
Evaluation Workbook V.

Evaluation plan: Use the right expertise

Key points

The evaluation plan can be designed using internal or external expertise.

- Use external expertise (including evaluators within government, external to the business unit) at any stage of the evaluation workplan, as needed.
- Consider where peer review (internal or external) can provide quality assurance.
- Evaluators should have an appropriate level of objectivity, capability, knowledge, expertise, and Value for Money (VfM).

Introduction

Expertise external to the business and delivery team can be used to undertake the evaluation, or aspects of the evaluation. This may be an evaluation unit or evaluators within the agency, independent consultancy teams or academic teams. When procuring an evaluation, comply with NSW Government and your own agency guidelines and policies. Consult the [NSW Government Procurement Policy Framework](#) and contact your agency's procurement team for specific guidance.

Appointing an evaluator or evaluation team

The evaluation plan should consider appropriate appointment of an evaluator or evaluation team. That is, parties with the skills, methods, resources, knowledge, and capability to complete the evaluation.

The evaluation brief should include a background and context of the policy/project, objectives of the evaluation, methodology, outputs, deliverables, and timeframes. A sound project plan enables the project team to determine the criteria and rubric to appoint an appropriate evaluator or evaluation team. *Refer to Table 2: Example information for an evaluation brief.*

Evaluators may be internal (i.e. within the initiative team) or external to the initiative team (i.e. external to government, or within government but external to the policy development and program delivery team). The chosen approach should:

- support the required level of independence and objectivity
- consider opportunities to support organisational learning and evaluation capability development
- provide the right levels of technical expertise and resourcing
- use evaluation expertise and subject expertise within government where feasible.

Table 1 presents information on when it may be suitable to involve external expertise, and the strengths and main considerations of such approaches.

When choosing an evaluator, ensure they have the necessary expertise and the ability to meet the requirements of the evaluation. If expertise external to government is required, the NSW Government Procurement Policy Framework outlines five key objectives in conducting procurement:

- Value for Money (VfM)
- fair and open competition
- easy to do business
- innovation
- economic development, social outcomes, and sustainability.

Table 3 outlines key criteria to consider in appointing and commissioning an evaluator. Refer to the NSW Government Procurement Policy Framework for other assessment criteria.

Table 1: Examples of evaluation management design

Evaluation management design	When to use design	Strengths
<p>Internal evaluation (The entire evaluation is designed and managed in house by the initiative team)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal staff have skills and resources to collect the data collection and implement evaluation methods. • The evaluation is for developmental purposes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can draw upon knowledge of the initiative context, design, and implementation. • Builds internal engagement and capability in evaluation activity and culture. • Can test feasibility of evaluation recommendations. • Limits procurement costs.
<p>Internal evaluation with external expertise (The evaluation is designed and managed by the initiative team, but independent advisor(s) separated from policy development and program delivery are engaged as needed)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal staff need support with some technical aspects of the evaluation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Builds internal government engagement in evaluation activity and culture. • Leverage existing capability (particularly if the entity has a centralised evaluation unit). • Provides additional resourcing and expertise. • Contributes an independent perspective.
<p>External evaluation (The entire evaluation is designed and managed by external advisor(s), either external to government, or internal to government with separate reporting lines and a level of independence from the project delivery team)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Required expertise or capacity is not available internally. • Independent evaluation is required for external reporting requirements (for example, Commonwealth-State funding or expressed cabinet requirement) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contributes external and independent perspectives. • Contributes targeted skills and expertise. • Provide additional capacity if internal resources are limited. • Provides reputation and experience of the external advisor(s)

Table 2: Example information for an evaluation brief

Include:	For example:	Provide information regarding:
Background	Initiative summary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The objectives of the initiative • Key stakeholders of the initiative • How the initiative links with other initiatives to deliver outcomes and benefits
	Evaluation purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why the evaluation is being undertaken • What decisions the evaluation will inform • The target audiences for the evaluation
	Initiative appraisal/ evaluation history	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The (pre-implementation) appraisal undertaken when designing the initiative • Previous evaluation of the initiative that has been undertaken • The information or reports that will be made available to the evaluator
Scope of work: Evaluation requirements	Project description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The types of evaluation that will be undertaken (for example, process, outcome, CBA) • What is in-scope for the evaluation (what may be out-of-scope) • Expectations related to communications and collaboration with stakeholders
	Issues/ risks	Challenges or risks that may impact the evaluation, for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • monitoring history and availability of data • delivery complexity (for example, multiple delivery partners) • ethical conduct approval timelines • potential challenges to stakeholder communications and collaboration
	Key Deliverables and Dates	Deliverables: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • key deliverables (e.g., evaluation plan, data sets, evaluation report(s), PowerPoint presentations) • how findings will be shared with stakeholders (e.g., presentation of findings, publications) Dates: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • when the evaluation findings and final report are needed to inform decision making • key milestones Be clear about who will retain the intellectual property produced during the evaluation (including to data and modelling)
	Key stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The people and groups who will have an interest in evaluation findings • The people who will be involved in the evaluation (and their roles and responsibilities) • The expectations related to stakeholder engagement, for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ steering committee ○ advisory groups ○ collaborative stakeholder processes • Any expectations regarding involvement of the delivery team or other agency staff in evaluation processes
	Agency's obligations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The data and information that will be provided to the evaluator • The support that will be provided by agency staff

Include:	For example:	Provide information regarding:
Initial assumptions	Logic model	The logic model for the initiative <i>OR</i> <i>Assist with developing or refining a logic model</i>
	Counterfactual	What would be expected to happen in the absence of the initiative <i>OR</i> <i>Determine a realistic counterfactual</i>
OR	Key evaluation questions (KEQs)	The evaluation questions <i>OR</i> <i>Develop KEQs</i>
	Evaluation methods	The methods considered suitable and feasible to answer the KEQs <i>OR</i> <i>Propose and develop evaluation methods</i>
	Outcomes and benefits	The measurable outcomes and benefits <i>OR</i> <i>Scope or measure outcomes and benefits</i>
	Stakeholders	The key stakeholders who should be included in the evaluation <i>OR</i> <i>Undertake stakeholder mapping or develop a stakeholder management plan</i>
	Data	Other data sources that are suitable and available <i>OR</i> <i>What data the consultant is expected to collect</i>
Identify evaluation tasks	Links to other initiatives	The broader context in which the initiative operates <i>OR</i> <i>Identify other activities (State, national or local) that interact with, complement, or replicate the initiative</i>

Table 3: Examples of selection criteria for procurement

Criteria	Examples in an evaluation
Evaluation expertise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experience in large scale and complex evaluations • Experienced and qualified staff in economic analysis • Ability to provide independence and objectivity to the evaluation
Subject matter expertise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relevant qualifications • Relevant technical knowledge • Experience in undertaking evaluation in relevant subject areas • Demonstrated understanding of key issues
Suitability of the proposed design and methods to address the evaluation objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective engagement with stakeholders (including appropriate cultural communication capabilities) • Strong examination of causal attribution to outcomes • Robust benefits valuation • Effective strategies to manage limitations of the design and methods • Cohesive evaluation processes, including evaluation design and methods, implementation, and reporting
Demonstrated ability to meet project requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project timeframes • Key milestones • Key deliverables (including how quality standards will be met) • Appropriate governance arrangements • Adequate resourcing
Compliance with relevant standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of approved procurement arrangements • Demonstrated ability to meet standards, as outlined in the NSW procurement policy framework

Using peer review

Independent peer review processes can provide quality assessment for internally and externally conducted evaluations.

Peer review is a process where the quality of the work is reviewed by an independent expert(s) in the relevant field. This ensures that professional, ethical, and analytical standards are met. Peer review may be appropriate before finalising key stages of the evaluation, such as the evaluation design, implementation of the evaluation method, or analysis of the results.

Peer review processes should be appropriate to the profile of the initiative and the complexity and risk of the evaluation. For **initiatives that are high profile or that involve significant investment or risk**, peer review of method and findings should be undertaken by independent subject experts. Peer review may also be prioritised for evaluations that are complex and challenging. Peer reviewers may include academics or other professionals with expertise. This may include commissioning peer review or formal review through NSW Investor Assurance (Gateway) processes.

For **lower profile initiatives and less complex evaluations** (for example, agency nominated strategic evaluation), reviews could be undertaken within the portfolio, but external to the business area, such as through expert reference groups.

For evaluations of **initiatives that affect First Nations people and communities**, peer reviews should be undertaken by First Nations evaluation or research specialists. Ensure that the review considers both the technical aspects of the evaluation and the appropriateness of the evaluation activities.