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WITS SCHOOL OF GOVERNANCE
UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND, JOHANNESBURG

The role of monitoring and evaluation in decision-making within Road Agency Limpopo



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Thesis presented in partial fulfilment for the degree of Master of Management (in the field of Public Sector Monitoring and Evaluation) to the Faculty of Commerce, Law, and Management, University of the Witwatersrand

Supervisor: Dr S Masvaure

December 2025

DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis/dissertation titled “The role monitoring and evaluation in decision-making within Road Agency Limpopo” is my own, unaided work. I have acknowledged and referenced all sources that I have used and quoted. I hereby submit it in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Master of Management (Public sector monitoring and evaluation) in the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. I have not submitted this report before for any other degree or examination to any other institution.



Edward Mokhwelepa
Johannesburg, December 2025

DEDICATION

I extend my deepest gratitude to the staff at the Road Agency Limpopo (RAL) and the Department of Public Works, Roads and Infrastructure, from whom I have learned invaluable insights into the role of M&E in decision-making. Most importantly, I dedicate this work to my family, whose unwavering love, patience, and support have been the cornerstone of my strength throughout this academic journey. Their encouragement carried me through the challenges and made the rewarding moments even more meaningful.

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I first and foremost thank God Almighty for His strength, grace, wisdom, and the precious gift of life and success. My deepest gratitude goes to my supervisor, Dr. Steven Masvaure, for his unwavering guidance and support throughout this research process. I am also profoundly grateful to the interviewees, whose generous contributions of time and invaluable insights on the subject matter made this research possible. This work would not have been realised without their willingness to cooperate.

ABSTRACT

The advent of democracy in South Africa brought with its transformative mechanisms aimed at making the public service more responsive and accountable. One such mechanism was introducing a Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) system to promote evidence-based decision-making and responsive, efficient, and accountable public service. The adoption of the Policy Framework for the Government-Wide Monitoring and Evaluation System marked the first step in embedding M&E within the public sector. The effectiveness of an M&E system relies on the functionality of twelve key components; Structure and organisational alignment for M&E system**,** human capacity for M&E**,** M&E partnerships**,** work plans and budgeting**,** advocacy, and cultivating a culture for M&E**,** routine monitoring**,** periodic surveys**,** M&E database**,** Supportive supervision and data auditing**,** evaluation and research and using information to improve results. The Road Agency Limpopo (RAL), which has made limited progress in paving provincial roads, with 66% of roads still unpaved faces challenges in integrating M&E into decision-making processes regarding road infrastructure maintenance and upgrades.

This study aimed to assess the role of M&E in decision-making within RAL. The study outlines the problem, identifies the knowledge gap, and conceptual frameworks to guide the interpretation of research findings. A qualitative research strategy was employed, using interviews and document analysis to gather data on the role of M&E within the agency. The study identified several gaps within RAL's M&E system, including the absence of evaluation practices, lack of a clear framework or plan, an unclear M&E policy, inadequate M&E advocacy, limited capacity, a disintegrated M&E system, and the absence of an automated system for data collection, verification, and storage. The study offers several recommendations, such as incorporating M&E into the Performance Management System, making it a key performance area for senior officials in their Performance Agreements, budgeting for and conducting evaluations through external service providers, developing a comprehensive M&E plan with measurable indicators, revising and enhancing the M&E policy, and leveraging information technology to improve data collection, verification, and storage.

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ACRONYMS

AOP	Annual Operational Plan
APPs	Annual Performance Plans
ARs	Annual Reports
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
DPME	Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation
DPSA	Department of Public Service and Administration
DPWI	Department of Public Works, Roads and Infrastructure
EBP	Evidence-Based Policy
4IR	Fourth Industrial Revolution
GWME	Government-Wide Monitoring and Evaluation System
KPAs	Key Performance Areas
KPIs	Key Performance Indicators
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
NGOs	Non-Government Organisations
OCED	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OTP	Office of the Premier
PA	Performance Agreement
RAL	Road Agency Limpopo

SEZs	Special Economic Zones
SMS	Senior Management Services
SOPs	Standard Operating Procedures
SP	Strategic Plan
ToC	Theory of Change
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund

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1. CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE RESEARCH

1.1 Introduction

There has been a global shift towards improving public sector performance through the adoption of Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) system. As Mackay (2007) argues, effective M&E systems enable governments to systematically track progress, identify implementation challenges, and inform evidence-based policy and decision-making. This evolution reflects the broader influence of New Public Management (NPM), which emphasises efficiency, measurable outcomes, and strategic planning in public administration (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2017). In line with this paradigm, international financial institutions, particularly the Bretton Woods institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, have been pivotal in encouraging developing countries to institutionalise M&E systems. These institutions have linked the provision of development aid and loans to the presence of reliable performance measurement and evaluation mechanisms, specifically for programmes they are funding (World Bank, 2002).

In the South African context, the institutionalisation of M&E can be traced back to civil society organisations, particularly non-governmental organisations (NGOs), which were initially required to report to international donors on the use of funds and programme outcomes (Abrahams, 2015). In support of this assertation, Mouton (2010), indicates that in South Africa, "programme evaluation first emerged as a practice where project activities and outcomes had to be evaluated within the non-government (NGO) sector as a requirement for further donor funding". As democratic governance matured post-1994, the South African government adopted M&E as a central component of its broader public sector reform agenda, aimed at addressing service delivery backlogs and historical inequities (Goldman,2013). The Policy Framework for the Government-Wide Monitoring and Evaluation System (GWMES), introduced by the Presidency in 2007, provides a coherent approach for institutionalising M&E across national, provincial, and local government spheres. This policy framework gives practical expression to the values outlined in Chapter 10 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996), which calls for a public service that is accountable, transparent, efficient, and developmentally responsive (Presidency, 2007).

Against this backdrop, this study focuses on the Road Agency Limpopo (RAL), a Schedule 3C public entity under the Limpopo Provincial Government, operating under the oversight of the Member of the Executive Council (MEC) for Public Works, Roads and Infrastructure. RAL is

mandated to plan, construct, maintain, and rehabilitate the provincial road network, spanning over 19,800 kilometres (RAL, 2024). As a public entity, RAL is expected to operationalise the GWMES by embedding M&E systems within its institutional framework to support evidence-based decision-making, enhance operational efficiency, and improve service delivery outcomes. However, like many infrastructure-focused entities, RAL may face sector-specific challenges in aligning M&E practices with its strategic goals and operational realities.

This research aims to examine the role that M&E plays in decision-making within Road Agency Limpopo. Specifically, the study investigates how M&E systems are structured within RAL, implemented to measure performance, and utilised to inform infrastructure planning, resource allocation, and policy decisions. As Anderson (2015) notes, the utility of M&E in decision-making is significantly influenced by how well the system is institutionalised, resourced, and integrated into organisational processes. Understanding the application of M&E within RAL offers valuable insights into the broader challenges and opportunities of strengthening performance-based governance in South Africa's infrastructure sector.

1.2 The research problem statement

Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) is critical in enabling governments to achieve their developmental goals by providing reliable, timely, and continuous information on the progress, effectiveness, and deviations of programmes and policies across short-term, medium-term, and long-term outcomes. By systematically collecting and analysing data, M&E facilitates evidence-based decision-making, supports adaptive management, enhances transparency, and strengthens accountability within the public sector. This process ensures policymakers have credible insights to identify challenges, allocate resources efficiently, and implement corrective actions where necessary (Rabie, 2010).

The institutionalisation of M&E within the South African public service was driven by a Cabinet resolution and implemented through a series of initiatives led by central government departments. This initiative was motivated by the need for the South African government to report on progress towards the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and to account for donor funding (Cloete, 2008, as cited in Rabie, 2010:141). In response to the Cabinet resolution of 2005 to develop a government wide M&E system, government departments such as the National Treasury, Presidency and the Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA) initiated

the development of a framework aimed at managing performance and measuring service delivery across government department (Rabie, 2010). These efforts were further reinforced by policy papers issued by the Public Service Commission (PSC), which assessed the state of M&E practices within government departments (Rabie, 2010).

Despite this progress, public institutions, particularly in the infrastructure sector, frequently adopt M&E systems more for compliance than for strategic utility (Mackay, 2007). Eke and Boadu (2019) allude that such systems often lack functionality due to inadequate institutional preparedness and limited capacity. Brown *et al*. (2003), as cited by Motsoeneng (2018), stress that the effectiveness of M&E hinges on how well it is aligned with an institution's organisational structures and decision-making processes. Without meaningful integration, M&E becomes a box-ticking exercise rather than a tool for learning and performance enhancement.

The Limpopo provincial government has entrusted RAL with managing and maintaining over 19,800 kilometres of provincial roads (RAL, 2024). However, it is unclear if RAL effectively uses M&E to inform road maintenance and upgrading decision-making. In its 2023/24 Annual Report, the agency failed to meet its target of upgrading 55 kilometres of gravel roads to surfaced roads, despite entirely spending its infrastructure budget. Despite budget expenditure, Road Agency Limpopo's inability to meet the 2023/24 target for upgrading roads suggests potential inefficiencies or resource misallocation. Also, despite having an M&E system, RAL has made limited progress in paving roads, with 66% of provincial roads remaining unpaved and many poorly maintained roads (RAL, 2024). This has resulted in numerous claims against RAL due to motor vehicle accidents. For instance, in 2011, a court judgment was issued against RAL requiring the agency to pay R4,950,000.00 in compensation for a motor vehicle accident (RAL, 2024).

Poor performance by RAL has far-reaching consequences on economic growth and development. Road infrastructure is crucial for enabling socio-economic activities, making M&E essential for informing decision-making and enhancing project delivery and performance. Mackay (2007) highlights that M&E is crucial for effective decision-making, as it provides the evidence needed to set priorities, allocate budgets, and distribute resources. Additionally, M&E is key in identifying implementation challenges and optimising resource use by employing performance indicators. In recent years, information generated from M&E has become essential in decision-making (Onyango, 2019). Road infrastructure is crucial for enhancing living standards as it provides access to essential social facilities, including sports, education, and healthcare. It also plays a

vital role in the production process and supports key sectors like tourism, agriculture, and mining amongst the others (Pillay, 2023). Thus, road infrastructure is fundamental to facilitating development, stimulating economic growth and promoting social interaction. It is therefore necessary to assess how M&E contribute to the decision making within an antifracture sector that is highly dependent on Project Management Body of Knowledge (PMBOK) principles.

1.3 Research purpose and objectives

The purpose of this research is to examine the role played by M&E in decision-making within Road Agency Limpopo RAL. The following research objectives were formulated to realise the purpose of the study:

- To assess the structure of the M&E function within RAL
- To examine the role of M&E in Measuring performance within RAL
- To assess the role of M&E in resource allocation within RAL
- To examine the relevance of the M&E function to RAL programmes
- To identify the factors affecting the M&E function within RAL

1.4 Research Questions

The main research question of this study was: What role does M&E play in decision-making within RAL? To thoroughly explore this main question, the research was guided by the following sub-research questions:

- How is the M&E function organized within RAL?
- What is the role of M&E in measuring performance within RAL?
- What role does M&E play in resource allocation at RAL?
- What is the relevance of the M&E function to RAL programmes?
- What are the factors affecting the M&E function within RAL?

1.5 Overview of methodology

This study is grounded in an interpretative research paradigm, which emphasises understanding the subjective experiences of individuals within their organisational contexts. This paradigm was particularly well-suited for exploring how officials at RAL perceive and experience the role of M&E

in decision-making. A qualitative, descriptive research design was employed to systematically capture prevailing attitudes, practices, and organisational culture related to M&E. This approach facilitated rich, reflective engagement with participants, enabling them to identify current challenges and propose practical improvements in M&E utilisation. A purposive sampling was used to select 15 participants based on their expertise and relevance to the study objectives, with 13 interviews ultimately conducted. Data collection combined semi-structured interviews with document analysis of plans, performance reports, and M&E policy, offering both internal and external perspectives on RAL's M&E system. Thematic content analysis was conducted manually and guided by the study's sub-questions. This allowed for the identification of recurring patterns, thematic contrasts, and misalignments between policy and practice. Triangulating insights from interviews and documentary evidence enhanced the credibility, depth, and contextual validity of the findings, resulting in a methodologically coherent account of how M&E informs decision-making within RAL.

1.6 Rationale and Significance

In recent years, many public entities in South Africa have exhibited poor performance, particularly in the areas of service delivery and corporate governance. This has resulted in substantial government bailouts for entities such as Eskom and the South African Broadcasting Corporation (Adebayo & Ackers, 2024). A key factor contributing to this underperformance is the ineffective implementation and utilisation of M&E systems, which have led to weak accountability mechanisms, inadequate oversight, and suboptimal decision-making (Makona, 2023).

The institutionalisation of M&E within public entities entails embedding monitoring and evaluation functions into core organisational systems, supported by strong leadership, political will, adequate capacity, a conducive policy environment, and coordination among central oversight institutions. Despite the existence of national M&E frameworks and policies, a significant gap remains in the operationalisation of M&E systems at the level of public entities especially in the construction sector, where inefficiencies such as project delays, escalating costs, and infrastructure backlogs continue to undermine development. Given these persistent challenges and the crucial role that M&E can play in strengthening public sector performance, this research seeks to address the limited academic focus on the institutionalisation and influence of M&E within public entities' decision-making processes.

The significance of this study lies in its potential to contribute both theoretically and practically to the field of public management. Theoretically, it expands the understanding of how M&E is institutionalised and utilised in decision-making processes within public entities. Practically, it offers actionable insights and recommendations to policy makers, managers, and practitioners on how to strengthen M&E systems to enhance accountability, promote efficient resource use, and improve service delivery outcomes particularly within the construction and infrastructure development sectors.

1.7 Definition of key terminologies

The key concepts underpinning this study are institutionalisation, monitoring, and evaluation. While these terms are commonly used in development and organisational performance literature, their meanings can vary depending on the context and scope of different studies. Therefore, it is essential to clearly define these concepts within the framework of this research to ensure a shared understanding of their relevance and application. Defining these terms in relation to this study allows for conceptual clarity and consistency, and provides a foundation for analysing how each contributes to the implementation and effectiveness of M&E systems within the institutional context under investigation.

1. 7.1 Institutionalisation

According to Kimaro, Fourie, and Tshiyoyo (2018), institutionalisation involves embedding the M&E function into the core operations of an institution. This integration enables consistent assessment of predetermined objectives, systematic reporting, progress tracking, and the utilisation of performance information systems. Ssali (2016) adds that institutionalisation entails establishing a formal M&E structure that fosters an enabling environment for the generation and use of M&E information in decision-making. In this study, institutionalisation refers to the implementation of a formalised system for data collection, verification, dissemination, monitoring, and evaluation of organisational performance and or initiatives, with the aim of using the resulting information to support informed decision-making within the organisation.

1. 7.2 Monitoring

According to Kusek and Rist (2004), monitoring refers to a continuous activity that uses the systematic collection of data on selected indicators to provide managers and stakeholders with indications of the extent of progress toward the achievement of management goals and objectives. Rossi *et al* (2004) refer to monitoring as an assessment of the extent to which a programme is implemented as designed and serves the intended target group. In this study, monitoring is a continuous process of assessing if a planned performance or initiative is implemented as planned in order to take corrective actions or improve the performance.

1. 7.3 Evaluation

According to Nweke (2021), evaluation is a systematic and objective assessment of the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, and impact of activities in relation to predetermined objectives. Similarly, Solomon and Young (2007) describe evaluation as a process undertaken by planners and project developers to determine the extent to which a project has achieved its intended goals. These definitions align in emphasising that evaluation focuses on assessing whether the initial objectives of an initiative have been met, in order to determine its overall impact. In this study, evaluation refers to the periodic assessment of implemented interventions or projects to determine whether they have achieved their intended outcomes. The findings from such evaluations are used to guide decisions regarding the continuation of current initiatives or the development of new ones.

1.8 Organisation of the dissertation

Chapter One: Introduction and background to the study- Chapter One establishes the context of the research problem by introducing the topic under investigation and outlining the purpose, structure, and significance of the study. It also clarifies key concepts and presents the background and motivation for the research. Overall, the chapter sets the foundation for the entire study, providing a clear direction that guided the researcher throughout the research process.

Chapter Two: Literature review - This chapter provides a comprehensive analysis of the literature on M&E, with a specific focus on its application in the public sector. It traces the historical evolution of M&E from a global perspective to its institutionalisation within the South African public

service. A central theme is the institutionalisation of M&E, with particular attention given to the factors that hinder its effectiveness and its role as a governance tool for evidence-based decision-making.

Chapter Three: Research methodology- This chapter outlines the research methodology employed in the study, detailing the steps taken to conduct the research. It provides a comprehensive explanation of the methods used for data collection, analysis, and interpretation. The chapter also evaluates the effectiveness of these methods in facilitating the data collection process. Overall, the chosen methodology proved to be instrumental in guiding the research process and ensuring that the study was conducted in a systematic and coherent manner.

Chapter Four: Presentation of findings- Chapter Four presents the research findings derived from the data collected through interviews and document analysis. The presentation of results is organised around five key themes that emerged during the data analysis process. These themes are aligned with the study's sub-questions, allowing for a structured and coherent interpretation of the findings. This approach ensured that the analysis remains focused and systematically addresses the core objectives of the study.

Chapter Five: Discussion of research findings- Chapter Five presents a discussion of the research findings outlined in Chapter Four, drawing connections to the literature review as well as the theoretical and conceptual frameworks established in Chapter Two. This chapter critically interprets the findings in relation to existing knowledge and theoretical perspectives, providing deeper insight into the implications of the results.

Chapter Six: Summary, conclusions and recommendations- Chapter Six provides a summary of the key research findings, presents concluding remarks, and offers recommendations based on the study's results. The recommendations are aligned with the identified findings and are aimed at enhancing the effectiveness of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) within the Road Agency Limpopo (RAL). This chapter concludes the study by highlighting its contributions, implications, and potential areas for further research.

2. CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Chapter Two explores the historical evolution of M&E and its role in shaping decision-making processes. This chapter lays the foundation for understanding M&E by tracing its origins from the international landscape to its institutionalization within the South African public service. Through this historical lens, the chapter highlights key developments that have influenced how M&E is perceived and applied. A central focus of this chapter is the institutionalization of M&E, examining the factors that hinder its effectiveness and assessing its role as a governance practice for decision making. These insights will serve as a benchmark for interpreting the research findings in subsequent chapters.

Traditionally, M&E has often been viewed as a tool imposed by donors to ensure compliance and accountability, rather than as a strategic management practice to enhance performance across various sectors. This perception has particularly shaped its adoption mainly in social sectors, as stated by Armstrong and Baron (2013), as cited by Okafor (2021:35), who emphasise that many organisations perceive M&E primarily as a donor requirement, given that donors are entitled to full transparency regarding the allocation and utilisation of project funds. In contrast, Mohamed and Kulmie (2023) allude that M&E serves as a crucial mechanism for generating reliable information that guides decision-making across various sectors.

Otieno (2000:572), cited by Callistus and Clinton (2018), notes that M&E has long been regarded as marginal to the construction sector, where its relevance has been questioned. This perspective overlooks the significant role M&E plays throughout the entire project cycle of road construction. Gitahi (2012) highlights that the short lifespan of most roads in African countries is primarily due to poor workmanship, presenting a major challenge to service delivery given the critical socio-economic role of road infrastructure. This underscores the importance of discussing the relevance of M&E in this chapter, as it provides valuable insights into how M&E contributes to informed decision-making in road infrastructure development and maintenance.

In many instances, challenges in service delivery stem from constrained resources, making evidence-based decision-making indispensable. For example, many road infrastructure projects remain incomplete by the end of the financial year due to financial constraints and poor decision-making, such as the appointment of incompetent contractors and poor performance. Most of RAL's projects are implemented through contracting, making M&E essential for tracking contractor performance and enabling continuous decision-making based on their progress. This

Chapter also asses the role of M&E in measuring performance and resources allocation. By assessing the role of M&E in information gathering and resource allocation, this chapter highlights how data-driven insights inform strategic decisions. Kanyamuna (2019) and Hauge (2003), argue that M&E provides policymakers and managers with the accurate data needed to understand their environments, measure performance, allocate resources efficiently, and assess outcomes. Bengwi (2017) supports this view, highlighting that M&E involves systematic data gathering and analysis to inform successful strategies during the decision-making process. Kimaro and Fourie (2017), further support this argument by linking M&E with performance management, highlighting its critical role in measuring performance, informing decision-making, and determining resource allocation.

The above arguments collectively highlight that M&E is a crucial tool for generating reliable data that informs decision-making across various sectors. These insights are particularly relevant for an institution like RAL, which is responsible for making critical decisions regarding the management of road infrastructure projects within the province. As the implementing agency of the provincial government, RAL must systematically track project performance, ensure accountability, and ensure evidence-based decision-making to enhance efficiency, optimise resource allocation, and achieve sustainable development outcomes. By systematically gathering and analysing data, RAL can improve project outcomes, mitigate risks such as delays and cost overruns, and enhance overall infrastructure development in Limpopo.

2.1 The conceptualisation of M&E

It is essential to distinguish between Monitoring and Evaluation, as they are two distinct yet interconnected concepts. Clearly defining these terms ensures a comprehensive understanding of their application and effectiveness. This distinction is particularly important in the context of the RAL, as it will help determine whether both aspects of M&E are appropriately implemented to support informed decision-making and enhance road infrastructure management. Furthermore, this conceptualisation is essential because M&E is a multifaceted discipline that serves multiple roles such as; a core component of performance management, a practical tool for improving outcomes, a professional practice, and an academic field of study. Understanding these dimensions provides a comprehensive perspective on how M&E is applied across different contexts and its significance in driving informed decision-making.

Monitoring involves the continuous collection, analysis, and reporting of data to support effective management (DPME, 2019). The OECD (2002), as cited by Mahala (2024:139), define monitoring as the systematic collection of data on pre-determined indicators to inform management about the progress of an intervention. These definitions converge in emphasising that monitoring is a continuous process aimed at tracking a project's progress, identifying challenges, and implementing improvement measures.

Evaluation is defined by DPME (2019) as the "systematic collection and objective analysis of evidence on public policies, programs, projects, functions, and organisations to assess issues such as relevance, performance (effectiveness and efficiency), value for money, impact, and sustainability, and recommend a way forward". According to the OECD (2002), as cited by Mahala (2024:139), evaluation involves examining an ongoing or completed intervention to determine if its objectives are relevant and whether they have been achieved. These definitions emphasise that evaluation is focused on determining whether a project's objectives have been achieved effectively and efficiently.

Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) is an integral part of performance management that involves defining expected performance outcomes and establishing the indicators that will be used to measure performance (Rabie & Goldman, 2014). According to Basheka and Byamugisha (2015), M&E serves as a practice, profession, and field of study or academic discipline. As a practice, M&E involves activities carried out by government officials, NGOs, and the private sector to assess the effectiveness and efficiency of interventions. This view is supported by Shapiro (2001) who describes M&E as a management tool used to evaluate the progress of an intervention toward its objectives and to identify areas needing improvement. Additionally, M&E provides management with critical information for making informed decisions about policies, programs, or projects.

As a profession, M&E is a distinct skill held by individuals who have studied M&E disciplines and are responsible for leading the monitoring and evaluation functions. As an academic discipline, M&E refers to the qualifications acquired by individuals to become evaluators or M&E practitioners (Basheka & Byamugisha, 2015). Mohamed and Kulmie (2023) view M&E as a management tool designed to enhance the performance of both public and private institutions. In contrast, Babie and Mouton (2006) describes M&E as a requirement for ensuring donor accountability regarding the use of donated funds. In this literature, M&E will be explored as a good governance practice by management that informs performance measurement and program decision-making. Thus, to

understand how the information gathered and reported through M&E is used by management to identify gaps in service delivery, make informed decisions, set priorities, plan, budget, allocate resources efficiently, and improve implementation, as well as to learn from past performance.

2.2 The Origins of M&E

This section explores the origins of M&E from an international, regional, and national perspective. This is done through the examination factors that have contributed to the emergence of M&E globally and highlighting its benefits in enhancing service delivery. By tracing its evolution, this section provides a foundational understanding of how M&E has developed over time and its growing significance in governance and accountability. This discussion sets the stage for the next section, which delves into the institutionalisation of M&E, offering a deeper analysis of its integration into organisational structures and decision-making processes. Furthermore, this discussion is essential in establishing a foundation for understanding the role of M&E in decision-making within the road infrastructure sector as effective M&E ensures that road infrastructure continues to contribute to social and economic development by facilitating access to essential services and supporting economic growth. Wall (2009), emphasises that road infrastructure is a cornerstone of quality of life and a thriving economy. It enables seamless mobility for citizens and road freight transport, fostering interconnectivity and improving business efficiency. Given that M&E originated primarily as a tool for enhancing service delivery, this section will explore its evolution and impact in greater detail.

2.2.1 Monitoring and Evaluation in the International Context

Although M&E is globally recognised as having roots in the western countries, its origins can actually be traced back to Africa. Rugege (1998), as cited by Masuku and Ijeoma (2015), opines that global literature has often overlooked Africa's role in the development of M&E. To support this view, Basheka and Byamugisha (2015), indicate that M&E practices, both in theory and methodology, are largely influenced by western traditions worldwide. The role of M&E practice dates back over 5 000 years to ancient Egypt, where Egyptians regularly monitored and assessed the country's output in grain and livestock production (Basheka & Byamugisha, 2015). According to Kusek and Rist (2004), western countries developed M&E systems as a response to both internal and external pressures such as structural issues, globalisation, declining confidence in the public sector, and increasing demands for better and more responsive services, among

others. Thus, the increasing demand for a result-oriented, accountable, effective, and efficient public administration has driven the global adoption of M&E.

According to Plumber *et al*, (2022), M&E gained prominence in the 1960s through the work of C.S. Holling and colleagues in the environmental field. They introduced the concept of adaptive environmental assessment and management, which integrated project design, management, and monitoring to create a framework for testing assumptions, fostering adaptation, and promoting learning. As a result, M&E became a priority for scholars and practitioners, who increasingly used it to assess progress in addressing complex contemporary challenges. Basheka and Byamugisha (2015), argue that the United States of America is the birthplace of M&E, as most of the field's authors, academic programs, institutional frameworks, legislation, guiding principles and standards, and the development of models and approaches originated there.

The role of M&E has been acknowledged for enhancing project and program performance, as well as promoting accountability, efficiency, effectiveness, and increased impact. It has become essential to enable the achievement of development goals and improving the lives of citizens (Mohamed and Kulmie, 2023). Onyango (2018) alludes that M&E is crucial for problem identification, implementation, monitoring, information sharing, learning, and improved decision-making. This view is synonymous to Naidoo and Henning (2012), who argue that governance crises worldwide have necessitated the need for M&E systems to facilitate timely problem identification, ensuring that findings and recommendations reach the appropriate levels before crises unfold.

2.2.2 The Evolution of M&E in Africa

There is no clear consensus on the official origins of M&E in Africa. Basheka and Byamugisha (2015) suggest that the Ghana Evaluation Association, established in 1997, is the oldest formal M&E body on the continent. According to De Kool and Van Buuren (2004), cited by Bahseka and Byamugisha, (2015), the rise of M&E in Africa is closely linked to the adoption of New Public Management (NPM). The NPM emphasises the transition from traditional bureaucratic administration to a market-oriented approach that prioritises accountability, efficiency, effectiveness, transparency, and results (Rabie & Gold Man, 2014). Consequently, M&E has become essential for informing the development of policies, projects, and programs. This argument is further supported by Kimaro and Fourie (2017), who argue that the importance of

M&E emerged from discussions on traditional administration and public management, where M&E is widely recognised as a "key tool for enhancing efficiency and accountability".

Some of the key driving forces behind M&E in Africa include economic decline, the demand for improved service delivery, reform agendas, and poverty reduction initiatives (Kimaro & Fourie (2017). According to Bahseka and Byamugisha (2015), the growth of M&E in Africa was significantly influenced by the Development Assistance Committee's 1987 conference, which focused on addressing evaluation capacity gaps in developing countries. This conference set the stage for numerous other conferences across Africa, organised by international institutions such as the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the American Evaluation Association, among others. Given this background, it can be concluded that the development and institutionalisation of M&E across Africa was largely influenced by initiatives from western organisations. This is due to the predominance of western influenced approaches and methodologies, which often overlook indigenous African knowledge and ways of doing things.

Although M&E is gaining momentum in Africa, its implementation often seems insufficient, with a stronger focus on compliance rather than on achieving meaningful results. Cloete (2009:3) as cited by Mapitsa and Khumalo (2018), points out that M&E has been predominantly emphasised by donor institutions seeking accountability from beneficiaries. This argument is supported by Masuku and Ijeoma (2015), who highlight that in many developing countries, M&E is primarily used as a compliance mechanism rather than as a tool for delivering tangible outcomes. According to Mackay (1998), as cited by Mapitsa and Khumalo (2018), some of the key challenges to M&E in Africa include a lack of thorough evaluation, poor quality financial and performance information, insufficient feedback mechanisms in decision-making processes, and a general lack of accountability among other issues. Despite this challenge, several African countries are committed to enhancing their M&E systems by establishing ministries at the centre of government to lead these efforts. Goldman (2013) highlights that countries like South Africa, Ghana, Kenya, Uganda, Senegal, and Benin, M&E is coordinated through central government ministries.

2.2.3 The emergence of M&E in the South African Public Service

While the origins of M&E date back over 5 000 years in Africa, its development in South Africa is still maturing. The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, somehow highlights the need for an M&E system. Sections 92 and 133 mandate cabinet members at both the national

and provincial levels of government to account collectively and individually to the Parliament for the exercise of their powers and the performance of their functions. Furthermore, Chapter 10 establishes fundamental values and principles governing the public service, including efficiency, effective resource utilisation, accountability, responsiveness, and transparency, among others. Sections 195 and 196 entrust the Public Service Commission with the responsibility to monitor and evaluate public service institutions.

The White Paper on Public Service Delivery of 1995 outlines key principles aligned with the Constitution, several of which are directly connected to M&E. These principles include consultation, service standards, information dissemination, openness, and transparency (Kimaro, 2018). These principles emphasise the need for an accountable and performance-driven public service, which aligns with the constitutional mandate to uphold public service values. According to Masuku and Ijeoma (2015), South Africa made initial attempts to introduce M&E in the 1990s. However, it began to take proper shape after being emphasised in the African National Congress (ANC) manifesto in 2004, which aimed to enhance program performance across all spheres of government (Bester, 2009). In 2005, the government adopted the Policy Framework for a Government-Wide Monitoring and Evaluation System, which outlines the principles, practices, and standards for M&E implementation nationwide

Since the adoption of the Policy Framework for a Government-Wide Monitoring and Evaluation System, there has been a significant increase in the institutionalisation of M&E in South Africa. Many South African public institutions have established M&E units led by a senior management official (Bester, 2009). It can be argued that the introduction of the Policy Framework for a Government-Wide Monitoring and Evaluation System marked a significant step toward enhancing service delivery in the public sector by establishing principles, practices, and standards for M&E implementation. Subsequent to this Framework, the National Treasury developed the Framework for Managing Programme Performance Information, which details essential concepts for designing and implementing management systems that define, collect, report, and utilise performance information in the public sector (National Treasury, 2007).

South Africa's commitment to improve M&E approach was demonstrated by the establishment of the Ministry for Performance, Monitoring, and Evaluation now the Department of Planning, Monitoring, and Evaluation (DPME) within the Presidency in 2009 (Philips, 2012). The DPME plays a central role in leading government performance planning, monitoring, and evaluation. In 2011, DPME developed a National Evaluation Framework to provide guidelines and principles for

evaluations across the three spheres of government. Additionally, in 2019, it introduced a Revised Framework for Strategic Plans and Annual Performance Plans, which emphasises a results-based approach.

Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) is crucial for decision-making within RAL, as it can facilitate feedback loops and adaptive management. It can be argued that an effective M&E provides continuous feedback on performance, enabling the measurement of both performance information and outcomes. This allows organisations to adjust their strategies in response to emerging data and changing circumstances. Therefore, the failure to leverage M&E effectively within RAL may disable its capacity to make informed decisions that prioritise the improvement of provincial road infrastructure development. Ultimately, this could negatively affect the agency's accountability and responsiveness to the public.

2.3 Institutionalisation of M&E System

This section explores the structure and processes of an effective M&E system within an organisation, outlining the key components required for its functionality. Understanding the institutionalisation of M&E is essential for interpreting research findings in the context of the literature review.

2.3.1 Describing M&E system

An M&E system is a defined mechanism that outlines how relevant information is collected, communicated, and utilised within an organisation to support decision-making at various management levels, particularly regarding resource allocation and policy formulation (Dahal & Uprety, 2015). It plays a crucial role in shaping a wide range of decisions, including how plans are formulated, the methodologies used to gather and analyse data, the degree to which M&E findings are shared and incorporated into learning, and the allocation of resources towards the achievement of organisational goal (Simister, 2019). Rabie and De Coning (2014) point out that an M&E system is established through the creation of an independent strategic unit at the Chief Director level, officially mandated to lead and facilitate the M&E function across the organisation, with the support of top management.

In South Africa, the Policy Framework for Government-Wide Monitoring and Evaluation mandates government institutions to formally adopt M&E systems to inform planning, budgeting,

implementation, and the monitoring and evaluation of institutional performance. These systems must be integrated into the institution's management and decision-making processes, ensuring that they consistently produce credible and accurate information. This information should be used on an ongoing basis to enhance service delivery and governance (Presidency, 2007). Like any other public institution, the RAL is required by the Policy Framework for Government-Wide Monitoring and Evaluation to establish a robust M&E system. This system is essential for tracking performance, assessing the impact of projects, and ensuring accountability in service delivery. By implementing an effective M&E framework, RAL can enhance decision-making, improve project efficiency, and align its operations with national development priorities. Moreover, a well-functioning M&E system can enable RAL to identify challenges, optimise resource allocation, and foster a culture of continuous learning and improvement.

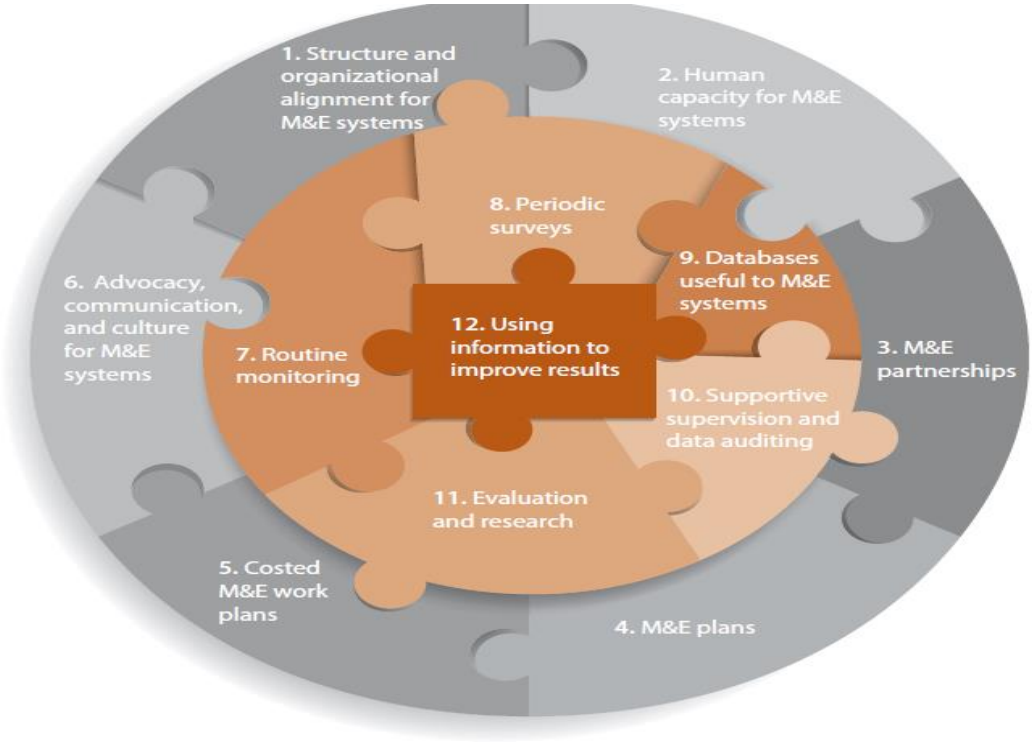
2.3.2 Institutionalisation of M&E

Institutionalisation of M&E can be regarded as the process of embedding M&E functions, principles, and practices within an institution. According to Kimaro, Fourie, and Tshiyoyo (2018), this process involves integrating the M&E functions into the core activities of the institution, allowing for the consistent assessment of predetermined objectives, systematic reporting, tracking progress, and the adoption of performance information systems. Simister (2019), argues that the institutionalisation of M&E entails the creation of a structured system where data is collected to inform planning, reporting, and organisational learning. This involves defining performance measures, formulating relevant indicators, collecting and analysing data, and finally, reporting and using the information to guide and enhance organisational decision-making. Masvaure and Fish (2022) highlight that the institutionalisation of M&E involves formalising a dedicated unit to lead M&E functions within an organisation, along with the development of M&E policies aligned with the national development agenda. According to the Presidency (2007), as cited by Rabie and De Coning (2014), M&E responsibilities should be distributed throughout management. Thus, line managers, must ensure that M&E is implemented for monitoring, reporting, and decision-making within the programs under their supervision. According to Fourie (2006), as cited by Wotela (2017:1), the institutionalisation of M&E can contribute to more effective and efficient "public administration, operations management, and decision-making".

For an M&E system to be effective and institutionalised, the following twelve key components must be in place; Structure and organisational alignment for M&E system**,** human capacity for M&E**,** M&E partnerships**,** work plans and budgeting**,** advocacy, and cultivating a culture for M&E**,**

routine monitoring**,** periodic surveys**,** M&E database**,** Supportive supervision and data auditing**,** evaluation and research and using information to improve results (Gorgens & Kusek, 2009). It is pivotal that all these components are described in this study to highlight their significance in the M&E system of an organisation, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of their impact on decision-making and institutional effectiveness.

Figure 1: M&E components



Source: Gorgens and Kusek (2009)

2.3.2.1 Structure and organisational alignment for M&E system

For M&E to be effective within an organisation, a dedicated unit should be established within the organisational structure and led by a senior official responsible for coordinating M&E functions (Odhiambo, 2013)**.** According to Gorgens and Kusek (2009), this unit can either be integrated with the planning function or exist as a standalone entity. When embedded within planning, M&E tends to be more institutionalised or mainstreamed, however, there is a risk that it may be overseen by an official lacking technical expertise in M&E. Conversely, as a standalone function, M&E typically holds greater authority but may be perceived as a policing mechanism (Gorgens

and Kusek, 2009). The Policy Framework for Government-Wide Monitoring and Evaluation acknowledges that M&E structures will vary across institutions. However, it is essential that established M&E structure is highly visible within the institution. Further, the Policy Framework for Government-Wide Monitoring and Evaluation provides that sufficient authority must be granted to officials responsible for managing the M&E system to ensure that its findings effectively inform policy decisions, programmatic planning, and resource allocation.

2.3.2.2. Human capacity for M&E

Like any other unit, the established M&E unit should be staffed with personnel who possess the necessary technical expertise. According to Odhiambo (2013), a well-functioning M&E system requires a qualified human resource base, ensuring that employees have the requisite knowledge and experience in M&E implementation. Further, continuous professional development through training and capacity-building initiatives is essential to keep staff updated on current and emerging trends in the field. As Gorgens and Kusek (2009) emphasise, the effectiveness of an M&E system depends on the presence of skilled officials who can efficiently execute their assigned M&E tasks. This perception is further supported by Nabris (2002), as cited by Nayebare (2009:23), who points out that for M&E to be effective, institutions must prioritise capacity building, and their leading officials should possess strong skills in research and project management.

A study titled *"Monitoring and Evaluation Process on Road Construction Projects Performance in Somalia"* by Mire (2023) found that the availability of dedicated M&E personnel significantly contributed to the success and effectiveness of road construction projects. Thus, the presence of skilled professionals within the working groups in Somalia's construction industry ensured that monitoring and evaluation processes were adequately implemented, leading to better project outcomes. This highlights the importance of human resource capacity in strengthening M&E systems and achieving project goals.

An effective M&E system aligns its purpose and design with the project's capacity to implement it (Kithinji et al., 2017). A strong M&E must be built around qualified officials (World bank, 2011) as cited by Onsomu & Johnbosco 2020: 168). This view is supported by Iravo (2013), who suggest that the official placed in the M&E unit should match the desired skills and qualifications to effectively carry out their responsibilities. Onsomu and Johnbosco (2020) also highlight that the selection of appropriate officials to lead the M&E function is critical. Further, once appointed, these officials should undergo a comprehensive induction process to ensure they are fully acquainted

with the policies and procedures of the system. Rabie and De Coning (2014) suggest that the M&E unit must be well-funded and staffed with competent practitioners or managers. Ninh (2004) adds that M&E must be professionally designed, with appropriate methods, standards, resources, and scheduling.

2.3.2.3 M&E partnerships

M&E partnerships are a critical prerequisite for the successful implementation of an M&E system within an organisation (Odhiambo, 2013). An M&E partnership refers to a collaborative relationship between individuals or institutions that share a common responsibility for executing the M&E system (Gorgens & Kusek, 2009). For example, RAL may establish partnerships with key stakeholders such as the Department of Public Works, Roads and Infrastructure, municipalities, and other organisations with a vested interest in its operations. This component emphasises the critical role of stakeholder involvement in M&E processes. It also highlights how these partnerships can serve an auditing function, allowing technical groups and other stakeholders to compare M&E outputs with reported outputs, thereby ensuring accuracy, transparency, and accountability (Odhiambo, 2013).

Stakeholders refer to both internal and external parties with a vested interest in a particular project. According to Patton (2008), as cited by Njama (2015), stakeholder participation is crucial to the success of M&E. Stakeholders provide valuable feedback that can enhance the performance of any organisation by offering insights and identifying areas for improvement. Hacking (2006) further highlights that stakeholders play an essential role in M&E by offering progress updates on the implementation of organizational programs. Program managers, who oversee projects, are particularly important in this process, as they provide regular feedback on the status of projects under their supervision. Onsomu and Johnbosco (2020) argue that M&E systems support accountability, as they allow stakeholders including beneficiaries to receive updates on the progress of interventions through regular M&E reviews. This not only fosters transparency but also helps ensure that projects remain on track and meet their intended outcomes.

2.3.2.4 M&E plan

The M&E structure should be reinforced by a policy or plan that outline the guidelines and responsibilities of different stakeholders regarding the M&E function within an organisation (Rabie & De Coning, 2014). The M&E plan, also referred to as the M&E framework, is a comprehensive document that defines all aspects of what the M&E system will measure and how it will operate (Gorgens & Kusek, 2009). Odhiambo (2013) supports this argument, stating that an M&E plan outlines the allocation of personnel, time, materials, and financial resources to effectively achieve the established M&E functions. It can be argued well-structured M&E plan not only ensures systematic data collection, analysis, and reporting but also enhances accountability and decision-making. By clearly defining roles, responsibilities, and resource allocation, the M&E plan serves as a strategic guide for the successful implementation and sustainability of the M&E system. According to Nayebare (2009), the success of M&E system is heavily dependent on effective planning.

The development of an M&E plan should occur at the initial stages of project planning to ensure that monitoring and evaluation are integrated into the project from the outset (David & Gamariel, 2021). This view is further supported by the Presidency (2000), which emphasises that M&E plans should be crafted during the design phase of a policy or program. It can be argued that institutions should ensure M&E planning is a central component of their organisational strategic planning process. Thus, as interventions are identified and targets set, an M&E plan should be developed to track progress and assess whether the intended outcomes of these interventions are being realised.

Cleland and Ireland (2007), as cited by Okafor (2021:36), argue that an M&E plan is crucial for outlining how programs and projects will be evaluated. Thus, it should define key indicators, specify data collection methods, and establish processes for data analysis and reporting, ensuring that evaluation activities are clear, consistent, and aligned with the project's objectives. The National Evaluation Policy Framework (2019) highlights that all government institutions across different levels in South Africa must develop evaluation plans outlining the evaluations to be conducted over a specified period. It can be argued that evaluation plans are essential for facilitating the evaluation of government programs, enabling informed decisions regarding their continuation or termination.

2.3.2.5 Costed work plan

Gorgens and Kusek (2009) believe that a costed M&E plan serves as a valuable management tool for coordinating the M&E system. According to UNAIDS (2008), as cited by Kithinji et al. (2017:85), M&E capacity encompasses human, financial, and material resources. Therefore, allocating a sufficient budget for M&E is essential to ensure that the necessary resources are available for its effective implementation. Further, a dedicated budget is crucial for recruiting qualified M&E staff, enabling the institution to build the expertise required for successful M&E activities (Onsomu & Johnbosco, 2020). Beyond compensating officials, financial resources are also necessary for training personnel and procuring the materials and equipment required to collect high-quality data that can enhance decision-making (Kithinji et al., 2017).

Chaplowe (2008), as cited by Onsomu and Johnbosco (2020:169), emphasises that institutions must proactively plan and allocate financial resources for evaluating organisational projects. Proper planning and budgeting for M&E are crucial for ensuring that monitoring activities are not treated as an afterthought but are integrated into the project lifecycle from inception to completion. Supporting this perspective, Mugambi and Kanda (2013), also cited by Onsomu and Johnbosco (2020:170), suggest that allocating 3% of an organisation's total budget to M&E functions is a global best practice. This recommendation reflects the need for institutions to view M&E as an essential investment rather than a cost, ensuring that adequate resources are available to facilitate data collection, analysis, reporting, and feedback mechanisms.

2.3.2.6 M&E Advocacy

For any initiative or policy position to succeed, strong advocacy is essential. According to Odhiambo (2013), advocacy in the context of M&E focuses on how M&E processes are promoted within an organisation. It is widely recognised that without promotion, even well-designed systems may go unnoticed or underutilised. Therefore, continuous communication and advocacy efforts are crucial for embedding an M&E culture within an organisation. These efforts should be actively supported by the organisation's leadership to ensure widespread acceptance and integration. Gorgens and Kusek (2009) emphasise that effective M&E advocacy and communication can foster a positive organisational culture that values and prioritises M&E across all levels, ultimately enhancing accountability, learning, and decision-making.

According to Onsomu and Johnbosco (2020) management is responsible to instil a culture of M&E within the organisation. This includes supporting the development of M&E policies, plans, standard operating procedures, and the communication and use of M&E information throughout the organization. The World Bank (2011), cited by Onsomu and Johnbosco (2020:167), highlights that, in most cases, the accounting officer is responsible for establishing a system for collecting credible information about organisational projects, ensuring that evidence of performance and lessons learned is shared. To achieve this, the system must be managed efficiently through a competent and well-resourced M&E structure. In South Africa, the Treasury Regulations place the responsibility for the establishment of M&E system squarely on the shoulders of the accounting officer. The regulations require accounting officers to establish procedures for reporting to the executive authority, ensuring that M&E processes are integrated into overall governance and accountability frameworks.

Management is responsible for defining the data needs and requirements necessary for organisational decision-making, as stated by Care (2012), cited by Onsomu and Johnbosco (2020:167). This involves identifying the types of data that are crucial for informed decision-making, ensuring the data is accurate, relevant, and timely to support effective planning and performance evaluation within the organization. Thus, the success of an M&E system hinges on management consensus regarding the use of results and how these results will be applied. Further, this highlights the importance of management buy-in to ensure that the M&E function is both effective and valuable in influencing evidence-based decision-making across the organisation (Rabie & De Coning, 2014). According to Byamugisha et al. (2014), as cited by Kimaro, Fourie, and Tshiyoyo (2018:2011), a management culture that actively seeks and utilises M&E data significantly contributes to the sustainability and effectiveness of M&E systems. It can be concluded that management teams that prioritise the use of M&E data are more likely to support and prioritise M&E functions, ensuring their integration into decision-making and institutional practices.

2.3.2.7 Routine monitoring

Odhiambo (2013) alludes that data must be collected and reported continuously to assess whether project activities are progressing toward achieving their intended objectives. This necessitates the integration of routine data collection and analysis into program activities to ensure systematic tracking of performance. Additionally, Wilson (2004), as cited by Gorgens and

Kusek (2009:251), highlights the importance of routine monitoring in generating reliable data that can be used to verify structured program reports. Regular monitoring not only facilitates timely decision-making but also enhances accountability, transparency, and the overall effectiveness of project implementation. Therefore, by embedding routine data collection within program operations, organisations can identify trends, address challenges proactively, and make informed adjustments to improve outcomes.

2.3.2.8 Periodic survey

A periodic survey is crucial for gathering data at regular intervals, such as annual surveys, to inform decision-making processes. The advantage of conducting periodic surveys is that they help generate impact and outcome level data, as noted by Gorgens and Kusek (2009). These surveys provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of policies or interventions, allowing for timely reviews and adjustments after their implementation over a specified period. Typically, national departments conduct such surveys to evaluate the progress of related projects, ensuring that interventions are on track and achieving the desired results (Odhiambo, 2013). It can be argued that periodic surveys offer the opportunity to monitor trends, assess long-term impacts, and enhance the overall effectiveness of programs and policies.

2.3.2.9 M&E Database

The M&E database plays a critical role in the process of data collection, capturing, and verification to ensure that relevant and reliable data is readily available for stakeholders involved in policy formulation, program management, and improvement (Gorgens & Kusek, 2009). According to Odhiambo (2013), an effective M&E requires database wherein there is development of strategies for collecting accurate, valid, and reliable data.

While M&E databases are typically computerised, they are subject to limitations, particularly in cases of internet connectivity issues (Gorgens & Kusek, 2009). This highlights the need for alternative data collection and storage methods, which are manual. However, although manual data collection, verification, and storage can be used as a backup, it presents challenges in terms of retrieval efficiency and data accuracy compared to computerised systems. Therefore, it can be argued that a well-integrated approach that combines both manual and digital systems can enhance data accessibility, reliability, and overall effectiveness in M&E processes. A

computerised database may be useful for RAL looking at the nature of its work, wherein more infrastructure projects are implemented through contractors who may need to report data timeously far from the head office.

A computerised database would be highly beneficial for RAL, considering the nature of its work, which involves implementing numerous infrastructure projects through contractors. Given that these contractors often operate in remote locations, a digital system would enable them to report data in a timely manner, ensuring efficient communication and real-time project monitoring, even when they are far from the head office.

2.3.2.10 Supportive supervision and data auditing

Supportive supervision and data auditing play a crucial role in strengthening M&E systems by ensuring data credibility, enhancing the capacity of program implementers, and improving the use of information for informed decision-making (Gorgens & Kusek, 2009). When implemented effectively, supportive supervision allows M&E experts to regularly oversee and guide M&E processes within individual programs or business units, providing constructive feedback for continuous improvement (Odhiambo, 2013). It can be argued that data auditing ensures that collected data undergoes thorough verification to maintain its reliability and validity. Together, these processes contribute to a more transparent, accountable, and efficient M&E framework, ultimately leading to better project outcomes and policy decisions.

In the case of RAL, supportive supervision and data auditing will require the M&E unit to periodically monitor how program managers implement M&E processes within their respective work areas. Additionally, the M&E unit will ensure that data collected by individual business units is quality-assured and verified. Furthermore, the unit will conduct independent verification, and any discrepancies identified will be promptly communicated to the relevant business units for corrective action.

2.3.2.11 Evaluation and research

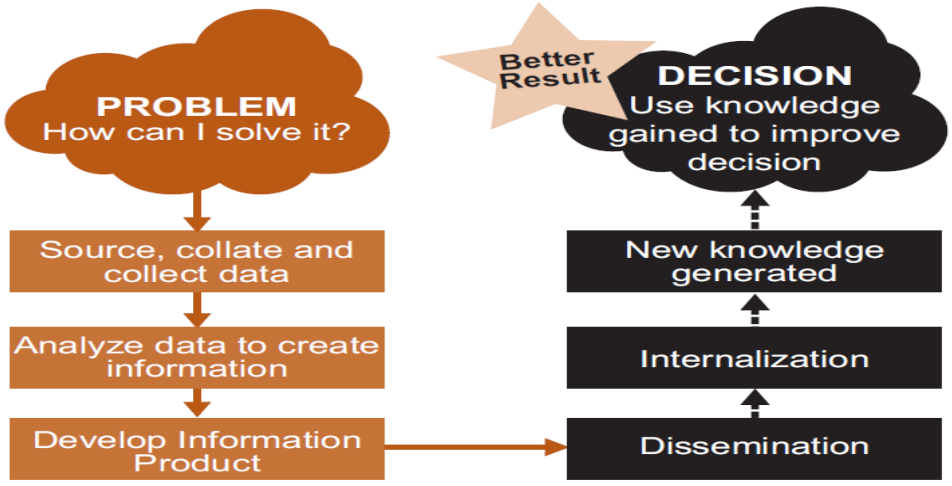
Research and evaluation are both systematic approaches to data collection and analysis, but serving different purposes. According to Gorgens and Kusek (2009), research generates data primarily for knowledge-building, whereas evaluation focuses on assessing specific aspects of an intervention or policy, such as determining whether to continue, modify, scale up, or replicate

activities. Evaluation is essential for examining whether a project has achieved its intended objectives and contributes to organisational learning while facilitating the sharing of successes with stakeholders (Odhiambo, 2013). Therefore, M&E should be coordinated by officials with the capacity to conduct scientific research, as both evaluation and research use similar data collection and analysis methods.

2.3.2.12 Using information to improve results

This component serves as the focal point of this study, as it directly pertains to decision-making. Specifically, it examines how M&E information influences and informs decision-making processes. A more detailed discussion of this component is provided in Section 2.5. To enhance accountability and maximise the value of M&E, the results must be effectively communicated to relevant stakeholders. As Odhiambo (2013) emphasises, organisations should establish a structured information dissemination plan within the M&E framework to ensure that stakeholders can use the insights gained to enhance service delivery and decision-making processes. According to Borun (2000), as cited by Gorgens and Kusek (2009:419), decision-making involves problem analysis, where gathered information is utilised to identify solutions and assess potential consequences. Figure 2 illustrates the decision-making process, in which data is collected, analysed, and used to inform decisions.

Figure 2: Using data to solve a problem



Source: Gorgens and Kusek (2009)

2.4 Factors affecting the success of M&E within an institution

Section 2.3 reflected on the institutionalisation of M&E by outlining key components of M&E system. This section discusses factors that affect the success of M&E system within an organisation. It can be argued that every system has its own set of advantages and disadvantages, and M&E systems are no exception. According to Onsomu and Johnbosco (2020), the ineffectiveness of an M&E system is a factor contributing to the failure of projects in many government institutions. These shortcomings often undermine the intended outcomes and hinder progress toward organisational goals. This section delves into factors such as inadequate capacity, lack of management support to M&E system and under budgeting for M&E insufficient stakeholder engagement.

2.4.1 Lack of management support to the M&E system

The failure of M&E systems in some institutions can be attributed to lack of management support (Simister, 2019). Management should serve as the driving force behind the M&E system by providing essential resources (Kusek & Rist, 2004). It can be argued that strong managerial backing ensures the integration of M&E information into decision-making processes. However, many institutions fail to incorporate M&E information into their decision-making due to a disconnect between M&E activities and institutional level decision-making (Preskill & Mack, 2013, as cited in Simister, 2019:20). The lack of consistent management and strategic direction can undermine the importance of long-term investments in M&E. According to Dahal & Uprety (2015), frequent changes in management approaches within organisations have led to reluctance among management and leadership to invest in improving M&E systems.

A lack of management support for M&E is one of the key factors contributing to the underutilisation of M&E information in some institutions (Taut, 2007, as cited by Kithinji et al., 2017:287). Without active buy-in and commitment from leadership, M&E system often fail to receive the necessary resources, attention, and integration into decision-making processes. Management's role is critical in fostering a culture that values evidence-based practices, yet in many cases, leaders may overlook or undervalue the insights provided by M&E due to competing priorities, limited understanding of its benefits, or a reluctance to embrace accountability. It can be argued that lack of support can result in poorly designed M&E frameworks, inadequate data collection and analysis, and ultimately, the failure to leverage insights to improve project outcomes. Furthermore, when management fails to champion M&E initiatives, it sends a message to other stakeholders

that M&E is not a priority, which can lead to disengagement, non-compliance, and a lack of trust in the system.

2.4.2 Inadequate capacity

Inadequate capacity is a significant challenge for M&E systems. Eke and Boadu (2019) highlight this issue, with Gomez et al. (2009) as cited by Eke & Boadu, (2019:534) emphasising that many institutions suffer from a lack of built capacity. M&E functions are often deprioritised, leading to limited resources allocated to M&E units. Plaatjies and Porter (2011), cited by Eke and Boadu (2019:534), note that insufficient material and human resources contribute to dysfunctional M&E systems. Supporting this view, Porter and Goldman (2013) suggest that some institutions neglect the importance of human resources.

Poor M&E capacity building is recognised by Gomez et al. (2009) as cited by Eke and Boadu (2019:534) as a challenge in many institutions. A significant constraint to developing efficient and effective results-based M&E systems is the lack of institutional competencies. Masvaure and Fish (2022) argue that M&E capacity is essential for enabling individuals and institutions to document program implementation, interpret results, enhance program delivery, and ultimately improve outcomes. This view is supported by Gorgens and Kusek (2009), who highlight the strong demand for skilled professionals and the need to build capacity in developing effective M&E systems.

2.4.3 Under budgeting for M&E

According to Dahal & Uprety (2015), the M&E unit is the most poorly resources in many organisations. Kimaro etal (2018), opine that many institutions struggle to conduct evaluations due to limited financial resources, resulting in an over-reliance on monitoring. Masvaure and Fish (2022) argue that insufficient financial and human resources can hinder the success of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) within an organisation. This view is supported by Njama (2015), who notes that in some institutions, a lack of allocated funds for the M&E function leads to poor M&E practices, ultimately affecting the overall performance of the organisation. The underfunding of an M&E system often results in a compliance-driven approach that prioritises monitoring over evaluation, which can have significant drawbacks. This narrow focus is resource-intensive yet fails to deliver a comprehensive understanding of program effectiveness and outcomes (Kimaro, Fourie, & Tshiyoyo, 2018). Subsequent, without the evaluation component, the system lacks the

depth needed to generate valuable insights for informed decision-making, strategic adjustments, and sustainable long-term improvements.

A study conducted by Wanjiku in Kenya titled *"Monitoring and Evaluation Factors Influencing the Performance of Road Infrastructure Projects"* revealed that inadequate funding is a significant challenge affecting the effectiveness of M&E systems. Wanjiku (2015) found that insufficient budget allocations for the monitoring and evaluation of road infrastructure projects left officials feeling that the resources provided were not adequate to meet the demands of thorough project oversight. Similarly, he World Bank Report (2022), as cited by Mire (2023:59), highlights suboptimal budget allocations for monitoring and road maintenance across Africa. The report points out that many governments prioritise new construction over the upkeep and evaluation of existing infrastructure, resulting in poorly maintained roads and inefficiencies in project delivery. It can be argued that lack of funding undermines the capacity to conduct regular assessments, collect quality data, and implement corrective measures in a timely manner. Further, the absence of financial support for M&E may compromise project quality, which affect the long-term sustainability of road infrastructure investments.

2.5 Monitoring and Evaluation as management tool for decision making

Section 2.3 explored the institutionalisation of M&E, providing insights into how an ideal M&E system should operate and be structured. The discussion directly relates to the research sub-question of this study: "*How is M&E organised within RAL?".* Similarly, Section 2.4 examined the factors influencing M&E systems, addressing aspects relevant to the study's sub-question: "*What are the factors affecting M&E within RAL*?". This section focuses on the role of M&E as a management tool for decision-making. The sub-topics within this section directly align with the research sub-questions: "*What is the role of M&E in measuring performance within RAL?*", "*What is the role of M&E in resource allocation?*", and "*How relevant is M&E to RAL's programs?*". By addressing these aspects, this section of the literature review plays a crucial role in guiding the research findings discussion in Chapter Five, ensuring a structured approach to answering the study's key questions.

2.5.1. The importance of M&E in decision making process

The Road Agency Limpopo (RAL) is responsible for making decisions regarding the management of close to 19 0000 road network within the province. These decisions not only affect the agency's operations but also have a significant impact on the socio-economic development of the province. According to Mire (2023), the lack of adequate and well-maintained rural feeder roads connecting villages, farming areas, and market centers remains a significant gap in rural transport in many African countries. The choices made by RAL's management can have positive or negative consequences for the lives of citizens and road users. As highlighted in Chapter 1 of this study, road infrastructure influences citizens' lives in various ways, such as providing access to essential social and economic services and contributing to job creation through construction projects.

Evidence-based decision-making is crucial for RAL in determining the scope of road construction or maintenance projects, as well as identifying delivery speed and quality standards. To effectively and efficiently fulfil its legislated mandate, RAL requires a system for collecting data that will inform these critical decisions. Monitoring and Evaluation is increasingly recognised as an essential component for informed decision-making in the public sector (Byamugisha *et al*., 2014, as cited by Kimaro, Fourie, and Tshiyoyo, 2018: 211). Therefore, M&E plays a crucial role in promoting good governance by ensuring that data and information are accessible to everyone, and enable citizens to understand how public funds are utilised (OECD, 2015). According to Rahim (2020), as cited by Issack and Njoroge (2023: 500) to achieve good governance, effective decision-making must be grounded in reliable evidence and data. It can be argued that evidence-based decision-making is becoming increasingly prevalent, playing a significant role in resource planning and allocation within many organisations.

As cited by Onyango (2019), Moreland and Curran (2018) emphasise that M&E is crucial for providing timely, valid, accurate, and reliable evidence, which is indispensable for informed decision-making. This highlights the importance of credible data in driving effective program decisions. Further, this highlights a need to institutionalise M&E systems to collect, process, store, and communicate information. Kananura et al. (2017) argue that M&E provides program implementers and management with the evidence to identify the most effective strategies and performance measurement mechanisms. This enables more efficient resource allocation towards service delivery.

The World Bank Operations Evaluation Department (2001) suggests that M&E supports good governance by providing critical information for decision-making in areas such as planning, prioritisation, and budgeting. Kotze and Phiri (2019) argue that M&E is vital in addressing poor governance by providing evidence-based information that supports sound decision-making, policy formulation, and implementation.

Institutions need to implement a robust system for collecting information that informs decision-making (Mapitsa & Khumalo, 2018). Issack and Njoroge (2023) suggest that South African public institutions have consistently demonstrated a weakness in effectively implementing government policies and utilising data for M&E purposes. This underscores the importance of M&E in public institutions. Kemerer and Salentine (2014), as cited by Masvaure and Fish (2022:3), suggest that M&E significantly influences decision-making, "including decisions to improve, reorient, or discontinue interventions or policies, as well as decisions regarding strategies and management structures".

Callistus and Clinton (2018) argue that M&E is crucial for integrating client needs into project planning, ensuring proper resource allocation, and continuously measuring progress against established objectives. This in turn, supports informed decision-making. By ensuring adherence to predetermined standards and monitoring the achievement of budgetary and scheduling targets, M&E proves essential, especially in decision-making processes related to road infrastructure projects. For M&E to influence decision-making, it must be aligned with the overall mandate of the government (Porter and Goldman, 2013, as cited by Wotela, 2017). Thus, it can be argued that, even at the organisational level, M&E functions should be conducted with the goal of enhancing performance and achieving set priorities.

2.5.2 The role of M&E in measuring performance

This section focuses on measuring performance, which involves strategy development, implementation, monitoring, and using results for continuous improvement. One of the critical decisions RAL faces is setting achievable targets within its organisational strategy. Therefore, the entity must develop a feasible strategy with clearly defined outcomes, outputs, indicators, and targets. The development of such a strategy requires evidence that reflects baseline data and performance trends from previous years. In terms of the Revised Framework for Strategic Plans and Annual Performance Plans (2019), public institutions are required to develop a Theory of Change (ToC) that will guide to identify interventions to be outlined in the institutional plans. This

ToC should be informed by a comprehensive situational analysis, where both problem and solution analyses are conducted to ensure the strategy is grounded in evidence and addresses the most pressing challenges effectively.

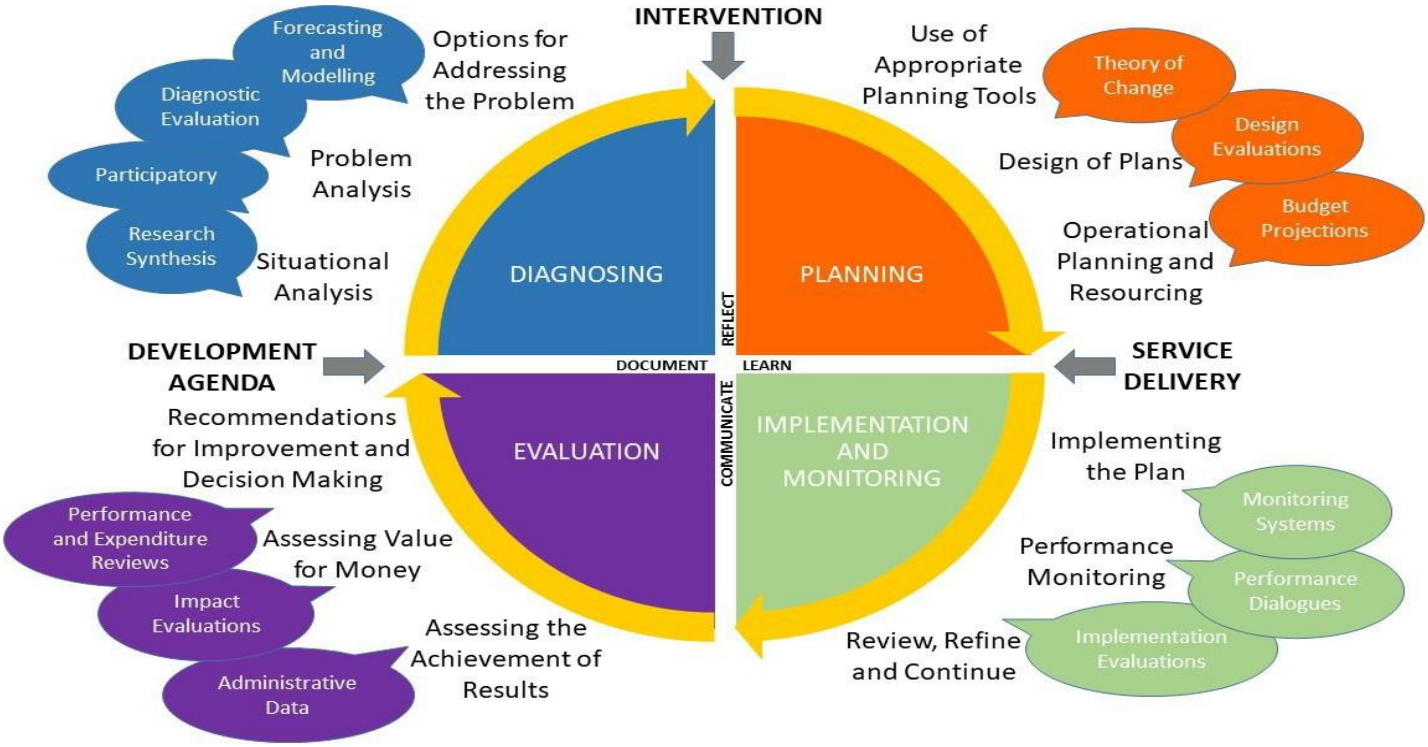
Seang (2003:1) defines performance measurement as “the process of determining how successful organisations or individuals have been in attaining their objectives.” Stanzler and Spieker (2017) describe it as the process where organisations use gathered information to assess how will objectives or goals are achieved. This view is further supported by Moullin (2007), who suggests that performance measurement is the process through which institutions use information to improve service delivery. In this context, organisations identify specific metrics to track their performance against set objectives. These definitions converge on the understanding that performance measurement is a systematic approach using data and information to monitor and evaluate how well an organization or individual is meeting its predefined goals, ultimately driving improved outcomes. Bovaird and Löffler (2000), as cited by Kimaro, Fourie, and Tshiyoyo (2018:201), define performance measurement as “acting upon performance information.” This definition is particularly relevant to this study, as it highlights the importance of utilizing collected information to inform and guide decision-making processes.

The purpose of performance measurement is to monitor, adjust, and refine an organisation’s strategy and operations, ensuring that it remains aligned with its goals (Ritter, 2003). According to Gimbert et al. (2010), a performance measurement system is crucial for supporting organisational decision-making by collecting, processing, and analysing performance data. This process is vital for understanding progress, pinpointing areas for improvement, and enabling informed decisions that will enhance future performance.

In the South African public service context, the Framework for the Management of Programme Performance Information (2007), highlights the importance of performance measurement as a critical tool to ensure that institutions understand their objectives and deliver accordingly (National Treasury, 2007). Setting performance expectations upfront and monitoring them regularly increases the likelihood of institutional success. This is because performance measurement enables management to adopt a results-based approach (National Treasury, 2007). The Framework for the Management of Programme Performance Information (2007), provides clear guidelines and key concepts for measuring performance, emphasising the role of M&E in generating valuable information on the performance of government policies, programs, and projects (National Treasury). This information serves as an essential input for policy development,

budgeting, performance management, and fostering accountability (Kimaro, Fourie, and Tshiyoyo, 2018). The integration of M&E into decision-making processes ensures a systematic approach to achieving desired outcomes and improving governance. Figure 3 below illustrates how M&E information is utilised in policy development.

Figure 3: Use of M&E information in policy development.



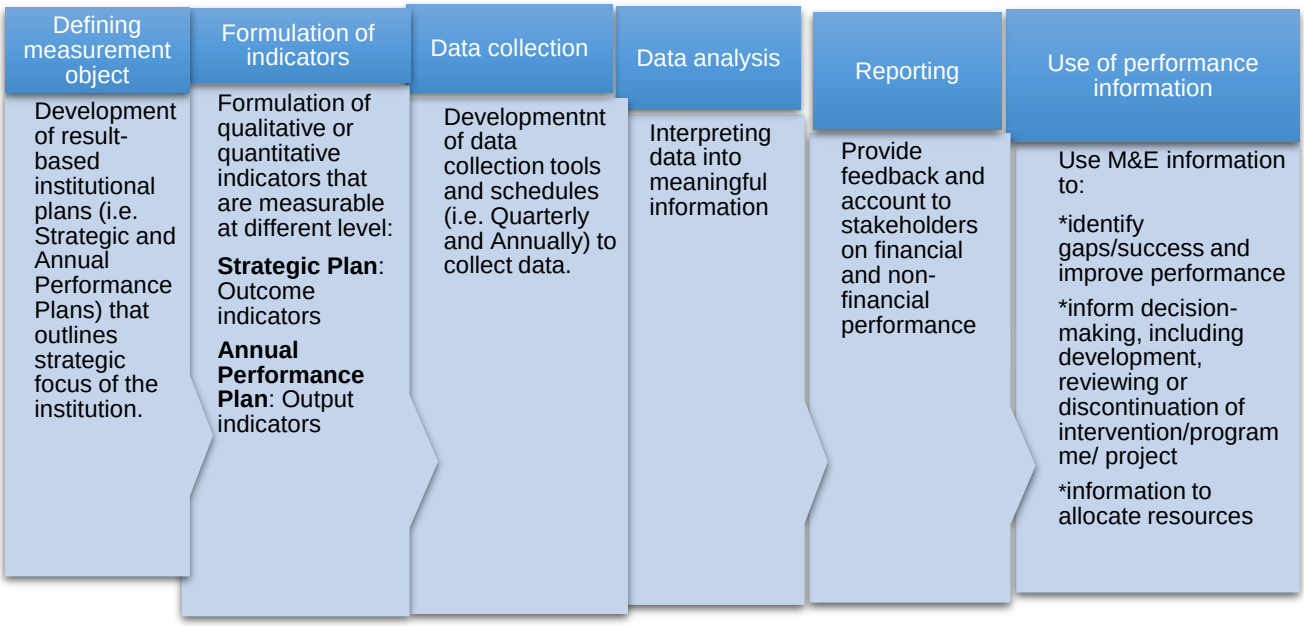
Source: DPME Revised Evaluation Framework (2019)

The M&E play a critical role in providing an analytical framework to assess an institution's capacity to monitor and evaluate its goals (Mapitsa & Khumalo, 2018). Thus, organisations systematically track progress, identify challenges, and make evidence-based decisions to enhance performance. According to Mngomezulu (2013), as cited by Kimaro, Fourie, and Tshiyoyo (2018:202), M&E is as tool used in performance measurement. Based on the purpose of measuring performance and the role of M&E, it can be concluded that M&E is integral to performance measurement as it provides the tools for tracking progress, analysing data, supporting decision-making, identifying areas for improvement, and ensuring accountability. By

continuously assessing performance, M&E helps organisations stay aligned with their objectives and enhances their ability to achieve desired outcomes.

Van Dooren and Thijs (2010), as cited by Kimaro, Fourie, and Tshiyoyo (2018:203), further elaborate that M&E is institutionalised when an organisation systematically measures its performance. Thus, M&E enables institutions to effectively implement key performance measurement components including; defining the measurement objectives, formulating indicators, collecting and analysing data, reporting findings, and utilizing performance information (Van Dooren & Thijs, 2010, as cited by Kimaro, Fourie, & Tshiyoyo, 2018:2011). These components collectively support a systematic approach to performance management, ensuring that public service institutions can monitor progress, identify areas for improvement, and make evidence-based decisions. Figure 4 illustrates the application of these components within the public service context.

Figure 4: Performance Measurement Components



Source: Author (2025)

2.5.3 The role of M&E in Road Infrastructure Projects

The M&E information is mostly used for accountability, knowledge generation, and policymaking. However, it can also serve other purposes, such as monitoring implementation, providing feedback for planning, testing innovations, and revising processes (Kithinji *et al*., 2017). It can be

argued that M&E information can be used in different sectors as its purpose is multifaceted. As results, this section will focus specifically on the advantages of M&E in road infrastructure projects.

Hassan (2013) argues that effective monitoring and evaluation of road construction projects lead to successful implementation, whereas inadequate M&E is a significant factor contributing to project delays and poor workmanship on completed roads. This perspective is supported by Lawrence (2014), as cited by Manedo *et al* (2018:320), who asserts that timely, regular, and reliable monitoring and evaluation of infrastructure projects provide critical information to support project implementation while fostering organisational learning and knowledge sharing. Similarly, Ben (2002), as cited by Onsomu and Johnbosco (2020:168), argues that the success of a program largely depends on the effectiveness of M&E systems in assessing its lifecycle.

Maendo *et al* (2018) suggest that M&E is essential for assessing the success of road projects, wherein performance indicators are developed to measure factors such as time, quality, client satisfaction, and overall project performance. These indicators are then continuously monitored and evaluated to determine whether the desired outcomes have been achieved. The M&E is relevant to road infrastructure as it involves the assessment of both ongoing and completed projects in terms of their design, implementation, and outcomes (Mambo & Chiragu, 2013, as cited by Maendo *et al*, 2018:319). This view is supported by Harrison (2008), as cited by Maendo etal (2018:318), who argues that M&E is a crucial management function for the continuous collection and analysis of information to track the progress of road infrastructure projects. Thus, M&E plays a vital role in monitoring project progress by providing regular reports on the implementation, including input delivery, work schedules, and targeted outputs. As such, it provides management with evidence to take informed decision to improve the projects' processes and outcomes.

The M&E provides valuable information that highlights the outcomes of previous interventions, as well as their strengths and weaknesses (Fapohunda & Stephenson, 2010) cited by Gitahi, 2015:13). This process is particularly useful for learning, as the lessons learned from past interventions can be applied to improve ongoing projects. The construction of road infrastructure involves gathering and utilising information at various stages of the decision-making process, including planning, design, and implementation (Gitahi, 2015). Thus, at each stage, informed decision-making is critical to the successful completion of road infrastructure projects. A study

conducted by the Uganda National Roads Authority highlighted that monitoring road infrastructure projects significantly contributes to their successful completion (Namakula, 2024, as cited in Thuo & Ndung, 2024:1373). On the other hand, Nauko *et al.* (2024), as cited by Thuo and Ndung (2024:1373), opine that M&E in Ghana's road infrastructure projects proved instrumental in identifying issues such as delays and poor workmanship during the initial stages. Kamau and Mohamed (2015:84) highlight that the PMBOK (2001) advocates the monitoring and evaluating projects across all stages of the project lifecycle.

2.5.4 The role of M&E in Resources Allocation within an organisation

This section examines the role of M&E in resource allocation, particularly in the budgeting decisions made by institutions responsible for road infrastructure. One of the key challenges in this sector is budget allocation. The growing demand for road infrastructure has placed an increasing financial and institutional burden on governments, often outpacing available allocations (Ikiara et al., 2020, as cited by Mire, 2023:7). The inadequacy and instability of financial resources for road construction pose significant obstacles to the sustainability of road infrastructure. According to Fapohund and Stephenson (2020), as cited by Mire (2023:7), funding for road infrastructure maintenance remains a persistent challenge in Africa, with expenditures falling well below the levels required to keep road networks in stable, long-term condition.

Mire (2023) notes that *"*budget allocations are often cut at short notice in response to difficult fiscal conditions, funds are rarely released on time, and actual expenditures are often well below agreed budget allocations*."* These financial constraints exacerbate the deterioration of road infrastructure, which is already in a dire state due to natural disasters such as floods. Additionally, Kikwasi (2022), as cited by Mire (2023:7), points out that many African countries face a persistent backlog of road rehabilitation projects**.** Ongoing construction efforts are often hindered by stagnating contractors who struggle to complete projects on time, leading to cost inefficiencies and further delaying much-needed infrastructure improvements. This highlights the critical need for a robust M&E system**,** which provides decision-makers with essential data on how best to assess progress of infrastructure projects and allocate scarce resources.

When organisational goals are identified, it is essential to ensure that adequate resources are made available, highlighting the importance of M&E. Khan (2015), as cited by Hailemichael (2021:14), highlights that M&E simplifies the identification of the most efficient resource allocation

and offers essential information for improving strategic planning, design, and implementation. Monitoring and Evaluation play a critical role in guiding the resource allocation process within institutions, ensuring that resources are effectively assigned and managed to support organisational objectives (Njeru, 2018). It is used during the budgeting process to identify unmet needs effectively. This allows institutions to address gaps and allocate resources more strategically. Formative evaluations can be conducted to assess the efficiency of program operations, processes, and procedures, ensuring they align with the program's objectives (Boyle & Lemaire, 1999).

2.6 Conceptual Frameworks

This study does not rely on a single overarching theory but is conceptually informed by the principles of New Public Management (NPM)**,** Rational Decision-Making**,** and Evidence-Based Policy-Making (EBP)**.** These frameworks collectively underscore the significance of institutionalising monitoring and evaluation (M&E) as a means to improve organisational efficiency, accountability, and service delivery within the Road Agency Limpopo (RAL). In a nutshell, together these concepts offer a coherent framework for understanding how institutionalising M&E can strengthen evidence-informed decisions, improve public accountability, and ensure the efficient use of resources in public infrastructure projects.

New Public Management (NPM) is particularly relevant in guiding this study's focus on embedding M&E practices within public institutions. The NPM advocates for the transformation of public administration through the adoption of private-sector management principles such as performance measurement, results-based budgeting, and accountability mechanisms aimed at enhancing efficiency and responsiveness to service users. Abdullahi (2023) supports this perspective by highlighting how NPM promotes a results-oriented public sector that utilises business-like practices to drive transparency and service delivery improvements. In this context, the institutionalisation of M&E at RAL is aligned with NPM's emphasis on evidence-based governance.

Complementing NPM, the concepts of Rational Decision-Making and Evidence-Based Policy-Making (EBP) provide further grounding for the study by framing M&E as a critical enabler of effective decision-making within public institutions. The M&E generates reliable, systematic data that serve as an essential input for sound policy decisions and resource allocation. In the case of

RAL, where decisions involve prioritising road construction and maintenance projects, the use of timely, accurate, and relevant M&E data ensures that interventions are based on socio-economic impact and aligned with institutional goals (Goldman, 2013).

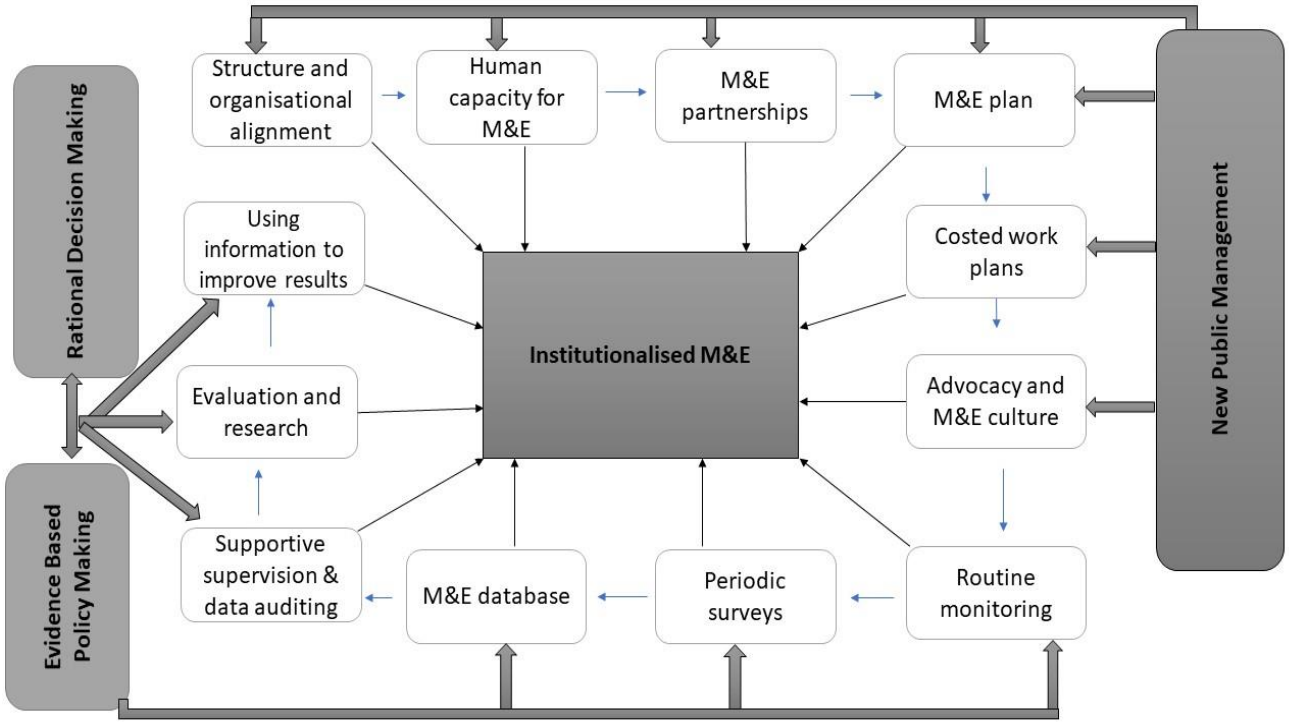
Rational Decision-Making focuses on a logical, evidence-driven approach to selecting the most effective course of action. This process includes identifying alternatives, evaluating them systematically, and making decisions based on objective analysis. Uzonwanne (2016) and Heracleous (1995) highlight that rational decision-making is iterative and incorporates ongoing monitoring and evaluation to ensure implementation success and continuous improvement. For RAL, this means infrastructure planning, budgeting, and project execution must be underpinned by data and systematic analysis to achieve efficiency, relevance, and sustainability. Similarly, Evidence-Based Policy-Making (EBP) promotes the integration of credible, research-based evidence into public policy processes. Reid (2003), as cited by O'Dwyer (2004), and the African Centre for Evidence (2020), describe EBP as a systematic approach to using data during the early stages of policy planning, ensuring interventions are not only feasible but contextually appropriate. Applied to RAL, EBP helps identify and implement road infrastructure strategies that maximise public investment effectiveness while enhancing accountability and service delivery outcomes.

Institutionalising M&E entails embedding it systematically across all levels of organisational functioning, supported by twelve key components described in section 2.3 of this chapter. Figure 5 reflect the institutionalisation of M&E using the twelve components. Further, Figure 5 highlight the alignment of these components to the conceptual frameworks for the study.

The NPM support institutionalising M&E focusing on the components such setting the system that is results-based management, accountability, and performance measurement through components such as M&E planning, costed work plans (budgeting), building M&E capacity, M&E partnerships and Advocacy.

Rational decision-making and Evidence Based Policy Making support processes of evidence collection, evaluation, and analysis, which enable logical, informed decisions through components such as routine monitoring, evaluation, surveys, databases, supportive supervision, and the use of M&E findings to guide programme/projects and policy improvements.

Figure 5: Institutionalisation of M&E



Source: Author (2025)

2.7 Conclusion

The literature reviews trace the origins of M&E to Africa, yet its recognition as a predominantly Western initiative is attributed to the influence of scholars, methodologies, tools, expertise, and literature from Western regions. In the South Africa public service, M&E is still in its developmental stages. However, the country has made significant strides toward formalisation of M&E through legislative frameworks and the establishment of a dedicated ministry at the national level. The literature review further highlights that M&E serves as a critical tool for providing the information necessary to influence decision-making. It noted the role of M&E as a management tool for decision that include; measuring of performance and resource allocation. The literature has noted the importance of M&E in the road construction sector, where it is applied throughout the project lifecycle to ensure that objectives are met. Finally, the literature reviews provide insights into the institutionalisation of M&E systems whereby a dedicated unit should be developed to lead in the facilitation of M&E functions.

3. CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines and describe the research methodology adopted by this study**,** and outlining the research paradigm, design and procedures. It further outlines the methods used to collect data and describe how data was collected and analyse empirical evidence. It also discusses the ethical approach applied to ensure the credibility of the research and its outcomes. This is prefaced by an introspection into the researcher's identity and the positionality within the research context. Additionally, the chapter examines the limitations and delimitation of the study and the measures taken to address them**.**

3.2 Research Paradigm

To answer the research question, it was first necessary to understand the organisational context of the study area. Therefore, adopting an interpretative paradigm was crucial for this study. The interpretative research paradigm places emphasis on understanding respondents' experiences within their work environment (Chilisa, 2011). It was particularly useful in shaping the philosophical assumptions of the researcher, especially regarding epistemology, and served as a guiding framework throughout the research process.

Guided by the interpretative paradigm, the study adopted a case study approach focusing on Road Agency Limpopo (RAL) as a bounded context for enquiry. The researcher actively engaged with officials from RAL to gain valuable insights into the prevailing attitudes and organisational culture surrounding Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E). These interactions fostered a sense of connection and trust between the researcher and participants, which was essential for exploring the subjective experiences of the officials. According to Sułkowski (2010), interpretative epistemology emphasises the constructed and conventional nature of social and organisational realities, reinforcing the need for an in-depth, context-specific investigation.

The interpretative paradigm also enabled an exploration of the lived experiences of officials regarding how they perceive and interpret the influence of M&E on decision-making. These perceptions were critical for understanding how M&E frameworks are used, applied, or at times overlooked in practice. The researcher captured how RAL officials feel and experience the use of evidence in informing organisational decisions. Since organisational decision-making often relies

on personal judgment, interpretative epistemology provided a lens through which to capture the subtle, individual factors shaping these decisions. As Luckmann cited in Sułkowski (2010:112), argues, organisational order is not an objective reality, but something continuously maintained, reconstructed, and modified by individuals and groups operating within and around an organisation.

Elements of action research were incorporated as the study not only sought to understand experiences but also engaged participants in reflective dialogues aimed at identifying opportunities to strengthen the use of M&E in decision-making. Through these engagements, participants critically reflected on current practices and suggested potential improvements.

3.3 Research Design

The research adopted a qualitative, descriptive design to explore how M&E influences decision-making within RAL. A qualitative approach was chosen to capture rich, contextual insights into participants' experiences and perceptions. According to Oranga and Matere (2023), qualitative research offers a deeper, more comprehensive, and richly detailed understanding of phenomena by analysing non-numeric data. The descriptive nature of the study enabled the researcher to systematically document the attitudes, practices, and organisational culture surrounding M&E without manipulating the environment or variables. As Denzin and Lincoln (2005) noted, qualitative research seeks to understand phenomena through the meaning's individuals ascribe to them. This approach ensured that the complex realities of decision-making processes at RAL were captured in a naturalistic and meaningful way.

Data collection involved semi-structured interviews with officials from RAL and the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure (DPWI), along with document analysis of formal M&E processes. This combination allowed for a comprehensive understanding of M&E's influence from both personal and institutional perspectives, aligning with the aim of qualitative research to uncover the meanings individuals assign to their experiences. Employing multiple data sources strengthened the credibility and depth of the findings through triangulation. By comparing personal experiences shared by officials with official records and reports, the study was able to validate key themes and uncover inconsistencies between formal M&E procedures and actual practice.

3.4 Research Setting

This research was conducted within Road Agency Limpopo (RAL), a Schedule 3C public entity under the Limpopo Provincial Government. RAL serves as the sole implementing agency for road infrastructure development in Limpopo Province, operating under the oversight of the Member of the Executive Council (MEC) for the Department of Public Works, Roads, and Infrastructure. The agency is responsible for the planning, design, construction, maintenance, and rehabilitation of over 19,800 kilometres of provincial road networks (RAL, 2024).

Established in 1999 through the Limpopo Roads Agency Proprietary Limited and Provincial Roads Act 7 of 1998 (as amended), RAL is incorporated under the Companies Act 71 of 2008, positioning it as a semi-autonomous but government-controlled agency. Its creation was aimed at professionalising road infrastructure delivery and insulating the function from direct political interference, while still aligning it with provincial strategic priorities. RAL operates under a governance framework that includes a Board of Directors, responsible for strategic oversight, corporate governance, and accountability. In addition, the Agency is politically overseen by the MEC for the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure, who serves as the Executive Authority ensuring that RAL's programmes remain consistent with provincial policy directives and service delivery objectives.

The selection of RAL as the research setting is both strategic and timely. The entity lies at the heart of Limpopo's infrastructure development agenda, which is central to the province's broader economic growth strategy particularly in relation to emerging projects like the Musina-Makhado and Fetakgomo-Tubatse Special Economic Zones (SEZs). These SEZs require accessible road networks to enable investor mobility, freight movement, and regional integration, thus placing RAL at a critical juncture of economic transformation.

The research was conducted during a period marked by widespread governance challenges among South African public entities. Many public entities have recently faced issues related to poor service delivery, weak accountability mechanisms, reliance on government bailouts, and the lingering effects of state capture (Adebayo & Ackers, 2024). In the context of road infrastructure, Limpopo has also experienced significant setbacks due to flood disasters and community unrests, which have resulted in the damage of road infrastructure and delays in service delivery.

Conducting the study within RAL allows for a deep examination of the role of Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) in enhancing evidence-based decision-making amid these complex

governance and operational dynamics. With the growing backlog in the provision of tarred roads, and national emphasis on infrastructure-led growth to stimulate investment, RAL represents a critical case study in understanding how M&E systems can be leveraged to improve transparency, resource allocation, and performance in the public sector.

3.5 Research population and sampling

3.5.1 Research population

The research population consisted of all officials from RAL's business programs and as well as officials from its parent department, the Limpopo Department of Public Works, Roads, and Infrastructure (DPWI). Officials from all RAL business units were included because monitoring and evaluation (M&E) practices and decision-making processes cut across the entire organisation, not only the M&E unit. Therefore, each business unit interacts with M&E information in different ways through planning, project implementation, reporting, oversight, or strategic coordination making their perspectives essential for gaining a holistic understanding of how M&E influences organisational decisions. Participants from DPWI were purposively selected based on their role in internal and transversal planning, monitoring, and evaluation functions, which are integral to the study's focus on decision-making and performance oversight. These respondents were identified due to their strategic roles in shaping, implementing, or overseeing Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) systems within the road infrastructure sector.

The research population, as defined by Salkind (2003), refers to the broader group of individuals who possess the relevant knowledge, experience, or authority necessary to provide insights into the research problem. In this study, the population was carefully selected to ensure access to reliable, context-specific, and decision-relevant information on how M&E practices influence governance and service delivery outcomes within RAL and its oversight department.

3.5.2 Sampling

A purposive sampling approach was employed to intentionally select participants who were best positioned to respond meaningfully to the research questions. As Tongco (2007) explains, purposive sampling involves the deliberate selection of individuals based on their expertise, experience, and relevance to the research topic. The sample was composed of officials

representing varied levels of seniority, including technical personnel, middle managers, and senior management, ensuring a balanced perspective across operational, strategic, and governance dimensions. This diversity enabled the collection of nuanced insights into how M&E influences decision-making processes within RAL. The inclusion of officials from the DPWI, particularly those involved in transversal planning and M&E oversight, further enriched the data by introducing external, accountability-oriented viewpoints that could either corroborate or contest the internal narratives from RAL officials.

A total of 15 participants were sampled, and 13 interviews were successfully conducted. There are only 4 officials within RAL's M&E unit. Given this limited number, the sampling strategy was intentionally designed to include a broader range of participants across the organisation to ensure a comprehensive and informed understanding of how monitoring and evaluation (M&E) influences decision-making within RAL. Further, the sampling strategy included participants of different genders, age groups, and organisational designations to ensure that insights were drawn from individuals with diverse backgrounds and experiences. Out of 13 participants, 3 are from the DPWI and 10 are from RAL. On gender representation, seven participants were male, and six were female. Six participants were aged 30–49, while seven were 50 and above. In terms of designation, seven participants belonged to senior management anchelon, four to middle management, and two to technical roles. These interviews were held during January and February 2025. A semi-structured interview guide was developed under the supervision of the research supervisor to guide the discussions. While structured enough to maintain focus, the guide was also designed to be adaptable, allowing interview dates and times to be scheduled according to participant availability. This flexibility was crucial to ensuring meaningful participation and minimising disruption to the officials' schedules.

In alignment with established research ethics protocols, several measures were taken to safeguard the rights and dignity of all participants. Informed consent was obtained from each participant prior to data collection. Participants were briefed about the purpose of the study, their right to withdraw at any stage without penalty, and the confidentiality of their responses. No personally identifiable information was disclosed, and data was stored securely to protect privacy. The study adhered to the ethical guidelines of social science research, including principles of voluntary participation, anonymity, and respect for human subjects, in accordance with ethical clearance requirements.

3.6 Data collection methods

The study employed a combination of semi-structured interviews and document analysis to explore the phenomenon under investigation and answer the main research question. Qualitative research, as noted by Bowen (2009), often draws from a range of sources to gather data. In line with this approach, the study was not limited to a single data collection method, providing flexibility and adaptability in the research process. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with officials from the Road Agency Limpopo (RAL) to gather first hand insights into their experiences and perceptions of how M&E influences decision-making. Additionally, officials from the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure (DPWI) were interviewed to provide an external perspective on RAL's M&E system. Document analysis was used to complement these qualitative insights, offering a more comprehensive understanding of how formal M&E frameworks are applied in practice and their overall impact on organisational decision-making.

3. 6.1 Interviews

The study employed semi-structured and key informant interviews due to their flexibility in capturing detailed insights into participants' experiences and perspectives. Bryman (2019) highlights that such interviews are flexible and cost-effective methods for gathering qualitative data on respondents' experiences. These interview types were particularly well-suited for this study as they allowed the researcher to guide and control the flow of the conversation while encouraging participants to elaborate on relevant issues, as noted by Taherdoost (2021).

Prior to conducting the interviews, a research guide was developed in consultation with the study supervisor. As per Taherdoost (2021), semi-structured interviews are guided by an interview protocol or guide, which provides a framework for probing relevant questions. While the guide contained predetermined questions, the researcher was prepared to clarify or rephrase questions if participants expressed uncertainty. The flexible nature of the interviews also allowed for follow-up questions to delve deeper into participants' responses, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of their perspectives.

Key informant interviews were conducted with two main groups: M&E officials and senior management officials within the Road Agency Limpopo (RAL). These groups were deliberately selected because they possess specialised knowledge essential to understanding the use and influence of M&E on organisational decision-making. As Chesnay (2015) defines, key informant

interviews involve in-depth discussions with individuals who have expert insights or specialised roles. The M&E officials were targeted for their technical expertise in monitoring and evaluation functions, while the senior management officials were selected for their decision-making authority, as they are responsible for integrating M&E findings into strategic and operational decisions.

In addition to these key informants, the study also interviewed junior officials, middle management officials, and officials from the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure (DPWI). Middle management officials were included because of their role as project implementers, positioned between policy-making and operational activities, making them critical for understanding how M&E influences day-to-day operations. DPWI officials were interviewed for their oversight role over RAL, providing an external and independent perspective on how RAL's M&E processes are perceived and evaluated.

All interviews were conducted virtually via Microsoft Teams, a platform that facilitated easy communication without the need for travel. This approach offered flexibility, enabling the researcher to reschedule interviews to accommodate participants' work commitments. Additionally, Microsoft Teams supported follow-up conversations, allowing participants to respond to questions at their convenience. While the interviews were not electronically recorded, there was sufficient time to scribe responses, including direct quotations. This manual documentation ensured that follow-up questions could be aligned with the sequence of responses, maintaining a coherent flow in the discussion.

By interviewing a range of officials across different levels and functions, the study was able to capture multiple viewpoints and gain a comprehensive understanding of how M&E is operationalised and perceived both within and outside of RAL.

3.6.2 Document analysis

Document analysis was employed as a key qualitative data collection and analysis method in this study. This involved the systematic examination and interpretation of both electronic and printed materials relevant to M&E practices within RAL. According to Bowen (2009), document analysis enables researchers to draw meaningful insights by critically evaluating existing documents in a structured and purposeful manner. The primary documents reviewed included Strategic Plans (SPs), Annual Performance Plans (APPs), Annual Reports (ARs), and the M&E Policy Framework of both RAL. These documents were selected because they encapsulate key planning,

implementation, and reporting mechanisms central to the M&E processes under investigation. They also reflect the agency's alignment with national policy frameworks, strategic priorities, and performance expectations.

The analysis was conducted using a thematic content analysis approach, which involved identifying, categorising, and interpreting recurring patterns and themes related to the use and influence of M&E in decision-making. This method was chosen for its ability to handle complex qualitative data and meaningful insights from written texts. The documents were coded manually, and emerging themes were compared against findings from the interviews to identify convergences, discrepancies, and contextual explanations.

Document analysis served multiple purposes in this study. Firstly, it provided theoretical grounding for understanding M&E principles as embedded in official policy and planning instruments. Secondly, it enabled triangulation a process of cross validating data collected through interviews to strengthen the credibility and reliability of the research findings. Thirdly, it offered a cost-effective and time-efficient alternative to extensive fieldwork, which is particularly valuable when resources are limited (Morgan, 2022). By reducing the dependency on real-time primary data collection, document analysis allowed for a broader and more comprehensive view of institutional practices over time. Finally, the insights gained from document analysis were further substantiated or challenged through the literature review, which served to position the study within a broader scholarly and practical discourse. This dual-layered analysis helped ensure that findings were both contextually grounded and academically robust**.**

3.7 Data Analysis

A qualitative thematic analysis approach was adopted to analyse data collected through semi-structured interviews and document analysis. This method was chosen for its flexibility and suitability in examining complex, context-specific information related to M&E practices. According to Hardy and Bryman (2009), data analysis involves a range of methods used to describe facts, identify patterns, develop explanations, and test hypotheses. The analysis was conducted manually to allow the researcher to engage deeply with the data, ensuring a nuanced understanding of emerging concepts. The themes were developed in alignment with the five research sub-questions established in Chapter 1, which provided a structured framework for categorising and interpreting the data. Thematic analysis, as outlined by Kiger and Varpio (2020), involves systematically identifying, analysing, and interpreting patterns or themes within

qualitative data. The process began with familiarisation. The interview transcripts were carefully read multiple times to gain a comprehensive understanding of the responses. This was followed by initial coding, where significant phrases, ideas, or observations were marked and grouped. These codes were then clustered into broader thematic categories that directly addressed the research objectives.

The document analysis followed a similar procedure. Strategic Plans, Annual Reports, M&E Policies, and Annual Performance Plans were reviewed for content relevant to the five research sub-questions. Patterns identified in the documents were compared with themes from interview data to detect consistencies or discrepancies. This process supported the triangulation of findings, which enhanced the credibility, reliability, and robustness of the study by reducing researcher bias and verifying insights across different data sources.

Although the analysis was primarily manual, the structured coding matrix allowed for a level of systematic data reduction, ensuring clarity and consistency across thematic areas. The decision to analyse data manually rather than using computational based on the moderate volume of qualitative data, which allowed for in-depth engagement without the need for digital processing. Furthermore, manual coding facilitated a closer interpretive connection between the researcher and the data, an essential aspect of qualitative inquiry. Overall, the combined use of manual thematic analysis, document comparison, and triangulation allowed for a comprehensive and methodologically sound approach to analysing the data, aligning with best practices in qualitative research.

3.8 Ethics and Trustworthiness

In conducting this study, the researcher adhered to established ethical principles and standards to protect participants' rights and ensure the integrity and trustworthiness of the research. Key ethical aspects included informed consent, anonymity, and confidentiality, while issues of reliability, validity, and trustworthiness were addressed through methodological rigor and ethical practice.

3.8.1 Informed Consent

The researcher completed ethics training and obtained ethical clearance from the university. Upon receipt of the clearance certificate, request letters conduct interviews were submitted to both RAL and DPWI in December 2024. Approval was subsequently granted in January 2025. According to Lambert (2000), potential research participants must be provided with clear, accessible information to make informed decisions about participation.

Participants received an information sheet via email outlining the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of participation, their right to withdraw at any point, and how the data would be used. Each participant then signed and returned an emailed consent form confirming their voluntary participation and understanding of the study. In addition, the researcher signed a declaration affirming that all collected data would be used solely for academic purposes and managed in accordance with ethical requirements.

3.8.2 Anonymity and Confidentiality

To protect the identities of participants, strict measures were taken to ensure anonymity and confidentiality. Anonymity was preserved by assigning codes to each participant, and no identifying information was included in transcripts or findings. Confidentiality was maintained by restricting access to raw data to the researcher only. As Taylor et al. (2003) emphasise, confidentiality entails ensuring that responses cannot be traced back to specific individuals. Before interviews began, the study's objectives were thoroughly explained, and participants were assured that their inputs would remain confidential. Interviews were conducted via Microsoft Teams without recording, in line with participants' preferences and to mitigate cybersecurity risks. Instead, detailed notes were taken during the interviews to preserve the richness of the data.

3.8.3 Reliability and Validity

The concepts of reliability and validity were carefully considered throughout the research process. The interview guide was piloted with colleagues and reviewed by the research supervisor to test for clarity, relevance, and alignment with the research questions. Additionally, a range of strategic documents such as Annual Reports, Strategic Plans, and M&E Policies were selected for analysis to provide an institutional backdrop to the interview data. According to Whiston (2021), validity

refers to the accuracy and relevance of data in addressing research objectives, while Surucu and Maslakci (2020) describe reliability as the consistency of the research instruments over time. To enhance the trustworthiness of the research, the study employed the four criteria proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985); namely credibility, transferability dependability and confirmability.

Credibility was established through triangulation of data sources (interviews and document analysis) and prolonged engagement with the material during data interpretation. While formal member checking was not feasible, informal clarification was sought from some participants to validate key interpretations.

Transferability was ensured by providing thick descriptions of the research context, participant characteristics, and institutional structures. This allows readers and other researchers to assess the relevance of findings in similar contexts, especially within other public infrastructure entities.

Dependability was supported by maintaining a detailed audit trail, including notes on decisions made throughout sampling, data collection, and analysis. Methodological consistency was further reinforced through the use of a structured thematic analysis framework.

Confirmability was addressed by documenting the researcher's reflections and decisions in a research journal, ensuring that findings emerged from the data and were not shaped by personal bias. The use of verbatim quotes from participants also supported transparency and accountability in interpretation.

3.8.4 Limitations, Delimitations and Transferability

A key limitation of the study was the availability of participants, particularly during the data collection phase, which coincided with the Quarter 3 reporting period in government institutions including RAL. This timeframe placed significant demands on technical and senior management officials involved in physical monitoring and performance reporting. As a result, interviews with some key informants had to be postponed, and in a few instances, cancelled entirely. One RAL official could not participate due to pressing work obligations, while one DPWI official who was away on offsite duties could not be interviewed within the limited window available. Additionally, a five-day period was granted for interviews with officials at DPWI. This tight schedule restricted the research an opportunity to conduct follow-up interviews or reschedule missed appointments.

Despite these constraints, 13 out of the 15 targeted interviews were completed, and the data achieved saturation, with consistent themes emerging across participant responses, thus minimising the impact of the missing interviews. Another limitation relates to document access. The researcher was unable to obtain direct access to Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) of RAL due to internal access restrictions. However, information about the SOPs and their implementation was gathered through participant interviews, providing indirect but useful insights.

In this study, several delimitations were applied to define the parameters of the research. Geographically, the study was confined to Limpopo Province, with a RAL and selected officials from the DPWI. Institutionally, only RAL, as the implementing agency, and its parent department were considered, while other public entities and provincial departments were excluded to maintain a clear analytical focus. The study focused on M&E practices under the sixth government administration (2019–2024), with historical data included only where it provided critical context. Methodologically, a qualitative research approach was adopted, utilising semi-structured interviews and document analysis.

Transferability refers to the extent to which research findings can be applied to similar settings or contexts (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). While this study is context-specific, several features enhance its potential relevance beyond the immediate research setting. The focus on M&E practices in public infrastructure entities is relevant to other provincial and national agencies facing similar governance and performance challenges. The insights into decision-making processes, the role of technical and executive leadership, and the integration of M&E into planning can inform institutional reforms in other public entities across South Africa and similar governance environments.

4. CHAPTER FOUR: PRESENTATION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

Having explained how the data was collected and analysed in the previous chapter, this Chapter presents the research findings obtained through interviews, complemented by document analysis. Interviews were conducted with officials from both RAL and the DPWI. These interviews proved valuable, enabling the researcher to ask follow-up questions for deeper understanding and insights. Documents such as the M&E Policy, Strategic Plans, Annual Performance Plans, and Annual Reports were reviewed and synthesised to compliment the research findings.

This chapter presents the research results to answer the following: (1) How is the M&E function organised within RAL? (2) What is the role of M&E in measuring performance within RAL? (3) What role does M&E play in resource allocation at RAL? (4) What is the relevance of the M&E function to RAL programmes? (5) What are the factors affecting the M&E function within RAL? The research findings are presented according to five key themes derived from data analysis and grouped according sub-questions, ensuring a structured and coherent analysis of the data.

4.1. The organisational structure of M&E function within RAL

In this theme, the research findings provide insights into how M&E is structured within the RAL. This is crucial for understanding whether M&E processes are institutionalised and effectively integrated into decision-making within the organisation. The responses reveal the extent to which M&E practices are formalised, embedded in organisational processes, and influence key decisions. By assessing these findings, the research aims to determine whether RAL's M&E framework supports a systematic and informed approach to decision-making, ensuring that it plays a central role in shaping the agency's strategic direction and operational effectiveness.

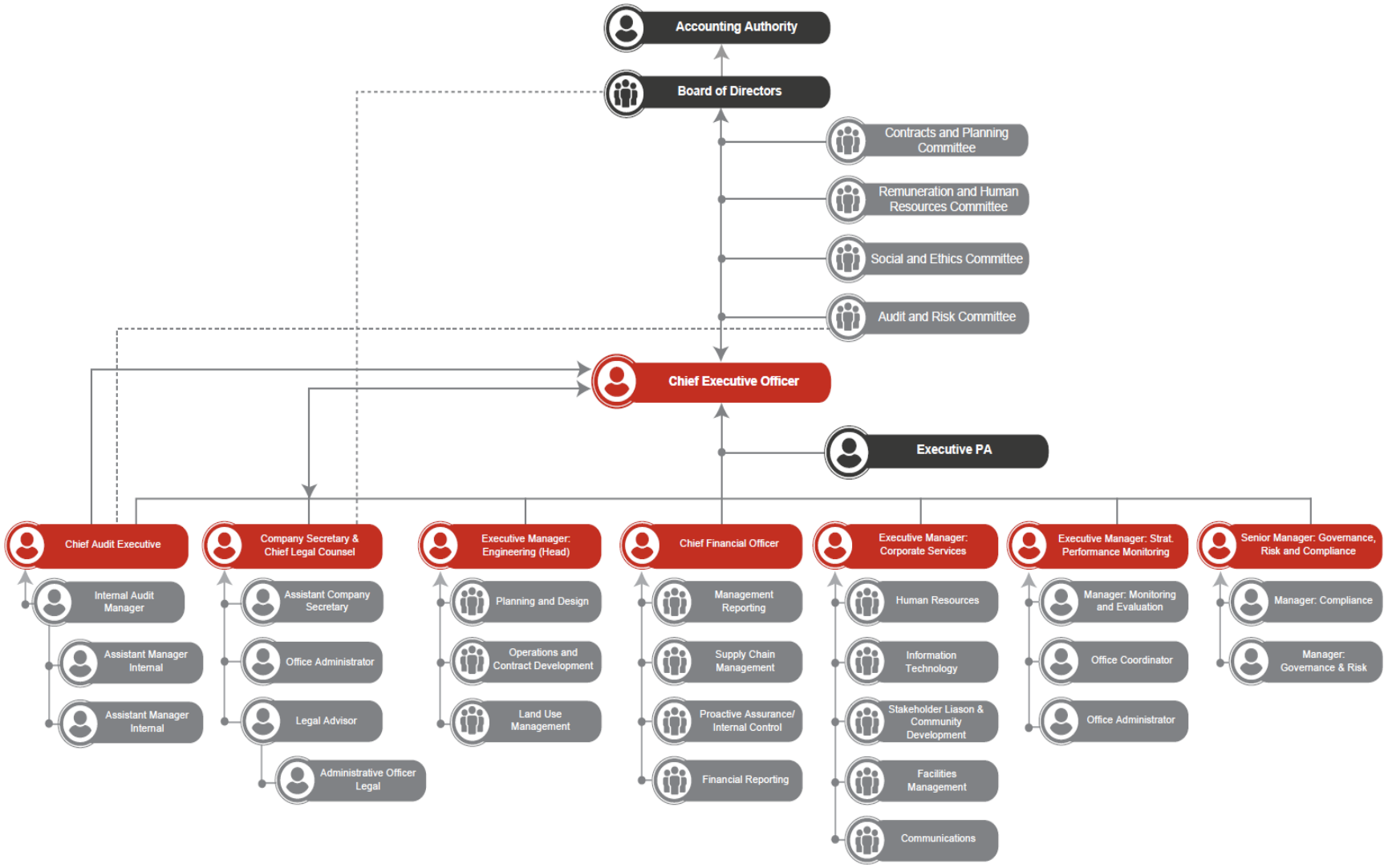
Findings indicate that the M&E system within RAL is still in the process of maturing, given that it does not have all twelve components of effective M&E as outlined and discussed in Chapter Two of this study. The system was established in 2015 to ensure compliance with the Policy Framework for Government-Wide Monitoring and Evaluation, which requires public institutions to establish an M&E system. Additionally, the study reveals the challenges faced by the entity, which include poor contractor performance, discrepancies in performance data leading to audit findings by either internal or external auditors, and the underachievement of certain annual targets in the Entity plan.

The system was established through the establishment of an M&E unit and processes within the organisational structure. The M&E unit was also formally established in 2015 to coordinate organisational planning, performance monitoring, and evaluation functions. The confirmation comes from the respondents of which one of them stated that; "*The M&E unit was officially established sometime around 2015 to coordinate and improve the entity's performance*." This statement aligns with RAL's 2015/16 Annual Report, which is the first to reflect the position of the Executive Manager for Performance Monitoring and Evaluation within the organisational structure. During period on this study was conducted, the position of the Executive Manager was occupied by an official on acting capacity.

The M&E function is led by the Executive Manager, who reports directly to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO). In terms of staffing, the unit responsible for M&E consists of four officials namely the Executive Manager, a Manager, and two M&E Officers. The research findings further indicate that the M&E function is integrated with Strategic Planning, meaning that M&E personnel are responsible for the coordination of both strategy development and performance monitoring and evaluation. One respondent explained, *"The M&E officials coordinate our strategic planning workshops and monitor the implementation of our plans to assess whether we are achieving the set targets."* The respondent further indicated that the M&E function is coordinated at the organisational level by the Strategy Performance Monitoring Unit, which is the M&E unit. As a result, there are no dedicated M&E coordinators within all individual business units in the entity, which may impact the institutionalisation and effectiveness of M&E processes and practices across the organisation.

Figure 6 illustrates RAL's organisational structure and the placement of the M&E unit. The figure confirms that M&E officials are responsible for both strategy development and performance monitoring. It also shows that the M&E unit reports directly to the CEO's office. Notably, the organogram reveals the absence of Senior Manager and Assistant Manager positions, which highlights gaps in the unit's structure.

Figure 6: RAL's Organogram



Source: RAL Annual Report 2023/24 (2024)

The following four M&E components are currently fully effective: an established M&E unit within the organisational structure, dedicated M&E officials assigned to the unit, a routine monitoring process, and M&E partnerships. Additionally, the organisation effectively utilises M&E information to enhance results. One respondent confirmed, stating that, *"We have an M&E unit that reports directly to the CEO. The unit plays a crucial role in verifying our means of verification for reported actual performance and advising us when we are not meeting our APP targets."* Another respondent highlighted M&E's role in stakeholder engagements, explaining that, *"The M&E report is presented during stakeholder meetings, outlining the organisation's performance in terms of its indicators and contractors. This information has been instrumental in preventing community unrest, especially when a project is delayed, as the report clarifies the factors affecting project progress."*

The study further reveals some shortcomings with three M&E components that are partial effective and they relate to human capacity for M&E, M&E advocacy, and supportive supervision and data auditing. These limitations primarily stem from the understaffing of the M&E unit and the absence of M&E coordinators within business units. Regarding M&E advocacy, it was noted that awareness of M&E is largely confined to a select group of officials, particularly those responsible for reporting, as they engage with the M&E unit more frequently. Additionally, supportive supervision and data auditing are hindered by the lack of sufficient staff within the M&E unit, thus limiting its ability to provide guidance to other business units. During interviews, one respondent expressed, *"Most of us do not fully understand how the M&E system operates. We just know that we must comply with M&E officials when they request reports and supporting documents."*

Another respondent echoed this concern, stating that, *"Our M&E unit is so small in terms of human capacity that they cannot make M&E more impactful, and there are no workshops on M&E."* Similarly, another interviewee highlighted the impact of understaffing, explaining that, *"I think our M&E is not as effective as is supposed to be because there are too few officials in the M&E unit to adequately support each business unit. If there were more staff, every business unit could have a dedicated expert to assist them."*

The above two paragraphs highlight only a portion of the M&E components within RAL, leaving out five the other components namely; costed M&E, an M&E plan/framework, an M&E electronic database, evaluation and research, and periodic surveys. These components were confirmed to be lacking through interview responses from some participants. One respondent stated, "*We do not have an M&E plan, but we have a policy and standard operating procedures to guide our*

processes. Additionally, we do not have a dedicated budget for M&E processes, instead the unit operates under a general budget for its functions. *I think this also contribute to why we have not conducted an evaluation since the introduction of M&E processes*." Another respondent highlighted a key challenge, saying that, "*One of the gaps we still face is the use of a manual system. This is particularly challenging given the large volume of data that needs to be verified during the reporting period. I believe an electronic system would make it easier to ensure data quality, facilitate storage and retrieval, and improve the timeliness of our data*."

As indicated by one responded earlier, the RAL has developed a M&E policy to guide the management, administration, and reporting of performance information. A review of this policy indicates that it defines the roles and responsibilities of various stakeholders, including governance committees, the CEO, the Executive Manager for M&E, senior management, and other staff members. Furthermore, the policy outlines a structured framework for monitoring and evaluation processes, detailing key procedures, reporting mechanisms, and accountability measures. The roles and responsibilities within RAL's M&E framework are distributed among various stakeholders as thus:

- Board of Directors**:** The board is responsible for developing the organisation's strategy and exercising an oversight function.
- Audit and Risk Committee**:** This committee provides an independent assessment of RAL's effectiveness in managing performance.
- Executive Manager responsible for M&E**:** This role involves coordinating M&E activities within RAL, reporting to the CEO, and ensuring effective communication of the M&E policy. Additional responsibilities include conducting workshops across the organisation, developing tools to support policy implementation, and periodically reviewing and revising the policy.
- Management and Staff**:** Their responsibilities include cooperating with the M&E unit, preparing and submitting required supporting documents and reports within stipulated time frames, and implementing improvement plans. However, their role is primarily limited to compliance with data submission and responding to inputs from the M&E unit.
- Internal Audit**:** The internal audit function provides independent and objective assurance regarding the effectiveness of planning, monitoring, and evaluation activities within RAL.

The above roles and responsibilities of management and other staff are primarily limited to compliance with data submission to the M&E unit and acting on its inputs. The policy does not

clearly define their role in monitoring projects, data collection, ensuring quality assurance, or conducting verification processes and usage of data. This gap may impact the overall effectiveness of the M&E system by limiting broader accountability and engagement in performance monitoring.

To support the implementation of the policy, RAL developed the SOPs to guide strategic planning, monitoring and evaluation processes. The SOPs provide guidelines on planning, performance monitoring, and reporting processes, specifying schedules and responsibilities for programme managers and reporting requirements for various stakeholders. However, the SOPs do not specify how data verification should be conducted within individual programs. Instead, they only provide guidance for M&E officials on validating and verifying data received from programme managers. As one respondent indicated, *"The shortcoming of the SOPs is that it does not outline self-assessment by business units, but direct how M&E unit should verify reported data."* The entity uses planning workshops as a platform to promote to communicate M&E information. One respondent stated, *"To ensure that M&E is improved, the entity holds strategic planning sessions where M&E reports are presented during the development of Strategic Plans and Annual Performance Plans."*

4.1.1 *Monitoring process*

In accordance with RAL's M&E policy (2024), monitoring is conducted on an ongoing basis to provide various stakeholders, including managers and decision-makers, with regular feedback on the progress of projects, interventions, or programs against planned targets. The policy specifies the required submission frequency of key strategic documents and reports to the Executive Authority, including the Strategic Plan (SP), Annual Performance Plans (APPs), Budgets, Quarterly Reports (both financial and non-financial), and ARs. However, the policy does not explicitly outline the processes for monitoring the implementation of projects and or interventions within the SP, APPs Annual Operational Plan (AOPs), budget, or specific projects. The SOP defines the process by which the M&E unit ensures the quality assurance of these documents before their submission to relevant stakeholders, including governance committees, the oversight department (DPWI), the Office of the Premier (OTP), external auditors, and the provincial legislature.

While the policy and SOP does not define a specific monitoring frequency, most officials appeared to share a common understanding of how monitoring is conducted. Based on their responses, the

monitoring function follows these key steps: a) Program managers conduct regular (monthly) monitoring and reporting on the progress of projects under their responsibility, b) M&E officials consolidate data from various program managers and compile quarterly and annual reports, and c) Joint physical monitoring of selected road infrastructure projects is carried out collaboratively by M&E officials and concerned program managers. The three-level approach outlined above is utilized for both project monitoring and the tracking of performance information. Although majority of respondents shared a common understanding of the monitoring approach outlined above, some respondents expressed a different perspective, one responded stated, "*The monitoring function is the role of the M&E unit. Other business units are only involved through the submission of the required information during reporting periods*." Another respondent described a hybrid approach, where business units actively monitor the progress of their projects while the M&E unit provides oversight monitoring. These differing views suggest that while monitoring practices exist, there may be inconsistencies in their interpretation and implementation. Therefore, formalising these practices within the policy could help enhance clarity, consistency, and accountability across all units.

Regarding oversight monitoring by external stakeholders, the policy indicates that RAL submits its performance reports to oversight bodies such as the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure (DPWI) and the Office of the Premier. Supporting this approach, one respondent stated that, *"After the end of each quarter, RAL submits its quarterly reports to oversight bodies as stipulated in the quarterly report guidelines."* In addition, the entity compiles annual report at the end of each financial year, which include performance information, human resource performance, governance matters, and the financial statements. These reports are submitted to the Office of the Auditor-General South Africa for audit in accordance with applicable regulations.

4.1.2 Evaluation process

Notably, although the M&E policy outlines various types of evaluations and evaluation processes, RAL does not actually conduct evaluations. All respondents confirmed that no formal evaluations have been carried out since the introduction and institutionalisation of the M&E system. A responded has indicated that "*We have never conducted an impact assessment of our projects*." This sentiment was shared by many other respondents. For example, a respondent said that "*We are doing a lot of monitoring, without evaluation because our M&E system is still maturing*." Similarly, another responded indicated that "*Evaluation is still a challenge in the public entity. We rely mostly on the monitoring*." These sentiments indicate that the Entity's M&E system as not yet

reached a level of evaluation maturity. This is well captured by this respondent, "*We have not yet conducted impact evaluation of our programmes and this is concerning as evaluation will inform us in terms of the impact of our road projects to the road users, communities and municipalities*. *I think we are not conducting evaluation because of shortage of officials in the M&E unit to can guide our programmes on the evaluation process. I think if we had more officials in the M&E units, each business unit would be allocated a dedicate officials to assist them on M&E and they would advise how evaluation process should be done*."

The lack of road infrastructure development project evaluation can be attributed to the absence of an evaluation plan or framework and dedicated budget for this exercise. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the entity primarily relies on two documents to guide its M&E processes; the M&E policy and the SOP. However, capacity constraints both in terms of expertise and financial resources were highlighted by some respondents as key factors contributing to the lack of evaluation. One respondent stated that, *"I think we are unable to conduct evaluations because some officials placed within the M&E unit lack the necessary expertise, while some were assigned to these roles simply to fill vacancies."* Another participant added, *"There is no budget allocation for the M&E unit to conduct evaluations or research. Also, I don't think the current staff will have time to conduct evaluation or research because are working on a bulk of evidence to ensure that our actual performance is accurate to avoid audit findings."*

4.2 The role of M&E in measuring performance within RAL

Participants were asked to explain their understanding of the role of the M&E function in measuring RAL's performance. Assessing the role of M&E is essential to gain insight into participants' perspectives on whether it is perceived as a valuable tool for tracking RAL's performance, identifying gaps for improvement, and determining whether M&E is effectively integrated into strategy development and decision-making or it merely serves as a compliance requirement.

The study revealed a unanimous acknowledgment of M&E's significant role in measuring performance. The views from the respondents suggest that RAL's policy formulation and organisational strategy development are evidence-based. Furthermore, the findings highlight M&E's crucial role in tracking organisational performance, enhancing stakeholder engagement and promoting transparency and accountability. Furthermore, a review of the entity's 2020-2025

SP and the 2020/21-2024/25 APPs indicates that these documents recognise and incorporate the entity's

With regards to strategy development, one respondent explained that; *"During strategic planning sessions, performance reports, along presentations on other priorities are presented. This enables us to identify service delivery needs. Based on these insights, we are able to develop key performance measures to be implemented in our Strategic Plan and Annual Performance Plan."* This sentiment was echoed by another respondent who indicated that, "*M&E is highly valued in our strategic planning processes, especially since the officials responsible for M&E are the same ones involved in strategy development. These officials ensure that every strategic planning session is informed by historical performance reports and assessment reports from oversight bodies such as the OTP and the DPWI*."

Additionally, one of the respondents highlighted that *"M&E plays a role in ensuring the RAL sets measurable indicators with clear targets by providing historical data on performance challenges and/ or indicators that were identified as not measurable by auditors."* In summary, the findings of this study suggest that M&E information plays a crucial role in guiding key focus areas for the new financial year. This corroborates with document reviews, which reveal that the situational analyses in the Strategic Plan and Annual Performance Plans outline organisational performance trends. These analyses highlight key achievements and challenges from previous years, and therefore serving as a foundation for identifying service demands and developing new interventions. For example, RAL's 2020–2025 SP and 2024/25 APP incorporate a theory of change framework, which guide the development interventions outlined in these plans.

While most respondents acknowledged the role of M&E in strategy development within RAL, there appears collaboration with the DPWI as it makes inputs in setting targets for certain infrastructure projects. One respondent pointed out that some infrastructure targets are influenced by the oversight department rather than being solely informed by M&E evidence within RAL. The respondent stated that, *"We identify certain targets and submit a draft plan to the oversight department, but the entity is required to adjust those targets based on their directives."* This suggests that external directives may sometimes override data-driven decision-making, potentially impacting the effectiveness of M&E in guiding infrastructure planning. A gap in terms of the role of M&E in budgeting and resource allocation will be later highlighted and discussed in this chapter.

With regards to performance management, most respondents strongly emphasised that M&E is essential for tracking performance and providing feedback on the progress of organisational projects and targets. Their responses indicate that officials recognise the value of M&E, as it helps them to remain vigilant about the pace and progress of the projects implemented. As one respondent indicated, *"The M&E process informs business units about project progress, allowing them to identify lagging projects or those making good progress. It helps them to review the performance and assess whether contractors are meeting the expectations, as well as enabling timely interventions."* This view is reinforced by another respondent, who noted that *"M&E enables us to achieve the targets outlined in our Annual Performance Plans and improve service delivery." Furthermore, a*nother respondent highlighted that M&E plays a crucial role as a motivational factor in enhancing service delivery since without M&E it would not be easy to identify the gaps or services delivery bottlenecks, "*By systematically tracking progress and evaluating performance, M&E helps determine whether planned targets are being met. This, in turn, enables the organisation to identify areas requiring further improvement, make informed decisions, and enhance overall efficiency in service delivery*."

On stakeholder engagement and accountability, the research findings highlighted that M&E plays a crucial role in informing organisational stakeholders about both the successes and the challenges associated with service delivery within the organisation. The findings further indicate that M&E enables RAL to account for resource utilisation and overall performance, thereby ensuring transparency and accountability in achieving its strategic objectives. The respondents' perspectives emphasise that M&E information is not solely for internal use; it also extends to external stakeholders, including communities and oversight structures such as the provincial legislature. Some of these views are reflected in the quotations below:

One respondent explained: *"We use this information to keep stakeholders, including communities, informed about project progress, helping to prevent unrest. In the past, delays in completing some road infrastructure projects led to community unrest, which in turn affected project timelines and forced contractors to halt work during periods of unrest."* Another respondent stated: *"Performance reports are presented to various governance structures within RAL to support informed decision-making and ensure accountability to external stakeholders. In most cases, these reports spark robust discussions within governance structures, as they play a crucial role in highlighting progress in policy implementation and enhancing service delivery."*

A further respondent added: *"The M&E process enables us to provide accurate and credible information to stakeholders, as all means of verification are quality assured before finalising performance reports. Because we are audited on this information, we ensure that it is thoroughly verified so that it meets audit criteria."* One participant noted: *"On a quarterly basis, the M&E unit presents performance reports to core business units, highlighting key successes and challenges. These presentations include recommendations on how business units can enhance their performance in the following quarter, ensuring progress toward achieving annual targets."* Another respondent highlighted: *"On a quarterly basis, performance reports are also presented to governance structures and oversight institutions to ensure accountability."*

One respondent highlighted that while the entity utilises M&E information to keep stakeholders informed, it also gains valuable insights from the communities regarding the services provided. The respondent elaborated by stating that, *"During the community engagement workshops conducted according to the organisational events calendar, the entity not only shares information but also receives direct feedback from community members regarding their level of satisfaction with the services rendered by RAL. This feedback mechanism allows the entity to assess the impact of its services, identify areas for improvement, and align future projects with the actual needs and expectations of the communities*. *This process also contributes to needs assessments across different communities, enabling RAL to identify service delivery gaps within various communities and municipalities*."

4.3 The role of M&E in resource allocation within RAL

This theme reflects participants' perspectives on the role of M&E in decision-making related to resource allocation. Assessing this aspect was crucial to determining whether resources are allocated based on actual needs and service demands rather than arbitrary distribution. Understanding this helps evaluate whether M&E serves as a guiding tool for prioritising projects, ensuring efficient use of resources, and aligning budget allocations with organisational goals and service needs.

The findings on this theme revealed mix reactions from the participants. The findings revealed a lack of consensus on the role of M&E in resource allocation within RAL. The observation is that there is ambiguity and uncertainty, as some respondents struggled to distinguish between M&E's role in measuring performance and its influence on resource allocation. While M&E is recognised as important for tracking performance, most respondents suggest that it does not play any role in

guiding resource allocation decisions. For instance, one respondent highlighted that, *“In some financial years, there is a mismatch between the allocated budget, actual expenditure, and completed projects. In some financial years the entity has less progress on its projects but with more expenditure incurred”.*

A review of the entity ARs from 2021 to 2023 reveals a misalignment between actual expenditure and the initial budget allocations. In some instances, expenditure exceeded the original budget, suggesting that in-year budget adjustments were necessary to ensure the completion of certain projects. This indicates potential challenges in budget forecasting, cost estimation, or project planning. It also highlights problems with management of the budget since exceeding the original allocated budget in terms of expenditure is tantamount to unauthorised expenditure in terms of the financial laws such as the Public Finance Management Act (PFMA). Furthermore, the annual reports highlight cases where, by the end of certain financial years, limited progress was made on certain performance indicators. This highlights discrepancies in project execution, resource allocation, and the effectiveness of financial and operational planning processes. Such misalignments negatively impact service delivery timelines and hinder the overall efficiency of the entity’s infrastructure projects.

At an organisational level, some respondents felt that M&E plays a role in guiding the budgeting process, as the budget is presented during strategy development. One respondent stated, *"During the strategic planning session, there is a budget presentation that reflects expenditure trends and progress on the current budget."* The view was shared by another respondent who noted that, "*Every business unit is advised to set targets based on the available budget. Therefore, the budgeting process requires business units to submit their key priorities in advance to inform budget allocations."*

While conducting the interviews, it was noted that some organisational units are making efforts to use M&E information for needs analysis in both financial and non-financial resources. For instances, one responded indicated that, *“During the unit review meetings, project managers report on the progress of their assigned projects against the allocated budget. Through this process, the programme identifies the availability of resources and determines whether additional resources are needed.”*

It is noted that M&E is used to guide not only financial resources but also non-financial resources. One respondent indicated that M&E is useful for monitoring the acquisition of non-financial

resources. The responded indicated that, *"We use the M&E approach to track whether we have acquired essential resources, such as human capital to ensure, for example, the proper implementation of the human resource plan. M&E helps us to assess whether we are on track to employ the required number of officials with the right skills. Furthermore, M&E plays a crucial role in ensuring that contractors comply with contract specifications, particularly regarding workforce acquisition. The entity periodically assesses whether contractors have hired community members as required by their contractual obligations, promoting local employment and adherence to agreed-upon terms".* One respondent indicated that M&E information is useful in determining the workforce required to implement certain projects; *"Monitoring information helps identify human resource needs. However, its influence on other resources, such as equipment and finances, remains unclear."*

In contrast to the above sentiments, one respondent stated that*, **"**I have not seen any indication that M&E information informs resource allocation decisions, as the entity's M&E primarily focuses on tracking progress against APP targets."* Another respondent added, *"The targets reflected in our institutional plans are influenced more by human capacity than by the budget. I think it is commonly understood that budgeting in government institutions does not happen at the same time as institutional planning. Therefore, targets are set before budget allocations, making human capacity a more significant factor than financial resources."* Therefore, this sentiment highlights the mismatch between budgeting and planning within RAL, which is contrary to what the government strategic planning framework require.

One respondent highlighted that budget allocation is informed by the number of project interventions a particular business unit is responsible for rather than M&E information. Another respondent stated that, *"The number and value of projects a business unit must implement determine its budget, not historical data."* Although this perspective appears to downplay the role of M&E, it actually reinforces its importance. To determine the number of projects a business unit should implement, there must be data to identify service gaps, the nature of required projects, and their spatial distribution across districts.

4.4 The relevance of M&E function to RAL Programmes

This theme focuses on assessing the necessity of M&E for RAL programs, particularly because M&E is traditionally more common in the social sector than in the road infrastructure sector.

Therefore, it was essential to determine whether RAL employees recognise the value of M&E in complementing project management practices, enhancing decision-making, and improving overall program effectiveness.

The 2024/25 APP of RAL acknowledges the significant role that RAL's programs and projects play in driving economic development and transformation within the Limpopo province. An analysis of the plan reveals that for the 2024/25 financial it prioritised roads designed to support Special Economic Zones (SEZs) in the province, especially in Vhembe and Sekhukhune districts where the SEZ program is being implemented. Therefore, effective planning for RAL requires accurate information on the condition and availability of roads providing access to these SEZs, highlighting the importance of M&E in its operations. Furthermore, in the situational analysis of the 2024/25 APP, RAL has identified rising material costs as a key challenge, prompting an investigation into alternative technologies for road construction to mitigate these costs. This demonstrates the critical role of M&E in gathering data, analysing performance trends particularly in road construction costs and using insights to inform strategic decision-making. Furthermore, this finding underscores how RAL leverages M&E to identify challenges, explore potential solutions, and ensure cost-effective road infrastructure development.

Insights gathered from the interviews indicate that respondents perceive M&E as relevant and valuable for RAL's programs. Some respondents indicated that M&E supports both organisational programs and officials in implementing their unit plans. Furthermore, the respondents highlighted that M&E has enhanced compliance with reporting deadlines and improved project implementation across various business units. One respondent indicated that M&E is essential for enhancing the quality of services provided by the entity. Thus, M&E ensures that infrastructure projects are closely monitored to assess compliance with project specifications, including the use of appropriate materials and adherence to service standards: *"The function enables business units to implement projects in accordance with predetermined project requirements and in compliance with organisational policies."* Another respondent pointed out that, *"M&E ensures that programmes remain accountable when implementing projects, as progress must be reported continuously."* A respondent highlighted that, *"M&E provides valuable insights into the shortcomings of current projects, allowing us to avoid similar issues in the future."* However, there was one respondent who agreed on the relevance of M&E but expressed a concern over its impact on the implementation of infrastructure projects, stating that, *"Ideally, M&E should be applied throughout all phases of an infrastructure project. Unfortunately, in our case, it is only conducted during the implementation phase."*

In addition, another respondent emphasised the important role of M&E in risk assessment. This respondent state that, *"The M&E function complements the risk assessment process by providing critical information that helps the organisational programmes to detect potential threats to project performance and operations. This information is essential for identifying mitigation measures to prevent underperformance or service delivery disruptions".* The respondent further reflected the importance of M&E in ensuring or enforcing compliance with governance prescripts by the RAL. "The *M&E enables the organisation to enhance compliance with governance prescripts and effectively account for its performance. For instance, the M&E unit monitors each business unit's adherence to the M&E policy and compiles consolidated performance reports, which are submitted to oversight bodies in a timely manner*". Another respondent indicated *"M&E helps us identify poor contractor performance and develop strategies for improvement".*

Road Agency Limpopo has established a framework for the core business of infrastructure projects, enabling the monitoring of road conditions within RAL's management. For instance, one respondent noted that the entity has developed a mechanism to detect road deterioration and updating road users or the public about the conditions of different roads within the RAL's responsibility. Thus, M&E is essential for assessing road infrastructure conditions and providing valuable feedback on service delivery to RAL's clients. As said by a respondent, "*For road infrastructure, we have developed a system that allows road users to report damages, enabling us to track road deterioration more effectively. Through this system, we can promptly address infrastructure issues and keep road users informed about the conditions of their roads within our network*". This approach demonstrates transparency in RAL's road infrastructure maintenance and accountability. Furthermore, it highlights the role of M&E feedback loops in ensuring effective infrastructure management and upkeep.

4.5 Factors affecting M&E within RAL

This theme was to gain insights into participants' perspectives on the challenges hindering M&E within RAL. Assessing the factors affecting M&E was crucial for identifying gaps within the system and understanding limitations that may impact its effectiveness. Identifying these challenges not only helps in diagnosing weaknesses but also informs the development of recommendations grounded in the literature review, ensuring a more robust and effective M&E framework for RAL.

The research respondents identified the following common challenges: Lack of Integration in the M&E System, insufficient M&E advocacy, absence of an automated system for data collection,

verification, and storage, the inability to conduct evaluations, and capacity constraints within the M&E unit.

4.5.1 Lack of integration in the M&E system

The findings presented in this section align with the issues raised in Sections 4.1 and 4.2, where the M&E policy primarily confines the role of other units to compliance only through the submission of documents to the M&E unit. Furthermore, the lack of clear guidance within the M&E policy and SOPs limits their effectiveness in directing officials, raising concerns about the integration of M&E across the organisation.

As said earlier, the M&E system does not appear to be fully integrated into the organisation's operations, as most officials relate to its implementation primarily from a performance measurement perspective. The 2024/25 APP points out that one of the weaknesses of RAL is lack of integrated information management systems, which may impact M&E processes such as data collection, analysis, and reporting. While some of officials, particularly unit managers, are aware of M&E due to performance reporting requirements, this understanding is largely confined to managerial levels, and this creates knowledge gap among junior staff. One respondent highlighted this issue by stating that; *“There is not sufficient advocacy around the M&E function. We recognise the M&E unit as a watchdog for our performance at the managerial level, but our junior staff have no role in the process.” Another responded concurred and indicated that “There no clear mandate of M&E function to officials, only the officials at managerial level understand that they have to attend strategic planning sessions and report performance of their business units.”*

Although officials at the managerial level are aware of the M&E function, it is unfortunately not included in their Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) within their Performance Agreements. This omission was raised as concern for some respondents, who emphasised the need for enforcement mechanisms, particularly at the managerial level, to ensure M&E is effectively integrated into organisational processes. One respondent stated that, *"The fact that M&E is not included as a KPI for Senior Management Service (SMS) members in their Performance Agreements (PA) creates a gap. As a result, they do not fully integrate it into their units’ performance or enforce its implementation within their business areas."* Another respondent echoed similar concerns, noting that, *"As long as M&E is not incorporated into the Performance Agreements of senior staff, such as Senior Managers and Executives, it will not be fully*

implemented within all business units. Instead, it will continue to be viewed as the sole responsibility of the M&E unit and its Executive."

Sentiments expressed by some respondents highlight the need to formalise M&E at the business unit level across the organisation, where managers would be required to develop a structured plan outlining how information will be gathered, verified, stored, and utilised within their respective units. One respondent emphasised the need and importance of integrating M&E into performance management. This person stated that, *"Performance Agreements are tools used to assess the performance of individual officials. Therefore, if M&E becomes a mandatory KPI for senior management, they will ensure that M&E requirements are effectively implemented at the business unit level, and they will remain accountable for reporting on this KPI."* Another respondent echoed this view by stating that, *"It has become a norm in public institutions that for a system or intervention to be taken seriously, it must be reflected in either the APP or Performance Agreements, since the APP is always subjected to audit by external and/ or internal auditors. At RAL, we need to elevate M&E to the Performance Agreements of senior management officials so that M&E implementation is not seen as the sole responsibility of the M&E unit, but a shared value for accountability across the organisation. This would also encourage individual managers to motivate evaluation of programmes or interventions within their area of responsibility."*

4.5.2 Insufficient M&E advocacy

The study finds that RAL is characterised by a lack of management advocacy across the organisation. This suggests that management's involvement in promoting M&E and ensuring its seamless implementation is insufficient. As a result, officials at the lower level are often unaware of their roles and responsibilities within the M&E process. As said earlier, only those responsible for performance reporting especially middle and senior management are well informed about M&E due to their accountability obligations.

One respondent claimed that *"management is not emphasising the use of evidence in the organisational business units since the focus on M&E seems to arise primarily when reporting and audit information is required, at which point officials are encouraged to cooperate with M&E unit and auditors."* Another respondent noted that, *"Management has not clearly advocated for M&E".* This respondent suggested a need for a management to be workshoped on these concepts, arguing that for management to effectively advocate for something, they must first understand it. Supporting these views, another respondent said, *"It seems that M&E knowledge is limited to the M&E officials, who are mainly viewed by others as the 'watchdogs' of performance*

information. Management seems primarily concerned with the accuracy of the information presented in the performance reports so that auditors does not find the organisation at fault during the audit process". As explained somewhere in this chapter, the M&E policy does not clearly define the roles of other officials, except those located within the unit, in the M&E process, which makes it very challenging for other business units and/ or individual staff members to prioritise M&E within their operations. The policy only outlines general responsibilities for all employees, which are largely limited to compliance with data submission requirements and acting on feedback or recommendations from the M&E unit.

Moreover, it appears that the practice of tabling M&E reports only during organisational strategic planning workshops is a barrier for the staff members at the lower-level, since these sessions are typically attended by managers and senior management. Justification for this assertion is provided by a respondent that said, *"We mostly have M&E reports during the strategic planning workshops. We only engage with the M&E unit when they ask us to rectify reports or submit additional evidence. There is no other platform for general staff to engage with performance reports".* The lack of some business unit performance reviews was also highlighted as a key factor contributing to the absence of M&E advocacy within RAL. One respondent explained that, *"Most of the time, the compilation of performance reports submitted to M&E is done hastily by managers, without involving junior staff, in an effort to meet submission deadlines".* Another responded indicated that *"I think all staff need workshop or training so that we can understand our role fully to ensure that we support the M&E practices and processes".* The views by respondents highlight the need for greater involvement of lower-level staff and more consistent performance reviews to foster a culture of M&E advocacy across all levels.

In Chapter Two, the study highlighted the importance of M&E in fostering a culture of organisational learning and knowledge sharing. Notwithstanding this, the findings above reveal a knowledge-sharing gap within RAL as an organisation, as junior officials are not actively involved in the M&E processes. Additionally, the gap in the M&E policy regarding the role of other managers in advocating for M&E creates challenges in both knowledge sharing and utilising performance information for learning purposes from past outcomes.

4.5.3 Absence of an automated system for data collection, verification, and storage

The entity was found to be relying on a manual system for data collection, verification, and storage. Manual system poses a significant challenge, as it negatively affects the accuracy of reported data by the public entity on a quarterly basis. Some respondents noted instances where inaccurate data was reported during the quarters, with errors only becoming apparent at the end of the financial year during the audit process of the annual report by the auditors. Of course, this affects the overall audit conclusion and opinion expressed by the auditors on management of performance information in the annual report of the entity. Inaccuracies on reported data suggests that the review and verification processes of performance information is inadequate. As noted by one respondent, *"Inaccurate data is sometimes reported during the quarter, which is problematic because auditors often identify these discrepancies only during the audit of the annual report."* Another respondent mentioned that, *"At some point, the oversight department, which is DPWI, measured some indicators as the entity, but discrepancies arose in the annual reporting process".* This respondent alleges that the data submitted during the year to the department on the performance of such indicators differed significantly from the entity's records, leading to inconsistencies in the reported figures.

As said earlier, RAL's M&E system is still in the process of maturing and requires further transformation and strengthening. However, several factors are impacting its progress and slowing down its full development. According to one of the respondents, one of the factors delaying the fully transformation of our M&E system is the misplacement of officials with the requisite skills within the M&E unit. This respondent mentioned that *"the system requires individuals who possess a deep understanding of M&E, as they would be able to identify gaps and improve the system.* Another respondent pointed out that the lack of a dedicated budget for M&E processes is a major impediment to the system's transformation. *"I believe the M&E unit needs a larger and dedicated budget to transform the entire process. Unfortunately, with the current operational budget, it will not be possible to address critical issues, especially system automation."*

4.5.4 Inability to conduct evaluation

Empirical evidence highlights the importance of fully institutionalising monitoring and evaluation system in terms of its processes and practices such as conducting evaluations. However, the findings of this study indicate the lack of evaluation studies within RAL. This finding was

corroborated by all respondents who agreed that the entity does not conduct evaluations. This is well captured by this citation: *"We only monitor, there is no evaluation. However, management has resolved to prioritise evaluations after recognising their necessity based on feedback from various stakeholders."* Conducting evaluations of developmental road infrastructure projects requires someone with expertise and competencies in evaluation and/ or research. The researcher does not believe that the officials within the M&E unit in RAL readily possess these skills and this was justified by one respondent who highlighted that, *"I think we are unable to conduct evaluations due to the shortage of staff within the M&E unit, as these officials are also responsible for coordinating the strategic planning process."* Supporting this sentiment, another respondent stated that, *"Evaluation is one aspect that the entity has yet to develop and implement. We currently lack the human capacity within the M&E unit to lead the evaluation process. Even if we decide to initiate it soon, we would have to rely on external capacity and resources."* This underscores the need for capacity-building initiatives and resource allocation to strengthen the M&E unit's ability to conduct independent evaluations.

Upon reviewing the 2020-2025 SP, all APPs, and all ARs for the 6th administration, it was found that no evaluations were conducted over the past five years. Further, the entity's website does not feature any evaluation reports. This supports the interviewees' responses that RAL' has not yet conducted evaluations, which points to a gap in decision-making as the entity need require evaluation outcomes to reflect if intended objectives and contributes to organisational learning while. The absence of a comprehensive evaluation across the 6th government administration may pose significant challenges for the development and implementation of new strategies within the entity. Without insights from previous initiatives, the impact of past efforts remains unclear, making it difficult to refine and improve future approaches. As a result, RAL's strategic priorities may risk misalignment with the actual needs and realities of service delivery.

4.5.5 Capacity constraints within the M&E unit

The understaffing of the M&E unit was identified as another significant challenge by all the respondents. According to most respondents, the shortage of human resources in the M&E unit is a major contributor to the challenges outlined above. As explained above, for example, some respondents indicated that the entity is unable to conduct evaluations due to the limited capacity of the M&E unit. Furthermore, other respondents believe that inaccurate data that is often reported on quarterly basis is due to the available of few M&E officials that are unable to properly review

and verify the Means of Verification from all business units with tight timelines set at the end of each quarter. Due to capacity constraints and tight timelines set for submitted of verified performance reports to various oversight structures, officials within the M&E unit are sometimes forced to work overtime. This is articulated by one respondent that said, *"At the end of the quarter, officials work overnight trying to quality-assure the reported data against the plan."* Another respondent added that, *"The entity sometimes relies on internal audit for data accuracy, as M&E officials cannot quality-assure all the reported data within the set tight timelines. This poses a risk, as the entity is forced to rely on auditors to correct its information".* Despite these efforts as said earlier on, inaccuracies are still identified by the external auditors during the audit of the entity's annual reports. Some respondents highlighted that due to a shortage of M&E officials, not all infrastructure projects are physically monitored. For example, one respondent explained that, *"In a financial year, RAL implements nearly 200 road infrastructure projects, and not all of these projects are physically monitored because the M&E unit is understaffed. As a result, physical monitoring is only conducted for a select few projects".* This limitation implies that the M&E unit does not always give a full picture of the development of road infrastructure delivery to the entity stakeholders. In addition, this situation forces business units within RAL to act as both implementers and monitors, therefore raising concerns about reliability, transparency and accountability as well as effectiveness of project oversight.

The study noted that the human capacity within the M&E unit is not the only challenge. A significant issue also lies in the discrepancies within the structure of the M&E unit and the placement of officials with the appropriate skills, which contribute to M&E challenges within RAL. As indicated in the beginning of this chapter, RAL's organogram reflects the M&E unit that consists of only four officials (Executive Manager, Manager, and two Officers). This structure is lacking a Senior Manager role, creating a significant gap between the Executive Manager and the Manager. Further, the absence of Assistant Manager(s) leaves another gap between the Manager and the Officers.

The study revealed that some officials were placed within the M&E unit without the necessary qualifications and/ or experience. This compromise the quality of this unit before the eyes of other business units and external stakeholders including the oversight structures such as the auditors, audit committee(s) and the provincial legislature. This situation further creates additional challenges, as these officials must coordinate M&E processes while simultaneously learning how to effectively implement them. This misalignment in both structure and staffing significantly impacts the efficiency and effectiveness of the M&E function within RAL.

4.6 Conclusion

Chapter Four presented the research findings based on themes derived from data collected through interviews and document analysis. The findings confirmed the existence of an M&E function within RAL, with an official structure established to coordinate its processes. However, it was noted that RAL has not yet institutionalised a culture of conducting evaluations due to lack of internal evaluation capacity and skills as well as dedicated budget for evaluations. Furthermore, the findings of this study highlighted the role of M&E in measuring performance as key towards strategy development, ensuring accountability and enhancing stakeholder engagements. The Chapter has also reflected an existing gap on M&E's role in guiding resource allocation. Several gaps in the M&E system were also identified and discussed including a lack of integration, insufficient M&E advocacy, the absence of an automated system for data collection, verification, and storage, the inability to conduct evaluations, and capacity constraints within the M&E unit. Having presented the research findings, the next chapter provides a detailed discussion and interpretation of these findings, drawing conclusions based on the findings, literature review and theoretical frameworks as explored in the previous chapters.

5. CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

This chapter presents a discussion of the research findings outlined in Chapter 4, drawing on the literature review and the theoretical and conceptual framework discussed in Chapter 2. The discussion is structured around the research sub-questions and is divided into five sections. The first section discusses the organizational structure of M&E within RAL. The second section seeks to discuss findings of the role of M&E in measuring performance within RAL. The third section discusses the role of M&E in resource allocation. The fourth section seeks to discuss the relevance of M&E Function to RAL Programmes. The last section discusses factors affecting M&E within RAL.

5.1 The organisational structure of the M&E function within RAL

This section discusses and analyses the research findings on the organisational structure of M&E within RAL, focusing on the availability of M&E components, the presence of an M&E unit, the existence of an M&E policy or plan, and the implementation of M&E processes within the organisation.

According to Gorgens and Kusek (2009), an effective M&E system is built on twelve key components. These components are the structure and organisational alignment for M&E system**,** human capacity for M&E**,** M&E partnerships**,** work plans and budgeting**,** advocacy, and cultivating a culture for M&E**,** routine monitoring**,** periodic surveys**,** M&E database**,** supportive supervision and data auditing**,** evaluation and research and using information to improve results. The research findings only partially support this view, as only five components are effectively functional within RAL. These include the M&E structure and organisational alignment, human capacity for M&E, a routine monitoring process, M&E partnerships, and using information to improve results.

Regarding the M&E organisational structure, the findings confirmed that RAL has an established M&E structure, with a dedicated M&E unit responsible for coordinating monitoring and evaluation processes. This finding corroborates the view by Gorgens and Kusek (2009), who indicate that once an organisation establishes an M&E system, it should create a coordinating unit within or outside its organogram. Literature further suggests that if the M&E unit is placed within the organisation, it can be housed within the planning function or operate as a standalone entity (Gorgens & Kusek, 2009). This is the case within RAL where the M&E unit is not only responsible for performance monitoring and evaluation but also responsible for strategic planning matters in

the organisation. This means the M&E unit is embedded within the planning unit and is led by a senior management official at the executive level. The unit reports directly to the accounting officer, enhancing its authority and influence over decision-making processes. The placement of the unit, coupled with the role of the accounting officer, strengthens its ability to advocate for evidence-based decision-making in strategy development and performance monitoring. Furthermore, this organisational arrangement is supported by the Policy Framework for Government-Wide Monitoring and Evaluation (2007), which acknowledges that M&E structures may vary across institutions and that officials managing the system must be granted sufficient authority. Reporting directly to the Accounting Officer means the M&E unit's voice is so powerful to influence the organisation's decision-making authority.

Rabie and De Coning (2014) indicate that an M&E structure should be reinforced by a policy or plan that outlines the guidelines and responsibilities of stakeholders within an organisation. Similarly, Cleland and Ireland as cited by Okafor (2021:36), highlight the importance of an M&E plan, noting that it defines how projects will be monitored and evaluated. Gorgens and Kusek (2009) further support this view, stating that an M&E plan serves as a critical management tool for coordinating M&E efforts and must be properly costed. Findings indicated that the entity relies more on M&E policy than on a structured plan. Moreover, despite the existence of an M&E policy, the findings revealed that RAL's policy does not comprehensively define the roles and responsibilities of all internal stakeholders. Lack of clarity in the M&E policy may result in uncertainty among staff about their responsibilities in the M&E process, which can lead to inefficiencies in the implementation of the M&E system. As noted by Rabie (2011), a poorly defined monitoring and evaluation (M&E) policy and framework can hinder staff understanding of their roles and responsibilities, often resulting in resistance to or poor implementation, delays in execution, and overall inefficiencies in the M&E system. Similarly, Kusek and Rist, (2004) support this view and claim that the lack of clarity regarding role allocation within M&E structures may lead to duplication of efforts or omission of essential tasks, thereby undermining both efficiency and accountability in public sector programmes.

According to Odhiambo (2013), the primary role of evaluation is to assess whether a project's intended results have been achieved and to contribute to organisational learning. However, this view was partially supported by the research findings. The study revealed that while monitoring (the "M" in M&E) is actively practised within RAL, evaluation (the "E") is largely absent. Therefore, the absence of the 'E' means the entity misses the opportunities to measure the achievements or impact of its intended road infrastructure development programs. While monitoring supports

operational efficiency, the absence of project or program assessment may limit the organisation's capacity for reflective practice and continuous improvement. To reiterate, RAL is missing critical opportunities for strategic learning and adaptive management. Further, without evaluation, RAL may struggle to determine whether projects have met their objectives and/ or how they have contributed to long-term development goals. This view is augmented by Görgens and Kusek, (2009), who indicate that the lack of a systematic evaluation process hinders an organization's ability to determine whether its projects have achieved their intended outcomes or effectively contributed to overarching development goals.

5.2 The role of M&E in measuring performance within RAL

This section discusses and analyses the role of M&E in measuring performance within RAL, focusing on strategy development, tracking organisational performance and reporting, stakeholder engagement, and promoting accountability. It aims to illustrate how RAL defines and measures its performance, monitors progress, and accounts for the services it delivers. It is particularly important to understand how the agency makes decisions across short-term, medium-term, and long-term planning horizons. Additionally, the section highlights the extent to which RAL utilises information gathered during strategy implementation to inform improvements, address discrepancies, and enhance overall effectiveness in achieving its objectives.

According to Ritter (2003), measuring performance involves tracking progress, adjusting, and refining organizational strategies and operations to ensure alignment with established goals. Similarly, Gimbert et al. (2010) support this view, emphasising that M&E enhances performance measurement by collecting, processing, and analysing performance data. The research findings corroborates these perspectives. Regarding strategy development, the findings revealed that RAL conducts planning workshops involving management and other relevant stakeholders to reflect on performance trends and challenges before formulating a new strategy. Performance reports are reviewed during these workshops to assess achievements and identify gaps in the output indicators outlined in the APP. Additionally, the findings demonstrated that RAL reviews its five-year strategy annually, as evidenced by the availability of five APPs developed to support the implementation of the 2020–2025 Strategic Plan. Notably, these APPs consistently incorporated a Theory of Change and a logical framework, reinforcing a structured approach to performance measurement and strategic planning.

According to Van Dooren and Thijs as cited by Kimaro, Fourie, and Tshiyoyo (2018:2011), M&E enables institutions to monitor and report on the progress of interventions, projects, and programs. Similarly, Odhiambo (2013) emphasises that data must be collected and reported continuously to assess whether project activities are progressing toward their intended objectives. The research findings indicated that RAL is very good at monitoring the implementation of its project, even though not all projects are regularly monitored due to capacity constraints within the M&E unit. Project monitoring is conducted alongside oversight inspections. Furthermore, the findings indicated that continuous monitoring and reporting ensure the timely availability of data, which is essential for implementing corrective actions. However, despite the existence of this process, gaps remain in the guidelines and understanding of roles and responsibilities related to data collection, verification, and performance monitoring among junior officials and unit heads. This ambiguity has contributed to reporting unreliable data to oversight bodies, potentially undermining the effectiveness of M&E efforts. In addition, this may negatively affect the overall audit outcome expressed by the external auditors on the annual performance report and the annual financial statements of the entity. For instance, it has been observed that RAL has never achieved unqualified audit opinion without matters of emphasis (clean audit) for a number of years in its history of existence. The M&E unit is one of the critical units within the institution that can help RAL receive positive audit outcomes year in and year out, especially on performance information, from the auditors.

RAL is also doing better in involving other stakeholders in its performance monitoring exercise and providing project performance feedback. This approach is in tandem with Patton (2008, cited in Njama, 2015) suggestion that stakeholder involvement in M&E provides an opportunity to share valuable feedback on services, enhancing organisational performance and identifying areas for improvement. This view is supported by the research findings, which revealed that stakeholder engagements take place both within and outside RAL. Externally, the findings indicated that communities and municipalities have the opportunity to discuss M&E reports and reflecting on how poor performance affects service delivery. This platform enables everyone involved to come up with improvement interventions to increase the rate of road infrastructure service delivery in Limpopo province. Furthermore, the findings indicate that these engagement sessions serve as a platform for transparency and accountability, particularly concerning under-performing projects. The research also found that RAL uses stakeholder engagement to address project delays and foster transparency. This approach has proven effective in strengthening collaboration between the entity and its stakeholders, helping to resolve challenges such as community unrest and

recruiting human resources for road infrastructure project delivery. Oversight bodies such as the auditor-general South Africa (AGSA), the Board of Directors and the Provincial Legislature contribute to RAL's M&E process through the assessment of its performance reports submitted for scrutiny and/ or audit. Through this process, the findings by auditors are able to reflect the gaps in the internal control systems of the organisation including the M&E system. Subsequent to audit findings, auditors outline recommendations on how RAL can improve its internal control environment or system across the board. Equally, the engagement with the provincial legislature, particularly through the portfolio committee responsible for road infrastructure development, also enable RAL to come up with service delivery improvement suggestions or interventions when bottlenecks have been identified.

5.3 The role of M&E in resource allocation within RAL

This section discusses and analyses the research findings based on the role of M&E in resource allocation. It is crucial to identify how M&E enables RAL to efficiently allocate resources to address road infrastructure development services within its road network. In the literature review, the World Bank Operations Evaluation Department (2001) emphasised that M&E provides essential information for decision-making in areas such as planning, prioritization, and budgeting. The research findings partially support this view, since a gap was noted, particularly in the allocation of financial resources. A misalignment between budget expenditure and the number of projects implemented was identified, raising concerns between budgeting and planning processes. It is worth noting that resource allocation is the responsibility of the office of the CFO, while planning and performance monitoring and evaluation is the responsibility of the M&E unit in RAL. If the two offices do not sit together to agree on key priorities of the entity, then there will always be misalignment between planning and budgeting. Additionally, the research found that the setting of APP targets is influenced more by human capacity than financial resources, highlighting the need for a more balanced approach. This imbalance may result in targets that are not financially viable, potentially leading to implementation delays, incomplete projects, or unfulfilled commitments. Further, APP targets informed by staffing constraints might not reflect strategic priorities or broader development needs of the entity, therefore, reducing the impact of the agency's programmes. On a positive note, the findings revealed that the strategic planning process includes budget presentations, ensuring that budget monitoring informs reprioritisation efforts.

According to Kananura et al. (2017), program implementers and management use M&E evidence to identify the most effective mechanisms for efficient resource allocation in service delivery. The research findings support this view, revealing that business units are empowered by M&E collected information to plan and secure the necessary resources for implementing interventions and priorities within their scope. Additionally, the findings highlighted that M&E facilitates resource allocation and plays a crucial role in monitoring resource utilisation during implementation to determine whether additional resources are needed.

In the literature review, Khan (2015, cited in Hailemichael, 2021:14), highlighted that M&E facilitates the identification of the most efficient resource allocation. The literature further indicates that M&E guides the resource allocation process within institutions, ensuring that resources are effectively assigned and managed to support organizational objectives (Njeru, 2018). The research findings of this study partially support this view in revealing that M&E helps the entity to track whether some essential resources have been acquired. For example, the findings indicate effectiveness in the recruitment process. However, significant gaps remain in other resources, such as finances and equipment. This aligns with the views of Kusek and Rist (2004), who highlight that limited financial and human resources are, among other things, barriers to effective monitoring and evaluation.

5.4 The relevance of M&E function to RAL Programmes

This section examines and analyses the significance of M&E in RAL's programs. The initial paragraphs discuss its relevance to RAL's core function, which is road infrastructure management that encompasses road infrastructure construction, rehabilitation, and maintenance. This discussion is critical in assessing whether M&E is essential for implementation within an infrastructure-focused institution like RAL, given that M&E is typically associated with social sector institutions. Subsequent paragraphs explore the relevance of M&E in other support programmes within RAL.

Hassan (2013) highlights that the absence of M&E can result in project delays and substandard workmanship in road construction. On the other hand, Nauko et al. (2024), as cited by Thuo and Ndung (2024:1373), emphasise that M&E plays a crucial role in identifying challenges such as delays and poor workmanship in road infrastructure. Consistent with these views, the research findings confirmed that M&E enables RAL to detect contractor underperformance and implement

corrective measures to address it effectively. The M&E appears to play a crucial role in informing decision-making within RAL, particularly when it comes to identifying areas that require corrective action. The findings derived from M&E activities, such as contractor underperformance or delays, provide crucial evidence that guides management decisions, ensuring that any corrective measures such as penalties, project adjustments, or resource reallocation are grounded in factual data.

According to Gitahi (2015), M&E is integrated throughout the road infrastructure project cycle, facilitating the collection and utilisation of information at various stages of decision-making, including planning, design, and implementation. However, the research findings do not fully align with this perspective, as M&E is only partially implemented within RAL. Its presence is most evident during the implementation phase, where monitoring and oversight activities are conducted.

In the literature review, OECD (2015) emphasised that accessibility of information to all stakeholders, including the public, is fundamental to good governance and ensuring transparency and accountability. This is made possible through M&E, which supports performance planning and reporting within organisations. The findings of this study align with this view, as programme managers report progress of their respective business units and account for their performance to management through the M&E unit.

Lawrence (2014), as cited by Manedo et al. (2018:320), highlighted that one of the key benefits of M&E is its role in fostering organizational learning and knowledge sharing. Similarly, Fapohunda and Stephenson (2010), as cited by Gitahi (2015:13), argue that M&E provides valuable insights into the outcomes of past interventions, helping to identify their strengths and weaknesses. The research findings partially support this view, revealing that monitoring information is utilised to identify shortcomings in existing projects, enabling learning and improvement in future initiatives. However, the lack of evaluation within RAL presents a significant gap, hindering the organization’s ability to assess the overall impact of its programs and learn with the purpose of sharing knowledge on the best practices. Lack of dedicated budget for evaluations means the entity will never learn where things are going wrong on its implementation of road infrastructure development program. The entity will also not learn about the impact its programs and projects are making on the lives of ordinary citizens in the province. This is because

it is only through the execution of evaluation projects that the entity can be able to measure the impact of its programs or projects on communities.

In the literature review, Naidoo and Henning (2012) argued that governance crises worldwide have necessitated the need for M&E systems to enable timely problem identification, ensuring that findings and recommendations reach the appropriate levels before crises emerge. The literature further indicates that formative evaluations are useful in assessing the efficiency of program operations, processes, and procedures, ensuring their alignment with the program's objectives (Boyle & Lemaire, 1999). The research findings support these views, as RAL has an M&E system in place and then use M&E information to detect potential threats to its operations and implement mitigation measures proactively.

According to Callistus and Clinton (2018), M&E ensures adherence to predetermined standards and facilitates the monitoring of budgetary and scheduling targets. The research findings support this view, demonstrating compliance with policies within RAL, both in reporting and implementation. Additionally, the findings revealed that M&E plays a crucial role in enforcing policy adherence among contractors or service providers of road infrastructure development projects. For example, the recruitment of community members in road infrastructure projects is closely monitored to ensure not only compliance with equity standards but drive local economic development by empowering community members.

5.5 Factors affecting M&E within RAL

This section examines the factors influencing M&E within RAL. Its primary objective is to identify gaps within the M&E system and propose recommendations based on insights from the collected data and the literature.

According to Kimaro et al. (2018), the institutionalisation of M&E involves embedding M&E functions, principles, and practices within institutions. This ensures that M&E is used to assess predetermined objectives, facilitate systematic reporting, track progress, and conduct evaluations. The findings of this study are in congruence with these claims as explained in the previous chapter. Literature further suggests that M&E responsibilities should be distributed across management levels, with line managers ensuring its implementation for monitoring, reporting, and decision-making within their respective programs (Presidency, 2007, cited in Rabie & De Coning, 2014). However, findings reveal that M&E is not implemented by all line managers within RAL.

This means that management has not enforced M&E as a responsibility for all managers, as it is not included in their Performance Agreement contracts. Consequently, the M&E unit bears the sole responsibility for ensuring M&E implementation. This creates a gap, as program managers are not actively advocating for the use of M&E practices within their areas of work.

Advocacy is crucial for promoting M&E within an organisation (Odhiambo, 2013). The literature further indicated that effective M&E advocacy and communication can foster a positive organisational culture that values and prioritises M&E at all levels, ultimately enhancing accountability, learning, and decision-making (Gorgens & Kusek, 2009). Contrary to this argument, research findings in this study reveal that within RAL, M&E is known only to a select few, primarily those responsible for reporting. Also, advocacy efforts are largely confined to managers who attend strategic planning workshops, excluding junior staff from the M&E processes, thereby limiting broader organisational integration. To reiterate, this contradicts the literature, which emphasised that management is responsible for instilling a culture of M&E across the organization irrespective of levels (Onsomu & Johnbosco, 2020). The literature indicated that a lack of management support for M&E is a key factor contributing to the underutilisation of M&E information in some institutions (Taut, 2007, cited in Kithinji et al., 2017:287). By virtue of being placed within the CEO's office, M&E unit should be more advocated looking at the authority of the office.

The research has revealed that the M&E faces capacity challenges related to human resources, appropriate skills and financial resources. This capacity constraint has also resulted in some projects not being monitored. Clearly this practice within RAL contradicts the literature, which emphasises that M&E capacity is essential for organisations to develop program implementation strategies, interpret results, enhance program delivery, and ultimately improve outcomes (Masvaure & Fish, 2022).

The literature suggests that when effectively implemented, supportive supervision enables M&E experts to regularly oversee and guide M&E processes within individual programs or business units, providing constructive feedback for continuous improvement (Odhiambo, 2013). However, research findings do not support this view. It was observed that M&E officials lack the capacity to support individual business units in implementing M&E at the program level.

According to Gorgens and Kusek (2009), an M&E database plays a critical role in data collection, capturing, and verification, ensuring that relevant and reliable data is readily available for

stakeholders involved in policy formulation, program management, and improvement. However, research findings reveal that the entity relies on a manual system rather than an automated system. The absence of an M&E database has led to inaccuracies in reported figures, highlighting an accountability gap. Additionally, it has hindered the timely retrieval of information needed for effective decision-making. The fact that sometimes RAL management rely on the use of incurate figures implies that there is likelihood of wrong business decisions being taken. If these inaccuracies are later detected by external stakeholders, they may have serious implications for the entity in relation to its reputation or public image. In other words, the use and publication of inaccurate financial figures, for example, has the potential to ruin public confidence and trust for the organisations such as RAL.

According to Nabris (2002), as cited by Nayebare (2009:23), effective M&E requires leading officials leading M&E to possess strong skills in research and project management. However, research findings reveal that M&E personnel within RAL lack the necessary skills, making it difficult for the entity to develop an M&E plan or framework with a logical framework for effective coordination. As stated earlier, there is not internal capacity to even undertake evaluation projects to determine the level of implementation of road infrastructure construction or impact of this program. Lack of evaluations means limiting the entity's ability to assess the extent to which its programs contribute to the socio-economic development of the Limpopo province.

5.6 Linking discussions to the Conceptual Frameworks

The study was grounded in the conceptual framework of New Public Management (NPM), alongside Evidence-Based Policy-Making (EBP) and Rational Decision-Making**,** all of which emphasise the importance of performance, accountability, and the systematic use of evidence in guiding public sector decisions.

These conceptual frameworks converge on the principle that data, particularly evaluative evidence, is essential for informed decision-making. However, the study's findings revealed a critical gap in this regard within the Road Agency Limpopo. While the monitoring function of M&E is operational, the evaluation component remains underdeveloped. This imbalance limits RAL's ability to assess long-term outcomes and the broader impact of its road infrastructure services, undermining the effectiveness of evidence-informed and rational decision-making. The absence

of rigorous evaluation means that strategic decisions, such as prioritising infrastructure projects or assessing programme effectiveness, are made without the benefit of comprehensive evidence.

This gap highlights a misalignment between current M&E practices at RAL and the expectations set by NPM, which calls for performance-based governance and accountability through evidence. The study further identified limited M&E capacity in terms of human resources, technical skills, and institutional support as a key barrier to implementing a fully functional evaluation system. Without adequate capacity, RAL may not generate the type of evaluative data necessary to support EBP and rational decision-making.

However, the research findings corroborate efforts within RAL to align with these Rational Decision-Making and EBP, particularly in the area of strategy development. The findings revealed that RAL use performance information evidence to inform decisions its plans. Performance reports are reviewed during planning workshops to assess achievements and identify gaps service delivery in order to come up with new intervention.

5.7 Conclusion

In conclusion, the study's findings reinforce the relevance of the NPM, EBP, and rational decision-making frameworks by demonstrating how the underdevelopment of evaluation within RAL hinders evidence-based governance. Addressing these challenges requires not only institutional commitment but also targeted investment in building M&E capacity to ensure that all components of the M&E system function effectively and support informed, strategic decision-making.

6. CHAPTER SIX: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter evaluates the extent to which the study has achieved its purpose. It also provides a summary of the key findings while offering recommendations to address the identified research gaps. Further, the chapter offers suggestions for future research, highlighting potential areas for further exploration and improvement in the field.

6.1 Summary of key findings

The purpose of this study was to assess the role of Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) in decision-making within the Road Agency Limpopo (RAL). It is prudent to note that study does not focus on the M&E within the whole public services rather than on the mentioned public entity. Similarly, the study is limited to decision making as a component of policy development cycle.

Specifically, the study addressed the research question: What role does M&E play in decision-making within RAL? To answer the main research question, the study was guided by sub-questions exploring how M&E is structured within RAL, its role in measuring performance, its influence on resource allocation, its relevance to RAL's programs, and the factors affecting its effectiveness within the organisation.

To assess and address the main research question, the study employed qualitative research methods. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews, document analysis, and a literature review to explore sub-research questions. The research findings were analysed using the Theory of Change, EBP, and Rational Decision-Making frameworks.

Thirteen (13) participants were interviewed, selected through purposive sampling. The sample comprised technical staff, middle management, and senior management officials. The interviews were conducted between January and February 2025, using a semi-structured interview guide that facilitated the collection of in-depth data. This data was subsequently coded and categorised into key themes emerging from the interviews. Additionally, document analysis was conducted, focusing on both printed and electronic materials, including the Strategic Plan, Annual Performance Plans, Annual Reports, and the M&E Policy of the selected case. This comprehensive approach ensured a robust assessment of the role of M&E in decision-making within RAL.

The finding reflects that a general understanding of the monitoring process exists among most officials. However, there is no a clearer, formalised guidance within the policy to ensure consistency and accountability. Further, although RAL's M&E policy includes provisions for evaluations, no formal evaluations have been conducted since the system was introduced. Respondents unanimously confirmed the absence of impact assessments, attributing this gap to the early developmental stage of the M&E system, a lack of dedicated evaluation frameworks, and capacity constraints. These include a shortage of skilled personnel, insufficient staffing within the M&E unit, and the absence of budget allocations for evaluation activities. Without evaluation, RAL cannot fully understand the impact of its road infrastructure development projects on communities, road users, and municipalities as well as the province of Limpopo.

In relation to measuring performance, there is unanimous agreement on the critical role of M&E in shaping policy and organisational strategy at RAL. The findings revealed that RAL's strategy development is grounded in evidence, largely informed by performance data and historical trends. It was found that M&E is noted as instrumental in identifying service delivery needs, setting measurable targets, and ensuring strategic planning is based on credible insights. The findings have highlighted M&E as a vital tool for tracking project progress, identifying implementation gaps, and informing the management decision for corrective actions. It enables business units to monitor the pace and quality of project delivery and assess contractor performance. It also motivates for improved service delivery by allowing the organisation to systematically assess whether targets are being met and/ or adjuste accordingly to enhance operational efficiency.

The findings have highlighted that M&E strengthens transparency and accountability within RAL. Performance reports are presented to governance structures, oversight bodies, and stakeholders, sparking discussions that lead to better-informed decisions and enhanced service delivery. Furthermore, the findings revealed that M&E is also seen as a critical tool for stakeholder engagement wherein the public is informed of project progress. Moreover, community feedback gathered during engagement sessions allows RAL to assess satisfaction levels, identify gaps, and realign services to meet actual needs. This feedback loop not only supports transparency but also improves responsiveness and trust between the agency and its stakeholders.

With regards to resources allocation, while M&E contributes to planning and informs budget reprioritisation during strategic sessions, a notable gap was observed in the actual alignment between budget allocations and the number of projects executed. This misalignment raises

concerns about the effectiveness of the budgeting process and suggests a disconnection between planned targets and available financial resources. Moreover, the study found that the setting of Annual Performance Plan (APP) targets is more heavily influenced by the availability of human resources than by financial considerations. This suggest that M&E's role in budgeting and resource allocation remains underdeveloped. Addressing this gap would enhance the agency's ability to match resources with planned interventions, thereby improving overall efficiency and impact.

The study confirms that Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) is instrumental in enhancing road infrastructure project performance at the Road Agency Limpopo. Consistent with existing literature, M&E enables RAL to identify contractor underperformance and implement corrective actions, thereby addressing common challenges like delays and poor workmanship on time. Moreover, the findings revealed that M&E promotes learning by helping to identify weaknesses in ongoing projects, though the absence of formal evaluation limits RAL's capacity to assess broader program impacts. It also confirms that M&E supports compliance with policies and standards, including equity requirements in community recruitment process for projects.

The study has identified the following five factors affecting the M&E function within:

Lack of Integration and Institutionalisation- M&E is not embedded in the broader operations of RAL. It is not included in senior management's performance agreements, limiting accountability. Junior staff are generally excluded from M&E activities, reinforcing a perception that it is the sole responsibility of the M&E unit or senior management.

Insufficient Advocacy and Leadership Support- Leadership has not effectively promoted an M&E culture across the organisation. Engagement with M&E largely occurs during audit or reporting deadlines, and there is no consistent effort to educate or involve all staff members at all levels in the organisation on M&E practices and processes.

Absence of an automated system - RAL lacks an integrated data management system. It relies on manual processes for data collection, verification, and storage, which compromises data accuracy and consistency. The institution also run the risk of having the manual system being lost with the whole M&E information on it. Nevertheless, the use of manual system has led to discrepancies in reported performance data and limits real-time decision-making.

Inability to conduct Evaluations- Despite the strategic importance of evaluations in assessing the impact of interventions, RAL has not conducted any evaluations between 2020 and 2025, which is a period aligned to the 6th government administration. This gap restricts organisational learning and evidence-based planning.

Capacity constraints- The M&E unit is understaffed and poorly structured, with only four officials, and lacks mid-level management roles. There are also mismatches in skillsets, with some staff lacking formal M&E training or qualifications. These constraints affect the unit's ability to carry out its duties effectively, including physical project monitoring and data verification.

6.2 Conclusions

The study has answered the main research question "What role does M&E play in decision-making within RAL?" The findings show that to some extent M&E at RAL plays a critical but still developing role in decision-making. It informs strategic planning**,** performance monitoring**,** stakeholder engagement**,** and slightly resource allocation**,** although formal evaluation practices and integration into decision-making structures are lacking. The use of M&E to guide evidence-based planning, identify gaps, adjust strategies, and improve transparency demonstrates its current influence.

In response to the research sub- question "How is the M&E function organised within RAL?" The findings reveal that RAL has an M&E policy, but the function is not fully institutionalised. It's not integrated into management performance agreements, lacks leadership advocacy, and relies on manual processes**.** The M&E unit is understaffed, lacks mid-level management, and has mismatched skillsets all of which point to an underdeveloped organisational structure.

The answers to the sub-question "What role does M&E play in resource allocation at RAL?" the study revealed some gaps in the M&E system within RAL. M&E contributes to budget reprioritisation and strategic planning, but its role in actual budget allocation is limited**.** There is a disconnection between project planning and resource allocation, and financial decisions are more influenced by human resources than performance data. This highlights an area needing improvement for M&E to fully support efficient resource allocation and usage.

In answering the sub-question “What is the relevance of the M&E function to RAL programmes?”, the study has revealed that M&E is relevant to a construction sector. The study indicates that M&E is relevant in enhancing project performance**,** contractor accountability**,** service delivery**,** and community engagement. It helps identify implementation gaps, supports compliance with recruitment equity standards, and encourages organisational learning though this is hindered by the absence of formal evaluations.

The research analysis identified several discrepancies within the M&E system of RAL, which hinder its potential to effectively support decision-making. However, it is important to note that the M&E system within RAL is still in the process of maturing and has yet to reach its full potential. Some of the key components of the M&E system are not yet functional within RAL. One of the major concerns highlighted in the research is the lack of evaluation, which is primarily due to limited capacity and/ or no dedicated budget. The entity relies heavily on monitoring, primarily for compliance purposes, enabling it to compile and submit quarterly reports to oversight bodies such as the Provincial Department of Public Works, Roads and Infrastructure, the Board of Directors, the Office of the Premier, the National Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation, and the Provincial Legislature. However, this compliance-driven culture prioritises meeting audit requirements and achieving minimal planned targets rather than focusing on meaningful service delivery that positively impacts the public.

Another critical gap that needs to be addressed is the absence of a comprehensive M&E framework or plan that outlines measurable indicators. Currently, RAL depends on an M&E policy that does not clearly define the roles and responsibilities of management and other officials. While the policy explicitly outlines the duties of the M&E Executive, it leaves the M&E unit solely responsible for understanding the M&E process and ensuring that other officials comply with data requests. This results in a culture of superficial compliance, where performance information is not always accurate, leading to additional workload and burnouts since M&E officials are often forced to work overtime to meet the tight submission timelines. This further prevents M&E from being fully integrated into the organisation's operations and from effectively informing decision-making.

In conclusion, the role of management in advocating for and integrating M&E within the entity's Performance Management System significantly impacts the speed and effectiveness of M&E implementation. Executive management must actively promote evidence-based decision-making across the organisation and ensure that M&E responsibilities are embedded in all managers' Key Performance Areas (KPAs) or KPIs within their performance agreements. This approach will

foster greater accountability and buy-in from all relevant stakeholders, ultimately strengthening the effectiveness of the M&E system within RAL.

6.3 Recommendations

Based on the research findings, this study proposes the following recommendations to strengthen the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) function in both policy and practice within RAL, thereby enhancing its effectiveness in supporting evidence-based decision-making:

- Ensure full functionality of M&E Components- There should be operationalisation of all key M&E components for the M&E system to be effective. This includes the development of a comprehensive M&E plan or framework that clearly outlines the logical results chain, performance indicators, data sources, and reporting timelines. A well-structured framework will guide implementation and ensure consistency across programmes.

- Set aside budget and conduct project evaluations. To assess the impact and effectiveness of work done by public entities, institutions should institutionalise project evaluations. However, setting aside or ring-fencing the budget for evaluation is crucial and illustrates management's commitment and seriousness about evaluations. These evaluations can be conducted internally where capacity exists, or through external evaluators where with oversight from a steering committee to ensure objectivity and alignment with national evaluation standards.

- Embed M&E in management Performance Agreements- M&E responsibilities should be integrated into the performance agreements of senior and middle management. This will drive accountability, promote ownership of M&E processes, and ensure that leadership actively monitors and supports the use of performance data in planning and decision-making.

- Review and strengthen the M&E Policy- the M&E policy should clearly outline roles and responsibilities at all levels of the organisation, including junior staff. This will promote ownership and clarity, ensuring M&E is not viewed as the sole responsibility of a single unit within the organisation.
- Build M&E Capacity- There should be investment in training the staff involved in M&E and ensure that the M&E unit is properly staffed with qualified professionals. This includes

recruiting personnel with strong skills and competencies in data analysis, research, and project management including monitoring.

- Automate M&E processes. The digital platform should support data collection, verification, storage, and retrieval, enabling real-time performance tracking and reporting. Automation is crucial to improve data accuracy, reduce administrative burdens, and enhance the agency's ability to make timely and informed decisions.

Areas for further research

For further studies, this study highlights several gaps that warrant further investigation. Specifically, there is a need to explore the comprehensive implementation of the twelve key M&E components and to examine how their integration influences decision-making within public entities such as the Road Agency Limpopo (RAL). While the current study found that not all components are fully operational, future research could identify which elements are most instrumental in enhancing efficiency, accountability, and overall institutional performance.

In addition, further studies may be undertaken to investigate the practical implications of integrating M&E system into performance management systems within public institutions. This could provide valuable insights into how such integration affects staff accountability and results-driven governance.

Another critical area for future exploration is community participation in the M&E process. Engaging local stakeholders and beneficiaries can significantly improve the relevance, accuracy, and sustainability of development initiatives by ensuring that service delivery aligns with community needs and priorities.

Lastly, given that RAL has not conducted any formal evaluations in the last five years, it is important to examine the underlying reasons for the absence of evaluation practices in public entities such as RAL. Future research should also consider how both internal and external evaluations can be leveraged to strengthen organizational learning, inform strategic decision-making, and enhance the measurement of long-term impacts.

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Appendix 1: Requests for permission to conduct research

Appendix A: Letters of Request to conduct research at RAL



University of the Witwatersrand,
Wits School of Governance 011 717 3520

Edward Mokhwelepa
Capital View Lifestyle
Pretoria
10 December 2024

The Chief Executive Officer
Road Agency Limpopo
Private Bag X9554
Polokwane
0700

Dear Sir/Madam,

Re: Permission to conduct research at Road Agency Limpopo

My name is Edward Mokhwelepa

I am studying for a Master's degree in Public Management with a focus on Public and Development Sector Monitoring and Evaluation in the School of Governance at the University of the Witwatersrand. I am seeking permission to do research at Road Agency Limpopo (RAL).

I am conducting research on the role of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) in decision-making within RAL. This study forms part of my academic requirements, with RAL selected as the case study. The research will entail collecting data from M&E officials, programme managers and members of executive management.

Participants will be asked to give their written or verbal consent before the research begins. Their responses will be treated confidentially, and identities will be anonymous. Individual privacy will be maintained in all published and written data resulting from the study.

I would like to assure you that all data collected from your organisation will be used strictly for academic purposes. The results will be published on the University of the Witwatersrand website.

The research participants will not be advantaged or disadvantaged in any way. They will be reassured that they can withdraw their permission at any time during this project without any penalty. There are no foreseeable risks in participating in this study. The participants will not be paid for this study.

All research data will be will be destroyed after the completion of the report.

I therefore request permission in writing to conduct my research at your organisation. The permission letter should be on your organisation's headed paper, signed and dated, and specifically referring to myself by name and the title of my study.

Please let me know if you require any further information. I look forward to your response as soon as is convenient.

Yours sincerely,

Edward Mokhwelepa
083 565 8696
2180520@students.wits.ac.za

Supervised by Dr Steven Masvaure
steven.masvaure@wits.ac.za

Appendix B: Letters of Request to conduct research at DPWI



University of the Witwatersrand,
Wits School of Governance 011 717 3520

Edward Mokhwelepa
Capital View Lifestyle
Pretoria
10 December 2024

The Head of Department
Limpopo Department of Public Works, Roads and Infrastructure
43 Church Street
Polokwane
0700

Dear Sir/Madam,

I hope this message finds you well.

I am a postgraduate student at the University of the Witwatersrand, currently pursuing a Master's degree in Public Management with a focus on Public and Development Sector Monitoring and Evaluation. As part of my academic requirements, I am conducting a research study, with the Road Agency Limpopo (RAL) as my case study. Since RAL functions as an implementing agency of your department, I would appreciate gaining your department's insights on the research topic to complete the study.

The purpose of this research is to assess the role of Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) in decision-making processes within RAL. The research will entail collecting data from M&E officials. I would like to assure you that all data collected from your department will be used strictly for academic purposes.

I look forward to your positive response.

Yours sincerely,

Edward Mokhwelepa
083 565 8696

Appendix 2: Consent Form



Consent Form

Research Topic: The role of monitoring and evaluation in decision-making within Road Agency Limpopo

Name of researcher: Edward Mokhwelepa

I, ……., agree to participate in this research project.

I agree to the following:

(Please circle the relevant options below)

The research study was explained to me. I understand what this study is about.	YES	NO
I understand that I can volunteer to take part in the study	YES	NO
I agree that direct quotations from my interview may be used by the researcher in their research report	YES	NO
I agree that my participation will remain anonymous (my name or other identifying data will not be used by the researcher in their research report)	YES	NO
I agree that other researchers may use the information I provide in my interview but my name and any personal information will not be used or passed on	YES	NO

(signature):
Name of participant:
Date:

(signature):
Name of researcher: Edward Mokhwelepa
Date:

Appendix 3: Participant Information Sheet



Dear Sir / Madam

My name is Edward Mokhwelepa. I am a Masters student in Public Management at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. My supervisor is Dr Steven Masvaure. I am conducting a research study about the role of monitoring and evaluation in decision-making. The study title is "The role of monitoring and evaluation in decision-making within Road Agency Limpopo".

I am inviting you to take part in an interview. If you decide to take part, your participation in this research study will last about an hour. The interview will take place virtually (via Microsoft Teams) during working hours. The interview data will be stored in password protected personal laptop that is secured for the period of this projects (i.e.1 year) and will deleted after completion of the study (i.e.1 year). Only the researcher will have access to the data.

The interview will be confidential and anonymous. When I share the results of the research study, I will not include your name or anything else that could identify you.

If you decide to take part in the research study, it should be because you want to volunteer. You do not have to take part. You can stop being in the study at any time. You do not have to answer any questions if you do not want to. You will not get any direct benefits if you choose to join the research study. You will not lose any services, benefits or rights you would normally have if you decide not to join. Taking part in the research study will not cost you anything. You will not be paid for being in this research study.

The risks for this research study are no more than what happens in everyday life.

This research study will be written up as a research report. The report will be available on the university library website. If you would like to receive a summary of this report, I will be happy to send it to you.

If you have any questions during or afterwards about this research study, feel free to contact me or my supervisor on the details listed below. If you have any concerns or complaints about the ethical procedures of this research study, you are welcome to contact the University Human Research Ethics Committee (Non-Medical), telephone +27(0) 11 717 1408, email hrecnon-medical@wits.ac.za.

Yours sincerely,
Edward Mokhwelepa

Researcher:
Edward Mokhwelepa, 2180520@students.Wist.ac.za, 083 565 8696

Supervisor:
Dr Steven Masvaure, steven.masvaure@wits.ac.za

Appendix 4: Semi-Structure Interview guide

A. M&E function structure within RAL

1. What is your understanding of Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E)?
2. How is the M&E function structured within RAL?
3. At what organisational level does the M&E unit operate?
4. What is the size of the M&E unit? **[M&E officials only]**
5. How is monitoring carried out within RAL? **[M&E officials only]**
6. How is evaluation conducted within RAL? **[M&E officials only]**
7. How do you plan for M&E annually? **[M&E officials only]**

B. The role of M&E play in measuring performance

1. Are M&E reports used to inform the planning of programs, projects, or initiatives?
2. What is the perception of M&E within RAL, and how does this perception impact its influence in measuring performance?
3. How frequently is M&E information reviewed during decision-making processes?
4. In your opinion, does M&E contribute to the improvement of policy formulation or project adjustments/planning? **[Department of Public works]**

C. The role of M&E in resource allocation at RAL

1. How does M&E influence resource allocation decisions within RAL?
2. What role does M&E play in reprioritising resources during budget adjustments or revisions of Annual Performance Plans?
3. In your experience, can you provide examples where resources were reprioritised based on insights from M&E?
4. How does M&E inform resource planning and budgeting within RAL?
5. Do you think M&E informs resource planning and budgeting within RAL? **[Department of Public works]**

D. The relevance of the M&E function to RAL programmes

1. How does M&E support road infrastructure rehabilitation and maintenance services?
2. In what ways does M&E contribute to road infrastructure construction projects?
3. In your opinion, what is the role of M&E in the design, rehabilitation, maintenance, and construction of road infrastructure?
4. Do you see M&E playing role in the design, rehabilitation, maintenance, and construction of road infrastructure? **[Department of Public works]**

E. Factors affecting the M&E function within RAL

1. Do you believe there are challenges affecting the effectiveness of M&E? If so, what specific challenges do you think exist?
2. What do you think should be done to address these challenges?
3. What successes can you highlight regarding the M&E function within RAL?

Appendix 5: Permission letters to conduct research

ROADS AGENCY LIMPOPO
TOGETHER FOR BETTER ROADS

Physical Address:
26 Rabe Street
Polokwane
0700
Email: info@ral.co.za
Web: www.ral.co.za

Postal Address:
Roads Agency Limpopo
Private Bag X9554
Polokwane
0700
Tel: +27 15 284 4600
+27 15 291 4236

TO : Mr Edward Mokwelepa

FROM: Mr Makhitha Chesane

Acting Chief Executive Officer

DATE : 24 January 2025

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT ROADS AGENCY LIMPOPO

I, Mr. Makhitha Chesane in my capacity as the Acting Chief Executive Officer of the Roads Agency Limpopo SoC, grant permission to collect data for your research project titled "The role of monitoring and evaluation in decision -making within Roads Agency Limpopo

With reference to your request, you are notified of the following:

1. That permission has been granted for you to conduct research for academic purposes, only.
2. That all data collected from employees of RAL, as a result of your academic research shall be used for academic research only.
3. That obtaining research related information from employees of RAL must not, in anyway, impact negatively on the work of the Agency and its staff.

Mr Makhitha Chesane

Acting Chief Executive Officer

Directors: Mr R.M. Tseli: Interim Accounting Authority | Mr M.J. Chesane: Acting Chief Executive Officer |
Roads Agency Limpopo (SOC) Ltd, Reg no. 2001/025832/30

LIMPOPO
PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

DEPARTMENT OF
PUBLIC WORKS, ROADS AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Reference: 2/7/5/2
Enquiry: Molope KF(7385)
Maponya DJ(7154)

08 January 2025

Mokhwelepa Edward
University of Witwatersrand

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE DEPARTMENT: MOKHWELEPA E, STUDENT NO: 2180520.

1. Your application to conduct research in the department bears reference.
2. Your proposal was forwarded to the Acting Head of Department for assessment, and it was concluded that:

   Your proposal complies with the Departmental Research and Development terms of reference.

   - Your research samples cover 20 officials at Head Office/RAL.
   - You should complete a departmental declaration form within 5 working days upon receipt of this letter.
3. For completion of the declaration form, please contact the following officials between 07:30 and 16:30:
   - Ms. KF Molope at office number 5-1-13 or call 015 284 7385
   - Ms. D.J. Maponya at office 4-1-17 or call 015 284 7164.

Regards,

MR M.J PHUKUNTSI
ACTING HEAD OF DEPARTMENT

24/01/2024
DATE

43 Church Street. Polokwane, 0699, Private Bag X9490, POLOKWANE, 0700
Tel: (015) 284 7001, (015) 284 7030 website: http//www.dpw.limpopo.gov.za