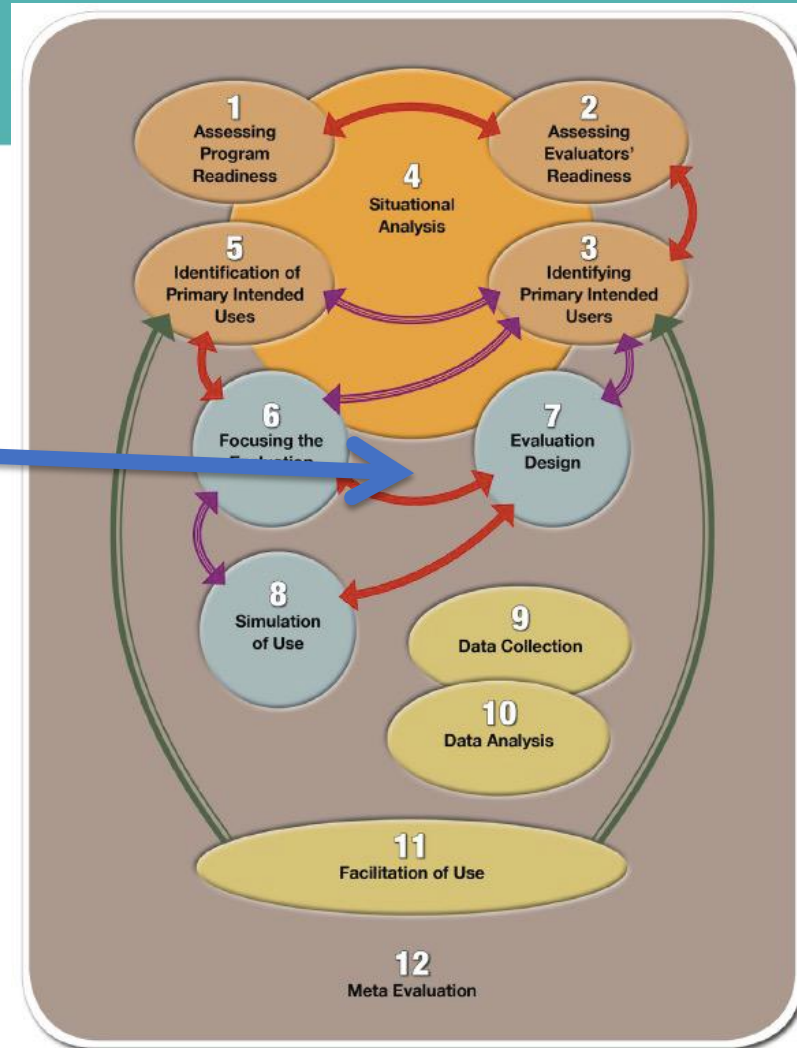# Module 4. **MEL design**

Content:

1. Recap: where are we in the process?

2. Data collection – selecting methods

3. Simulation of use – an optional step

4. Developmental evaluation – design considerations

5. Planning for data collection

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1. Recap:
evaluation design

1. MEL design matrix

	KEQs	Evidence/ Data sources	Data collection tools
EVALUATION USE or PURPOSE			

2.Data collection: selection methods (1/6)

- To answer the KEQs, what data do you need?

- How much evidence already exists (documents, people's experience) and what needs to be collected?

- What methods can you use to collect this data?

2.Data collection: selection methods (2/6)

1. There is no magic key to tell you the most appropriate method to answer your KEQ.

2. All methods have limitations, so try using a combination of methods.

3. Each type of question suits specific approaches/methods – so let them guide you. Other factors to consider: time, cost, resources, knowledge.

4. Primary users should the one to determine what constitutes credible evidence. The primary user should feel comfortable with the selected methods and the collected data.

Adapted from Dart, 2007.

COMPATIBILITY BETWEEN METHODS AND QUESTION CATEGORIES

Impact: Contribution Analysis / Data trawl & expert panel / GEM.

Outcomes: OM / MSC / GEM.

Approach/Model: Comparative studies of different approaches.

Process: Evaluation study: interview process, focus groups.

Quality: Audit against standards, peer review.

Cost-effectiveness: Economic modeling

Adapted from Dart, 2007.

2.Data collection: selection methods (4/6)

Contribution Analysis: Seeks for data to show evidence between a given activity and an outcome in order to show change trends that have resulted from an intervention. Does not intend to show linear causality.

Data Trawl: Data search and analysis from disperse literature in order to identify relationships between activities and outcomes.

GEM (Gender Evaluation Methodology): Links gender and outcomes through relevant indicators.

- **<u>Outcome Mapping:</u>** Focuses on mid-term outcomes, suggesting that in the best case scenario these outcomes will lead to long-term impact in a non-linear way.

- **<u>Most Significant Change:</u>** Seeks to identify most significant changes based on participants´ stories.

- **<u>Expert panels:</u>** Group of experts is invited to comment and analyze outcomes and how they relate to possible impacts.

2.Data collection: selection methods (6/6)

- **Comparative studies of different approaches:** Self-explanatory.

- **Interview process:** Interviews on how participants experienced the process of the project subject of the evaluation.

- **Focus Groups:** Self-explanatory.

- **Audit against standards:** This might refer to a comparative analysis against specific standards.

- **Peer reviews:** Self-explanatory.

- **Economic Modeling:** Requires expertise, eg econometrics

2.Data collection: Summary

- Will you be able to use the data – now that you have selected the questions, method according to the USE identified?

- Who will do the data collection? How will you sample? Who will manage and analyze the data?

- How will primary users be involved - IN ALL OF THE ABOVE?

3.Simulation of use: an optional step

- When there are doubts among PIUs about the usefulness of a KEQ, then it is timely to reflect on whether it truly <u>informs</u> the relevant evaluation USE

- The simulation step means <u>fabricating probable findings</u> to confirm and forecast whether they will be useful

- When there is a high degree of certainty over the probable findings, the KEQ may need revising (to avoid wasting time collecting evidence for which we have a high degree of confidence; ie the process will not be useful)
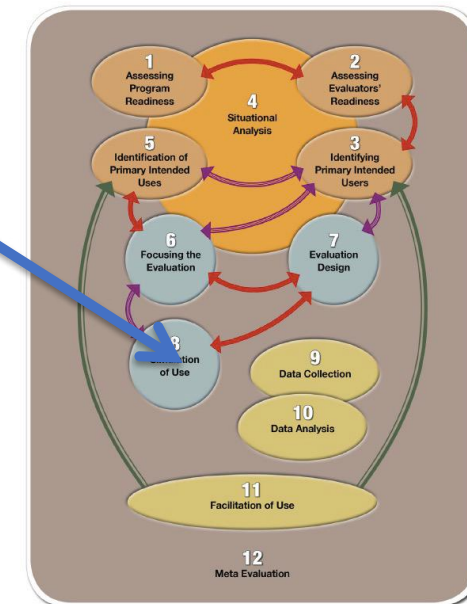
4a. Developmental evaluation – design considerations

- For those evaluations uses that are developmental, there is a variation in the steps of UFE

- Developmental uses are relevant to track an ongoing development (an innovation or experimental process; adapting principles from elsewhere to a new context; exploring real-time solutions to a sudden major change; measuring the impact or scalable innovations; or major systems change and cross-scale challenges (Patton, 2011)

## 4b. Developmental evaluation – design considerations

- Supports continuous progress and rapid response to **complex situations** with **multiple variables**.

- The evaluator is often an **integral member** of the program design team.

- Does not replace other forms of evaluation, rather is seems best suited for **initiatives that are at an initial stage of development** or **undergoing significant change**, and can benefit from careful tracking. (McConnell Foundation, 2006)

- Render definitive judgment of success or failure
- Measure success against predetermined goals
- Position the evaluator outside the assure independence and objectivity
- Design the evaluation based on linear cause-and-effect logic models
- Aim to produce generalizable findings across time and space
- Accountability focused on and directed to external authorities, stakeholders and funders
- Accountability to control and locate responsibility
- Evaluator determines the design based on the evaluator's perspective about what is important. The evaluator controls the evaluation
- Evaluation results in opinion of success or failure, which creates anxiety in those evaluated

- Provide feedback, generate learnings, support changes in direction
- Develop new measures and monitoring mechanisms as goals emerge and evolve
- Position evaluation as an internal, team functions integrated into action and ongoing interpretive processes
- Design evaluation to capture systems dynamics, interdependencies, models and emergent interconnections
- Aim to produce context-specific under-standings to inform ongoing innovations
- Accountability centred on the innovators' deep sense of fundamental values and commitment
- Learning to respond to lack of control and stay in touch with what's unfolding and thereby respond strategically
- Evaluator collaborates with those engaged in the change effort to design an evaluation process that matches philosophically with an organization's principles and objectives
- Evaluation support ongoing learning
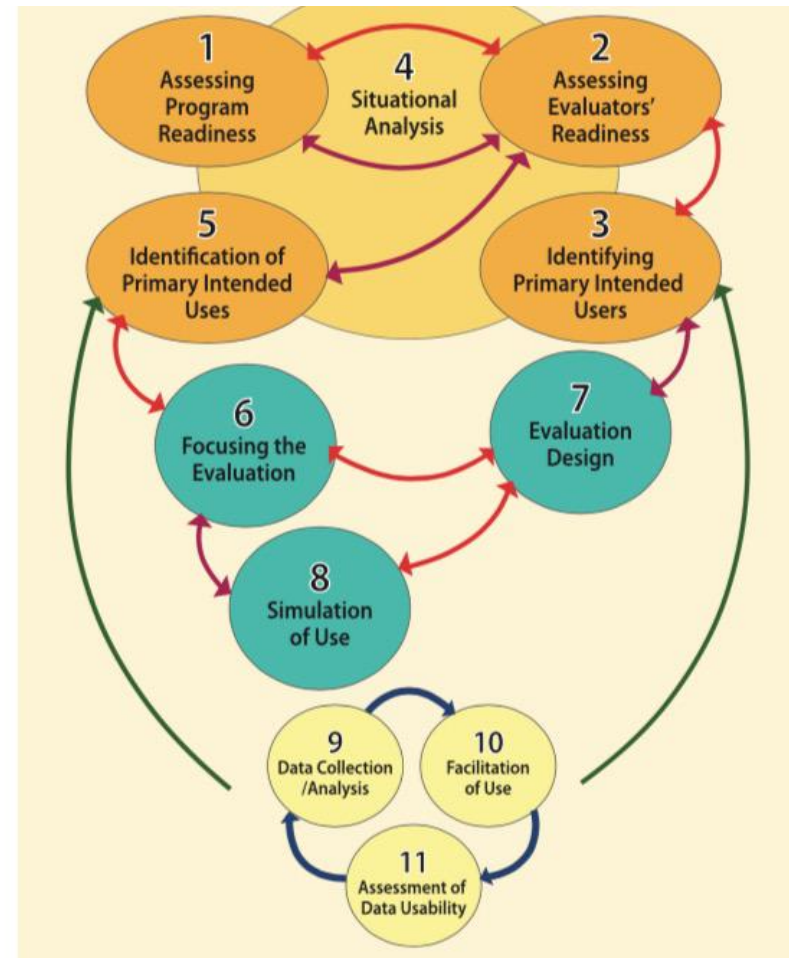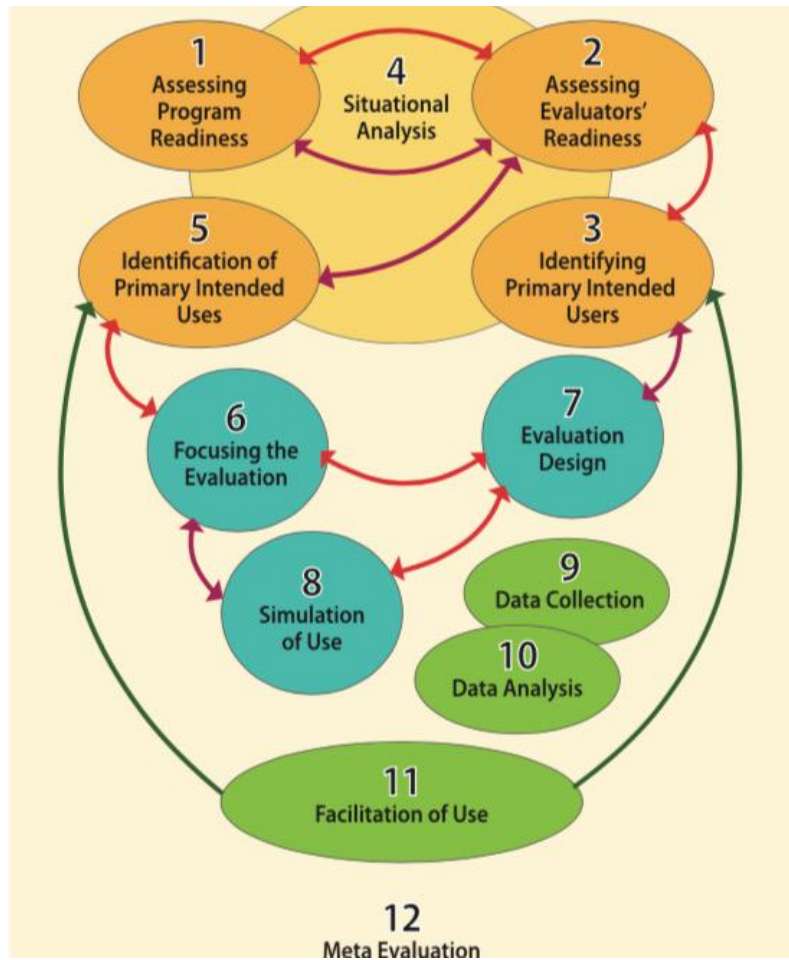
5.Planning for data collection

Based on the MEL design matrix, the evaluation plan includes details on:

- data collection methods
- ethical protocol
- sources of information (individuals, groups, documents, etc.)
- data collection timing and frequency
- dates and locations
- data storage
- persons responsible, and
- budget

Resources

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

- McConnell Foundation. (2006) *Sustaining social innovation: Developmental evaluation.* Montreal.

- Norman, C. & Navas, J. (2014). *Exploring developmental evaluation: Reflections on two case studies.* Prepared for IDRC.

- Quinn Patton, M. (2011). *Developmental Evaluation: Applying complexity concepts to enhance innovation and use*. Gilford Press: pp. 308-313)

- 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/