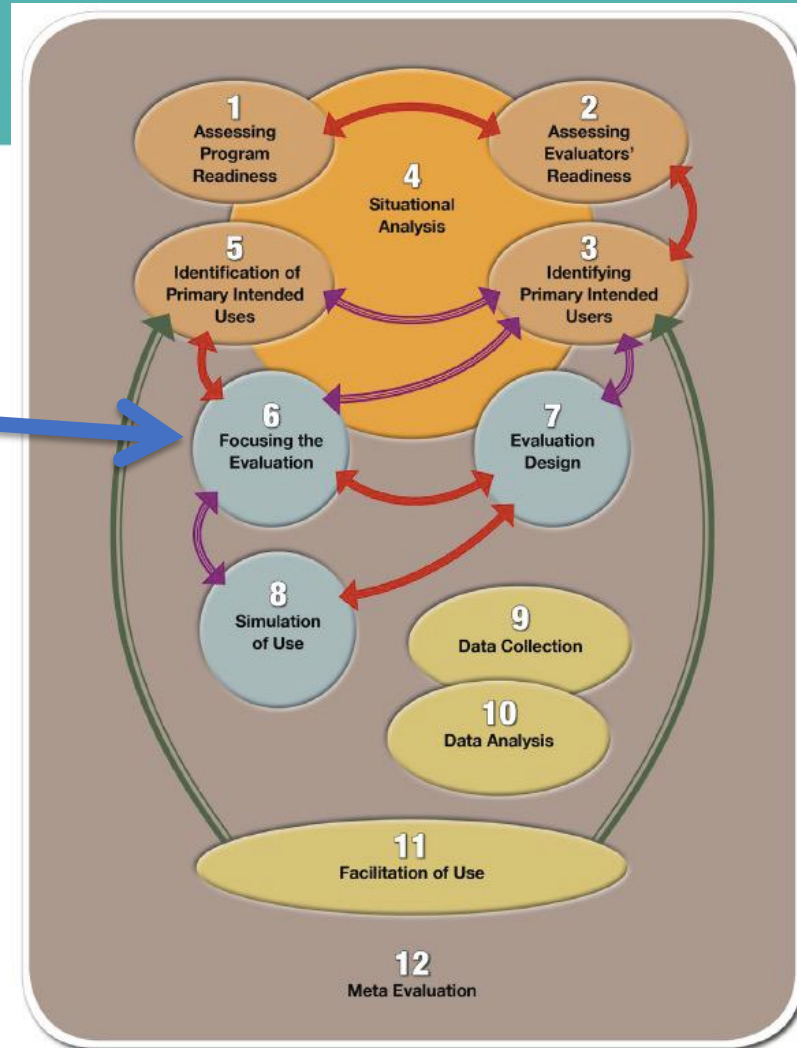# Module 3. **Focusing the MEL design**

Content:

1. Recap: where are we in the process?

2. Review of the evaluation uses or purposes

3. Shifting from uses to key evaluation questions (KEQs)

4. Design matrix

5. How to develop good KEQs

1. Recap:
focusing the evaluation and evaluation design

2. Process use Vs findings use

Process Use	Findings Use
• Infuses evaluative thinking into the project/network • Enhances shared understandings about goals and priorities • Supports the project/network itself • Creates capacity and adaptability (Patton, 2008: adapted from p. 193 - Ch.4)	• Provides a judgment about the value and future of the project/network • Provides learning to improve the project/network • Accountability over resources • Improves project/network management (monitoring) • Contributes towards the adaptation of the project/network to changes in the context (Patton, 2008: adapted from p. 141 - Ch.5)

2. Use & KEQs table

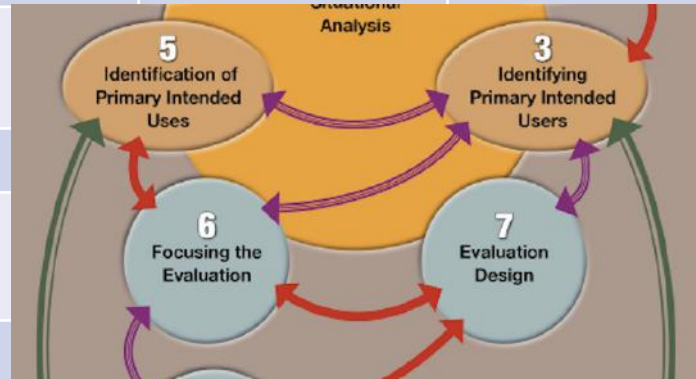| USE [*purpose*]	Key evaluation question (sample)	remarks
To describe / explain achievements [**accountability; summative**]	To what extent did farmers adopt the technology?	

2d. Review of evaluation uses and users

- It is practical to focus on 2-3 evaluation uses

- One way to prioritize them is to focus on decisions that need to be made for which the primary intended evaluation users need evidence.

- It is common for additional USERS to become identified when defining the USES; the process is iterative

3. Shifting from uses to key evaluation questions (KEQs): a space for adaptation

- While the evaluation USES provide the overall reason for doing evaluation, the Key Evaluation Questions challenge the PIUs to focus on the elements and details of a program that they wish to examine
- Shifting to KEQs challenges the users to uncover assumptions about change trajectories. When done in a group, it creates a space for reflection and clarification of strategy.
- This process has often led to adaptation of project objectives and strategy – and Theory of Change.

Evaluation USE	Key Evaluation Questions (KEQs)	Evidence needed (*)	Sources of evidence	Data collection (tools, frequency, etc.)
Why to do evaluation? Broad purposes Practical, urgent To inform decisions	Narrow down to specific components; this requires discussion and consensus	A good KEQ "speaks" to the evidence needed	People, reports, existing data, multi-media, etc.	Priorities to be set based on budget and human resources
Aim for 3-5 different uses (impact, process dimensions, learning topics, coordination, methodology, communication…..)				Details will be specific to each KEQ
Different primary evaluation users will have unique uses to propose				

Next Steps

- Confirm the MEL team by project and/or sub-projects

- Identify and confirm primary interested evaluation users (PIUs or 'owners') for the evaluation at each level

- Invite the PIUs to propose evaluation uses and Key Evaluation Questions (it is common to only gather evaluation questions)

- Request copies of existing MEL plans and ToC

5a. How to develop good KEQs: samples

➤ **INPUT:** To what extent did the implementers receive adequate and timely resources to carry out the activities?

➤ **IMPACT:** To what extent did the desired practice change lead to improvement in X, Y, Z? (measurable change in state)

➤ **OUTCOME:** To what extent did participating nurses change their practices around patient care?

➤ **APPROACH / MODEL QUESTIONS:** How did our model of capacity building compare with a best practice?

➤ **PROCESS:** To what extent were partners adequately engaged during the project process

➤ **QUALITY:** What was the quality of the research or research output?

➤ **COST EFFECTIVENESS:** What was the cost-benefit of the intervention?

5b. What makes good KEQs?

- ➤ **Specific** enough to be useful in guiding you through the evaluation

- ➤ **Broad** enough to be broken down - are not the same as a question in a survey

- ➤ **Data** (qualitative/quantitative) can be brought to bear on the KEQ

- ➤ KEQs are **open** questions (can't answer yes or no!)

- ➤ Have **meaning** for those developing the plan

- ➤ Lead to **useful, credible**, evaluation

- ➤ There **are not too many** of them (2-4 is enough).

5c. Example

- **Specific** enough to be useful in guiding you through the evaluation

- **Broad** enough to be broken down - are not the same as a question in a survey

- **Data** (qualitative/quantitative) can be brought to bear on the KEQ

- KEQs are **open** questions (can't answer yes or no!)

- Have **meaning** for those developing the plan

- Lead to **useful, credible**, evaluation

- There **are not too many** of them (2-4 is enough).

'Impact' Example:

What strategies by the umbrella / network were most effective in attracting research proposals from first-time applicants?

• *Is it too specific or too broad?*

• *What 'data' would you need to answer the question?*

5c. Review your choices – tips
(Adapted from Dart, 2007)

- Try to use **more than one method** for each KEQ.

- Be able to **defend your choice**.

- **Consider sequencing**: scoping - breadth - depth (semi-structured interview - survey - in-depth focus group)

- Consider a **dominant** and a **supplementary** combination

Resources

Dart, J. 2007. "Key evaluation questions". Presentation at the Evaluation in Practice Workshop. Kuala Lumpur, December.

Patton, M.Q. (2008) Utilization focused evaluation, 4th Edition. Sage.

Ramírez, R. & Brodhead, D. (2018). Evaluation and communication decision-making: A practitioner's guide.
https://evaluationandcommunicationinpractice.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/ebookv10.pdf?9023db&9023db

Utilization-focused evaluation: A primer for evaluators (2013) – (English, French & Spanish)
https://evaluationandcommunicationinpractice.net/featured-publications/

Webinar: Utilization-focused evaluation – Steps 4 through 8 (2014) 29.06 min.
https://evaluationandcommunicationinpractice.net/knowledgebase/utilization-focused-evaluation-steps-4-through-8/

Use & KEQs table

USE [*purpose*]	Key evaluation question (sample)	remarks
To describe / explain achievements [***accountability; summative***]	To what extent did farmers adopt the technology?	Focus is on pre-determined change (high-level outcomes)
To provide information on key issues that require managerial attention [***monitoring; formative***]	To what extent and in what ways is implementation of the initiative progressing?	Focus on those elements that are likely to need adjustment
To compare findings across different sites to identify patterns of effectiveness [***learning***]	To what extent have outcomes emerged? What factors appear to enable the changes?	Focus is on trends, process and context
To provide data to adapt interventions under emergent conditions [***developmental***]	What have been the main forks in the road and on what basis did we change the strategy? What drivers are enabling the process?	Acknowledges complexity, emerging properties, and systemic change