RSPN Lunch and Learn: Monitoring and Evaluation for Climate Change Adaptation and Resilience

May 13, 2026

GREEN MUNICIPAL FUND
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How to use this resource

This resource has been co-created by everyone in attendance at the meeting on May 13, 2026.

This resource can be shared with people outside the network.

You will also find useful resources and links, identified by these icons:

Downloadable resource for presentations & reports

External resource link

Exercise or take-away activity

Monitoring and Evaluation for Climate Change Adaptation and Resilience – May 13, 2026

Meeting Objectives:

- To share knowledge on monitoring and evaluation (M&E) for climate change adaptation and resilience

Highlights:

- Mia Chung, MERL, gender, and policy specialist from ISET International, presented on best practices in monitoring and evaluation in the context of climate adaptation
- Discussed how M&E can support accountability, learning, communication, planning, and evidence-based decision-making for climate adaptation work.
- The session highlighted practical tools and approaches, including TAMD and Outcome Harvesting, for tracking adaptation progress, capturing qualitative change, and sharing lessons learned.

The full recording can be found at https://www.communityenergy.ca/rspn

Key points

1. Climate change adaptation and resilience (CCA/R) is cross-sectoral, non-traditional, non-siloed thinking – taking a mixed methods approach is best practice for understanding its effectiveness

2. Keep it simple: the best system is one that you can use from start to finish

3. Use what you have - you don’t necessarily need new indicators, just ones that make sense and you’ll use

4. Flexibility and iteration is an inherent part of the process of M&E for CCA/R

5. Use a mix of general and sector-specific indicators to measure results.

6. There is no one size fits all for CCA/R work – therefore the same applies for its M&E

What is Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E)?

Monitoring asks: “Are we doing things right?”

- Tracks whether activities, budgets, timelines, and targets are on track.
- Supports accountability to funders, partners, communities, and internal teams.
- Helps identify implementation issues early.

Evaluation asks: “Are we doing the right things?”

- Assesses whether the strategy or program design is sound.
- Looks at whether the work is achieving the intended outcomes.
- Supports decisions about what to continue, change, or improve.

Knowledge, learning, and communications are part of M&E

- M&E generates evidence for internal learning.
- Learning can become knowledge products, tools, case studies, or guidance.
- Communications help share what was done, what was learned, and why it matters.

M&E is more than indicators

- It includes program design, monitoring processes, evaluation questions, and learning loops.
- The goal is not just to measure progress, but to improve decisions and strengthen future work.

When is the best time to think about M&E?

The earlier, the better
- Build M&E into risk assessment and adaptation planning from the start.
- Use early planning stages to clarify what success looks like and what you already track.

But start when you can
- Budgets, funding windows, political direction, and project timelines do not always line up neatly.
- A practical M&E system is better than a perfect one that no one uses.

Keep it simple and realistic
- Design around available staff time, capacity, and budget.
- Start by identifying what information is already being collected across the organization.
- Add only what is useful and manageable.

Prioritize training and co-development
- External consultants can help, but avoid fully outsourcing the learning.
- Co-developing the approach builds internal capacity for future monitoring and evaluation.

Plan for iteration and longer timelines
- Climate adaptation M&E will likely need to evolve over time.
- Mixed-methods, qualitative analysis, storytelling, and community validation can take longer.
- This is especially important where relationship-building, reconciliation, and community accountability are priorities.

Why do M&E?

Accountability
- Show how resources were used and whether commitments were met.
- Demonstrate progress to funders, leadership, Council, partners, and community.

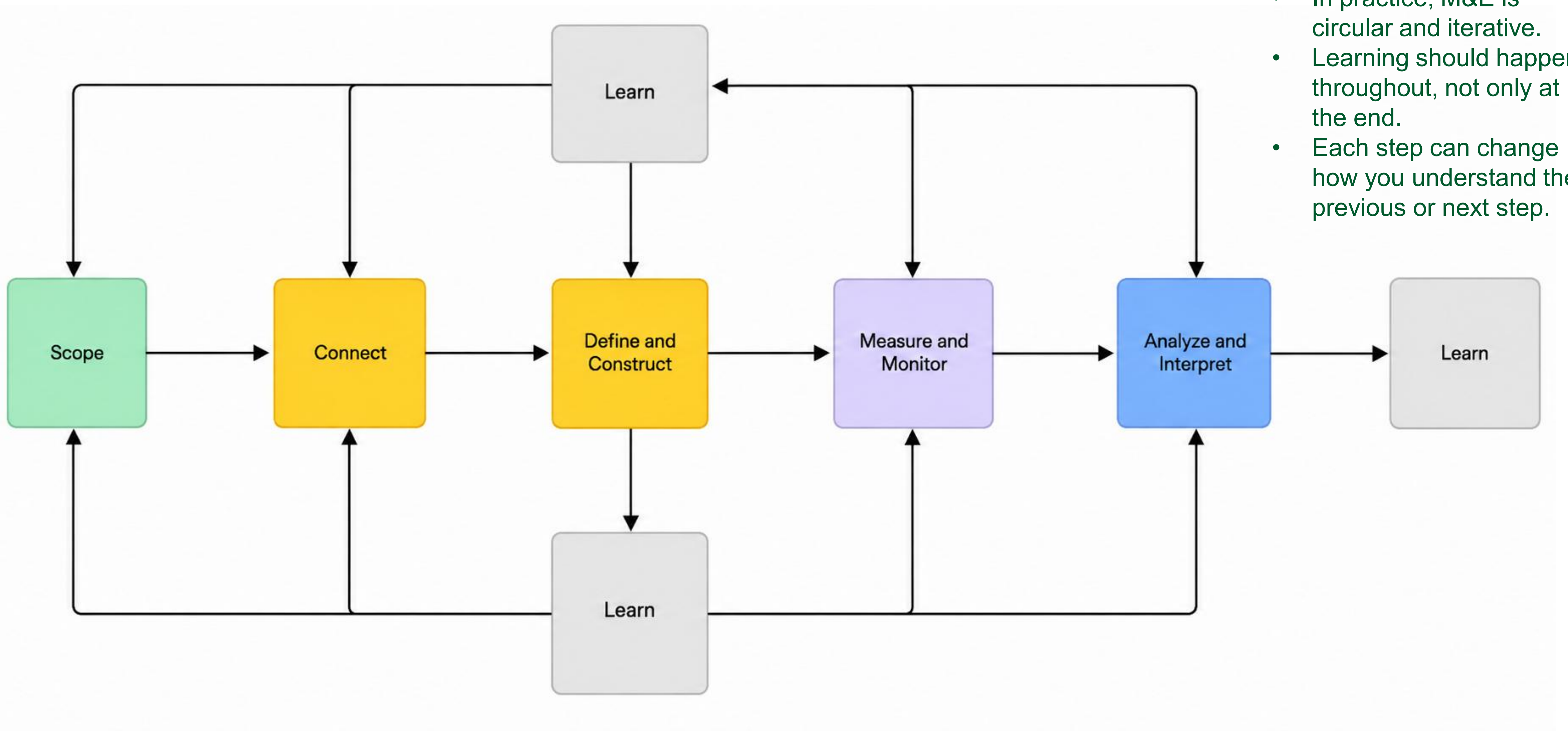
Learning
- Understand what worked, what did not, and what should change.
- Capture lessons so they are not lost through staff, Council, or leadership turnover.

Communication
- Provide evidence for priorities that may need stronger support.
- Help explain what was done, why it mattered, and what impact it had.
- Support clear messages to internal teams, decision makers, and the public.

Planning
- Inform future program design, staffing, funding, and resource allocation.
- Support succession planning by documenting decisions, knowledge, and progress over time.

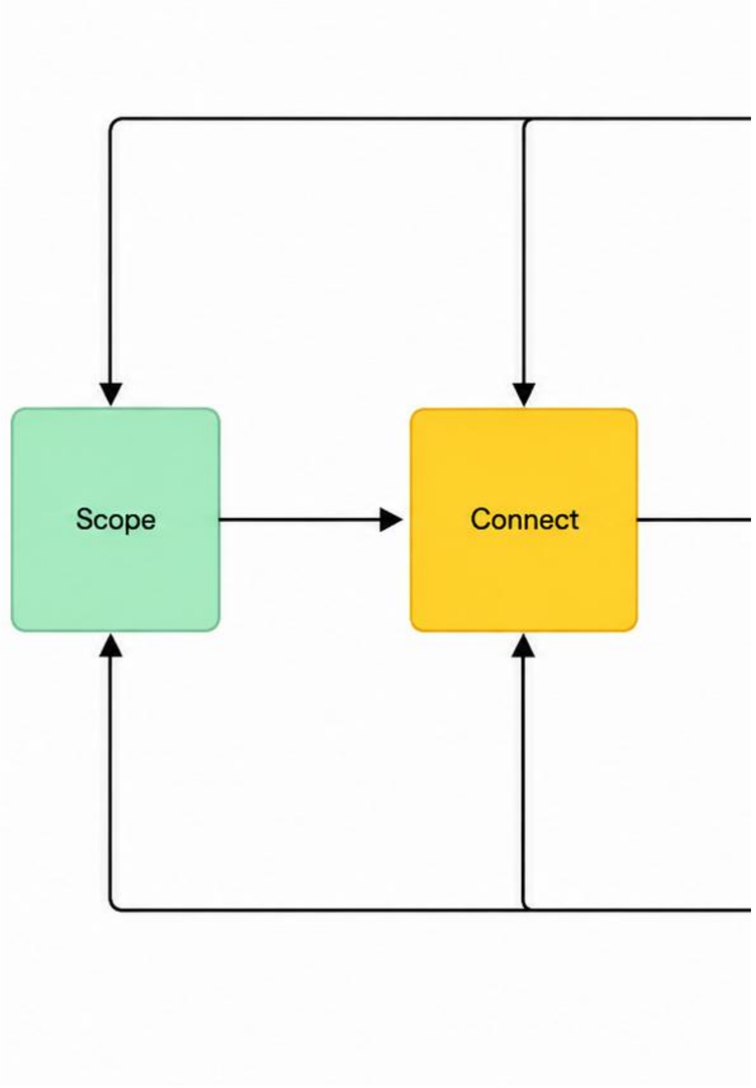
Satisfaction
- Create space to recognize progress and celebrate good work.
- Show that goals were met, and that they were met well.

The M&E Process



- Projects often look linear: plan, implement, report, finish.
- In practice, M&E is circular and iterative.
- Learning should happen throughout, not only at the end.
- Each step can change how you understand the previous or next step.

Scope and connect



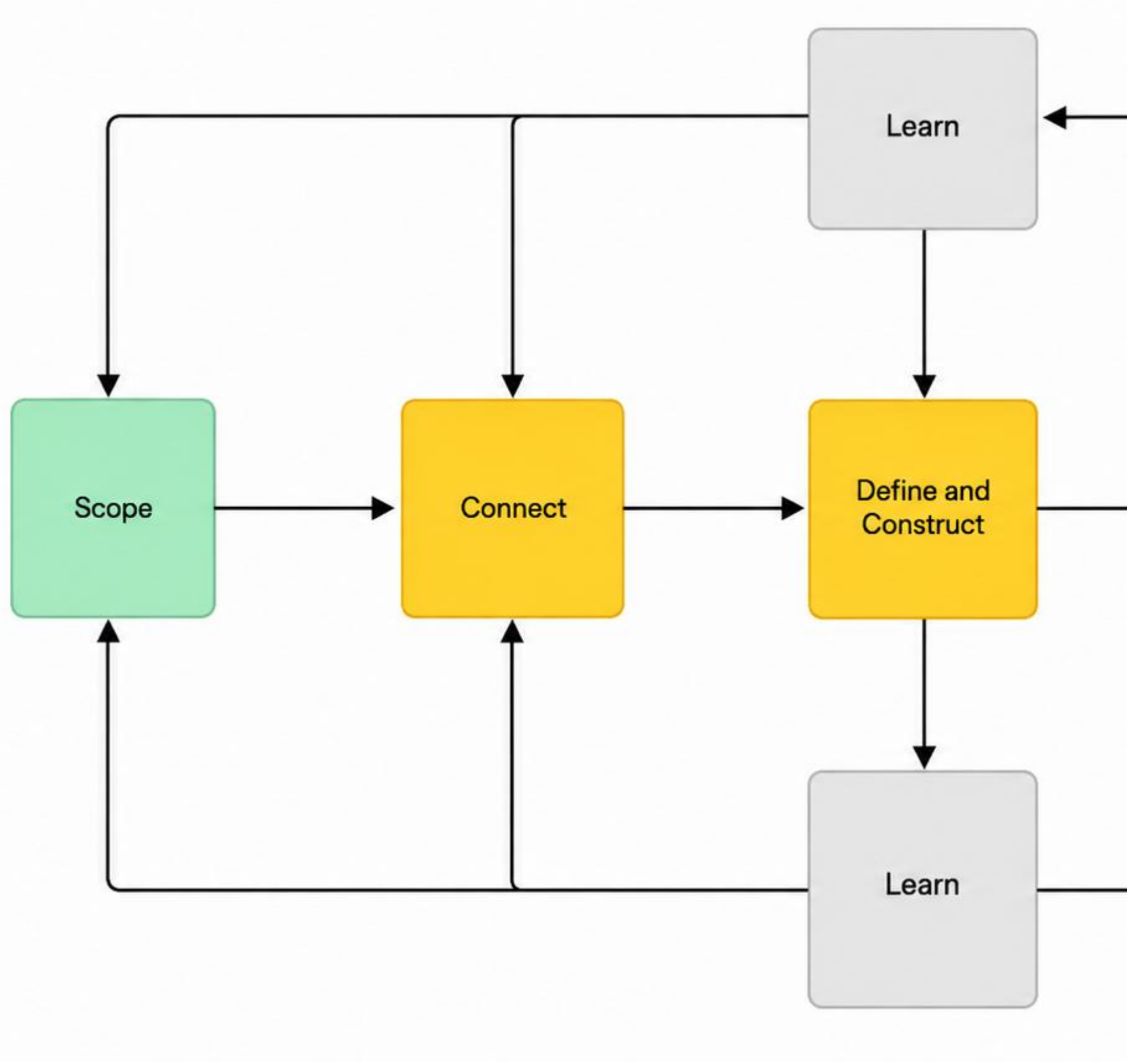
Scope

- Clarify what you want to understand and why.
- Identify who is already collecting relevant information.
- Look across departments, teams, partners, and community relationships.
- Map existing data, systems, roles, and gaps.
- Consider whether you are trying to understand attribution or contribution.

Connect M&E to other processes

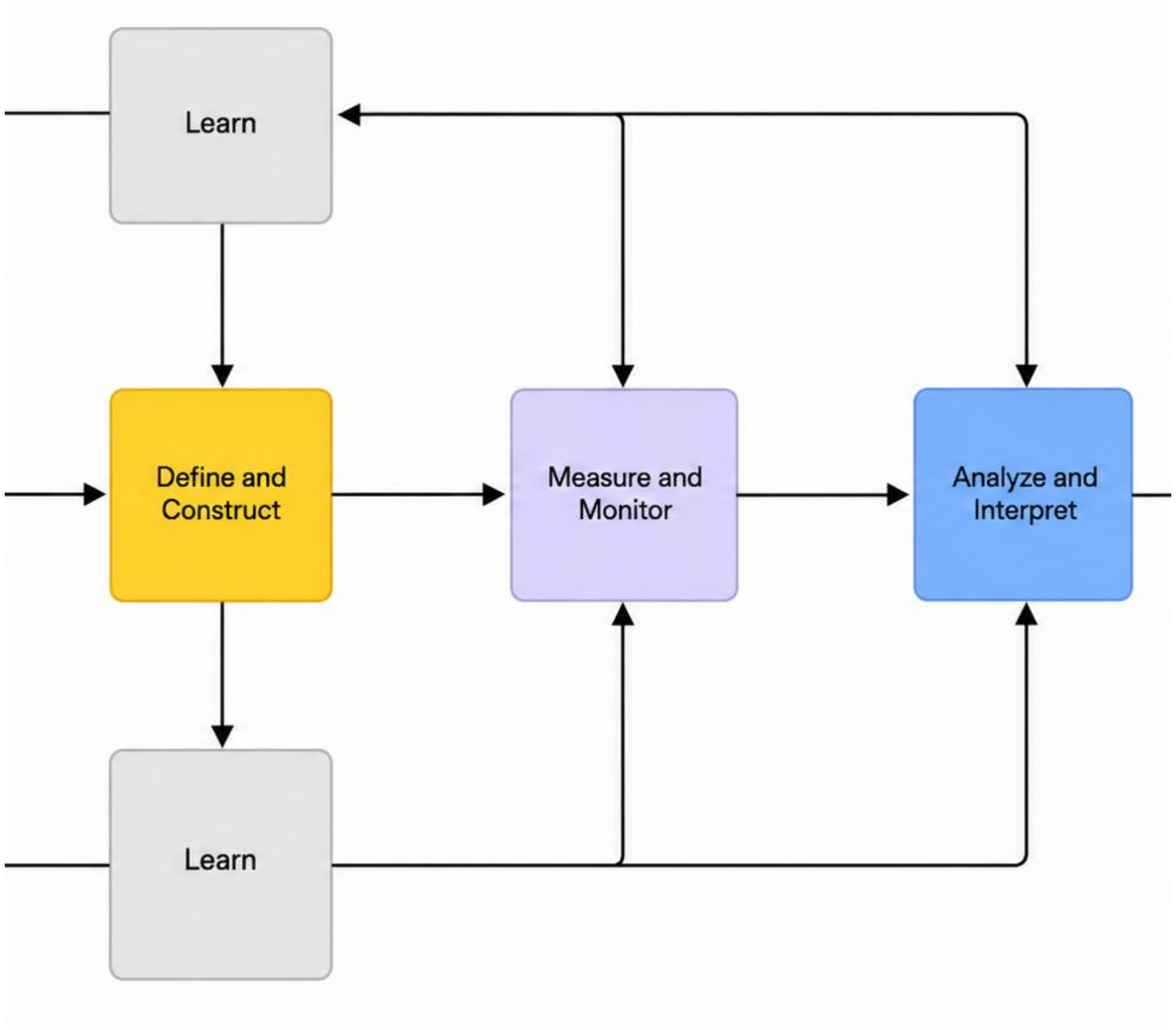
- Link M&E to your work plan, theory of change, log frame, or results framework.
- Make sure indicators reflect the kind of success you are aiming for.
- Build in flexibility, because adaptation work changes with context.
- Use planning tools to clarify what should be monitored, evaluated, and learned.

Define and construct indicators



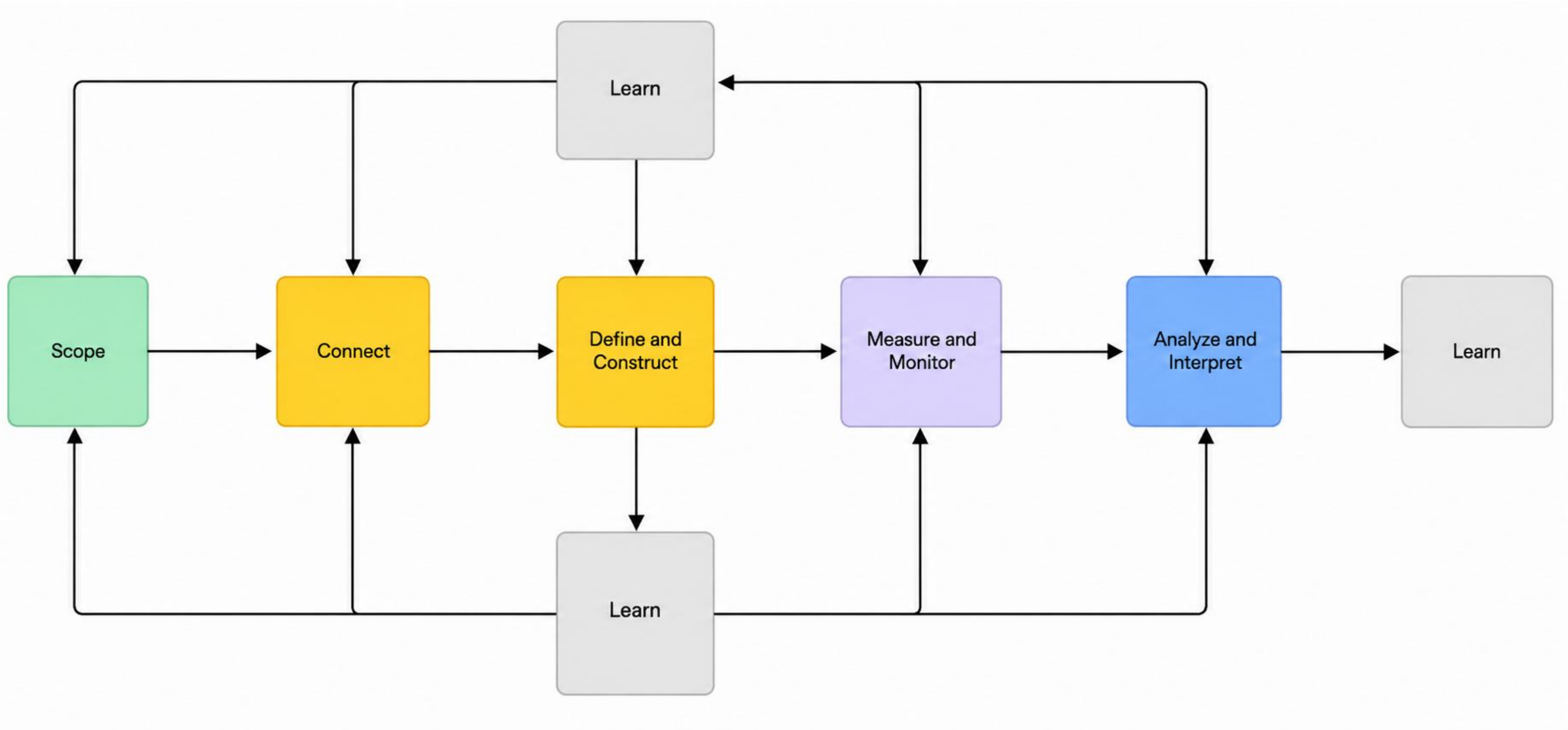
- There is no universal indicator set that works for every community.
- National or provincial indicators can be useful starting points, but they need to be adapted locally.
- Choose indicators that are realistic for your staffing, budget, data access, and context.
- In adaptation, indicators may track progress and process, not only final outcomes.
- Targets should be tied to baselines, resources, funding, and what is actually achievable.

Measure, monitor, analyze, interpret



- Put a clear process in place for collecting and reviewing information.
- Make sure someone is responsible for follow-up.
- Expect analysis to take time, especially with qualitative or participatory methods.
- Interpretation should include context, not just numbers.
- Participatory approaches can help clarify what success means at community, organizational, or individual levels.

Learn and adjust



- Learning should happen throughout the process.
- If an indicator is not working after several months, revisit it.
- Check whether the issue is the indicator, the data collection process, or the way people understand the question.
- Use learning to improve the M&E system and the program itself.
- The goal is not to get the framework perfect the first time, but to keep making it more useful.

Example # 1:

Tracking Adaptation and Measuring Development (TAMD) Framework and Toolkit

What it is

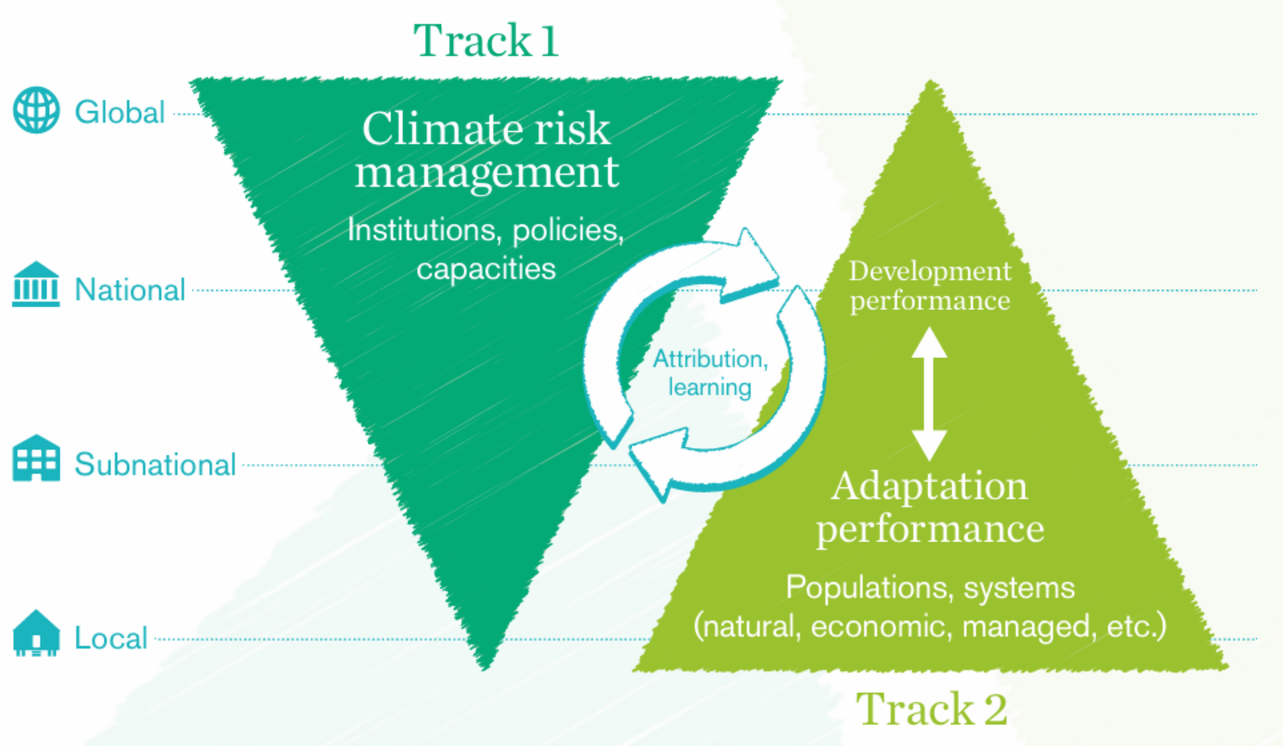
- An adaptation-focused M&E framework developed by the International Institute for Environment and Development
- Designed to help users assess both:
  - how well climate risks are being managed, and
  - whether adaptation efforts are reducing vulnerability and supporting development outcomes.

Why it is useful for adaptation M&E

- TAMD is useful because adaptation success is hard to measure through one simple indicator.
- It recognizes that adaptation work often involves:
  - long timelines,
  - multiple sectors,
  - institutional change,
  - community-level outcomes,
  - and uncertain climate risks.
- Rather than offering one universal measure of success, TAMD supports the development of **context-specific frameworks**.

TAMD Toolkit: A manual for local planning

TAMD: The “twin track” approach



Source: [TAMD Toolkit: A manual for local planning]

The “twin track” approach

TAMD uses two connected tracks:

Track 1: Climate risk management

Looks at how widely and how well institutions manage climate risks. Focuses on systems, policies, capacities, coordination, planning, and resources. This track asks: **Are the conditions in place to manage climate risk well?**

Track 2: Adaptation performance and development outcomes

Looks at whether adaptation interventions are reducing vulnerability. Also considers whether adaptation is helping keep development on course. This track asks: **Are adaptation actions making a meaningful difference?**

TAMD: Indicators

TAMD includes nine Track 1 indicator areas that can be customized to different contexts:

- climate change integration into planning,
- institutional coordination for integration,
- budgeting and finance,
- institutional knowledge and capacity,
- climate information,
- uncertainty,
- participation,
- awareness among stakeholders,
- and vulnerability/resilience.

Track 2 does not rely on one universal set of indicators.

It may include:

- resilience indicators,
- wellbeing indicators,
- climate hazard indicators,
- vulnerability indicators,
- or locally developed indexes.

TAMD: Strengths and Key Takeaways

Strengths

- **Flexible:** can be applied at different scales, from national systems to local projects.
- **Systematic:** provides a full-cycle approach to planning, monitoring, and evaluation.
- **Adaptation-specific:** designed for climate risk and vulnerability, rather than generic program evaluation.
- **Useful in a growth phase:** helpful when an organization or government is still building its M&E systems.
- **Supports customization:** provides guidance and examples without requiring every user to adopt the same indicators.

Key takeaways

- TAMD is a strong example of an M&E approach that balances **structure and flexibility**.
- It gives users a way to track both the **systems that support adaptation** and the **outcomes adaptation is meant to achieve**.
- For local adaptation work, the most important lesson is not to copy indicators directly, but to use them as a starting point for locally relevant, realistic, and useful M&E.

Example # 2:

Outcome Harvesting

What it is

- Outcome Harvesting is a systematic, qualitative methodology that treats stories as data.
- It is useful when the change you are trying to track is not easily captured through other indicators
- It is especially relevant when you are trying to understand changes in:
    - behaviours,
    - relationships,
    - participation,
    - decision-making,
    - systems,
    - or community-level dynamics.

What it focuses on

- Outcome Harvesting tracks evidenced changes in the environment where your work is happening.
- The focus is on changes your work has likely contributed to, rather than changes you can fully attribute to your work.
- It looks for evidence that something has actually shifted, not only that an activity was intended to create change.

Outcome Harvesting: Contribution, not attribution

Outcome Harvesting is helpful in complex settings because it recognizes that change rarely comes from one actor alone.
It asks: **What changed, and how did our work contribute?**

This is useful when multiple actors may have influenced the same change, such as:

- community associations,
- local organizations,
- friendship centres,
- community trusts,
- service providers,
- or government partners.

What counts as an outcome

Outcomes can be big or small.
A large outcome might be something like receiving major new funding.
A smaller but significant outcome might be community members feeling more comfortable speaking up or participating in a new way.
Outcome Harvesting can capture both:

- positive changes, and
- negative or unexpected changes.

Outcome Harvesting: How it works

Data Collection

Outcome Harvesting collects three main types of information:

1. **Outcome statements**
Describe the **evidenced change** that happened. ***What changed?***

2. Contribution statements
Describe who or what contributed to the change. ***How did our work, and the work of others, contribute?***

3. Significance statements
Explain why the change matters. ***Why is this change important?***

Meaning-making

The collected stories are analyzed to understand impact or effectiveness.
This meaning-making process can be triangulated against a guiding document, such as:

- a Theory of Change,
- a logframe,
- or a similar planning framework.

Verification and validation

Findings should be checked with key interest-holders.
This may include:

- participants,
- beneficiaries,
- communities,
- partners,
- or others connected to the change.

This step helps confirm whether the outcome statements are accurate and meaningful.

Outcome Harvesting: Strengths and limitations

Strengths	Limitations / considerations
Treats stories as data, which helps capture changes that are hard to measure numerically.	Narrative data may not be enough for all audiences; some funders may still want numerical KPIs.
Focuses on evidenced change, not just intended change.	Requires clear explanation for audiences less familiar with qualitative methods.
Works well for contribution, rather than trying to prove direct attribution.	Can take time because participation, verification, and relationship-building are built in.
Complexity-aware: recognizes multiple actors and influences.	May feel resource-heavy, especially if used systematically across a full project cycle.
Captures big, small, positive, negative, and unexpected changes.	Requires up-front training because the approach may not feel intuitive at first.
Participatory: interest-holders help define what is significant and why.	Needs ongoing learning, review, and iteration.
Flexible: can support monitoring, evaluation, and program design.	May need to be adapted into a lighter version if timelines or capacity are limited.
Can use existing data and generate multiple products for different audiences.	Budget should include time for training, analysis, validation, and review.

Next steps

- Connect – internal to your organization, with other municipalities
  - Community of practice?
  - M&E sessions via a convenor, like CEA?
- Invite conversation
  - With key interest holders, to check into baseline
  - With experts, to help guide, train, implement, conspire
  - With colleagues – maybe they have already gotten started
- Get support
  - ISET is happy to help with any of the above

Additional Resources

[Climate Resilience Framework]	ISET's **Climate Resilience Framework** is an analytical, systems-based approach for building climate resilience. It supports practitioners in moving from vulnerability and risk assessment to identifying resilience strategies through an open, inclusive learning process. It was first piloted with cities in Asia through ACCCRN and later developed into training materials. (i-s-e-t.org)
Twelve Reasons Why Climate Change Adaptation M&E is Challenging	A guidance note by Dennis Bours, Colleen McGinn, and Patrick Pringle that explains why M&E for climate change adaptation is difficult. It highlights challenges such as long timeframes, uncertainty, cross-sectoral work, unclear end points, and the need to treat adaptation as an ongoing process rather than a fixed outcome.
Selecting Indicators for Climate Change Adaptation Programming	A practical guidance note on choosing indicators for climate adaptation programs. It argues that adaptation does not necessarily require a completely separate set of indicators; instead, users should choose a balanced mix that captures progress toward adaptation and resilience, including process indicators.
Measuring Progress on Adaptation and Climate Resilience: Recommendations to the Government of Canada	A 2018 Expert Panel report prepared for the Government of Canada on measuring national progress on adaptation and climate resilience. It recommends indicators aligned with the adaptation and climate resilience pillar of the Pan-Canadian Framework and includes guidance on implementing a sustainable adaptation M&E approach. (Publications.gc.ca)

Interested in learning more about climate adaptation planning and action?

Contact peernetworks@communityenergy.ca