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Case study: Using a modified evaluation methodology for assessing the performance of contract service providers

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How does a government agency effectively assess the performance of programs delivered under contract by service providers in very diverse contexts? Or make decisions about re-funding that are credible to central agencies, service providers and other stakeholders? How does the agency know when a provider's performance is a sufficient concern to warrant intervention?

This paper considers these questions in a case study of the use of a modified evaluation method in the performance assessment of 97 service providers across Australia in 'Reconnect', a \$20 million per annum program for early intervention in youth homelessness. The paper outlines the issues considered in the design of the framework, the methodology, explores the positives and negatives in the approach and the issues encountered over the last five years in the implementation of the methodology. This case study is a good example of the adaptation of evaluation techniques to a contract environment and a flexible approach to deal with very different service delivery environments, including inner urban areas, rural areas and indigenous communities.