
Evaluation Workbook IV.

Evaluation plan: Manage the evaluation

Key points

Evaluation management planning should be undertaken when designing the evaluation and before starting an evaluation:

- Establish:
 - clear roles and responsibilities, deliverables and milestones
 - a plan for relationship management.
- Involve the right people.
- Identify relevant standards and approval processes related to cultural appropriateness and ethical conduct (and allow adequate resources and time).
- Identify and cost the activities that will need to be scheduled and resourced.

Introduction

An evaluation management plan establishes roles and responsibilities for key stages of the evaluation, including design, delivery, analysis and reporting.

Evaluation design activities appropriate to include in the management plan are set out in *Workbook I. Foundations for evaluation* (where these may need to be developed or reviewed) and *Workbook III. Evaluation plan: Design the evaluation*. Evaluation reporting and response activities appropriate to include in the management plan are set out in *Workbook VI. Evaluation plan: Report and use evaluation findings*. Evaluation management planning should be undertaken when designing the evaluation.

Evaluation management planning needs to identify what activities should be undertaken and determine what is feasible within available time and resources. Allocate adequate time and resources to develop the evaluation management plan.

Establish a project plan

The evaluation management plan should cover the activities needed **for evaluation design, delivery (data collection), analysis and reporting**, and assign clear roles and responsibilities. It should also include a plan to manage relationships and communications with stakeholders.

The plan should also **identify and cost the activities** that need to be scheduled and resourced under each step of the evaluation (see *Table 2* for examples). For example, data collection may involve ongoing monitoring, or undertaking surveys, interviews, site visits and other travel. Data may need to be purchased or linked and will require analysis and adequate management systems.

The plan should establish **clear deliverables and milestones**, with realistic timeframes. Build flexible timeframes to allow for unanticipated events or any adjustment to the evaluation design or data collection methods.

Prepare for aspects of the evaluation that will need **approval or authorisation**. For example, if existing data sets need to be accessed, notify data owners of upcoming requests, and plan for any actions to ensure that the data will be available and can be used in the evaluation. Consider where legal or data security advice may be needed. Identify **ethical issues** that should be considered and addressed and allow time for relevant approval processes.

Establish a **risk management** process to set out risks that the evaluation may face, and to identify strategies for managing and minimising these. For example, consider risks related to timelines, commissioning, stakeholder engagement, data access and ethical conduct (see [Ethical Conduct](#)). Plan to revisit and update the risk register as the evaluation progresses. NSW Treasury has developed a [Risk Management Toolkit](#) to support agencies in risk monitoring and management processes.

Key features of the evaluation management – particularly governance, stakeholder engagement, and ethics approval processes – can be documented in an Appendix to the Evaluation report (see [Workbook VII. Example evaluation report template](#)).

It is good practice to assign an evaluation manager to lead the development and implementation of the plan.

Involve the right people

Relationships and communication are important

Work with key stakeholders in designing the evaluation and developing the management plan. This may include agency executives, initiative managers, key delivery staff, customers/clients, and people and communities who are impacted by or may have an interest in the initiative and evaluation findings.

Table 1 gives examples of key stakeholder groups, their potential interest in evaluation, and key processes or decision-making points, and where it may be suitable to involve them. Use processes, such as stakeholder mapping (see [Resources. Useful references](#)), to identify and categorise stakeholders in line with their potential interests and roles within the evaluation.

Seek guidance from the communications and stakeholder engagement teams of the cluster on how to collaborate with external stakeholders.

Seek advice from the evaluation leads within the cluster on where engagement with NSW Treasury is appropriate. In these cases, engage with NSW Treasury at the planning stage of the evaluation and before starting procurement processes.

Evaluation governance

A governance structure for managing an evaluation will need to be established.

A well-defined governance structure can support:

- clear roles and responsibilities
- clear processes for decision-making
- accountability among stakeholders.

Governance arrangements should match the purpose and scale of the evaluation. Governance may be from within the agency or include external stakeholders. In most cases, governance should include leadership above initiative management and delivery representatives from within the agency or from partner agencies. Coordinate governance arrangements for the evaluation with any governance arrangements already established for initiative monitoring or under Benefits Realisation Management.

For a large or complex evaluation, governance can include a **steering committee** to provide direction or advice at various stages of the evaluation. The committee may also involve representatives from key stakeholder groups (as below). A Terms of Reference (ToR) can be developed to identify the responsibilities of the steering committee, including how approval processes will operate.

Stakeholder collaboration

Evaluation will be strengthened through involving customer and community stakeholders, and can be used as an opportunity to build relationships.

When stakeholders are involved early and during the evaluation process, the evaluation can be better focused on relevant concerns, and the findings and recommendations are likely to be better understood and supported.

Stakeholder collaboration is a negotiated process with stakeholders likely to have varying perspectives on the initiative and the evaluation. Be clear regarding what the evaluation will be able to consider and what it can achieve.

The stakeholder engagement approaches used should be appropriate to the initiative, the scope of the evaluation, and opportunities to inform decision-making. Strategies to effectively support stakeholder collaboration may include:

- Identify different stakeholder groups that should be involved, and provide a safe, and respectful environment where different perspectives and experiences can be shared.
- Actively involve stakeholders in planning or making decisions about the evaluation, including establishing priorities, identifying what questions are important and ensuring that the design and methods are suitable.
- Empower stakeholders to deliver aspects of the evaluation.
- Ensure information and findings are shared in accessible formats and at suitable times.
- Highlight how stakeholder involvement has shaped process and outcomes.

An **advisory group** can be established to provide advice and review at various stages of the evaluation. The group can incorporate a range of perspectives, areas of expertise and interests. Members may include agency staff, external subject matter experts, or representatives of target population groups.

For outcome evaluation and ex-post cost-benefit analysis (CBA), best-practice is to **work with stakeholders** to test assumptions about outcomes and benefits and explore the breadth of impacts (including identifying unintended impacts) of an initiative. It may be appropriate to share preliminary findings with key stakeholders to test how results are understood.

Allow adequate time and resources for genuine co-design and partnership with stakeholders. To support their involvement, the evaluation timeframes and resourcing should accommodate relationship building and community participation. Consider factors that may impact the ability of stakeholders to participate, including any key events in their schedules. An evaluation with multiple stakeholders, or with stakeholders with additional communication requirements (for example, translations or in-person workshops), may need additional time and resourcing.

A wider group of stakeholders (beyond those directly involved), who may have an interest in evaluation findings, can be updated at key stages of the evaluation.

Table 1 presents example stakeholder interests and potential roles in evaluation.

Table 2 presents an example template for scoping evaluation activities and their potential costs.

Table 1: Stakeholder interest and potential roles in evaluation

Stakeholder	Interest in evaluation	Potential roles in evaluation
Executive leadership	Senior executives are responsible for ensuring the delivery of outcomes, identifying the decisions that will be informed by the evaluation, communicating findings to Ministers, and ensuring that findings are acted upon.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Endorse and advocate evaluation activity • Establish expectations of the evaluation • Approve funding • Approve public release of reports • Use the evaluation to inform decisions regarding the initiative
Initiative manager	The initiative manager holds responsibility for delivering outcomes and for implementing change.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop logic model (with key stakeholders) at initiative design • Scope focus of evaluation, evaluation questions, and potential risks • Appoint evaluation manager (including commissioning where used) • Ensure feedback to executive and initiative stakeholders • Be transparent regarding response to recommendations • Participate in evaluation steering committee
Cluster evaluation unit/ evaluators	Cluster evaluation units or internal evaluators may be well positioned to manage the overall evaluation process and governance arrangements and provide an independent (from the project and delivery team) perspective. Engage technical experts, such as from the economics unit within a cluster, to contribute to components of evaluation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide advice on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ evaluation standards and design ◦ performance reporting requirements across the cluster ◦ other appraisal/evaluation activities across the cluster ◦ ethical standards and required approval processes. • Develop evaluation design (with initiative manager and team) • Undertake evaluation or assist in commissioning (for example, assist with draft tender ToR and project management) • Participate in evaluation steering committee or an advisory group • Provide peer review
Delivery team	People involved in delivering the initiative will have important background knowledge to the initiative and practical experience in considering what is and is not working. Involving the delivery team can focus the evaluation on important concerns, ensure that evaluation design and stakeholder engagement strategies are feasible, and support retention of learnings within the agency.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide input to evaluation design (for example, develop or review logic model, identify knowledge gaps and scope evaluation questions) • Provide data from administrative systems • Coordinate collaboration with stakeholders (for example, workshops) • Undertake data collection • Participate in aspects of evaluation (for example, process evaluation) • Act as an audience to test preliminary evaluation findings and the feasibility of recommendations • Implement endorsed recommendations
Subject matter experts	Academic and other professionals can contribute evaluation or subject matter expertise and will have an interest in evaluation design and findings.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide evaluation or subject matter expertise • Participate in an evaluation advisory group • Provide peer review
Customers/ clients and community	Initiative recipients, and people who otherwise experience the impacts of an initiative, will have an interest in evaluation design, findings and recommendations. Collaborate with stakeholders to ensure that the evaluation concerns and design are appropriate to the community. Identify where and how inclusive and participatory engagement can be established.	<p>Key points for involvement/co-design may be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • developing the logic model • identifying outcomes and benefits that matter • developing and testing evaluation questions • selecting measures of outputs, outcomes and benefits • designing the evaluation • identifying risks • providing responses to evaluation questions • testing outcomes assumptions and benefits estimates • designing recommendations in response to evaluation findings.

Meet relevant standards: cultural appropriateness and ethical conduct

Evaluation should be undertaken in line with relevant standards related to cultural appropriateness and ethical conduct. Reference up-to-date guides and standards from within the cluster, or from representative organisations.

Cultural appropriateness

Cultural appropriateness is about recognising and acknowledging differences in knowledge, language, norms, beliefs, practices, family and community structure and dynamics, and priorities.

In the 2016 Census, New South Wales accounted for the largest population of First Nations people in Australia and the largest overseas born population. The state's diversity is increasing both in absolute numbers and in the range of cultures represented.

Evaluation activities should be sensitive and responsive to the culture and values of participants, communities and the cultural setting in which the initiative operates. Be aware of where different communities may have distinct cultural or communication needs. Ensure that processes for working with people and communities — including from culturally and linguistically diverse communities, regional and remote areas, the LGBTQ+ community, and of different ages, abilities and genders — meet relevant standards.

Cultural appropriateness should be considered in all evaluation activities, including planning, design, management, data collection (including facilitating or co-facilitating consultations), analysis and reporting findings. Strategies to support cultural appropriateness may include:

- **Establish initial contact** with community leaders or organisations, who can facilitate introductions to the community.
- **Spend time working** with participants and communities, when planning evaluation, to understand:
 - previous experiences with evaluation processes and issues faced by the community
 - concerns and priorities related to the upcoming evaluation.
- **Collaborate with the community** in the co-design and delivery of the evaluation, including identifying what is important to monitor and examine (for key points where it may be appropriate to involve communities in evaluation, see *Table 1*).
- **Engage people with cultural and language expertise**, including interpreters.
- **Incorporate culturally specific communication** styles and mannerisms (for example, some cultures may prefer more formal communication styles).
- **Pilot test questions and instruments** with representatives of the community before broader rollout.
- **Demonstrate genuine respect** for different cultural values and acknowledge that this may require flexibility.

Be aware that some terms and concepts can be interpreted differently by different groups. When **planning evaluation**, ensure that those who will be involved (for example, from direct engagement with the community to analysing data and reporting findings) are aware of relevant cultural and ethical considerations. Reflect on how the evaluators' cultural and social identity may shape their approach to the evaluation, including the relationships with stakeholders. Develop strategies to build the cultural capability of those involved in the evaluation if there are gaps in knowledge, abilities or skills. This may involve training with cultural and community consultants.

Ethical conduct in evaluation

Ethical conduct should be a key consideration in all monitoring and evaluation processes. Identify what ethical issues need to be addressed, and where ethics clearance will be required. Where formal ethics review is not required, ethical practices should still be followed.

Ethics in evaluation relates to the potential risk of harm to people participating in the evaluation, whether as informants or as evaluators. Types of harm can range from loss of privacy or benefits to participants, damage to vulnerable groups, or physical, social or mental harm.

All monitoring and evaluation activities (such as data collection, consultation and reporting) need to protect the privacy, dignity and confidentiality of participants.

When planning monitoring and evaluation, ask questions such as:

- Are there vulnerable or culturally distinct groups involved with, or who will be impacted by, any of the monitoring and evaluation activities?
- Are there linked datasets involved, with different consent and privacy issues?
- What are the ethical implications of the evaluation design?
- Is a formal ethics review required?
- How will ethical standards be upheld during the evaluation?

Use the ethics policies or guidelines of your cluster where available and consult the evaluation experts within your organisation. Several organisations have ethical guidelines and standards to support researchers and evaluators, including the Australian National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) and the Australian Evaluation Society (AES) (see also *Resources. Useful references*). Evaluations need to also conform to Australian legislation and legal practice, including:

- The *Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998 (NSW)* if an evaluation involves personal information.
- The *Health Records and Information Privacy Act 2002 (NSW)* if it involves health information
- The *State Records Act 1998*.
- Mandatory reporting, regulated by the *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998 (NSW)*.
- *Guidelines under Section 95 of the Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)*, for initiatives involving the Commonwealth where it is impracticable to obtain explicit consent from individuals to use their information in an evaluation.

The NHMRC National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2018 update) sets out standards for the design, review and conduct of human research and provides guidance on establishing a Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC). This document is relevant to consult at different stages of an evaluation, including the planning and design phases. Under the statement, ethics review and approval are needed where the potential risk(s) posed to evaluation participants is higher than low i.e., where there is a potential risk of harm. Ethics reviews for these projects should be overseen by a HREC. Where the risk to participants of taking part in a project or evaluation is either low or negligible, a formal HREC review may not be necessary. However, an alternative ethics review process should be implemented to ensure sufficient protection for evaluation participants and adherence with internal ethics procedures and policies.

Actions to address ethical requirements may include:

- Obtain **consent** from participants in the evaluation. This includes providing them with clear information about the evaluation purpose, methods, risks and potential benefits.
- Identify potential **risks to participants** in evaluation and identify how they will be managed (such as by monitoring participants' perspectives or providing training to the evaluation team) or reduced (such as by having mechanisms in place to support participants).
- Ensure appropriate **confidentiality arrangements** for different evaluation activities, including data collection, data storage, data deletion and reporting of findings. Consider how consent arrangements may impact the sharing of information.

Ensure that the time and resources necessary for **external ethical conduct approval processes** and undertaking activities to address ethical requirements are incorporated into the evaluation timeline and budget.

Working with First Nations people and communities

Put First Nations people and communities at the centre of the evaluation of initiatives that are delivered to or that impact upon them. Consistent with the preferences of the community, collaborate with First Nations people and communities in evaluation co-design, governance, delivery, data governance and self-reflection. Incorporate First Nations priorities, perspectives and knowledges, and allow adequate time for collaborative processes. Support genuine partnerships that are respectful and based on ongoing and clear communication.

Establish governance arrangements for initiatives impacting on First Nations people and communities that include community representatives and relevant experts.

Recognise and respect cultural and intellectual property. The way First Nations people conceive and recognise cultural and intellectual contributions to evaluation may differ to non-First Nations approaches. Data sovereignty is an important issue for First Nations communities¹. This should be considered throughout the evaluation and in all data collection activities, including data selection, collection, storage, interpretation and analysis. Agreements relating to the contribution of expertise and cultural and intellectual property rights should be discussed as part of evaluation design.

Follow guidance on ethics for First Nations people and communities. Evaluators (Indigenous and non-Indigenous) undertaking research related to First Nations people and communities should adhere to ethical principles identified by peak research bodies in Australia, including the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) Code of Ethics for First Nations and Torres Strait Islander Research. The National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) and the NSW Aboriginal Health and Medical Research Council (AH&MRC) have developed protocols and guidelines to underpin research in First Nations health and wellbeing.

The NHMRC National Statement requires researchers to consult the Ethical conduct in research with First Nations and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and communities: Guidelines for researchers and stakeholders for all health related research involving First Nations people and communities, and requires all evaluations involving First Nations and Torres Strait Islander people to be reviewed by a HREC. The AIATSIS Code of Ethics for First Nations and Torres Strait Islander Research notes that this includes research and evaluation:

- where the target population is First Nations and Torres Strait Islander individuals, groups, communities, or societies
- where the evaluation includes a significant number of First Nations and Torres Strait Islander people
- where researchers wish to separately analyse Indigenous-specific data
- about First Nations and Torres Strait Islander peoples, societies, culture and/or knowledge, First Nations and Torres Strait Islander policies or experience.

The First Nations Economic Wellbeing Branch in NSW Treasury is developing a First Nations investment framework, including evaluation and cost-benefit analysis, for initiatives that impact on First Nations people and communities. The First Nations investment framework will support government and key stakeholders to design, implement and evaluate initiatives in a way that leads to the achievement of outcomes identified as important by First Nations people and communities. For guidance on working with First Nations communities in evaluation, contact NSW Treasury's First Nations Economic Wellbeing Branch (fnew@treasury.nsw.gov.au) and refer to the:

- NSW OCHRE Plan (2013) for high-level guidance on working with First Nations communities
- Commonwealth Productivity Commission (2020) Indigenous Evaluation Strategy
- Australian Evaluation Society (2021) First Nations Cultural Safety Framework.

¹ Indigenous data sovereignty is about the rights of Indigenous people to govern the collection, management, access, interpretation, dissemination and reuse of data. It is about giving Indigenous people control and allowing individuals and communities to participate in processes and determine how data is collected and used (Kukutai, T and Taylor, J, 2016, Indigenous data sovereignty: Toward an agenda, Centre for First Nations Economic Policy Research College of Arts and Social Sciences, The Australian National University, Canberra research monograph NO. 38).

Template

Table 2 presents an example template for scoping evaluation activities and their potential costs.

Table 2: Example activities and potential costs

Plan	Example activities	Potential costs
Internal resourcing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assign roles and responsibilities Implement staff training and capacity building as required 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff time (FTEs) Training sessions
Data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contact data custodians (as needed) Plan for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> data collection, including confidentiality arrangements data purchase data linkage data management (e.g. data entry, cleaning and coding, data storage, data deletion) data analysis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data purchase Data management and analysis costs, including procurement of external expertise or supplies and equipment (for example, software, computers and cloud storage) Fees for the safe disposal of confidential documents
Managing relationships	Governance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify key decision-makers Establish a steering committee Clarify roles, responsibilities and approval processes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Venues and catering Travel Participant remuneration Supplies and equipment Communications tools (e.g. internet access, telephone, postage, etc.) Copying and printing of surveys or other documents Contingency costs
	Stakeholder collaboration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify key stakeholders and representative groups Establish an advisory group or collaborative processes 	
	Implement evaluation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Determine methods for engagement (e.g. focus groups, interviews, site visits, and surveys) Involve translators and cultural and community consultants/leaders 	
Ethical conduct	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allocate time and resources for ethics applications 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fees for ethics review
Peer review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plan for internal or external peer review at key stages of the evaluation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fees for peer review
Reporting (Workbook VI. <u>Evaluation plan: Report and use evaluation findings</u>)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Determine mechanisms to provide feedback and report findings (for example, workshop presentations) Identify timeframes and methods for the publication of results Plan for stakeholder workshops 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Printing of reports or other documents Website development Stakeholder workshops, including travel and accommodation