Australian Government

Department of Social Services

Evaluation readiness - Weaving evaluative inquiry into the fabric of policy & program design, delivery and performance

31 August 2022

The Department of Social Services acknowledges the traditional owners of country throughout Australia, and their continuing connection to land, water and community.
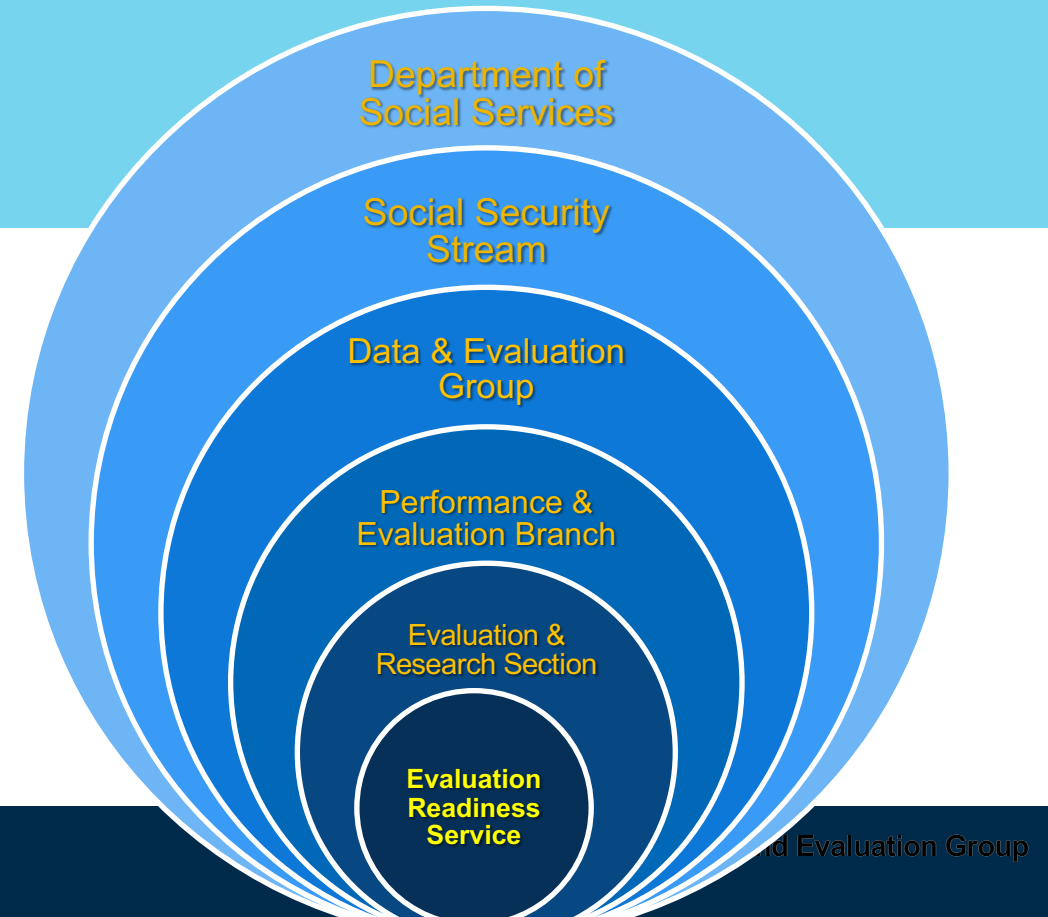
We pay our respects to them and their cultures and to Elders both past and present.

Acknowledgements

- *Kath Mandla*
- *Lyn Alderman*
- *Kale Dyer*
- *Ruth Pitt*
- *Danielle King*
- *Department of Industry, Innovation & Science*

What the 'Evaluation Readiness Service' (ERS) is…....

- Small team within the *Evaluation and Research Section*

- Internal consultancy service model

- The *Evaluation and Research Section* supports the design and commissioning of evaluations, which are undertaken by external consultants

Department of
Social Services

Social Security
Stream

Data & Evaluation
Group

Performance &
Evaluation Branch

Evaluation &
Research Section

Evaluation
Readiness
Service

What is the 'Evaluation Readiness Service' (ERS)?

An internal service that collaboratively develops & delivers:

o Program Logic models (PL)

⬇

o Performance Measurement Frameworks (PMF)
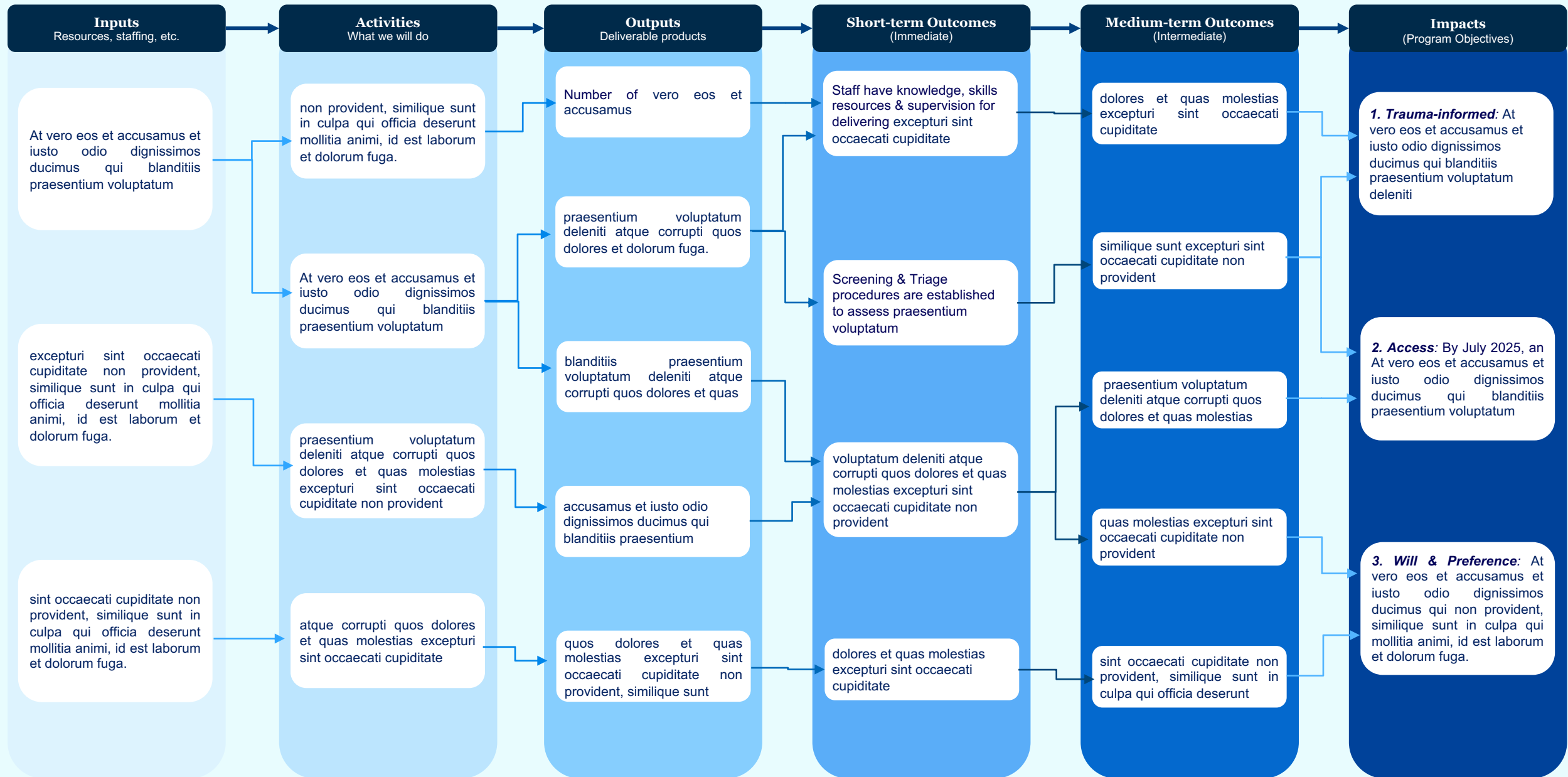
⬇

o Performance and Evaluation Strategies (PES)

What is the ERS for?

The 4Ps → policies, programs, pilots and projects

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Inputs
Resources, staffing, etc.

Activities
What we will do

Outputs
Deliverable products

Short-term Outcomes
(Immediate)

Medium-term Outcomes
(Intermediate)

Impacts
(Program Objectives)

Inputs

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Activities

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atque corrupti quos dolores et quas molestias excepturi sint occaecati cupiditate

Outputs

Number of vero eos et accusamus

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accusamus et iusto odio dignissimos ducimus qui blanditiis praesentium

quos dolores et quas molestias excepturi sint occaecati cupiditate non provident, similique sunt

Short-term Outcomes

Staff have knowledge, skills resources & supervision for delivering excepturi sint occaecati cupiditate

Screening & Triage procedures are established to assess praesentium voluptatum

voluptatum deleniti atque corrupti quos dolores et quas molestias excepturi sint occaecati cupiditate non provident

dolores et quas molestias excepturi sint occaecati cupiditate

Medium-term Outcomes

dolores et quas molestias excepturi sint occaecati cupiditate

similique sunt excepturi sint occaecati cupiditate non provident

praesentium voluptatum deleniti atque corrupti quos dolores et quas molestias

quas molestias excepturi sint occaecati cupiditate non provident

sint occaecati cupiditate non provident, similique sunt in culpa qui officia deserunt

Impacts

1. Trauma-informed: At vero eos et accusamus et iusto odio dignissimos ducimus qui blanditiis praesentium voluptatum deleniti

2. Access: By July 2025, an At vero eos et accusamus et iusto odio dignissimos ducimus qui blanditiis praesentium voluptatum

3. Will & Preference: At vero eos et accusamus et iusto odio dignissimos ducimus qui non provident, similique sunt in culpa qui mollitia animi, id est laborum et dolorum fuga.

Performance Measurement Framework – [Name of Program/Project]

Drafting note: add or delete rows as required. Delete this note after drafting.

1. Program Results	2. Measure(s) and Indicators	3. Targets (Success Criteria)	4. Data Source	5. Data Frequency	6. Data Quality (High, Acceptable or Limited)	7. Baseline Data	8. Additional comments
Long-Term Outcomes							
Medium-Term Outcomes							
Short-Term Outcomes							

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[Insert Policy/Program name]

Performance and Evaluation Strategy

Performance and Evaluation Strategy Template and Guidance V0.4 12 May 16, 2022

Contents

Data and Evaluation Group

Why did it come about?

Previously had a centralised evaluation model

- Summative evaluations undertaken by Evaluation Unit, policy/program areas undertake formative evaluations.

Strengths but also issues with model

- e.g., requests for Evaluation Unit to commission impact evaluations with compromised timeframes/funding/administrative data/clarity around program purpose & outcomes.

Introduced the concept of '*Evaluation Readiness*'

- Policy/programs required to have a PL, PMF and PES in place before an impact evaluation would be undertaken by evaluation unit

This led to a service offer

- Drawing upon existing strands of work, which included supporting areas to develop these.

It's not just about simply producing the product......

Delivered in the context of an authorising environment:

- Public Governance Performance & Accountability (PGPA) Act (2013)
- Enhanced Commonwealth Performance Framework (2015-)
- Independent Review of the PGPA Act and Rule (2017)
- Independent Review of the Australian Public Service (Thodey Review, 2019)
- Commonwealth Evaluation Policy (2021)

- DSS Evaluation Policy
- Commitment by DSS – investment/work in data, research, evaluation
  – reflected in establishment of Data & Evaluation Group (2021)

It's not just about simply producing the product……

Delivered in partnership with:

- Getting Better Outcomes (GBO) – internal team using human centred design principles to support policy/program/pilot/project managers

- DSS Data Exchange (DEX) Policy Operations – internal team responsible for the program performance reporting system that enables organisations to measure & report service delivery information and demonstrate their outcomes

- Analytics Hub – internal team providing guidance, analytical output and support to policy areas seeking to build capability to conduct in-house analytics

- Policy/program/pilot/project owners – experts in their subject matter, key stakeholders, issues, sensitivities etc

It's not just about simply producing the product……

ERS is continually adapting to our internal client's needs, constantly striving to improve the quality of our services

ERS delivery is informed by:

- Feedback from policy areas
- A thematic analysis of 3 years of service requests
- Reflective practice
- Responsiveness – processes and products are tailored and calibrated to the policy/program/pilot/project owners

ERS is not a drive-thru fast-food franchise.

ERS services are *préparé à votre commande.*

It's not just about simply producing the product……

Our practice & teaching is guided by principles from evaluation theories:

- ### Utilisation approaches
An evaluation should be judged on its usefulness to its intended users

- ### Theory-driven approaches
e.g., We develop a Theory of Change & a Program Logic model for each program evaluation

- ### Realist approaches
"~~Does it work?~~" ✓ *"What works, for whom, in what respects, to what extent, in what contexts, and how?"*

- ### Monitoring & Performance measurement
Systems generating evidence for ongoing adaptation, improvement & management decision-making

- ### Participatory approaches
Involving decision makers, managers, service providers & other stakeholders in evaluation design & building their evaluation capability in the process

Weaving evaluative inquiry throughout the fabric of policy and program design, delivery and performance

- Embedding evaluation often challenging

- Issues of capability, capacity and performance literacy

- But we are seeing some promising signs that we are getting some traction e.g.

    - Engagement with the Evaluation team earlier in the policy/program lifecycle
    - Supporting the policy/program/project/pilot conceptualisation and design, sometimes at crucial & early stages
    - Informing and supporting improved program performance
    - Improved foundations for undertaking process and impact evaluations
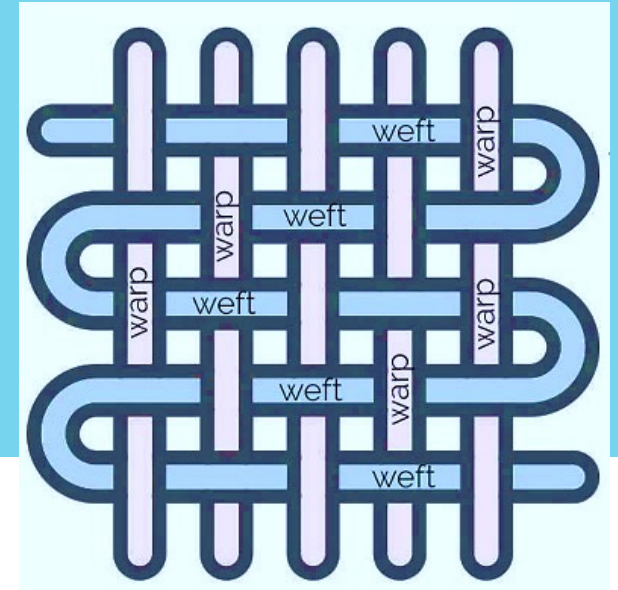   - Knowledge/skill transference

Weaving evaluative inquiry throughout the fabric of policy and program design, delivery and performance

- We are gradually seeing evaluative inquiry being applied across the lifecycle in practical ways to support program performance – aligning with evaluation theory, good practice and our PGPA Act, Commonwealth Performance Framework and Commonwealth Evaluation Policy requirements.

- We are also starting to leverage opportunities to support performance literacy.

Why is this so?

<u>ERS works *within* and *across* various domains:</u>

- o Authorising environment
- o Existence of champions
- o Broader strategies (data, evaluation, capability)
- o Theory-practice (praxis)
- o Technical expertise – policy, design, data, analytics

- o Data resources and holdings
- o Collaboration, partnerships, co-design, holistic approach
- o Adaptation
- o Knowledge/skill transference

- Feedback indicates products are meeting our colleagues needs
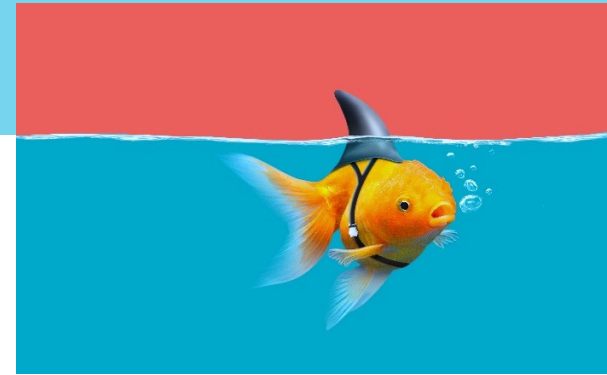- Service that is seen as valued (both within our Group and across DSS)

Looking forward: Opportunities and challenges

Challenges

- Demand for ERS services likely to increase

- Building policy/program managers' capability and capacity - to better understand their own evaluation needs and to take on evaluation tasks

- Fully embedding a culture of *evaluation literacy* before the 'world turns again'

- Measuring our own performance

Opportunities

- Maturity of DSS work and investment (and also broader Australian Government) in data, evaluation and research

- Increasing government interest in evaluation

- Positive experiences of colleagues to date

Evaluation readiness - Weaving evaluative inquiry into the fabric of policy & program design, delivery and performance

Data and Evaluation Group

Questions?

Thank you

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