Advancing quality, safety and innovation

Department of Health and Human Services Evaluation Guide

Centre for Evaluation and Research

August 2017

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Guide purpose

Introduction

Evaluation and research is a key tool for ensuring efficient and effective delivery of government services through evidence-based policy and decision making. This guide is designed to support staff planning and commissioning of evaluation. The subject of an evaluation could be a policy, activity, initiative or program. The guide is designed for anyone responsible for program development, implementation or evaluation.

The role of the Centre for Evaluation and Research

The Centre for Evaluation and Research (the Centre) was established to provide support, advice and resources to the Department of Health and Human Services (the department) staff to build a strong evaluation culture. The Centre offers a suite of resources and can assist at all stages of the evaluation cycle (see Figure 1).

Resources provided by the Centre include:

- this evaluation guide
- tools and templates
- support and advice – ad hoc support and advice to department staff
- an annual report on key findings from evaluations conducted each year
- the Knowledge Bank – a central internal repository for all evaluation and research reports
- the Evaluation Preferred Provider Panel.

The Centre for Evaluation and Research can assist at all stages of an evaluation. For more information, please email cer@dhhs.vic.gov.au.

Figure 1. Evaluation cycle

Introduction to evaluation

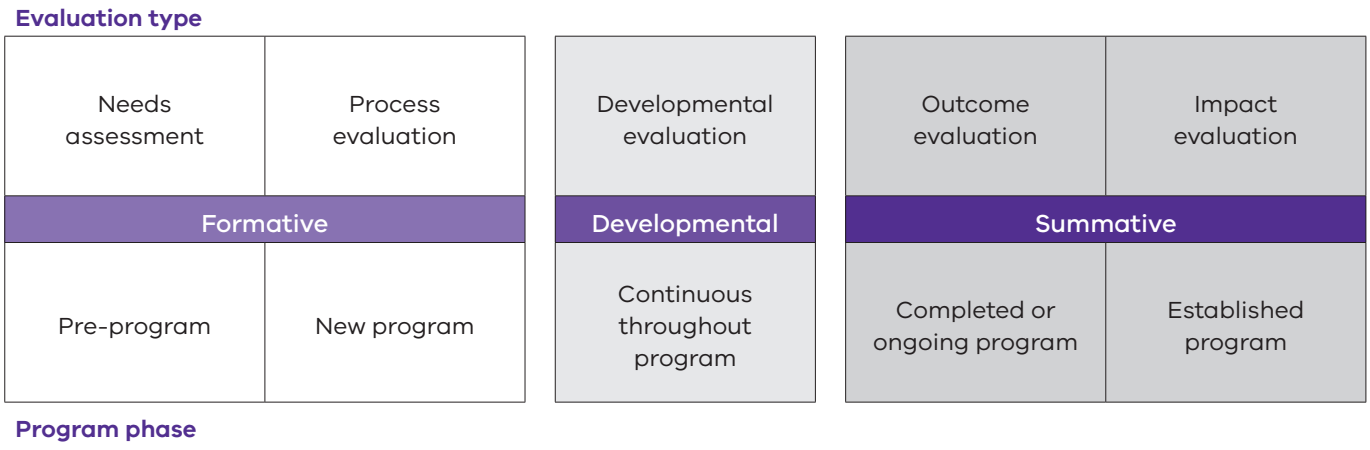
This section provides a brief introduction to different types of evaluation, using the department's Outcomes Framework in evaluation, investment logic mapping and the difference between monitoring and evaluation.

Evaluation is an important element of the policy and program cycle, because it creates an opportunity for departmental learning and evidence-informed decision making. For the department, the use of evidence is key to achieving 'the best health, wellbeing and safety of all Victorians so they can live a life they value.'

Evaluation types

There are many types of evaluation that may be used before, during or after a program is implemented. This guide focuses on the evaluation types most commonly used in the department. Figure 2 provides a brief overview of where each evaluation type sits during a program lifespan.

Figure 2. Evaluation types along a program lifespan



Formative evaluation: Used for program improvement

Needs assessment (prior to program design and delivery)
A needs assessment evaluates the perceived want or need among the target community, to judge whether a program is necessary in a specific context. This process can also help staff decide between different interventions based on their assessment of what is most appropriate in the relevant context.

Process evaluation (during program implementation)
A process evaluation assesses whether program activities are being implemented as intended. Focusing on the program's operations, implementation and service delivery, this type of evaluation helps to distinguish ineffective programs from those that were not properly implemented as intended. This helps the evaluator to differentiate between a flawed program and a flawed implementation strategy.

Developmental evaluation: Used to provide continuous real-time feedback to guide new initiatives

A developmental evaluation is commonly used for emerging initiatives in complex environments. It focuses on conceptualising, designing and testing new approaches through a long-term, ongoing process of continuous improvement and adaptation. Evaluators work closely with program providers to analyse a program's processes as it evolves.

This type of evaluation can assist innovators to develop social change initiatives in complex or uncertain environments, through producing close to real-time feedback on an initiative. It is often used for programs that are innovative and unique. This type of evaluation can be used to support co-design approaches in the department.

Summative evaluation: Used to make an overall judgement of merit or worth

Outcome evaluation (undertaken at program end)
Outcome evaluations measure program effectiveness in the target population by assessing the progress and achievement of program objectives. An outcome evaluation is used to assess the extent to which the program contributed to the desired change.

Impact evaluation (undertaken at least a year after program end)
An impact evaluation is ideally conducted at least two or three years after program implementation. The purpose is to assess the extent to which a given program has achieved sustained impact. This is measured by assessing the impact of the program's activities on a particular population or community.

Economic evaluation: Used to assess resourcing and investment

Economic evaluation is another type commonly used in the department and can be undertaken during the formative or summative stages. It is designed to assess a range of factors, including:

- the degree to which resources have been allocated efficiently
- whether the project provides sufficient returns or benefits on investments
- if sufficient funds and institutional capabilities are available to make project operation sustainable
- whether the distribution of project benefits and costs is consistent with project objectives.

Cost benefit analysis

Cost benefit analysis is a type of economic evaluation that assesses costs and benefits of alternative programs using a common monetary metric. This type of evaluation can occur prior to program delivery to compare program cost estimates with predicted program benefits, or at the end of a program to compare actual program costs with program outcomes. Cost benefit analysis focuses on efficiency by considering results in terms of their value for money.

Incorporating the department's Outcomes Framework into evaluation

The department's Outcomes Framework is central to demonstrating the impact of the department's goals. It provides a way to better understand what works, what doesn't, and why, by measuring outcomes for people and systems reform against thirty-nine key results (see Appendix B). To guide departmental integration of the framework's key results, the department is developing a Health and Human Services Outcomes Strategy.

This strategy will focus on embedding the Outcomes Framework in all areas of our work including:

- performance, accountability and funding arrangements
- service system design
- workforce development and sector readiness
- information and communication technology
- information-sharing mechanisms
- the broader policy cycle.

Using the department's Outcomes Framework in evaluation activities will support staff to effectively design, measure and identify the impact of individual programs, initiatives and policies against the key results. This whole of government outcomes approach will increasingly drive the Victorian Government's investment cycle and corporate strategic planning cycle.

This means the department's evaluation activities have a key role to play in identifying how effectively departmental programs and policies align with the key results in the Outcomes Framework. Evaluation activities should present analysis that provides insight and creates evidence for action to inform appropriate investment decisions.

The Outcomes Framework should be used to inform the scoping of evaluation across the department. The Framework will be useful in different ways, depending on the evaluation type being conducted (see Figure 2). Using the Framework will ensure evaluation activities identify whether programs and policies are on track to meet the key results identified by the department.

Investment logic mapping

Investment logic mapping is undertaken prior to the design of a program. It is a process used to determine the most appropriate investment for a given problem. This process is commonly used when there is no clear pathway forward, or when there are various options for a given problem. It also helps to test whether investment will impact on the department's priority outcomes, and to ensure chosen programs have the right data to demonstrate impact.

The process of investment logic mapping involves bringing together key stakeholders through a series of workshops to discuss key problems, possible outcomes and benefits to achieve an appropriate investment decision. It is a useful method for understanding and assessing complex or significant investment opportunities, and for ensuring a proposed investment makes sense. This process is designed to demonstrate the core focus of an investment and to answer key questions required to make an investment decision.

The output of investment logic mapping is an investment logic map, which demonstrates the underpinning logic of a chosen investment.

Investment logic mapping is a valuable process to:

- allow an organisation to easily understand and compare investment opportunities
- undertake timely and cost-effective decision making (as they are relatively quick to develop)
- focus on the benefits of an investment (as opposed to solutions) to ensure a program is logically linked to a defined benefit
- ensure all options respond to the problem, deliver the desired benefits and are considered from a cost, time and risk perspective.

Investment logic mapping can be used in numerous situations including:

- shaping a new investment
- prioritising investment proposals
- developing new policy
- monitoring and measuring the delivery of benefits to validate a program or initiative
- evaluating a program for investment
- securing additional funding.

Source: Building Queensland Business Case Development Framework. Investment Logic Mapping Guide. 2016.

The Centre provides support to facilitate investment logic mapping workshops and to develop the investment logic map. For more information, please email cer@dhhs.vic.gov.au.

Evaluability assessment

Before investing in evaluation, it is important to undertake an evaluability assessment. This will help to identify whether or when a program is ready to be evaluated. It will determine the extent to which an intervention can be evaluated in a reliable and credible manner, and inform what evaluation type and method is most suited to a specific program. This process prevents wasting time and resources on premature or inappropriately designed evaluation, reducing the risk of irrelevant or invalid findings.

An evaluability assessment should ideally be conducted before the program commences to ensure the program design includes robust performance monitoring to support a rigorous evaluation. It will also help program staff identify ways to incorporate evaluation measurement into the program design.

If evaluability is not assessed prior to intervention, it can also be undertaken during program implementation or at the end of a program. While scope for corrective action during or at the end of a program is more limited, it can still help program staff determine whether evaluation is worthwhile.

Evaluability assessments help to:

- clarify program objectives
- identify any gaps in program design
- investigate what data is available and where further data can be collected
- inform what evaluation types and methods are most suitable
- confirm whether the program is evaluable.

Source: Methods Lab: ODI, Better Evaluation and DFAT, Evaluability Assessment for Impact Evaluation 2017 and Department of Education and Training, Evaluation Toolkit 2017.

The Centre can provide advice and support to undertake evaluability assessment. For more information, please email cer@dhhs.vic.gov.au.

The difference between monitoring and evaluation

Monitoring

Monitoring is a continuous collection and analysis of program data to measure program progress. Monitoring focuses on the use of allocated resources, and the number and quality of inputs, activities, outputs and outcomes that these resources produce. Monitoring can provide important information to program managers, including whether the program is being implemented on time, whether it needs quick adjustments to improve program delivery or whether immediate outcomes are being achieved.

Evaluation

Evaluation is a periodic systematic enquiry of the merit and worth of an activity, against a set of implicit or explicit criteria for the purpose of improvement. One distinguishing feature of evaluation is that it goes beyond routine performance monitoring and provides a judgement of value. While monitoring focuses on the inputs, activities and outputs, evaluation focuses on the medium and longer-term outcomes of a program by measuring the extent to which the program objectives have been achieved. See Table 1 for a summary of differences between monitoring and evaluation.

Why monitoring is important for good-quality evaluation

Good performance monitoring provides a critical basis for evaluation. The input, activity and output data collected during the monitoring phase produces crucial evidence for the evaluation, and supports the continual improvement of programs and practice. It enables the evaluator to understand how the program was delivered, including whether program outputs were implemented according to plan.

Monitoring primary data reduces the evaluator's workload and helps the evaluator make a more informed judgement about the program's effectiveness or ineffectiveness. Good monitoring data highlights any challenges that occurred during the program, allowing the evaluator to better understand the program context.

Table 1. Differences between monitoring and evaluation

	Monitoring	Evaluation
Timing	Continuous/ongoing	Periodic
Scope	What the project: • uses (inputs) • does (activities) • produces (outputs and short to medium-term outcomes)	Differences/changes made Progress towards program implementation (process) Progress toward objectives (outcomes) Contribution to the goal (impact)
Concerns	Project implementation and management Identifying emerging and unforeseen issues for correction	Reasons and learning for approaches that worked well or did not work well Level of judgement as to overall quality and value
Main participants	Project staff	Project staff External evaluators

Source: Markiewicz, A. Australian Evaluation Society. 2017.

Planning an evaluation: Stage 1 scoping

Scoping is the first stage of planning an evaluation and helps to determine the evaluation parameters.

It includes:

- developing a program theory and program logic
- clarifying the evaluation context and purpose
- formulating the evaluation questions
- identifying stakeholders
- clarifying budget, resources and timelines.

Most importantly, scoping helps to inform the second stage of evaluation planning: the evaluation design stage (see page 24).

Developing the theory of change and program logic

Before planning the evaluation, it is important to clarify the purpose of the program being evaluated. What is the problem or situation? What is the program trying to achieve? What is the underlying theory of change?

Theory of change

A theory of change is a conceptual representation of how change will occur. It can be developed based on research, literature and practice experience, and focuses on how change is expected to occur in a given program.

As shown in Figure 3, a theory of change conceptually maps out the theoretical chain of events during a program. For example, if a program aims to increase employment opportunities for young people in out-of-home care, one theory of change might look like this:

Figure 3. Example of theory of change

A theory of change outlines the underlying assumptions of the change process. For example, the program theory assumes that increased enrolment in education and skills training will improve young people's confidence to apply for jobs. If this assumption is wrong, it may limit the success of the program.

It is important to identify program assumptions to ensure they are realistic and to help staff recognise possible program risks or limitations. The assumptions will also support staff to develop their evaluation appropriateness questions. See page 14 for guidance on how to develop evaluation appropriateness questions.

Program logic

A program logic is an operational representation of the theory of change that focuses on the resources, planned activities, outputs and outcomes over time, which will help the program meet its desired change. A program logic shows a chain or flow of events that corresponds to the time period of program implementation.

It is important to involve stakeholders in the development of a program logic when planning a program and evaluation. Engagement with stakeholders can facilitate common language about a program and build a shared understanding of how it will work. Before developing a program logic, identify the program goal and program objectives outlined in Figure 4. The 'elements' of a program logic are defined in Figure 5.

Developing a theory of change and program logic assists with:

- establishing agreement between all program stakeholders about the program aim and program implementation. This will help to resolve different expectations at the beginning of a program
- increasing the likelihood of program effectiveness by identifying gaps in the program design
- testing the theory behind a program to identify and mitigate any potential program risks
- providing a strong basis for monitoring and evaluating the program by defining the key outcomes expected to occur. This will help inform the evaluation questions, design, method and data collection.

Developmental evaluation approaches do not rely on program logic as much as more traditional evaluation approaches. However, it may still be useful to develop one, even if it changes over time as the program and evaluation develops and changes, as it provides the background for why the initial approach was selected.

Ideally, theory of change and program logic are developed as part of the program design. However, they can be developed at any point during the implementation of a program. In an evaluation, this generally occurs as part of the evaluation plan because they are important tools for the evaluation process. Program theory and program logic are best developed jointly with key stakeholders. This can be achieved through a workshop run by an experienced facilitator.

The Centre can facilitate these workshops. For more information, please email cer@dhhs.vic.gov.au.

Figure 4. Program goal and objectives

Program goal

Overarching high-level goal for the program.
The goal is used to measure impact during an evaluation.

Identify the program objectives

The objectives sit under the goal and outline specific directions for desired change.
The objectives are used to guide decision making around inputs, activities and outputs, and to measure whether the outcomes have been achieved during an evaluation.

Figure 5. Program logic

Situation	Input	Activities	Outputs	Short-term and medium-term outcomes	Long-term outcomes
What is the current situation or problem the program will address?	What resources will be used to achieve the outputs (for example, funding, staffing and materials)?	What will the program do (for example, skills training, establishing partnerships and providing services)?	What activities is the program expected to produce (for example, training delivered, partnerships developed and services provided)?	These describe the expected short and medium-term changes during program implementation and at program end. They indicate the extent to which the objectives of a program are being or have been achieved. These results can be measured when conducting a process (short term) or outcome (medium term) evaluation.	Long-term outcomes are those measured two or three years after program implementation. They indicate the extent to which the overarching program goal has been achieved. These outcomes can only be measured when conducting an impact evaluation.

External factors

These are the potential issues that are not directly relevant to the evaluation, but may influence the outcome of the evaluation.

Clarifying the purpose of the evaluation

The second step of planning an evaluation is to define its purpose. What is the context for the evaluation? Why is it being conducted? How will it be used?

Understanding the context

Understanding the context in which an evaluation occurs will provide important background and perspective when planning the evaluation. Mapping out the context is useful to clearly articulate the specific geographical regions and communities the evaluation will cover. This will help the evaluation team to define the evaluation purpose, identify the key stakeholders and understand their needs and expectations.

Identifying the evaluation purpose

The evaluation's purpose will help determine the evaluation resources and timeframes, key stakeholders, questions and the evaluation design. When identifying the purpose or purposes, it may be useful to think about whether the evaluation is intended to:

- improve and inform policy, providing an evidence base to develop future options and alternatives
- support and determine budget priorities, identifying cost efficiencies and resource allocation options
- drive service or system improvement, resulting in changes to existing or future programs and policies
- meet a compliance requirement to show accountability and transparency, such as lapsing program evaluation standards for the Department of Treasury and Finance (DTF).

Developing the evaluation questions

Developing evaluation questions is a critical part of the evaluation process. The questions will identify the information that needs to be collected to effectively measure a program's contribution to change. Evaluations are always constrained by budget, time, data availability and resources, which means they cannot investigate everything. Identifying quality evaluation questions will help to target the evaluation.

The evaluation questions should reflect the evaluation purpose and the type of evaluation you are conducting. See pages 3-5 for detailed information on evaluation types.

Key steps in developing evaluation questions

Developing evaluation questions can be done in a number of ways, but generally consists of:

- **consulting with stakeholders** – initially, questions are generated by seeking input from key stakeholders of the evaluation. Different stakeholders often have different information requirements, so it is important they all have an opportunity to contribute. Their involvement will also increase their interest in and support for the evaluation
- **prioritising questions** – considering the purpose of the evaluation, identify which are the most important questions and rank them

- **considering existing and required data:**
  - It is worth considering whether existing information, such as operational, unit record, forecasting and linked data can be used to answer any of these questions. This will not only save money but also time and effort (including that associated with the burden of duplicative data requests), and may provide broader context and impact for an evaluation. See section 4 for further detail on using existing data and information.
  - After identifying existing data, consider what new data needs to be collected during program delivery to support the evaluation questions, and to help determine whether the program is achieving the required outcomes. This process will form part of the monitoring and involves collecting real-time program data to help an evaluator answer the evaluation questions and determine the impact of the program.
- **selecting final questions:**
  - The final selection of evaluation questions is determined by the extent to which the questions can be answered, given the constraints of the evaluation (time, budget, data availability and resources).
  - Most evaluations will select between three and seven key questions, and add sub-questions to investigate important detail. It is better to answer a few evaluation questions well with good-quality data, rather than stretch the evaluation resources across many questions.
  - When developing evaluation questions, refer to the department's Outcomes Framework and/or the program area outcomes frameworks to ensure the questions provide scope for measuring programs, initiatives and policies against the key results outlined in these frameworks. It is also worth checking the evaluation purpose here and considering carefully whether the key questions can be answered and whether there are any questions that sit out of the scope of the evaluation. For more information on incorporating the department's Outcomes Framework into evaluation questions, see page 5.

If your program is funded through a Budget measure, you will need to meet the Department of Treasury and Finance's Evaluation policy and standards for lapsing programs, which includes specific evaluation questions to be answered. See Table 8 for these evaluation questions.

Key ways to break down the evaluation questions

When developing evaluation questions, it is useful to break them down into the five categories of:

- appropriateness
- effectiveness
- efficiency
- impact
- sustainability.

These categories reflect important focus areas of an evaluation. When conducting a formative evaluation, only the first three categories will be relevant. Whereas a summative evaluation will use all five categories to measure the extent of change a program has achieved.

Appropriateness

Appropriateness questions investigate the extent to which a program is, or was, appropriate for the specific target population and context. These questions can be developed using the assumptions identified in the program theory. See page 9 for more detail on identifying key assumptions.

Effectiveness

Effectiveness questions investigate the extent to which a program has been effective. These questions can be developed using the objectives identified when developing the program logic. When developing these questions, refer to the key results of the department's Outcomes Framework to capture whether the program is or is not achieving the department's overarching goals. See page 5 for information on the Outcomes Framework and page 11 for more detail on identifying program objectives.

Efficiency

Efficiency questions investigate the extent to which the program has been cost effective. For example, these questions can compare the cost with program benefits.

Impact

Impact questions measure the extent to which a program is on track to or has achieved its goal. These questions can be guided by the overall goal of the program. See page 11 for more detail on a program goal.

Sustainability

Sustainability questions measure the extent to which there is funding or policy support for a program. They may also measure the extent to which the program is bringing about sustainable outcomes for the given community. These questions could investigate levels of support or endorsement from local councils, community organisations, and state and Commonwealth government departments.

Examples of evaluation questions for different types of evaluation

See Tables 2 to 7 for examples of evaluation questions.

Table 2. Formative: Needs assessment

Evaluation measure	Evaluation questions	Program stage	Focus/purpose
Appropriateness	What are the particular needs of this region/community in relation to a particular issue? To what extent will the program respond to the identified need/ problem appropriately? To what extent will the program meet the needs of the individual communities (is it culturally appropriate for the target community/ies)?	Prior to program implementation	An evaluation is undertaken to make decisions about a potential intervention These questions are designed to help program staff determine whether a program is necessary in a particular context, or help staff decide which is the most appropriate program to implement. The questions look at existing program provision, infrastructure, and present and future needs.
Effectiveness	To what extent will the program inputs, activities and outputs lead to the desired outcomes? What would make the most difference to the region/ community, considering all other policies and programs in place? To what extent is this program likely to be effective? To what extent is the program likely to achieve its outcomes, in comparison to other program options?		
Efficiency	To what extent will the program resources be sufficient to implement this program? To what extent will the program provide value for money? To what extent will the project resources be sufficient to implement this program? How should resources be allocated to service the total range of needs identified?		

Table 3. Formative: Process evaluation

Evaluation measure	Evaluation questions	Program stage	Focus/purpose
Appropriateness	To what extent is this program responding to the identified need/problem? To what extent is the program still relevant, despite context changes (if context changes occur)? To what extent is the program design suitable to meet desired outcomes? To what extent are the activities culturally appropriate in this program context?	During program implementation	To gauge whether program implementation is going according to plan and if participant response is positive. Considers how the program is delivered, including efficiency, quality and client satisfaction. This can support program and process improvements as part of implementation. It also helps to differentiate ineffective programs from those that were not implemented as intended, when conducting an evaluation.
Effectiveness	To what extent is the program being implemented as expected? How well is it going? Is the program understood by providers? To what extent are the program participants responding positively to the program? To what extent are the outputs being realised? How does it compare to engagement, in particular, activity last year? Are there differences in achievement at different program sites? If so, why? Are there differences in the quality of support across the region? What effect is this having on the quality of programs across the region? To what extent are there positive signs of change attributable to the program?		
Efficiency	To what extent are the budget and resources sufficient for effective program implementation and delivery? If not, is there opportunity for further resourcing?		

Table 4. Summative: Outcome evaluation

Evaluation measure	Evaluation questions	Program stage	Focus/purpose
Appropriateness	To what extent did the program appropriately meet the needs of the target group(s)? To what extent was the program culturally appropriate?	After program implementation is complete	Focus is on the existing program and the extent to which it has achieved its objectives.
Effectiveness	To what extent did the program contribute to the program aim? Has it delivered the outcomes sought for participants? Are participants satisfied?		
Efficiency	To what extent did the program have sufficient resources to implement as originally planned? Or were program staff limited in their ability to satisfy all program requirements?		
Impact	To what extent did the program contribute to the desired change mapped out in the program theory/program logic?		
Sustainability	Has this program been recognised and endorsed by the relevant governance or authorising bodies? Are key stakeholders supportive of the program and proposing continued funding?		

Table 5. Summative: Impact evaluation

Evaluation measure	Evaluation questions	Program stage	Focus/purpose
Appropriateness	Have there been any unanticipated outcomes (desirable or undesirable)?	At least two years after program completion	Focus is on the extent to which the goals of the given intervention have been achieved through demonstrating their sustained impact.
Effectiveness	Were the real goals reflected in program statements? Have some programs performed better than others in achieving desired goals? Have program participants achieved sustained benefits (employment rates, positive health outcomes) in comparison to two years ago? And was this program a factor in supporting them to get there?		
Efficiency	To what extent were the resources and support mechanisms effective in supporting program provision?		
Impact	To what extent has the program goal been achieved across the region?		
Sustainability	Has this program been integrated into long-term state or local policy and planning arrangements?		

Table 6. Economic: Cost benefit analysis

Evaluation measure	Evaluation questions	Program stage	Focus/purpose
Appropriateness	To what extent is this program appropriate, in terms of its ratio of investment made to value delivered?	Can be conducted during the design phase or once the program has ended	Focus is on the extent to which the intervention has delivered benefits, considering the investment made.
Effectiveness	To what extent has this program been effective in achieving its outcomes, while remaining within the budget parameters?		
Efficiency	To what extent is this program value for money, compared to other possible interventions? To what extent does this program have the sufficient resources to achieve its objectives?		

Source: Tables 2-6 are adapted from: Owen, J. Program Evaluation: Forms and Approaches, 2006

Table 7. Developmental evaluation

Crafting questions for this type of evaluation does not follow the systematic structure used for the other evaluation types identified. See below, numerous example questions that are appropriate for a developmental evaluation.

Evaluation questions
What is the baseline understanding of the situation?
What are the initial conditions and the nature of the environment within which action will occur?
What is emerging as the program unfolds? What does this mean?
How is the context changing? What is the level of uncertainty? Has this changed program direction or priorities?
What are the vision and values that will guide innovation?
What do rapid feedback and initial results reveal about progress in desired directions? (focus on whether results are aligning with the key outcomes identified in the department's Outcomes Framework).
What's working and not working as the program unfolds?
What real-time data and information needs to be collected?
What criteria emerge to tell the difference between working and not working?
What processes and outcomes generate enthusiasm and why?
What are the drivers of the problem – known, assumed and hidden?
What does the problem look like from different perspectives? How do these differences affect the roles and interactions? What are the consequences? What relationships are emerging?
Is the broader environment effecting the program outcomes in a particular way?

Source: Adapted from Quinn Patton M 2011, Developmental Evaluation.

Table 8. Department of Treasury and Finance compulsory questions for lapsing programs

Question 1. Justification/problem	What is the evidence of continued need for the program and role for government in delivering this program?
Question 2. Effectiveness	What is the evidence of the program's progress toward its stated objectives and expected outcomes, including alignment between the program, its output (as outlined in BP3), departmental objectives and any government priorities?
Question 3a. Funding/delivery	Has the program been delivered within its scope, budget, expected timeframe, and in line with appropriate governance and risk-management practices?
Question 3b. Efficiency	Has the department demonstrated efficiency and economy in relation to the delivery of the program?
Question 4. Risk	What would be the impact of ceasing the program (for example, service impact, jobs, community) and what strategies have been identified to minimise negative impacts?
Question 5a. If further funding was provided	Reassess funding required to deliver the program using data collected through service delivery. Does the initial funding allocated reflect the true cost required to deliver the program?
Question 5b. If further funding was provided	What level of efficiencies could be realised?
Limitations	Briefly consider the limitations of the evaluation. For example, discuss methodological limitations such as sampling issues, low response rates, or data issues. This helps enable critical review of the work undertaken.

Identifying stakeholders

Most evaluations will have a wide range of stakeholders with different interests. The identification of key stakeholders should occur early in the evaluation planning process and be documented in the evaluation plan. One common strategy is to map stakeholders who have an influence or will impact the evaluation. The need to add new stakeholders may arise as the evaluation changes and progresses.

Thinking about stakeholder engagement is another element of scoping an evaluation. There are multiple strategies that support successful stakeholder engagement. It may be useful to develop a strategic approach, such as to document the roles, responsibilities, timeframes and communication approaches with stakeholders.

Consider potential issues for stakeholders and desired outcomes from engagement, such as:

- How will stakeholder engagement help achieve the evaluation aims?
- What are the roles, responsibilities and accountabilities for stakeholders?
- What are the risks (if any) posed to the evaluation by stakeholder engagement?
- Has the development of resources to support stakeholder engagement been included in the evaluation plan?
- Which stakeholders do you need to consider to help you achieve the evaluation purpose?

As there are likely to be differences in relationships with stakeholders, the level of engagement will vary. For instance, engagement may include activities to inform, consult and/or collaborate with stakeholders, as shown in Figure 6. The appropriate level of engagement will vary depending on the nature of the program and evaluation. Using a developmental evaluation approach where a program is being co-designed, will usually require a higher level of engagement than a summative evaluation for example.

Figure 6. Levels of stakeholder engagement

Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate/ co-design	Empower
Provide balanced, objective information to assist understanding of the evaluation approach	Obtain feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions in relation to the evaluation	Work directly with stakeholders throughout the evaluation to ensure their concerns and aims are understood and considered	Work with clients and stakeholders to design and implement an evaluation	Empower stakeholders to conduct evaluation

Increasing level of stakeholder engagement →

Source: Adapted from the IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation, International Association for Public Participation

Mixed communication techniques may help maintain stakeholder engagement throughout the evaluation. Consider the use of one-on-one discussions, reference groups, public forums, meetings, email or website updates, phone calls and tools or resources such as discussion papers, particularly in delivering a developmental evaluation where real-time feedback on findings is a key element.

Mapping evaluation resources and timelines

Budget and staff

Estimating resources such as budget and staff requirements is an important part of planning for an evaluation. Tailoring the evaluation budget to the needs of the program is critical for achieving value for money. Costs will vary depending on the size, duration and methodology of the evaluation. When estimating total financial requirements and ensuring appropriate funding is available, it is worth considering the:

- type of evaluation being conducted – this will provide an indication of the evaluation timeframe. A needs assessment is often less resource intensive than a process or developmental evaluation, which often involves data collection and reporting at multiple stages. Outcome and impact evaluations can also be resource intensive, depending on the scope of the evaluation
- scope and complexity of the evaluation – will the evaluator need to travel across different geographic areas to collect data and how many stakeholders will the evaluator need to speak to?
- availability and accessibility of primary and secondary data – if the readily available data is insufficient (for example, if the monitoring data is of poor quality), the evaluators will need to spend more time and resources on sourcing appropriate data or creating new data collection methods, which will increase the costs. This can be ameliorated by ensuring program staff develop good processes to collect performance monitoring data and agree to this at project inception.

See Table 9 for examples of the direct and indirect costs that an evaluation may include.

Table 9. Direct and indirect costs of an evaluation

Direct costs	Indirect costs
• Number of days an evaluator is commissioned for (if external) • Size of the evaluation team • Data collection and storage, including revision of existing data • Travel and logistics (room hire, catering etc.) • Report printing and dissemination of findings	• Internal program and project staff time in managing and overseeing the evaluation, including accessing and arranging for analysis of currently available information • Participant's time (cost of responding to surveys, and/or participating in interviews, focus or reference groups etc.) • Facilities and office space

The Evaluation Plan template provides a table to support staff in planning the evaluation budget and staffing requirements.

Timelines, deliverables and responsibilities

Planning timelines for key activities, deliverables and responsibilities will help to determine the realistic length of an evaluation. It will also help in preparing the Terms of Reference or Request for Proposal (RFP). See page 32 for more information on developing an RFP.

The Evaluation Plan template provides a table to support staff in planning the evaluation timeline, including its key activities, deliverables and responsibilities.

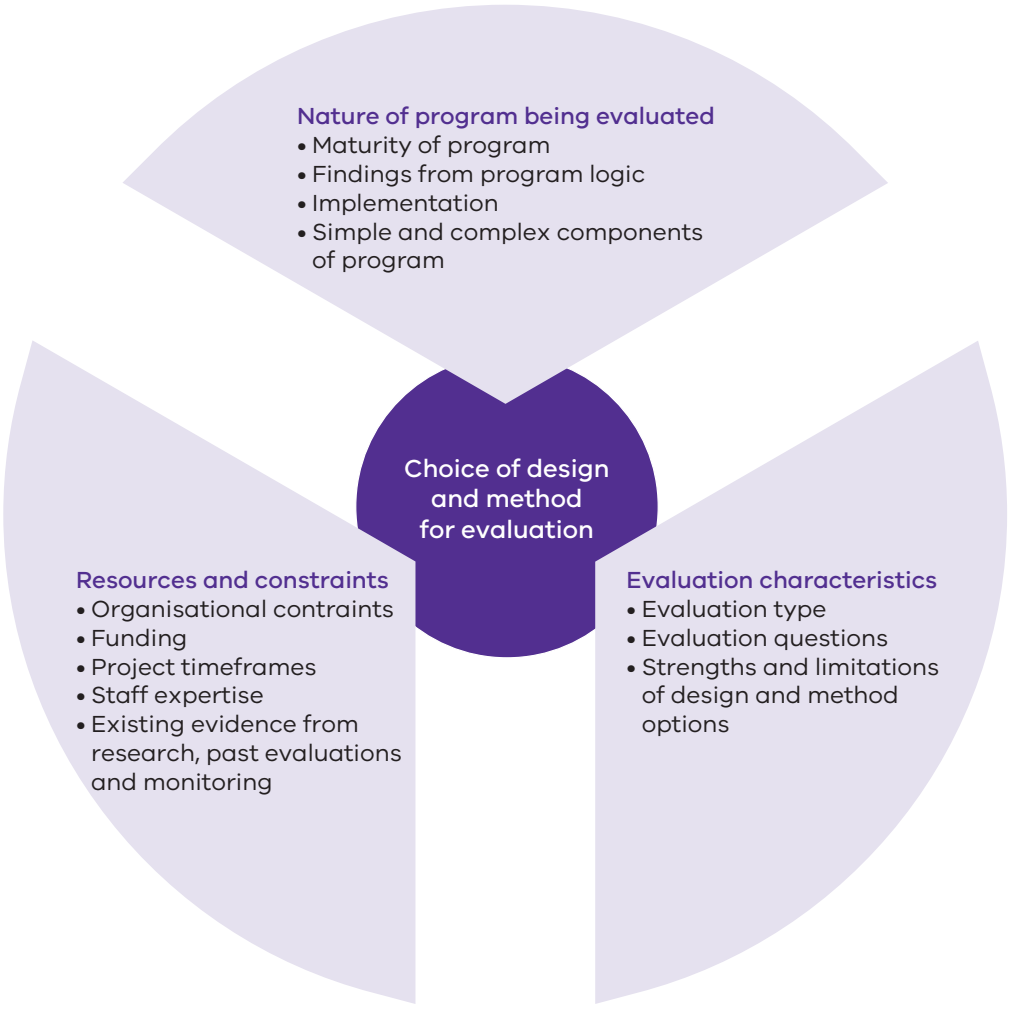
Planning an evaluation: Stage 2 design

The evaluation questions developed during Stage 1 Scoping should be used to inform Stage 2 Design. This section is about the design and methods, and ethical and cultural appropriateness considerations.

Choosing the evaluation design and methods

A tailored evaluation design is essential for the collection of high quality and relevant data to provide meaningful answers to the evaluation questions. The choice of method will be influenced by the evaluation questions, and factors such as available resources and the intended use of findings (see Figure 7).

Figure 7. Influences for choosing an appropriate design and method



Source: Modified from Office of the Chief Economist, 2015, Impact evaluation report, Australian Government.

It may be useful to consult an experienced researcher, evaluator or statistician, as well as the Centre, to identify possible designs and methods. The following sections provide guidance around some of the factors to consider.

The Centre can provide advice on evaluation designs and methods. For more information, please email cer@dhhs.vic.gov.au.

The evaluation or research design

The evaluation design details how the chosen method will be applied to answer the evaluation questions. There are a broad range of evaluation or research designs. The most appropriate design depends on the particular evaluation questions and it is likely that some designs will better address the evaluation questions.

They can be classified as:

- Experimental design – is often used when the evaluation aims to demonstrate program effectiveness. This involves a set of individuals who are randomly allocated to different groups, such as those who receive an intervention or treatment and those whose intervention or treatment is withheld. A randomised control trial is a form of experimental design. The random allocation process creates statistically equivalent groups that enable group comparisons. This in turn enables the intervention or treatment impact to be measured by the difference between the means of the groups. They can assist in obtaining evidence that indicates a program has caused the outcomes observed.
- Quasi-experimental design – often involves a comparison between matched groups. Groups are matched on a number of characteristics that are thought to influence the intervention or treatment outcomes. Matched comparison groups can be selected before project implementation (prospective studies) or afterwards (retrospective studies). Another type of quasi-experimental design is where participants are compared to themselves before and after the intervention or treatment. This is a reflexive comparison (for example, pre-post) where the same participants function as both an intervention or treatment group, and as a comparison group.
- Non-experimental design – is often used where the evaluation seeks to identify needs and ways to improve programs. This encompasses a broad array of designs where the researcher or evaluator explores the phenomena of interest as it naturally occurs. It does not involve the manipulation of randomly or matching comparison groups, nor does it focus on statistical relationships between groups.

A number of designs may suit any given evaluation. For instance, a non-experimental design (for example, descriptive) and a quasi-experimental or experimental design could be used to measure increases in participants' knowledge, skills or behaviours.

The evaluation or research method

In evaluation and research, the term 'method' refers to the techniques that the researcher or evaluator uses to gather data. Methods are characterised by the sources of data, how that data is sampled, and the types of tools or techniques used to collect data. Methods are also characterised by whether they collect qualitative data, quantitative data or both. While a wide range of methods are used in evaluation and research, it is important to identify the method that will be the most meaningful to answer the evaluation questions.

About mixed methods

In an evaluation, it is common to use a mixed method that involves both quantitative (for example, numerical) and qualitative (for example, interview or survey text) data collection and analysis. The differences between these two methods is that:

- Quantitative methods are used to measure the extent and pattern of outcomes across a program. This is often done using surveys, outcome measures and administrative data.
- Qualitative methods often use observation, analysis of text (for example, from interviews and focus groups) to explore the behaviour of people and organisations in detail.

Data obtained through a mixed method provides a level of corroboration between data types, known as 'triangulation.' Multiple evidence sources can present strong findings when each supports the same conclusion, or can show the need for further data collection or analysis when they show differing results. A mixed methods approach also reduces the risk of a misleading result that relies on one type of data.

Consider using existing data

Using existing data can help improve the efficiency and cost effectiveness of an evaluation, while also providing broader context for the evaluators. A significant amount of data is currently collected and reported to the department, including routine data, financial information, performance reporting and case files. It is important to consider using these or other sources of secondary data.

Rather than starting a new process of data collection, it is best practice to investigate existing sources of data first, and to amend those data collections to avoid creating duplicative data sources (at a cost to the department and possibly external providers). A second option may be to use a subset of currently existing data (such as hospital ID, UR number, sex, DOB and postcode), and begin collecting new data that is relevant to the specific focus of the evaluation. This will provide an opportunity for the new data to be linked to the existing data source.

For more guidance on linking datasets, email the Victorian Data Linkage team on vdl@dhhs.vic.gov.au.

It is important to note that once existing data sources are identified, the quality of the data should be determined before using it as part of an evaluation.

Examples of ways existing data can be useful include:

- Departmental data can demonstrate specific trend analysis and impacts at an individual level. Such data is likely to be available where the department either manages the operational systems used by service provider and the department (for example, data relating to mental health clients, child protection and housing services), or where the department has significant holding of unit record data, such as hospital data (admitted, emergency, waiting list, outpatient and other).
- The use of data such as census, local government area profiles or forecasting data can provide greater context to the issue bring evaluated. These are all available within the department.
- A needs assessment can use existing data to ensure staff use supporting data to confirm that the identified problem exists and to guide staff decisions on the most appropriate way forward.
- For a summative evaluation, outcomes data may exist, as the department is working to increase this data set across all program areas.

- The use of linked datasets considers broader impacts and flow-on effects that could help mitigate program risks and support program improvement.

Use of department data must comply with the department's Data Access and Release Policy 2015 to fulfil legislative and ethical requirements.

For concerns around privacy regulations on using existing data, please email the Privacy Team on privacy@dhhs.vic.gov.au.

Outcomes Framework

The Outcomes Framework may have particular relevance to the evaluation method. If the evaluation type is summative (for example, outcome/effectiveness or impact), the evaluation method should be developed with reference to the department's Outcomes Framework. For instance, if the evaluation assesses the effectiveness of an intervention at achieving a particular outcome, then the method should include valid and reliable measures of key result areas for the specific outcomes for clients and system-level results, as identified in the framework.

For more assistance on developing outcome measures, please email melanie.thomson@dhhs.vic.gov.au from the Outcomes Policy Team.

Ethical considerations

The design of an evaluation is shaped by understanding, assessing and managing ethical risks. Determining whether an evaluation should be formally reviewed by a Human Research Ethics Committee depends on the potential impact on participants. A list of factors to consider include:

- Assessment of risks and benefits – a risk is commonly defined as a potential for harm, discomfort or inconvenience. From an ethical perspective, it is essential that the potential benefits justify the risks (if any) of the research or evaluation. It is often useful to consult and engage with others to strengthen judgments about the risks and benefits. The assessment of risk and benefits comprises:
  - identifying any potential risks and who they affect
  - estimating the likelihood of a risk occurring, and the severity or harm if the risk occurred
  - determining the extent and ways in which risk can be minimised
  - identifying any potential benefits and who they affect
  - determining whether the risks are justified by the potential benefits
  - identifying the mechanisms for how risks can be managed.
- Considerations specific to participants – the characteristics of some participants require unique ethical issues to be considered, and many department clients fall within these groups. This includes women who are pregnant, children and young people, people in dependent or unequal relationships, people who are highly dependent on medical care, people with a cognitive impairment, an intellectual disability, or a mental illness, people who may be involved in illegal activities, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.
- Consent – another important ethical consideration is that a person's decision to take part in the evaluation or research is voluntary. Their decision should be based on sufficient information and enable an adequate understanding about the proposed evaluation or research, in addition to the implications of taking part.

- Considerations specific to method – the features of the chosen method are often associated with unique ethical considerations. For instance:
  - care to protect the identity of participants in qualitative methods
  - the process in which data may be collected, stored or disclosed in quantitative studies
  - the randomisation of participants to interventions and therapeutic treatments.

This process of ethical consideration should be informed by applying relevant ethical standards and codes of conduct, including the:

- National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007)
- Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research.

Consider consulting with researchers, stakeholders, Human Research Ethics Committees and other ethical review bodies to determine whether formal review is required, to ensure the evaluation is ethically acceptable. Responsibility for the ethical design, review and conduct of research and evaluation occurs across many levels (for example, HRECs and funding organisations). However, it is the primary responsibility of the researchers or evaluators and the institutions within which they work to ensure the evaluation or research is ethically acceptable.

Ethical guidelines for research involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples

It is essential that evaluations and research are conducted in an ethical, culturally safe and appropriate manner to ensure the health, safety and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and their communities.

The National Health and Medical Research Council has produced ethical guidelines for research involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, which include the:

- Values and ethics: Guidelines for Ethical Conduct in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research (2003)
- Keeping research on track: A guide for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples about health research ethics (2005)

Note that these guidelines are under review.

About the Department of Health and Human Services Human Research Ethics Committee

The Department's Human Research Ethics Committee was established to deal with human research ethics for projects carried out under the aegis of the department, in accordance with guidelines provided by the National Health and Medical Research Council. Ethical application guidelines, submission dates, contact details and other resources are available on the departmental website.

Ensure there are sufficient resources allocated to preparing an ethics application and allow sufficient time for revisions (if needed) to obtain ethical approval. See the above link for information about submissions, including specific submission and meeting dates.

Cultural intelligence

Cultural intelligence aims to foster constructive interactions between members of different cultures, whether that relates to indigenous status, ethnicity, disability, religion, gender, sexuality, and so on. From an organisational perspective, this means demonstrating behaviours, attitudes, policies and practices that enable inclusive, respectful and effective work across diverse cultures.

Evaluations benefit from being designed and conducted in a culturally intelligent way, as this:

- effectively engages stakeholders, subsequently leveraging their input to the evaluation
- helps ensure that data collection is more representative, and making the findings generated more meaningful
- helps to identify and mitigate risks.
- Specific expertise can help ensure cultural intelligence in your evaluation. Within the department, relevant contacts are the:
- Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing Branch, Community Participation, Sport & Recreation, Health & Wellbeing Division
- Diversity and Office for Disability Branch, Community Participation, Sport & Recreation,
- Health & Wellbeing and Partnership Division.

The department also provides training in cultural awareness.

Determining governance arrangements

Governance arrangements provide the systems and processes for decision making during the evaluation. Specifying who will make or contribute to decisions at the beginning of the evaluation will help ensure all evaluators and relevant stakeholders are aware of these decision-making bodies throughout the evaluation process.

Some things to consider when establishing governance arrangements are:

- Who is ultimately responsible for the delivery and reporting of the evaluation?
- Who will use and have access to the evaluation?
- Who has authority to make day-to-day decisions regarding the evaluation?
- What are the reporting and communication lines for the evaluators (whether contracted or internal staff) and participants in the evaluation (for example, funded agencies that may be required to submit data)?

Depending on the scale and strategic significance of your evaluation, your governance arrangements may include:

- an evaluation steering committee or governance committee – made up of key stakeholders and potentially external parties to oversee the evaluation plan, the evaluation report and the knowledge dissemination strategy
- an evaluation working group – to read and comment on evaluation deliverables, and provide advice to the program management team on the evaluation
- a program management team – to scope and design the evaluation (in collaboration with external consultant, if applicable), and conduct daily decision making and management of the evaluation.

Commissioning an evaluation

An evaluation can be conducted internally (by your team or the Centre) or externally (by a contracted private or not-for-profit organisation). Useful things to consider when deciding which option to take include:

- available resourcing, including staffing and expertise to conduct an internal evaluation
- budget availability for an external provider
- perceptions of potential conflict of interest that an internal evaluation might create
- expected timeframe of the evaluation.

Evaluation Preferred Provider panel

Many of the department's evaluations are conducted by external consultants.

The Evaluation Preferred Provider (EPP) panel has been established by the department to streamline the procurement process. The panel is a list of providers with demonstrated experience in evaluating service delivery policies, programs and projects in health and human services. All members of the EPP panel are also members of the whole-of-government Professional Advisory Services (PAS) panel.

The EPP panel is not compulsory and there may be some instances where your evaluation will require specialist content knowledge that can only be delivered by specific providers, who may not be on the EPP or the broader PAS panel. In these instances, you should contact the Procurement and Contract Management Branch to determine whether you need an exemption from standard procurement processes.

Contracts suitable for procurement through the EPP panel include:

- lapsing program evaluations
- evaluations of a specific project
- policy reviews
- evaluation of a collection of projects or initiatives
- service and organisation reviews
- system reviews and evaluations.

There are a number of benefits to using the EPP panel, which include that:

- all EPP panel members have passed through an assessment process, demonstrating experience and capability in evaluation and review of health and human services
- using an EPP panel member ensures automatic fulfilment of DTF requirements to use the PAS panel
- using an EPP panel member reduces the administrative work associated with procurement – the contract is already set up, so you just need to do the schedules
- requirements for quotes are less onerous when contracting through the EPP panel
- panel members receive advice and feedback about department expectations for evaluation and review work.

You can find out who the panel providers are, and their contact details via the depeartment's intranet.

The Centre can provide support and input for the development of procurement documents. Staff procuring through the EPP or PAS panel can contact the panel manager, Lisa Thomson, Manager, Evaluation and Research, on 03 9096 1920, or email lisa.thomson@dhhs.vic.gov.au.

Request for proposal or quote

Areas to consider including in a request for proposal (RFP) or request for quote (RFQ) to commission an evaluation include:

- the purpose
- background
- The project scope (evaluation questions and key deliverables)
- assessment of quotes.

Proposed deliverables of the evaluation

Some examples of key deliverables might include:

- an evaluation plan
- a stakeholder communications strategy
- data collection tools
- outlines of sampling or statistical methodologies
- copies of fieldwork summaries or preliminary data analyses
- presentations or briefings
- draft reports
- final reports
- a strategy for communicating findings.

This will assist the contractor to understand how much work is expected to be delivered and the timing of delivery. For example:

- Will data be collected from a sample or will it be collected from everyone involved in the program, and is there potential for current data to be reused?
- How many participants, individuals or groups should be engaged?
- Will there be specific qualitative or quantitative methods or both?
- Will there be field visits, and if so, how many and where?
- Will there be collection of information across the state or only at specific sites?

The Centre can provide support to staff to develop the RFP or RFQ.
For more information, please email cer@dhhs.vic.gov.au.

Communicating and using evaluation findings

This section includes information about applying findings, developing a dissemination strategy, identifying evaluation products, writing evaluation reports and the Knowledge Bank.

A dissemination strategy is a systematic communication plan to ensure that the evaluation findings are used and shared with key internal and external stakeholders. The strategy should be created at the start and revised (as needed) throughout the evaluation process. See Table 10 for questions to consider when developing a dissemination strategy.

Table 10. Considerations for developing a dissemination strategy

Key audiences	Key dissemination purpose	Evaluation products	Budget and resources	Dissemination events/ timeframes
• Who are the key audiences? (e.g. internal, external stakeholders, clients, academia and the public)	• What are the key purposes for dissemination? (e.g. building capacity, generating knowledge, transparency and improving services).	• What types of evaluation products are needed to encourage use of findings (e.g. presentations, briefings to executives, fact sheets, journal articles and reports)?	• What are the budget and resources available? • Are there low-cost opportunities to share findings (such as Knowledge Bank, staff forums and existing stakeholder meetings)?	• What are the events that could be used to disseminate findings (e.g. staff forums, executive meetings and conferences)? • What are the timeframes given for the development and dissemination of evaluation products?

Source: Modified from the United Nations Development Fund for Women Evaluation Unit, 2009, Guidance Note on Developing an Evaluation Dissemination Strategy. Evaluation Guidance Note Series No. 10 December 2009, United Nations Development Fund for Women.

Application of evaluation findings

The application or use of evaluation findings often involves:

- communications to ensure stakeholders consider the findings
- acting on findings and recommendations (monitoring progress against recommendations helps to ensure that recommended practice improvements are realised)
- a dissemination strategy to support shared knowledge from the evaluation.

Findings are likely to influence the program, initiative or activity that was evaluated. They may also have implications for the development of future programs or policy. Findings from lapsing programs are required to be used to inform budget processes.

There are a number of ways that findings from an evaluation can be applied to decision-making processes. Consider the use of findings in:

- budget proposals
- strategic planning
- divisional, branch and unit planning
- policy development
- changes to policies or procedures
- program or service development
- training updates or development of new training
- management of service agreements and contracts
- ministerial or executive briefings
- performance reports and updates.

Evaluation products

There is a range of ways that knowledge created from an evaluation can be shared and used through different types of products. Often, various evaluation products are specified in the RFQ or proposal and included in deliverables.

The target audiences for these products are likely to include evaluation stakeholders and interested parties, in addition to the broader service sector, including government and academia.

Consider the use of multiple products to meet the needs of different key audiences, including:

- an evaluation report
- forums, presentations, video-conferencing or webinars
- innovative formats (for example, the use of audio-visual technology to produce short films)
- participant summaries
- briefs or memos
- pamphlets
- announcements (for example, websites or emails)
- press releases
- newsletter articles
- Board or sub-committee agenda items
- journal articles (findings may inform areas for future research or evaluation, particularly where there are gaps in evidence).

Contact the department's Communications and Media Branch to help identify appropriate communication avenues and improve the effectiveness of evaluation products.

Writing evaluation reports

The Centre has developed an optional 'evaluation report template' to help produce credible and consistent evaluation reports. The template includes a number of headings as a general guide for how to structure an evaluation report. It is based on the headings required in evaluation reports for the DTF.

The structure can be adjusted for lapsing or non-lapsing programs. Brief information about the structure is provided below. The detail in each section, under headings and sub-headings can be tailored to suit the target audience. This includes the:

- Executive summary – the purpose of this section is to convey the key and most important information about the evaluation.
- Introduction and context – the purpose of this section is to introduce the context (what is known about the issue) and the activity, program or initiative that was evaluated. Detail about the evaluation framework should also be provided.
- Design, methodology and data – the purpose of this part of the report is to give readers an overview of how the evaluation was conducted and confidence that the methods used generated sound findings and conclusions.
- Key findings – this section presents the findings or results. One way to organise this section is by 'telescoping', which means providing a statement in relation to the evaluation objective or questions, and then providing the findings that support the conclusion.
- Subheadings for lapsing program evaluation reports, in order to meet DTF requirements, should include:
  - Question 1. Justification and problem
  - Question 2. Effectiveness
  - Question 3a. Funding and delivery
  - Question 3b. Efficiency
  - Question 4. Risk
  - Question 5a. If further funding was provided
  - Question 5b. Limitations.
- Key conclusions – the purpose of this section is to summarise and reinforce the main messages about what was found from the evaluation.
- Recommendations – this section should be included if recommendations are requested in the Terms of Reference.
- References used in the body of the report should be included. There are a number of ways these are formatted, such as the Harvard Style.
- Appendices are a useful way to include information in your report that could distract the reader from the main body of the report. Generally, each item has its own appendix. Examples of items you might include are:
  - terms of reference
  - a stakeholder consultation list in an aggregate form (for example, no names or gender)
  - a literature review
  - program logic
  - detailed information about methodology (for example, interview schedule for data collection)
  - the evaluation plan.

Please email the Centre for peer review and comment on draft evaluation reports at cer@dhhs.vic.gov.au.

Sharing findings through the Knowledge Bank and Meta

Knowledge Bank

The Centre provides support to disseminate evaluation findings for internal use and distribution through the Knowledge Bank. This delivers an interface for department staff to search for internal evaluation reports, literature reviews, epidemiological studies and other examinations of the department's services.

Department staff are strongly encouraged to share findings from evaluations through the Knowledge Bank. Access to evaluation reports is invaluable to the department, as it provides evidence to inform decisions.

If you would like to contribute to the Knowledge Bank, please return the Evaluation and research knowledge bank report submission form by email to cer@dhhs.vic.gov.au and include 'Report submission' in the subject line. The submission form is available through the department's intranet.

Meta

The department operates in a regulated environment and is the custodian of a significant amount of information. One important source of information is known as Meta. Metadata refers to information that identifies and describes a record and its contents. It is an important tool that is used to describe, access and share information. Different types of records have different metadata requirements, including evaluation reports or products.

The department also maintains an information asset register, a component of Meta. Over time, the information asset register will provide descriptions and contact details for all significant departmental information assets.

Meta is managed by the Information Management Policy and Coordination Team, Business Technology and Information Management. For more information about requirements to record the evaluation report and other products, please contact the team on 03 9096 2632 or email info.management@dhhs.vic.gov.au.

Evaluation contribution to information assets

Evaluation can contribute to the development of information assets. The evaluation process creates and uses a range of information assets, which include, but are not limited to:

- transactional and analytical data, including extracts of unit record service delivery, aggregate summary statistics, forecasting, linked and monitoring data, and indicators and measures such as trends (for example, those relating to Outcomes Frameworks and public reporting in annual reports)
- documents, including previous audits, reviews and evaluations.

Any new information assets, such as evaluation reports, should be added onto Meta to ensure central storage of departmental data.

Appendix A. Glossary

Table 1. Glossary of evaluation-related terms

Accountability	Obligation of government or its agencies to demonstrate to citizens that money has been spent effectively, work has been conducted in compliance with agreed rules and standards, and to report fairly and accurately on performance results
Action research	A family of research methodologies that pursue action (or change) and research (or understanding) at the same time. They are done both for and by those implementing the program to assist the program implementers to improve their action. Consequently, action research is both participatory and qualitative. See also Qualitative research
Activities	Use inputs (resources) to deliver products or services (outputs), typically to clients, stakeholders or staff
Appropriateness	An evaluation of appropriateness is concerned with whether the program design is appropriate to meet an identified need and the program's outcomes, and whether any context changes have affected the appropriateness of the program design
Assumptions	Generally, assumptions are made about what needs to go right for the project logic process to play out as anticipated, that is, for outputs to lead to short-term outcomes, short-term outcomes to lead to medium-term outcomes and medium-term outcomes to lead to long-term outcomes. Consequently, assumptions will frequently include factors beyond the direct control of the program
Attribution	Attribution relates to the relationships between the program and the resulting outcomes, and asks to what extent the program can be said to have caused the documented outcomes. This is as opposed to the changes being the result of something other than the program. This is an important concept in impact evaluation
Audience	Includes individuals, groups and organisations whose information needs are specifically being addressed in the evaluation. They may also be stakeholders, but the manner in which information from the evaluation is disseminated is guided by their information needs. See also Stakeholder
Audit	Determines whether an activity meets specific standards (checking and improving). This could be a financial or non-financial audit
Baseline	Information collected before or at the start of a program that provides a basis for assessing the effects of the program on its expected outcomes
Benefits realisation	The process of identifying, organising, managing and measuring benefits, so that potential benefits arising from investments are actually achieved and maximised where possible. These benefits can be seen as a way of wording a program outcome
Comparison group	Concept relates to impact evaluation. This is where an equivalent group who did not participate in the program are studied to determine the effects of the program. In a comparison group, the program participants and comparison group participants have not been randomly selected

Context	The environment in which a program is operating
Contribution	The term attribution refers to the extent to which a change can be directly attributed to a program. Contribution reflects that in some cases the program is not the only cause of a change, but is part of the cause. In this case, evaluators say that the program contributed to the change
Control group	Concept relates to RCTs (see RCTs in glossary). In an RCT, people are randomly allocated to two groups, one that receives the program and another that doesn't. The control group is the group that doesn't receive the program
Cost effectiveness	This term relates to a judgement as to whether the same outcome could have been achieved through a less costly program design
Cost efficiency	This considers whether the same outputs could have been produced more cheaply (for example, whether cheaper or fewer inputs could have been used to produce the outputs)
Counterfactual	What would have happened in the absence of the intervention, compared to the observed situation that was the result of the program? There are many ways to determine the counterfactual
Credibility	The believability of a statement, action or source, and the ability of the observer to believe that statement
Data management	The function that provides access to data, performs or monitors the storage of data, and controls input/output operations
Developmental evaluation	This type of evaluation is relevant when a program is still being created or developed, and those involved are still investigating what is the best type of program to achieve the outcome. It is useful for innovative programs, and complex and uncertain contexts. It helps people developing a program to get ongoing, real-time feedback about how the program is working and then to adapt the program to improve its effectiveness. It is an approach to consider for pilot programs with lots of adaptability and flexibility
Economic evaluation	This approach involves considering the costs involved with the delivery of a program and sometimes putting dollar values on the outcomes achieved by the program. It can be used at the start of program design to compare the costs and effectiveness of two or more possible program alternatives
Effectiveness	Program effectiveness considers to what extent the program is achieving its intended outcomes
Efficiency	The extent to which a program is delivered to effectively achieve outcomes with the lowest possible use of resources, to the areas of greatest need, and continues to improve over time by finding better or lower-cost ways to deliver outcomes
End-of-program outcome	What you expect to be happening differently on the last day of the program
Evaluation	The production of knowledge based on systematic enquiry to assist decision making. It involves collecting information and then making a judgement on the basis of that information to answer some defined questions

Evaluator	The person conducting the evaluation. See also External evaluators; Internal evaluators
External evaluators	Researchers or consultancy units not directly managed by, and independent of, the managers and users of the evaluation external to the evaluation
Formative evaluation	A type of evaluation that is generally focused on learning. It is conducted to inform decisions about how a program may be developed or improved
Goal	An overarching statement of the key focus of the project or program
Impact evaluation	An impact evaluation provides information about the longer-term results produced by an intervention, positive and negative, intended and unintended, direct and indirect. This means that establishing the cause of the impacts is important. Consequently, the issue of attribution is particularly important for impact evaluation
Indicator	A measure for which data is available that helps to quantify the achievement of an outcome, for example, the percentage of children who demonstrated the achievement of appropriate developmental milestones
Inputs	Resources used to implement activities directed towards achieving the desired goals and outcomes. These generally include money, time and people
Intermediate outcome	An outcome that you expect to see achieved while the program is being implemented. It is a sign that your program is on the journey that you expected and is likely to achieve its end-of-program outcome(s)
Internal evaluators	Evaluators who are part of the organisation that is implementing the program, but who are separate from the team implementing the program
Investment logic	A process, usually involving three workshops, which helps decide what type of program would best address the problems identified in your sector
Key performance indicators	Tracking indicators used during a project or program to measure the achievement of outputs against targets
Long-term outcomes	The long-term impacts (changes) expected from the program
Medium-term outcome	The mid-term impact (changes) expected from the program
Meta-evaluation	Evaluation of other reported evaluations or research; assesses quality of designs and conclusions
Mixed research/mixed methods research or evaluation	Research or evaluation that uses both quantitative and qualitative data collection and methods
Monitoring	Monitoring is a continuous process of systematic data collection to check progress in relation to planned inputs, activities and outputs, as well as the use of allocated resources.
Objectives	Objectives are results-orientated statements of what the program intends to achieve. Objectives will usually relate to the functional responsibilities of the Group and relevant departmental objectives
Outcomes	Clear statements of the targeted changes or results expected from the program

Outcome evaluation	Measures to what extent the program produced the expected outcomes
Outputs	The specific products or services produced by the program activities
Participatory research/ evaluation	Research or evaluation where those who have commissioned the research or evaluation are heavily involved in the data collection, analysis and development of findings
Performance measure	A yardstick for measuring the success of outcomes. A measure that comprises data which quantifies the achievement of a desired outcome
Process evaluation	Process evaluation investigates how a program is delivered and may consider alternative delivery processes. It can also be very useful in supporting an outcome evaluation, by describing a program's current operating conditions that are most likely to support or impede success. It helps to distinguish where a program wasn't implemented as expected, as opposed to a program that was ineffective because of a flawed design. Process evaluation findings can be used to adjust program delivery to inform continuous improvement
Program	Generally defined as an organised set of activities directed towards a common purpose or goal, undertaken or proposed by an agency, in order to carry out its responsibilities. In practice, however, the term program has many uses and is used to describe an agency's mission, programs, functions, activities, services, projects and processes.
Program logic	A thinking tool, often presented as a diagram showing the logic or rationale underlying a particular program. It outlines what a program is intended to achieve and how that is intended to happen. A logic model describes the links between project or program objectives, activities, and expected outcomes
Program management	Delivering a project from concept through to completion to achieve the program's objectives
Project	A temporary endeavour undertaken to create a unique product or service that has a defined end date
Qualitative research/ evaluation	Qualitative evaluation uses in-depth written data. This could include case studies, systematically collected stories and in-depth descriptions of processes and outcomes, to generate insights into what program participants experience and what difference those experiences make. It captures data from the perspective of an individual and is sensitive to the context for that person
Quality assurance	Formal process of implementing quality assessment and quality improvement in programs to assure people that professional activities have been performed to a set standard
Quantitative research/ evaluation	Research discovering facts about social experiences and trends where data are collected through measuring things and are analysed through numerical comparisons and statistical inferences. Data are represented numerically in numerous ways (for example, percentages, mean, and averages.). More commonly, data appears as a table or chart

Randomised control trial (RCT)	RCTs are a type of impact evaluation that establishes causation by dividing the population into two equal groups, one of which participates in the program and one that doesn't
Realist evaluation	This evaluation approach seeks to go beyond just establishing whether the program worked, to identifying what works in which circumstances and for whom. It is particularly concerned with understanding the impacts of circumstances
Research	A methodical investigation into a subject in order to discover facts, establish or revise a theory, or to develop a plan of action based on the facts discovered. An activity that meets the Australian Standard Research Classification definition: 'creative work undertaken on a systematic basis in order to increase the stock of knowledge, including knowledge of people, culture and society, and the use of this stock of knowledge to devise new applications'
Review	A systematic way of looking back or reflecting on a service, project, program or policy. This could include a cycle of project or program management, such as a review conducted as part of the finalisation of a project or program, stage, or a compliance review conducted in response to suspected non-compliance. It tends to rely on the professional judgement of the reviewer, based on the available evidence at a point in time, rather than the systematic collection of evidence to answer questions as in an evaluation
Short-term outcome	The changes you expect to see as a result of your program within a short period of time after the program commences implementation
Stakeholder (primary and secondary)	Individual, groups and organisations that have something significant to gain or lose in relation to the project and therefore the evaluation. As such, their interests must be considered in evaluating the program. Stakeholders who are expected to use the evaluation findings are identified as the primary stakeholders, while those who will be interested in the evaluation, but not required to take direct action, are secondary stakeholders
Summative evaluation	Generally conducted for the purpose of accountability, summative evaluation informs decisions about continuing, terminating or expanding a program
Transparency	Transparency is operating in such a way that it is easy for others to see what actions are performed. This includes the disclosure of information that is clear and accurate
Triangulation	Triangulation is a method of cross-checking data from multiple sources to become more certain about your findings.
Value for money	Value for money is a judgement based on the costs of delivering programs, the effectiveness of the outcomes and the equity of delivery to participants.

Source: Department of Education and Training, 2017, Evaluation Toolkit.

Appendix B. Outcomes framework

Our vision: To achieve the best health, wellbeing and safety of all Victorians so that they can live a life they value.

Outcomes for people

Table 1. Victorians are healthy and well

• Victorians have good physical health • Victorians have good mental health • Victorians act to protect and promote health	
Key results	
Result 1.	Reduce the incidence of avoidable harm in Victorian hospitals
Result 2.	Reduce obesity and increase physical activity across Victoria
Result 3.	Increase the proportion of children with healthy birth weight – with a focus on reducing smoking during pregnancy
Result 4.	Reduce infant mortality
Result 5.	Reduce inequalities in premature death
Result 6.	Reduce the suicide rate
Result 7.	Improve rates of self-reported health and wellbeing
Result 8.	Reduce deaths resulting from misuse of prescription medicine
Result 9.	Increase immunisation coverage rates at two years of age and at school entry

Table 2. Victorians are safe and secure

• Victorians live free from abuse and violence • Victorians have suitable and stable housing	
Key results	
Result 10.	Reduce the abuse and neglect of children and young people
Result 11.	Reduce the rate of growth in out-of-home care – especially for Aboriginal children
Result 12.	Reduce the number of children in out-of-home care who live in residential care
Result 13.	Reduce the level of continuing risk for victims of family violence
Result 14.	Identify and respond to bullying, assault and inappropriate behaviour in departmental and public health services to reduce occurrence
Result 15.	Reduce reoffending by young people and return to court-ordered supervision by the department's youth justice services (community and custody)
Result 16.	Reduce the proportion of the population experiencing homelessness – especially victims of family violence, and young people

Table 3. Victorians have the capabilities to participate

• Victorians participate in learning and education • Victorians participate in and contribute to the economy • Victorians have financial security	
Key results	
Result 17.	Increase educational engagement and achievement by children and young people in contact with departmental services – especially those in out-of-home care
Result 18.	Increase participation in 3 and 4-year-old kindergarten by children known to child protection
Result 19.	Increase the satisfaction of those who care voluntarily for people with a disability; people with mental illness; and children in out-of-home care
Result 20.	Increase labour market participation by people with a disability, people with a mental illness, and people living in specified locations and communities

Table 4. Victorians are connected to culture and community

• Victorians are socially engaged and live in inclusive communities • Victorians can safely identify and connect with their culture and identity	
Key results	
Result 21.	Increase rates of community engagement, including through participation in sport and recreation – especially for Aboriginal children and young people
Result 22.	Increase cultural connection for children in out-of-home care – especially Aboriginal children

Service system outcomes

Table 5. Victorian health and human services are person centred and sustainable

• Services are appropriate and available in the right place, at the right time	
Key results	
Result 1.	Increase participation in universal and earlier intervention services – especially by Aboriginal Victorians
Result 2.	Reduce the average wait time for people on the priority housing list
Result 3.	Improve timeliness of access to elective surgery, emergency department treatment, ambulance services and palliative care
Result 4.	Reduce unexplained variation in the care people receive – especially for disadvantaged groups

Table 6. Services respond to choice, culture, identity, circumstances and goals

Key results	
Result 5.	Increase client and patient choice concerning the services and treatment they receive
Result 6.	Increase diversity of the department's workforce – especially Aboriginal people employed in senior roles
Result 7.	Increase citizen engagement in the design and delivery of services
Result 8.	Increase participation of service providers and staff in the design of services

Table 7. Services are efficient and sustainable

Key results	
Result 9.	Reduce demand for acute services to manage complex and chronic conditions
Result 10	Increase the proportion of service assets that are appropriately maintained
Result 11.	Increase the proportion of capital projects delivered on time and within budget
Result 12.	Improve alignment of our health, human services, and community recreation assets with the needs of clients, patients and Victoria's growing population
Result 13.	Reduce waste arising from the use of inappropriate care

Table 8. Services are safe, high quality and provide a positive experience

Key results	
Result 14.	Improve patient and client-reported experiences of care and treatment
Result 15.	Reduce restrictive practices in formal care settings
Result 16.	Increase the transparency of service safety and quality
Result 17.	Reduce assault, exploitation and neglect of clients and patients cared for in formal settings