

Adaptive management: methodologies to support planning, monitoring, evaluation and learning (PMEL)

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Presentation outline

1. Adaptive management and learning - introduction

2. Mixed methodologies for reflection and learning

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Adaptive management



PMEL approaches and steps

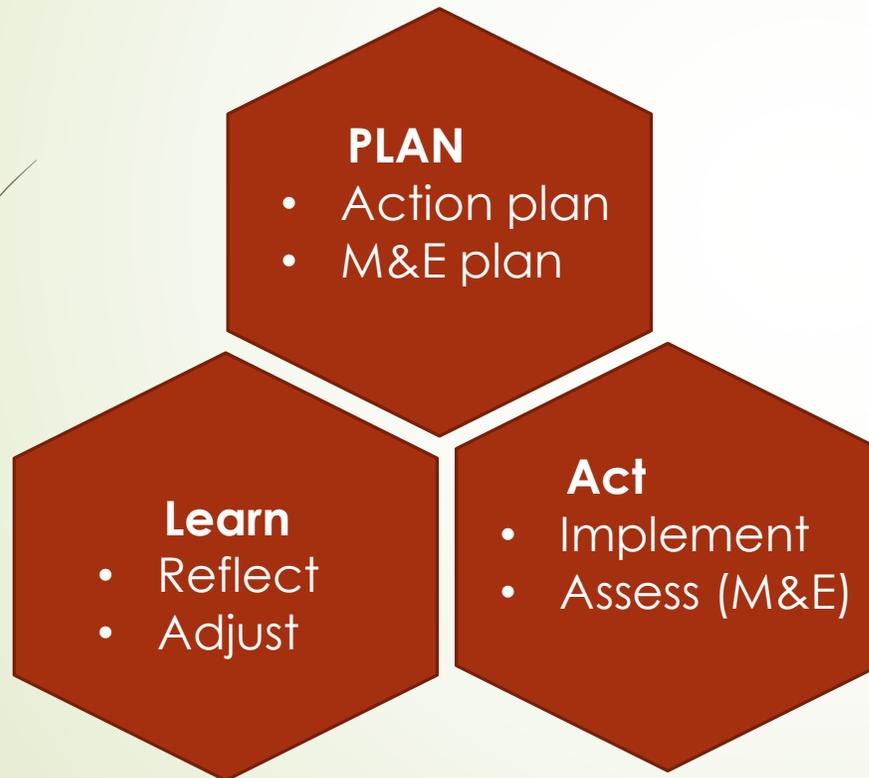


Reflective practice



Methodologies

Adaptive management – “learning by doing” – and working collaboratively



It's about moving forward together

Start by clarifying where you are going - and involve the right people in that process



Your values describe who you are. They speak to your character and the things that drive the people involved.

Your vision is your why! It describes the change you and your team believe you can make in the world.

Your mission is your how! It outlines the work you do as you work towards your vision

Here is where you develop your plan-act-learn cycles. Your plans outline the specific work that you believe will organize and activate your people – goals/outcomes, objectives, measures, etc.

Planning, Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (PMEL) approaches

PMEL seen as “a process and a product”

Learning-based – but also provides for accountability

Its about identifying management (and supporting management systems)

Helps actors to see the bigger picture – and how their individual activities contribute

The importance of reflective practice

“We do not learn from experience ... we learn from reflecting on experience.” ~ John Dewey (1938)

“Organizations and programmes do not routinely learn unless they are purposeful about creating both the structure and the space to support collective dialogue and exchange.” ~ Jewla Lynn (2012)

Learning and reflective practice



People naturally reflect on their experiences (or aspects of them), and we really like confirming evidence! The challenge in complex settings is to find how to ask questions that dig into the hidden aspects of the situation, are non-intuitive and get to disconfirming evidence.



Product: Your plans and planning documents (ToC, logic models, rubrics, etc.) create the **“structure” for learning**, and function as living documents that are equally relevant to planning, evaluation and learning.



Process: The value from the collective, and often facilitated, thinking that those involved go through to create and adapt those plans highlight the importance of process. Periodic strategic learning debriefs (e.g., After Action Reviews) can also create **“space” for learning** through reflective practices that help move from learning to action.



Systems are more than the sum of their parts

Successful outcomes to environmental problems increasingly depend on the coordinated actions of decision-makers at different system levels (e.g., from farm (e.g., farm family), to enterprise (e.g., resource manager), to region and/or nation (policy agents)).

Complex programmes should include detail on 'nested' PMEL frameworks, capturing different levels of detail, scope, and context. At the higher level, a PMEL approach should sketch out the 'big picture' view of the wider program – including an indication of how different activity streams contribute to the desired longer-term outcomes.

At a sublevel, PMEL frameworks can be used to focus on the elements that are specific to any one activity stream in greater detail.

PMEL steps to support social learning and adaptive management



Clarify **purpose, scope and scale** (being careful to involve the right people) – acknowledge key system components and levels.



Describe the programme – Agree a **Theory of Change (ToC)** and **accompanying models** (at appropriate scales).



Agree **evaluation priorities** and **key evaluation questions (KEQs)**.



Develop **evaluation criteria and performance standards** (e.g., rubrics – encourages use of “sets of indicators”).



Assess and reflect using (agreed) **indicators and measures** and **methodology**.



Implement plan-act-reflect cycles - **adaptive management**.

Methodologies for clarifying and assessing progress (at each system level)

Theory of Change (ToC)

- What outcomes we expect, and how and why we expect change to happen in this context.

Intervention Logic Model

- Linking activities/outputs with intermediate (prerequisite) and expected longer-term outcomes.

Rubrics

- Key criteria for each area, and how to measure and assess performance (sets of indicators).

Complexity-aware monitoring

- Monitoring for unintended results (positive and negative).

Strategic learning and adaptive management

- After Action Reviews (AARs)/Strategic learning debriefs.

2. Mixed methodologies for reflection and learning



Theory of Change



Logic models



Rubrics



Strategic learning debriefs

Theory of Change (ToC)



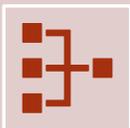
Description of how and why a desired change is expected to happen.



Aims to “fill in” the “missing middle” between what a programme does (activities) and how these lead to the desired change (outcomes).



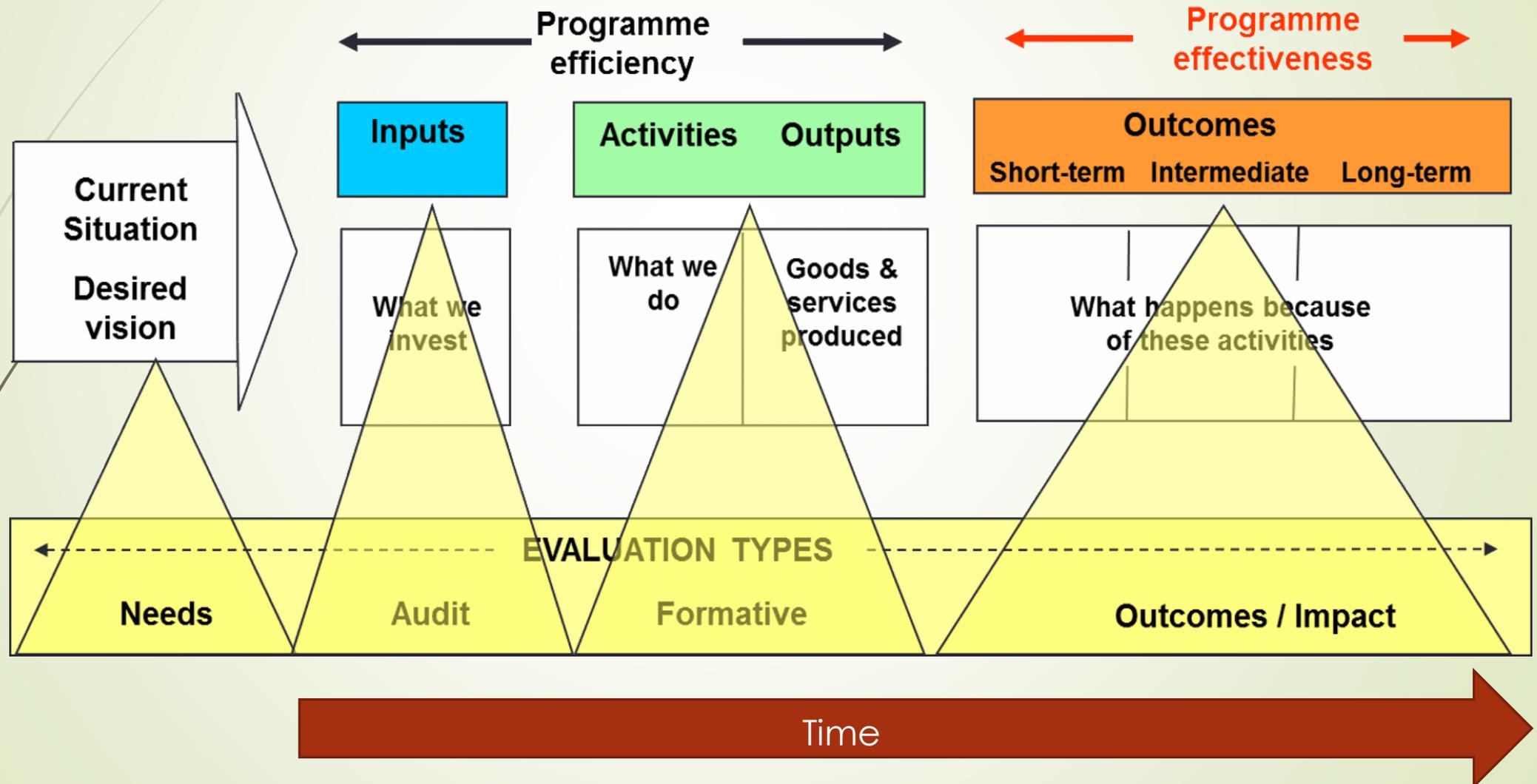
Provides for discussion around evidence-based approaches and underlying assumptions.



Includes diagrammatic and temporal representation of how programme elements fit together (e.g., logic model).



Logic models – help evaluate



Rubrics (multi-criteria performance tables)

Rubrics help us understand, assess and improve complex tasks and behaviours



1. Define task and/or behaviour.



2. Define key outcome areas and associated activities.



3. Develop assessment scales and performance levels.

Task definition ...

	Great	Good	Not so good
Outcome 1		✓	
Outcome 2	✓		B+
Outcome 3		✓	

Rubrics (multi-criteria performance tables)

Rubrics help us understand, assess and improve complex tasks and behaviours



1. Define task and/or behaviour



2. Define key outcome areas and associated activities



3. Develop assessment scales and performance levels

Task definition ...

Great Good Not so

Outcome 1

Outcome 2

Outcome 3

4. Assess – with evidence

e.g. **Stakeholder engagement and awareness**

... A stakeholder engagement plan has been developed – and is used. An awareness programme is being run. 12 biosecurity-focused groups have been set up – covering about half the target audience ...

Strategic learning debriefs/AARs

- Start with good planning – Utilise tools (ToCs, logic models, rubrics, etc.) to lay out the big picture, identify key components and clarify how the initiative will unfold over time (steps and phases).
- AARs should contribute to information that not only help assess an immediate activity, but also help assess progress across the wider initiative.
- Must first benefit the immediate team.
- Build a reflective culture over time – keep things simple to begin with and add in richer assessments and other features as capability builds.





PMEL in action



A **management plan** – activities, milestones, etc., and how they link.



A **monitoring and evaluation plan** - outlining key monitoring information (indicators) and frequency for each outcome area.



Assess and measure progress - and provide for **collaborative reflection** as part of evaluation and learning.



Adapt planning and implementation.



Acknowledge and account for **individual reporting needs** (members, funders, CEO's, etc.).

For more information

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- ▶ [Will Allen & Associates](#)



Annotated links to a wide range of related on-line material can be found via the Learning for Sustainability clearinghouse - <https://learningforsustainability.net/>

Reference as: Will Allen (2021) Adaptive management and planning, monitoring, evaluation and learning (Presentation). Available online <https://learningforsustainability.net/pubs/AM-learning-reflecting.pdf>

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