

# Monitoring, Evaluation, Research and Learning Manager

## Project Overview

The ASPIRE project (Achieving Sustainable Partnerships for Research, Innovation and Entrepreneurship) is developing a regionally relevant, replicable model for how Latin American universities can address local development priorities through their research, teaching, innovation, and entrepreneurial activities. This five-year, \$15 million project is funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and builds on existing collaboration between MIT and its Guatemalan partners, the Universidad del Valle de Guatemala (UVG), and the Guatemalan Exporters Association (AGEXPORT). Together, they are co-developing innovative local solutions to locally-identified challenges.

## Position Overview

The full-time Monitoring, Evaluation, Research and Learning (MERL) Manager, based out of the Department of Mechanical Engineering in MIT, will work closely with ASPIRE MERL staff in the United States and Guatemala and other team members in the development, submission, and annual updating (as needed and required by USAID) of the project's monitoring, evaluation, research and learning (MERL) plan, establishing and maintaining the project's internal performance monitoring systems, and implementing a subset of the project's MERL activities related to completion of the USAID-approved MERL plan as described below:

## Duties and Responsibilities

- **Manage and continue to improve the project's MERL system:** Manage the implementation of a uniform, consistent, user-friendly system and processes for data collection, storage, and reporting for use by ASPIRE staff and core project partners (e.g. sub-awardees, contractors, etc.). Manage the MERL calendar, soliciting required data at regular intervals and providing updates on any performance monitoring, data access, or data quality issues to the Senior Project Manager in a timely manner.
- **Collect and analyze data:** Use the system and processes established Streamline and continue to develop the project's data collection processes and systems to collect, compile, and analyze the performance data specified in the MERL Plan from all relevant project partners, including sub-awardees; coordinate closely with the MERL manager at UVG on data collection, cleaning, analysis and reporting work.
- **Build partners' capacity for MERL data collection and reporting:** Identify any recurring issues related to data access, data quality, or timely reporting among project staff or partners and provide training and technical assistance as needed to build partners' capacity to submit the required performance monitoring data.
- **Compile, manage and report on performance data:** Maintain up-to-date data sets, aggregate ("roll-up") performance data, and provide content for the bi-annual required MERL reports for USAID. Upload required results (e.g. publications, other research results) to USAID results platforms such as DEC.

- **Serve as the project’s MERL point of contact:** Serve as the primary point of contact externally for all project partners and USAID as it relates to reporting on performance data and key project metrics. Internally, coordinate closely with MERL team members at UVG to ensure timely, accurate, and accessible collection, storing, management, and reporting of M&E data on the ground in Guatemala.
- **Synthesize and Disseminate Learning:** Identify and document challenges, best practices, and learning summaries from the project’s performance monitoring and learning activities and identify venues for the effective sharing of this learning. Take the lead to share where appropriate (internal all-ASPIRE team meetings and bi-annual reporting, for example), and coordinate with the ASPIRE Communications team who will lead as otherwise appropriate (short news stories and posts for the project web site and social media, for example). In the latter case, the ability to “see the story in the data” and contribute to communications pieces that are accessible to a wide variety of audiences is important.

### **Supervision Received**

The MERL Manager receives supervision from the Senior Project Manager, and receives guidance from and coordinates with the project’s Co-Principal Investigators .

### **Qualifications and Education**

Minimum Qualifications:

- Bachelor’s Degree (or higher) in quantitative or qualitative methods, international affairs, economics, public administration, public policy, program evaluation, or a technical field related to the project is required. Master’s Degree with a focus on project/program evaluation or related technical field preferred.
- Minimum of five (5) years of experience managing and conducting monitoring, evaluation, and data analysis efforts for projects. Required skills include data management and analysis and collecting and reporting performance metrics.
- Minimum of two (2) years of experience leading the knowledge management or continuous learning and adapting (CLA) component of projects.
- Demonstrated ability to create knowledge and learning products (e.g. briefs, executive summaries, user-friendly reports, etc.) from MERL data and to communicate MERL data in user-friendly ways, including the ability to produce compelling visualizations of MERL data.
- Excellent oral and written English communication skills.

Preferred Qualifications

- Demonstrated professional experience working on international development projects funded by USAID, or other international donor organizations.
- Working proficiency in Spanish preferred, especially the ability to read and accurately interpret survey results and other similar short form documents in Spanish.

### **Key Capabilities:**

- Ability to function autonomously and play both a leadership and coordinating role in a fast-paced and fluid environment.
- Ability to facilitate and enable the work of others through excellent communication skills, team-building skills, and accessible research tools and methods.
- Strong interest and experience in working across traditional disciplinary lines to understand complex issues and processes in human and socio-economic development within the context of developing countries.
- Ability to balance system development, field implementation, and project management responsibilities and roles.

### **Travel**

- Ability to travel internationally at least once a year for meetings, data collection, and learning activities.

### **Location**

- Preference will be given to those qualified candidates in the Cambridge-Boston commuting area who can work on a hybrid basis.
- Remote candidates will be considered.