples of green and red flags to assist your evaluation committee while it is reviewing adaptive management approaches in DE proposals.

Red Flags

The proposal:

- Lacks concrete plans to implement learning and adapting activities or describes a one-size-fits-all approach to learning and adapting;
- Does not describe specific examples from the offeror's past programs; and
- Contains a "word salad" of popular buzzwords rather than a coherent description of the process or approach for bringing evidence to decision-makers, facilitating adaptations, and documenting those changes.



Green Flags

The proposal:

- Describes specific learning and adapting activities — such as learning summits, after action reviews, and pause and reflect sessions — to identify successful and unsuccessful practices, address changing context elements, and act upon lessons learned;
- Discusses how these activities will be tailored or responsive to the user's needs;
- Includes descriptions of how these learning activities feed into program deliverables such as work plans or regular reports;
- Provides examples of how these activities were successfully implemented in past programs and how they led to program adaptations; and
- Where possible, identifies draft learning questions to guide information gathering to better understand or challenge key programmatic assumptions.



BOX 3: EXAMPLE USAID LANGUAGE FOR EVALUATION FACTORS AND APPLICATION REVIEW CRITERIA

- Technical Understanding and Approaches:** Applicants or offerors will be evaluated on the basis of the extent to which the proposal reflects a thorough understanding of the overall activity SOW and its purpose. **[Name of the Mission]** is looking for approaches that focus on bringing evidence of effective interventions to scale, values innovation and creativity, and also supports adaptation based upon continuous learning about successes and failures in implementation.
- Management Approach and Institutional Capacity:** Extent to which the proposal presents a vision and strategy for program management that allows adaptation of program approaches based on program learning, experience, and inputs from both internal and external researchers and evaluators.
- Adaptive Experience:** Extent to which the proposal describes past experience generating theory of change-based MEL plans; adapting approaches based upon MEL findings; and course correcting in order to improve outcomes.
- Staffing Capacity:** Extent to which the proposal reflects that skills related to strategic collaboration, continuous learning, and adaptive management will be prioritized in the recruitment of staff and across the team, and that the staffing plan will itself be designed for adaptation and adjustment as needed over the course of implementation.

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 FUNDER	DE STAKEHOLDERS	OFFEROR (DE ADMINISTRATOR)
Draft Procurement Document	R A	C I	
Provide Instructions to Technical Evaluation Committee	R A	I	
Prepare Proposal	I		R A
Award DE	R A	C	I
Recruit Developmental Evaluator	I	C	R A

MODULE 7

Managing and Monitoring a Developmental Evaluation



Scoping and procuring the DE will likely be the most significant periods of engagement for Funders (person or organization funding the DE). However, due to the length, complexity, and potential outcomes of a DE, the Funder still has an important role to play beyond the start-up phase. In keeping with principles enabling nimble adaptations, decision-making authority to enact recommended adaptations should be delegated to the lowest level possible. This may mean that the Funder delegates decisions about adaptations to the implementing partner, except in cases such as those requiring contract amendments or significant changes to the structure of the work. The types of decisions delegated should be determined based on the needs of the program and documented clearly for all parties. This Module provides guidance on how to manage and monitor a DE to ensure its smooth implementation and maintain awareness of the DE's progress.

What Oversight Role Should Funders Play?



The Funder plays an important part in DE implementation. As noted in the previous Module, the beginning of the DE will entail significant involvement from the Funder regarding the generation of buy-in and interest. Once the DE is underway, the Developmental Evaluator or DE Administrator may escalate issues that arise to the Funder and ask for help in resolving them.




Accordingly, Funders should ensure that if they are providing oversight, they understand DE principles and are committed to a DE approach with an embedded, full-time Evaluator. To facilitate adaptive management stemming from the DE recommendations, Funders should strive to devolve decision-making authority as much as possible, or as is feasible, to the staff and teams that are the DE evaluands.

Another important role for Funders is signaling ongoing interest and buy-in for the DE to the team, process, or program being evaluated by serving as a DE champion. This will provide legitimacy to the DE, as well as moral and institutional support for the Evaluator and the Administrator. Buy-in — or ongoing time, resource,

and action commitments from key stakeholders (e.g., program managers, monitoring and evaluation staff, technical leads, and relevant organizational leaders) — is critical to the success of a DE. Here is a checklist of practical tips for Funders to establish and maintain buy-in:

- Be thoughtful about who should introduce the Developmental Evaluator to the stakeholders.** The right person can ensure that 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 the Evaluator to meet with the leaders first and then attend a team meeting to be introduced to everyone else.
- Grant the Developmental Evaluator physical access to teams.** If the organization's office space has restricted access, be sure to facilitate access and desk space for the Evaluator, ideally co-located with the team they will be serving.

-  **Help integrate the Evaluator into the teams they will support.** Help to convey expectations for embedding the Evaluator up front with the program team. Make sure there is agreement between the Evaluator and key stakeholders at the beginning of the DE about communications — for example, regarding inclusion of the Evaluator on emails and phone calls, the addition of the Evaluator to knowledge management systems, and the expectation that the Evaluator will attend regular team meetings. The Funder may need to be involved in enforcing these agreements in the beginning of the DE.
-  **Ensure all relevant stakeholders are present and actively engaged in the Acculturation Workshop.** The success of Acculturation Workshops depends on the right people being in the room and actively participating. The Funder’s role should involve:

 - Helping to make sure all key stakeholders are scheduled to participate;
 - Publicly acknowledging the value of DE to encourage buy-in and incentivize the Acculturation Workshop participants;
 - Helping the Developmental Evaluator anticipate any issues or challenges, including those around team dynamics or relationships; and
 - Brainstorming effective ways to engage stakeholders during the workshop.
-  **Establish regular meetings with the DE team to stay updated on DE progress, data collection, emerging outcomes, and potential adaptations.** Depending on the needs of the DE and the protocols you established during scoping, these meetings may or may not include stakeholders from the team(s) being evaluated. The protocols will also determine whether these meetings will be informational or if you will be expected to make decisions on specific action points.
-  **Create open communication and information flows. Try not to be a gatekeeper.** Part of the mutual agenda of all DE stakeholders is to build the capacity of the whole team and get everyone bought in, which can be difficult if there is separation between the Evaluator and the stakeholder team. While the Funder’s presence can open doors (e.g., through facilitating meetings with high-level stakeholders), if the Funder is too involved, it can limit a DE’s effectiveness. For example, a Funder’s attendance at all meetings between a DE team and program team may limit the free exchange of ideas, especially if the program team is worried about looking good in front of the Funder.
-  **Revisit the SOW periodically.** Remember, the SOW for a DE should be a living document. Be open to revisiting these resources during implementation. To help prioritize the needs of the evaluation, SOWs can be updated with guidelines on how or when the Evaluator should and should not fulfill requests from stakeholders to take on additional evaluative efforts. Updates to the DE SOW should be recorded in a pivot log similar to the example below.

“One DEPA-MERL Developmental Evaluator realized that even after several months into the evaluation, his work was still being perceived as external rather than as a part of the program. He found that it was necessary to explicitly and repeatedly communicate to his colleagues that he was to be fully embedded. For example, he would say to the program team ‘[N]ext week, I’d like to shadow you and be in your office.’”

— DEPA-MERL Administrator

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.
September 2018	Focus of DE in final months will be on institutional capacity building.	DE uncovered significant capacity gaps that threaten the sustainability of the program team's work, as well as the sustainability of the DE results.	Work is in the bounds of the SOW as agreed upon at the outset. DE Administrator will need to monitor closely to ensure activity remains within appropriate scope.

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.

How Can Funders Monitor Developmental Evaluations?

Funders may be separated from the day-to-day work of a DE, which can make it difficult to stay engaged. The DE report template below, adapted from a DE of United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund (UNICEF)’s Peacebuilding, Education, and Advocacy (Myanmar) project, is an example of a tool the Evaluator can use to keep the Funder updated on an ongoing basis and to maintain a mutual understanding of the DE’s progress. The Funder can use these reports to track progress, assess whether their support or intervention is warranted, and keep the lines of communication open with the Evaluator.

Keep in mind, however, that DEs should be utilization focused. Their primary responsibility is to their project team, and interactions with the Funder beyond regular reporting may not be necessary. If this kind of accountability is required, it is best tasked to a monitoring and reporting specialist within the team. Do not require or expect Developmental Evaluators to provide lengthy written report updates unless absolutely necessary for institutional reasons. Ideally, updates will be short and provide “need to know” information.

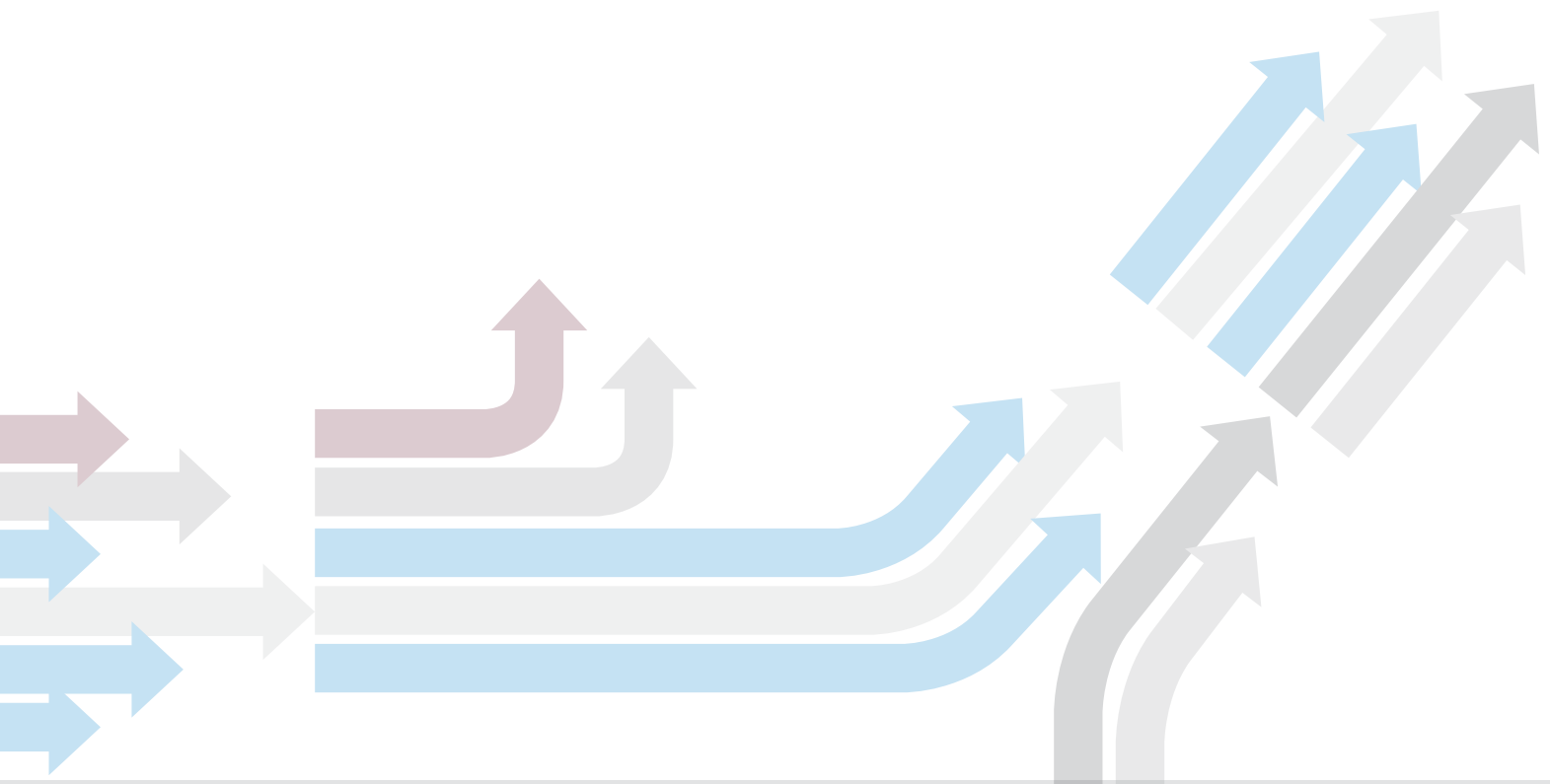


FIGURE 4:

Developmental Evaluation Report Template

I. Overview of Evaluation

[Description of activity and rationale for DE.]

II. Summary of Key Activities

Key Dates and Milestones

Date	Milestone

Major Activities

[Overview of major programmatic activities in the reporting period, as well as how contextual factors influenced them.]

III. Key Updates

[Discussion of framing and emergent learning, e.g., process, context, and patterns. Includes descriptions of data collection exercises; challenges, tensions, and opportunities; roads taken and not taken; and unintended consequences.]

IV. Key Reflection and/or Developmental Moments

[Documentation of any moments of reflection about assumptions, values, practices, etc., that occur through the process of evaluation or implementation, including unresolved questions that the team may need to revisit at a future point.]

V. Issues and Challenges

[Documentation of issues and challenges to implementation and evaluation encountered and/or anticipated.]

VI. Next Steps

[For program and evaluation.]

Annex A: People Consulted

Annex B: Documents Reviewed

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
Onboard Developmental Evaluator	C I	C	R A	I
Conduct Initial Meetings and Data Collection	C I	R	A	C I
Integrate Evaluator Into Program Team (i.e., invite to meetings, include on emails, etc.)	I	C	I	R A
Hold Acculturation Workshop	C	R	A	C I
Develop Evaluative Activity Designs	C I	R	A	C I
Conduct Ongoing Analysis	C I	R	A	C I
Oversight of DE	A	C I	C I	R

Developmental Evaluation Deliverables



Some of the most frequent questions asked by those commissioning a DE include *What will we get from this DE? What do DE products or deliverables look like? How can DE help the program succeed?* The answers are both flexible and frustrating: it depends on what is needed. While DE deliverables are often determined by the project team working with the Developmental Evaluator, the Funder may want to provide input as well, since funders may have a different perspective on organizational priorities. These priorities, and the Funder's level of input, may change over the course of the DE, depending on the context and the progress of the DE. This Module provides possible deliverables to promote understanding and use of DE findings.

What Deliverables Can Be Produced?

When deciding what deliverables to ask the Evaluator to produce, consider the following:

- The intended audience for the deliverable,
- What information the audience requires and how they prefer to process information,
- How widely (or not) the deliverable might be disseminated,
- The level of participation required of key stakeholders (e.g., program managers, monitoring and evaluation staff, technical leads, and relevant organizational leaders), and
- The level of detail desired.

How Do DE Results Differ from Other Evaluation Results?

Scopes of work for other evaluation approaches often call for reports as primary deliverables. However, unless that is the way the DE stakeholders prefer to receive information, Developmental Evaluators may prefer to produce alternative forms of deliverables. Rather than traditional reports, DEs can produce a variety of other products, such as:

- **Memos:** Evaluators can save stakeholders time by summarizing information on findings or recommendations in short documents (ideally fewer than five pages). A particularly useful tool we have used in DEs are “Options Memos,” which summarize findings, possible paths forward, and recommendations, as well as 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 (see example in Figure 6), icons, or other visual tools to convey key takeaways, which may even entice stakeholders to engage further with the DE

- **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 theories 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 (see example in Figure 7), as the below example from one DEPA-MERL pilot illustrates. See USAID’s [How To Note: Developing a Project Logic Model](#) for more examples.
- **Maps:** Conceptual maps can visually convey information in a great way. There are many types that DEs can produce. Some could be relatively simple (i.e., without needing to purchase costly software), including network maps (see example in Figure 8), heat maps, and timelines.
- **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 Developmental Evaluator, DE participants, or Funder. Dashboards (see example in Figure 9) are particularly useful for communicating how successful the implementation of adaptations suggested by the DE has been.
- **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.

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 serve as an intervention in and of itself.

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

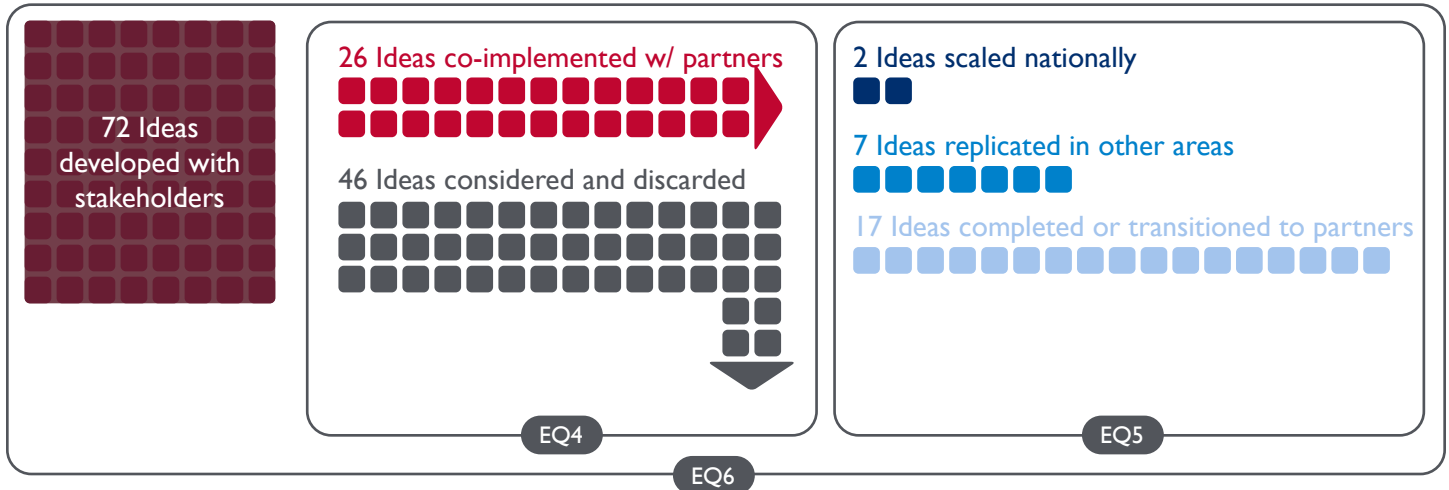


FIGURE 7: EXCERPT FROM FAMILY CARE LOGIC MODEL

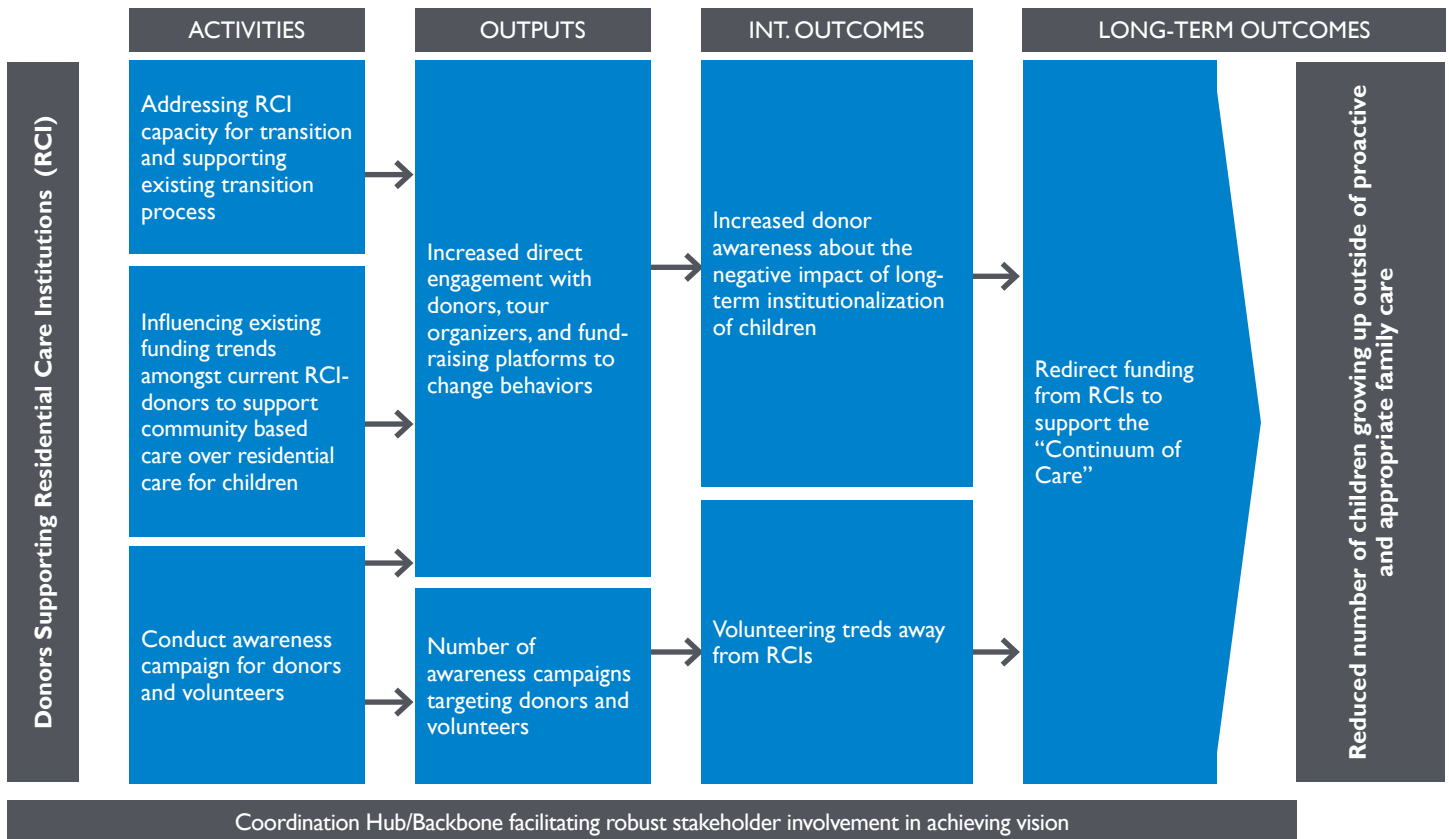


FIGURE 8: NETWORK MAP EXAMPLE

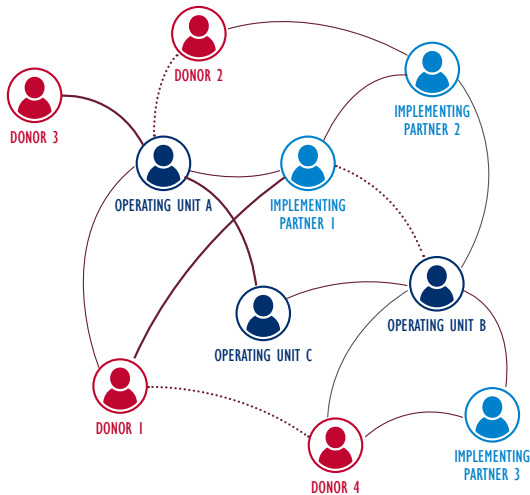
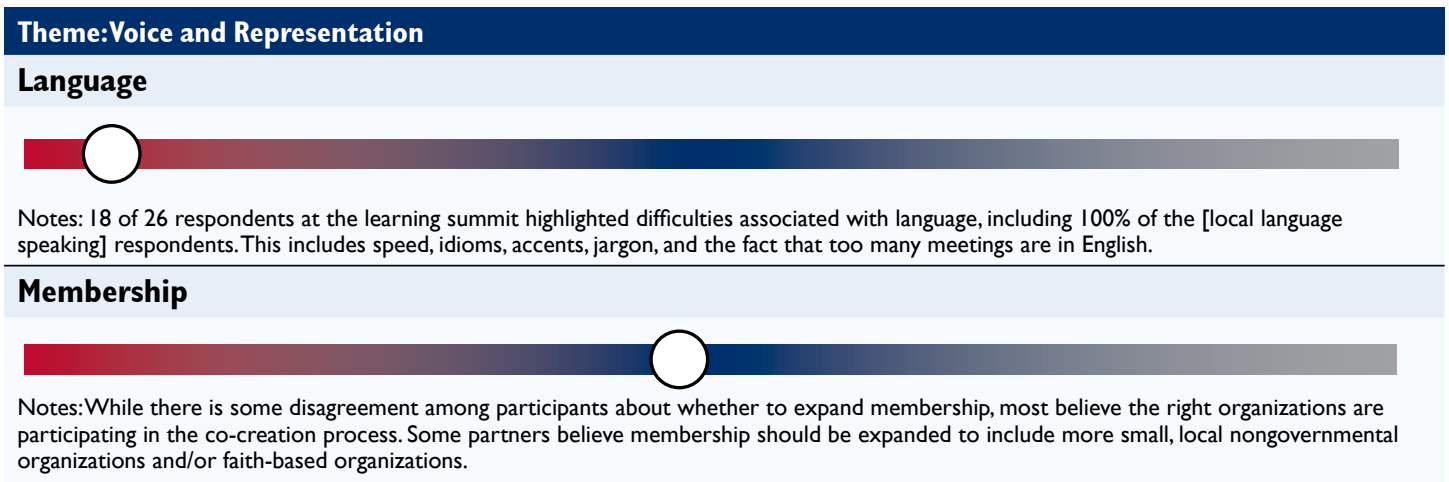


FIGURE 9: DASHBOARD EXAMPLE



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
Develop Understanding of Stakeholders' Preferred Ways of Consuming Information	C	R	A	C
Develop Deliverables on Ongoing, Timely Basis	C	R	A	C

MODULE 9

Developmental Evaluation Outcomes



The tools mentioned in [Module 8](#) will hopefully be used to inform decisions and adaptations made by the Funder (person or organization funding the DE), program team, or implementing partners to the program or process being evaluated. Expectations for the Funder’s level of involvement with these adaptations were set with key stakeholders (e.g., program managers, monitoring and evaluation staff, technical leads, and relevant organizational leaders) in the scoping phase in [Module 4](#) but may have changed during the course of the DE. Some decisions, such as those around contract changes, will likely come to the Funder no matter what. This Module describes the potential types of outcomes Funders may anticipate emerging as a result of decisions and adaptations made during a DE.

What Outcomes Can Be Expected?

Outcomes can come in a variety of forms: large or small, program level or sector level, relationship based or institutional. Table 5 examines the different ways to classify outcomes that might be expected from the DE.

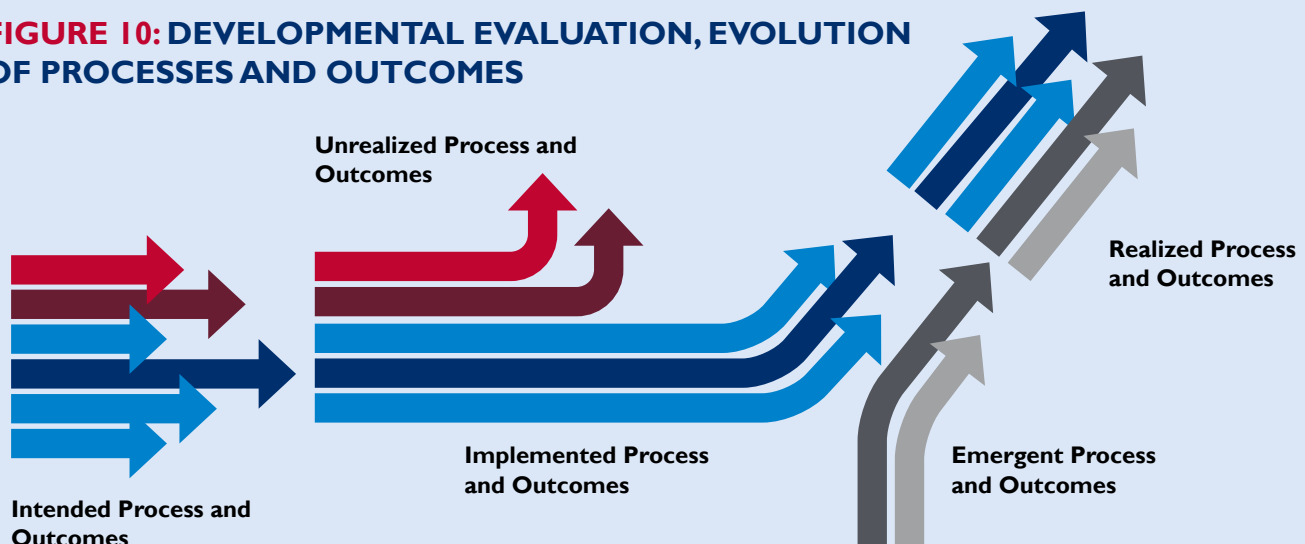
TABLE 5: DEVELOPMENTAL EVALUATION OUTCOME CLASSIFICATION

DE Outcome Category	Other Evaluation Approaches
Size of Change	The size of the change associated with the particular outcome can vary. Some changes will be small (e.g., affecting 1-2 individuals’ priority tasks). Others will be medium sized (e.g., affecting 2-3 teams’ work plans), and some will be large (e.g., affecting the strategic direction of the program or implementing organization). The standards for size will vary depending on the scope of the DE.
Level of Change	DE outcomes can affect different levels of a system: the operational level (e.g., procedural changes within a project), program level (e.g., priority geographies in which to deliver an intervention), sector level (e.g., programming guidance or best practices within the child protection or biodiversity sector), government level (e.g., a country government’s policies), or Funder level (e.g., USAID policy).
Type of Change	Outcomes can occur in many different areas, including reflecting changes primarily related to the knowledge and capabilities of stakeholders, stakeholder engagement and relationships, the formal institution and policy changes, or improved development results.
Value of Change (to the program)	DE outcomes can provide various types of direct value to a program or set of stakeholders. Some changes may influence a team’s knowledge management practices or evaluation capacity, as well as their operational efficiency and stakeholder engagement strategies.

As Figure 10 demonstrates, outcomes in a DE are not always intended. Over the course of the DE, the DE team will document intended processes and outcomes that were implemented and then became realized processes and outcomes, but also unrealized and emergent processes and outcomes:

- **Intended Processes and Outcomes:** The initial intentions of a program as they are articulated and designed in accordance with the reality as it exists during the design phase of the initiative. For example, improved knowledge management functions within a team, as described in a DE SOW.
- **Unrealized Processes and Outcomes:** Outcomes that are initially articulated in a program's design and intended to be implemented, but, for a variety of reasons, are not implemented. Unrealized outcomes may result from:
 1. Intentional adaptations, such as activities that are removed from or added to a work plan;
 2. Unpredicted issues in implementation due to the complex, changing reality in which the program operates; or
 3. Changes in implementation structures caused by how actors work together.
- **Implemented Processes and Outcomes:** Also called “deliberate” outcomes, these outcomes are those remaining from the intended outcomes, as they align with and benefit the contextual reality of the program and are implemented. In our earlier example under “Intended Processes and Outcomes,” an implemented outcome would involve the Developmental Evaluator working with key stakeholders to understand the barriers to better knowledge management.
- **Emergent Processes and Outcomes:** Over time, as the intended outcomes collide with and accommodate to a changing reality and other factors in a complex context, additional outcomes come to light. Organizations learn what works in practice. For example, from work with the knowledge management team, the DE produces evidence resulting in a change to meeting formats to improve productivity.
- **Realized Processes and Outcomes:** Outcomes that have been achieved in actuality and comprise both implemented and emergent outcomes.

FIGURE 10: DEVELOPMENTAL EVALUATION, EVOLUTION OF PROCESSES AND OUTCOMES



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

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

MODULE 9 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
Provide Analysis to Inform Adaptations	I	R	A	C I
Implement Adaptations	A	C I	I	R
Document Outcomes of Adaptations	I	R	A	C

MODULE 10

Closeout and Handoff



The Funder's (person or organization funding the DE) role may end with the conclusion of the DE, or the Funder may continue to work with the DE participants. The level of participation will depend on the Funder's organizational role, engagement throughout the DE, and the capacity of the DE participants to implement findings from the DE. Deeply involved Funders, for example, may find value in continuing to stay involved to ensure institutionalization of the DE recommendations. This Module provides guidance related to some of the most pivotal questions Funders may ask related to DE closeout.

What Happens When a Developmental Evaluation Closes?

Remember, DE differs from other evaluation approaches, which may provide recommendations only at the end of the evaluation. For DE, the “end” is not inherently defined by the production of a final report. Instead, data collection, findings, and recommendations are continuous throughout the period of performance. Funders have an important role to play as DE approaches closeout. It is important to work with other key stakeholders — including the project team, the Developmental Evaluator, and the DE Administrator — to manage expectations about what the closeout means in context and to understand what DE success looks like from the Funder's perspective. Below

are some questions to ask as the DE comes to an end:

1. **Sustainability Planning:** How can continued utilization of knowledge and tools from the DE be enabled?
2. **De-integration of the Developmental Evaluator:** How will some components of the Evaluator's role be transitioned to others within the program?
3. **Final Deliverables:** How will learning from the DE be captured and disseminated?

How Should Sustainability Planning Occur?

To facilitate the uptake and sustainability of DE results, it is important to begin planning well before closeout. Based on experience, we find that active planning for the closeout should begin approximately three months prior to the end of the DE. From the Funder's perspective, this may mean working with the Developmental Evaluator to help set up processes stakeholder teams can use to continue their learning culture after the DE.

Helpful processes may include:

- Holding workshops prior to project close to build capacity in important areas identified by the Developmental Evaluator and the team throughout the DE;
- Establishing quarterly pause and reflect sessions or other adaptive management-oriented events to the team's calendar and providing the protocols and tools necessary to conduct these meetings;
- Providing learning tools as well as instructions for their use;

- Defining 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) 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 Developmental Evaluator may join teams with the sole role as an evaluator. 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 particularly acute if the Evaluator is 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 project team well in advance of closeout to take active steps to de-integrate the Evaluator from the stakeholder teams.

Along with the project team, the Funder should meet with the Developmental Evaluator and the participants to create an action plan for de-integration. Examples of items that could go in a closeout action plan could include:

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

“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

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.

For example, in one DEPA-MERL pilot, the Developmental Evaluator gave teams multiple reminders during her last months with them and facilitated workshops to help teams set themselves up for success. This included providing additional coaching for individuals and teams on sustainability planning, exit strategies, and the

responsibilities they would take over from her. She also worked with teams to build in time to re-review and prioritize current (or previous) recommendations with stakeholders. Funders can play an important role in this process by participating in the planning process, providing input into priorities, and signaling support for these actions. Because the Funder's level of involvement may vary across DEs, please consult [Module 10](#) of the Administrator's and Evaluator's Guide for more information on steps to successfully de-integrate.

What Do Final Deliverables Look Like?

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

To avoid a deadline crunch, Funders should work with the Developmental Evaluator well in advance of DE closeout to define what expected final deliverables look like. Depending on the needs of the different stakeholders involved, as well as the bandwidth of the

DE team, deliverables may include a **final report**, a dedicated **learning event**, or continued production of **tools to support adaptations**. As with all steps of the DE, final deliverables should be designed with the users in mind, particularly thinking about their post-DE needs. Remember, the Developmental Evaluator will not provide a summative or accountability report or grade performance. Instead, their final deliverable(s) will likely focus on the DE process, the evidence it produced to inform adaptations, and the outcomes of those adaptations.

What Happens Next?

Congratulations! The final deliverables are completed, the Developmental Evaluator has been de-integrated, and the DE participants are ready to move on from the evaluation. At the same time, it is important that stakeholders continue to institutionalize any recommendations, tools, and processes that were established during the DE.

Common challenges post-DE include a lack of bandwidth or resources to execute the Evaluator's recommendations, a lack of institutional will to adapt, and an inability to create a learning culture that continues to facilitate

adaptations. There may be a period of "let-down" after the Evaluator leaves and the participants are left on their own. It takes hard work and a dedicated team of stakeholders to continue the remaining work. The Funder's continued dedication to the DE participants in the months preceding closeout can be critical to inspiring a continued commitment to learning and adapting for programmatic success.

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

Closing

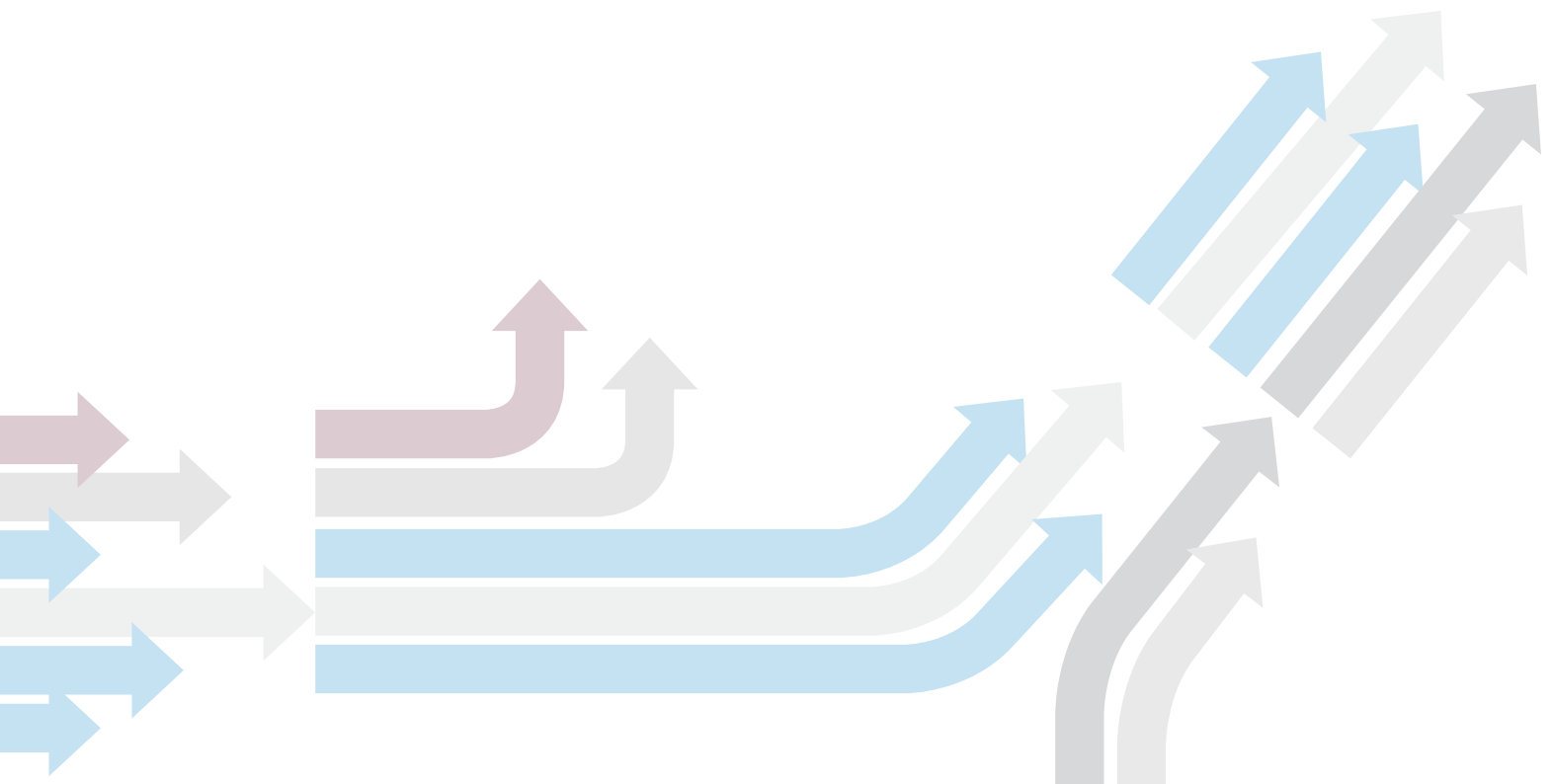
DEs carried out in their ideal format do not have a fixed end. Although the Evaluator may no longer be a part of the program team after a certain point, they leave behind a team more capable of engaging in evidence-based decision-making, navigating the unique complexities of their context, and employing 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

This guide was updated in 2024 by Joyce Elele (USAID), Heather Esper (The William Davidson Institute at the University of Michigan), Danielle de Garcia (Social Impact), Shannon Griswold (USAID), and Sharon Meged (Social Impact).

Suggested Citation: Implementing Developmental Evaluation: A Practical Guide for Funders. (2019) U.S. Agency for International Development.