planning, monitoring & evaluation

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Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation
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Rapid Evaluations Toolkit

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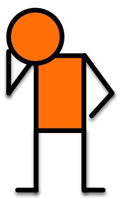


CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION

This toolkit provides a framework to think about *rapid evaluations*, and provides example questions, indicators and tools to do it.

Rapid evaluations is, in many ways, relatively straightforward. It is however, new in the government system, and this resource provides information and a helping hand with how to embed it in the work of the interested official.

Rapid evaluations address the need to quickly assess policy/programme/strategy/function delivery, and establish the main performance data, with main recommendations for improvements. *They* help us to understand and learn from what works, what doesn't, when and for whom. It is also an important tool for accountability, helping departments and entities to demonstrate uptake, and that our work as policy/programme/project/strategy/service delivery managers is of high quality and useful. *Rapid evaluations* are the latest addition to the National Evaluation System in government, and can be undertaken *internally* by officials, and/or involve procurement of service providers.

This toolkit is intended for use by officials in evaluations,, research and policy/programme/project/service delivery implementation working in national/provincial/local government departments and Schedule I & II entities .

It is based the work of the DPME extend the NES to include *rapid evaluations* to encourage sharing and learning; to improve the quality, reach and use of evaluations; and to produce evidence for decision-making quickly. *Rapid evaluations* is still a work in progress; we are publishing this guide in the hope that it will be useful to others, but also that it will invite discussion and shared learning.

1.1. How to use this toolkit | **1.2. Where the approach comes from**

1.1. How to use this toolkit

The toolkit encourages flexibility and problem-solving. It suggests ways to incorporate *rapid evaluation* techniques into a shorter evaluation, to produce quicker results and evidence with the aim of their quicker use to make decisions or improvements to policies/programmes/projects/strategies/services.

This toolkit helps with designing, planning, and implementation of an effective *rapid evaluation*, and

The framework has two key sections:

1. Designing a *rapid evaluation*

You can't evaluate and learn from a *rapid evaluation* if you don't know what you were trying to achieve in the first place. This section outlines how to design and plan a good *rapid evaluation* to succeed. It provides eight questions to answer when assessing and learning from your rapid evaluation.

2. Making sure it's a good *rapid evaluation*

This section looks at how to measure the success of your outputs. It goes beyond the usual vanity metrics (downloads and retweets) to address three key dimensions. For each dimension, we provide example questions, indicators and tools to monitor, evaluate and learn.

- Reach: the breadth of your reach and who you are reaching.
- Quality and usefulness: the technical standard of your work and how relevant it is to your audience.
- Uptake and use: if and how your work is used.

At the end of this section, we provide a table of example indicators by channel.

How to use this toolkit

Remember:

Keep it simple

Rapid Evaluations do not have to be complicated. Only seek to measure what can be measured, and be realistic about how much can be tracked given your resources and time

Don't just focus on the evaluation

Think more broadly about the *rapid evaluation* to include quality and usefulness, and uptake and use of outputs.

Feed into wider efforts to measure outcomes and impact

Normally *rapid evaluations* won't assess overall policy/ programme/project/service delivery impact – but it should be seen as contributing towards it, not separate.

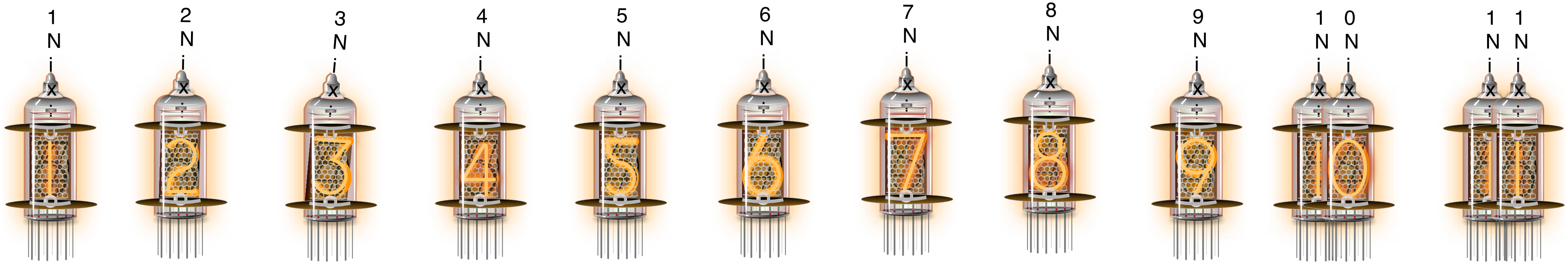
Always link back to your objectives

Be clear about the questions you are asking, why and how you plan to answer them. Then select the key performance indicators that are most relevant.

1.2. Where the approach comes from

Rapid evaluations are associated with reducing the costs and time of evaluation projects, teamwork, quick assessments, and flexibility across relatively diverse exercises of evaluation enquiry. There are different approaches; this guideline uses a more structured approach to compress and intensify larger evaluation implementation into a short specific project timeline.

Primary data collection methods are qualitative - interviews, direct observations, focus group discussions, and so on - though quantitative techniques like surveys are often used. Data is typically collected and analyzed by field-based teams that are led by experienced evaluation professionals who have considerable knowledge of qualitative methods as well as rapid evaluation principles and techniques.



Purpose	**Sphere**	**Scope**	**Key Evaluation Questions**	**Design**	**Method**	**Data required**	**Team**	**Stake-holders**	**Budget**	***Rapid Evaluation* Manage-ment**
quickly assess policy or programme, and establish main performance data, with recommend-dations for improvement	national, provincial or municipal	usually smaller, more limited in comparison with full-scale evaluations. Period of review may cover 3 years	Flexible 1) Main results? 2) Strengths, weaknesses? 3) Gaps, and recommendati ons	trade-off between research rigour and usability. More limited evaluation	typical for other evaluations in NES	Good secondary data ready for analysis. Data preparation essential. Build RE into plans	Policy, programme, evaluations experts. Select mode: internal, external, hybrid	critical to include policy owner(s)/ custodian(s).	Cost significantly less than full-scale evaluations	Structures as per larger evaluation. Strong support from TWG

The toolkit focuses specifically on *rapid evaluation* design and method, outputs and uptake. It does not focus in detail on specific methods. And *rapid evaluations* should be seen as an integral part of the NES, not separate.

2. *Rapid evaluation* Design

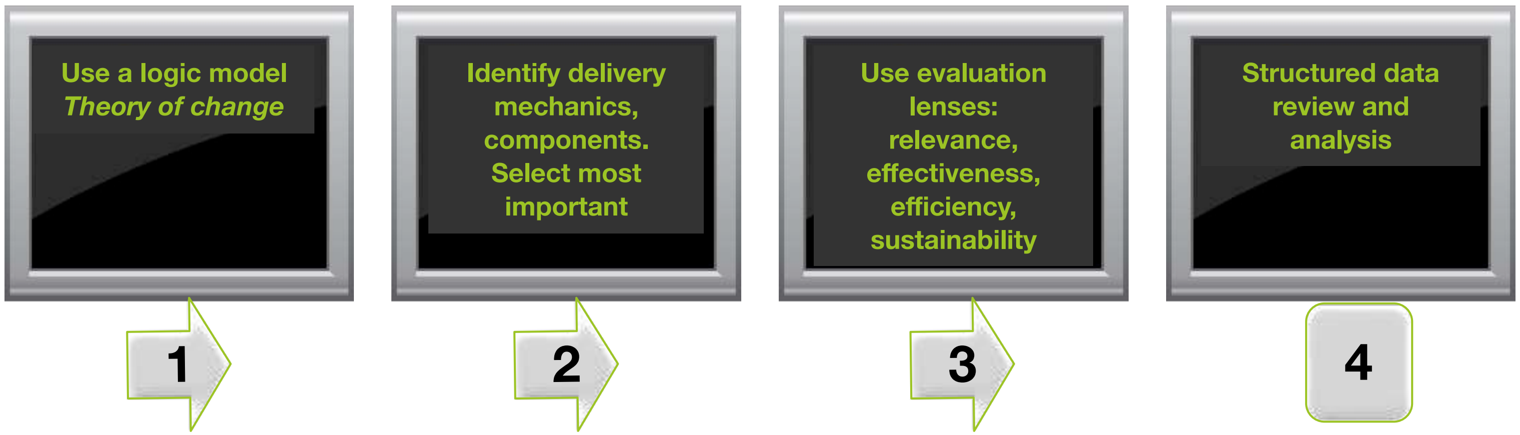
We can't undertake a *rapid evaluation* and learn from it, if we don't have a solid design in the first place. This section outlines how to design a rapid evaluation to succeed. It provides eight questions to answer when assessing and learning from your evaluation design.

2.1. Planning for *rapid evaluation* quality and usefulness

To achieve make a difference, a *rapid evaluation* needs to be both strategic and of reasonably high quality.

While sometimes a low-quality *rapid evaluation* output can still achieve some positive impact, if it is relevant and topical, it can potentially cause longer-term risks to reputation and credibility. On the flipside, if many high quality evaluations are produced, but arrive too late to be useful or are inaccessible to key audiences, then a risk is that we are wasting time, energy and funding.

To ensure that our *rapid evaluations* are strategic and the outputs are of a good quality, we must design and plan them carefully. This does not need to be overly complicated or long, but sound *rapid evaluation* design should include:



For full-scale evaluation, it is necessary to have a more sophisticated design, particularly for high-end quantitative design and sample selection. *Rapid evaluation* is about a trade-off of evaluation research rigour and usefulness. Once a *rapid evaluation* has been designed and planned, we need to ensure that systems and processes are in place to deliver it. We follow standard practice in the NES, but remove the obligation to present to Cluster and Cabinet. Your department or entity already has operational systems in place for managing project delivery, but these have to be aligned for evaluations and the NEPF. For rapid turnaround, a compressed evaluation relies on four key elements to be in place: (1) a good logic model, (2) identified delivery mechanics and components, (3) use of standard evaluation lenses, (4) use of logic model and delivery model to analyse performance data.

2.1. How to plan for quality and usefulness

2.2. Learning from your *rapid evaluation*

2.2. Learning from implementation: key questions

There are four key questions to address when looking at implementation - what was done and what was learned:

There are three key questions to address when looking at management and what was done, as well as what was learned:

1. Did we identify clear objectives that support wider policy/programme/project or institutional goals?
2. How did we perform (results)? (outputs, outcomes)
3. What were the main strengths and weaknesses?
4. Did we have the right delivery systems and processes in place?
5. Did implementation happen on time and benefit the right people?
6. With what budget, and was it used optimally?
7. What did we learn from implementation, and what might we do differently next time?

The information above should be backed up by facts and figures, but can be brought together informally through a follow-up meeting or after-action review.

3. *Rapid Evaluation* OUTPUTS

This section is designed to help you ensure the quality and usefulness of your *rapid evaluation* outputs. There are four main outputs to consider:

- Logic model – *theory of change*
- Delivery model value chain
- Evaluation lenses or dimensions
- Structured data review and analysis.

For each output a definition is provided, as well as tools to gathe data, and key questions and indicators. We identify what this information tells you, as well as what it doesn't tell you.

We then provide a summary table of *rapid evaluation* questions and indicators by channel (publications, websites, multimedia, press media and blogs, social media, email/newsletters, and events).

What do we mean by outputs?

In an outcomes-based approach, we define outputs broadly as tangible products, activities and services. These can include: publications, events (including meetings, workshops, webinars or face-to-face discussions), articles, websites and other digital platforms, infographics, media and social media activities, presentations, videos, podcasts, photography and so on. Outputs can also be a package or larger body of work, not just individual products or activities.

3.1. Using a logic model in the *rapid evaluation – theory of change*

3.2. Identifying policy delivery mechanics, components

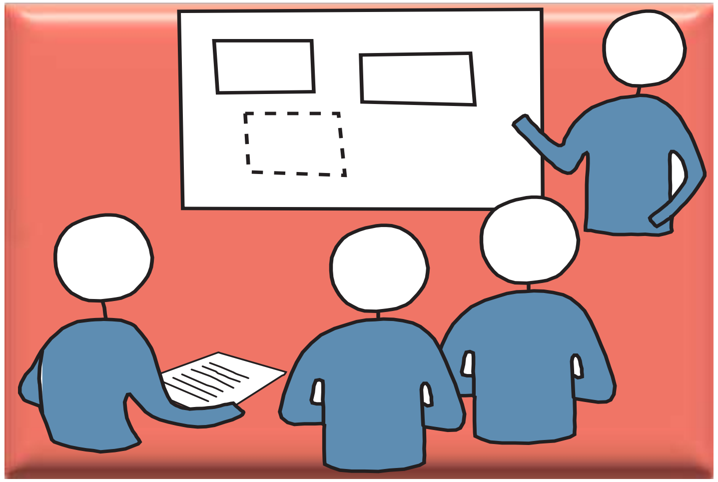
3.3. Measuring the uptake and use of your *rapid evaluation* outputs

3.4. Measuring the uptake and use of your *rapid evaluation* outputs

3.1 Using a logic model – *theory of change*

Rapid evaluations require proper preparation. The first major step in this process is the initial logic model workshop (*theory of change)*, involving all of the key stakeholder departments/entities in the evaluation. This workshop takes between 1-2 days depending on the skill of the facilitator.

The workshop deals with *seven* main questions. As the initial critical step, it is important not to get bo down in the complexities of the responses to the questions. The facilitator must be a seasoned *th change* facilitator, and/or prepare thoroughly because of the tendency to get stuck in the deba the basic questions encourage.



1 **What is the specific problem that the policy/programme/project/service is responding to?**
establish and articulate clearly what the problem is, the scale of the problem empirically, and do a fishbone analysis/problem tree of the causes and effects of the problem

2 **Identify and articulate an impact statement of what long-term success will be**

3 **What is the purpose of the intervention?**
An alternative expression is its *raison d'etre* or reason for existence. Must relate directly to the problem statement

4 **Identify and articulate the main inputs used to work towards the specific impact that has been identified.**
Inputs are used in the intervention "production process"

5 **Identify and articulate the main high-level activities that will produce the specific results that have been identified.**

6 **What are the main development outputs of the intervention?**
In *theory of change*, outputs are the big development contributions of the intervention, over which there is almost 100% control

7 **What are the main immediate outcomes of the intervention?**
(Usually only max 3 to 4). Immediate outcomes are the immediate difference achieved, written in the form of an outcome statement. Each of the major immediate results (3 or 4) could fall under the result areas within which the intervention will report results or be measured within

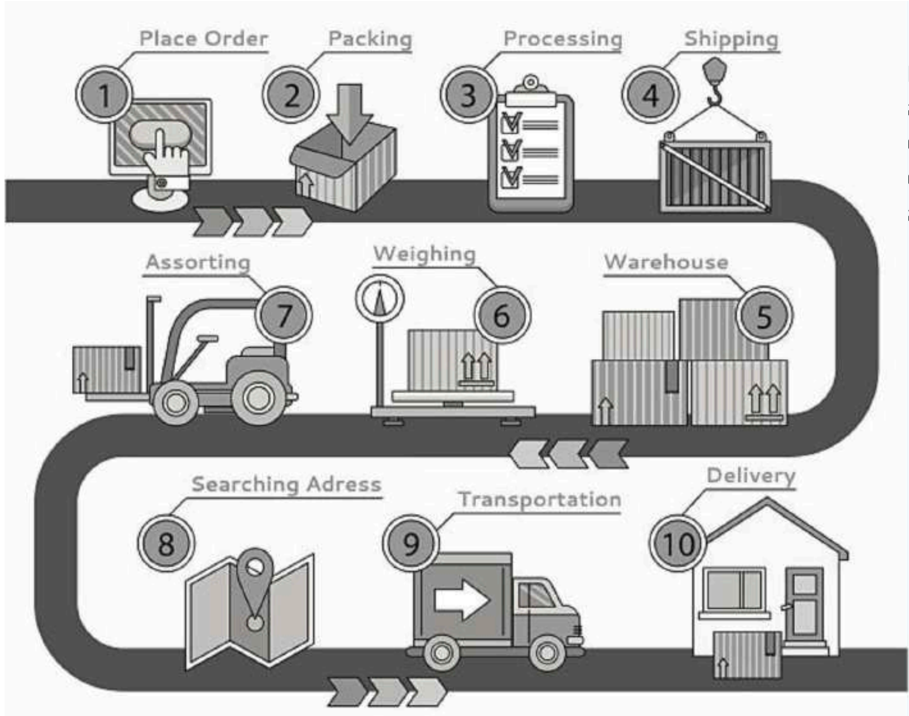
3.2 *Identifying policy delivery mechanics, components*

High-level *value chain mapping* establishes clear, logical and sequential steps in the “standard operating procedures” (SOP) for how *value* or the *development contribution* is produced and delivered.

The mapping method is applicable to delivery of policies, programmmes, projects, and services.

In the government system, we typically move from **diagnosis** to **planning**/budgeting to **implementation**, to **impact**.

These basic SOP processes are supported by monitoring, auditing, and evaluation.



Delivery can be viewed as how we move from policy goals and objectives, and translate them into tangible outputs (development value), through our day-to-day execution of tasks and actions (activities).

In the accompanying illustration, the logistics value chain is mapped for an online company, from initial order (1) through all of the 10 basic business processes which eventually culminates in the timely delivery of the product to the consumer (10).

The entire value chain in the illustration is put in place and controlled by the logistics company.

It’s economic contribution to households and the broader economy is not included.

Carefully map the delivery value chain from design through to the final outputs over which we have more or less full control. Impact is not usually included in value chain mapping.

Policy *value chain mapping* is about delivery, and not to be confused with *theory of change*.

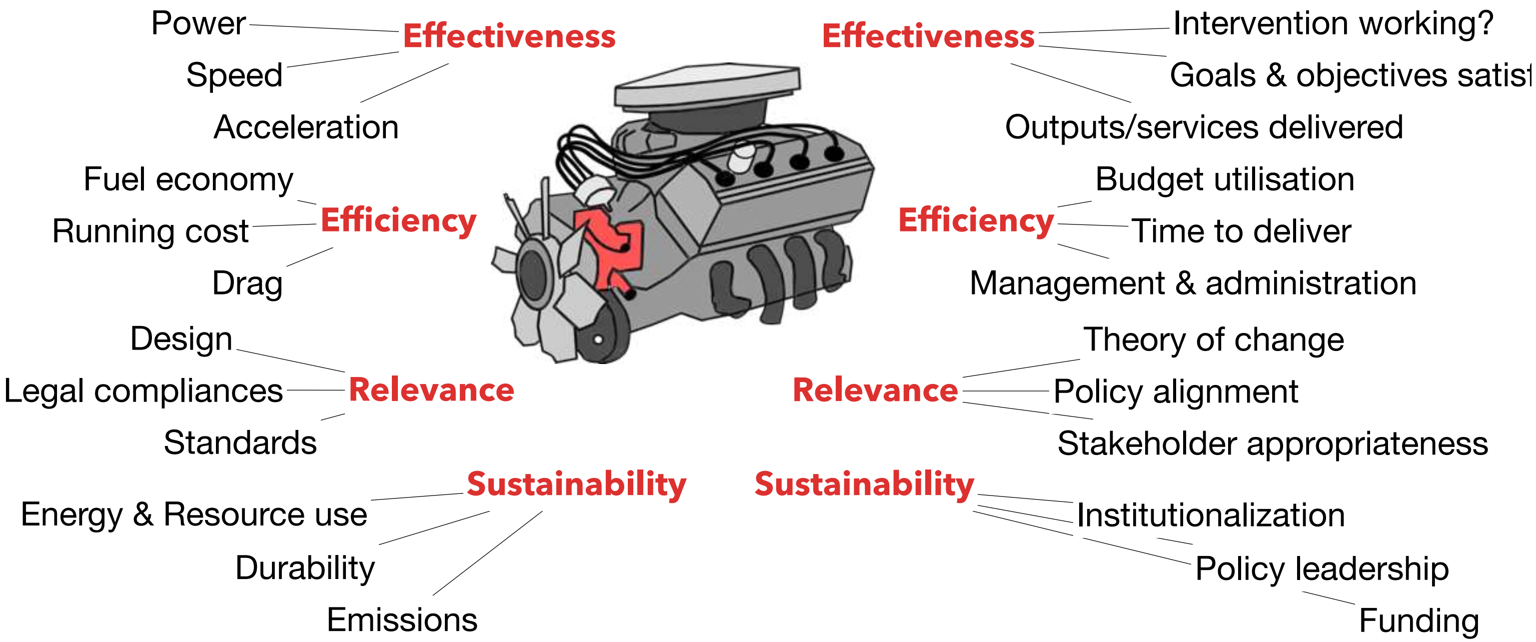
The 10 steps are clear, measureable, and follow in logical sequential order. It is relatively easy to develop an indicator for each of the steps.

Typically policy/programme/project/service delivery *value chain mapping* is embedded in the logframe (logical framework).

3.3 *Using implementation lenses focus evaluation*

The OECD DAC criteria still provide the most common lens used to assess performance. The four evaluation are applicable to delivery of policies, programmmes, projects, and services, and are in line with current guidelines in the National Evaluation System (NES). We typically refer to **relevance**, **effectiveness**, **efficiency**, **sustainability**, and **impact**. For *rapid evaluations*, the first four lenses are recommended.

In the illustration of the motor vehicle combustion engine below, the parallels are evident with the policy performance measurement lenses and the related indicators often used. Although there are obvious limitations, the illustration powerfully brings across the link between the policy production process ("inner workings of the engine" – see section 3.2 above) and performance measurement in the four dimensions.



Tangible outputs (development value), is produced using our policy delivery model. Output indicators and targets are relatively easily developed once we are clear of the performance parameters as illustrated.

3.4 Monitoring uptake & use of *rapid evaluation* outputs

Quality

***Rapid Evaluation* Methodology**

Is the methodology design appropriate? Is it realistic about data gathering, given your resources and time?
Is the sampling adequate to produce a “good-enough” evidence basis?

Delivery model

Is there a logical sequential set of key business processes identified? Is it realistic and plausible to meet the identified need in the *theory of change*?

***Rapid evaluation* Report**

Is the report coherent and plausible?
Are the conclusions derived from the data analysis? Is there good evidence?
Are the recommendations specific and tangible?

Theory of Change

Is it logical, coherent and does the pathway(s) of change make sense?
Is the problem sufficiently clear?

For the purpose of this guide, quality can be defined as the technical standard of work, both the content and presentatio generally complies with the evaluation guidelines in the NE is also closely linked to usefulness and reception of the int audience/readers/users (discussed later).
As part of planning for your *rapid evaluation*, you will need to include routine assessment of the quality of the major outputs (a detailed in sections 3.1 to 3.3).
Even for small projects, the *rapid evaluation* team should a whether the output (e.g. theory of change, evaluation design, delivery model, report, brief, video, presentation,etc.) does the following:

Structured data analysis and review

Were the logic model and delivery model used to collect, capture, and analyse the data?
Was the data adequately prepared for analysis before start of the *rapid evaluation*?

Usefulness

Monitoring uptake & use of *rapid evaluation* outputs

Usefulness takes *rapid evaluations* even further, and engages both the quality of your evaluation outputs and the user's response. This can be useful both for internal learning, to ensure the quality of *rapid evaluation* outputs (and to adapt them as necessary), but also for assessing if your audience has interacted with the *rapid evaluation* report in some way.

Monitoring the use of evaluations in an important element in the current NES. Thi outlines some useful ways to go about trying to acquire this data from policy-makers evidence users, and in your own section or team. Usefulness can also be viev type of "*immediate outcome*". The intrinsic value of a *rapid evaluation* is d linked to the initial purpose of the project, and why it was planned and ap the first instance. Monitoring must be strategic, and assess whether the *r evaluation* delivered the following:

Key *Rapid Evaluation* monitoring data to be collected regularly:

- Whether a *rapid evaluation* has delivered value: actual evidence producec
- How the *rapid evaluation* was actually used?
- Whether the *rapid evaluation* evidence arrived on time?
- Whether the *rapid evaluation* evidence was credible?
- What type of outputs work for different audiences in more depth, and to inform *rapid evaluations*.

Figure 1. Typical rapid evaluation monitoring *methods*

3.1. Using a logic model in the *rapid evaluation – theory of change*

3.2. Identifying policy delivery mechanics, components

3.3. Using implementation lenses to focus evaluation

3.4. Measuring the uptake and use of your *rapid evaluation* outputs

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