
Evaluation Workbook V.

Evaluation plan: Use the right expertise

Key points

The evaluation plan can be designed using internal or external expertise.

- Commission external expertise for any stage of the evaluation workplan, as needed.
- Consider where peer review (internal or external) can provide quality assessment.

Introduction

Expertise external to the business and delivery team can be used to undertake the evaluation, or aspects of the evaluation. This may be an evaluation unit or evaluators within the agency, independent consultancy teams or academic teams. When procuring an evaluation, comply with NSW Government and your own agency guidelines and policies. Consult the [NSW Government Procurement Policy Framework](#) and contact your cluster's internal procurement team for specific guidance.

Commissioning in evaluation

The evaluation workplan can be designed to use internal and/or external expertise.

External evaluators can be brought in at any point in the evaluation process. The need for external expertise may depend on existing evaluation capability within the team, the technical expertise required for the evaluation, and any requirements for an independent perspective. *Table 1* presents information on when it may be suitable to involve external expertise, and the strengths and main considerations of such approaches.

In a procurement Request for Quotation (RfQ), include all the information a consultant will need to effectively design and cost their proposal, including information on the initiative, context for the evaluation, evaluation requirements, and the expertise required. *Table 2* lists information that may be useful to include in a consultancy brief.

When engaging consultants, it is important that they have the necessary expertise and the ability to meet the requirements of the evaluation. The NSW Government Procurement Policy Framework outlines five key objectives in conducting procurement:

- Value for Money (VfM)
- fair and open competition
- easy to do business
- innovation
- economic development, social outcomes, and sustainability.

Table 3 outlines key criteria to consider in choosing a consultant. Refer to the NSW Government Procurement Policy Framework for other assessment criteria.

Table 1: Examples of evaluation management design

Evaluation management design	When to use design	Strengths	Considerations
Internal evaluation (The entire evaluation is designed and managed internally by the initiative team)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small to medium sized initiatives • Low risk evaluations • Internal staff have skills and resources to collect the data collection and implement evaluation methods • The evaluation is for developmental purposes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can draw upon knowledge of the initiative context, design, and implementation • Builds internal engagement and capability in evaluation activity and culture • Can test feasibility of evaluation recommendations • Limits procurement costs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May lack credibility as an independent evaluation • May have less evaluation experience • May draw resources away from initiative delivery
Internal evaluation with external expertise (The evaluation is designed and managed by the initiative team, but independent advisor(s) are engaged as needed)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small to medium sized initiatives • Low risk evaluations • Internal staff need support with some technical aspects of the evaluation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Builds internal engagement in evaluation activity and culture • Provides additional resourcing and expertise • Contributes an independent perspective 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • External participants will need information on initiative activities and processes, and access to data • Will involve procurement costs
External evaluation with internal input (The evaluation is designed and managed by independent advisor(s), but internal staff are involved with components of the evaluation)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medium to large sized initiatives • Complex or high-risk evaluations • The required expertise and knowledge are not available internally • Internal staff are available to support components of the evaluation • Independent perspectives are required for external accountability 		
External evaluation (The entire evaluation is designed and managed by independent advisor(s)) Use expertise external to the agency where independent perspectives are required.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large initiatives • Complex or high-risk evaluations • Required expertise is not available internally • Independent evaluation is required for external accountability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contributes external and independent perspectives • Contributes targeted skills and expertise • Provides reputation and experience of the external advisor(s) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May involve high procurement costs • May have limited understanding of initiative processes • May need to include engaging with internal employees and stakeholders • May be challenging accessing data

Table 2: Example information for consultancy brief

Include:	For example:	Provide information regarding:
Background	Initiative summary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The objectives of the initiative • Key stakeholders of the initiative • How the initiative links with other initiatives to deliver outcomes and benefits
	Evaluation purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why the evaluation is being undertaken • What decisions the evaluation will inform • The target audiences for the evaluation
	Initiative appraisal/ evaluation history	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The (pre-implementation) appraisal undertaken when designing the initiative • Previous evaluation of the initiative that has been undertaken • The information or reports that will be made available to the consultant
Scope of work: Evaluation requirements	Project description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The types of evaluation that will be undertaken (for example, process, outcome, CBA) • What is in-scope for the evaluation (what may be out-of-scope) • Expectations related to communications and collaboration with stakeholders
	Issues/ risks	<p>Challenges or risks that may impact the evaluation, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • monitoring history and availability of data • delivery complexity (for example, multiple delivery partners) • ethical conduct approval timelines • potential challenges to stakeholder communications and collaboration
	Key Deliverables and Dates	<p>Deliverables:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • key deliverables (e.g., evaluation plan, data sets, evaluation report(s), PowerPoint presentations) • how findings will be shared with stakeholders (e.g., presentation of findings, publications) <p>Dates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • when the evaluation findings and final report are needed to inform decision making • key milestones <p>Be clear about who will retain the intellectual property produced during the evaluation (including to data and modelling)</p>
	Key stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The people and groups who will have an interest in evaluation findings • The people who will be involved in the evaluation (and their roles and responsibilities) • The expectations related to stakeholder engagement, for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ steering committee ○ advisory groups ○ collaborative stakeholder processes • Any expectations regarding involvement of the delivery team or other agency staff in evaluation processes
	Agency's obligations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The data and information that will be provided to the consultant • The support that will be provided by agency staff

Include:	For example:	Provide information regarding:
Initial assumptions OR <i>Identify evaluation tasks</i>	Logic model	The logic model for the initiative OR <i>Assist with developing or refining a logic model</i>
	Counterfactual	What would be expected to happen in the absence of the initiative OR <i>Determine a realistic counterfactual</i>
	Key evaluation questions (KEQs)	The evaluation questions OR <i>Develop KEQs</i>
	Evaluation methods	The methods considered suitable and feasible to answer the KEQs OR <i>Propose and develop evaluation methods</i>
	Outcomes and benefits	The measurable outcomes and benefits OR <i>Scope or measure outcomes and benefits</i>
	Stakeholders	The key stakeholders who should be included in the evaluation OR <i>Undertake stakeholder mapping or develop a stakeholder management plan</i>
	Data	Other data sources that are suitable and available OR <i>What data the consultant is expected to collect</i>
	Links to other initiatives	The broader context in which the initiative operates OR <i>Identify other activities (State, national or local) that interact with, complement, or replicate the initiative</i>

Table 3: Examples of selection criteria for procurement

Criteria	Examples in an evaluation
Evaluation expertise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experience in large scale and complex evaluations • Experienced and qualified staff in economic analysis • Ability to provide independence and objectivity to the evaluation
Subject matter expertise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relevant qualifications • Relevant technical knowledge • Experience in undertaking evaluation in relevant subject areas • Demonstrated understanding of key issues
Suitability of the proposed design and methods to address the evaluation objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective engagement with stakeholders (including appropriate cultural communication capabilities) • Strong examination of causal attribution to outcomes • Robust benefits valuation • Effective strategies to manage limitations of the design and methods • Cohesive evaluation processes, including evaluation design and methods, implementation, and reporting
Demonstrated ability to meet project requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project timeframes • Key milestones • Key deliverables (including how quality standards will be met) • Appropriate governance arrangements • Adequate resourcing
Compliance with relevant standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of approved procurement arrangements • Demonstrated ability to meet standards, as outlined in the NSW procurement policy framework

Using peer review

Independent peer review processes can provide quality assessment for internally and externally conducted evaluations.

Peer review is a process where the quality of the work is reviewed by an independent expert(s) in the relevant field. This ensures that professional, ethical, and analytical standards are met. Peer review may be appropriate before finalising key stages of the evaluation, such as the evaluation design, implementation of the evaluation method, or analysis of the results.

Peer review processes should be appropriate to the profile of the initiative and the complexity and risk of the evaluation. For **initiatives that are high profile or that involve significant investment or risk**, peer review of method and findings should be undertaken by independent subject experts. Peer review may also be prioritised for evaluations that are complex and challenging. Peer reviewers may include academics or other professionals with expertise. This may include commissioning peer review or formal review through NSW Investor Assurance (Gateway) processes.

For **lower profile initiatives and less complex evaluations** (for example, agency nominated strategic evaluation), reviews could be undertaken within the cluster, but external to the business area, such as through expert reference groups.

For evaluations of **initiatives that affect First Nations people and communities**, peer reviews should be undertaken by First Nations evaluation or research specialists. Ensure that the review considers both the technical aspects of the evaluation and the appropriateness of the evaluation activities.