



MEASURING AND MONITORING ADAPTIVE LEARNING: An Overview

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

The [landscape review on measuring and monitoring adaptive learning](#) highlights the learning from five adaptive programming guidelines and toolkits, and one implementation science framework, to inform the monitoring and evaluation of adaptive learning. **Adaptive learning** is defined in the [MOMENTUM Adaptive Learning Guide](#) as “the intentional adoption of strategies and actions to facilitate critical reflection and analysis of data, information, and knowledge—on a continuous basis and from a wide range of sources—to inform decisions that optimize program implementation and effectiveness in expected, unexpected, and changing circumstances.” The introduction of adaptive learning processes and skillsets in global health programming is part of an emerging strategy to advance a learning culture within projects and teams for the purpose of improving health program performance.

The monitoring and evaluation of adaptive learning is an emergent field aiming to monitor how adaptive learning processes have been introduced and are being used and whether they are having the intended results. Although there is a growing body of literature on adaptive programming more generally, there is a limited knowledge base on the monitoring and evaluation of adaptive learning interventions and their impacts. Unlike other implementation strategies or program management approaches, there are no standard metrics or monitoring and evaluation frameworks to track the integration, implementation, and effectiveness of adaptive learning in health programming.

FRAMING ADAPTIVE LEARNING MEASUREMENT AND MONITORING

The six key resources included in the landscape review suggest common themes related to defining essential capacities, processes, and performance in adaptive learning, including structures, team composition and roles, management, and Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) procedures, and skillsets.

- The [EPIS \(Exploration, Preparation, Implementation, Sustainment\) Framework](#), [USAID’s Collaborating, Learning, and Adaptation \(CLA\) Framework](#), the [MOMENTUM Adaptive Learning Guide](#), and the [Abt Associates Implementing Adaptive Management guide](#) place adaptive learning broadly in the context of a comprehensive implementation strategy or program cycle. They consider a range of program capacities and processes that must be introduced or strengthened at different levels when building an adaptive learning approach.
- The [Making Adaptive Rigor Work: Principles and Practices for Strengthening Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning for Adaptive Management \(MEL4AM\)](#) and [Rapid Evaluation Action and Learning \(REAL\)](#) Framework and Toolkit resources focus specifically on processes, standards, and mindsets relevant to data collection and data use, the need for strengthening skills in data interpretation, and steps to facilitate collective decision-making around program modification.
- None of these resources present an impact pathway or Theory of Change that links adaptive learning actions to program outcomes. However, all resources anticipate that adaptive learning contributes to improved program performance.
- All six resources identify an enabling context as being important to the success of adaptive learning introduction, institutionalization, and performance.

- A central element of adaptive learning capacity found across all guidance documents is the need for capacity in data generation and data use to inform continuous cycles of learning and adaptation.

THREE DOMAINS OF ADAPTIVE LEARNING INTERVENTION AND MEASUREMENT

Current adaptive learning interventions focus on one or more of the following levels, suggesting three possible domains for adaptive learning monitoring and evaluation.

1. Level 1: Integration & institutionalization of adaptive learning practices in teams, projects, or organizations
2. Level 2: Utilization of adaptive learning processes to achieve and accelerate program performance improvement
3. Level 3: Scaling up adaptive learning products, solutions, and practices beyond team or project settings

At this emergent stage of practice, most practitioners and organizations implementing adaptive learning are integrating or strengthening adaptive learning approaches in their own teams or working collaboratively to integrate adaptive learning into other entities. It is expected that measurement and monitoring at **this first level** would focus on the **outputs and outcomes of adaptive learning interventions** or the **effectiveness of efforts to introduce and institutionalize adaptive learning in public health programming**.

The **second level** of adaptive learning activity and measurement focuses on addressing the **effectiveness of adaptive learning as a performance improvement strategy**. Measurement and monitoring at this level require mapping and exploring **the impact pathway from adaptive learning to program improvement**.

The **third level** of adaptive learning intervention reflects the intent of organizations and public sector institutions to roll out adaptive learning capacity across country systems or to translate learning on adaptive approaches from one setting to another. The integration and institutionalization of adaptive learning in this sense are not project-focused interventions, but interventions that could drive health system change beyond the initial investment in adaptive learning by a program team.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MOMENTUM

In the early stages of implementation, the focus of adaptive learning activities is on the integration and institutionalization of adaptive learning (Level 1). Measurement and monitoring will therefore focus on tracking the effectiveness of adaptive learning interventions. Program teams are recommended to blend the MEL approaches that drive adaptive learning processes with those that are useful for evaluating the effectiveness of adaptive learning intervention to optimize investment and efforts. Examples of appropriate approaches include: case studies focused on specific learning questions, reflection diaries where teams document internal changes and learning over time as they integrate new approaches, and qualitative impact assessment data collected through key informant interviews and focus group discussions. Full-scale evaluation and assessment of efforts to scale up adaptive learning practices (Level 3) may come with time, as country level interventions take hold and interest in replication grows.

The [landscape review](#) includes some proposed MOMENTUM metrics and measurement strategies that will provide an aggregated picture of adaptive learning activities and learning. Beyond these metrics, broad questions around adaptive learning and measurement in the context of adaptive learning also need to be addressed. To address the need for research evidence on the pathway from adaptive learning to program improvement, further exploration of the hypothetical pathway from adaptive learning to program outcomes may be needed. Program implementers could integrate this effort into a program or impact evaluation strategy for MOMENTUM investments. Through sophisticated research designs conducted at larger scales, MOMENTUM teams could serve as important contributors and innovators in the effort to fill the gap in research evidence on the value and effectiveness of adaptive learning.