

2026

Gender Intentional MLE Toolkit



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2026

Gender Intentional MLE Toolkit

Users' Guide



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GRID Impact's Gender Intentional Monitoring, Learning, and Evaluation Toolkit offers practical guidance and tools for practitioners, funders, and partners working in the financial inclusion space. These tools aim to support the design and evaluation of programs that acknowledge and respond to contextual gender dynamics and social norms.

The toolkit can be applied across grants and projects in policy, payment systems, deepening usage, and more—and we hope it supports the diverse range of users working to advance women's financial inclusion.

Introduction

About the MLE Pilot

Throughout 2024 and 2025, GRID Impact collaborated with the Gates Foundation's Inclusive Financial Systems (IFS) team to co-create an approach, framework, and supporting tools for tracking and measuring women's financial inclusion (WFI) outcomes. Our goal was to enable the IFS team to take a holistic and systematic view of WFI across its grants, ultimately strengthening its ability to articulate impact and embed gender-intentional, impact-focused approaches throughout the investment cycle.

GRID Impact piloted the approach with four IFS partners representing the portfolio's geographic and thematic diversity, and refined the tools and resources in response to their needs. The resulting approach, captured in this toolkit, supports future IFS partners in conducting gender-intentional monitoring, learning, and evaluation (MLE).



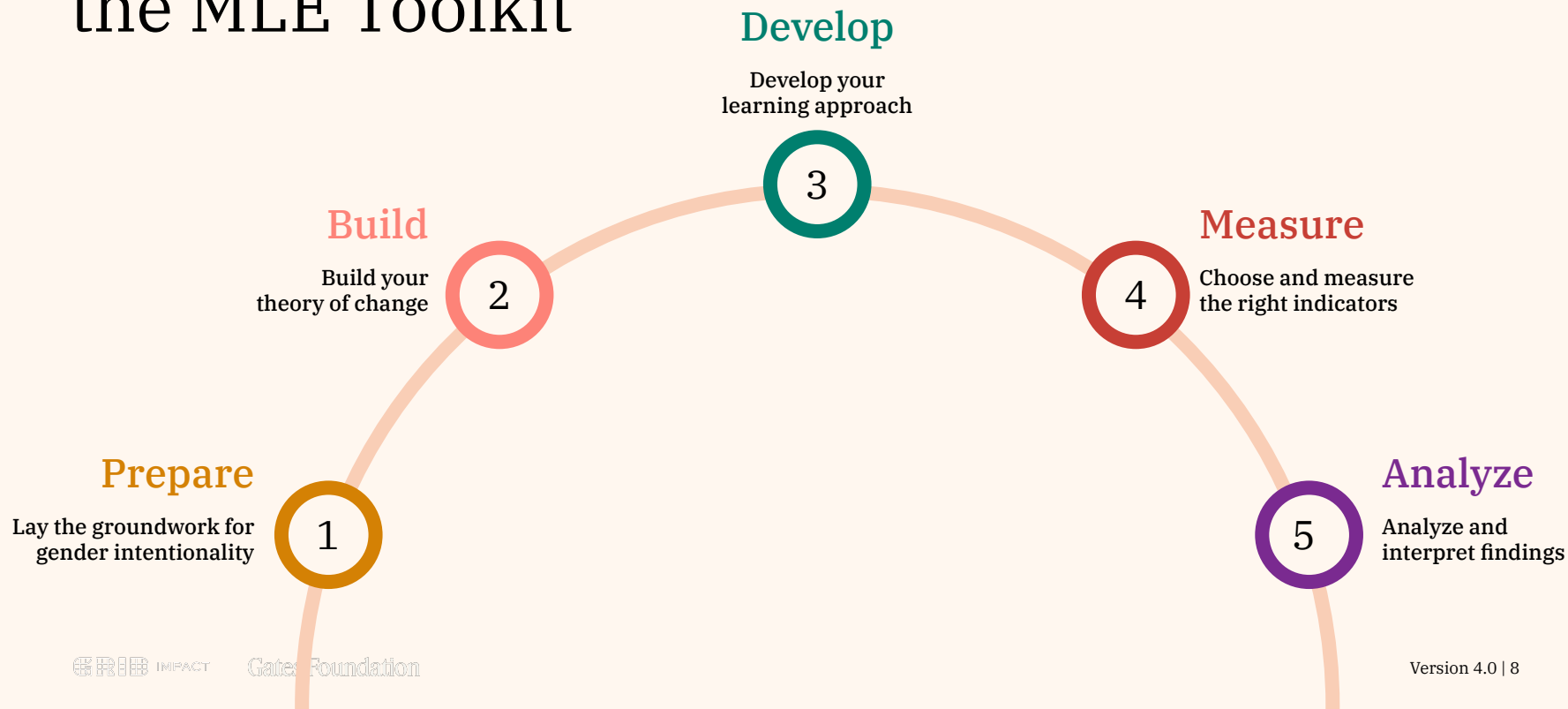
Introduction



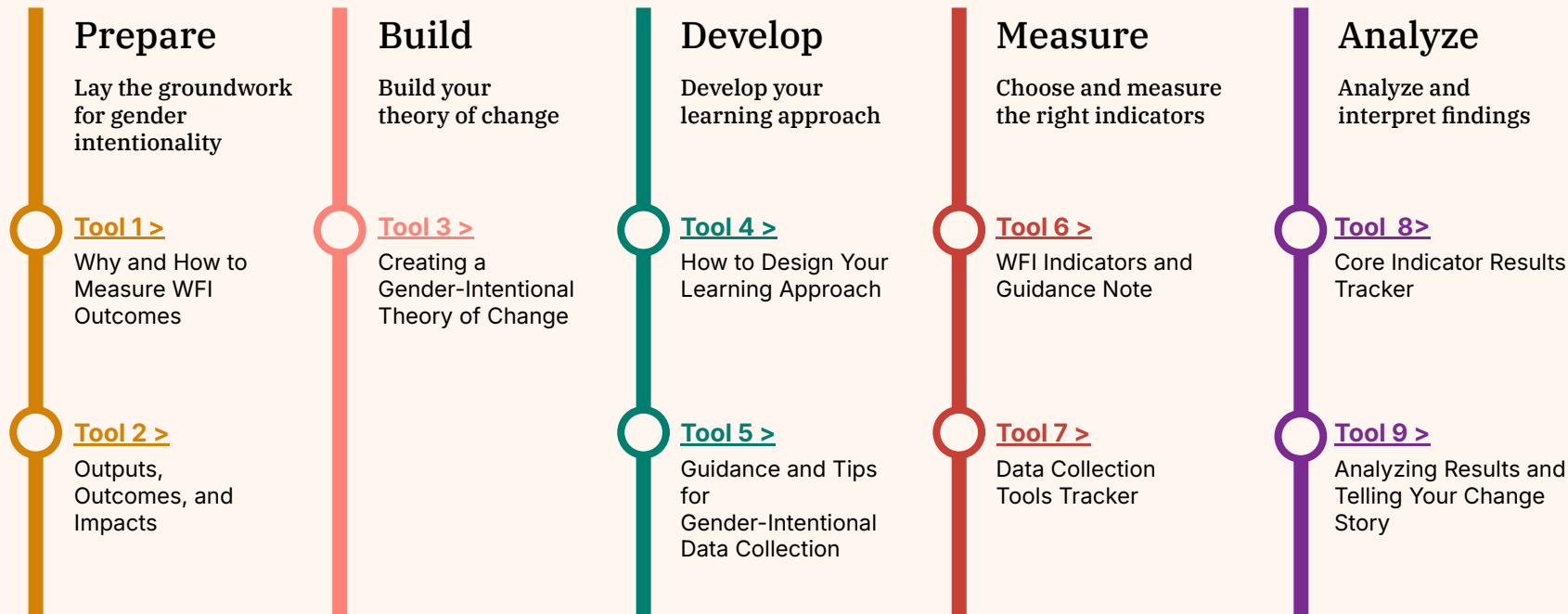
This toolkit supports a wide range of users with different roles, experience levels, and needs in gender-intentional program design and evaluation. The user journey that follows is illustrative, not prescriptive. Users can apply the resources modularly, drawing on the tools most relevant to their work or role at any given time.

For suggestions on how you can best use this toolkit, given your role on a project, see [“Who should use this toolkit?”](#)

User Guide to the MLE Toolkit



Tools



Prepare

Lay the groundwork for gender intentionality

Understand the importance of centering women's experiences in program design and evaluation. Align on key concepts and terminology and clarify the importance of collecting data on outcomes.

Tool 1

Why and How to Measure WFI Outcomes

Emphasizes the importance of collecting and analyzing data on WFI outcomes in a systematic way, beyond investment-level outputs, and tips on collecting this data.

[**View tool**](#)

Tool 2

Outputs, Outcomes, and Impacts

Describes the difference between outputs, outcomes, and impacts, with relevant examples.

[**View tool**](#)



Build

Build your theory of change

Design a gender-intentional theory of change and logic model, articulating clear pathways from activities to outputs, outcomes, and impacts.

Tool 3

Creating a Gender-Intentional Theory of Change

Helps partners develop a robust, gender-intentional Theory of Change that can be integrated into proposals.

[**View tool**](#)



Develop your learning approach

Shape your learning to account for gender and power dynamics. Develop learning tools that ensure ethical, effective data collection.

Tool 4

How to Design Your Learning Approach

Poses guiding questions to help partners think through what kind of data to collect. Includes guidance to help you decide what approach and tool(s) are right for the project.

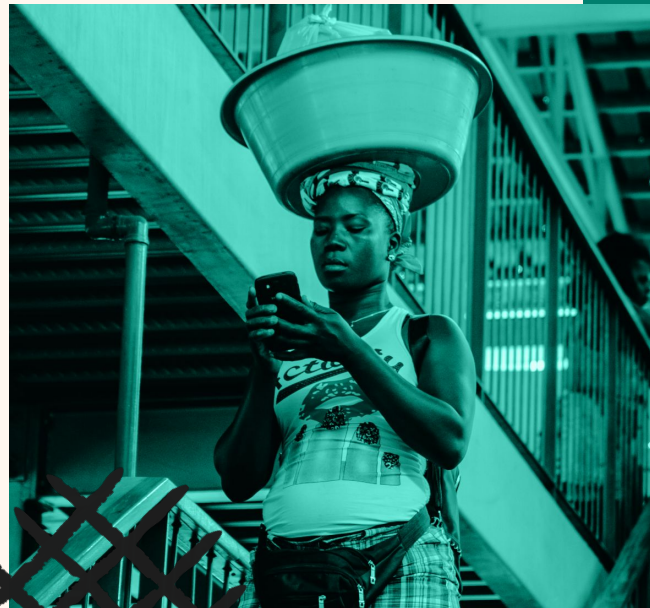
[View tool](#)

Tool 5

Guidance and Tips for Gender-Intentional Data Collection

Offers tips for conducting different types of surveys—and determining what kind of data collection is right for your project—with a focus on gender intentionality and protection of research participants.

[View tool](#)



Measure

Choose and measure the right indicators

Align your outcomes with standardized measures of WFI that allow for comparability and aggregation at the portfolio level. Ensure you are learning and tracking what matters for inclusion.

Tool 6

WFI Indicators

Lists core WFI indicators along with definition, data source, measurement notes for each.

[**View tool**](#)

[**View user guide**](#)

Tool 7

Data Collection Tools Tracker

Tracks surveys, interview guides, and other tools to manage what data are being collected where.

[**View tool**](#)



Analyze

Analyze and interpret findings

Interpret data and lessons learned in a way that captures gendered experiences, avoids bias, and translates findings into actionable insights.

Tool 8

Core Indicator Results Tracker

Tracks progress on GRID-recommended indicators over the life of the investment.

[**View tool**](#)

Tool 9

Analyzing Results and Telling Your Change Story

Guiding questions for sensemaking and translating findings into policy/program recommendations.

[**View tool**](#)





Who should use this toolkit?

This toolkit is designed to help diverse practitioners make financial inclusion more gender-intentional, from program designers and field teams to researchers, evaluators, and funders.

Each group has a distinct role to play in generating, interpreting, and applying evidence that reflects women's lived experiences with financial systems, and each group may find different ways to use the tools and guidance provided here.

These user profiles describe the typical goals, needs, and use cases for different audiences. Whether you are developing a new program, monitoring results, conducting research, or reviewing proposals and project plans, the toolkit provides practical tips for applying a gender lens to your work.

You can use this section to identify where you fit, understand which resources are most relevant to your work, and see how to apply them in practice.

User Profiles

Who you are:

Program Designer or Proposal Writer

If you are developing and seeking funding for a new financial inclusion program, this toolkit helps you embed gender intentionality from the very beginning - clarifying your theory of change, results framework, and indicators.

Goals

- Integrate gender intentionality into a new program's theory of change and design, and articulate these clearly in a proposal submission.
- Create a plan to measure and speak about meaningful program impact.
- Move beyond counting participants to measuring empowerment outcomes and select relevant, evidence-based indicators.

Tools

- [Why and How to Measure WFI Outcomes](#)
- [Creating a Gender-Intentional Theory of Change](#)
- [WFI Indicators](#)

Achieve

A gender-intentional results framework with clear pathways from activities to outcomes and impacts, supported by appropriate indicators

User Profiles

Who you are:

Program or Product Manager

If you're implementing a project, developing a product, or delivering a service, the toolkit supports you in integrating gender-sensitive monitoring and using data to strengthen learning, adaptation, and accountability.

Goals

- Integrate gender-sensitive monitoring and reporting into ongoing operations.
- Adjust activities based on early outcome data and achieve more sustained, impactful results for everyone.
- Strengthen internal learning and accountability around gender results.

Tools

- [Why and How to Measure WFI Outcomes](#)
- [Outputs, Outcomes, and Impacts](#)
- [Core Indicator Results Tracker](#)

Achieve

A clear, gender-intentional program and results framework

User Profiles

Who you are:

Monitoring & Evaluation Specialist

If you're responsible for program measurement, the toolkit guides you in aligning definitions, tracking progress on gender outcomes, and producing actionable evidence to inform decision-making.

Goals

- Distinguish between outputs, outcomes, and impacts in reporting
- Track progress consistently across interventions
- Produce evidence that can be fed back into program design

Tools

- [Outputs, Outcomes, and Impacts](#)
- [WFI Indicators](#)
- [Data Collection Tools Tracker](#)
- [Core Indicator Results Tracker](#)

Achieve

Accurate monitoring of gender-sensitive results and actionable analysis for adaptive management

User Profiles

Who you are:

External Research Partner

If you're conducting studies or evaluations, this toolkit helps you design and execute research that captures women's financial inclusion experiences and measures empowerment outcomes credibly and ethically.

Goals

- Design robust research that captures gender realities and power dynamics
- Minimize bias and ensure ethical, inclusive research practices

Tools

- [How to Design Your Learning Approach](#)
- [Guidance and Tips for Gender-Intentional Data Collection](#)
- [Data Collection Tools Tracker](#)
- [Analyzing Results and Telling Your Change Story](#)

Achieve

A robust, gender-intentional evaluation that produces actionable results

User Profiles

Who you are:

Funder

If you review proposals and/or monitor programs you fund, this toolkit enables you to assess how proposals integrate gender outcomes and to compare performance across projects using standardized, gender-relevant indicators.

Goals

- Encourage partners to account for and measure gender dynamics in program design and proposals
- Compare across projects using standardized indicators
- Strengthen accountability and learning across portfolio

Tools

- [Creating a Gender-Intentional Theory of Change](#)
- [Analyzing Results and Telling Your Change Story](#)

Achieve

Stronger assessment of proposals for gender intentionality and understanding of portfolio-level outcomes and impact

Ready to get started?
Explore the tools [here](#).



Prepare

Lay the groundwork for
gender intentionality

Version 4.0

Tool 1

Why and How to Measure WFI Outcomes

Women's Financial Inclusion

Introduction

This guidance note introduces the “why” and the “how” of measuring women’s financial inclusion measurement. It helps users understand the importance of assessing how women’s access, usage, and agency over financial products and services change over time and as a result of program activities. It also lays out practical guidance for collecting WFI outcome data.



Who is it for

- Program designers or proposal writers
- Program or product managers
- Funders



How to use it

Review guidance when scoping or designing programs to set the foundation for what kinds of change to measure and how. Apply the practical tips for systematic outcome measurement and refer to the Access-Usage-Agency framework for selecting indicators.



When to use it

Refer to this early in the program design or proposal development process.

What's in this tool?



What is Financial Inclusion?

Briefly defines financial inclusion and presents why it matters to consider women's financial inclusion.

Measurement and the Gender Integration Continuum

Gives an overview of gender-blind, gender-intentional, and gender-transformative design, implementation, and measurement, and presents examples to help strengthen gender integration in measurement.

How to Measure WFI Outcomes

Provides guidance and practical tips for measuring WFI outcomes.

What is Financial Inclusion?

Financial inclusion is **access to**, **usage of**, and **agency over** a diverse range of high-quality, relevant, and safe financial products and services, including mobile money and digital financial products.

Access

The ability to open and register for financial services, and the availability of financial products

Usage

The extent to which individuals actively and regularly use those services to meet their needs

Agency

Users' confidence, decision-making power, and control over financial services to achieve their goals

Harm Reduction

Providers' efforts to address and mitigate potential financial harms, including susceptibility to fraud, scams, and predatory financial behavior

What does this mean in practice? Think about the ways in which you use financial services – saving, checking accounts, transferring funds between accounts direct deposits, POS machines for mobile transactions linked to a credit card or mobile money account, insurance, loans. All of these tools enable you to manage your life and achieve your goals.

Why *Women's* Financial Inclusion?

Many financial inclusion projects and grants view their work in terms of "customers" or "end-users" and do not explicitly identify women as primary stakeholders. This assumes markets and systems are neutral, yet persistent gender gaps across financial inclusion show this is not the case. Because women remain systematically underrepresented in data and leadership, such approaches continue to primarily benefit men while women are left behind.

Even if your project does not specifically intend to increase women's financial inclusion, it is important to think about the impacts it will have on women, and the ways that you can ensure it addresses women's experiences and needs. Neglecting these can lessen your overall impact, especially on the most vulnerable groups, and even have harmful unintended consequences. Gender intentionality means thinking about and planning for how gender dynamics and norms will affect the uptake of your project.

For projects as diverse as infrastructure, regulation, or product design, it is essential to ask **how women would interact with or be affected by the work**, and how improvements in their lives could be documented. Measuring outcomes for women must be part of every investment to move beyond gender-blind assumptions and exclusionary understandings of impact.

Note for Grant and Program Officers

Encouraging grantees and partners to adopt a gender lens in both program design and measurement strategy is not just about ensuring equity. It also unlocks new markets and drives more inclusive impact.

This does not mean requiring partners or grantees to create parallel "women-only" approaches. Rather, consider purposeful integration of practical gender components into implementation strategies. As a funder (or project lead), you can accelerate this shift by setting clear expectations, providing technical support where needed, and embedding gender outcomes into measurement and learning.

Measurement and the Gender Integration Continuum



The gender integration continuum describes the extent to which programs consider and address gender in their design, implementation, and measurement. From a measurement perspective, the continuum illustrates how data can ignore gender differences, respond to them, or intentionally drive equity. **Gender-blind** measurement overlooks gender dynamics entirely, masking and potentially reinforcing inequality. **Gender-intentional** measurement recognizes and measures gender gaps in access and usage of products and services. **Gender-transformative** measurement goes further to examine shifts in power dynamics, social norms, and shifts in agency that drive meaningful and lasting equity.

Gender-Blind



Also referred to as “gender unintentional” or “gender agnostic.” This approach does not recognize the impact of gender on the problem, nor does it integrate a gender lens in the proposed approach.

Implications for measurement:

Data not disaggregated by sex.
Results mask differences in access, participation, and outcomes between men and women

Gender-Intentional



This approach considers how gender impacts the issue and may affect uptake of the project. The approach seeks to address gender gaps in access to resources or build the evidence base around gender barriers.

Implications for measurement:

Data disaggregated by sex;
recognizes gender barriers and potential unintended consequences and may collect relevant data (e.g., % of men/women with an ID)

Gender-Transformative



A transformative approach considers the norms and power dynamics behind gender barriers and is designed to reduce gender gaps in agency or control over resources and products.

Implications for measurement:

Measurement intentionally examines and tracks changes in gender power relations, agency, and norms

Measuring Outcomes Beyond Outputs

Collecting and analyzing data on women's financial inclusion (WFI) outcomes is essential to move beyond tracking project-level outputs – such as number of training sessions held, number of new products launched, etc. – to **understand the real impact** of programs and the extent to which women are truly benefiting from investments in financial inclusion. Counting activities and tracking outputs provides only a partial picture of progress, telling us what a person was exposed to (like a new financial product) but not how that exposure has led to a real change in their lives. Measurement of WFI outcomes can tell us much more about how women begin to access, use, and make decisions about financial products in new ways following an intervention.

Systematically collecting data on WFI outcomes also allows us to **assess shared impact** across projects, telling a broader story about how our work has created change beyond a single program or project. It further allows us to compare results in a consistent way, enabling learning at a portfolio level, highlighting what works in different contexts, and informing future investment and strategy.



For more on the difference between outputs, outcomes, and impacts:

Outputs, Outcomes, and Impacts

Outputs are what you produce as a direct result of the activities of your program. These are generally tangible, countable things that you can control or reasonably predict will happen if you carry out your activities as planned.

Outcomes are what you hope will be the result of the outputs you produce. Outcomes may be short, medium, or long term, even beyond the lifetime of the grant or project.

Example 1

Digital Literacy Training

A partner holds mixed-gender training sessions to teach users to use mobile devices to perform basic banking transactions. To measure success of the training, they track the following outputs and outcomes:

- Number of training sessions held
- Number of attendees
- Percentage of participants able to conduct basic transactions
- Percentage of participants with a mobile account



For more recommendations for gender-intentional indicators:

[WFI Indicators](#)

[WFI Indicators: User Guide](#)

Recommendations

This measurement strategy is *gender-blind* and *output-focused*. It lacks gender disaggregation and fails to capture measures of women's usage of and control over financial resources. It does not account for or measure gender norms or barriers to digital literacy. To improve this measurement strategy, consider the following:

- Disaggregate all measures by gender (e.g., *number of women attendees; number of men attendees*)
- Measure sustained usage of digital accounts (e.g., *number of women/men with active digital accounts after 6 months*)
- Measure women's confidence and skills using digital accounts (e.g., *percentage of women/men who can conduct basic digital transactions independently*)
- Consider normative barriers to financial literacy (e.g., *percentage of women who can decide for themselves to attend education programs on financial resources*)
- Measure potential unintended consequences (e.g., *percentage of women reporting violence or physical harm as a result of digital or financial activity*)

Example 2

Expanding Agent Networks

A partner works with financial service providers (FSP) to facilitate hiring and training of female agents in rural outposts. To measure success of the project, they track the following outputs and outcomes:

- Number of outreach sessions held
- Number of female agents onboarded
- Number of agent training modules delivered



For more recommendations for gender-intentional indicators:

[WFI Indicators](#)

[WFI Indicators: User Guide](#)

Recommendations

Though this project appears to dismantle a gender barrier (lack of female agents), its measurement strategy is *gender-blind* and does not move beyond outputs. While it does include some gender disaggregation, it does not allow for measurement of differential outcomes at the *customer* level, nor does it examine shifts in women's access to, usage of, or control over financial resources. To improve this measurement strategy, consider the following:

- Measure how additional female agents has impacted women users' access (e.g., *percentage of women with a financial services access point (e.g., bank/FSP/CICO agent) within a reasonable distance of their home*)
- Measure agents' ability to serve women customers (e.g., *percentage of agents who feel confident they can support women customers; percentage of customers satisfied by agent/provider customer service interactions*)

How to Measure WFI Outcomes

Measuring WFI outcomes requires a systematic approach, but this does not always mean complex or experimental research design. The recommendations and tips included below and throughout this toolkit provide practical guidance for capturing, reporting on, and learning from meaningful data using methods that are feasible, context-appropriate, and actionable. By adhering to these good practices, teams can collect high-quality, comparable data across projects, track changes over time, and ensure that women's experiences and perspectives drive program learning and improvement. This approach supports both accountability to funders and stakeholders and a deeper understanding of what interventions truly advance women's inclusion and empowerment.

Our overall approach focuses on collecting data related to **access to, usage of, and agency over** financial products and services, with a strong emphasis on examining gender barriers to these three dimensions of inclusion. Central to this approach is hearing **directly from women** themselves about their financial behaviors and preferences. Collecting data from users through surveys, interviews, digital feedback, and other context-appropriate methods ensures that their experiences and perspectives are at the heart of the learning process and guide future decision-making and program design. These perspectives are critical to illustrating meaningful change and illuminating real barriers and opportunities.

Tips for Systematic Measurement of WFI Outcomes

- Where possible, **use standardized core indicators, questions, and tools**, determined and defined at the start of programming, to ensure aggregatability and comparability across investments and contexts. Secondary survey sources, like the Demographic and Health Surveys, World Bank's Global Findex Database, and others offer rigorously tested questions that can be easily adapted to your context.
- **Collect data from women users** through gender-intentional surveys, interviews, focus groups, and/or digital feedback mechanisms.
- **Disaggregate all data** by sex, age, geography, and other relevant characteristics to uncover differences in outcomes across groups and segments.
- Leverage both **quantitative and qualitative methods** to capture measurable trends as well as women's lived experiences.
- **Track outcomes over time** to assess not only uptake but also sustained use and empowerment.
- **Integrate outcome measurement into routine program monitoring**, not only in formal evaluations. Build in opportunities for adjustment to programming based on outcome progress.
- **Ensure privacy and confidentiality** so women feel safe sharing honest feedback about their financial experiences.
- **Share findings back** to women, partners, and investors to validate insights, strengthen accountability, and guide future investments.

Next Steps

Tool 2

Review the difference between outputs, outcomes, and impacts.

Toolkit Home

Explore all tools.

*For questions, feedback, or more information
please contact:
wfi@gridimpact.org*





Prepare

Lay the groundwork for
gender intentionality

Version 4.0

Tool 2

Outputs, Outcomes, and Impacts

Women's Financial Inclusion

Introduction

This document explains the foundational language of results measurement to ensure that program teams can accurately describe what success at each stage looks like and measure progress toward it. It provides realistic examples of outputs, outcomes, and impacts within the financial inclusion sector. By clearly defining each layer, this tool helps teams connect day-to-day activities to the larger vision of women's financial inclusion.



Who is it for

- Program or product managers
- Monitoring & evaluation specialists
- Funders



How to use it

Use this as a reference to clarify terms when creating a theory of change or results framework, defining indicators, and reporting progress.



When to use it

Refer to this during the design phase and throughout the project, especially during each grant reporting cycle.

What's in this tool?



What is the difference between an output, outcome and impact?

Clearly and concisely defines three key terms, and describes why the difference matters—including specifically why it matters to Gates Foundation POs and other grantmakers.

Examples

Gives illustrative examples of programs and their outputs, outcomes, and impacts.

What is the difference between an output, outcome, and impact?

Outputs

Outputs are what you produce as a **direct result** of the activities of your program. These are generally tangible, countable things that you can control or reasonably predict will happen if you carry out your activities as planned.

Outcomes

Outcomes are what you **hope** will be the result of the outputs you produce. These are usually things that depend on many different and/or external factors, so you may not be able to assure they will come true, even if your activities go as planned. Outcomes may be short, medium, or long term, even beyond the lifetime of the project or grant, and they may or may not be things you intend to measure with a formal evaluation.

Impact

Impact is your **ultimate goal**. This is the larger change you want to create in the world. It is the reason for and purpose of your project. These goals are usually the result of many things over a long period of time, of which your project is just one. You are working **toward** that goal, but will not necessarily expect to achieve it within the timeframe of the project or grant.

Why does it matter to get this language right?



The difference between outputs, outcomes, and impacts can seem subtle, but using correct terminology ensures precision, clarity, and shared understanding between stakeholders, including implementers, partners, evaluators, and funders. This clarity reduces the risk of overstating or misrepresenting achievements and ensures that all parties understand what has been accomplished. Using precise language also helps align expectations, informs accurate monitoring and evaluation, and strengthens accountability by making it evident whether a program has contributed to meaningful change.

Why this matters for Gates Foundation Program Officers (PO) and other grantmakers



Capturing both outputs and outcomes is essential for funders to contribute meaningfully to the broader learning objectives of a portfolio or body of work. When projects track and analyze outcomes, not just outputs, they enable learning that extends beyond individual grants. Consistent collection, interpretation, and use of outcome data strengthens accountability and insight within a project, across a portfolio, and ultimately across the field. This is the shift from data collection to data use—from counting activities to understanding impact.

Examples

Example 1

Partner A finds that women in India are hesitant to use mobile banking due to **fear of making mistakes** when completing transactions. In response, they launch weekly training sessions to build women's digital literacy and confidence in using mobile banking services.

<i>Activity</i>	Hold training sessions for women
<i>Outputs</i>	Number of training sessions conducted Number of women trained
<i>Outcomes</i>	Increased skills among women in using digital devices Increased confidence among women in using digital devices Higher rates of women's use of digital accounts
<i>Impact</i>	Increased financial and economic inclusion of women

Example 2

Partner B observes that although many women in Tanzania have their own bank accounts, there is a **lack of female agents** available at rural posts. Women customers often feel uncomfortable—or are not permitted—to interact with male agents, which discourages account usage. In response, Partner B provides gender-sensitive training to local financial service providers (FSP) to encourage the recruitment and training of female agents.

<i>Activity</i>	Hold gender-sensitive training for FSP staff
	Develop training for female agents to be delivered by FSP staff
<i>Outputs</i>	Number of FSP staff who have completed gender-sensitive training
	Number of training modules written for female agents
<i>Outcomes</i>	Higher rates of women agents in rural posts
	Higher rates of women customers with access to a woman agent
	Increased use of financial services among women
<i>Impact</i>	Increased financial and economic inclusion of women

Example 3

Partner C observes that **KYC requirements** and **broader legal constraints** limit women's ability to open accounts in their own name, leading many to rely on their husbands' account instead. In response, Partner C conducts research to determine how many women are affected, publishes findings and recommendations in white papers, and shares them through roundtables with local FSPs and regulators.

<i>Activity</i>	Conduct research on women and KYC policies
	Draft and publish white papers
	Hold roundtables and workshops
<i>Outputs</i>	Research conducted
	Number of white papers published
	Number of downloads of white papers
	Number of dissemination events held
	Number of FSP staff and regulators attending dissemination events
<i>Outcomes</i>	Increased awareness of challenges related to policies among FSPs and regulators
	Adoption of new policies or updates to existing policies in line with recommendations
<i>Impact</i>	Increased financial and economic inclusion of women

Next Steps

Tool 3

*Develop a robust, gender-intentional
Theory of Change*

Toolkit Home

Explore all tools.

*For questions, feedback, or more information
please contact:
wfi@gridimpact.org*





Build

Build your theory
of change

Version 4.0

Tool 3

Creating a Gender-Intentional Theory of Change

Women's Financial Inclusion

Introduction

This tool guides users to develop a gender-intentional theory of change and logic model as they prepare their proposals, including clarifying intended impact, identifying activities, and mapping outputs and outcomes.



Who is it for

- Program designers or proposal writers
- Program or product managers
- Funders



How to use it

Collaboratively complete the exercises to articulate your intended impact, map out your theory of change, and identify gender-related assumptions.



When to use it

Use this during the design or proposal development process, before finalizing your results framework or monitoring plans.

What's in this tool?



Key concepts

Defines and explains key terms used in this tool.

Step-by-step guidance to create your theory of change

Beginning with defining who you aim to serve, includes worksheets and templates to articulate your overall impact and define your activities, outputs, and outcomes.

- [Worksheet: Create a Persona](#)
- [Worksheet: Impact Statement](#)
- [Worksheet: Inputs, Activities, and Outputs](#)
- [Worksheet: Illustrating your Theory of Change](#)

Common theory of change pitfalls

Gives examples of common problems you may run into when creating a theory of change.

Indicators: Measuring success

Discusses how to map indicators to your outputs and outcomes.

Incorporating these tools into your proposal

Offers practical guidance for how and where to include your theory of change and logic model in a proposal document.

Key concepts

Theory of Change

A detailed explanation of how and why a program or project is expected to create change, including assumptions, preconditions, and the causal pathway from inputs to impact.

Logic model

A visual representation that links inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes, and impact to show how a program is expected to work.

Inputs

The resources, funding, staff, or materials needed to carry out program activities.

Activities

The actions, interventions, or strategies implemented using inputs to achieve program goals.

Outputs

The immediate products, services, or deliverables produced by program activities.

Outcomes

The short- and medium-term changes that result from program outputs.

Impact

The longest-term, broader change or effect that a program contributes to, often at the community, societal, or system level.

Assumptions

The beliefs or conditions that must be true for your activities to lead to your outputs, outcomes, and impact as you expect.

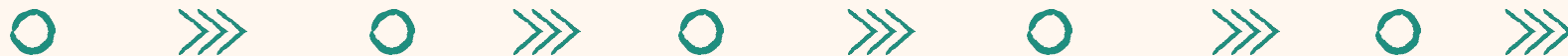
What is a Theory of Change?

A **Theory of Change** (ToC) explains **how a project or program is expected to create change**. It lays out the steps from what a project will do (activities) to the long-term results (impact) it hopes to achieve, and it clearly explains why those steps will work if your activities go as planned. A ToC should also highlight the assumptions behind the plan – what needs to be true for the project to work – and any risks or barriers that could get in the way. A ToC is used to guide planning, learning, and evaluation throughout the life of the project. Establishing a ToC early—and linking it to specific activities—helps clarify your intentions and supports strategic decision-making from the start. It builds a shared understanding of the project's goals among different stakeholders, aligns activities with outcomes, and provides a framework for MLE. By making assumptions explicit, it also helps to identify gaps early on, adapt to changing conditions or new information, and strengthen accountability for results.

A **logic model** is a visual, linear representation of how your inputs and activities lead to outputs, outcomes, and impact. It is a clear, step-by-step causal pathway from inputs (such as funding, staff, or partners) to activities (such as trainings or services), which produce outputs (immediate products or services delivered), and lead to outcomes (short- and medium-term changes) and eventually impact (long-term change). Logic models help teams plan programs, align actions with goals, and communicate their approach clearly to stakeholders. A logic model translates your theory of change (the *why*) into clear causal pathways (the *how*). It organizes the key components of a program into a structured sequence of inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes, and impact, making the strategy operational and measurable. Creating a logic model helps you plan your MLE approach by clarifying what success looks like at each stage.

A **gender-intentional** ToC and logic model are critical to ensure that your program not only *includes* men and women as customers and participants but actively considers how their barriers, needs, and opportunities differ. By integrating a gender lens from the start, you and your team will explicitly think through how change will happen for men *and* women, and what needs to be done to achieve equitable outcomes. Creating a gender-intentional ToC means thinking about how gender norms and power relations affect men's and women's access to, ability to use, and agency over resources; how outcomes might differ for men and women; and what assumptions and risks could reinforce or challenge inequality. This leads to more inclusive, effective, and sustainable programming that does not unintentionally leave women behind.

Envision your pathway to change



INPUTS

The resources that you, the intervention team, provide in order to make this work happen. Think about what is needed for your project: money, time, staff, etc.

ACTIVITIES

The things you will do with your investment. These should be actions: conduct a workshop, build a product, etc.

OUTPUTS

The direct results of your activities. These are generally things that you can control and/or reasonably predict will happen if you carry out your activities as planned. They should be countable, tangible things: women trained, new products launched, etc.

OUTCOMES

What you hope will be the result of the outputs that are produced by your activities. However, these are usually things that depend on different factors so you may not be able to assure they will come true: women's increased account usage, women's satisfaction with new products, etc.

IMPACT

The larger change you want to contribute to in the world - your ultimate reason for this project. These goals are the result of many things over a long period of time - your project is just one of those: reduced gender gap in agency, increased household financial security, etc.

Developing a theory of change

When creating a ToC, it can be helpful to work backwards – first stating your ultimate goal, then your long- and medium-term outcomes, then your short-term outcomes, and finally determining what outputs and activities will get you there.

Ultimately, you want a one-sentence statement that shows the kind of change you want to create:

If we do _____, then someone else will do _____, and we will achieve _____.

In one clear, concise sentence, can you say how your project will *move from action to outcome to impact*? Is it *clear and specific* enough that different people would interpret it the same way? Critically, is it *credible and realistic*, given the context, scope, and scale of the intervention and the problem?

The exercises that follow are designed to help your team refine this statement and clearly articulate how and why

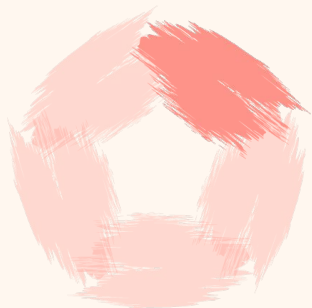
you plan to do the work you are proposing. Working through these exercises together will help develop a shared understanding of your goals, the people you aim to serve, and the steps needed to achieve lasting results. The process encourages critical thinking, collaboration, and a focus on real-world evidence, ensuring that your program is both strategic and grounded in the needs of the people it is designed to benefit.

You do not need a perfect or exhaustive theory of change. A clear, credible, and testable ToC is enough to guide learning and adaptation. A theory of change is a living document. It should be revisited and refined as you learn more during implementation.

Step 1

Create a persona

Creating a clear and meaningful ToC begins with a clear understanding of **who** you aim to serve.



The first step is to define a **persona** – a realistic character based on real insights and data about your target audience. A persona is a realistic representation of a user group—an archetype grounded in real insights. A persona is meant to represent general characteristics, behaviors, experiences, and perspectives of a group of similar individuals from a segment or population. To help you envision your end user, your persona should include a name, relevant demographic information, and what the user:

- **Says and does:** Actions, appearance, behavior towards others
- **Thinks and feels:** Attitude, preoccupations, hopes & fears, what matters most
- **Sees and hears:** Environment, physical barriers; What influencers say, what employers say, what friends and family say

Creating a persona helps you envision the ultimate goal or impact of your project, which will be your starting point to identifying your short- and medium-term outcomes, your project outputs, and your activities.

Think about the kind of person you intend to help in the long run. Who is the ultimate user, customer, or participant in your project? You may or may not work directly with this person and that's ok! We still want to get clear on who the ultimate end customer or participant is.

Fill out this worksheet to create a female persona..

[Click for worksheet](#)



Tool 3: Designing a Gender-Intentional Theory of Change

Create a Persona

Let's create a female persona together. You can fill out the template below.
Choose a regionally appropriate name and think about what her life is like.

Who is [Name]?
[Write response here]

Demographics
*How old is she?
Is she employed? What is her occupation? What is her income? Does she have other sources of income?
Who does she live with? What is her role in the family? Is she the head of the household?
Where does she live? Is it a rural or urban area?*
[Write response here]

Behaviors and habits
*How does she spend her day? What does she do regularly?
What are atypical but important actions or behaviors?
Where does she regularly go in her community?
Who does she interact with? What do they expect from her?
What is important to her?
What does she want for the next year? The next five years?*
[Write response here]

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Why a female persona?

- Women and girls often face **distinct barriers** to financial inclusion that can be overlooked.
- Using a female persona helps teams design solutions that are more **inclusive, accessible, and responsive** to how different people experience programs and change.

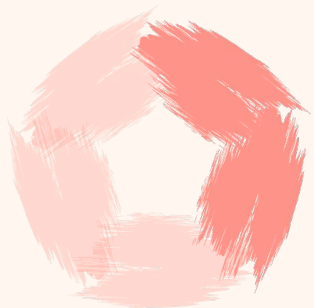
This helps avoid gender-blind planning that:

- Unintentionally excludes women or assumes that men and women **benefit in the same way**.
- Fails to account for different **constraints, needs, and access patterns**.
- Increases the risk that women are **left behind**.

Step 2

Articulate your ultimate impact and outcomes

Now that we have clarified the kind of person we want to serve or engage with our project, and the major challenges that she faces, it is time to be specific about what we want to achieve.



Imagining how you want to impact the lives of people like the persona you've envisioned will translate directly into your long-term outcomes, which will help you decide what outputs and activities will be most effective and meaningful.

Consider the following questions:

- What barriers that she faced before will be reduced or eliminated? How will that improve her social, economic, or personal wellbeing?
- What new resources will she have access to? Will she have more money that she controls? Will she have a new tool or skill she can use? What will those mean for her life?
- What new opportunities will be available to her because of the project? Will she be able to earn or save more money? Will she be able to make more decisions for herself than she does now?
- What will she do differently in her day-to-day life because of the project?
- How will her relationships to other people change because of this project? Think about her family, her neighbors, her friends, and her community.

We want to think about your ultimate reason for this project. One good way to do this is to continue asking yourself:

So what?

[Click for worksheet](#)



Tool 3: Designing a Gender-Intentional Theory of Change

Impact Statement

We want to think about your ultimate reason for this project. One good way to do this is to continue asking yourself: **So what?**

Example: If your project is to train new female agents, what does that mean for users? How does that improve their lives? What is the impact of that improvement?

- ↳ There are more bank agents who are women. **So what?**
- ↳ Women users feel more comfortable using and have greater trust in CICO points. **So what?**
- ↳ Women conduct more transactions, use more digital tools, and use their accounts more frequently. **So what?**
- ↳ Women have more control over their wages and savings and can make decisions about how to manage their financial assets. **So what?**

↳ **Women have greater agency and control.**

Continue asking yourself so what until you arrive at your *ultimate goal*. Now you can craft your impact statement based on that goal.

What will this project do?

[Write response here]

So what?

[Write response here]

So what?

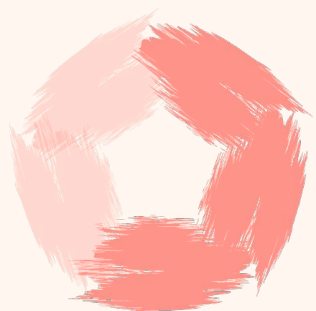
[Write response here]

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Step 3

State your inputs, activities, and outputs

Clearly stating your intended activities is necessary for ensuring that you are working toward your stated outcomes and goals.



It is also necessary for clearly articulating your intended plans in your proposal. Naming the products or outputs that will result from your activities will keep you accountable to your proposed project, and will directly translate into the results framework you will present in your proposal. Thinking about what is needed to carry out each activity will help you accurately budget for your project.

What can your team and the project you envision do to help achieve the outcomes you have identified? What activities that are feasible (given your time, budget, staffing constraints) could help you achieve the short- and long-term outcomes that you have defined? What is needed to carry out these activities?

What will you do (activities), and what will you produce (outputs) that will help you meet your goals? What do you need (money, staff, supplies, time) (inputs) to do those things?

Where along this path is it possible that women will experience friction? Where will they drop off and why? What can we do to anticipate this?

Use the template to help guide your thinking.

[Click for worksheet](#)



Tool 3: Designing a Gender-Intentional Theory of Change

Inputs, activities and outputs

It is also necessary for clearly articulating your intended plans in your proposal. Naming the products or outputs that will result from your activities will keep you accountable to your proposed project, and will directly translate into the results framework you will present in your proposal. Thinking about what is needed to carry out each activity will help you accurately budget for your project.

We will do:
Activities

[Write response here]

We will need
Inputs

[Write response here]

We will create:
Outputs

[Write response here]

Women might drop out because:
Gender risks

[Write response here]

Activity 1

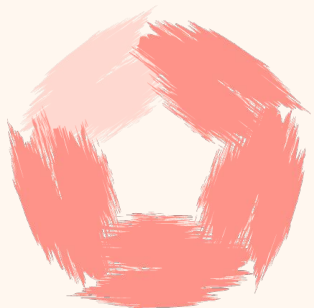
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Step 4

Identify your assumptions

Assumptions are the beliefs and conditions that must be true in order for your theory of change to work—but that are outside your control.



Assumptions help you explain why your ToC makes sense, and what must hold true for it to work. Assumptions often relate to things like people's behavior, social norms, partner reliability, market conditions, policies, and the enabling environment. Being clear and explicit about your assumptions helps you identify risks, test your logic, and adjust your strategies if real world conditions end up being different from what you expect.

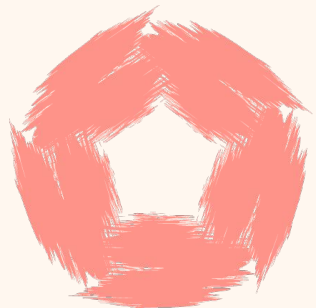
Try to answer the following questions:

1. What assumptions are you making about your context that will drive your pathway to change?
2. Are these assumptions reasonable? Do you have any evidence that these assumptions are true? Have other interventions that relied on these assumptions in the same or similar contexts held true?
3. What will be the impact on your project if they turn out to be untrue? Are there ways you can mitigate those risks?

Step 5

Bring it all together

Now look back at the one-sentence theory of change you created at the beginning of this set of exercises. Can you refine it further to add clarity, context, and credibility?

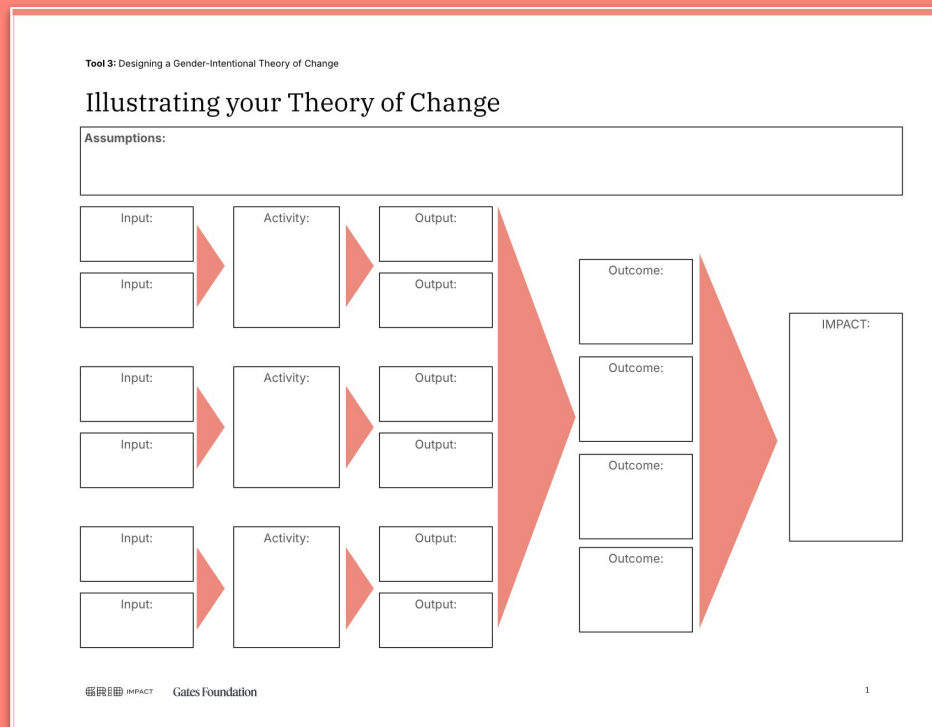


If we [activities] for
[persona/ target group], then
[short term outcomes],
which will lead to
[long term outcomes and impact]
because [assumptions].

Illustrating your theory of change

Use the Logic Model template to illustrate your theory of change and map your inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes, and impact. You can also note the assumptions that underlie your theory.

[Click for worksheet](#)



Common theory of change pitfalls

Take care to avoid making these mistakes when creating your Theory of Change:

1

Confusing outputs with outcomes.

Your ToC should depict the real *impact* you expect your activities and outputs to have. If you don't include outcomes, you won't be set up to measure, track, or even think about how your program can make real change.

2

Skipping assumptions.

It is important to think through assumptions to make sure that your logic is sound. They can also help to diagnose why something doesn't go according to plan.

3

Designing outcomes that are too broad to measure.

Outcomes need to be specific, with clear definitions for all key concepts so that progress can be measured, interpreted, and used for decision-making.

4

Treating the ToC as fixed rather than adaptive.

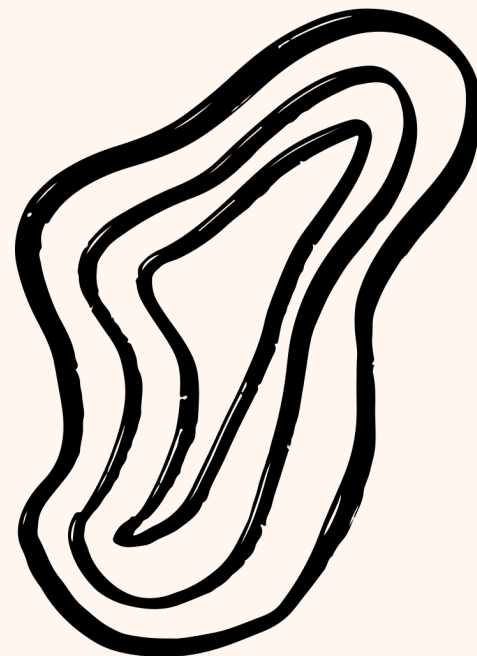
Your ToC must be allowed to shift over time so it can evolve in response to new evidence, shifting contexts, and lessons learned.



Indicators: Measuring success

Now that you have created mapped your outputs and outcomes, you can think about how you will measure whether or not you are making progress toward your impact.

Indicators tell you how to measure progress, making abstract results concrete. Choosing the right indicators ensures accountability, enables learning, and provides evidence of both program delivery and meaningful change. You should assign at least one indicator to each output and outcome in your logic model. Some outcomes may have several indicators, but not *all* outcomes need multiple indicators. Focus on those that best signal meaningful change for women.





Indicators: Measuring success

Output indicators measure *what the project delivers directly* (e.g., services delivered, participants engaged, products created) and **outcome indicators** measure *changes in behavior, skills, access, power, or well-being* that derive from those outputs.

Think through the following questions when thinking about what indicators make sense for your project:

OUTPUT INDICATORS

1. How will we measure the **quantity** and **reach** of our project?
2. What evidence will show that an activity **happened as planned**?
3. **Who will receive** these outputs, and how should we disaggregate (by gender, age, location, income level)?
4. What **data** we need to collect to confirm progress?

OUTCOME INDICATORS

1. What signs of **change** will we see if your outputs are having an effect in the short-term? In the long-term?
2. How will we know if women's **access to, usage of, or control over** financial services is improving?
3. How can we measure shifts in **power, decision-making, or confidence**, not just participation?

Incorporating these tools into your proposal

When crafting your proposal, including a clear one-sentence change statement and a visual representation of the ToC can show clearly how and why you expect your project to work. This will help you clearly explain your intended outcomes and make the case for your project. The theory of change should appear early in the proposal narrative, explaining the **problem you aim to solve** (along with the **evidence** that it exists), the **pathways to change**, and the **assumptions** behind your strategy. The visual logic model follows, often as a table or a flowchart and outlines the **inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes**, and **impact**. Some templates you can use are included on the following pages. Together, these tools demonstrate the strategic reasoning behind your project design as well as your operational plan and monitoring and evaluation strategy. This will help reviewers understand **what you intend to do and why**, and **how it will create measurable change**.

Ensure your proposal includes each of the following elements:

- ☐ The problem you want to solve
- ☐ Evidence the problem exists
- ☐ Impact statement
- ☐ Activities you will implement, including all stakeholders involved
- ☐ Outputs that will result from the activities
- ☐ Outcomes that will result from the outputs
- ☐ Qualitative and quantitative indicators that will be used to measure outputs and outcomes
- ☐ Inputs: budget and timeline required

Next Steps

Tool 4

Think through what learning approach is most appropriate for your project.

Toolkit Home

Explore all tools.

*For questions, feedback, or more information
please contact:
wfi@gridimpact.org*





Develop

Develop your
learning approach

Version 4.0

Tool 4

How to Design Your Learning Approach

Women's Financial Inclusion

Introduction

This guide helps users select a learning approach that aligns with their goals, context, and available resources. It supports the design of systematic, gender-intentional learning strategies, with practical recommendations for inclusive, ethical, and just data collection. It includes: a clear comparison of types of research and a decision-making framework for selecting a methodology; actionable suggestions for gender-intentional research; and guiding questions to build a research protocol.



Who is it for

- External research or evaluation partners
- Monitoring & evaluation specialists



How to use it

- Review the diverse types of research approaches and consult the decision-making framework to determine what approach is most appropriate for you.
- Follow the guidelines for gender-intentional learning to ensure your research actively includes women's perspectives.
- Consider and answer the questions in Building a Research Protocol to plan and refine the logistics of your study.



When to use it

Refer to this document during early implementation to finalize your research plans, train enumerators, and set up systems.

What's in this tool?



Step 1: Decide what learning approach is best for you

Helps you choose an approach based on your learning goals.

Step 2: Decide what methods and tools you will use

Lists suggested methods, tool structure, and use cases, and helps you understand how to make these decisions.

Deep Dive: Activity-based and immersive methods

Provides examples of activity-based and immersive research methods to consider.

Step 3: Develop your survey questions

Highlights common pitfalls to avoid when writing surveys, and practical guidance to fix them.

Deep Dive: Principles of gender-intentional learning

Suggests actions you can take to ensure research includes and highlights women's voices.

Step 4: Build your research protocol

Walks you through questions to ask yourself when creating your research protocol.



For more on how you think about telling your impact story:

[Analyzing Results and Telling Your Change Story](#)

Step 1

Decide what learning approach is best for you



Systematically collecting, analyzing, and interpreting learning from your project is essential.

The information you gather will allow you to tell the story of your project once it is completed, including what worked, what didn't, and why. Research and learning can take many forms—**not all credible evidence comes from experiments**. The spectrum of approaches ranges from routine program monitoring and implementation data to more formal studies such as randomized control trials (RCTs). While RCTs are often viewed as the “gold standard” for demonstrating causality, they are only one of many rigorous methods—and are appropriate only in specific contexts. For many projects, practical approaches like before-and-after (pre- and post-) surveys, interviews, focus group discussions, outcomes harvesting (a method that works backward from observed changes to understand contribution), and structured reflection can provide valuable evidence of change and insight into how and why it occurred.

There is no single “right” learning approach. *The best choice depends on what you want to learn, how you plan to use the findings, and what is feasible given your context and resources.*

To determine what kind of data to collect, first think about what you want to learn:
what kind of information do you need?

<i>Your goal</i>		<i>Suggested methods</i>
Understand the situation or problem	We need to learn more about what's happening, and why.	Interviews, focus groups, field visits, desk research
Understand people's experiences or needs	We need to know what people (especially women, customers, or partners) think, need, or do.	Interviews, focus groups, user research, case studies
Measure reach or progress	We need to show how many people we reached or how much things changed.	Surveys, administrative data, monitoring dashboards
See what difference the work made	We need to understand if this project or policy actually made change happen.	Before-and-after comparisons, contribution analysis, simple outcome surveys, outcomes harvesting

Tool 4: How to Design Your Learning Approach

<i>Your goal</i>		<i>Suggested methods</i>
Track ongoing implementation	We need to keep an eye on how the project is going and make quick course corrections.	Routine monitoring data (administrative data, performance indicators), short check-in surveys, dashboards
Understand and improve business outcomes	We need to know how we are doing, where we can improve, and how.	Performance data, MIS data, monitoring dashboards
Inform policy or advocate for change	We need evidence to influence decision-makers or support a new approach.	Policy reviews, stakeholder consultations, learning briefs
All of the above	We're learning, measuring, and improving at the same time.	Mixed methods – combine quantitative and qualitative approaches

Step 2

Decide what methods and tools you will use



Choosing the right data collection tool is just as important as choosing the right analysis framework.

How information is captured and structured can dramatically affect the time, cost, and usefulness of your data. This is especially true for investments with multiple activities: different activities may call for different data collection strategies and tools, but they ultimately must integrate into a coherent analysis and impact story.

Quantitative Data

Typically numerical data, like surveys and experiments, that enable you to identify patterns and trends. Data can come from primary (you and your project team) or secondary (third-party entities) data sources.

Qualitative Data

Typically comes from speaking with individuals in-depth, focused on human experiences to provide depth and nuance. Data comes from group discussions, observations, and individual interviews. Rigorous qualitative data collection adds critical insight into social and economic inclusion.

In many cases, both of these methods may be used to capture the range of impact and changes that occurred from your project.

Tool 4: How to Design Your Learning Approach

Align your methods with your questions, resources, and capacity. You can—and often should—use multiple methods (e.g. a survey plus interviews plus observation) so that you can triangulate findings, check consistency, and enrich numeric trends with voice and context.

<i>Method</i>	<i>Structure</i>	<i>Use Case</i>
Highly structured quantitative survey	Closed questions, binary or Likert scales, fixed order	Collect comparable numeric data across many respondents
Mixed (quantitative + open response) survey	Mostly fixed choices but with occasional “other / explain” or multiple selections	Gather both counts and qualitative nuance
Semi-structured interview guides	Core set of questions + space for probing	Collect deeper insights while maintaining comparability across interviews
Discussion or participatory guides	Broad prompts rather than strict question order	Explore community experiences, norms, tensions, or co-designing solutions
Observation/field-note guides	Predefined aspects to observe, often with space for notes	Systematically record what you see (e.g. behaviors, interactions, environment)
Secondary/administrative data review	Use existing records, reports, logs, dashboards	Reduce the burden of primary data collection and triangulate findings

Consider the following when choosing your methods and tools

1. Level of representation needed.

Use *probability-based methods*, like surveys with random sampling, when you need results that can be generalized to a defined population or compared across locations, time periods, or groups. These approaches are particularly important for accountability, benchmarking, or tracking change over time.

When representativeness is not required – or when access, cost, or security constraints make random sampling impractical – purposive sampling, where researchers select specific respondents intentionally, as opposed to randomly, can be used to make sure you are talking to the people best placed to answer your questions. This approach is well suited to exploratory research, learning-focused evaluations, pilot testing, or situations where the objective is to understand specific experiences, not estimate prevalence.



Consider the following when choosing your methods and tools

2. Type and sensitivity of information.

The sensitivity and reliability of the information being collected will strongly influence method choice. Anonymized surveys, administrative data, or passive data sources are best when asking about sensitive topics, behaviors that may be stigmatized, or issues prone to social desirability bias – where respondents feel pressure to answer a certain way – as they can reduce pressure on respondents and improve data accuracy.

For information that is not highly sensitive and is relatively straightforward to report, individual interviews or structured questionnaires work well, especially when some explanation or probing is useful. When the goal is to understand social norms, group dynamics, or how opinions are formed and negotiated collectively, focus group discussions are most appropriate, often complemented by individual interviews to capture perspectives that may not surface in a group setting.



Consider the following when choosing your methods and tools

3. Time and budget constraints.

Time and budget availability determine how much depth and methodological rigor is feasible. When resources and timelines allow, in-depth and in-person methods (qualitative interviews, face-to-face surveys, longitudinal designs, or mixed-methods approaches) can help researchers understand processes, change pathways, and contextual factors.

When time or budget is limited, rapid or lighter-touch methods (including online or phone surveys, administrative data, or a small number of highly targeted purposive interviews) allow teams to generate timely insights, test assumptions, or inform short-term decision-making without compromising feasibility.



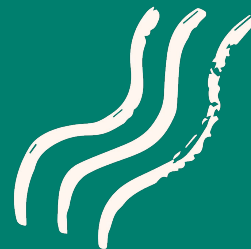


Deep Dive

Activity-based and immersive methods

Participant-led research methods invite active engagement and ownership, and are especially useful for understanding behaviors and contexts in real time.

These approaches often require more time, facilitation skill, and flexibility, and produce insights that are less standardized or harder to compare. However, they can surface lived experience and strengthen the relevance of findings within a given context.



Activity-based research

Activity-based research generally begins with some engaging activity, which the participant completes either on their own or together with a facilitator, followed by a guided discussion based on the activity.

Some examples:

Card-sorting

Participants rank or organize cards with words or images according to given criteria, illustrating preferences, relationships, and processes. As they work, the facilitator can prompt the participant to explain their choices and reasoning and respond to diverse scenarios or contexts.

Diaries

Participants are given instructions and tools to document (through a written record, photography, drawing, or other method) a given aspect of their life for a predetermined period. Diaries can provide an invaluable first-hand account of an experience or event.

Mapping

Participants and researchers together create a visual representation of some system or process.

Immersive research

Immersive research enables researchers to experience first-hand the process or situations they are trying to understand.

There are different “levels” of immersive research:

“True” immersion

Researchers go where their participants live, work, and engage in the topic of the research and, as best as possible, walk in their shoes.

Analogous contexts

In cases where true immersion is not feasible or practical, researchers choose to observe or immerse themselves in a situation where participants encounter a similar challenge, behavior, or system, but in a different context.

Observation or shadowing

Researchers watch closely as an individual goes about their day, engaging in their usual activities.

Guided tours

Participants give researchers a (literal or figurative) tour of their home, workplace, or community, introducing them to objects, places, and activities that are part of their lives. Researchers ask questions about the environment, but allow the participants to take the lead.

Step 3

Develop your survey questions



Surveys are a helpful tool for gathering data from a lot of participants. Analyzing surveys is generally straightforward and allows you to easily compare responses between groups and/or over time.

However, designing effective survey questions requires careful attention to wording, structure, and context. Even well-intentioned questions can produce biased or incomplete data if they are unclear or poorly framed. This section highlights common pitfalls to avoid when designing quantitative questions to ensure data are accurate, inclusive, and meaningful.

Common Pitfalls: *Overusing open-ended questions*

While open-ended or free response questions can be integrated into surveys, and can provide helpful information, they are more complicated to analyze than simple fixed response questions.

The questions themselves are also more likely to be misunderstood, and you may find that responses are not what you intended, or discover that participants skip these questions altogether – especially in an online or self-administered survey. You may find it more helpful to include an “Other” or “None of the above” option alongside your fixed responses.

Example

What is your agency's role in handling public complaints? *[free response]*

Suggested Fix

What is your agency's role in handling public complaints? *(Select all that apply)*

- A. Complaint receiving
- B. Complaint handling
- C. Complaint processing
- D. Complaint investigation
- E. Complaint mediation
- F. Complaint resolution/customer care
- G. Complaint process oversight
- H. Other (please specify)

Common Pitfalls: *Asking multiple questions at once*

Double-barreled questions ask about two or more issues at the same time, often unintentionally.

Even if they seem connected, this can make it unclear what participants are responding to, especially in a closed-ended question, or prevent participants from responding to both parts. Separating each into a question on its own and using skip patterns as needed is critical to ensuring that your data are clear and accurate.

Example

**What is the process of referring the complaint to the satellite office?
After referring the complaint, are you still looped in until resolution?**

Suggested Fix

How are complaints referred to satellite offices? (Select all that apply)

- A. No formal process
- B. Paper reports (mail, fax, PDF, excel)
- C. Email or website submissions
- D. Specialized centers
- E. Bank consolidated system
- F. Other (please specify):

**After the referral, is your office kept informed until the complaint is resolved?
(yes/no)**

Common Pitfalls: *Neglecting to triangulate responses with multiple questions – and planning to deal with potential incongruencies*

Especially for complex or sensitive topics such as financial decision-making, empowerment, or agency, using multiple complementary questions can help you capture different dimensions of the same concept, or act as an accuracy check.

Triangulating responses strengthens data reliability and helps reveal nuances that a single indicator might miss. When results seem inconsistent or contradictory, consider this as meaningful information rather than an error. Consider whether it reveals differences in interpretation or context.

Example

Do you currently have access to a bank account, mobile money account, or other financial product? (yes/no)

Suggested Fix

- A. **Do you currently have a bank account, mobile money account, or other financial product in your own name?** (yes/no)
- B. **In the past three months, how often have you used this account?** (every day, several times a week, once a week, a few times a month, once a month, less than once a month)
- C. **Who decides when to use this account?** (me alone, me and someone else, someone else)

Common Pitfalls: *Using ambiguous or vague wording*

Using clear, simple language and avoiding jargon as much as possible ensures that your questions are understood consistently by all participants.

Words like “usually” or “rarely” can mean very different things across respondents, especially in diverse settings. Define key terms when needed, and be specific with things that might be subjective, like timeframes. This helps participants not have to guess at your meaning and ensures that answers are accurate.

Example 1

Do you usually save money? *(yes/no)*

Suggested Fix

Have you saved any money in the past three months? *(yes/no)*

Example 2

How often do you and your spouse talk about finances?
(usually/sometimes/ never)

Suggested Fix

How often do you and your spouse talk about finances?
(every day, several times a week, once a week, several times a month, once a month, less than once a month)

Common Pitfalls: *Asking leading questions*

Leading questions inadvertently suggest a “correct” or preferred response, which can bias your results.

Using neutral, open phrasing avoids implying approval or passing judgement and helps ensure the most accurate results.

Example 1

How have you benefited from the training?

Suggested Fix

What, if anything, are you doing differently after completing the training?

Example 2

Do you share financial decisions fairly with your spouse?

Suggested Fix

Who usually makes decisions about how to spend money in your household?

Deep Dive

Principles of gender-intentional learning

Conducting research that is gender-intentional is critical to ensuring that the evidence you gather is holistic and illustrative of the experience of all potential program beneficiaries or participants.

Traditional research methods are subject to power dynamics and differentials that may unintentionally overlook or silence the voices of marginalized groups, including women. By intentionally centering diverse voices, researchers ensure that the perspectives of these groups are not excluded. This approach makes research more ethical, inclusive, and action-oriented, ensuring that evidence supports solutions that work for everyone—not just the most visible groups. The following are suggestions for conducting gender intentional research.



Principles: *Voice and Participation*

Center women's and marginalized groups' perspectives.

Action Involve women in designing or reviewing tools—e.g., hold a short feedback session with women before finalizing survey questions or partner with community-based organizations to gather common consumer grievances faced by the people they serve.

Ensure equitable participation and fair compensation.

Action Schedule interviews at times convenient for women; when possible, provide childcare or transport stipends; pay participants for their time.

Avoid extractive research.

Action Return findings to communities through local meetings, short summaries, or radio discussions so participants see how their input was used.

Principles: *Power and Reflexivity*

Acknowledge and challenge power dynamics.

Action Use community or peer researchers instead of only external experts; facilitate small-group discussions so quieter voices are heard.

Build reflexive research teams.

Action Include a gender reflection in enumerator training and debriefs—ask “How might our own assumptions be shaping what we hear?”

Principles: *Safety, Dignity, and Intersectionality*

Protect participants' dignity, agency, and safety.

Action Use private interview spaces, obtain verbal consent when literacy is low, and avoid collecting sensitive data you can't safely protect.

Apply an intersectional lens.

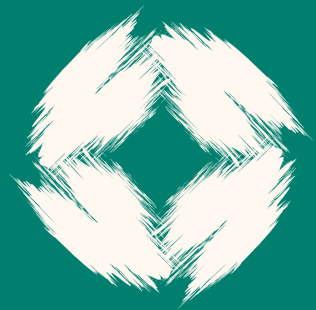
Action Disaggregate data by sex, age, location, and other relevant factors; analyze how overlapping identities influence access and outcomes.

Use inclusive, agency-affirming language.

Action Replace “barriers women face” with “strategies women use” or “conditions that enable or limit women’s choices.”

Step 4

Build your research protocol



A research protocol is a document that explains exactly how you will conduct research.

It is a detailed plan that serves as a roadmap for researchers and enumerators, and acts as a quality assurance document for reviewers, funders, and ethics committees. Creating—and sticking to—this plan helps ensure that data are collected accurately, ethically, and consistently across study sites, enumerators, and time periods.

It typically includes:

1. Study title and project background
2. Research questions and objectives
3. Population and sampling methodology
4. Data collection methods
5. Data analysis plan
6. Ethical considerations
7. Timeline and workplan
8. Study limitations and potential risks

Consider the following questions when designing the logistics of your research protocol:

Recruiting participants

- How many people do you plan to speak to? How will you know when you have reached saturation?
- What kinds of people will you need to include in your study? What segments of the population are you most interested in? Be as detailed as possible.
- How will you find and contact the people who will participate in your study?
- Will the same individuals participate in future rounds of data collection? How will you be sure you can find them again?

Informed consent

- What information will participants need to have before they give informed consent?
 - Will participants sign consent forms or give verbal consent?
 - Will any participants be minors or otherwise unable to give informed consent? If so, who will consent on their behalf, and how?
-

Data collection

- Will data collection take place in person, over the phone, or online?
- Will enumerators collect data on paper or using tablets?
- How will you ensure privacy and confidentiality for participants?
- What checks for data accuracy will be implemented?
- What, if any, compensation will you provide to research participants? How will you deliver it?

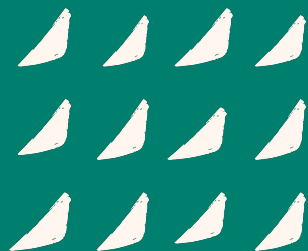
Data management

- How long will data be kept, and how will it be stored? Who will have access to it?
- Will any personal or identifiable data be stored?

Mitigating risk and adapting to challenges

- What will you do if you cannot recruit enough participants into the study?
 - What will you do if privacy or confidentiality becomes compromised?
-

Wrapping up Key Takeaways



Not all projects require the same level of methodological rigor.

The goal is not to apply the most complex method possible, but to use an approach that is *credible*, *ethical*, and *appropriate* to the decisions the evidence will inform. Methods and tools should be aligned with your learning questions and with your capacity to collect, report, and analyze the results. In practice, this also means being intentional about whose voices are included, and whose are overlooked. Balancing depth with feasibility should not come at the expense of inclusivity; even lighter-touch methods, if intentionally designed, can meaningfully capture women's experiences and perspectives. A well-chosen, thoughtfully implemented approach will generate more valuable insights than a more complex design that fails to reflect diverse realities. By staying true to purpose, inclusion, and use, you can ensure your research supports learning, adaptation, and more gender-responsive decision-making over time.

Next Steps

[Tool 5](#)

Get tips for conducting different types of surveys.

[Toolkit Home](#)

Explore all tools.

*For questions, feedback, or more information
please contact:
wfi@gridimpact.org*





Develop

Develop your
learning approach

Version 4.0

Tool 5

Guidance and Tips for Gender-Intentional Data Collection

Women's Financial Inclusion

Introduction

This document provides practical, field-ready guidance for collecting ethical, accurate, and inclusive data in women's financial inclusion (WFI) projects. It helps users make informed decisions about who collects data and about how it is collected and recorded—ensuring that women's voices are captured safely and authentically. It is a planning and operational resource—supporting teams from research setup through field implementation.



Who is it for

- External research or evaluation partners
- Monitoring & evaluation specialists
- Funders



How to use it

Review the pros and cons of different data collection and recording methods, considering your subject matter, accessibility and connectivity constraints, and budgetary and time considerations. Then consult the training guide to ensure you appropriately prepare your data collectors. Finally, adhere to the tips for data collection to ensure data collection is accurate, ethical, and successful.



When to use it

Refer to this document during implementation to finalize your research plans, train enumerators, and prepare for fieldwork.

What's in this tool?



Choose a mode of data collection

Helps you to decide who will collect data and how, and where it will be recorded.

Prepare to train your data collectors

Guides you to adequately and appropriately train your data collectors, including specific considerations for different modes of data collection and recording.

Begin data collection

Provides tips and recommendations for gender-intentional data collection, ensuring that women's voices are highlighted and their privacy protected.

Choices about *who collects data and how* directly shape whose voices are heard, how safe participants feel, and how credible findings are - especially for women.

Choose a mode of data collection



Systematically collecting, analyzing, and interpreting learning from your project is essential.

Once you have determined the best learning approach, you will need to decide:

1. *Who* will collect the data?
2. *How* will data be collected?
3. *Where* will data be recorded?

Data can be gathered by professional enumerators or trusted community members, in person, over the phone, or using digital tools. Each option involves trade-offs in cost, timing, data quality, and gender considerations. Understanding these trade-offs can help you choose a data collection approach that is both technically sound and socially acceptable—ensuring that women’s voices are captured accurately and safely.

There is no single “*best*” mode of data collection. Each option involves trade-offs, and the right choice depends on context, sensitivity of the topic, and who is being reached.

1. *Who* collects the data?

Mode	Pros	Cons
Professional enumerators <i>Best for sensitive subject matter</i>	- Already trained in research ethics, interview techniques, bias mitigation - Higher data quality and consistency across respondents - Familiarity with complex surveys and digital tools - Reduced risk of community influence or social desirability bias (when respondents give answers they think are expected or acceptable rather than fully honest ones) - Easier to match respondent and interviewer gender	- More expensive (training, travel, salaries) - May be perceived as outsiders and need additional support/time to build trust with respondents - Reduced contextual knowledge or language nuances
Community members <i>Best for low-cost, non-sensitive subject matter</i>	- Trusted by respondents - Helps ensure cultural and linguistic sensitivity - Lower cost compared to professional teams - Builds local ownership of research and research process	- High potential for biased answers if collecting data from peers and acquaintances - May lack experience with data collection techniques and ethical protocols and require more training - Risks to confidentiality in close-knit communities - May be difficult to recruit women enumerators

2. *How* is data collected?

Mode	Pros	Cons
In-person <i>Best for in-depth research and complex, longer surveys and interviews</i>	- Allows for easier rapport and trust-building - Enables observation of nonverbal cues and contextual factors - Easier to ensure privacy, verify respondent identity, and ensure completion of survey - Suitable for environments with low-literacy or limited phone/internet access	- Highest cost (transportation, logistics, enumerator time) - Time-consuming especially if research areas are remote or dispersed - Potential safety/security risks and mobility challenges, especially for female enumerators - Increased risk of social desirability bias - Reaching female participants maybe more time intensive - Can be burdensome to participants with limited time
Over the phone <i>Best for reduced cost or geographically diverse populations</i>	- Lower cost and faster data collection - Can reach wide range of participants and/or geographically dispersed populations - Opportunity to monitor and ensure data quality through call recordings - Reduced social desirability bias compared to face-to-face interviews	- Excludes populations without phone access or with low digital literacy - May exclude women in contexts where phone access or ownership is gendered - Reduced opportunity for building rapport - Potential for issues of privacy and identity verification

2. *How* is data collected? (cont.)

Mode	Pros	Cons
Online surveys (Google Forms, Whatsapp, etc.) <i>Best for large, quantitative surveys with structured questions and answers and/or sensitive subject matter</i>	- Cost-effective and quick to administer at scale - Data automatically digitized - Reduced social desirability bias, especially if data is anonymized - Can ensure confidentiality and increase participation	- Excludes populations without internet access or with low digital literacy - May exclude women in contexts where internet access is gendered - Challenges ensuring participant identity - Does not allow for probing or clarification

3. *Where* is data recorded?

Mode	Pros	Cons
On paper <i>Best for low-connectivity areas</i>	- Familiar and accessible to enumerators with low digital literacy - Easier in low-connectivity areas - No risk of device-related privacy issues	- Increased risk of data entry and transcription errors - Slower data processing and difficulty implementing feedback loops and real-time changes - Increased risk of confidentiality issues - Increased burden on enumerators
Digitally (on tablets) <i>Best for structured surveys in areas with reliable internet access and highly trained enumerators</i>	- Increased data accuracy and consistency - Easier to administer complex surveys with built-in logic or skip patterns - Enables real-time monitoring of responses and participant demographics, allowing for quick changes if necessary - Data stored securely and anonymized automatically	- Requires enumerators who are comfortable using digital devices - Risk of technical failures or battery issues



Digital data collection tools

Digital tools, such as smartphone based apps, can improve the security, consistency, and efficiency of data collection. Compared with professional enumerators, app-based digital tools can significantly reduce the time and expense of data collection, cleaning, and analysis. Leaner digital tools that rely on community members or local leaders using simple apps are well suited for smaller, rapid “dipstick” surveys or ongoing monitoring. When well designed and resourced, community-based digital data collection can expand participation and ownership in research, offering a practical, less extractive way to understand change from within communities themselves.

Prepare to train your data collectors



Once you have selected a mode of data collection, the next thing to consider is training. No matter who collects the data, adequate preparation before any fieldwork begins is essential to ensure data quality and participant safety. Training and supervision are essential to ethical, consistent, and credible data collection.

Regardless of mode, all trainings should cover:

Thorough review of the data collection tool(s):

Enumerators must be comfortable with the survey or interview guide, including fully understanding all questions included. Training should include a full review of the guides being used and enumerators given the opportunity to ask questions and check understanding.

Informed consent and confidentiality:

Enumerators must understand how to obtain genuine, voluntary consent and ensure respondents' privacy at every stage. They should know how to protect sensitive information — especially on topics like income, empowerment, or gender-based violence — whether data are collected on paper, phone, or digitally.

Gender sensitivity:

All enumerators should be trained to recognize and respond to gender and power dynamics, ensuring that questions are asked respectfully and all participants feel safe and heard. Training should build awareness of unconscious bias, inclusive language, and local gender norms.

Regardless of mode, all trainings should cover:

Building trust and rapport:

Training should equip enumerators to create comfortable, nonjudgmental environments for all respondents. This includes using empathetic communication, active listening, and neutral responses, while being mindful of social hierarchies and power imbalances.

Approaching sensitive topics:

Enumerators must understand how to address sensitive or potentially sensitive topics, including how to respond if participants become upset or disclose harm.

Technical proficiency:

Enumerators should be given ample time to practice all protocols – including related to digital devices, recording devices, and tablets, as well as paper survey storage procedures – that will be used during data collection.

There are also specific training considerations for specific modes of data collection. Training for different kinds of enumerators and different modes of data collection will focus on different topics:

Professional enumerators

Enumerators with country-based research experience are likely already competent interviewers and understand ethical best practices. However, it is a good idea to ensure they have gender sensitivity training, and they must understand what the survey aims to measure and how to interpret each question consistently. Training should include guided practice with the tool and mock interviews.

Community data collectors

When community members serve as enumerators, they must be trained carefully on consistent survey administration, interviewing best-practices, and ethical protocols. This may be their first experience collecting data of this kind. Attention should be given to foundational research ethics and nonjudgemental behavior. Special care should be taken to help them manage pre-existing local relationships.

In-person data collection

Training should emphasize managing privacy in the field, including how to identify private, discreet interview spots and manage the presence of other household members. Training should also cover observation skills and culturally appropriate techniques to build rapport quickly and efficiently.

Phone-based data collection

Callers need specific training to confirm the respondent's identity, ensure they have time and privacy to participate, and maintain confidentiality, as well as how to handle interruptions or situations where the respondent cannot speak freely. Phone-based interviewers should also receive training on how to build trust remotely and without face-to-face interaction.

Online data collection

Online data collection may not involve a formal enumerator. In lieu of this, ensure that all questions and any written instructions are given clearly and in simple language. Any complicated terms or concepts should be clearly defined within the question or in accompanying guidance. Someone on the team should also pilot the survey in full to ensure the skip logic works as planned. Confidentiality and data storage procedures should be clearly stated in a way that builds participants' confidence in the data collection system and encourages truthful responses. Contact information for participants seeking support should also be provided when possible.

Paper-based recording

Training should enforce the importance of accurate recording, legible handwriting, and secure storage of completed surveys.

Digital recording

Training must allow enumerators ample time to feel confident using digital devices and platforms, including offline functionality and troubleshooting any potential issues. Training should cover data protection protocols to ensure confidentiality in the event that devices are shared or lost.

Begin data collection



Once enumerators are selected and trained, the next step is to put that training into practice during data collection. Fieldwork brings real-world challenges — from managing privacy and respondent comfort to navigating local power dynamics and unexpected situations. This section outlines key guidance for enumerators to uphold ethical standards, ensure high-quality data, and create a respectful and safe experience for all participants. It also includes specific considerations for specific modes of data collection.

Quick tips for gender-intentional data collection

Be gender intentional.

Recognize that bias is human—and plan for it. Train data collectors to reflect on their own assumptions, match enumerators and respondents by gender when possible—especially for sensitive topics—and use inclusive language (for example, instead of asking for the “head of household” ask about who participates in or influences decisions on specific issues).

Prioritize privacy and trust.

Conduct interviews in private, explain confidentiality clearly, and give respondents space to stop or reschedule if they feel uncomfortable. Building trust leads to more honest responses—especially on topics like money, decision-making, or autonomy.

Maintain neutrality and respect.

Ask questions exactly as written, keep tone and body language neutral, and record responses without showing surprise or approval. Be efficient and respectful of respondents’ time—especially women’s—and watch for fatigue.

Protect data quality and security.

Write legibly, follow skip logic and coding instructions, review each form before leaving, and store completed surveys safely. Enter or back up data as soon as possible to prevent loss or error.

In some contexts, the most ethical choice may be *not to collect certain types of data at all*—like if privacy cannot be ensured or if participation could place women at risk.

Gender-intentional data collection

GENDER NORMS AND ASSUMPTIONS

- **Match enumerators and respondents by gender** whenever possible.
- **Train enumerators on implicit biases and assumptions.** Help them think about what biases they hold before asking a question.
- **Don't neglect local power dynamics.** Remember that data collectors may hold more status than respondents.
- *Phone-based and online surveys:* **Plan for inclusivity.** Consider who owns smartphones and who doesn't; recognize how this affects whose voices are captured. Determine whether alternative strategies are feasible.

PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY

- **Hold interviews in private spaces** where both you and the participants are comfortable and no one else can hear what you say.
- **Clearly explain that participation is voluntary and that responses will be kept confidential.** You can say: "I am going to be asking you some questions about how you use different financial accounts and tools. You don't have to answer any questions you don't want to, and we can stop at any time. I will make sure that no one else can hear what you are saying or find out what you have told me. Your answers are confidential."
- *Phone-based interviews:* **Mitigate potential violations of privacy.** You can tell the respondent: "If someone tries to come into the room where you are or you think someone will hear, you can say 'the weather is very hot today' [or some other code word or phrase] and I will stop the interview until you are ready to continue."

BUILDING RAPPORT

- **Begin the conversation by setting the stage**, including introducing yourself and sharing information about the project and the interview itself. Tell the participant about your research objectives and how long you expect the interview to last.
 - **Set the participant at ease**. Try to read and respond to the participant's body language, noting whether they are nervous or uncomfortable. If appropriate, try to lighten the mood with a joke or personal story.
-

NEUTRALITY

- **Ask all questions exactly as they are written**, and without any inflection or body language that could let the respondent know what answer you expect.
 - **Avoid reacting to responses or adding personal opinions**, even if the responses are surprising or concerning.
-

DATA ENTRY

- **Record interviews whenever possible** to capture responses accurately and reduce the burden of notetaking. If audio-recording is not possible, or if the participant is not comfortable being recorded, have a colleague act as a notetaker. Be sure to test any recording software or app ahead of time.
 - **Review each form before leaving or ending the survey** and ask for clarification if needed.
 - *For paper-based recording: Record all responses clearly and legibly.*
 - *For paper-based recording: Store documents securely* in a safe, dry place, and enter data electronically as soon as possible.
-

**TIMING, SCHEDULING,
AND COMPENSATION**

- **Schedule interviews ahead of time** and offer different options, including evenings and weekends. Confirm the interview time and location with the participant the day before.
 - **Watch for signs of fatigue** or disengagement and stop the interview or take a break when needed. Space out surveys and ensure respondents aren't overburdened by repeated data requests.
 - **Budget accurately for time and data costs**—both professional enumerators and community members should be compensated for their work and any mobile data used.
 - Digital data collection: **Don't treat digital data collection as cost-free.** It requires planning, support, and oversight to produce credible, ethical data.
 - For phone-based or online data collection: **Compensate participants and enumerators** for airtime and/or data costs.
 - Data collection on sensitive topics can also be emotionally taxing for enumerators. Build in debriefs, peer support, and clear escalation pathways when difficult situations arise.
-

Next Steps

[Tool 6](#)

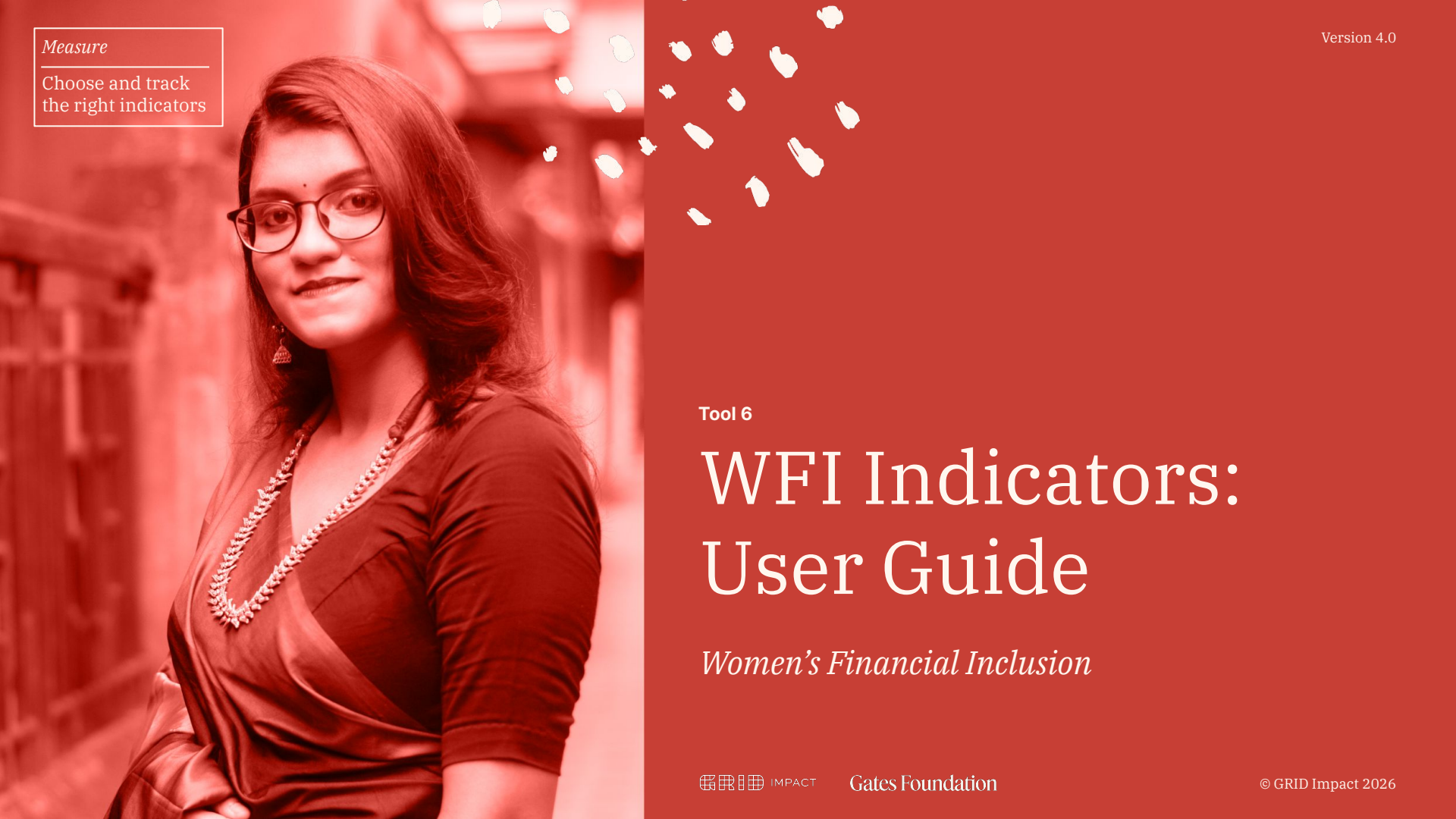
Choose from a list of WFI indicators. Consult indicator user guide [here](#).

[Toolkit Home](#)

Explore all tools.

*For questions, feedback, or more information
please contact:
wfi@gridimpact.org*





Measure

Choose and track
the right indicators

Version 4.0

Tool 6

WFI Indicators: User Guide

Women's Financial Inclusion

Introduction

The WFI Indicators List is a list of recommended indicators for measuring outcomes relevant to women's financial inclusion. These indicators are organized by domain (i.e., access, usage, agency, harm) and accompanied by definitions and measurement notes. This User Guide provides instructions and suggestions for choosing indicators that are right for your project.



Who is it for

- Program designers or proposal writers
- Program or product managers
- Monitoring & evaluation specialists
- Funders



How to use it

Select the indicators that are relevant to your project and stated outcomes. These indicators can be included in your project's results framework and should drive your evaluation plan. Funders may choose to recommend specific indicators that are most relevant to their bodies of work and can aggregate results on specific indicators across multiple grants.



When to use it

Use this during the design phase, when creating your RFT and theory of change, and throughout the grant, especially during each reporting cycle.

What's in this tool?



What is this list?

Explains the purpose of the WFI Indicator List—what it can do, and what it can't do.

How to Read the WFI Indicator List

Gives detailed instructions for reviewing the list, including what information is provided for each indicator.

How to Choose Your Indicators

Gives step-by-step guidance to reviewing the list in full and selecting most relevant indicators.

Connection to Portfolio-Level Indicators

Describes how the WFI Indicators relate to portfolio-level KPIs, and gives suggestions for how to use them to tell a contribution story of individual investments to broader change.



What is this list?

✓ *This list is:*

A shared resource designed to help implementers and funders more consistently measure outcomes related to women's financial inclusion (WFI). It complements strong, grant-level monitoring by offering a common set of reference indicators that can be used across diverse projects to track change over time. The indicators in this list are focused on outcomes, not outputs, as the intention is to strengthen measurement of real changes in WFI rather than activity completion.

✗ *This list is NOT:*

A replacement for project-specific MLE systems, nor should it limit partners' ability to select context-appropriate indicators. Projects should continue to use tailored output and outcome indicators for managing their activities; this list simply adds a shared outcome-focused layer that supports comparability across grants.

Avoid these mistakes:

1. Treating the indicator list as a **required checklist**
2. Selecting indicators without a clear link to the project's **theory of change**
3. **Comparing** indicator values across projects or contexts
4. Using indicators without sufficient **contextual explanation**

Why this matters

Ultimately, this indicator list is a practical experiment in improving consistency, comparability, and rigor in measuring WFI across a diverse set of projects.

It aims to:

1

Move beyond fragmented, project-specific measurement

2

Strengthen outcome-level evidence on what is changing for women

3

Support both partners and program officers in making data-informed decisions

4

Build a clearer picture of portfolio-wide impact over time

Who should use the indicator list?

The indicator list is intended to serve two complementary audiences.

Program or product managers

Use the list to:

- Identify relevant outcome indicators aligned with their project objectives
- Strengthen measurement of WFI impacts
- Ensure that changes in access, usage, agency, and harm are captured over time

Beyond reporting, these indicators are intended to support reflection and adaptation, helping teams understand what is working, for whom, and under what conditions.

Funders

Use the list to:

- Speak to portfolio-level impact on WFI
- Identify trends, gaps, and areas for strategic adjustment
- Strengthen evidence for internal reporting and decision-making

The indicator list can also support high level accountability and learning.

How to Read the WFI Indicator List

The WFI Indicator sheet provides a list of recommended indicators along with key information to support consistent interpretation and use.

Filter indicator by:

WFI Domain

(Access, Usage,
Agency, or Harm)

Indicator ID	WFI Domain	Category	Priority	Indicator
1	Access			Adult
2	Access			Adult
3	Access			Adult
4	Access			Adult
5	Access			Adult
6	Access			Adult
7	Access			Adult
8	Access			Adult
9	Access			Adult
10	Access			Adult
11	Access			Adult

Search the list by:

Category

(e.g., "policies," or
"payments").

Indicator ID	WFI Domain	Category	Priority	Indicator
1	A		High	Adult
2	A		High	Adult
3	A		High	Adult
4	A		High	Adult
5	A		High	Adult
6	A		High	Adult
7	A		High	Adult
8	A		High	Adult
9	A		High	Adult
10	A		High	Adult
11	A		High	Adult

How to Read the WFI Indicator List

Filter indicator by:

Priority

The screenshot shows a data table with columns 'Priority' and 'Indicator'. The 'Priority' column has values 'High' and 'Low'. The 'Indicator' column has values 'Strategic', 'Operational', and 'Tactical'. A modal is open over the table, displaying sorting and filtering options. The modal has a title bar with a close button. The main content area lists sorting options: 'Sort A to Z', 'Sort Z to A', 'Sort by color', 'Filter by color', 'Filter by condition', and 'Filter by values'. Below these is a link 'Select all 2 - Clear' and a status 'Displaying 2'. There is a search input field with a magnifying glass icon. Below the search field are two checked items: '✓ (Blanks)' and '✓ High'. At the bottom of the modal are two buttons: 'Cancel' and 'OK'.

Priority	Indicator
High	Strategic
High	Operational
High	Tactical
Low	Strategic
Low	Operational
Low	Tactical

Sort A to Z

Sort Z to A

Sort by color

Filter by color

Filter by condition

Filter by values

[Select all 2 - Clear](#)

Displaying 2

Search

✓ (Blanks)

✓ High

Cancel OK

18 indicators are tagged as **High Priority**. These are indicators that are likely to be most relevant to the greatest number of investments and/or are most critical to understanding changes in WFI.

How to Read the WFI Indicator List

Separate sheets also list indicators for major areas of financial inclusion programming:

Policies & Regulation,
Payments & Infrastructure, and
Gender & Usage. Program

teams that focus on one of these areas may find it useful to use these individual sheets as a starting place. *We still recommend reviewing the full list – you may find other relevant indicators depending on the nature of your project!*

				financial product that is right for them		
29	Usage	Basic usage		Adults that use formal financial services to recover from a financial shock	% of adults	Se
30	Agency	Financial decisions	High	Adults participating in decision-making about financial spending	% of adults	Se
31	Agency	Confidence	High	Adults who are able to complete transactions	% of adults	Se
+ ≡ Introduction ▾ WFI Indicators ▾ Policies & Regulation ▾ Payments & Infrastructure ▾ Gender & Usage ▾						



How to Choose Your Indicators

Not every indicator will be relevant to every project.

Choose the indicators that are right for you.

Program or product managers and funders should select those most relevant to the investment's objectives and context. This list supports thoughtful indicator selection. It is neither necessary nor realistic to use every indicator. Instead, use the indicator list in conjunction with your theory of change and results framework to identify the specific changes you aim to influence and measure.

We recommend that investments measure approximately 5–10 indicators, prioritizing High Priority indicators where feasible.

Select indicators that are:

- Most relevant to your workstream or project
- Most closely tied to your theory of change
- Most feasible (in cost, time, and access) to collect

How to Choose Your Indicators

1. **Read all the indicators** before making a selection - you will immediately spot indicators that make sense for your project and those that do not.
2. As you go through the list, **ask yourself:** *Is this something I am already planning to capture? Is this easy to add to my data collection plans? Is this something I would love to capture, but did not budget for?*
3. **Start from your intended outcomes** - not your specific activities. Select indicators that reflect the broader change your work is contributing to, rather than trying to match indicators to individual outputs or tasks.
4. Do a **keyword search** for terms you know are related to outcomes you want to measure.

Funders

Also consider:

- Their own performance indicators and strategic objectives related to WFI
- Which WFI indicators are most important for demonstrating progress against those objectives
- How many and which types of investments should prioritize measurement against which indicators

Example

A project working on agent networks might choose to focus on indicators related to distance, reliability, and safety of access, while a project focused on consumer protection might focus on indicators tagged to the “harm” domain and prioritize indicators related to harm, awareness, and redress mechanisms.

<i>Example Project</i>	<i>Possible Indicators</i>
------------------------	----------------------------

Agent Networks

- #3** Adults with a financial services access point (e.g., bank/FSP/CICO agent) within reasonable distance of their home
- #7** Bank or mobile money agents who are women
- #39** Customers satisfied by agent/provider customer service interactions (%)

Consumer Protection

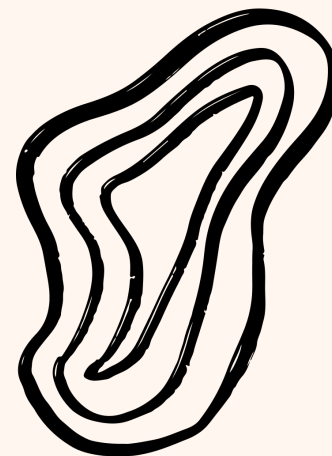
- #36** Adult users reporting consumer harm from DFS
- #42** Gender-intentional national consumer protection frameworks
- #45** Adults who have filed a grievance report and feel satisfied with the result



Another strategy to narrow your indicator selection is to think about the kind of data you will be able to collect, given time and resource constraints.

If you know you will only be collecting provider data and not conduct interviews or surveys with customers or users, this will heavily determine your indicator selection.

Indicators in this list may be measured using a range of methods, including surveys, administrative data, qualitative research, or secondary datasets. Project and/or research managers should select methods that are appropriate to their context, population, and resources.



Connection to Portfolio-Level Indicators

The WFI indicators can support a portfolio-level contribution story, rather than direct aggregation or attribution.

Projects use context-specific indicators to explain how and why change is happening, while a broader portfolio may track a small set of national-level indicators to signal broader progress. Together, these data sources allow diverse evidence to be synthesized into a coherent narrative of the portfolio's contribution to national-level change—without requiring all projects to measure the same outcomes.

✓ What these indicators *can* do

Tell a contribution story to illustrate the range of changes observed across projects operating in different contexts, and explain how and why outcomes may vary.

These indicators help to tell the story of a portfolio's **contribution** to the national-level change we expect to see.

For instance

If we see a dramatic change in **Indicator #36: Adult users reporting consumer harm from DFS** in Nigeria, we can look to Nigeria-based projects measuring related indicators like:

- **Indicator #38:** Consumer-focused data protection policies
- **Indicator #42:** Gender-intentional national consumer protection frameworks
- **Indicator #46:** Adults who know how to identify a digital scam or fraud

From these, we can draw conclusions based on these indicators and our assumptions about the pathways and mechanisms of change to suggest how our work contributed to the overall change in Nigeria.

✗ What these indicators *cannot* do

Aggregate or sum results across projects to produce a single portfolio-level figure or directly quantify progress against national-level KPIs.

It is **not** expected that individual investments monitor and measure indicators in a way that **aggregates** or sums to a total for each indicator at a portfolio level.

For instance

If four investments measure progress on **Indicator #4: Adults who can conduct basic digital transactions independently**, we cannot assume that this will total to an overall change in capacity at the portfolio level. Investments will measure these indicators across very different populations, at different time frames, and using different tools.

Contribution Approach

Because projects operate in different contexts—with different populations, interventions, and measurement approaches—results do not share a common denominator. Comparing percentages or summing outcomes across grants would be misleading and would obscure the factors that drive success or limit impact.

A contribution-based approach allows funders to draw meaningful insights from project-level evidence while recognizing that national-level change reflected in datasets such as Finindex cannot be directly attributed to individual investments.

Next Steps

[Tool 6](#)

Peruse the list of WFI indicators.

[Toolkit Home](#)

Explore all tools.

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Measure

Choose and track
the right indicators

Version 4.0

Tool 7

Data Collection Tools Worksheet

Women's Financial Inclusion

Introduction

This tool allows you to track all planned and ongoing data collection activities and map your data collection tools (surveys, interview guides, etc.) to your selected outcome indicators, ensuring that you are capturing the right data in the right ways.



Who is it for

- Program or product managers
- Monitoring & evaluation specialists
- External research partners



How to use it

Use the tracker to document survey and qualitative tools, noting which populations and time periods they cover. Refer to the "Instructions" tab for detailed guidance on completing the worksheet.



When to use it

Start using the tracker early in the intervention period and throughout the investment, especially during each reporting cycle.

Get the tool here.



Next Steps

[Tool 8](#)

Track your results.

[Toolkit Home](#)

Explore all tools.

*For questions, feedback, or more information
please contact:
wfi@gridimpact.org*



Tool 9

Results Tracking Worksheet

Women's Financial Inclusion

Introduction

This tool allows you to track all planned and ongoing data collection activities and map your data collection tools (surveys, interview guides, etc.) to your selected outcome indicators, ensuring that you are capturing the right data in the right ways.



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Use the tracker to document survey and qualitative tools, noting which populations and time periods they cover. Refer to the "Instructions" tab for detailed guidance on completing the worksheet.



When to use it

Start using the tracker early in the intervention period and throughout the investment, especially during each reporting cycle.

Get the tool here.



Next Steps

[Tool 9](#)

Analyze your findings and tell your change story.

[Toolkit Home](#)

Explore all tools.

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Tool 9

Analyzing Results and Telling Your Change Story

Women's Financial Inclusion

Introduction

This tool supports users in explaining what changed, for whom, under what conditions, and why it matters, with a strong focus on the experiences of women and other underrepresented groups. It helps readers interpret evidence rather than simply report it.



Who is it for

- Monitoring & evaluation specialists
- External research partners
- Program and product managers



How to use it

Apply guidance to analyze data through a gender lens, interpret findings, and identify actionable insights.



When to use it

Review this document before finalizing your research strategy to ensure you are gathering the right data to answer your questions, and refer to it throughout the analysis process.

What's in this tool?



Telling the story of your project

Explains what should go into your change story, including key questions to ask and clear tips for thinking through it.

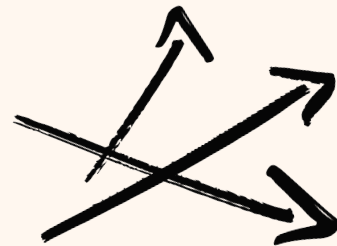
Common pitfalls

Identifies common mistakes in analysis and storytelling

Data sources

Presents common sources of data, and what kind of story each source can and cannot tell.

Despite the name, analysis is not just about crunching numbers. It's about telling the story of your project.



A good analysis goes beyond presenting data points and summarizing results. It involves making sense of what those numbers mean. Strong analysis shows **what changed**, **for whom**, and **under what conditions**, drawing out patterns, contrasts, and implications in a grounded way. It helps stakeholders understand why the results look the way they do, linking evidence to context, assumptions, and real-world conditions. In doing so, analysis helps readers move from metrics to meaning.

Strong analysis helps prevent overclaiming, surfaces who benefits and who does not, and turns evidence into decisions.

Whether you are an implementor or a program officer, the goal is to explain your change story clearly and credibly, keeping the experiences of women and other underrepresented groups at the center of how you understand impact.

Program and Product Managers

For program and product managers, project-level analysis examines what data reveal about how an intervention is working or has worked for different groups, with particular attention on women and other underrepresented participants. Your analysis should include insights about effectiveness, barriers, and unexpected outcomes that can support timely course corrections, sharpen decision-making, and lead to more responsive, inclusive practice.

Funders

For funders, body-of-work analysis synthesizes learning across investments to identify patterns, emerging themes, and shared drivers of impact. You can use analysis at this level to understand how capital is shifting systems, where persistent gaps and barriers are, and how different approaches perform across contexts. Rather than simply aggregating data, strong analysis at this level should interpret trends in relation to market dynamics, intervention contexts, and portfolio strategies and objectives. This can help you refine your theory of change, guide future resource allocation, and communicate clear, evidence-based insights.

Good analysis should include what you set out to change, what happened, and why it matters, and what you learned.

What you set out to change:

The world before the project

Purpose

Every good story starts with context. Before you describe change, make clear what was true before the project began.



Questions

- Who was this project for, and what were their starting conditions?
- What problem or gap were you addressing?
- What did “normal” look like before your work began?



Tip

Imagine who your target participants are or were. You can use [Tool 3](#) to create or refine a persona to exemplify your participants. Describe what life looked like for this person before your intervention.



Common Mistake

Reporting change without clearly describing the starting point. If you can't say what was true before, you can't say what changed. Be specific, using data to illustrate the conditions you wanted to address.

Example:

- **AVOID SAYING:** “Women lacked access to finance.”
- **LEAN INTO SAYING:** “Before the project, only 12% of women in rural districts had access to formal credit, compared to 46% of men.”

What happened:

What the project accomplished

Purpose

Explain what was done and for whom. Keep it concise and factual—this is about outputs, not outcomes (consult [Tool 2](#) to be clear about the difference!).



Questions

- What did the project actually do?
- Who participated or was reached?
- What tangible products, services, or actions resulted?



Tip

Revisit your theory of change and your results framework, where you tracked your activities, outputs and outcomes.



Common Overclaim

"We trained women, so now they are empowered." *Number of women trained* is an **output**. Empowerment is an **outcome** that needs to be measured and explained. We cannot assume that outputs automatically lead to outcomes.

Example:

- **AVOID SAYING:** "We trained 500 women, improving their business confidence."
- **LEAN INTO SAYING:** "We trained 500 women entrepreneurs in business record-keeping. Whether this led to higher confidence or sales will be assessed through follow-up interviews and sales records."

Why It matters:

What change we created

Purpose

This is the heart of your analysis—interpreting what the data show beyond reporting numbers. Show both the scale and the meaning of change.



Questions

- What changed as a result of your project?
- For whom did it change—and who was left out?
- Why does this change matter in your context?



Tip

Pair your numbers with sentences that interpret them. Ask, “So what?” and “For whom?” [Tool 3](#) includes guidance to help with this.



No single indicator tells the whole story

Think about what alternative indicators or even additional data sources can be used to triangulate, explain, or add context to your primary indicators. Can you follow your theory of change backward from each output indicator to your short-, medium-, and long-term outcomes?

Example:

- **AVOID SAYING:** “Phone ownership increased by 50%.”
- **LEAN INTO SAYING:** ““Phone ownership among women increased by 50%, mostly in urban areas. Interviews show many still rely on shared family devices, limiting personal control.”

Reference Reminders for Analysis and Storytelling

When interpreting results

- Always state the denominator (*out of how many?*)
- Compare your endline to the baseline (*what was true before?*)
- Clarify population and context (*where and for whom?*)
- Combine data types (*numbers + voices = meaning*)

Simple rule of thumb

A strong analysis paragraph includes:

- **What changed** (data)
- **For whom** (disaggregation)
- **Why it matters** (context + meaning)

Good analysis does not require complex statistics. It requires curiosity, honesty, and the discipline to ask “so what?” and “for whom?” before you write a single number.

What you learned:

How to plan for what comes next

Purpose

Reflect on what worked, what didn't, and what you learned about how change happens. Discussing challenges—both programmatic and operational—supports stronger future project design.



Questions

- What assumptions were confirmed—or disproven—by your data?
- What unintended outcomes or challenges appeared?
- What should be done differently next time?



Tip

Use your theory of change as a reference. Which arrows held true? Which ones didn't?



Avoid the “everything worked” trap

Learning is not failure. Honest reflection helps funders and peers understand what it really takes for change to happen.

Example:

- **AVOID SAYING:** “The digital savings pilot was highly successful.”
- **LEAN INTO SAYING:** “The pilot increased women’s use of digital wallets, but uptake stalled where women lacked phone privacy. Future programs should integrate household-level dialogue on device access.”

Common pitfalls

Avoid making these mistakes when analyzing data and telling your impact story:

- Reporting **averages** without disaggregation
- Highlighting positive outcomes while **ignoring who was left out**
- Treating **correlation** as causation
- **Omitting context** that explains why results differ across groups or locations

Data sources:

What they can (and cannot) tell you

No single data source tells the whole story. Different types of data let you answer different kinds of questions—and the strongest project narratives use multiple sources together. The key is knowing **what each data type can do for you**, and **what it cannot do**, so you use it wisely and avoid overstating results.

Be careful with causal claims:

Unless your design explicitly supports causal inference, describe results as contribution or association—not proof that the project alone caused the change.



Data Source	What it <i>can</i> do	What it <i>cannot</i> do
Surveys (quantitative)	• Show measurable change over time (e.g., % increase in phone ownership) • Compare subgroups (e.g., men vs. women, rural vs. urban) • Provide numbers for charts, dashboards, funder reports • Indicate correlation (and sometimes causation, if well-designed)	• Explain <i>why</i> the change happened • Describe lived experience or power dynamics • Tell you how people <i>use</i> or <i>feel about</i> the thing being measured
Interviews (qualitative, 1:1)	• Provide rich insights into individual experience, meaning, barriers, and strategies • Reveal how people make decisions, negotiate constraints, or interpret change • Surface unintended outcomes, positive or negative	• Produce statistically generalizable findings • Tell you how <i>many</i> people share that experience • Replace measurement of scale or reach

Data Source	What it <i>can</i> do	What it <i>cannot</i> do
Focus Group Discussions	• Provide insight into shared norms, attitudes, group behavior, or community dynamics • Help explain survey results (<i>"Why did usage go up but control stay low?"</i>) • Surface agreement <i>and</i> disagreement across groups	• Represent individual experience • Be used to estimate percentages or prevalence • Not appropriate for highly sensitive topics (power, violence, money)
Secondary or Existing Data	• Provide context ("phone ownership in region rose 12% before project began") • Allow comparison to national trends, policies, or research • Reduce data collection burden when used well	• Stand in for project-specific evidence • May not match your target population or timeframe

Data Source	What it <i>can</i> do	What it <i>cannot</i> do
Observation / Field Notes	• Capture behavior in real time, not just what people say they do • Useful for monitoring implementation quality (e.g., agent behavior, queue length, gender dynamics in meetings)	• Assess motivations or perceptions without pairing with interview questions • Hard to quantify without structured tools

Key takeaway

Strong analysis is not about perfect data or sophisticated models. It is about asking the right questions, centering women's experiences, and using evidence honestly to inform better decisions.



Next Steps

[Toolkit Home](#)

Explore all tools.

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