Frequently Asked Questions

Preparing your monitoring and evaluation budget

National media defence centres provide legal defence to journalists, bloggers and media outlets. This guidance is for organisations who are preparing a budget for their project and applying for a grant from Media Legal Defence Initiative (MLDI) to operate a national media defence centre. This guidance will provide answers to the following questions:

- What is monitoring and evaluation?
- What types of evaluation activities and costs will MLDI support?
- How much of MLDI's grant can be used for monitoring and evaluation?
- Do we have to spend grant funds on monitoring and evaluation?
- What other support can MLDI provide in the area of monitoring and evaluation?
- I have more questions – how can I discuss this in more detail?

What is monitoring and evaluation?

Monitoring and evaluation can mean many different things to many different people.

In brief, it is the processes and activities an organisation undertakes to measure their progress, results and impact with an emphasis on learning, improving and demonstrating impact, making reference to their predetermined goals and desired outcomes.

Monitoring – is the ongoing tracking and surveillance of a project's key activities, enabling organisations to track their progress against a set of goals and targets as the project progresses. Monitoring should make use of data captured during the project's implementation and be carried out periodically in order to highlight where things are going to plan and where they are behind schedule, allowing staff to respond to the amount of progress made and improve the delivery of the project.

Most monitoring systems will use Key Performance Indicators or KPIs to track progress. KPIs should be easy to collate and have a target wherever possible. They are typically reviewed on a monthly or quarterly basis.

In the context of a media defence centre, a monitoring system is likely to use the following KPIs (this list is not exhaustive)

- The number of requests for support received
- The number of cases supported
- Number of legal documents drafted
- Number of instances of legal advice provided
- The speed at which support is provided
- The number of men/women supported
- The number of successful trial outcomes of the cases supported

Evaluation – is the systematic and objective assessment of an ongoing or completed project, program, or policy, and its design, implementation and results. The aim is to determine:

- the relevance
- fulfilment of objectives
- efficiency
- effectiveness

- impact
- sustainability

An evaluation should provide information that is credible and useful, identifying lessons learned and supporting the decision-making process of both the organisation, its donors and its stakeholders.

In the context of a media defence centre, an evaluation should seek to explore and analyse how effective the defence centre has been, measure the quality of the support provided and explore the longer-term results and outcomes as a consequence of providing legal defence – this could look at the impact that legal support has had on the journalist themselves, the legal outcomes and the knock-on effects the case may have had on freedom of expression more generally. An evaluation of a media defence centre project or programme might include:

- a review and deeper analysis of project monitoring data
- a staff workshop at the end of the project to reflect on what worked well, what didn't and what could be improved
- a survey, interview or focus group with journalists supported to incorporate their experiences and feedback
- interviews with external experts
- analysis of judgments and other legal documents
- desk research, including media mentions and external data
- contribution tracing or analysis

Evaluations should normally seek to include multiple sources of evidence/data and feedback and involvement from the journalists supported through the project. Often, external consultants are commissioned to support the evaluation process to provide expertise and independent data collection and analysis to remove bias.

What types of evaluation activities and costs will MLDI support?

MLDI will support direct costs associated with the following types of evaluation activities:

- Surveys (costs for disseminating surveys online or offline)
- Focus groups (travel costs, meeting room hire etc.)
- Interviews with key stakeholders (travel costs)
- Document analysis e.g. court judgments
- Desk research
- Workshops with a specific M&E focus
- Media monitoring
- Setting up systems or tools for accurate project monitoring or data collection

External evaluation consultants may also be contracted to:

- Support the setup of monitoring and evaluation systems or tools for the project
- Independent data collection, analysis and/or report writing
- Facilitating staff review and/or learning sessions

If you are commissioning an evaluation of your organisation's work more generally, or as part of a bigger programme of work (which the media defence project is part of) MLDI will also consider a contribution to the cost of this evaluation, but will not pay for the full cost.

Monitoring and Evaluation budget cannot be used for:

- Trial monitoring
- Case management or follow up
- Monitoring or supervising staff
- Producing or disseminating research reports
- Case monitoring or monitoring of violations against journalists
- Strategic meetings

How much of MLDI's grant can be used for monitoring and evaluation?

Although we do not have a strict limit for the amount of your project budget you can spend on M&E, typically we approve between 3-5% of the total project budget. See the table below for approximate costs.

Grant amount	Typical amount of grant allocated for M&E
£25,000	£750 - £1250
£20,000	£600 - £1000
£15,000	£450 - £750
£10,000	£300 - £500

Do we have to spend grant funds on monitoring and evaluation?

In short, the answer is no.

Evaluation can take many forms, many of which will not have any costs attached (apart from staff time). The most important thing for us is to know that you have considered how you will monitor and evaluate your project and that you plan accordingly for this. The size, scale and methods of your monitoring and evaluation plan need to be appropriate to your own organisational context.

We appreciate that evaluating litigation projects can be very challenging due to the complex legal environments and the duration of court cases and thus carrying out complex impact evaluations is not be easily achieved.

We feel it is important to monitor, evaluate and learn from your projects but the resources you spend on doing this will greatly depend on:

- your current organisational evaluation practises
- the scale of the project
- your M&E goals
- your staff capacity to undertake M&E activities
- your other donor requirements for M&E

What other support can MLDI provide in the area of monitoring and evaluation?

As well as providing financial support, MLDI is committed to developing and strengthening its partners' organisational practises, including in the area of monitoring and evaluation. Our monitoring and evaluation staff can support you with:

- Advice and guidance on M&E
- Support you with the development of evaluation tools, data collection tools and other research methods e.g. drafting surveys, focus group topic guides, workshop plans etc.

- Reviewing and/or developing your organisation's "Theory of Change"
- Provide training in M&E to staff
- Developing monitoring and evaluation plans and frameworks – these can be more media defence projects or for other projects within your organisation, including for donor applications

I have more questions – how can I discuss this in more detail?

If you have any questions about monitoring and evaluation or need support developing your monitoring and evaluation plan, please contact our M&E staff: Naz.K@mediadefence.org. They would be happy to discuss your plans, ideas or queries on your evaluation before you submit your budget.