Australian Government
Australian Institute of Family Studies

AIFS

Monitoring, evaluation and learning

A guide for service providers

Evidence and Evaluation Support

Australian Institute of Family Studies

About this guide

Welcome to the AIFS interactive Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning guide.

Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning – or MEL – is essential for understanding how programs work, whether they are making a difference and how they can be strengthened over time.

This guide aims to help practitioners and organisations assess, strengthen and embed evidence-informed practice approaches in their work to better understand how their programs are working and find ways to improve them.

This guide provides an overview of the entire MEL process, from explaining what monitoring, evaluation and learning are and why they matter to providing step-by-step guidance on planning, collecting and learning from evidence. Whether your organisation is just starting out or already has monitoring and evaluation processes in place, this guide will help you embed MEL to achieve better outcomes for the children and families you serve.

We designed this guide to support your learning in a flexible and accessible way. It includes interactive content, videos and knowledge checkpoints. We encourage you to move through the content at your own pace.

Who is the MEL guide for?

The MEL guide has been developed for service providers in the child and family sector, including those funded by the Department of Social Services (DSS). It aims to help practitioners and organisations build knowledge and skills to understand and apply MEL processes in their everyday work.

For the purposes of this guide, program is defined as a coordinated set of services, interventions or initiatives aimed at producing defined outcomes for a target group.

The Australian Institute of Family Studies acknowledges the Traditional Owners of Country throughout Australia and recognises their continuing connection to lands and waters. We pay our respects to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, and to Elders past and present.

Contents

Introduction to monitoring, evaluation and learning

Monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) helps you understand how your program is working, what impact it's having and how it can be improved. But first, you will need to assess your readiness for MEL by working through several foundational activities.

This section will cover:

- what MEL is
- when to start a MEL process
- DSS funding requirements.

What is MEL

MEL is an approach that uses various processes and tools to:

- track the implementation of a program
- understand its impacts on communities
- use the insights gained to improve how a program is designed and delivered.

Monitoring

Monitoring is the process of regularly collecting data on a program's activities and progress. It can help you to track your program or service in real-time to see if it is being delivered as planned and meeting expectations.

Evaluation

Evaluation is a more in-depth process that allows you to make judgements about what worked, how well it worked, who it worked for and why. Evaluation often involves collecting various forms of information, documenting the findings of your analysis and making recommendations for improvements.

Learning

Learning is about using the insights from monitoring and evaluation to make informed decisions to improve programs. It helps you to understand how to do things better in the future, ensuring that the program adapts and evolves to achieve good outcomes for children and families.

MEL in practice

In practice, monitoring and evaluation are not separate activities – they work together to support learning. Monitoring helps you keep track of what's happening as your program unfolds, while evaluation helps you understand why things are happening and what it means. Together, they provide a fuller picture of your program's performance and impact.

> MEL can support you in your practice to achieving better outcomes for the children and families you serve.
> (Respect Victoria, 2022)

You can use a MEL approach in your programs to:

- demonstrate impact
- understand the extent to which programs address the needs of the community
- monitor sector partnerships and collaboration
- monitor accessibility and relevance to priority population groups in the community
- share successes and areas for improvement with service users, funding bodies and program staff.

When to start a MEL process

The best time to begin a MEL process is during the program design phase. As soon as a need is identified and program design begins, you should start thinking about the outcomes you hope to achieve, and how and when progress toward these outcomes will be measured.

Building monitoring and evaluation into the design phase will ensure the program is grounded in clear goals, with the right data collection and learning processes in place from the beginning.

Many services begin thinking about MEL after a program has already started – and that's okay. It's never too late to introduce MEL practices. The key is to start where you are and build from there.

Starting MEL at different points in the program cycle

Program stage	MEL activity
During program design	Plan your MEL framework, identify key questions, map stakeholders, and design data collection tools.
Early stages of program delivery	Begin collecting baseline data, track early implementation, and adjust your MEL plan as needed.
Midway through program delivery	Review what data you've already collected, identify gaps, and begin reflecting on what's working and what needs adjustment.
Near the end of program delivery	Focus on capturing outcomes, gathering feedback, and preparing for evaluation and reporting.
After program completion	Conduct a retrospective evaluation with available data and document lessons learned and gaps in knowledge. Use findings to inform future MEL planning.

Case study – MEL in action

During community consultations, people express concerns about lower school attendance in their area compared to nearby communities. They also highlight the need for additional support to help children stay engaged at school.

In response, your team reviews available evidence – such as school attendance data, community feedback and relevant research – and designs a program aimed at improving school attendance and student engagement.

As you implement the program, you begin collecting data to monitor progress.

This might include:

- daily attendance records from local schools
- feedback surveys from students and parents

- teacher observations on student engagement
- participation rates in after-school activities.

After 3 months, the data reveal that while attendance has improved slightly, student engagement remains low – particularly among older students. In response, you adjust the program by introducing peer mentoring and interest-based learning materials.

After 6 months, new data show a clear improvement in both attendance and classroom participation. However, feedback from teachers suggests that some students are still struggling with motivation. You respond with an initiative where students lead and take ownership over their classroom timetable and learning activities.

At the one-year mark, a formal evaluation shows that average attendance has increased by 12% and student engagement scores (based on teacher and student feedback) have improved significantly. Based on these results, the school adopts mandatory training requirements for teachers on inclusive and flexible teaching strategies.

This ongoing process of collecting and analysing data, making informed adjustments and evaluating outcomes is the learning part of MEL. It ensures your program remains responsive to community needs and continues to grow stronger over time.

The connection between practice impact and program impact

MEL can also be used for tracking practice impact in a more routine and continuous way throughout the duration of service delivery. This approach can enhance work you are doing to monitor program outcomes.

For example, feedback informed practice involves regularly seeking a family's views on their own functioning and progress, and their experience of the 'fit' between themselves and the program. More regular check-ins, reviews or the use of data-informed tools, such as the Session Rating Scale (or the Group Session Rating scale) and Outcome Rating Scale (ORS) can support:

- increased child and family engagement
- higher retention rates
- reduction in disengagement
- practice that is adapted continuously to client need and preferences.

These practice impacts can ultimately lead to better program outcomes.

Using MEL to track practice impact more routinely helps ensure that service delivery is tailored throughout and can adapt to changes along the way. This is particularly useful for groups experiencing multiple needs and vulnerabilities, as the process facilitates:

- collaborative and client-centred conversations
- dynamic safety and wellbeing screens
- identifying and addressing barriers
- timely service adaption based on the family's feedback.

If you are beginning MEL while your program is already underway, use these practical steps to get started:

- **Note what data you already have:** e.g. attendance records, feedback forms, case notes.
- **Start small:** Choose 1 or 2 areas to monitor or evaluate.
- **Engage your team:** Involve staff in identifying what's working and what could be improved.
- **Build in reflection points:** Even informal check-ins can support learning and adaptation.

Use this guide to develop a MEL approach that matches where you are now. Start with what's feasible and build your approach over time.

Aligning MEL with Department of Social Services funding requirements

If your service is funded through the Department of Social Services (DSS), it is important to consider the following when designing your MEL approach:

- your grant agreement
- operational guidelines
- reporting requirements (e.g. Data Exchange [DEX], work plans, progress reports).

These documents outline what your service is expected to deliver, who it aims to support, and what outcomes it is working toward. They also specify the types of data you need to collect and report.

By aligning your MEL activities with these requirements, you can ensure your data collection is purposeful, efficient and useful for both reporting and learning.

Using Department of Social Services templates to inform MEL

The Department of Social Services offers several tools that can also help shape your MEL planning:

- The Community Strategic Plan can help you clarify the aims and intended beneficiaries of your MEL activities.
- The Activity Work Plan (AWP) includes targets and deliverables that can be incorporated in your MEL data collection plan.

These tools can help you identify what to measure, how to measure it and how to use the results to inform both reporting and service improvement.

Designing MEL to serve multiple purposes

To make MEL work for both reporting and learning:

- **Map your reporting requirements** to your MEL questions and indicators
- **Use the same data sources** (e.g. Data Exchange (DEX), surveys, attendance records) for both reporting and internal reflection
- **Schedule regular review points** that align with reporting timelines and support team learning

- **Document insights and actions** alongside your reporting outputs

This approach ensures that MEL is not just a task but also a tool for reflection, decision making and growth.

This guide is organised in a way that supports you to collect and use data for both purposes.

Consent, privacy and ethics

While you may be familiar with ethics in the context of designing and delivering programs or services, additional consideration of ethics is needed when involving or working with people to undertake monitoring, learning and evaluation (MEL).

This part will cover:

- what consent, privacy and ethical practice mean in MEL
- when you may need formal ethics approval
- how to ensure MEL activities are safe, culturally respectful and inclusive
- how to collect, use and store data responsibly, including respecting Indigenous data sovereignty
- how to be accountable and share findings back to communities.

Consent, privacy and ethics

MEL activities often involve asking individuals and communities to share their experiences, needs and feedback. However, even well-meaning evaluations can unintentionally trigger discomfort. Asking inappropriate questions, overlooking cultural safety or failing to protect privacy can cause distress or harm.

An ethical approach – one that is mindful of trauma, privacy and cultural context – helps protect participants and supports safer, more respectful engagement.

In addition to minimising harm, MEL activities can also benefit participants by building their skills in data collection, analysis or other research-related areas, fostering empowerment and capacity within communities.

Ethics approval requirements

MEL approaches that are focused on collecting routine service data or client feedback for internal learning and improvement generally do not require a formal ethics review.

You may need formal ethics approval – such as from a Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) – if your evaluation involves:

- using data for a different purpose than originally intended, without specific consent (e.g. using clinical data for evaluation)
- comparing cohorts or using control groups, especially if this affects access to services
- involving historically marginalised groups (e.g. children, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, refugees, people with disability or mental illness)
- plans to publish or publicly share findings (Haynes, 2021).

If you're unsure, consult your organisation’s research, privacy or ethics advisor, or refer to resources such as the NHMRC National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research.

Ethical principles for MEL

Even if formal approval isn’t required, MEL activities should still be guided by ethical principles. Agencies already adhere to data privacy and storage standards for service delivery – MEL adds additional layers of responsibility.

Be transparent

People have a right to know what they're part of. Transparency builds trust and helps avoid misunderstandings.

Clearly explain what you're doing, why and how the information will be used. Be upfront about who will see the data, what will happen to it and how long it will be kept.

Make sure participants understand their rights – including the right to:

- say no
- withdraw at any time
- know how their data will be used in MEL activities.

Consider how you will ensure your program participants understand any distinctions between information you are gathering from them in order to deliver the service and information that will be used for MEL.

Be inclusive and respectful

Inclusive MEL leads to more accurate, fair and useful findings. It also supports equity and social justice.

Make sure diverse voices are heard and respected. This includes working with community leaders, using interpreters or cultural brokers when needed, and offering multiple ways for people to share their views – such as yarning circles, visual methods or anonymous surveys.

Be mindful of power dynamics and take steps to reduce them such as co-designing tools with community members or compensating people for their time. Most importantly, show how feedback is used to shape decisions, so participants see that their time and expertise are valued and respected.

Where appropriate, consider crediting participants as contributing authors in evaluation reports or other published products – this practice not only acknowledges their contributions but also fosters reciprocal benefit, builds community interest in research and MEL, and can even inspire future research careers.

Get the right permissions

Seek informed consent from participants to use their data. If you are planning to publish or share findings, consider whether formal ethical approval is needed.

Early planning is key. This includes developing clear and accessible consent forms, deciding how you'll explain people's rights to participate (or not), and setting up respectful ways to handle people who want to opt out.

If children are involved, you'll need both parental or guardian consent and the child's own assent. Children should be given developmentally appropriate information and the choice to participate (or not).

Read our practice guide: Involving children in evaluation for practical considerations and approaches to collecting data from children.

Use and store data responsibly

Responsible data handling protects privacy and builds trust. It also ensures compliance with legal and cultural expectations. This includes respecting data sovereignty – the right of communities, particularly First Nations peoples, to govern the collection, ownership and use of their data.

Only collect what you need. Store data securely, limit access and plan how and when it will be destroyed.

Respecting Indigenous data sovereignty in practice involves engaging communities in decisions about data, seeking informed consent in culturally appropriate ways, and ensuring transparency and accountability throughout the process.

Read our resource sheet Resources to support evaluation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and their communities for more guidance on how to uphold data sovereignty in your MEL work.

Be accountable

MEL is not just about examining the impacts of programs and services on others – it's also about taking responsibility for monitoring what is happening in the program and making changes when you need to.

Actively question your assumptions, seek out and listen to feedback, and be willing to change your approach when things aren't working. This kind of self-reflection and adaptability isn't just good practice – it's a core reason for doing MEL in the first place and a key part of ethical, accountable work.

Share back

Sharing back shows respect and helps build a culture of learning and improvement.

Let participants and communities know what you've learned.

See Part 8: Learning and doing for ideas on how to share results in ways that are clear, respectful and useful.

Using MEL in First Nations contexts

MEL in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander contexts must be grounded in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of knowing, being and doing. This means more than applying standard Western evaluation methods in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander specific settings. For many organisations, it requires a fundamental shift in how we think about purpose, process and power in evaluation.

MEL in this context is about valuing culture, building strong and respectful relationships and placing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people at the centre of decision making.

Wherever possible, MEL activities are led by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, ensuring that community priorities drive the work and that Indigenous knowledge systems shape the approach. This leadership is essential to strengthening community skills in research and MEL, supporting self-determination and ensuring that evaluation practices are culturally safe and relevant (Osborne & Goldsworthy, 2024; Productivity Commission, 2020).

From the outset, MEL should:

- Be undertaken in policy areas and on issues that matter most to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- Provide Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities with genuine opportunities to decide how they want to be involved.
- Ensure non-Indigenous evaluators bring cultural humility, self-awareness and a willingness to learn from and with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- Strengthen the evaluation capability of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and individuals.

This framework from Kowa is an example of how MEL can be tailored for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

In this section we mostly refer to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of knowing, being and doing but many of these principles and practices also apply to work in other cultural contexts.

Cultural safety

Cultural safety is foundational to ethical and effective MEL in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander contexts. It is not simply about being aware of cultural differences – it is about 'challenging dominant culture benchmarks in evaluation' (AES) and intentionally creating environments where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people feel respected, empowered and safe to be themselves.

As described by SNAICC (2021), cultural safety is:

> The positive recognition and celebration of cultures. It is more than just the absence of racism or discrimination and more than 'cultural awareness' and 'cultural sensitivity'. It empowers people and enables them to contribute and feel safe to be themselves. (SNAICC, 2021, p. 7).

In evaluation, cultural safety is a critical part of addressing the power imbalances that often exist between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and non-Indigenous researchers/evaluators. Historically, research carried out on Aboriginal and Torres Strait

Islander communities without cultural leadership was racist, exploitative and disrespectful (AIATSIS 2020).

Cultural safety supports self-determination and ensures that evaluation processes are not extractive or harmful but instead contribute to community wellbeing and strength (Osborne & Goldsworthy, 2024).

Practising cultural safety means recognising the unique voices, perspectives and lived experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. It also means understanding the deep and enduring connections to culture, land, family and language that shape identity and community life. When these elements are respected and centred, evaluation becomes a tool for better decision making and stronger outcomes (Gollan & Stacey, 2021; National Indigenous Australian Agency, 2023).

Further reading on cultural safety

- Australian Evaluation Society First Nations Cultural Safety Framework
  This document outlines key principles for culturally safe evaluation and includes practical tools for critical self-reflection and readiness assessment.
- Cultural safety tools
  This resource from the Lowitja Institute presents a suite of tools that evaluators and people commissioning evaluations can buy to support culturally safe evaluation.
- Improving cultural safety: Recommendations for child protection practitioners
  This article from AIFS aims to provide guidance using 3 cultural safety principles for how practitioners can adapt their practice to create a more culturally safe environment for First Nations peoples.
- Yanha-yalinya: Cultural responsiveness assessment tool for services and programs
  This toolkit from Yulang Indigenous Evaluation is for services to assess their cultural responsiveness when designing, delivering and evaluating services and programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Key ethical principles for MEL with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities

When conducting MEL with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, it is essential to uphold ethical principles that respect Indigenous rights, cultures and knowledge systems. These principles are grounded in national ethical guidelines and reflect the values of self-determination, cultural safety and mutual respect:

- Code of Ethics for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research (AIATSIS)
- Keeping research on track II (NHMRC)

Principle	What it means	How to apply it in MEL
Self-determination	Respect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' right to lead and make decisions.	Co-design MEL activities with communities. Use agreements to define roles and ensure free, prior, and informed consent.
Indigenous leadership	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people should determine priorities and guide the work.	Involve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in planning, governance, and decision-making. Prioritise Indigenous-led teams or partnerships.

Principle	What it means	How to apply it in MEL
Cultural safety and respect	Create safe spaces that value culture and identity.	Follow cultural protocols, be flexible, and build trust. Acknowledge and respect diverse cultural practices. Centre Indigeous perspective, worldviews and methodologies. Recognise and acknowledge the individual and collective contribution of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants and groups Evaluators should engage in ongoing critical self-reflection (including on biases and assumptions) to ensure cultural responsiveness and humility.
Reciprocity	Ensure a fair distribution of benefits.	Address community priorities, and needs described by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Be explicit about how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people will benefit from the MEL project.
Equity	Fairness in process and outcomes.	Establish equitable partnerships and engage with community when choosing MEL priorities and methods. Use inclusive methods and consider first language of participants when developing materials.
Responsibility	Do no harm and be accountable.	Plan for risks, monitor ethical practice, and follow through on commitments.
Impact and value	MEL should aim to benefit Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.	Define intended benefits, and their distribution, with community before seeking endorsement of the project. Ensure outcomes are tangible and relevant.
Sustainability and accountability	Long-term thinking and transparency.	Return data and findings to communities. Plan for ongoing relationships and future use of knowledge.

Data sovereignty

Indigenous Data Sovereignty refers to the right of Indigenous peoples (globally) to exercise ownership and control over data that relates to them. This includes the creation, collection, access, analysis, interpretation, management, dissemination and reuse of Indigenous data (Australian Research Data Commons, n.d.; Kukutai & Taylor, 2016; Maiam nayri Wingara, 2018; National Indigenous Australians Agency, 2024; Snipp, 2016).

Indigenous Data Sovereignty is practised through Indigenous Data Governance, which refers to Indigenous peoples autonomously deciding what, how and why Indigenous Data is collected, accessed and used (ensuring that data on or about Indigenous peoples reflects their priorities, values, cultures, world views and diversity).

In Australia, the Maiam nayri Wingara Indigenous Data Sovereignty Network has stated that priority rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in regard to data include:

- exercising control of data ecosystems, including creation, development, stewardship, analysis, dissemination and infrastructure
- data that is contextual and disaggregated (available and accessible at individual, community and First Nations levels)

- data that is relevant and empowers sustainable self-determination and effective self-governance
- data structures that are accountable to Indigenous peoples and First Nations
- data that is protective and respects Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' individual and collective interests.

These rights set out to counteract the existing problems of 'BADDR' (Blaming, Aggregate, Decontextualised, Deficit and Restricted) data, which:

- contrasts Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, holding Indigenous people up to be 'the problem'
- is aggregated at the national or state level, implying cultural and geographic homogeneity
- is simplistic and decontextualised, focusing on individuals and families outside their context
- is designed to capture deficits and service government priorities
- has restricted access, primarily being accessible to government agencies but not Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations (Walter, 2018).

In contrast, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities require data that:

> … [is] meaningful and useful, informing a comprehensive, nuanced narrative of who we are as peoples, of our culture, our communities, our resilience, goals and successes; [recognises] cultural and geographical diversity and can provide evidence for community-level planning and service delivery; can be contextualised to include the wider social structural complexities in which Indigenous disadvantage occurs; [measures] priorities and agendas, not just problems; and [is] accessible and useable (Walter, 2018)

Principles and actions for community organisations

Indigenous control over data ecosystems

Indigenous peoples must lead and make decisions about all aspects of the data ecosystem involving their data.

Organisations should ensure Indigenous peoples have power and control over their data by:

- Establishing (regional/local) Indigenous-led data governance structures for monitoring and evaluation data, or plugging into an existing data governance structure if one is in place.
- Documenting recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in your community as decision-makers regarding access, control, and use of their data.

Contextual and disaggregated data

Data should reflect the diversity of Indigenous communities and be broken down to provide meaningful insights.

Organisations should:

- Work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and community governance structures to develop or adapt indicators that reflect communities' key priorities for community development, children's wellbeing and family functioning.
- Make data accessible to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and community governance structures, including in granular/disaggregated forms that support detailed analysis and continuous quality improvement.
- Support data literacy initiatives within Indigenous communities.
- Collaborate with partner agencies to transfer data ownership and control to Indigenous peoples.

Data for self-determination and governance

Data should be relevant and empower sustainable self-determination and effective governance.

Organisations should:

- Engage with Indigenous communities to understand their priorities.
- Identify and collect data that benefits Indigenous peoples.

Accountability to Indigenous Peoples

Data systems must be transparent and accountable to Indigenous peoples.

Organisations should:

- Understand obligations under Priority Reform Four of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap.
- Maintain awareness of the data held and ensure it is easily accessible to Indigenous peoples.

Protection of Indigenous interests

Data must be safeguarded and respect both individual and collective Indigenous interests.

Organisations should:

- Invest in secure data infrastructure.
- Establish Indigenous-led data governance structures for monitoring and evaluation data, or plug into an existing data governance structure if one is in place.
- Ensure decisions about data analysis and communication are approved by Indigenous governance bodies.
- Develop and implement policies on the ethical treatment of Indigenous data.

Further reading on data sovereignty

- Taking Control of Our Data: A Discussion Paper on Indigenous Data Governance for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People and Communities
  This discussion paper from the Lowitja Institute aims to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and organisations to realise Indigenous Data Sovereignty by providing context and guidance for implementing Indigenous Data Governance.

- Indigenous Data Sovereignty Readiness Assessment and Evaluation Toolkit
  This toolkit from the Lowitja Institute provides guidance and tools for research and academic institutions and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and organisations who are implementing Indigenous Data Sovereignty principles and practices.
- Indigenous Data Sovereignty: Toward an agenda
  This book published by the Australian National University explores Indigenous data sovereignty, including what it means for indigenous peoples around the world and how it can be used to pursue self-determination.

Key evaluation resources and frameworks

- Resources to support evaluation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and their communities
  This resource sheet from AIFS provides a list of resources for non-Indigenous evaluators and/or child and family services who need to plan, undertake or commission an evaluation for programs that work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and their families.
- QATSICPP Evaluation Framework
  This resource published by the Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Protection Peak aims to guide the organisation and their Members (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations) to commission and plan evaluation that is culturally safe and respectful.
- Indigenous Evaluation Strategy
  This resource from Productivity Commission aims to provide a framework for Australian Government agencies to select, plan, conduct and use evaluations that affect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Preparing for monitoring, evaluation and learning

Program logic models are a critical element in Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) because they visually represent the relationship between the resources you use, the activities you complete and the outcomes you intend to achieve.

This part will cover:

- developing a program logic model
- assessing organisational readiness
- defining roles and responsibilities
- undertaking stakeholder mapping.

Before completing this section you should have

- Familiarised yourself with any funding guidelines that apply to your program
- Understood consent, privacy and ethical responsibilities, including cultural responsiveness and safety

Develop a program logic model

Having an up-to-date and evidence-informed program logic model is essential for MEL. Logic models illustrate how a program works, who is expected to benefit and what those benefits are (Australian Institute of Family Studies, 2016). By having this information documented in this way, you can more easily:

- use the logic model to select what to monitor and evaluate
- identify key outcomes and indicators
- choose appropriate data collection methods and tools
- decide who to collect data from and when (e.g. before/after program, at regular intervals)
- acknowledge assumptions made about how the program will work and external factors and monitor them.

There is more detailed guidance about how to use your program logic to plan for monitoring and evaluation later in this guide. If you need to develop a program logic model or update one, you can use these resources to step you through the process.

- A guided tour through: Program logic models
  This instructional video produced by AIFS steps through how to develop a program logic model by outlining common terminology and using examples to explore practical considerations for child and family practitioners.
- How to develop a program logic for planning and evaluation
  This resource from AIFS provides guidance on how to develop a program logic in the family and community sector.
- DSS program logic templates
  This Department of Social Services webpage contains links to templates and guidance for developing a program logic for services being delivered under the Family and Community Activity.

Programs designed for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

When working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, it's important that the program logic model reflects Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander beliefs, values and ways of understanding wellbeing.

SNAICC's Evaluation Readiness Toolkit offers a step-by-step approach to developing logic models that align with the domains and outcomes shown in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child and Family Services Wellbeing Framework.

Click through the image below to learn about the types of roles and responsibilities for delivering MEL within child and family service providers.

Figure 1: The domains and outcome statements from The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child and Family Services Wellbeing Framework

Assess organisational readiness

For a MEL approach to succeed, it requires an organisation to be ready to do that MEL work. This means ensuring the right **organisational support, skills and systems** are in place, ideally before you begin. Monitoring and evaluation findings are more likely to be actioned in organisations with a positive evaluation culture, where program staff have access to necessary skills and resources and there are processes for evidence collection and sharing.

For child and family service providers, this means organisations will:

- have leadership that endorses and champions MEL activities
- provide access to training, skills and expertise in things such as:
    - data collection and analysis (in relation to quantitative and/or qualitative data)
    - analysis software and tools (e.g. SPSS, Excel, PowerBI)
    - communication and project management
- allocate resources such as budget, staff training and data management systems
- establish processes on how to collect, use and communicate data. For instance, documenting decisions about how and why data are being collected, establishing

feedback loops for sharing evidence within the organisation, scheduling time frames for monitoring evidence and reporting findings.

If your organisation is missing some foundational elements or has low levels of readiness – that's okay. You can work to strengthen your capacity to undertake MEL with these strategies:

- **Raise awareness internally** about what's missing and why it matters. Help colleagues and leadership understand the value of MEL and how it can support better outcomes for the families and communities you service.
- **Tap into internal or external networks** where you can access knowledge and resources and test ideas. For example, this might include communities of practice networks, interest groups within your organisation, industry forums and webinar programs. Collaborating with others can help you build capacity and find creative solutions.
- **Set realistic expectations** for your MEL based on your organisation's current levels of support, skill and resources. Start small, focus on what's feasible and build incrementally over time.

Define roles and responsibilities

Another key aspect of readiness is identifying and assigning roles and responsibilities for overseeing different elements of the MEL process. From a practical perspective this helps to manage workloads but it also builds transparency and clarity around decision making and accountability.

Clearly defined roles ensure that everyone knows who is responsible for undertaking MEL activities and for implementing the learnings from your monitoring and evaluation activities. Every stakeholder in a MEL plan has a role to play, and what this looks like will depend on your organisation and the specific context of your MEL work.

Role	Typical responsibilities
Internal evaluator	Develops MEL plans, coordinates data collection, leads analysis and reporting, supports capacity building
Program Manager	Ensures MEL is integrated into program delivery, supports staff participation, uses findings for improvement
Frontline staff	Collect data (e.g., surveys, case notes), provide feedback on tools and processes, participate in reflection sessions
Executive/Leadership	Endorses MEL strategy, allocates resources, uses findings to guide strategic decisions
External evaluator (if used)	Designs and conducts independent evaluations, provides objective analysis and recommendations
IT/Data officer	Manages data systems, ensures data security and quality, supports reporting needs

Undertake stakeholder mapping

Stakeholders are the organisations or individuals that have an interest in, or who will be affected by, the findings of your monitoring and evaluation activities. Creating a stakeholder map early in the MEL process can help you to understand who you need to engage with, when and how.

Start by identifying the specific people or groups who have the capacity to effect change using your MEL findings and will therefore be invested in your MEL purpose. It is likely you will engage frequently with your primary intended users so identifying who they are early in the planning process is important (Better Evaluation, 2025a; International Development Research

Centre, 2012). Once you have identified who the key stakeholders are, you can use the approaches set out below to map their level of influence and plan how to engage with them.

Identify stakeholders

Start by listing all the individuals, groups or organisations who:

- have an interest in your program or its outcomes
- will be affected by the findings of your MEL
- will use the findings to make decisions
- have the power to influence decisions or implementation
- could support or block the MEL process.

Think broadly – include internal (e.g. staff, leadership) and external (e.g. funders, partners, participants) stakeholders.

Categorise stakeholders by interest and influence

Use a simple matrix to sort stakeholders into 4 categories:

Category	What it means	Engagement strategy
High interest / High influence	Key players	Engage closely and involve in decision-making
Low interest / High influence	Powerful but less engaged	Keep informed and tailor communication
High interest / Low influence	Supportive but limited power	Keep updated and involve when feasible
Low interest / Low influence	Minimal impact	Inform only as needed

(Umbrex, n.d.).

Map stakeholders and plan engagement

Create a stakeholder map or table that includes:

- stakeholder name or group
- level of interest and influence
- potential contribution or risk
- preferred engagement method (e.g. meetings, reports, surveys)
- frequency of engagement.

Based on your map, decide:

- **who** you will engage with
- **how** you will engage them (e.g. co-design workshops, regular updates, feedback sessions)
- **when** you will engage them (e.g. during planning, data collection, reporting)

Review and update regularly

Stakeholder needs and priorities can change. Revisit your stakeholder map throughout the MEL process to ensure it stays relevant and useful.

Stakeholder mapping resources

These tools and templates can help you to map your stakeholders.

- Stakeholder Analysis Matrix Template
  This template from tools4dev aims to support the identification of stakeholders, their level of influence, what issues are important to them and how they can be engaged for a program and evaluation.
- Stakeholder Assessment Tool
  This template published by BetterEvaluation aims to support the identification of stakeholders, their relationships and interests in relation to your program and evaluation.
- Getting stakeholder engagement right
  This article by the Australian Public Service Commission provides guidance and tools for mapping stakeholders and planning engagement.
- DSS Community Strategic Plan template
  This template published by the Department of Social Services aims to inform Communities for Children Facilitating Partners who are working to identify community needs, priorities and key outcomes.

Establishing aims and objectives

This stage is about setting the foundation for your monitoring, learning and evaluation (MEL) activities by defining your aims and developing MEL questions. These elements will guide what data you collect and how you use them.

You may revisit this stage throughout the MEL cycle as your program evolves, or new priorities emerge.

This section will cover:

- drafting a statement setting out the aim of your MEL activities
- developing the questions you want to answer through MEL.

Before completing this step you should have:

- Familiarised yourself with any funding guidelines that apply to your program
- Understood consent, privacy and ethical responsibilities, including cultural responsiveness and safety
- Developed a program logic model and assessed your readiness to undertake MEL activities
- Mapped key stakeholders

Draft an aim statement

An aim is a broad, overarching statement about what your MEL approach is trying to achieve. Ideally, your aims would reflect a commitment to learning, accountability and improvement.

Setting clear aims helps to:

- orient you throughout the MEL process, providing a clear direction and focus for your activities
- ensure that MEL activities are aligned with key program objectives and strategic goals, making sure that your evaluation efforts are relevant and purposeful
- promote a shared understanding of the evaluation purpose amongst stakeholders.

Establishing clear aims is not just a theoretical exercise – it's a practical step that will guide your MEL design and decision making.

Take time to articulate and document your aims clearly and intentionally, as they will shape the questions you ask, the data you collect and how you interpret your findings.

Examples of MEL aims for child and family service providers include (Garbutt, 2022; Respect Victoria, 2023a):

- To understand the impact of our work on families and children and make evidence-informed decisions.
- To understand if we are meeting community needs and expectations.
- To ensure accountability to funders, communities and partners.
- To monitor fidelity (the degree to which a program is delivered according to its original design) and assess whether expected outcomes are being achieved.
- To generate evidence that supports future funding or scaling.

Develop MEL questions

MEL questions are the key questions your monitoring, evaluation and learning activities aim to answer. They help focus your data collection on what matters most – such as how a program is working, what outcomes are being achieved and how improvements can be made. They will also become the lens through which you interpret your findings and decide on next steps.

How to draft MEL questions

Start by reflecting on the following prompts:

- What do we need to know in order to achieve our MEL aims?
- What do we need to report to funders?
- What insights would help program staff improve delivery?
- What matters most to the communities you work with?

Once you have initially listed what you want to know about your program, you may need to refine or revise the question focus to develop a more feasible list of MEL questions.

For new programs, you may want to prioritise questions about how programs are delivered, client satisfaction and adherence to the program plan (i.e. fidelity). For established programs, you might prefer to prioritise questions about outcomes, long-term impact and program sustainability.

Considerations for drafting MEL questions:

- Start with a manageable number of open-ended questions – small organisations with limited capacity for MEL may focus on 1-2 questions tied to reporting needs; larger organisations or those with more embedded evaluation capability may aim for 5-7.
- Avoid yes/no questions - ask both 'what happened?' and 'how well did it work?'
- Keep questions action-oriented.
- Check for feasibility:
    - Do we have the time and resources to answer this question?
    - Can we collect the necessary data?
    - Will the answer be useful for decision making?
- Involve stakeholders in reviewing and refining your questions to ensure relevance and buy-in.

Example questions

Relevant questions for child and family service providers include:

- How well is the program achieving the outcomes outlined in the program logic model?
- To what extent are services meeting the needs of children and families in the community?
- To what extent are our programs culturally safe for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and children?
- To what extent was the program delivered with fidelity?
- How satisfied are service users with their experience of the program?

- To what extent are we effectively reaching and engaging our priority target groups?
- What changes or benefits are being experienced by the community as a result of the programs we fund?
- To what extent do service users feel a sense of belonging and connection within the community?
- How does our program help children feel safe in the community?
- How many participants complete the program, and what factors influence completion rates?
- How efficient and effective are our referral processes in connecting people to the right support?

Collecting evidence

Once you have developed your key monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) questions, the next step is to determine what evidence you will need to answer those questions. Evidence means the information you collect and analyse to understand how your program is going – whether it's making a difference, being delivered efficiently and achieving its goals.

Collecting and reviewing evidence regularly helps your team learn and improve your services over time.

This part will cover:

- creating a data collection plan
- referring to your program logic model
- planning for the evidence requirements of funding bodies
- going beyond reporting requirements
- quality assurance practices.

Before completing this step you should have:

- Familiarised yourself with any funding guidelines that apply to your program
- Understood consent, privacy and ethical responsibilities, including cultural responsiveness and safety
- Developed a program logic model and assessed your readiness to undertake MEL activities
- Mapped key stakeholders
- Established MEL aims and objectives

Create a data collection plan

Having a MEL plan helps you document your decisions about what data to collect and how. A good plan:

- supports clear communication and shared understanding
- helps with onboarding new staff
- makes it easier to manage resources
- provides a record you can refer to and update as needed.

Here are 2 planning templates that you can download and use.

- Monitoring, evaluation and learning planning template .docx
- Data analysis planning template .docx

Digital vs paper records

Where possible, use digital tools (e.g. spreadsheets, databases or case management systems) to record and store data. Digital records make it easier to:

- organise and retrieve information
- analyse trends over time

- share data securely with your team.

Refer to your program logic model

As mentioned in Part 3, a **program logic model** is a key tool for deciding what evidence to collect. It shows how your program works and helps you focus on what to measure.

Using your logic model at this stage helps you to:

- focus on collecting useful information
- understand how your program works
- avoid collecting data that isn't needed.
- Here are some example MEL questions linked to different parts of a logic model:

Logic Model Component	Example MEL Question
Needs statement	Are we reaching the people who need our service most?
Inputs	Are we using our resources effectively?
Activities and outputs	How many people are attending and completing the program?
Outcomes	What difference is the program making for families?
Assumptions and external factors	What factors are helping or hindering success?

Plan for the evidence requirements of your funding body

Most child and family service organisations need to collect certain data to meet funding contract or reporting obligations. For example, organisations funded through the Department of Social Services need to collect data for the DSS Data Exchange (DEX/SCORE). Your funding body may require you to report data about things like:

- demographics
- client needs and referrals
- client circumstances, goals, and satisfaction.

If you only have the resources or capacity to collect the data required to fulfil your reporting obligations, you can still use your MEL questions and logic model to guide your approach. Embedding your data collection practices within a MEL framework strengthens your ability to learn from the data you are collecting.

Key steps:

- Start with your MEL questions
- Use your logic model
- Choose how to collect evidence

Start with your MEL questions

Ask:

- Which MEL questions can be answered using reporting data?
- Are there questions that can't be answered with this data?

- What gaps exist between what we want to know and what we're required to report?

MEL question	Can the data collected for reporting answer this?	Additional data needed?
Are we reaching priority groups?	Yes – via demographics	No
Are participants satisfied with the service?	Yes – via satisfaction	No
What changes in parenting confidence are occurring?	Yes – via goals/circumstances	Possibly
What are the barriers to program completion?	No	Yes – interviews or exit surveys

Use your logic model

Use your logic model to guide decision making. Click through the interactive below to reveal the associated program logic component.

Data collected for reporting	Program logic component
Demographics Key characteristics of population group/s your program was designed for.	Needs statement Outputs/participation
Attendance Who from your priority population group attended key program activities or sessions.	Program activities Assumptions
Referrals The number and nature of referrals in and out.	Program activities Outputs Assumptions
Client Goals and Circumstances 1–3 outcomes in your logic model that align with SCORE domains. For example, changes in knowledge, skills or behaviours.	Short or medium term program outcomes
Client Satisfaction Satisfaction with different elements of the program such as program quality, facilities, cultural safety, inclusiveness and wait times.	Program inputs Program activities Outputs Assumptions

Choose how to collect evidence

Once you know what evidence you need, the next step is choosing how to collect it. Here are some practical steps and tools to help you gather useful data. Move through each icon for more information.

- **Use intake forms to capture key demographics**
  Create new forms or review existing ones, ensuring that they include information aligned with your program logic model – e.g. housing status, mental health, disability, caring responsibilities, or other factors that help you understand whether the priority population groups are accessing the program.
- **Track attendance**
  Record each time a client attends a session. This helps measure engagement and program reach.

- **Log referrals**
  Record every referral made, including relevant details. If you make cold referrals, try to follow up to see if and when the referral was accessed.
- **Measure client goals and outcomes**
  Use a tool that collects data at both the start and end of the program to track change over time. Consistency is key – use the same tool at both time points.
- **When selecting a tool:**
  - **Check the** SCORE translation matrix for validated tools that align with your program outcomes.
  - **Explore other validated tools** in this guide if the translation matrix doesn't address your needs.
  - **Design your own survey** if no suitable tool exists. This guide includes tips for writing effective survey questions.

Choosing between validated tools or in-house surveys

Validated Measurement Tools	In-House Survey Questionnaires
Standardised tools tested for reliability and accuracy.	Custom surveys designed for your program's specific needs.
Pros: ✓ Reliable and consistent ✓ Can compare results across programs ✓ Often recognised in reporting	**Pros**: ✓ Cost-effective ✓ Flexible (can include both quantitative and qualitative questions) ✓ Tailored to your audience ✓ Can include questions from validated tools
Challenges: ✗ May not suit your audience or context ✗ Can be costly or time-consuming ✗ Limited availability	**Challenges:** ✗ Requires skill to design well ✗ May not measure outcomes accurately ✗ Risk of biased or unclear questions

Go beyond reporting requirements

Going beyond the needs of your reporting requirements will help you collect data that supports your full range of MEL aims and questions.

Even if you're primarily collecting data for reporting (e.g. DEX/SCORE), you may need additional evidence to:

- fully address your MEL questions
- understand how clients experience your program
- learn about broader program impacts – both positive and negative.

The following pages outline practical steps to help teams analyse data in a way that goes beyond reporting requirements by:

- choosing methods
- making use of existing data and tools
- finding a 'good enough' tool

- choosing when to collect data
- establishing criteria for success.

Choose methods

Start by reviewing your MEL questions and identifying the most appropriate methods to answer them.

While DEX/SCORE focuses on **quantitative data**, many MEL questions are best answered using a **mixed methods approach** – combining both quantitative and qualitative data to provide a more complete picture of your program's impact.

Using multiple methods allows you to capture both measurable trends and rich, personal insights – strengthening your understanding and your evidence base.

For example, for the MEL question 'Do children feel safe in the community?', you could collect:

- **quantitative data** through a survey asking adults to rate, on a scale, how safe they believe the children in their care feel
- **qualitative data** through arts-based methods and interviews where children create drawings or stories about what safety means to them.

Quantitative vs. qualitative data

Quantitative data refers to numerical information that measures the "how much" or "how many" aspects of your program or service. This type of data is useful for assessing measurable quantities, such as the number of participants, frequency of service use, or levels of satisfaction. Methods include: Surveys, statistical analysis, checklists, audits, attendance logs, self-report measures.

Qualitative data involves descriptive information that captures people's experiences, thoughts, and feelings about a program. This type of data provides insights into the characteristics and qualities that cannot be quantified, such as personal stories, feedback, and perceptions. Methods include: Interviews, focus groups, yarning circles, open-ended survey questions, case studies, observation, arts-based methods, content analysis of video/audio

Source: Goldsworthy, K. (2025).

Program processes and implementation

Another important area that may be missed in DEX/SCORE reporting is information about program processes and implementation. This includes understanding what actually happened during program delivery, whether the program was implemented as intended, and whether it was delivered with fidelity to the program design. Exploring these elements is essential for learning and improvement.

Examples of program process and implementation questions include:

- Was the program delivered consistently across different sites or facilitators?
- Were all key components of the model implemented?
- What adaptations were made and why?

Key considerations for choosing methods

Match methods to your MEL questions and available resources

Start by thinking about your MEL questions and the insights you're aiming to generate. Then, weigh this against the skills and experience available in your team, as well as the time and tools you have for collecting and analysing data.

Some methods are more involved than others. For instance, conducting interviews with every participant in a program can be time-intensive, both in terms of administration and analysis. In contrast, distributing a survey may be quicker to implement and easier to analyse, especially when working with larger groups.

Consider participant needs and context

Think about who your participants are and what approaches will work best for them. A method that is effective for one group may not be suitable for another. For example, standard written surveys may not be appropriate for young children, people with low literacy or participants from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. In these cases, more engaging or accessible methods – such as interviews or observation – can provide more useful data.

Co-design or pilot test your tools

It's important to test data collection tools to make sure they are clear, relevant and easy to use. Ideally, involve service users in the design process so that the tools reflect their language, experiences and ways of understanding the world. If co-design isn't possible, you should at least pilot test your tools with a small number of participants and staff. Go through the questions with them and ask how they interpret each one, whether the response options make sense, and if anything feels confusing or inappropriate.

MEL question	Relevant data collection methods
How well is the program achieving the outcomes outlined in the program logic model?	Surveys, Observation, Case studies, Document analysis, Interviews, Focus groups, Yarning circles
To what extent are services meeting the needs of children and families in the community?	Interviews, Focus groups, Yarning circles, Surveys, Document analysis
To what extent was the program delivered with fidelity?	Observation, Document analysis, Interviews
Are our programs culturally safe for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and children?	Interviews, Yarning circles, Open-ended surveys, Case studies, Arts-based methods
How satisfied are service users with their experience of the program?	Surveys, Interviews, Focus groups, Yarning circles, Open-ended surveys, Arts-based methods
Are we effectively reaching and engaging our priority target groups?	Attendance logs, Document analysis, Surveys, Interviews
What changes or benefits are being experienced by the community as a result of the programs we fund?	Case studies, Focus groups, Yarning circles, Surveys, Interviews
Do service users feel a sense of belonging and connection within the community?	Focus groups, Yarning circles, Interviews, Surveys, Observation, Arts-based methods
How many participants complete the program, and what factors influence completion rates?	Attendance logs, Statistical analysis, Interviews, Open-ended surveys, Observation, Document analysis

MEL question	Relevant data collection methods
How efficient and effective are our referral processes in connecting people to the right support?	Document analysis, Open-ended surveys, Interviews

More information about data collection methods

The Better Evaluation website has a comprehensive list of data collection methods and information about how to use them.

Make use of existing data and tools

Before developing new data collection tools, it's important to assess whether your existing data and processes can already meet your information needs. Routine forms, reports and surveys may already contain valuable insights. For instance, intake forms often capture demographic details and client needs, while older tools such as satisfaction surveys may need to be updated to align with your current MEL objectives.

Conducting a data audit can help you identify what information you already collect, how it's gathered and whether it's accessible and useful. This involves listing the types of data you collect, the tools or processes used, the frequency of collection and how the data are stored or accessed.

Types of data	How you gather information	Description
Demographics	Intake processes, program surveys	Includes age, gender, income level, and other characteristics of participants.
Project input data	Human resources files Budgets, invoices	Information about the resources you used when delivering your project. Example – your budget allocations, staff hours, resources used.
Process data	Work plans/schedules Intake forms Consultations	Information that describes how services was implemented. E.g. the number of sessions conducted, types of activities performed, adherence to protocols, participant feedback about delivery of the project
Outcomes data	Surveys/ questionnaires Interviews Staff observation or reflection Validated outcomes measures DEX/SCORE	Information you use to measure your project impacts. E.g. to what extent are your participants satisfied with the service delivery? This can be measure using a scale from 0 (not satisfied at all) to 5 (very satisfied). You can also collect qualitative data about satisfaction by having conversations with participants to gather detailed feedback and views about the service.

Find a 'good enough' tool

If your existing data aren't sufficient to answer your MEL questions, you will need to find an existing tool, or create your own, to collect information for your MEL. Here are some options.

Survey questionnaires and validated outcomes measurement tools

Structured tools used to gather information from individuals through a series of questions. Refer to the previous section on how to collect data for information about this option.

Interview and focus group schedules

Structured guides that outline key questions and topics, including introductions and closing remarks.

Open-ended questions in surveys

Add depth to your data. Examples:

- 'Can you describe your overall experience with the program?'
- 'How could we improve our service?'
- 'What barriers affected your participation?'

Observation checklists

Systematically record behaviours or activities during program delivery.

Document review templates

Help you consistently extract relevant information from reports, case notes or other documents.

Choose when to collect data

The frequency of data collection should be guided by your MEL questions, the nature of the data and the practical realities of your program. Collecting data too often can burden staff and participants. Collecting it too infrequently may result in missed insights.

Here are some key considerations:

Purpose of the data

- Outcomes data are typically collected at the start and end of a program or service.
- Process data (e.g. attendance, session delivery, participant engagement) may need to be collected continuously or after each session to monitor implementation.
- Feedback and reflection data (e.g. staff observations, participant feedback) can be collected periodically or after key milestones.

Program length and intensity

- New or intensive programs may require more frequent data collection to capture rapid changes. More established and longer-term programs may benefit from quarterly or mid-point reviews in addition to start and end points.

Resource availability

- Consider the time, staff capacity and tools available. Choose a frequency that is sustainable and does not compromise data quality.

Participant burden

- Avoid over-surveying or repeatedly asking for the same information. Where possible, integrate data collection in existing touchpoints (e.g. intake, exit, regular check-ins).

Use a data planning template to outline what data will be collected, by whom and when.

Establish criteria for success

To make sense of your data, you first need to define what success looks like. This helps you interpret findings and make informed decisions. Clearly defining success is also essential for answering your MEL questions – for example, 'Are we achieving our program goals?' By identifying what success means in the context of your goals, you can then assess whether your data provide evidence that those goals are being met.

Your Activity Work Plan or funding agreement may incorporate service standards, success metrics or criteria that can serve as a starting point for defining success and guiding your interpretation of findings and decision making.

Ways to define success

- Key performance indicators (KPIs): e.g. 80% of participants complete the program
- Benchmarks: e.g. industry standards or past performance
- Scoring instructions from validated measures: e.g. Personal Wellbeing Index scoring categories
- Rubrics: e.g. rating scales for outcomes such as parenting confidence. See examples below.

Criteria	Excellent	Good	Satisfactory	Needs improvement
Parenting knowledge	90% or more of respondents rate their knowledge at a 4 or 5	70-89% of respondents rate their knowledge at a 4 or higher.	50-69% of respondents rate their knowledge at a 4 or higher.	Less than 50% of respondents rate their knowledge at a 4 or higher.
Play and interaction skills	90% or more of respondents rate their skills at a 4 or 5	70-89% of respondents rate their skills at a 4 or higher.	50-69% of respondents rate their skills at a 4 or higher.	Less than 50% of respondents rate their skills at a 4 or higher.
Parent-child relationship	90% or more of respondents rate their interactions at a 4 or higher.	70-89% of respondents rate their interactions at a 4 or higher.	50-69% of respondents rate their interactions at a 4 or higher.	Less than 50% of respondents rate their interactions at a 4 or higher.

This evaluation guide provides examples of defining success for evaluation questions that focus on program processes and implementation.

Quality assurance practices

Good quality data are crucial for making informed decisions about resource allocation and determining whether a program should continue, change or be improved. Here are some things you can do to improve the quality of the data you collect:

- Provide training for your staff on data collection methods, tools and ethical considerations. Continue to support staff through refresher courses to make sure they stay updated on the best practices and new tools – particularly if you have some turnover of staff. This is something your leadership team would ideally support.
- Develop and implement standardised data collection procedures to ensure consistency and reliability. For example:
  - guidelines and protocols for data entry, storage, handling to maintain data integrity

    - putting data security measures in place to protect sensitive information.

- Pilot test your data collection tools with staff to identify any issues and make necessary adjustments. Also test them with service users to make sure they are appropriate, logical and understood.
- Establish a feedback mechanism for your staff to report problems and suggest improvements.
- Utilise data management systems and software to streamline data collection, storage and analysis processes.
- Use validated and reliable data collection instruments to ensure consistency across different teams and projects.
- Establish clear policies and procedures for data governance, including data ownership, access controls and compliance with relevant regulations.

By incorporating these practices, you can enhance the quality and reliability of your data, ultimately leading to more informed decision making and better program outcomes.

Good quality MEL data should have these key features:

- **Validity** - the data should accurately measure what they are supposed to.
- **Reliability** – the data should be consistent over time.
- **Completeness** - the data should be thorough and include all necessary information related to the program.
- **Timeliness** - the data should be up-to-date and available when you need it.

AIFS resources to learn more about data collection

- For guidance on collecting data about program processes and implementation, including indicators of success and program fidelity measures, refer to the Process evaluation guide.
- For guidance on collecting data from children refer to the Involving children in evaluation guide.
- For help choosing a validated outcomes measurement tool refer to the Communities for Children outcomes measurement matrix, designed for Communities for Children service providers and the wider child and family sector.
- For help developing your own survey refer to How to write a survey questionnaire for evaluation: A guide for beginners.
- For more information and resources to support evaluation of programs with and for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people refer to our resource sheet.

Organising and analysing evidence

Once you've collected your data, the next step is to analyse that data to draw out meaningful insights. This part provides a step-by-step guide to help you analyse your data in a way that supports both your reporting requirements and your broader monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) goals.

This part will cover:

- reviewing key documents
- choosing when to analyse
- choosing how to analyse the data.

Before beginning this step make sure you have

- Familiarised yourself with any funding guidelines that apply to your program
- Understood consent, privacy and ethical responsibilities, including cultural responsiveness and safety
- Developed a program logic model and assessed your readiness to undertake MEL activities
- Mapped key stakeholders
- Established MEL aims and objectives
- Collected evidence in accordance with reporting requirements and MEL plans

Review key documents

Before you begin analysing data, revisit your:

- MEL questions
- data collection and/or analysis plans.

These documents will help you:

- identify which data you need to analyse
- understand where that data are stored (e.g. DEX/SCORE, spreadsheets, case notes)
- Clarify what you're trying to learn or report on.

Have a data analysis plan

A data analysis plan outlines how you will manage, analyse and report on your data. It helps ensure that your analysis is systematic, efficient and aligned with your goals.

A strong plan includes:

- **Type of data:** Will you be working with qualitative, quantitative, or mixed data?
- **Data storage and security:** Where will the data be stored? Are there any permissions or security protocols to follow?
- **Tools and software:** What platforms or programs will you use for analysis?
- **Success metrics or criteria:** Are there benchmarks or indicators that define success?
- **Roles and responsibilities:** Who will conduct the analysis?

- **Dissemination:** How and with whom will the results be shared?

Planning early helps you make informed decisions about:

- **Data management:** How data will be stored, accessed, and protected.
- **Timing:** When analysis should occur in your project timeline.
- **Resourcing:** What skills, tools, and time are needed for analysis.

It also provides a written record of your intentions, which is especially useful if there are unexpected changes, such as staff turnover.

Choose when to analyse

Before you begin, determine the period your analysis will cover. This might be:

- a 6-month reporting period (e.g. aligned with DSS reporting)
- a full program cycle (e.g. start to end of a school term for a children's program)
- a specific milestone or event (e.g. pilot completion, mid-point review).

You may need more than one approach:

- Short-term analysis to support monitoring and quick decision making
- Longer-term analysis to assess outcomes as part of a formal evaluation and answer MEL questions in depth.

If you created an evaluation or analysis plan, it should include key points in the program cycle when analysis is most useful.

Choose how to analyse the data

When choosing how to analyse data, you have 3 options:

1. If you use the Data Exchange, you can refer to the data presented in the DEX/SCORE dashboard.
2. You can store and analyse data separately.
3. You can do a combination of options 1 and 2.

Option 1: Using data presented in the DEX/SCORE dashboard

This option is relevant for programs required to report data using the Data Exchange.

DSS provides a dashboard that allows you to view and analyse your DEX/SCORE data.

This option is useful if you:

- are focusing on reporting requirements
- want a quick overview of trends in demographics, referrals, outcomes or satisfaction
- need a quick snapshot for monitoring.

Using DEX/SCORE dashboard: demographic data

- Compare proportions across age, gender, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status, disability, CALD status, country of birth and language.

Ask: Do these demographics align with the target groups identified in our program logic?

- Look for imbalances (e.g. very few older clients, or low CALD representation)
  Ask: Does this reflect a gap in reach or a misalignment with intended beneficiaries?
- Use the support persons vs individual clients distinction
  Ask: Who is directly receiving services vs who is involved indirectly?
  Check that this information aligns with the program logic model.

Follow-up actions

- If certain groups are underrepresented, consider:
    - revisiting your program logic assumptions: Are we reaching who we said we would?
    - reviewing referral pathways, outreach strategies and network partnerships.
- If data look unexpectedly skewed, check:
    - whether staff are consistently recording demographic data
    - if clients are opting out of providing this information
    - whether definitions (e.g. CALD) are clearly understood or interpreted consistently.

Using the DEX/SCORE dashboard: SCORE data

SCORE data shows client outcomes and satisfaction, helping services assess:

- the percentage of clients who have a positive score
- how much clients are improving over time
- how different SCORE domains compare.

Interpreting SCORE data

- Point-in-time data (e.g. 69% positive) show the percentage of clients who rated positively on the domain.
- Pre-post change (e.g. +1.39 average change) shows the amount of progress made from when the client started the program or service.
- Domain-level data help identify strengths and gaps (e.g. strong gains in mental health, less in child development).

After analysis

Ask: Which outcomes did we say we'd influence in our program logic? Are those the ones showing change here?

If results are very positive:

- Celebrate success but also ask: Are we measuring what matters most as defined in our logic model?
- Consider whether measurement tools are being used consistently and accurately.

If results are neutral or negative:

- Review case notes or client feedback to understand the context – are there external or internal factors influencing outcomes?
- Review the program manual or operational guidelines: Are the activities being implemented as intended? Is the intervention design still appropriate for the needs of the community?
- Revisit the program theory and consider whether refinements to the program or program logic are needed.
- Consider whether the outcomes measurement tool needs refining or changing: does it measure what you think it measures?
- Investigate additional data collection options to fill gaps or provide deeper insight on what's happening and why.

Additional guidance

Triangulate your data: Triangulation means using multiple sources or types of data – such as SCORE data, qualitative feedback and case studies – to validate and deepen your understanding of outcomes. This helps ensure your analysis is well-rounded and credible.

Reflect regularly: Build in time to review dashboard data with program teams.

Document interpretations: Encourage staff to document why they think the results look the way they do.

Use findings for learning, not judgement: Emphasise that data are a tool for program and service improvement, not an individual performance ranking.

Option 2: Storing and manually analysing data

If you want more flexibility or need to analyse data that aren't captured in DEX/SCORE, or you don't use DEX/SCORE, you can store your data in a separate system (e.g. Excel, Access or a database) and then use tools like Power BI to analyse it at intervals that suit your MEL needs.

Key considerations

Prepare and organise your data

- Combine your data in a single location (e.g. spreadsheet or database).
- Clean the data by checking for errors, duplicates or missing values.
- Remove personal or identifying information about participants.
- Group data in ways that make them easier to interpret (e.g. by date, program type or participant group).

Separate quantitative and qualitative data

- Quantitative data includes numbers, counts and measurements.
- Qualitative data includes open-ended responses, interviews and case notes.

Analyse quantitative data

- Use basic descriptive statistics: mean (average), median (middle value), and mode (most frequent value) frequencies.
- Explore options for analysis, including statistical methods, software and tools.
  The Better Evaluation website provides helpful guidance on different types of analysis

and the skills you might need. Remember that it is okay to keep it simple if this suits your purpose.

- Create tables or charts to identify trends or compare groups.
- Use Excel or other tools to calculate and visualise results.

Analyse qualitative data

- Group similar responses together.
- Identify common themes or patterns.
- Use coding (manual or software-assisted) to organise insights. There are a variety of commercial products available to help organise and code qualitative data, for example NVivo or ATLAS.ti.

The Better Evaluation website has a detailed explanation of how to analyse qualitative data.

Link findings to your MEL questions

- Ask: What do these data tell us about our MEL questions?
- Note key findings, unexpected results and areas for further exploration.

Triangulate data to strengthen your analysis

Triangulation is a technique that involves comparing different types of data or perspectives to validate your findings. It helps ensure your analysis is well-rounded and credible. Using triangulation you can:

- cross-check findings from different sources (e.g. survey data vs. interview responses)
- look for alignment or contradictions between qualitative and quantitative data
- use multiple viewpoints (e.g. staff, participants, partners) to deepen understanding.

For example, if survey results show high satisfaction, do interview responses explain why? If attendance dropped, do case notes or staff feedback provide context?

Triangulation is especially useful when:

- results are unexpected or unclear
- you want to build confidence in your conclusions
- you're preparing to share findings with stakeholders.

Analysing data from a social skills program

MEL question

Are participants more socially confident after completing the program?

What data were collected

- Pre- and post-program self-assessment scores (1–5 scale)
- End-of-program feedback forms

When analysis was done

At the end of 2 program cycles (Jan–June), aligned with 6-monthly reporting.

How analysis was done

- Quantitative: Calculated average scores before (2.8) and after (4.1) the program → +1.3 point increase
- Qualitative: Reviewed feedback; common themes included 'more confident', 'better self-esteem', 'less anxiety'

What was learned

Participants reported increased confidence, supported by both score improvements and feedback. This triangulation of quantitative and qualitative data strengthened the conclusion that the program had a positive impact. Some participants said they wanted more content on gender diversity – this was flagged for future planning.

Learning and doing

Learning is at the heart of MEL. It's what transforms data into insight and insight into action. While it's the final letter in the MEL acronym, learning is not a final step – it's an ongoing process that supports continuous improvement, responsiveness and accountability.

Through learning, we:

- understand what is working and what is not working
- know how to adapt programs and services to better meet community needs
- strengthen our evidence base for decision making and advocacy
- build a culture of reflection, curiosity and improvement.

This part will cover:

- learning from MEL
- turning knowledge into action
- communicating your findings.

Before beginning this step make sure you have

- Familiarised yourself with any funding guidelines that apply to your program
- Understood consent, privacy and ethical responsibilities, including cultural responsiveness and safety
- Developed a program logic model and assessed your readiness to undertake MEL activities
- Mapped key stakeholders
- Established MEL aims and objectives
- Collected evidence in accordance with reporting requirements and MEL plans
- Analysed your data

How learning from MEL happens

Learning from MEL data happens in 2 main ways.

Ongoing review

This involves regularly checking your data to:

- track progress and implementation
- monitor participation and engagement
- identify early warning signs or unexpected outcomes
- celebrate small wins and improvements.

This type of learning is often informal and embedded in day-to-day practice. It helps you stay on course and make timely adjustments.

Assign someone to be responsible for ongoing data tracking and schedule routine check-ins to review findings with program staff and decision-makers.

Deeper reflection

At key points in your program or funding cycle, you may need to pause and reflect more deeply.

This might happen:

- at the mid-point or end of a program
- when piloting a new approach
- when something unexpected shows up in your data.

This kind of learning helps you understand:

- why intended outcomes are or are not occurring
- what's driving change
- how your program is contributing to those changes.

To support this kind of deeper reflection, you'll need to plan for the right kinds of data collection (e.g. interviews, focus groups, outcome measures) earlier in your MEL process.

Turning knowledge into action

The following pages outline practical steps to help teams turn knowledge into action by:

- reflecting on what the data are telling you
- involving the right people
- identifying and implementing changes
- sharing your findings
- planning your next steps.

Reflect on what the data are telling you

Your MEL questions guide your learning. They help you focus on what matters most and avoid getting lost in the data.

Ask:

- What do the data tell us in relation to our MEL questions?
- Are we seeing the changes we expected?
- Are there any surprises or concerns?
- What might we need to explore further?

Use visuals (charts, dashboards) to help identify trends and make findings easier to share.

There are a variety of data visualisation tools, for example Power BI, that can help you track and present data from multiple sources in real time.

Involve the right people

Learning is most effective when it's shared. Involve people who understand the program and those who can act on the findings.

- Hold regular reflection meetings with program staff, decision makers and stakeholders.
- Use visuals and summaries to support discussion.

- Create a feedback loop between data, discussion and action.
- Include current, previous and potential clients in reflection and feedback processes. Clients often have unique insights on what works and what doesn't – insights that may not be visible to program staff.

Identify and implement changes

Use what you've learned to make improvements. This might include:

- adjusting program design or delivery
- improving outreach or engagement strategies
- revising referral pathways
- advocating for additional resources.

Document the changes you make and track their impact over time.

Share your findings

Sharing your findings promotes transparency, accountability and collaboration. It also increases the likelihood that your insights will lead to real change.

To prepare for sharing:

- Revisit your stakeholder map – who needs to know what?
- Develop a dissemination plan early in your MEL process.
- Tailor your communication to each audience's needs. Consider testing draft communications with at least one stakeholder from each audience group to ensure clarity and relevance and to avoid misinterpretation or unintended consequences.
- Ensure participant data are shared ethically (e.g. with free, prior and informed consent).
- Make sure your reports and visuals are accessible. This includes ensuring text can be read by screen readers, videos are closed-captioned, images have alt text or embedded descriptions, and documents follow readability standards.

To strengthen learning across your organisation, create opportunities for managers from different teams or programs to come together. These sessions can help surface broader insights and trends, share what's working (and what's not), and inform strategic improvements.

Plan your next steps

Learning is an ongoing cycle. Use your findings to:

- make changes to your program, e.g. increase resources, add online options or update program manuals
- refine your program logic model
- adjust your data collection methods or tools
- set new goals or priorities, e.g. improved training for staff, explore program expansion, add to MEL plan
- inform future planning and funding proposals.

Case study – Embedding learning in practice – Family Connect Program

Program description

A regional family support service launched a new program aimed at increasing connections of neurodiverse families.

Ongoing review in action

Each fortnight, the program manager meets with staff to review monitoring data, including:

- enrolments, referrals and waitlist numbers
- attendance at group sessions
- weekly reflections recorded by facilitators
- feedback from children and parents/carers.

During one meeting, the team observes that parents and children are consistently asking for access to more sensory tools during the program. Staff share that while they offer some tools, they have limited funding to spend on additional resources. The team decides to:

- Discuss cost-effective program modifications with an occupational therapist.
- Ask other teams for advice and check if there are tools/equipment within the organisation that the team can use.
- During the next session, ask families to brainstorm ideas and rate their top 3 preferences. Program staff will try to acquire the most desired tools for future sessions.

These changes are implemented over several weeks. Facilitators observe that families engage in more play-based activities during the sessions and positive interactions. Parents share positive feedback about the actions taken and satisfaction with the program.

Deeper reflection and strategic adaptation

Every 6 months, the team holds a structured reflection session aligned with external reporting timelines. The program manager brings together facilitators and project staff to review program data, including:

- changes in attendance and engagement over time
- feedback trends from children and parents/carers
- facilitator reflections on group dynamics and challenges
- outcome measures related to wellbeing and social connection.

During one session, the team notices that while engagement has improved overall and families have increased social connections, the wellbeing of parents in the program isn't improving and, in some cases, wellbeing is declining. Qualitative feedback from parent surveys indicates that while the program is much loved and needed, parents have unmet mental health needs. Program facilitators share stories parents have told them about long wait times for mental health services in the region and their diminished capacity for searching for adequate supports.

The team decides to:

- Invite a psychologist to regularly attend group sessions.

- Investigate funding and resourcing options for hiring a support worker to coordinate mental health appointments for families.
- Review and refine the program logic model to reflect the new program model and update data collection tools to ensure that mental health is being monitored at more regular intervals.

These adaptations are piloted over the next term. Data collected through facilitator notes and parent feedback show slight improvements in wellbeing domains. Qualitative feedback suggests that families feel more supported and cared for because of the changes made. The team documents these findings and includes them in their 6-month report, along with recommendations for future program design.

Turning knowledge into action

Following both the monthly reviews and the 6-month reflection, the team took clear steps to translate learning into action:

- Immediate adjustments (e.g. adding sensory tools, modifying session structure) are made based on real-time feedback.
- Strategic improvements (e.g. piloting new activities to support family mental health) are planned and evaluated over time.
- Documentation of changes and their impact is maintained in a shared MEL log, which supports reporting and continuous improvement.

Staff feel empowered to suggest changes, knowing their insights are valued and acted upon. The manager ensures that learning is not just discussed but embedded in planning and delivery.

Cross-team learning

Twice a year, managers from across the organisation meet for a MEL learning forum. In one session, the family connections program manager shares insights from the changes piloted during the year. A manager from the early childhood team sees parallels with their own work and proposes a joint session to explore shared strategies.

This leads to:

- a cross-program working group on sensory inclusion
- shared resource development (e.g. sensory kits, training modules).

These forums help surface broader trends, foster innovation and strengthen the organisation's collective learning culture.

Communicating your findings

Sharing your MEL findings promotes transparency, accountability and informed decision making. By disseminating these insights, you can demonstrate the impact of your programs and services, justify resource allocation and identify areas for improvement. Sharing MEL findings can also foster collaboration and learning among stakeholders.

Developing a dissemination plan like this one at the beginning of your MEL process means it is more likely your findings will have an impact and be used, especially by your target audience. Having this plan in place early means you will be clear on how, when and with whom you will share your findings (Victorian Health Promotion Foundation, 2015).

The way you share your findings will largely depend on the type of stakeholder you are sharing those findings with. Not every stakeholder will need the same information or need it presented in the same way:

- Primary stakeholders (e.g. your Board, executive or funders) will most likely want a full report of your evaluation.
- You can use your evaluation report to create other products for the remaining stakeholders based on need.

Different stakeholders have different communication needs

Type of stakeholder	Type of dissemination product
Funding body	Report, summary in your AWP
Project staff	Workshops, executive summary, data visualisation, workshops
Organisational management	Sector newsletters, conferences, presentations, seminars, social network, data visualisation
Sector colleagues	Conferences, social media, press release, workshops, flyers, posters
Participants	Journal articles, conferences, presentations
Community	Flyers, handouts, tipsheets, infographics, videos, social media posts
Academic	Presentation, update in meetings written summary of key findings, journal articles, conferences

How to structure an evaluation report

If your organisation doesn’t have a standard template, here’s a simple structure:

- Executive summary – 1–2 pages summarising the whole report
- Introduction – Background and purpose of the evaluation
- Methodology – How data were collected, analysed and any limitations
- Findings – Evidence, themes, visuals
- Conclusions – What the findings mean
- Recommendations – Actions for improvement

Ethical note: If including participant quotes or data, ensure you have informed consent.

Considerations for preparing information to share

Revisit your stakeholder map to identify key stakeholders to share findings with and those who can help you promote change using your findings.

Consider developing a dissemination plan that includes any progress reports you are required to submit to your funding body or leaders in your organisation.

Identify what each of your stakeholders is interested in regarding your report. For example, funders will likely want to know that their funding was used as intended and that the program or service has made a difference, while community members may want to hear about service users’ experiences.

Ensure your communication only includes participant data (e.g. qualitative quotes) if you have met ethical consent standards prior to recording interviews or focus groups.

If developing a report, make sure it is accessible to all intended audiences.

Resources and tools on sharing evaluation findings

- Respect Victoria evaluation report template
  This resource from Respect Victoria is a templated final evaluation report that can be downloaded and adapted to suit your needs.
- NPC guidance on sharing impact stories
  This short article from New Philanthropy Capital contains tips on sharing evaluation and research findings with stakeholders.
- Final reports
  This short article from BetterEvaluation provides advice on writing evaluation reports.
- Guidelines on research evidence and evaluation
  This suite of guidelines and tools from the Victorian Department of Health has been developed to support the use of research evidence and commissioning of evaluations.

Conclusion

MEL is not just about reporting – it's about learning and improving, so put your hard work to good use. Don't stop at simply collecting data and meeting reporting requirements. Go further by analysing your findings, sharing what you've learned, and using those insights to drive meaningful change. What you discover through your MEL could have a significant impact on your program, your organisation and even your sector – so make sure your learnings are communicated and acted upon.

By embedding learning in your monitoring, evaluation and reporting practices, you can make your programs more responsive, effective and impactful. Whether you're reviewing data weekly or conducting a formal evaluation, the goal is the same: to understand, adapt and grow.

Further reading

There are many resources available to support MEL design and practice. The list below highlights a selection of useful websites and tools but it is not exhaustive. New resources are continually being developed.

Key concepts and methods

- Better Evaluation provides information and how-to guidance on a wide range of evaluation activities and methods.
- The Australian Centre for Evaluation has developed a toolkit that explains evaluation concepts and approaches. The toolkit includes various templates, tools and resources that can be used by people working in government and non-government organisations.

Evaluation design and approaches

- Evaluation design
  This resource from AIFS provides an overview of some of the main evaluation designs used for outcomes evaluations and impact evaluations.
- Process evaluation
  This resource from AIFS explains why process evaluations are useful and outlines the key steps involved in doing one.
- Developmental evaluation
  This resource from AIFS provides an overview of developmental evaluation – what it is, why it was established and what it can be used for.
- How developmental evaluation can be used to develop and adapt social service programs
  This webinar explores how developmental evaluation can be used to learn on the go and develop responsive programs.
- Evaluation and Value for Money
  This resource from AIFS provides an overview of Value for Money assessments and briefly describes the process of completing one.

Research and evaluation with different population groups

- Involving children in evaluation
  This resource from AIFS outlines the reasons behind involving children in program evaluation and includes some practical considerations and approaches to collecting data from children.
- Supporting children to participate in evaluation
  This webinar from AIFS discusses how to support children's participation in evaluation and how to think about ethics, participatory processes and data collection methods.
- Resources to support evaluation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and their communities
  This resource sheet from AIFS provides a list of resources for non-Indigenous evaluators and/or child and family services who need to plan, undertake or commission

an evaluation for programs that work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and their families.

- Evaluating the outcomes of programs for Indigenous families and communities
  This resource from AIFS explores key considerations for those thinking about evaluating the outcomes or impact of a program for Indigenous families and communities.
- AES First Nations Cultural Safety Framework
  This document outlines key principles for culturally safe evaluation and includes practical tools for critical self-reflection and readiness assessment.
- Indigenous Evaluation Strategy
  This resource from the Productivity Commission aims to provide a framework for Australian Government agencies to select, plan, conduct and use evaluations that affect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- Applying culturally inclusive principles in evaluation
  This webinar from AIFS shares examples of evaluative practice and ideas for collecting and using evidence in child and family services.
- How to do trauma-informed research and evaluation
  This resource from AIFS covers what trauma-informed research is, the value of considering trauma throughout the research process and high-level principles of trauma-informed research and evaluation to apply within projects.
- Toolkit for engaging people with disability in evaluation
  This toolkit published as part of Australia's Disability Strategy 2021-2031 provides guidance for inclusive and accessible evaluation. It also includes resources for people with disability to support their engagement in evaluation.
- Good Practice Guidelines for Engaging with People with Disability
  This resource published as part of Australia's Disability Strategy 2021-2031 aims to support people working in the government, private and not-for-profit sectors to engage and consult with people with disability in an inclusive and accessible way.

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