AUSTRALIAN
EVALUATION
SOCIETY

Improving the theory, practice and the use of evaluation

GOVERNMENT PANEL:
WEAVING EVALUATION IN POLICY AND PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

AES22, Adelaide, 31/08/2022

Evaluation in the Commonwealth: Embedding a service-wide approach

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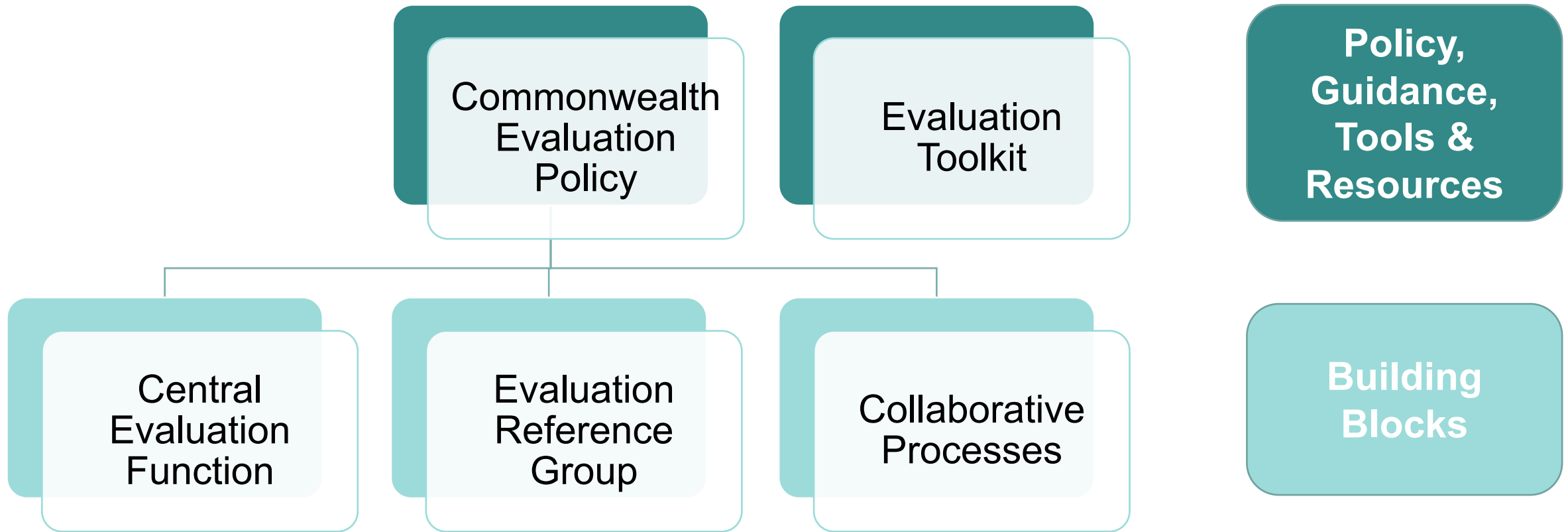
Governance and Resource Management Group

August 2022

Commonwealth operating context

Independent Review of the Australian Public Sector

OUR PUBLIC SERVICE OUR FUTURE

INDEPENDENT REVIEW OF THE AUSTRALIAN PUBLIC SERVICE

Recommendation 26: Embed a culture of evaluation and learning from experience to underpin evidence-based policy and delivery

Commonwealth Evaluation Policy

Evaluation Toolkit

Policy, Guidance, Tools & Resources

Central Evaluation Function

Evaluation Reference Group

Collaborative Processes

Building Blocks

Commonwealth Evaluation Policy

- Principles-based policy to support fit-for-purpose evaluative approaches in line with the public sector resourcing, reporting and performance frameworks established under the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability (PGPA) Act 2013*

- The Policy is designed to:

  — embed a culture of evaluation and learning from experience across the Commonwealth to underpin evidence-based policy and delivery

  — improve the way entities assess implementation, measure the impact of government programs and activities, and frame policy decisions on revised or new programs

  — improve the quality of performance reporting for the purposes of accountability, continuous improvement and decision-making

Evaluation Toolkit

Commonwealth Evaluation Policy →

What is evaluation? →

Evaluation involves the systematic assessment of programs and activities to support continuous improvement, accountability, and decision-making

Why evaluate? →

Planning how programs and activities will be evaluated from the start is good practice and helps to meet relevant policy and legislative requirements

When to evaluate? →

A risk-based approach will help to identify and prioritise the timing and type of evaluation needed at different stages of the policy cycle

Who evaluates? →

Who conducts an evaluation depends on its purpose and design, and the capability and culture within an entity

How to evaluate? →

An introduction to the steps involved, and questions to consider, when planning or conducting an evaluation of a government program or activity

Templates, tools and additional resources →

A set of templates, tools and additional resources to support this guide

Progress to date

Based on feedback, key benefits to date include:

— the **collaborative process** used to develop the new Commonwealth Evaluation Policy and Toolkit

— **leveraging existing expertise and good practice** to help embed evaluation into everyday practice across the Commonwealth

— adopting a **flexible, principles-based approach**, anchored in a whole-of-government policy that supports the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013*

— **creating opportunities for collaboration** across the Commonwealth to support better practice, including through a new Commonwealth Evaluation Community of Practice (registrations welcome from 1 Sep 2022).
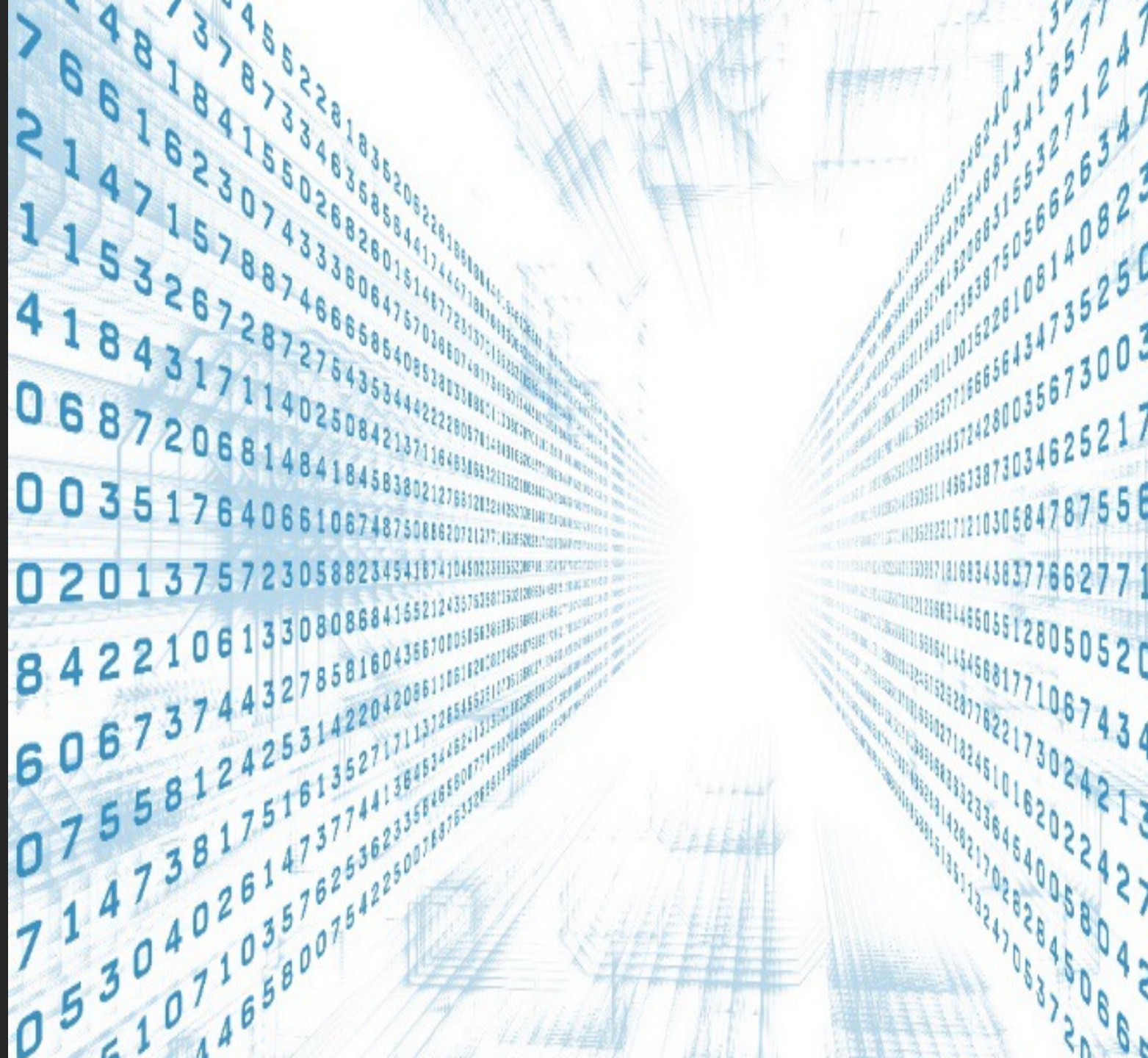
Future challenges

Embedding evaluation into everyday practice
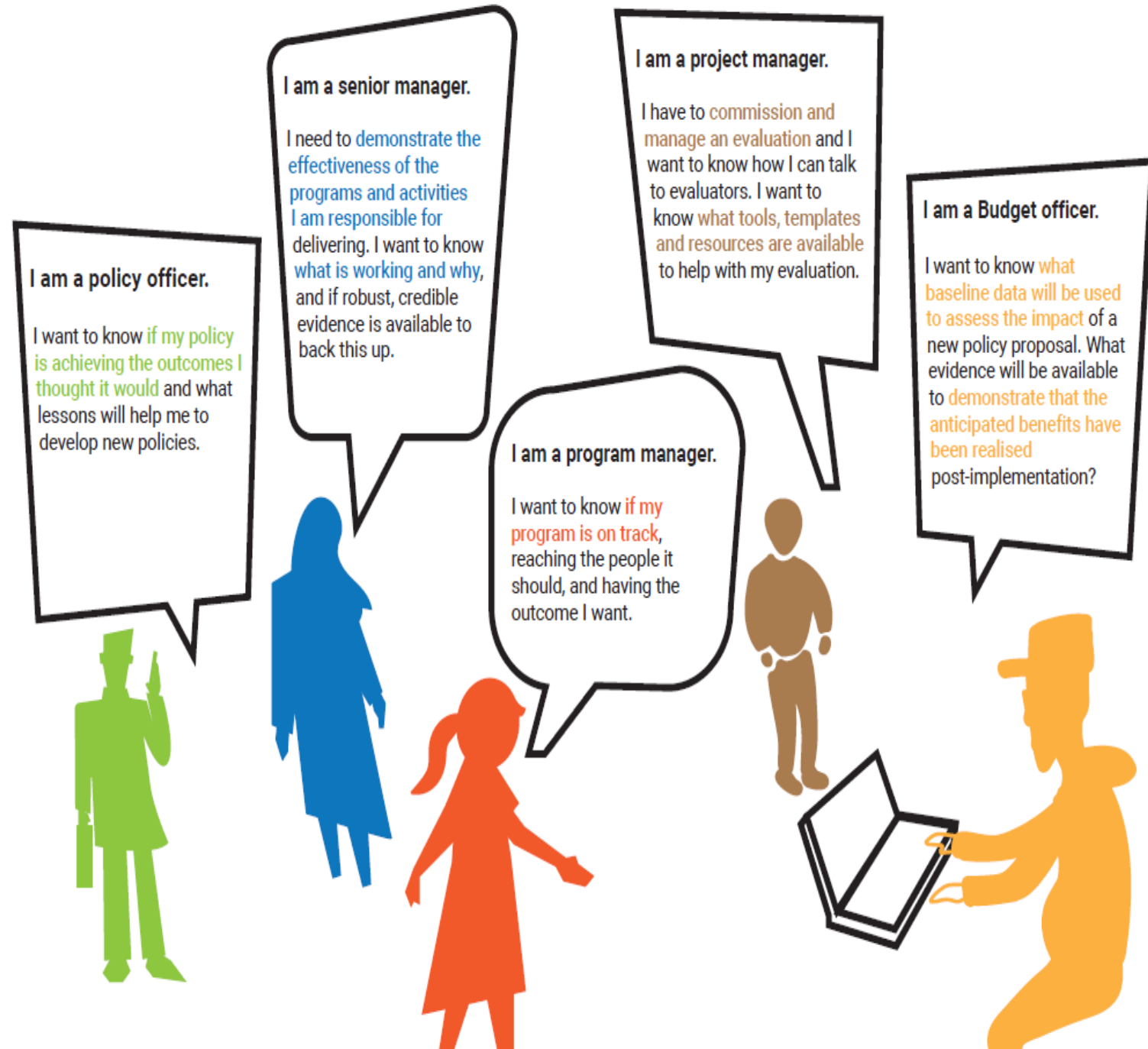
Embedding evaluation across the policy cycle

Leveraging advances in data maturity and capabilities

People, process, technology

In summary, future challenges are likely to include:

— supporting the **cultural change necessary to embed evaluative thinking into everyday practice**, and promoting systematic and multi-disciplinary approaches to generate performance insights, robust evidence and expert advice.

— **building capability in outcomes-based evaluation** and performance management approaches across the policy cycle, including:
  — establishing fit-for-purpose performance monitoring and evaluation arrangements early in the policy cycle
  — adopting strategic risk-based approaches to identify, prioritise and schedule evaluation activities
  — maintaining the rigour of robust evaluative approaches in a fast-paced policy environment
  — communicating findings in influential and timely ways

— **leveraging advances in data maturity and capabilities** to ensure:
  — administrative data is discoverable for evaluation purposes, while ensuring relevant ethical, cultural and privacy considerations are taken into account in specific operating contexts
  — effective use of evaluation and data supports better feedback loops between the design of programs and their outcomes to improve the quality of government spending
  — evaluations leverage data effectively to inform the development of strong policy that delivers measurable outcomes for Australians

Opportunities

"Better use of data to support policy decisions, improve and tailor services, facilitate risk-based regulation and conduct targeted evaluations will be one of the most significant changes to effect the APS in coming decades" (p173, Independent Review of the Australian Public Sector)

Contact us: pgpa@finance.gov.au

More information:

Evaluation in the Commonwealth (RMG 130) | Department of Finance

Embedding evaluation capability

- **Evaluation leadership** – *Indigenous Evaluation Committee, Evaluation Champions*

- **Dedicated funding for evaluations**

- **Management responses**

- **Hub and Spoke evaluation support**

- **Guidance and Resources** – *Evaluation Framework, Evaluation checklists, tips sheets and tools*

- **Training and support –** *Online evaluation training and ethics module, training sessions*

Improving monitoring and evaluation across the policy and program cycle

Evaluation built into Agency processes through New Policy Proposals and Grant Opportunity Guidelines

A performance, monitoring and evaluation approach that helps connect implementation of programs to Closing the Gap outcomes
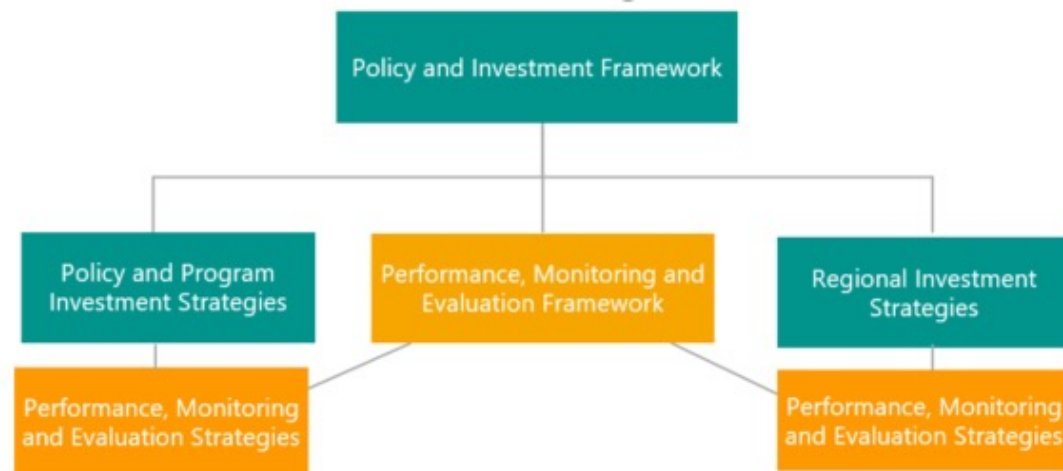
Measuring success

A meta-review of 10 completed evaluations

Evaluations generally met the IAS Evaluation Framework principles – some to a greater extent than others

Evaluations were used across the Agency – the higher the quality of the evaluation the more useful they were

Overall, the Agency's evaluation practices were good – but opportunities exist to improve the quality and use of evaluations

Working in partnership

Central to the Evaluation Framework is a commitment to working collaboratively with First Nations People

Many of the providers on our Panel for Indigenous Evaluation and Research Services are First Nations organisations

We are currently working in partnership with First Nations people to co-design a framework for Governance of Indigenous Data

Contact Details

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Panel: Weaving Evaluation in policy and program development

Centre for Evidence and Evaluation, NSW Treasury

An introduction

Presenter Name
Danielle Spruyt

31 August 2022

Introduction

Role of NSW Treasury Centre for Evidence and Evaluation

To **develop an evidence bank for decision-making**

To **assess CBAs and evaluations** conducted by agencies

Centre for Evidence and Evaluation

To **set the standards** for agencies to follow, for example through the *NSW Guide to Cost-Benefit Analysis* and the *NSW Government Evaluation Policy and Guidelines*
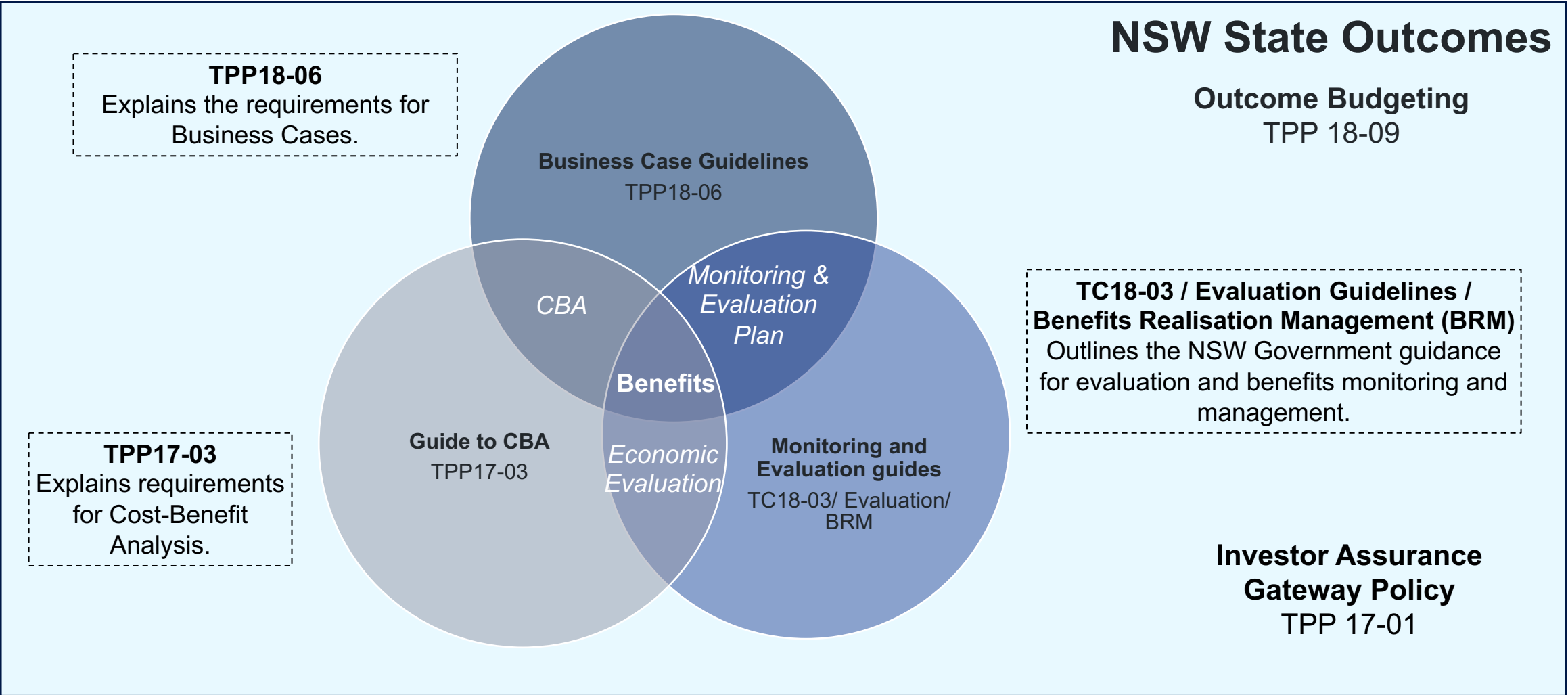
To **work with NSW agencies** to build capabilities to apply those standards consistently across the public sector
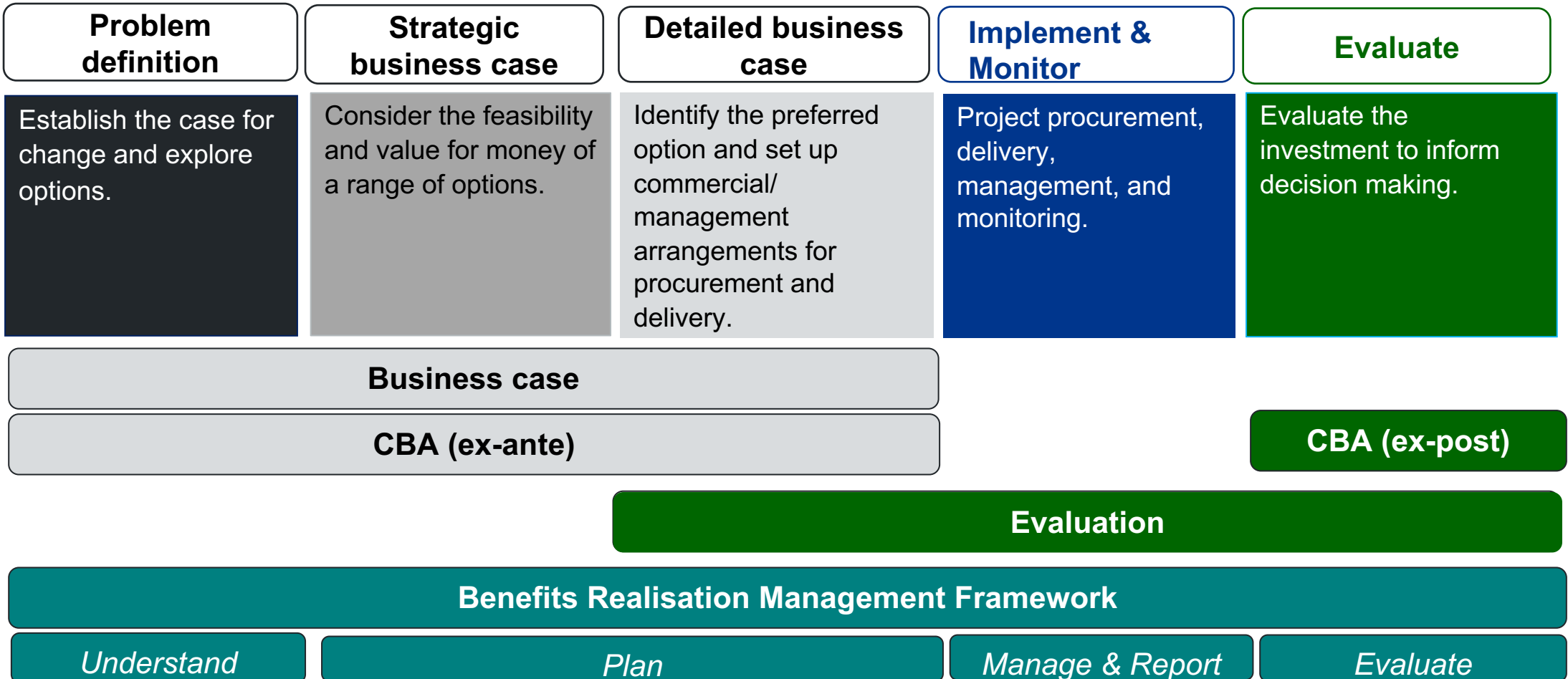
NSW Investment Framework Overview

The investment framework guidelines and processes are being updated to support examination of what works in delivering State Outcomes and support the NSW public sector to develop evidence-informed investments and policy proposals.

NSW State Outcomes

TPP18-06
Explains the requirements for Business Cases.

Outcome Budgeting
TPP 18-09

Business Case Guidelines
TPP18-06

Monitoring & Evaluation Plan

CBA

Benefits

TPP17-03
Explains requirements for Cost-Benefit Analysis.

Guide to CBA
TPP17-03

Economic Evaluation

Monitoring and Evaluation guides
TC18-03/ Evaluation/ BRM

TC18-03 / Evaluation Guidelines / Benefits Realisation Management (BRM)
Outlines the NSW Government guidance for evaluation and benefits monitoring and management.

Investor Assurance Gateway Policy
TPP 17-01

When to evaluate

Build evidence across the investment life-cycle

Problem definition	Strategic business case	Detailed business case	Implement & Monitor	Evaluate
Establish the case for change and explore options.	Consider the feasibility and value for money of a range of options.	Identify the preferred option and set up commercial/ management arrangements for procurement and delivery.	Project procurement, delivery, management, and monitoring.	Evaluate the investment to inform decision making.

Business case

CBA (ex-ante)

CBA (ex-post)

Evaluation

Benefits Realisation Management Framework

Understand	*Plan*	*Manage & Report*	*Evaluate*

When to evaluate

Plan when (and how) to evaluate
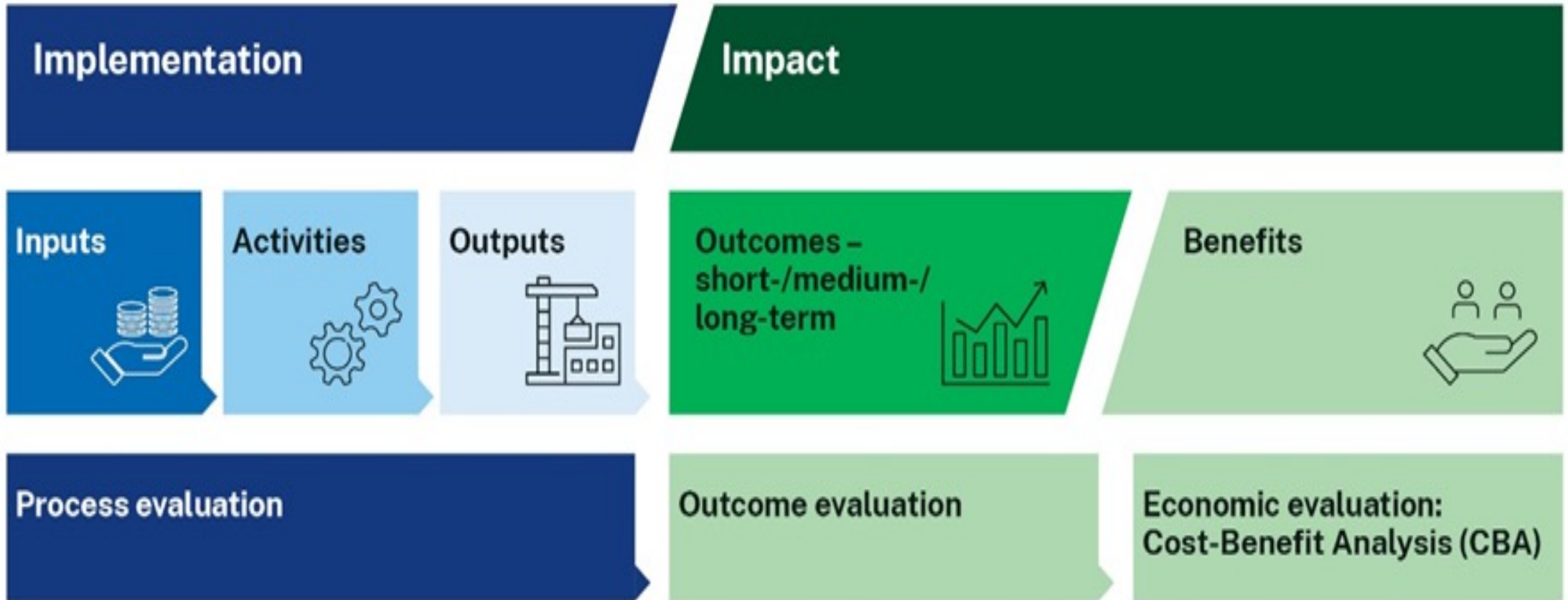
What to evaluate

Be strategic about evaluation

Decisions need to be made about what will be evaluated. Initiatives should be prioritised for evaluation considering existing evidence and previous evaluation activity, and their:

- **Size** — total cost of initiative (or relevant group of initiatives)
- **Strategic priority** — role in achieving State Outcomes and cluster objectives
- **Risk** — uniqueness and delivery complexity

Evaluation is good practice regardless of the size of an initiative. Evaluation can be undertaken strategically across the activities of a cluster to inform internal decision-making and to build an evidence-base. A cluster may plan evaluations for example, to:

- assess alignment of an initiative with Government or community priorities
- investigate best-practice (in initiative design and delivery) and share learnings
- examine how a portfolio of initiatives with a shared objective is performing; or
- support decision-making regarding an initiative.

What is feasible for an evaluation?

Aim to be rigorous, produce valid and reliable findings, and reach sound conclusions.

✓ The evaluation design, the methods used to gather evidence, and the data available, will determine the validity of evaluation conclusions.

✓ At key stages of the evaluation, and as a final assessment process undertaken as part of the evaluation, consider the:

- Strengths of the evaluation design and method, as implemented

- Robustness of evidence gathered

- Validity of evaluation conclusions.

✓ Where required data are unavailable, use the evaluation to inform recommendations for a forward data collection strategy.

Contact us

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