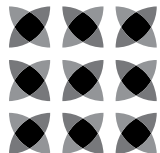


ROADMAP TO SOCIAL IMPACT – AT A GLANCE

ESSENTIAL HIGHLIGHTS
FOR PLANNING, MEASURING
AND COMMUNICATING YOUR
SOCIAL IMPACT.



CENTRE
for **SOCIAL**
IMPACT



FOREWORD



Welcome! This eBook is your introduction to outcomes measurement and evaluation. It offers a snapshot of the comprehensive **Roadmap to Social Impact: Your step-by-step guide to planning, measuring and communicating social impact (second edition)**, developed by the Centre for Social Impact.

It's designed for practitioners, leaders, organisations and anyone committed to creating measurable social impact. Inside, you will find practical tools and proven frameworks to help you plan, track and demonstrate the social impact of your program.

For the full guide, we encourage you to download the complete *Roadmap to Social Impact* to enhance the positive change you can create in your community, across Australia and beyond.

ABOUT

The Centre for Social Impact is dedicated to igniting social change through research, education and community engagement. It is a national collaboration of leading Australian universities — Flinders University, Swinburne University of Technology, the University of Western Australia and UNSW — united as one to create a better, more equitable world where everyone can thrive and grow.

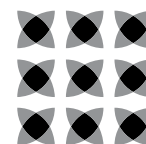
WE HOPE THIS RESOURCE PROVIDES BOTH GUIDANCE AND INSPIRATION AS WE WORK TOGETHER FOR A BETTER WORLD.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Street, C., Kaleveld, L., Flatau, P., Parker, R., Joyce, A., Ibrahim, N., Nalbandian, A. (2025).

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INTRODUCTION



WHAT IS OUTCOMES MEASUREMENT AND EVALUATION?

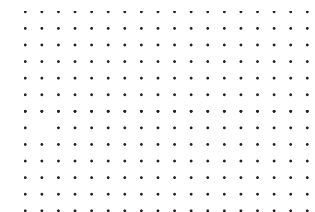
Outcomes measurement and evaluation are about understanding the value of social impact initiatives. They help you and your organisation demonstrate the real difference your work makes.

Outcomes measurement and evaluation can help to improve programs, guide decisions and allow you to communicate your impact with confidence, so you can move beyond good intentions to lasting results.

WHY IT MATTERS

Outcomes measurement and evaluation are key to enduring social impact because they:

- ✦ **Demonstrate** value by providing evidence of a program's effectiveness.
- ✦ **Motivate** teams by showing the tangible difference their work makes.
- ✦ **Support** decision-making for funding and resource allocation.
- ✦ **Connect** activities to an organisation's vision and values.
- ✦ **Enhance** communication with stakeholders, funders and the wider community.



YOUR NINE-STEP JOURNEY TO MEASURING SOCIAL IMPACT

The **Roadmap to Social Impact** will guide you through a step-by-step journey to outcomes measurement and evaluation.

Each stage focuses on a key component of the process, giving you a clear and structured way to plan, measure and communicate the impact of your work.

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ESTABLISH YOUR PURPOSE

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PROGRAM DESIGN

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ESTABLISH YOUR PURPOSE



Effective outcomes measurement and evaluation start with clarity of purpose. Rather than being an afterthought, planning from the outset ensures you are clear on how success will be defined, what should be measured and how you will use insights to create real impact.

WHAT PROBLEM ARE YOU TRYING TO SOLVE?

Social problems are often complex and multifaceted, with multiple causes and interrelated effects. They rarely have simple solutions and generally cannot be resolved without diverse, simultaneous and collaborative efforts.

Problem analysis is a process that helps you to:



Understand the entrenched nature of social issues.



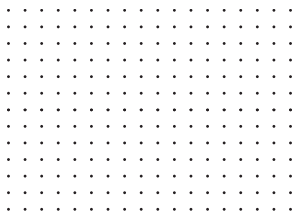
Identify the 'root causes'.



Map potential solutions.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF YOUR OUTCOMES MEASUREMENT AND EVALUATION?

All outcomes measurement and evaluation work should be guided by purpose. Purpose is the reason for doing something and provides clarity, direction and motivation. Your purpose drives your outcomes measurement and evaluation process. Without being clear on purpose, it is hard to know what needs to be measured and evaluated, and how.





ESTABLISH YOUR PURPOSE

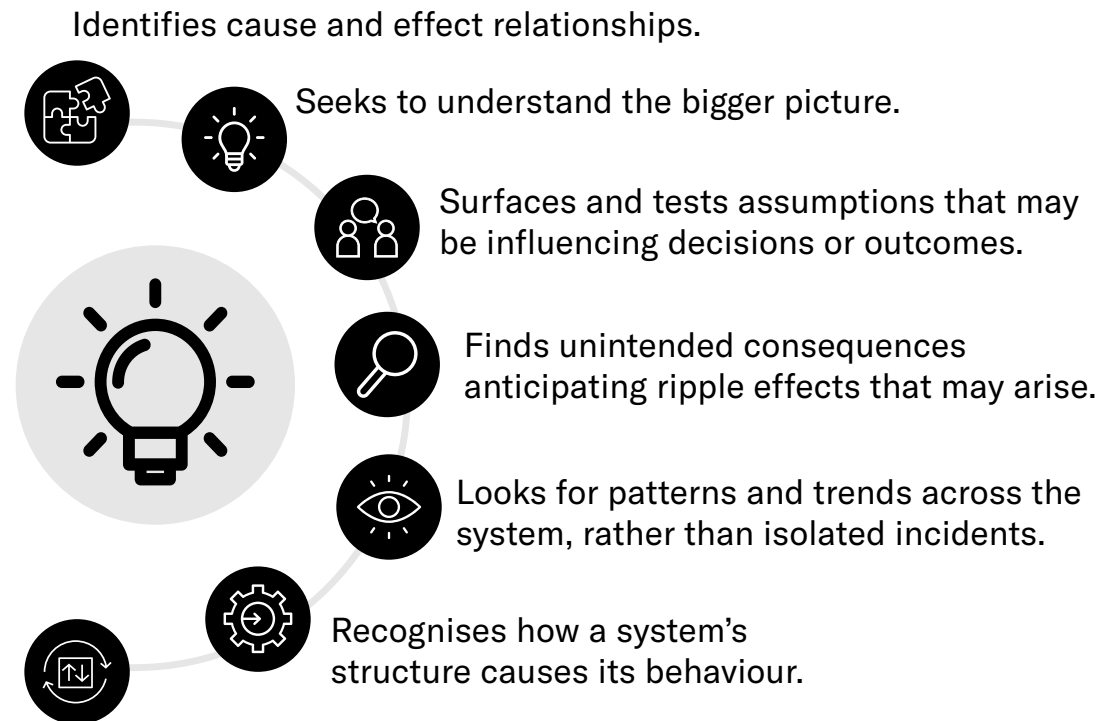


Social problems are not isolated; they exist within (and can be created by) systems. Systems thinking is an approach for understanding positive and negative influences on a problem and identifying 'big levers' for creating change.

Think about how various components of the system interact with each other, the problem you are trying to address and your program.

WHAT IS A SYSTEMS THINKER?

A systems thinker is someone who:



Recognises how structure drives behaviour, understanding that a system's design shapes its results.

DIVE DEEPER INTO THE POWER OF SYSTEMS THINKING
— EXPLORE THE FULL GUIDE.

SYSTEMS THINKING FRAMEWORK

Systems thinking supports learning about the complex causes of social problems, the effects of programs, their longer-term impacts within systems and how innovation and systems change can occur.

It is important to understand how people's lives are influenced by the world around them. The diagram below shows the different levels of the system, and examples are provided of factors at each of these levels that may impact on individuals.



-  **NATURAL ENVIRONMENT**
Geographical location, broad-scale infrastructure and climate factors.
-  **POLICY, GOVERNANCE, LAWS AND CULTURE**
Historical and current institutional policies and laws, socio-cultural norms and values.
-  **SOCIETAL INFRASTRUCTURE AND OPPORTUNITIES**
Systems and structures in society, such as social services, philanthropy, advocacy groups and religious institutions.
-  **COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE**
Local services, transport, community networks and public spaces.
-  **FRIENDS AND FAMILY**
Friends, family members, peers and mentors.
-  **INDIVIDUALS**
Individual attitudes, worldviews and experiences.



BEGIN PLANNING



GETTING TO KNOW YOUR PEOPLE: STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS

Outcomes measurement and evaluation are more likely to be successful if your stakeholders are engaged with the process. The first step is identifying who your stakeholders are and understanding their interest and influence over the program, and their attitudes and experience in outcomes measurement and evaluation.

When doing outcome measurement and evaluation, it's important to place the lived experiences of program beneficiaries at the heart of your process.

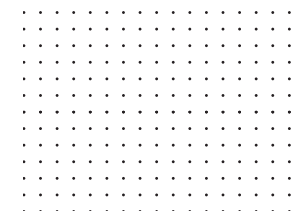
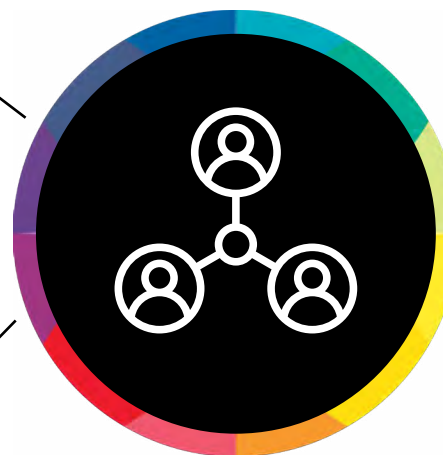
As you get to know your stakeholders better, you should consider¹:

How they will be impacted by your program.

What 'success' looks like from their perspective.

Any risks that need to be considered.

What is needed to support meaningful involvement.





CLARIFY YOUR PROGRAM DESIGN



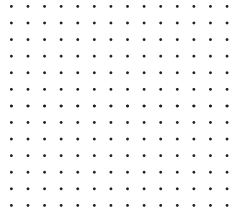
An important foundational activity for outcomes measurement and evaluation is to model what changes you are hoping to achieve through your program and how and why activities are expected to lead to outcomes.

Two common tools for undertaking this are:

- ✦ Program logic
- ✦ Theory of change

WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

A theory of change helps you explain why and how change is expected to happen, while a program logic shows what will be delivered and measured to make that change happen. In practice, your theory of change comes first. It provides the reasoning behind your program logic.





CLARIFY YOUR PROGRAM DESIGN



THEORY OF CHANGE

A theory of change is an explicit theory or model of how a program will achieve the intended or observed outcomes³. It articulates the expected link between a program's activities and its intended outcomes and identifies how and why changes are expected to occur.

Your theory of change must be plausible, doable and testable⁴. It should also articulate the assumptions and enablers that explain why activities will lead to the outcomes outlined.

A theory of change will help you understand how your program will achieve its goals. It will help you with^{5,6}:



STRATEGY

Helps teams work together to build a shared understanding of the program, aligns activities to its purpose and encourages deeper thinking about what you're trying to achieve.



COMMUNICATION

Can be used to inform stakeholders, in an 'elevator pitch' approach, about the program's aims.



OUTCOMES MEASUREMENT AND EVALUATION

Helps formulate and prioritise evaluation questions, identify outcomes and plan the outcome measurement and evaluation process. It also encourages the use of existing evidence.



WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP

Enables program staff and stakeholders to clarify roles and responsibilities, fostering shared understanding and coordinated action.



THE THEORY OF CHANGE PROCESS



Once you understand what a theory of change is, the next step is to build one for your own program. The following six steps will help guide you through the process.

1 IDENTIFY THE PROBLEM YOU ARE AIMING TO ADDRESS

Start by establishing what the 'problem' is that your program is setting out to address.

2 DEFINE YOUR INTENDED IMPACT

Explain the long-term impact that you think your program will contribute to. This represents the 'end goal' of your theory of change.

3 IDENTIFY WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE

Clearly outline the changes that will result from your program — both the immediate results (outputs) and outcomes. Think about the shifts in knowledge, attitudes, skills, behaviours, relationships or systems that need to occur to reach your long-term impact.

4 MAP ACTIVITIES AND CREATE PATHWAYS OF CHANGE

Articulate the key activities you'll carry out to help achieve your outcomes. Create visual representations or linkages that show causal pathways for how each activity leads to each change. Use available evidence to support the causal pathways you have identified.

5 ARTICULATE ASSUMPTIONS

Describe the assumptions that your theory of change is based upon. Assumptions are ideas that inform how you think the program will work. Being clear on assumptions is essential for understanding why program activities may or may not work as intended.

6 REFLECT AND REVIEW

Continue to reflect on any changes that are needed through working with stakeholders and staying abreast of available evidence.

BUILD YOUR THEORY OF CHANGE WITH CONFIDENCE

A strong theory of change is informed by evidence (where available) and helps you plan, measure and communicate your impact clearly. The full *Roadmap to Social Impact* guidebook includes worked examples and practical tips to inspire your own theory of change and other tools for clarifying program design.



**LEARN HOW TO CLARIFY THE
DESIGN OF YOUR PROGRAM.**
ACCESS THE COMPLETE GUIDE.

YOUR PROGRAM LOGIC TEMPLATE

A template for a program logic is shown below.



UNDERSTAND WHAT TO MEASURE AND EVALUATE



Evaluation is a systematic process of understanding the merit, worth or significance of a program that aims to achieve social change by combining evidence and values.⁷ It is important to think about what you want to know from your evaluation as this will determine what type of evaluation you do.

KEY EVALUATION QUESTIONS TO GET YOU STARTED

Below are some examples of different types of evaluation approaches and questions explored in the full *Roadmap to Social Impact* guide.



PROCESS EVALUATION

Was the program implemented as intended?



OUTCOMES EVALUATION

Did the program achieve its intended outcomes?



REALIST EVALUATION

Who will this program work for and why?



DEVELOPMENTAL EVALUATION

What is emerging as the innovation takes shape?



ECONOMIC EVALUATION

Do program outcomes represent value for money?



SYSTEMS EVALUATION

What are the systems levers that can influence the current situation?

NEED MORE INSPIRATION?

The complete *Roadmap to Social Impact* provides more practical examples of evaluation questions and a deeper understanding on types of evaluation.





DEVELOP AN OUTCOMES MEASUREMENT AND EVALUATION FRAMEWORK



There are many ways to create plans for your outcomes measurement and evaluation work. What matters most is that your framework includes a clear overview of your planned steps.

It's also important to develop your outcomes measurement and evaluation framework in consultation with key stakeholders, including people with lived experience.

WHAT TO INCLUDE IN YOUR FRAMEWORK

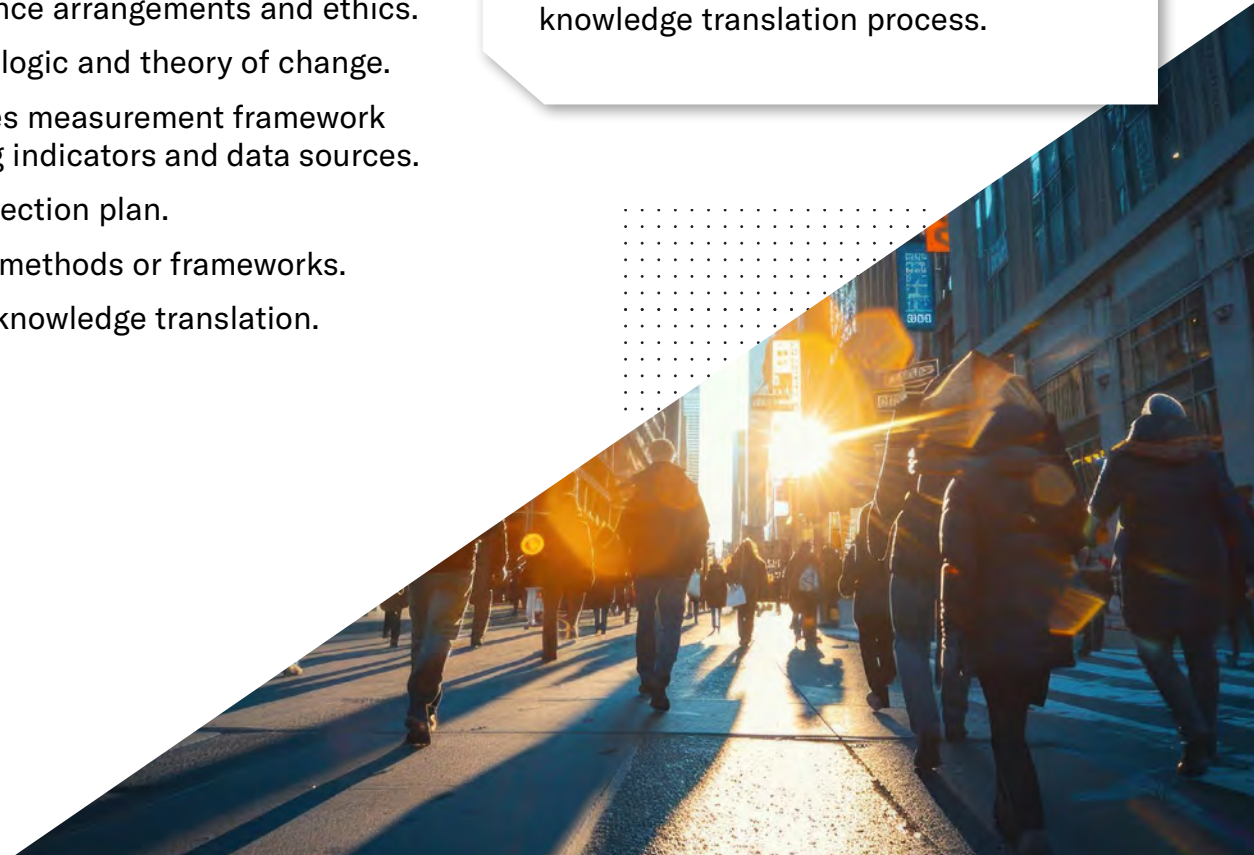
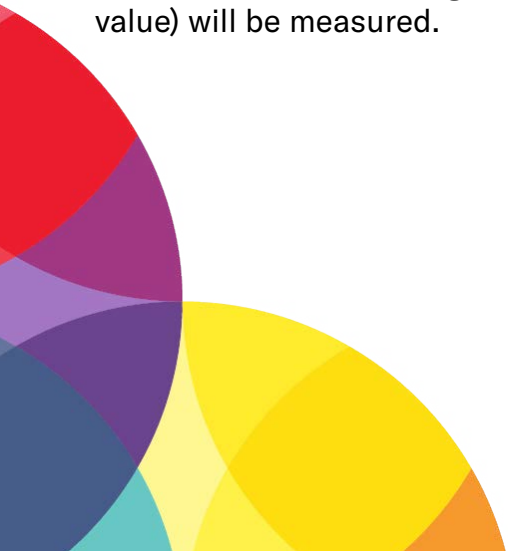
An outcomes measurement and evaluation framework explains the questions you are seeking to answer and how change (or value) will be measured.

An outcomes measurement and evaluation framework may include:

- ✖ Purpose, aim and objectives of the evaluation.
- ✖ Overview of the type of evaluation being conducted.
- ✖ Key evaluation questions and criteria.
- ✖ Methodology and limitations.
- ✖ Governance arrangements and ethics.
- ✖ Program logic and theory of change.
- ✖ Outcomes measurement framework including indicators and data sources.
- ✖ Data collection plan.
- ✖ Analytic methods or frameworks.
- ✖ Plan for knowledge translation.

NEED HELP PULLING IT ALL TOGETHER?

The full *Roadmap to Social Impact* includes tips for designing your own outcomes measurement and evaluation framework, from setting a clear purpose to planning the knowledge translation process.





COLLECT DATA



To complete your outcomes measurement and evaluation framework, choose the most appropriate data collection tools to quantify or qualify your indicators.

Ideally, you should collect both quantitative and qualitative data. Employing mixed methods for data collection helps increase the confidence in your findings.

THINKING ABOUT YOUR DATA OPTIONS

Both quantitative and qualitative data have a role to play in data collection, but each comes with its own strengths and limitations.

- ✦ Quantitative data can show patterns at scale, but may miss context.
- ✦ Qualitative data offers rich insight, but can be time-consuming to collect and analyse.

ETHICS IN EVALUATION

Ethics in outcomes measurement and evaluation ensures your work respects and protects people, builds trust and produces meaningful, credible insights.

Throughout every stage, you should commit to adhering to these key ethical principles:

- | | |
|---------------|-------------------|
| ✦ Integrity | ✦ Confidentiality |
| ✦ Beneficence | ✦ Merit |
| ✦ Justice | ✦ Value |
| ✦ Consent | ✦ Accountability |

EXPLORE THE FULL *ROADMAP TO SOCIAL IMPACT GUIDE* FOR A BREAKDOWN OF THE ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF DIFFERENT TYPES OF DATA.





ANALYSE DATA



Analysing your data helps you uncover patterns, draw meaningful insights and answer the questions that matter most for your program. Choosing the right analytical framework ensures a structured and systematic approach to analysis, and ensures findings will align with the purpose of your outcomes measurement and evaluation.

EXAMPLES OF ANALYTIC FRAMEWORKS

QUANTITATIVE ANALYTIC FRAMEWORKS:

- ✦ Descriptive statistics: Summarise basic features of your dataset.
- ✦ Inferential statistics: Draw conclusions about a population based on sample data.
- ✦ Cost-benefit analysis: Compare outcomes achieved against program costs to evaluate efficiency.

QUALITATIVE ANALYTIC FRAMEWORKS:

- ✦ Thematic analysis: Identify patterns or themes within data.
- ✦ Grounded theory: Develop theories based on observed patterns in data.
- ✦ Narrative analysis: Analyse stories or personal accounts to understand individual experiences.

MIXED METHODS FRAMEWORKS:

- ✦ Triangulation: Combine quantitative and qualitative data sources to cross-check findings.
- ✦ Integration: Synthesise insights from different types of data into a cohesive interpretation.

ASSESSING QUALITY OF EVIDENCE

Assessing evidence is essential to ensure the data is robust, reliable and meaningful. To check the quality of your evidence, ask yourself:



VALIDITY:

Does this evidence accurately measure what it is intended to measure?



RELIABILITY:

Is this evidence consistent over time and across different groups?



RELEVANCE:

Does the evidence collected align with your program's goals and objectives?



TRIANGULATION:

Have the findings been cross-checked using multiple sources or methods to ensure accuracy?



ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS:

Are the data collection and analysis methods respecting participants' rights and following ethical standards?



8 UNDERTAKE KNOWLEDGE TRANSLATION



GETTING TO THE 'SO WHAT?'

Knowledge translation in outcomes measurement and evaluation means sharing your program findings with key decision-makers in a way that inspires action and drives positive, lasting change.

Knowledge translation should adhere to an important ethical principle: Reciprocity. This means sharing the results with participants to bring benefit to the community or group that the program is for.

ACCESS THE FULL GUIDE FOR PRACTICAL INSIGHTS ON UNDERTAKING KNOWLEDGE TRANSLATION.

TOOLS FOR KNOWLEDGE TRANSLATION

The tools you choose for knowledge translation are key to sharing your findings clearly and making a real impact. The right tools depend on who you're trying to influence, how complex your findings are, and the change you want to inspire. Several tools can support effective knowledge translation, including:

LOGIC MODELS AND VISUAL PROGRAM MODELS:

Use these tools to clearly communicate how your program's activities led to desired outcomes.

INFOGRAPHICS:

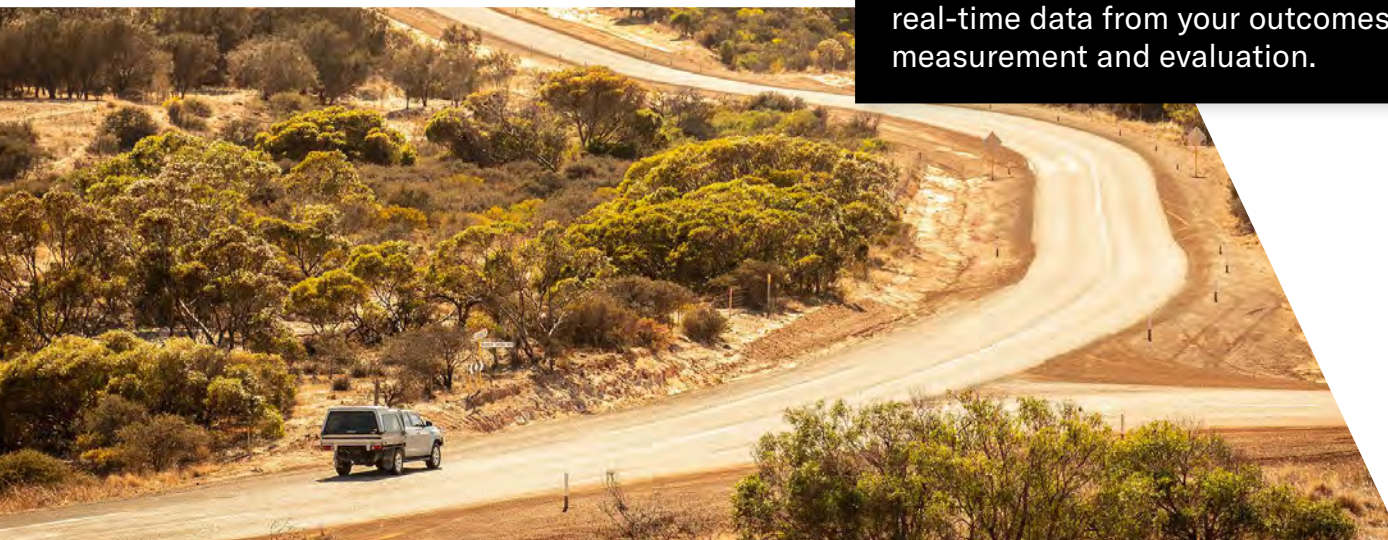
Create infographics that visually represent key data points from your outcomes measurement and evaluation.

DASHBOARDS:

Develop interactive dashboards that allow stakeholders to explore real-time data from your outcomes measurement and evaluation.

CASE STUDIES:

Share case studies to provide relatable, concrete examples that demonstrate impact and engage diverse audiences.





EMBED EVALUATION AND EVALUATIVE THINKING



Ensuring you have the right outcomes measurement and evaluation skills and capabilities within your organisation, or securing these externally, is essential for relevant, rigorous and reliable outcomes measurement and evaluation.

Importantly, this includes considering the skills and competencies of various people across an organisation, not only those who will be undertaking outcomes measurement and evaluation. According to the Australian Evaluation Society's Evaluators Professional Learning Competency Framework, there are seven competency domains⁸.

WHAT ARE THE SEVEN COMPETENCY DOMAINS?



EVALUATIVE ATTITUDE AND PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

Having the right mindset to self-reflect, learn and work in a fair and ethical way.



EVALUATION THEORY

Understanding the theoretical foundations behind evaluation.



CULTURE, STAKEHOLDERS AND CONTEXT

Understanding how different values shape cultures, societies and politics that impact on a program.



RESEARCH METHODS AND SYSTEMATIC INQUIRY

Applying knowledge and skills in research methods and systematic inquiry to collect valid and reliable data to make reasoned evaluative judgements.



PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Coordinating all the moving parts to effectively negotiate, scope, manage and conduct an evaluation from start to finish.



INTERPERSONAL SKILLS

Communicating appropriately with all stakeholders involved in or affected by the evaluation.



EVALUATION ACTIVITIES

Bringing together all of the competencies for all of the tasks carried out in an evaluation.

WANT TO SEE HOW IT ALL WORKS IN PRACTICE?

As mentioned, this eBook offers a glimpse into the *Roadmap to Social Impact*, but it's only a starting point. The complete guide provides detailed steps, practical examples and a range of tools and frameworks to support your successful outcomes measurement and evaluation.

If you are working to create positive social impact in Australia, it is our hope at the Centre for Social Impact that this guide will equip you and your organisation with the necessary knowledge, tools and confidence to measure, understand and amplify the difference you make.

Thank you for joining us on this journey! Together we can turn outcomes and evaluation measurement into meaningful change across Australia and beyond.

**ACCESS THE
FULL GUIDE**



GLOSSARY



Evaluation: A systematic process of assessing and understanding the merit, worth or significance of a program, by combining evidence and values. In an evaluation, social research procedures are systematically applied to assess the conceptualisation, design, implementation, and utility of programs or initiatives.

Evaluation framework (or plan): A document explaining all the elements of how you plan to evaluate a program according to your selected approach. An evaluation framework focuses on what needs to be evaluated from a strategic perspective, whereas an evaluation plan includes operational steps for how you will evaluate something. For example, your plan or framework may include evaluation questions, design, methodology, governance, risk and an outcomes measurement framework (if relevant).

Outcomes evaluation: The assessment of the changes resulting from the implementation of a program, policy or other initiative. It includes both intended and unintended outcomes for a range of stakeholders engaging in a program or initiative.

Outcomes framework: A collection of selected outcomes, indicators to measure those outcomes and the data sources necessary to quantify or qualify those indicators. It also includes the timing for data collection to measure change in each outcome.

Outcomes measurement: A systematic way to assess the extent to which a program has achieved its intended results.

Program logic: A visual representation of how a program will achieve its goals, including the short-, medium- and long-term outcomes. It comprises a detailed representation of inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes and impact.

Social impact: The intended and unintended social consequences, positive and negative, of programs (services, policies, plans, projects) and any social change processes invoked by these.

Systems thinking: Understanding a whole system – e.g. the social system – by examining the links and interactions between the components.

Theory of change: An explicit theory or model of how a program will achieve the intended or observed outcomes. It articulates the hypothesised causal relationships between a program's activities and its intended outcomes and identifies how and why changes are expected to occur. In doing so, the theory of change comprises a change model (the changes the program intends to achieve) and an action model (the activities that will lead to those changes). A theory of change must be plausible, doable and testable.

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