

Monitoring, Evaluation & Learning (MEL)

This area considers who collects data and what the data is about; who determines metrics, outcomes, and impact; who owns the collected data; and how the data is used.

Performance, measurement & learning

Who decides what gets measured and how?

Little or no participation:	Some participation:	Substantial participation:	Full participation:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">□ Governance sets indicators of “success” and “impact,” based on traditional evaluation criteria.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">□ Staff determine indicators of “success” or “impact.” These may be shaped by input from grantee reports, surveys, or other interactions, but priority is not on creating knowledge that would benefit community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">□ Community and foundation work jointly to define indicators of grantee “success” or “impact” and collectively agree how and when to measure it and who will conduct data collection.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">□ Community and grantees together decide metrics, methods, and approaches for all MEL activities.

Who carries out evaluations?

Little or no participation:	Some participation:	Substantial participation:	Full participation:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">□ No evaluations are carried out.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">□ Independent evaluators may assess grantees or foundation itself.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">□ Grantees or community carry out evaluations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">□ Participatory evaluation activities involving multiple stakeholders are used.

Whose performance is measured?

Little or no participation:

- Focus is on assessing grantee “performance,” especially short-term. Evaluation does not consider changes to foundation’s approach.

Some participation:

- Focus is on ensuring funding is being used “efficiently” by grantees. Grantee input may shift foundation’s MEL practices, but not its larger approach.

Substantial participation:

- Staff gather and act on input from grantees and community about successes and failures of foundation operations and approaches.

Full participation:

- Foundation formally and regularly invites and acts on independent feedback from grantees and community about foundation performance, operations, culture, and more.

Is learning a value?

Little or no participation:

- There is no focus on learning at any level – whether for grantees, staff, leadership, or governance – and no shared learning with community for their benefit.

Some participation:

- Learning is valued, but focus is on foundation needs.

Substantial participation:

- Focus is on grantee learning rather than output-oriented measurement.

Full participation:

- Process – or how work gets done – is highly valued, and focus is on learning by all stakeholders.

Data transparency & ownership

Who has access to and ownership of the data?

Little or no participation:

- ❑ Foundation does not share data back with staff, grantees, or community.

Some participation:

- ❑ Data about grantee achievements is shared internally. Findings about foundation operations are not publicized.

Substantial participation:

- ❑ Findings from evaluations, as well as foundation responses and actions, are shared publicly and transparently. There are regular discussions about who ultimately owns and benefits from collected data.

Full participation:

- ❑ Data collected is owned by grantees, and there is a dissemination strategy for publicly sharing cumulative data with community.

Why did you select the statements you did?

Additional questions to consider:

- Is there a focus on long-term systems change and power shifting at the foundation?
- Are power-shifting, movement-building, and/or systems-change goals articulated in and measured through the monitoring, evaluation, and learning system?
- Does the foundation evaluate and learn from its participatory approaches? Does it consider the quality of the experience, and the benefits for (or harms to) any external participants?

Resources:

- [Participatory Action Research Toolkit](#)
- [Participatory Evaluation: Definition, Methods, Advantages](#), by tools4dev
- [Participatory Evaluation: A Path to More Rigorous Information, Better Insights](#), by Corey Newhouse
- [More than Money: Participatory Grantmaking and Perceptions of Power](#), by Sarah Stachowiak
- [FRIDA's Strategic MEL Framework](#), by FRIDA | The Young Feminist Fund
- [Fenomenal Feminist Learning Framework](#), by Fenomenal Funds
- [Trust-Based Evaluation](#), by Brenda Solorzano
- [Learning and Evaluation for Community-Driven Systems Change](#), by Firelight Foundation
- [The Equitable Evaluation Framework](#), by Equitable Evaluation Initiative