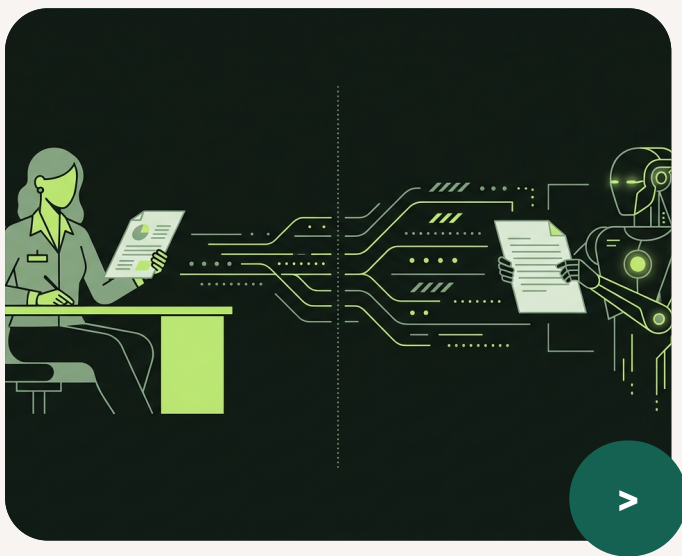


Breaking into M&E — and getting good at it.

The hardest part of an M&E career is not the theory. It is the gap between what you learn in a course and what happens on a live project. This short guide closes that gap: what the roles are, the three portfolio projects that get you hired, and how to answer the questions interviewers actually ask.



What you will be able to do

Name the four M&E roles. Build a portfolio that proves you can do the work. Answer the five questions that decide an interview. And plan your first 90 days in a new role.

Why M&E careers stall

People study M&E, learn the vocabulary, then stall — because the work is judged on evidence, not on words. The courses teach the concepts; almost nobody teaches you to build the artefacts a hiring manager recognises.

WHAT IS “M&E”?

Monitoring and Evaluation — the routine of tracking what a programme does and judging whether it worked.

WHAT IS “PORTFOLIO”?

A small set of real artefacts you made: a logframe, a tracker, a short evaluation plan. Evidence you can do the job.

“I know the basics and I understand the tools — but I have a disconnect between theory and live projects.”

The fix is not another certificate. It is three artefacts, built once, that you can show.

■ IN SUMMARY

The gap is not knowledge. It is evidence. Build the evidence and the roles open.

The four M&E roles

“M&E” is not one job. Knowing which one you are aiming at changes what you learn and what you show.

M&E Officer	Runs the day-to-day: indicators, data collection, reporting. The most common entry role.
MEAL Officer	M&E plus Accountability and Learning. Common in humanitarian NGOs; adds feedback and complaints.
M&E Consultant	Independent; hired for evaluations, baselines, reviews. Paid per assignment or day.
TPM / MEL Manager	Third-party monitoring, or leading a team. A senior step after 3–5 years.

Start where you are

Most people enter as an M&E or MEAL Officer, move to senior officer or manager, and some go independent as consultants. You do not need to decide forever — but you do need to aim.

The three portfolio projects

Three projects, each a weekend's work, cover almost everything a hiring manager wants to see. Build them once; reuse them forever.

1

A logframe and indicator tracker

For a real or sample programme: outcomes, indicators, baselines, targets and means of verification, in a sheet that calculates attainment.

Why this matters: Shows you can build the core tool.

2

A data-quality write-up

Take a public dataset, run five checks, clean it, and write one page on what you found and fixed.

Why this matters: Shows rigour, which interviews rarely test.

3

A one-page evaluation plan

Questions, design, sampling, data, analysis and use — with the limitations named.

Why this matters: Shows judgement, not just technique.

■ KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Publish them somewhere public with a one-line method note each.
- Show the method, not just the result.
- A reviewer reads the method — that is where you prove yourself.

■ PROJECT ONE

Build the logframe and tracker

This is the artefact that most proves you can do M&E. It has two parts: the logic, and the tracking.

The logframe columns

Outcome · Indicator · Baseline · Target · Means of verification. One row per indicator; the means of verification must name a real source, never “reports”.

The tracker

One row per indicator with a result column and a calculated attainment ($\text{result} \div \text{target}$), plus a status rule that flags anything off track.

- Every indicator has a baseline and a target.
- Every indicator names a real means of verification.
- Attainment is calculated, not typed.

■ IN SUMMARY

A logframe is the grid; a tracker is the grid that reports itself. Build both and you have your strongest artefact.

Write up a data-quality check

Pick a public dataset. Run five checks. Write one page. This is the project that shows you are careful — the trait employers cannot test in an interview.

1

Completeness

Are required fields present? How many records are missing something?

Why this matters: Missing data quietly distorts every average.

2

Duplicates

Is the same respondent in twice?

Why this matters: Duplicates inflate counts.

3

Outliers

Any values outside the plausible range?

Why this matters: A typo becomes a false finding.

4

Logic

Any answers that should not exist (skip-logic violations)?

Why this matters: Proves the form or the data entry failed.

5

Patterns

Any enumerator producing suspiciously uniform answers?

Why this matters: Catches fabrication early.

Log every exclusion. “We dropped 14 records: 9 duplicates, 5 incomplete” is a sentence a reviewer trusts.

■ PROJECT THREE

Write a one-page evaluation plan

The third artefact is judgement on a page. Six parts, in order.

1

Questions

Answerable, bounded and tied to a decision.

2

Design

Matched to the question — attribution needs a comparison group.

3

Sampling

How many and who; state the assumptions.

4

Data

Instruments and the collection calendar.

5

Analysis

How each question gets answered.

6

Use

Who acts on the findings, and when.

A plan with no limitations is not credible. Name them, and you sound senior.

Getting experience when you have none

Everyone hits this wall. The way through is to manufacture real work rather than wait to be given it.

Four honest routes

Volunteer with a small NGO and build their tracker for free. Take a paid short assignment through a consultant. Rebuild a published programme's logframe as practice (label it as such). And join a real evaluation as a field enumerator to see the work from the ground.

What to say

"I built this tracker for a sample programme to show how I work — here is the sheet and the method note." That is experience, framed honestly.

■ IN SUMMARY

Do not wait for permission to practise. Build the artefact, label it clearly, and show it.

A CV that shows evidence

Most M&E CVs list adjectives. The ones that get interviews list artefacts.

Instead of	"Strong analytical skills."
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Write	"Built the indicator tracker for a 12-school education programme; attainment reporting cut from two days to one."
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For each role: what you built, for what programme, and what changed. Numbers where you have them, honestly where you do not.

- Every bullet names an artefact or an outcome.
- No adjective stands alone.
- A one-line method note under each portfolio project.

The interview: three competencies

Interviews test three things. Prepare for the competency, not the question.

1 • Technical rigour

Can you design, sample and analyse? Show a method and a number.

2 • Judgement

Can you make defensible choices under constraints? Show a trade-off you made.

3 • Communication

Can you explain findings to a non-specialist? Show how you told a donor bad news.

Answer with a story: name the project, the method and the outcome. Definitions are forgettable; evidence is not.

The five questions that decide it

These come up again and again. Have a specific, honest answer ready for each.

How would you evaluate this programme?

Name a design (theory-based or quasi-experimental) and say why it fits the question.

What would you do with no baseline?

Reconstruct from records, or run a rapid baseline dated honestly — never invent one.

How many would you sample, and why?

Give a number and the assumptions: confidence, margin of error, expected proportion.

How do you report a failure to a donor?

Plainly, with the cause, the fix and what you learned — never hide it.

How do you use AI safely?

Label every claim, open every authority, and let a named human sign off.

Rates and negotiation

For consultancy, know your number before the call. It is easier to state a rate than to defend a discount.

Day rate

Price per day, not per hour. Include preparation and reporting time.

Per deliverable

Fixed fee for a defined artefact — a baseline, a review, a plan.

Quote a range, anchor at the top, and be ready to explain what the fee covers. Never undercut to win; you set your own floor.

Your first 90 days

A new M&E role is won or lost in the first three months. Here is the shape of a good start.

1

Days 1–30 · Listen and map

Read the programme documents, meet the team, find where the data actually lives.

2

Days 31–60 · Fix one thing

Pick the worst tracker or the missing baseline and fix it. Small, visible, real.

3

Days 61–90 · Set the rhythm

Put the reporting calendar, the means of verification and the register in place.

■ IN SUMMARY

Credibility comes from fixing one real thing early — not from redesigning everything at once.

Keep learning without stalling

The field moves. The way to stay current is a small, repeated habit, not a big course every few years.

- Read one evaluation or guideline a month, and write one paragraph on it.
- Keep your portfolio current — add one artefact a quarter.
- Re-test your tools when guidance or models change.

A habit that compounds

One hour a week beats one week a year. The people who advance are the ones whose portfolio quietly grows.

Five mistakes that hold people back

Each of these is common and each is fixable.

- Talking in theory instead of showing an artefact.
- Waiting for experience instead of manufacturing it.
- A CV of adjectives with no outcomes.
- Never naming the limitations of your own work.
- Treating AI output as a finding without checking it.

■ GO FURTHER – THE PRO EDITION

The Pro edition adds the full kit: 14 ready-made interview answers, a 30-day job-search plan, the CV and portfolio templates, and a rate-setting worksheet.

\$79 · downloadable PDF with every template. Or get it included with the video course. For teams, write to contact@evaluationai.com.