

Certification Exam Content Outline: Certification in Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning (MEAL)

FINAL (8 September 2017)

Domain 1: Components, concepts, and principles of MEAL/Situating MEAL

MEAL practitioners and project/program managers must be able to:

1.1 Identify the purposes, differences, and interdependencies of monitoring, evaluation, accountability, and learning.

- 1.1.a Identify commonly used definitions of monitoring, evaluation, accountability, and learning.
- 1.1.b Identify the main shared objectives of monitoring, evaluation, accountability, and learning.
- 1.1.c Differentiate between the main objectives of monitoring, evaluation, accountability, and learning.
- 1.1.d Identify the interdependencies of monitoring, evaluation, accountability, and learning.

1.2 Distinguish between commonly used terms for different types of monitoring and evaluation.

- 1.2.a Differentiate evaluation and monitoring type by their timing and purpose.
- 1.2.b Differentiate monitoring and evaluation type by who conducts them.

1.3 Identify ways in which organizations structure monitoring, evaluation, accountability, and learning roles and responsibilities.

- 1.3.a Distinguish the roles and responsibilities between MEAL specialists and project/program managers in MEAL design and implementation.
- 1.3.b Identify situations in which external MEAL expertise may be needed.
- 1.3.c Identify common approaches to MEAL in organizational structures, and the respective advantages/disadvantages of such alternatives.

1.4 Employ ethical principles relevant to monitoring, evaluation, accountability, and learning.

- 1.4.a Identify the relevant ethical principles to MEAL and the purpose of each.
- 1.4.b Identify ethical challenges regarding objectivity in MEAL.
- 1.4.c Identify relevant ethical considerations related to data collection practices.
- 1.4.d Identify best overall practices to minimize the risk of doing harm in MEAL activities.
- 1.4.e Identify commonly used ethical frameworks for MEAL.
- 1.4.f Apply the relevant ethical principles to MEAL in common types of situations and dilemmas faced by MEAL practitioners.

1.5 Identify common criteria used in evaluations.

- 1.5.a Define the OECD/DAC evaluation criteria.
- 1.5.b Identify commonly used Value for Money (VfM) criteria.
- 1.5.c Identify commonly used criteria for real-time evaluations.
- 1.5.d Identify other common criteria and organizational standards used in evaluations.

1.6 Identify challenges of, and methods for, carrying out MEAL activities in complex contexts.

- 1.6.a Recognize the need for “good enough” MEAL programming in complex contexts.
- 1.6.b Identify challenges relating to access and remote monitoring.
- 1.6.c Identify challenges regarding data quality in complex contexts.
- 1.6.d Identify challenges relating to unpredictable and rapidly changing situations.
- 1.6.e Identify challenges relating to higher levels of insecurity.
- 1.6.f Identify methods for dealing with complexity.

Domain 2: Planning, designing, and implementing monitoring, evaluation, accountability, and learning activities

MEAL practitioners and project/program managers must be able to:

2.1 Identify the key components of a MEAL system.

- 2.1.a Identify the key components of a MEAL system.
- 2.1.b Recognize how different types of contexts require different MEAL system designs.
- 2.1.c Recognize how a stakeholder analysis can inform the MEAL system.

2.2 Identify the constitutive components of commonly used logical planning frameworks.

- 2.2.a Identify the main types of logical models, the terms used to refer to them, the assumptions they make, and their distinguishing features.
- 2.2.b Identify the components of logical models and key variations between models.
- 2.2.c Distinguish between indicators, targets, and outputs/outcomes/impact.

2.3 Create logical planning frameworks for projects and programs.

- 2.3.a Recognize the main benefits and limits of using logical models.
- 2.3.b Create logical planning frameworks for projects and programs following the most commonly used types of logical models.

2.4 Identify methods for designing appropriate indicators for monitoring and evaluation of process, outputs, outcomes, and impact.

- 2.4.a Describe the different kinds of indicators used in a MEAL system.
- 2.4.b Explain the SMART indicator criteria, neutral indicators, and other common criteria for designing indicators.
- 2.4.c List factors to consider when setting indicator targets.

2.5 Adapt standard indicators used in development and humanitarian contexts.

- 2.5.a List standard sets of common indicators and the kinds of indicators covered by them.
- 2.5.b Describe the reasons for using common indicators.
- 2.5.c Identify how common indicators should be adapted for specific contexts.

2.6 Identify the main quantitative methods of data collection and their advantages and disadvantages in different situations.

- 2.6.a Define quantitative data.
- 2.6.b Identify the main overall advantages and disadvantages of using quantitative data.
- 2.6.c Identify the main quantitative methods for data collection and the primary advantages and disadvantages of each.

2.7 Recognize the main qualitative methods of data collection and their advantages and disadvantages in different situations.

- 2.7.a Define qualitative data.
- 2.7.b Identify the main overall advantages and disadvantages of using qualitative data.
- 2.7.c Identify the main methods of qualitative data collection and the primary advantages and disadvantages of each.

2.8 Combine quantitative and qualitative methods for data collection.

- 2.8.a Describe the benefits of mixing quantitative and qualitative methods for data collection.
- 2.8.b Identify approaches to combining quantitative and qualitative methods for data collection.
- 2.8.c Select data collection methods for different contexts and situations.

2.9 Identify appropriate sampling methodologies.

- 2.9.a Define sampling.
- 2.9.b Explain key sampling concepts.
- 2.9.c Identify sampling approaches for quantitative data.
- 2.9.d Identify sampling approaches for qualitative data.
- 2.9.e Describe key factors to consider when selecting a sample design.
- 2.9.f Identify strengths and weaknesses of different sampling approaches.
- 2.9.g Describe key factors that are used to determine sample sizes for quantitative and qualitative data collection.
- 2.9.h List dimensions that may need special consideration in the choice of sampling methodology due to equity concerns.

2.10 Identify ways in which ICT tools can assist the collection, recording, and visualization of data.

- 2.10.a Identify the ways in which ICT tools can assist the collection, recording, and visualization of data.
- 2.10.b Identify considerations for selecting and using ICT tools in MEAL.
- 2.10.c Identify hardware considerations regarding using ICT tools in MEAL.

2.11 Facilitate a stakeholder analysis.

- 2.11.a Identify the components of a stakeholder analysis.
- 2.11.b Distinguish different purposes and approaches to stakeholder analysis.
- 2.11.c Identify the different types of stakeholders relevant to MEAL planning and their overall interests related to MEAL.

2.12 Identify different mechanisms for community engagement and feedback in monitoring, evaluation, accountability, and learning.

- 2.12.a Identify the underlying purposes of community engagement and feedback.
- 2.12.b Identify key principles for designing systems of feedback.
- 2.12.c Identify the advantages and disadvantages of different community feedback mechanisms and their appropriateness in different contexts.
- 2.12.d Identify different methods and considerations to ensure that feedback is responded to in a timely manner.
- 2.12.e Identify ways of involving communities in MEAL activities.

2.13 Identify approaches to manage coordination challenges for MEAL activities.

- 2.13.a Recognize the advantages and disadvantages of joint/collaborative approaches.
- 2.13.b Identify common MEAL coordination structures used in different types of contexts.
- 2.13.c Recognize tools and guidelines for data sharing.
- 2.13.d Recognize how MEAL relates to major inter-agency planning frameworks.

2.14 Identify the human resources, financial resources, and time needed to carry out MEAL activities.

- 2.14.a Identify the factors determining the human resources, financial resources, and time needed for common MEAL activities.
- 2.14.b List key line items for inclusion in a MEAL budget.
- 2.14.c Describe key factors for determining sufficiency of MEAL human resources.
- 2.14.d Define tasks, roles, and responsibilities for decision-making and implementation related to MEAL activities.

Domain 3: Data management and quality

MEAL practitioners and project/program managers must be able to:

3.1 Identify methods for minimizing and mitigating different types of bias.

- 3.1.a List different types of bias.
- 3.1.b Identify methods for strengthening objectivity and minimizing and mitigating different type of bias.

3.2 Identify the main different methods for data quality assurance in data collection and data entry.

- 3.2.a Define data quality and data quality standards.
- 3.2.b Explain different kinds of data errors.
- 3.2.c Identify best practices for minimizing data collection errors.
- 3.2.d Identify best practices for minimizing data entry errors.
- 3.2.e Create a system of checks and balances for data collection and entry.
- 3.2.f Identify methods for validating data reducing threats to validity.
- 3.2.g Explain different methods for cleaning data.
- 3.2.h Explain the implications of data cleaning on outcomes.

3.3 Identify the main types and components of databases and database management systems and how to interact with them.

- 3.3.a Identify key purpose(s), features, and components of a database.
- 3.3.b Define key database-related terminology.
- 3.3.c Identify the main types of databases and their advantages and disadvantages.
- 3.3.d Identify the main database management systems used for MEAL.
- 3.3.e Identify the main stakeholders in designing and managing a database.

3.4 Identify principles and protocols for data storage, maintenance, sharing, and security.

- 3.4.a Identify protection risks related to data security and confidentiality and the main data protection principles for addressing them.
- 3.4.b List key sources of regulations and guidance on data protection and data privacy.
- 3.4.c List key international standards for data transparency and sharing.

Domain 4: Analysis, interpretation, and communication

MEAL practitioners and project/program managers must be able to:

4.1 Identify the main methods and tools for quantitative analysis.

- 4.1.a Identify the main methods for quantitative data analysis.
- 4.1.b Identify the ways to avoid errors and potential pitfalls when analyzing quantitative data.
- 4.1.c List types of software solutions that might be used for quantitative analysis and their main advantages and disadvantages.
- 4.1.d Describe the characteristics of common classifications of variables and the most appropriate analytic procedures related to the variables.
- 4.1.e Identify key descriptive statistics and when to use them.
- 4.1.f Interpret the results of descriptive statistics.

4.2 Identify the main methods and tools for qualitative analysis.

- 4.2.a Identify the main methods for qualitative data analysis.
- 4.2.b Identify the ways to avoid errors and potential pitfalls when analyzing qualitative data.

4.3 Interpret quantitative and qualitative data.

- 4.3.a Identify methods for triangulating between quantitative and qualitative data.
- 4.3.b Interpret quantitative and qualitative data collected.
- 4.3.c Identify methods for involving stakeholders in the interpretation and analysis of results.

4.4 Communicate findings and information to different stakeholders.

- 4.4.a Describe key principles for communicating.
- 4.4.b Recognize how a stakeholder analysis can indicate information needs.
- 4.4.c Identify the most appropriate ways to present information for different stakeholders.

4.5 Identify ways that MEAL results are translated into organizational learning.

- 4.5.a List the ways in which MEAL contributes to organizational learning.
- 4.5.b Identify the organizational channels/outputs which MEAL can feed into.
- 4.5.c Describe knowledge management, its purpose, and how it links with organizational learning and decision-making.