

# If Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Feels Like a Straitjacket, Try This Instead!

*A conversation guide for organizations exploring bottom-up and demand-driven learning*

---

Monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) can be a drag when it's only about following donor's checklists. But what if teams and organizations and the populations they serve could do MEL on their own terms, based on what they **actually want to learn**? That would be a breath of fresh air! Furthermore, this type of approach works the creative muscles that organizations need if they are to thrive in a turbulent future. Fortunately, many donors actually welcome this approach!

**Use our guiding questions with your team or organization to explore whether a demand-driven MEL approach is right for you.**

## What is bottom up or demand-driven learning?

It is an approach to organizational learning that is led by frontline staff and the populations they work with. *They* define what should be assessed, making the learning process more contextually relevant and responsive, especially in dynamic situations where more top-down approaches may fall short.

Read our [\*\*With All Our Hearts Report\*\*](#) to learn more!



## Exploring **WHY** bottom up/demand-driven learning might be appropriate for your team/organization

- *Why might we be interested in conducting MEL work on our own terms, rather than based on external standards or requirements?*
- *How do we currently approach learning? Who drives our learning agenda?*
- *How might a bottom up/demand-driven approach to MEL co-exist with a top-down approach?*
- *Why might our donors be supportive of us taking a bottom-up approach?*
- *In what ways might a bottom up/demand-driven MEL accelerate or slow down our impact?*

## Exploring **HOW** to carry out a bottom up/demand-driven learning approach to MEL.

- *How can our learning efforts be better aligned with what matters most to us?*
- *How might we pilot-test bottom up/demand-driven MEL? What areas of our work could be low hanging fruit for bottom up/demand-driven MEL?*
- *What are some challenges or barriers that we expect to see as we test a new approach?*
- *How do we communicate the benefits of bottom up/demand-driven MEL—such as increased relevance and effectiveness of MEL, greater flexibility, and alignment with organizational goals—to staff?*

**Want to learn more about bottom-up/ demand-driven learning?**

Contact us at [info@ignitedword.com](mailto:info@ignitedword.com)  
or visit [www.ignitedword.com/WithAllOurHearts](http://www.ignitedword.com/WithAllOurHearts)



**Need more tips on negotiating bottom-up/demand-driven MEL with donors?**  
Check out [Results Measurement On Your Own Terms](#)