Monitoring, evaluation and learning for ESOs

This action is supported by the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT).

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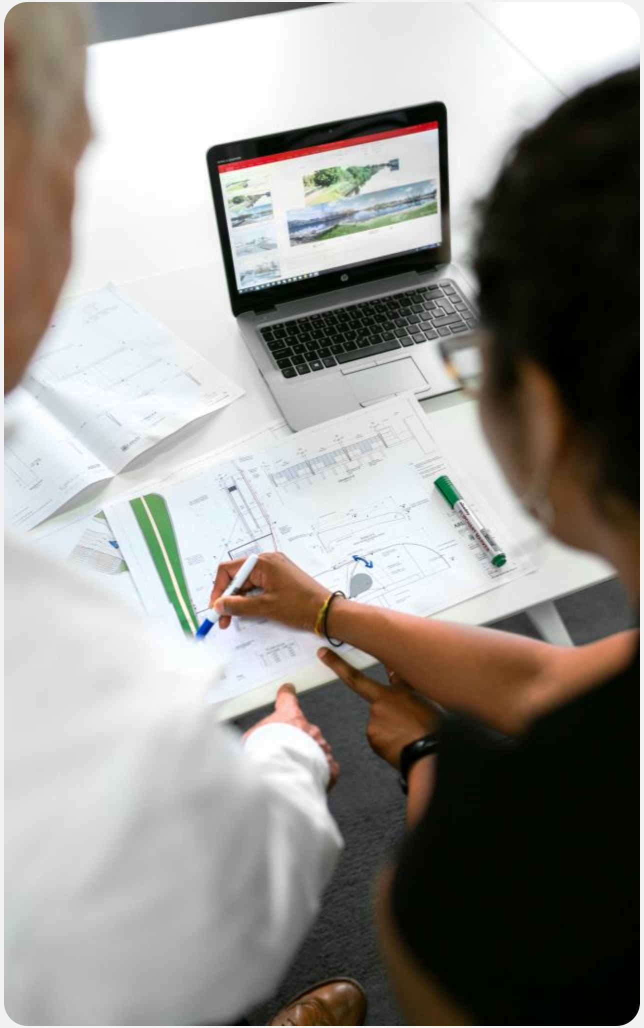
Check in

- What do you hope to get out of the session today?
- How confident are you in your organisation’s approach to monitoring, evaluation and learning?
- Two or three words you associate with monitoring, evaluation and learning - good or bad!



What we’ll look at today

- Foundational concepts in MEL
- Theory of Change
- Making practical choices
- Questions and discussion

MONITORING, EVALUATION AND LEARNING

What is MEL, why do it and who is it for?

Defining monitoring, evaluation and learning

- → Monitoring is a **systematic process of collecting and analysing evidence** to understand if the project, program, or organisation is being implemented as expected. Usually focused on **activities and deliverables**, effective monitoring allows to understand if changes in implementation are needed and suggest ways of doing it.

- → Evaluation is a **systematic process of collecting and analysing relevant evidence** to answer evaluative questions about a project, an organisation or systems. An evaluation may be carried out to either support strategic and development decisions, to enable improvements in implementation, to assess the value and effectiveness, or to promote organisational learning. One evaluation can serve diverse purposes.

- → [Organisational] Learning is the process through which the organisation, systematically, acquires knowledge to adapt and become increasingly more effective.

What?

The elements of a MEL framework.

Objectives and goals

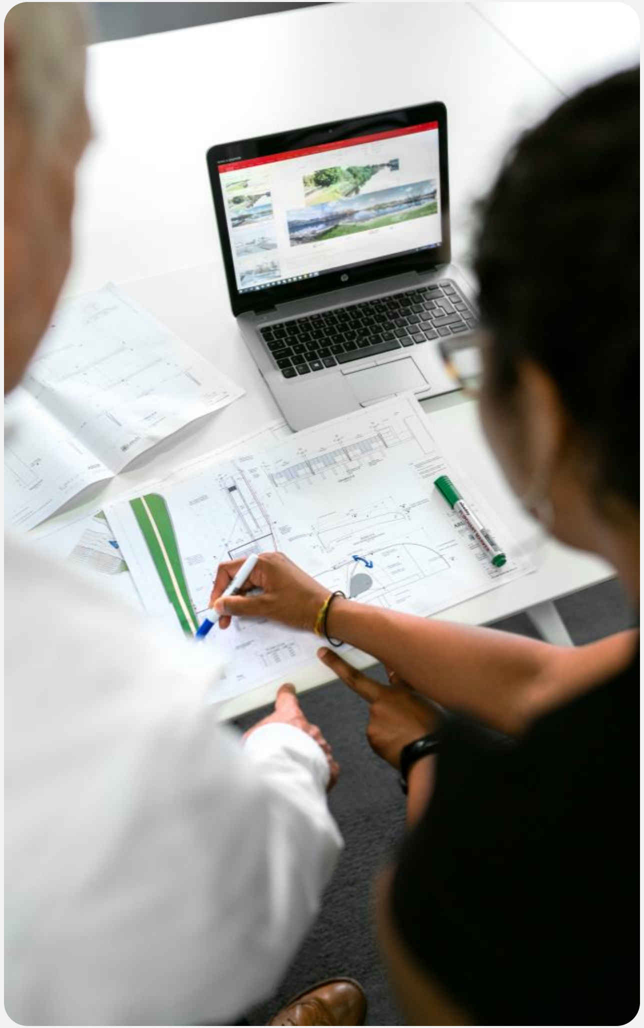
Theory of change or systems map

Learning questions

Data tools, indicators and targets

Analysis and reporting

Learning and sensemaking routines

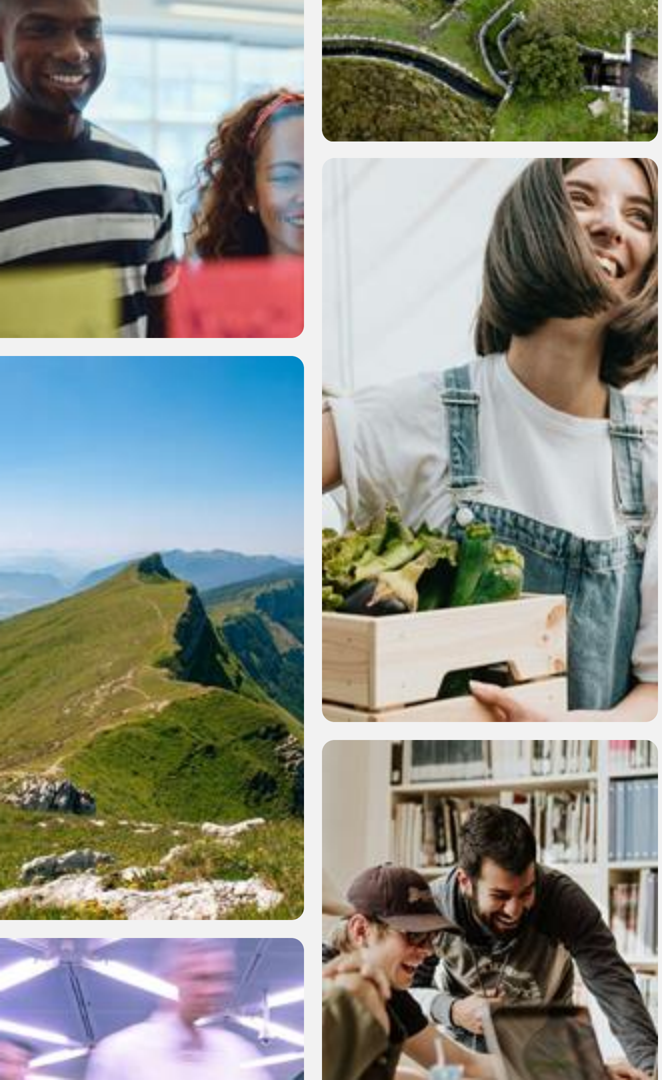


Why?

- → Accountability and transparency
- → Continuous improvement, experimentation and adaptation
- → Data-driven decision making
- → Communicating our value and impact to others
- → Communicating ventures' value and impact to others
- → Making our thinking visible
- → Bridging mission and strategy with the day-to-day of the work
- → Building evidence for scaling and replication
- → Addressing bias and group think

Who?


Policy actors
Media & public
Funders and investors
Trustees
My organisation
Staff
Ventures
Partners and co-delivery
Users & beneficiaries



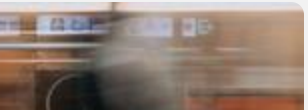
Small group discussion:

- → What is driving our monitoring, evaluation and learning approach? What is our ‘why’?
- → Who are our main stakeholders for MEL, and what do we need to take into consideration?

Theory of change








What is a theory of change?

- A map of the world you work in
- A process as much as a product
- Clarifies goals and objectives
- Articulates underlying programme logic and assumptions
- Identify what should be measured, when and how
- Communicates impact to stakeholders and the public

Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Outcomes	Impact
Inputs include all the human, physical, and economic **resources needed** to implement the program.	Activities include all **services and products offered** to participants during the program.	Outputs include **immediate and tangible results** observed after the completion of each activity.	Outcomes include the **goals desired after the program.** This includes indicators that can measure each goal.	Impact includes the **benefits that can be transferred to the ecosystem** as a result of the achieved goals.

CAUSAL RELATIONSHIPS / PATHWAYS

Inputs

- Project staff
- External trainers
- Volunteer mentors
- Clean tech sector project partners
- Outreach and events materials
- Office supplies
- IT equipment and tools
- Facilities

Activities

- Mentoring sessions
- Demo day with investors
- Networking events with clean tech ecosystem players
- Capacity building workshops business development, fundraising, financial management, and diversity and inclusion.
- Training office hours support

Outputs

- Number of participants enrolled in the program
- Percentage of minority groups representation in the cohort
- Number of mentoring sessions conducted per participant
- Rate of workshop completion per participant
- Level of satisfaction with the activities per participant

Outcomes

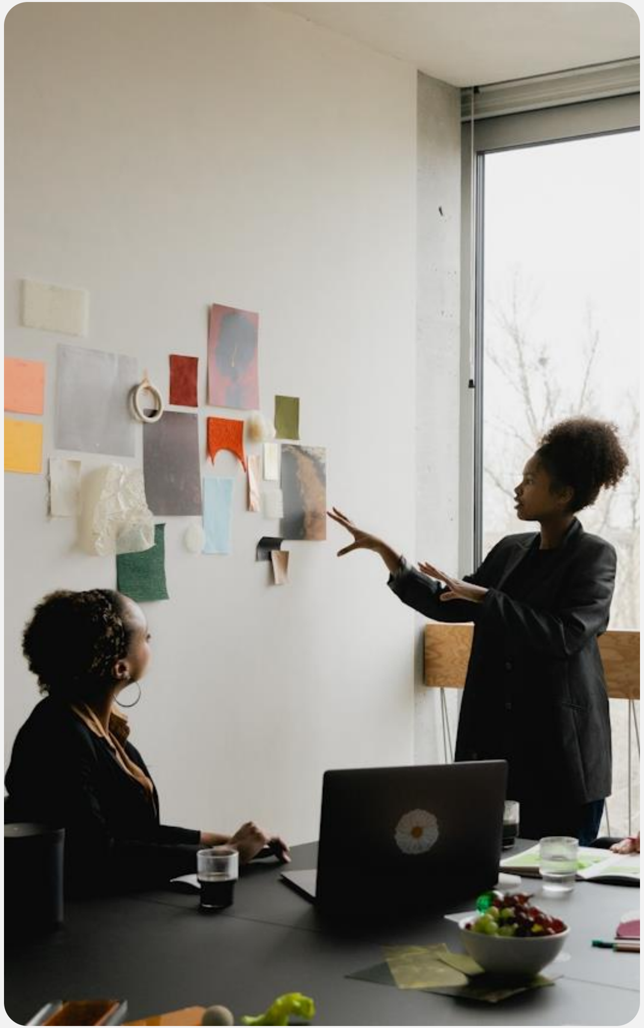
Participants have:

- Applied new knowledge and developed a business plan to increase revenue
- Connected with investors and raised funds for their startups
- Established new partnerships to enable scaling (i.e. supply chain, materials sourcing, R&D)
- From minority groups received tailored support to increase exposure and access to resources

Impact

- Increased capital available to foster the clean tech entrepreneurial ecosystem in a specific region or area.
- Increased representation of minority groups among founders in the clean tech sector.
- Improved energy efficiency solutions to mitigate and reduce negative environmental impact.

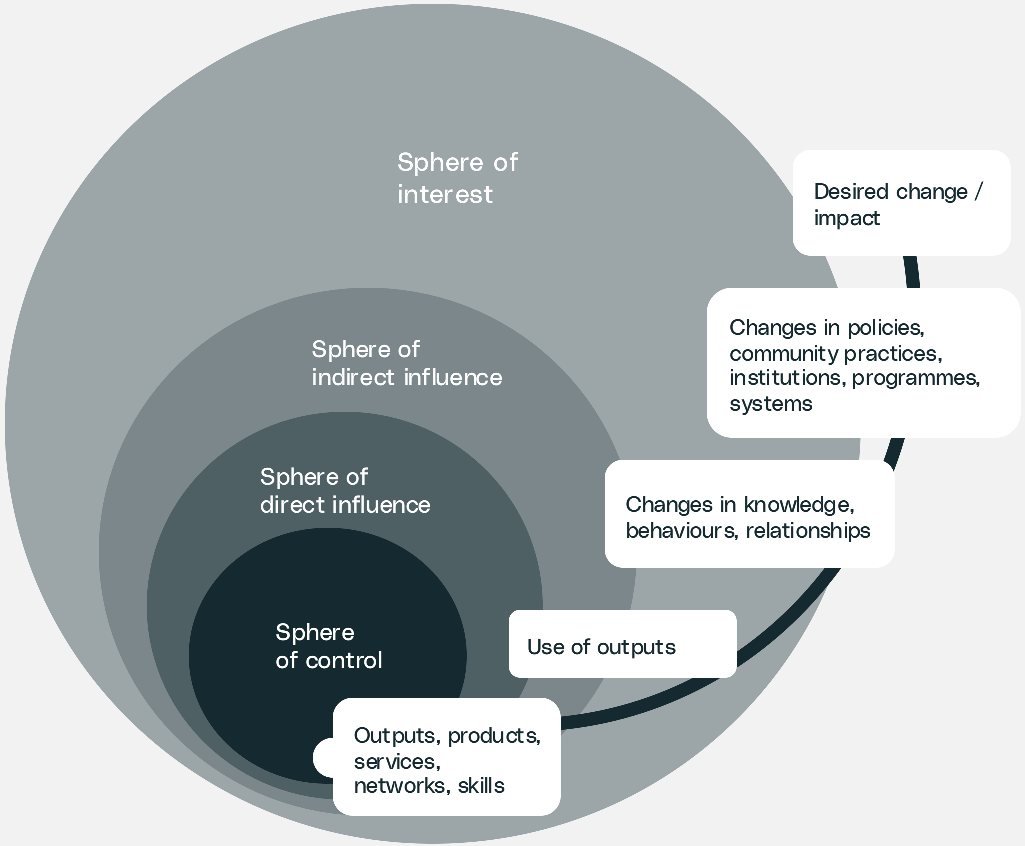
01	Situation analysis	- Map the actors in the system - Identify barriers and causes - Define your target group within the climate innovation ecosystem
02	Define the desired outcomes	- Clearly define the program's outcomes - Define the outcomes as SMART goals - Align the outcomes with ***your role*** in the system
03	State the causal pathways	- Review existing research and evidence - Gather stakeholders and experts' input - Define pathways stated as if we do X, then Y will happen
04	Visualise your theory of change	- Draw a visual representation of the program - Define inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes, and impact - Show the connection between goals and intended impact
05	Identify assumptions and risks	- Be specific on our assumptions - Identify potential risks or uncertainties that may affect the program's success during implementation
06	Define MEL priorities and processes	- Define quantitative and/or qualitative indicators - Consider data to be gathered pre, during and post program



Questions to ask (more than once!)

- → Does your set of outcomes capture what the initiative intends to achieve?
- → Are the outcomes clearly and specifically defined?
- → Are the outcomes plausible and realistically achievable?
- → Are the casual relationships (mechanisms for change) between each of the outcomes clear?
- → Is the rationale for one outcome leading to another supported by evidence? If not, what are the evidence gaps, and can these be addressed?
- → What are the assumptions underpinning the achievement of each outcome? (Factors affecting the achievement of outcomes).
- → Which outcomes will we hold ourselves accountable for achieving, and which do we recognise our contribution towards?

Line of accountability



In practical terms...

	Theory of Action	Theory of Change
In or out?	Inward looking – project focussed	Outward looking – context focussed
Change	Focusses on what the project will do to try and effect change	Focusses on how change happens generally in the system, regardless of your work
Control	Looks at factors within a project's control	Looks at factors outside the project's control
Cause and effect	Confident about A leading to B	Uncertain relationships between A and B... or C and D
Assumptions	Validating assumptions	Developing hypotheses
Log frame	Bottom half – inputs, activities, outputs	Top half - relationships between outcomes and goals

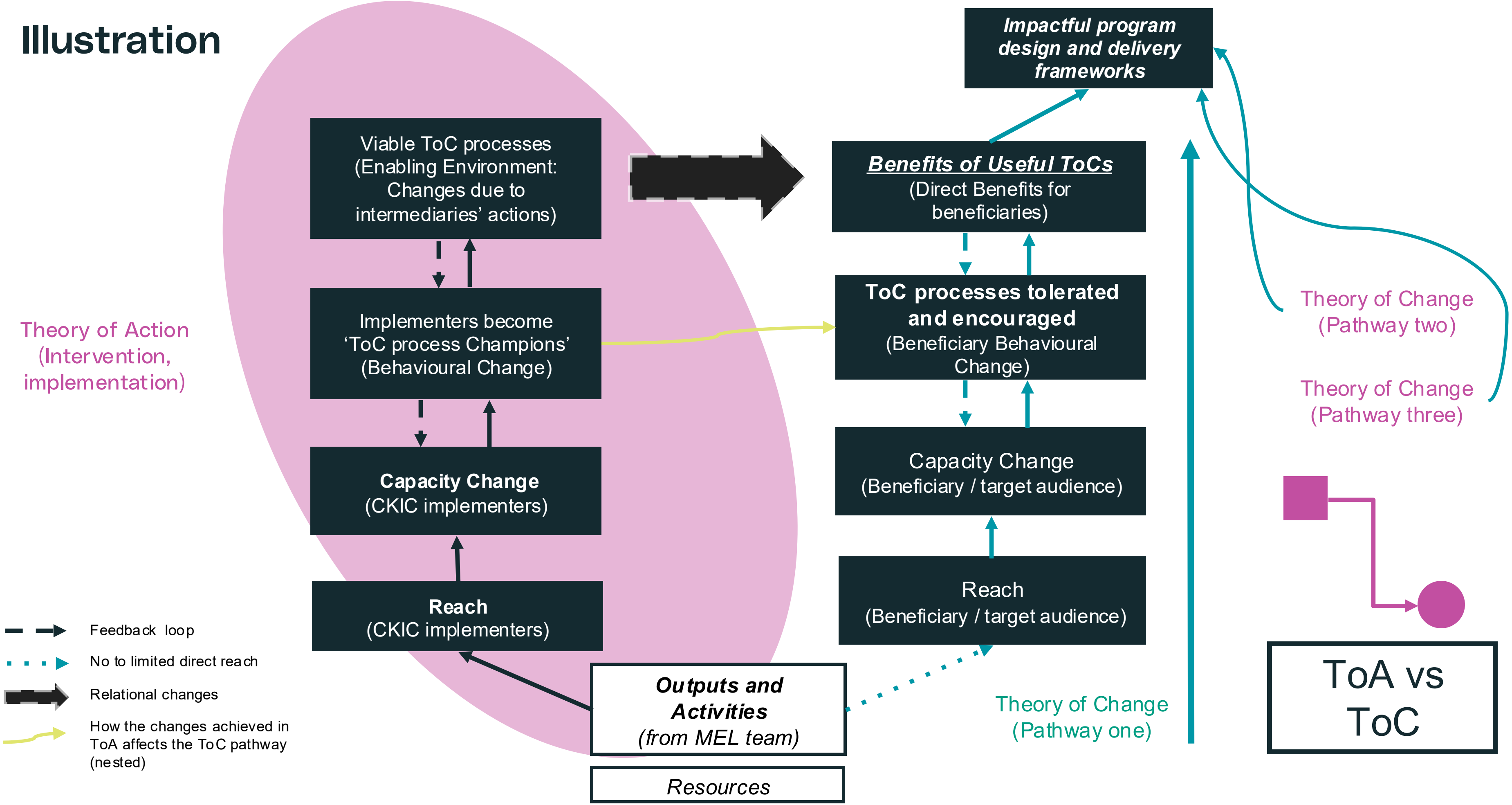
Knowing the difference in such terms matters while thinking of and initiating your ToC process.

As we see, our sense of the ToC assumptions (for example) is completely different from that of the ToA, same as causality and all other points of difference.

Think of it as part of a whole, as a ToA plays a crucial role in implementing your sought-after (non-linear) complexity-aware ToC.

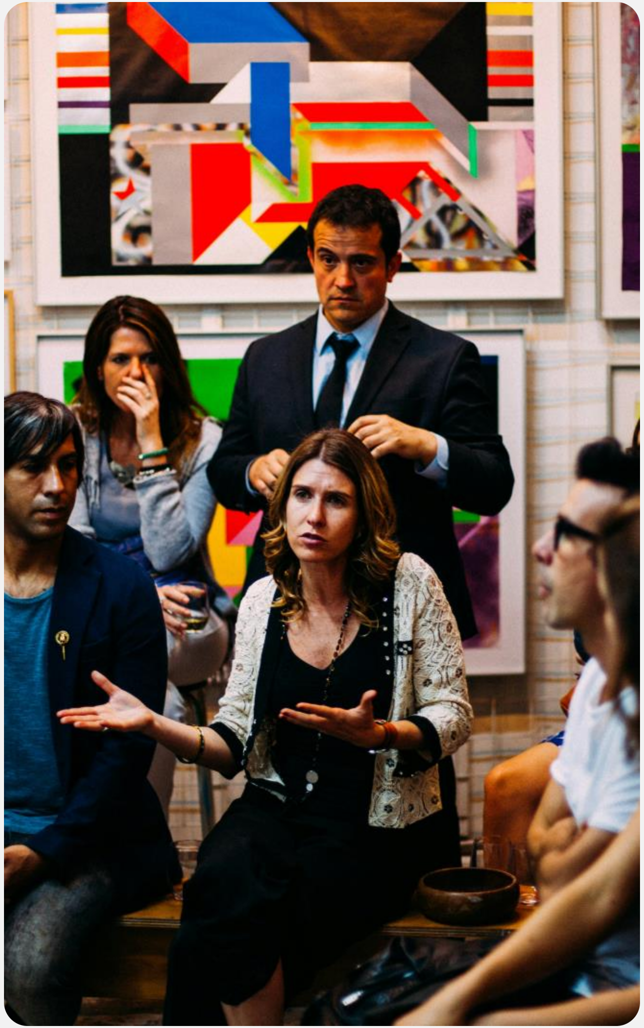
That's why, a ToC may often get conflated with a ToA, a thorough project strategy/plan, or logframe... etc.

Illustration



“All models are wrong, but some are useful.”

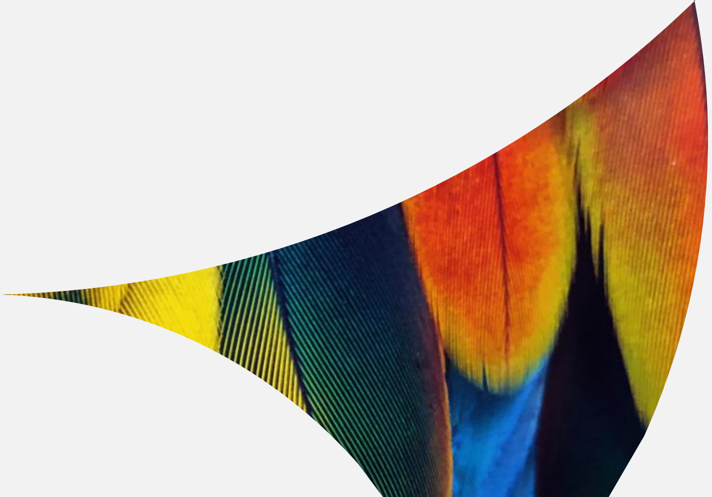
- George Box



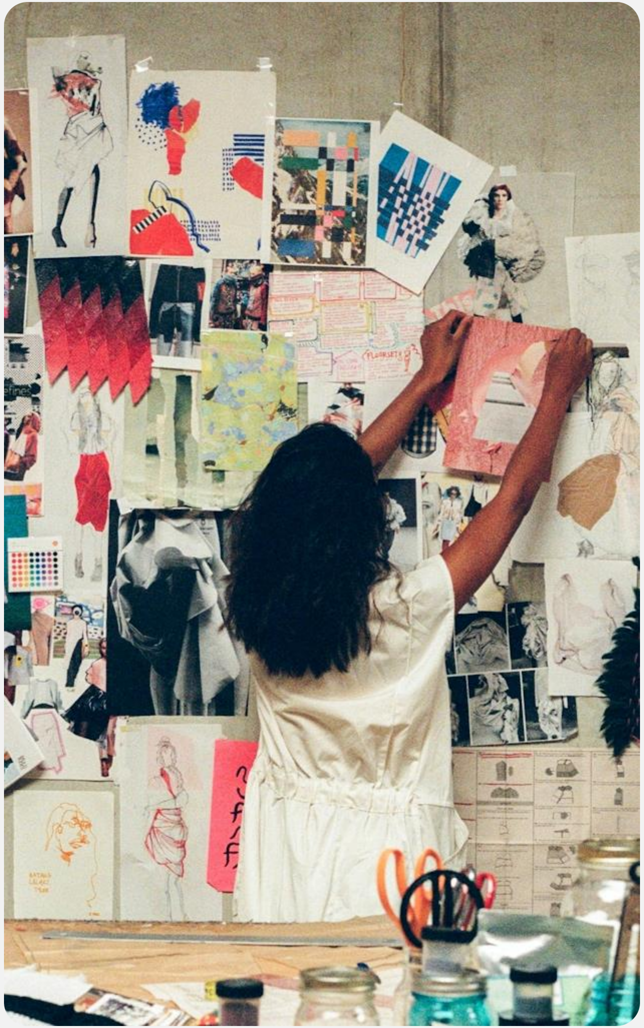
Small group discussion:

- → What experience have you had using theory of change, or other MEL planning models?
- → What challenges have you encountered?
- → What have you found helpful?

Making practical choices




GET ALL THE INFORMATION YOU CAN, WE'LL THINK OF A USE FOR IT LATER.



Decisions that inform the decisions

- → What do our funders require or expect us to do?
- → What do our stakeholders care about?
- → What capacity and resources do we actually have for MEL? (What should we have?)
- → What skills do we have, and what gaps are there?
- → Should we do the evaluation ourselves, or ask someone else to do it?
- → What data infrastructure do we have, and what gaps are there?
- → What is proportionate, for us and our partners?

Learning and evaluation questions

Good learning questions:

- → Frame the **scope and boundaries** of evaluation activities
- → Are grounded in the program's **theory of change** and reflect genuine gaps in knowledge
- → Reflect a variety of key **stakeholders'** information needs
- → Are those that matter most for **decision-making** and action (future-focussed)
- → Can be answered through the collection and analysis of **data**

Selecting data and analysis tools

Data Collection Tools:

- **Quantitative Tools:** Surveys (e.g., Google Forms, MSForms), automated data trackers, online polls
- **Qualitative Tools:** Interviews, focus groups, open-ended survey questions
- **Mixed Methods:** Combining quantitative (e.g., numerical data) and qualitative (e.g., participant feedback) approaches

Analysis Tools:

- Quantitative Analysis: Excel, Google Sheets, SPSS for statistical analysis
- Qualitative Analysis: Thematic analysis using tools like NVivo or manual coding

Reporting Tools:

- Dashboards
- Visual aids like infographics, PowerPoint presentations, or narrative reports

Data platform

Data gover-nance

Some examples of tools

1 Learning and development:

Kirkpatrick model for training evaluation

2 Capacity building:

Organisational capacity assessment tools

3 Peer-to-peer support:

Network analysis

4 Exploratory and pilot work:

Outcome Harvesting or Most Significant Change

Monitoring

A

Identify key metrics

Define clear and measurable metrics that align with the venture's goals and objectives. Consider metrics that capture financial, customer, social impact, and sustainability performance.

B

Establish baselines

Set baselines for each metric to compare against the venture's progress over time. This provides a baseline for assessing the impact of the accelerator support.

C

Collect data systematically

Gather data on the venture's performance on a regular basis. This data can be collected through surveys, interviews, performance tracking tools, and other methods.

D

Ensure data quality

Ensure that the data collected is accurate, complete, and consistent. This helps to ensure that the evaluation is reliable and reflects the true performance of the venture.

Evaluation

E

Analyse data trends

Analyse the data collected to identify trends and patterns in the venture's performance. This can help to identify areas of strength and areas for improvement.

F

Compare against baselines

Compare the venture's performance against the established baselines to assess the impact of the accelerator support.

G

Evaluate against goals and objectives

Evaluate the venture's performance against the defined goals and objectives. This helps to determine whether the venture is on track to achieve its intended impact.

H

Identify key insights

Identify the key insights that can be drawn from the evaluation. These insights can inform the next steps for the venture and the accelerator.

Learning

I

Draw conclusions

Based on the evaluation findings, draw conclusions about the effectiveness of the accelerator support.

J

Develop recommendations

Develop recommendations for improving the accelerator support program. This could include changes to the program structure, the metrics used, or the data collection methods.

K

Implement changes

Implement the recommended changes to the accelerator support program. This will help to ensure that the program is more effective in the future.

L

Identify key insights

Continue to monitor the venture's progress and make adjustments as needed. This ensures that the accelerator/incubator is providing the most effective support possible.

“Bringing the full force of evaluation to bear upon a new idea is a very effective way of killing it”

- Kees Dorst

Deductive vs inductive approaches

Deductive Analysis

Is useful when you are working in a well-researched field and want to **test specific hypotheses or evaluate predefined outcomes.** It's often used in **quantitative analysis** where data is collected systematically to test theories.

Inductive Analysis

is more appropriate when there is **uncertainty, little prior knowledge**, or when you aim to **explore new areas.** It’s frequently applied in **qualitative analysis** to allow new themes and insights to emerge from the data.

What kind of analysis is needed?

Criteria	Deductive Approach	Inductive Approach
Starting Point	Predefined theory or hypothesis	Specific observations or data
Direction of Analysis	Top-down: Tests a hypothesis	Bottom-up: Builds patterns or theory from data
Purpose	Confirm or reject existing theories / hypotheses	Develop new theories, insights, or hypotheses
Application	When you want to test a known relationship (e.g., cause and effect)	When exploring unknown territory or seeking unexpected insights
Type of Data	Structured, quantitative (usually)	Unstructured, qualitative (often)
Example in MEL	Testing if a training program leads to knowledge improvement	Discovering that informal mentorship is more impactful than formal training

Questions and Discussion

Climate KIC Academy

Thank you!

ALEX VAN VLIET

alexander.vanvliet@climate-kic.org