

**Please note this Guidance is for
Annual Application Round 1 and
will soon be updated for Round 2.**

Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning

**An Overview for
Community Grants**

May 2024



**Ocean Community
Empowerment
and Nature**



**UK International
Development**

Partnership | Progress | Prosperity

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1. Purpose of this document

Who is this document for?

This document provides an overview of Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) requirements for **Community Grant Applicants and Grantees**.

We explain OCEAN's approach and requirements for Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning for Community Grants. We recommend applicants read this to understand:

- MEL requirements at each stage of the application process.
- MEL reporting requirements during project implementation.
- The support available to applicants and grantees to design, develop and implement MEL.

Additional guidance is available from Flexi-Grant (<https://ocean.flexigrant.com/>) and the OCEAN website (<https://oceangrants.org.uk/>). Required templates can also be downloaded from the Flexi-Grant application form. We also run MEL focused training webinars which you can sign up to through our website or watch later via YouTube (https://www.youtube.com/@OCEAN_BPF).

Contact us

If, after reading this guidance, you have any further questions and you require any assistance, contact us on helpdesk@oceangrants.org.uk.



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Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to us at ocean@defra.gov.uk

2. What is Monitoring, Evaluation & Learning (MEL)?

Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) is an important part of effectively implementing projects, demonstrating results, and learning from activities and experiences to understand what works and what does not. The three elements of MEL are defined below:

Monitoring	The systematic and routine collection of data on project resources, activities and results. This includes the routine monitoring of progress towards a project's targets, expected outcome and impact.
Evaluation	The assessment and analysis of project resources, activities and results that can assure or inform a project's design and decisions to help it achieve impact.
Learning	The process through which evidence and information is reflected on and used to address evidence gaps and identify what works or doesn't, helping to continuously improve the ability to achieve results by the project and others.

It can be helpful to think of Monitoring as regularly collecting and analysing data to answer questions mostly related to 'what' and 'when'. i.e. is the project delivering what it set out to deliver and within the expected timeframe? Monitoring helps ensure that activities are on track and achieve the desired results. The information collected through Monitoring is also critical for planning as it allows projects to adjust their approach depending on what has worked or has not worked.

Evaluation is about taking a step back and looking at the big picture. It involves assessing the intended and unintended effects of an initiative or a group of initiatives, including its strengths and weaknesses at key points in the project cycle. Evaluation tends to provide richer insights than monitoring as the questions driving it are usually about, 'how' and 'why'. i.e.: how and why positive, or negative, change happens.

Learning involves using the information gathered through monitoring and the insights emerging from evaluation to understand what can be done to improve. It's about being open to change and using insights to learn from our successes and failures to do better in the future.

3. MEL in OCEAN Community Grants

We want MEL to be useful for you and your project team. OCEAN provides tools and training in how to use MEL as you develop your application so that you can get feedback that strengthens your project design, and show how you will measure achievements.

3.1. The two-stage process

Community Grant Applications are assessed in two stages. At Stage 1, applicants will describe their project design, approach and intended impact. The OCEAN Expert committee will assess these applications and shortlist the best proposals to be invited to Stage 2.

At Stage 2, applicants will develop a more detailed proposal, which includes how they will measure the project's progress towards meeting its objectives. This will entail completing and submitting a more detailed application form and additional supporting material.

To check the opening, closing and award dates, please see our website:

<https://oceangrants.org.uk/apply/community-grants/>

3.2. Overview of MEL requirements at Stage 1 and Stage 2

The main tools that OCEAN grantees will be required to use are the Theory of Change and Logframe. Templates are available on the FlexiGrant and the OCEAN website.

The table below summarises the MEL tools that we require applicants to submit at each application stage.

- Stage 1: Applicants submit a concept note which does not include any formal MEL tools.
- Stage 2: Applicants submit a more detailed application which will include a Theory of Change diagram (required by all) and a Logframe (optional for grants under £100k).

	Stage 1 Application		Stage 2 Application	
	Logframe	Theory of Change	Logframe	Theory of Change
Community Grants £100K - £250K	x	x	✓ Required	✓ Required
Community Grants under £100K	x	x	x Optional	✓ Required

Templates are provided for both the Theory of Change and Logframe, containing guidance on how to complete them. These are available on the OCEAN website and application portal.

3.3. Theory of Change and Logframe

At Stage 2 you will develop your project's Theory of Change and Logframe.

The **Theory of Change (ToC)** is a tool to describe the logical steps of how change is expected to come about through a project. In OCEAN we ask that you provide a Theory of Change diagram, to illustrate the narrative in your application. This should be uploaded as a Word document. For more information on how to develop the ToC, please see the guidance in the Theory of Change Template provided on the OCEAN website and application portal.

While the ToC describes the process of change and our assumptions, it is best used alongside a logframe. **A logframe** is a tool to monitor and evaluate performance – it is used to track actual results against what was planned, by using indicators that are specific measures of the changes you wish to achieve through your project. For more information on how to develop the logframe, please see the guidance in the Logframe Template on the OCEAN website and application portal.

Grantees will use the ToC and logframe as key monitoring and evaluation tools throughout the life of their project, and use them to demonstrate change in their project Annual Reports and Final Report (see 3.4).

3.4. Reporting & Monitoring Visits

OCEAN grantees will update us on the progress of their project every six months using report templates that we provide. This will involve completing and submitting a Half-Year Report in the first 6 months from your project start date and an Annual Report in each year of the project.

The **Half-Year Report** (2-3pages max) is an opportunity for grantees to give a short update on how things have progressed in past 6 months, and let us know if there are any notable challenges or achievements to share.

The **Annual Report** is a more a detailed account of progress over the previous year. The report template will provide guiding questions to help you reflect and evaluate how you are progressing towards your targets. You will submit an update of your progress against the indicators in your logframe. Three months after your project ends, you will be required to submit a **Final Report**, which will detail the achievements in the project lifetime and share lessons learned.

To support learning during your project, OCEAN will provide feedback on your Annual Reports and Final Report. Reports will be reviewed by a MEL expert who will be able to provide recommendations on how to strengthen your project monitoring and reporting.

Selected projects will undergo an **in-person monitoring visit** (up to 5 days) to facilitate further feedback and support. The details and scope of any visits will be agreed beforehand between the grantee and Grant Administrator to ensure there is minimal impact on the project team's ability to carry out its planned activities.

3.5. Support to Applicants and Grantees in MEL

We explain how to use the MEL tools in our guidance and templates on the Application Portal and our website. We recommend attending our webinars at Stage 2 for practical advice, hands-on practice and further examples. We will be available to answer questions in all our webinars and workshops, and throughout the application process at our Helpdesk (helpdesk@oceangrants.org.uk).

The OCEAN team will provide ongoing MEL support during project implementation through its helpdesk and one-to-one discussions.

If you need any support with your application or project MEL then please do not hesitate to reach out to our helpdesk and a member of our team will respond as quickly as possible: helpdesk@oceangrants.co.uk.

We recommend joining our webinars to help you with your project design at application stage. We will cover the best practices for planning for MEL in your project.

Check our website for upcoming learning events or recordings of past events: www.oceangrants.org.uk. Recordings from the webinar are available on the [OCEAN YouTube Channel](#).

Glossary

Activities	The actions carried out by the project to effect the desired change and lead to outputs, outcomes and impact in the results chain.
Biodiversity	"Biological diversity" is the variability among living organisms from all sources including terrestrial, marine and other aquatic ecosystems, and the ecological complexes of which they are part; this includes diversity within species, between species and of ecosystems.
Defra	OCEAN is a programme of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), UK Government.
Evidence	Ranges in format, quality and relevance and includes documented and undocumented experiences, data, studies, policies, best practices etc. but is particularly valued when it is quality assured, accessible and applicable.
Impact	The Impact is your project's long-term objective, and is often a contribution to a wider advance in the field, for example, in conservation and poverty reduction. Note that the Impact will not be achieved solely by the project and will often be achieved outside of the timeframe of the project.
Logframe	Logical frameworks, commonly known as Logframes, are a monitoring tool to measure progress against the Results Chain (Inputs -> Activities -> Outputs -> Outcome -> Impact), comparing planned and actual results using indicators, baselines, and targets.
Multi-dimensional Poverty	Poverty is multi-dimensional and not solely about a lack of money; it encompasses a range of issues that hinder people's abilities to meet their basic needs and better their life with dignity including a lack of income, land, or other means of access to the basic material goods and services needed to survive with dignity, or a deficiency in healthcare, security, education or necessary social relations.
OCEAN Expert Committee	An independent panel of experts selected by Defra to assess your application. The OEC will provide recommendations to Defra on which projects to fund, and will provide feedback to applicants on how to improve their proposals for future submissions.
Partner(s)	Have a formal governance role in the project, and a formal relationship with the project that may involve staff costs and/or budget management responsibilities.
Pathway to Change	A narrative description of how your project activities will lead to a desired change in marine environment and a reduction in multi-dimensional poverty. This is a written section in the application form.
Stakeholder	A person, organisation or group of people who have an interest or concern in the project and its impact. They are consulted, engaged and/or participate in project activities. They can also be partners, but if not, they would not have a budget management, or a formal governance role, within the project.
Theory of Change	A tool to describe how a project will lead to a desired change by outlining the problem, and how the inputs, activities and outputs of a project will lead to the desired change.