

Evaluation Framework

including Evaluation Checklist

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Evaluation Framework

This document is a guide for staff of the Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation (Foundation), our funded agencies, partners, and stakeholders. The framework outlines our commitment to ensuring that our evaluation approaches are robust, relevant, and as good as they can be given the limited and emerging evidence on gambling harm, and the complexities and challenges associated with measuring the impact of initiatives in the human services. It describes the aim of our evaluations, the scope and rationale, guiding principles and our approach and process.

Evaluation described

Evaluation provides a systematic method to study a program, practice, intervention, or initiative to understand how well it achieves its goals with the aim to improve effectiveness, and/or to inform programming decisions.

It involves collecting and analysing information about a program's activities, characteristics, and outcomes.

Evaluation is distinct from research even though many of the methods used and approaches are similar. The main distinction between evaluation and research is that research requires a higher burden of proof, often backed by academic standards. While evaluation also requires logical and robust methodologies, usually pragmatic decisions take into account time constraints and limited resources, when designing evaluations.

Foundation evaluations

The Foundation evaluates all community-based programs and media campaigns to ensure they are meeting their stated objectives, the needs of the community and to identify and make improvements in design and delivery over time.

Programs and projects are evaluated in the main by independent contractors to provide some objectivity and distance, usually through a request for quote or tender process depending on the scale and complexity of the evaluation (see internal procurement documentation <link>). Rarely, we undertake internal evaluations for small scale projects, such as pilots or trials where a more robust and independent approach is not warranted.

The Foundation's approach to evaluating campaigns includes:

- a) attitudinal objectives for awareness of gambling harm and understanding of who it affects, as well as stigma reduction and help seeking.
- b) behavioural objectives include reducing levels of harm caused by gambling and halting the increase of gambling-related harm experienced by key Victorian population segments.

Campaign effectiveness is evaluated via external market research, community attitudes surveys, channel performance analysis and service engagement information. The evaluation of Foundation campaigns requires a different approach to that outlined for Foundation programs and the process must adhere to guidelines set by the Department of Premier and Cabinet.

This framework aims to provide an overview of the Foundation's approach to the evaluation of its programs, campaigns and funded projects. The framework (together with attached evaluation process checklist) covers:

- What we evaluate
- Why we evaluate
- Guiding principles
- Developing an evaluation plan
- Implementing the evaluation
- Monitoring evaluation outcomes

Aim of the framework

The aim of this framework is to:

- a) enhance the evaluation of the Foundation's contribution to reducing the prevalence and severity of gambling harm, and
- b) to describe and detail the Foundation's approach to evaluation

What do we evaluate?

All programs and projects across the Foundation, including those delivered by our funded partners, should be evaluated, from inception, and continuously, if possible. Evaluation should be in place from the outset so that benchmarks can be established to enable measurement of the program's impact. The Foundation is committed to the Design, Monitoring and Evaluation (DME) cycle, which should be incorporated for all projects.

Why do we evaluate?

Evaluation helps to assess the efficiency and efficacy of the work we do across the Foundation. It allows us to measure our impact in achieving our objectives and provides some of the data and evidence necessary to assess the success of our outcomes.

Evaluations will assist the Foundation to achieve its strategic objectives in the short term and realise its longer-term goal to prevent and reduce gambling harm. Quality and robust evaluations will provide the Foundation and its stakeholders with strategic information about the performance, value and impact of the Foundation's programs and initiatives, and helps to build up the evidence base. They will also assist in demonstrating the success of the outcomes we are seeking as defined in the [Reducing gambling harm in Victoria: Outcomes framework](#).

Evaluation also enables us to strengthen our programs by making recommendations around enhancements. Enhancements can be made partway through the evaluation, or at the conclusion.

Guiding principles

The following principles underpin implementation of the Foundation's programs and activities, including our evaluation framework:

- Fostering a whole of community approach to reducing gambling related harm through collaboration and partnerships in research, education, prevention and treatment.
- Implementing communication, prevention and treatment approaches based on research and evaluation findings.
- Building the capacity of individuals, families, the community and allied health and welfare services to better identify and respond to the needs of people who experience harm from gambling.
- Developing targeted initiatives, programs and services that address the specific needs of vulnerable groups and people who are at risk of experiencing gambling related harm.
- Inclusion of the views of people who have experienced gambling related harm into the development of appropriate programs and activities.

Evaluation activity will also be guided by the following principles:

- **Accountability** - We will be fiscally responsible and embed a culture of program / service ownership, evidence informed practice and continual service improvement.
- **Program / service ownership** – Evidence and evaluation design will be embedded into the development, design and implementation of our programs, strategies and services.
- **Continuous improvement** – The knowledge and evidence developed through monitoring and evaluation will be strongly linked to future development, design, implementation and review of our programs, strategies and services.
- **Collaboration and consultation** – Evidence activities will be supported, implemented and translated through engagement with our teams, funded agencies and stakeholders.

Objectives

The framework provides the overarching structure for the Foundation to:

- Establish a cumulative evidence base using evaluation evidence to guide the Foundation's approach to delivering on our purpose, role and strategic priorities
- Assess the individual and aggregate impact of Foundation programs and initiatives
- Embed robust evaluation, action learning and evidence informed practice across the Foundation's projects, programs and strategies
- Drive, develop and improve organisational learning, and
- Contribute to the body of evidence and knowledge on gambling related harm

The Foundation's evaluation process

Individual evaluations are directly managed by program staff, working closely with the evaluation team. This reflects the respective expertise of staff, as well as the collaboration between evaluation and program management, which necessitates timely, informed and responsive decisions on evaluation matters.

An Evaluation Steering Committee, endorsed by the Executive Leadership Team (ELT), has been established to support continuous improvement in the Foundation's evaluation approaches, including continuing to shift to outcomes focused evaluation and applying research and evaluation findings to program design. The Evaluation Steering Committee is responsible for overarching strategy and decisions related to the Foundation's evaluations. The committee is also intended as a decision-making forum for key evaluation matters which have cross-program implications, such as the Foundation's approach to establishing the cost-effectiveness of programs and campaigns.

The Steering Committee is authorised to oversee all the Foundation's evaluation process from inception to monitoring outcomes. This includes:

- assessing the cost of the program,
- capacity to undertake evaluation internally or need to contract out,
- whether a business case is required, and
- what approach to take depending on the program's level of complexity.

This also includes assessment of the cost-effectiveness of prevention approaches in future evaluations, where appropriate, and approving and ensuring appropriate evaluation budgets considering investment in the program, history of the program and internal staffing implications.

Further considerations at the beginning of the process include, ensuring the evaluation approach is fit for purpose and consultation with program managers (i.e., how it should be evaluated, period of the evaluation, procurement processes, consultation with relevant branch head, whether there is a need for consistency in approaches).

How do we evaluate?

An evaluation plan should be developed for all new programs before they are implemented. The evaluation plan should be written alongside the overall program plan. The evaluation plan should:

- identify the objectives of the evaluation – these need to align with the program objectives and strategy and the Foundation's Outcomes framework
- clarify roles and responsibilities of those involved in the evaluation
- determine whether evaluation is commissioned externally or conducted internally
- determine the most appropriate evaluation strategy/design
- clarify assumptions/ lines of enquiry/ evidence on which program design and implementation were based
- outline how a program intends to produce results
- design the most appropriate evaluation questions to measure the impact of the activities (check the Outcomes Framework inputs and evaluation data collection materials from other evaluations and, where appropriate, use questions from these for consistency of measures across the Foundation and input to the Outcomes Framework as required)
- confirmation of evaluation methods/sources of information – primary evaluation activities (e.g. qual, quant) and secondary information (program or policy documents, project outputs etc) and triangulation of information
- determine the most appropriate data collection methods
- outline how the evaluation results will be disseminated – internal or external publication may determine whether internal or independent evaluation is required
- provide a budget for the evaluation
- cost effectiveness

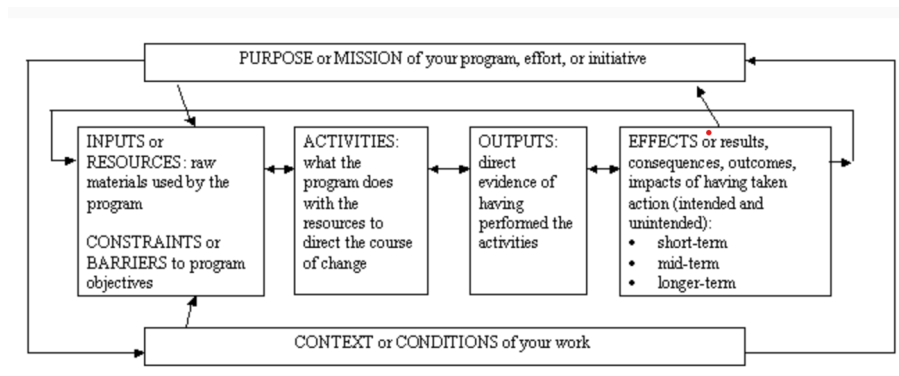
While it is preferable for an evaluation plan to be developed alongside the development of a new program, where a program has been implemented prior to development of an evaluation plan, it is important to make sure that a plan is developed in retrospect.

A note on cost-effectiveness in evaluation. Measuring cost effectiveness in preventing / reducing gambling harm is challenging and to the Foundation's knowledge has not been measured in other jurisdictions. Future evaluations will include a requirement to assess cost-effectiveness of prevention approaches, where appropriate. As noted above, this will be overseen by the Evaluation Steering Committee.

Measuring cost-effectiveness can be varied in method, subjective in nature and difficult to undertake due to the range of variables that may or may not be included. It is only one aspect in measuring effectiveness and needs to be considered in the context of other evaluation lines of enquiry such as program outcomes data, web traffic and social media posts depending on the program. While including cost-effectiveness in evaluation is not possible or appropriate in all situations and may not be the lead indicator of program effectiveness, the Foundation is committed to developing the skills and knowledge, inhouse and through external expertise, to include measures wherever possible

Evaluation plan

1. Evaluation preparation
 - a. Engage stakeholders
 - b. Clarify purpose of the evaluation
 - c. Identify key evaluation questions
 - d. Identify resources for the evaluation
2. Describe the program
 - a. Statement of need
 - b. Intended results
 - c. Activities
 - d. Resources
 - e. Stage of development (maturity)
 - f. Alignment with the strategy and outcomes framework
 - g. Context (environment in which the program operates)
 - h. Program Logic model



3. Focus the evaluation design
 - a. Study design
 - b. Data collection tools
 - c. Evaluation types and purposes
 - i. Process/implementation evaluation (note that this type of evaluation is usually one aspect of an evaluation, combined with an assessment of the program's impact)
 - ii. Impact/outcome evaluation
 - iii. Cost effectiveness/economic evaluation
 - iv. Formative
 - v. Summative

Implementing the evaluation

1. Appointment of evaluator (internal/external)
2. Review evaluation plan
3. Conduct evaluation
4. Obtain evaluation report (with recommendations)

Monitoring evaluation outcomes

1. Review recommendations (accept/reject)
2. Disseminate evaluation outcomes
3. Monitor implementation of recommendations
4. Apply findings to future iterations.

For a detailed guide through our evaluation process see the Foundation's Evaluation process checklist attached.

This framework draws on a range of **unpublished and published sources**, including:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (1999, September). Framework for program evaluation in public health. *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, 48(RR-11). Available from <ftp://ftp.cdc.gov/pub/Publications/mmwr/rr/rr4811.pdf>

Prevention and Population Health Branch (2010), Evaluation framework for health promotion and disease prevention programs, Melbourne, Victorian Government Department of Health.

Evaluation Checklist

This document describes the process for evaluations at the Foundation and is aligned with the Foundation's Evaluation Framework, which also describes the aim, scope, rationale, and our approach to evaluations. Together with the Framework, this checklist acts as a guide for those about to or currently undertaking evaluations and describes considerations at each step of the process (see **Figure 1** below).

In the first instance the Foundation's Evaluation Steering Committee should be consulted for review and approval with each new evaluation to ascertain the strategic implications and evaluation decisions to be made. Issues when establishing an evaluation include; whether to evaluate internally or externally, budget and procurement considerations, alignment with the Foundations Strategic and Outcomes Frameworks and whether including measurement of economic effectiveness is feasible or appropriate.

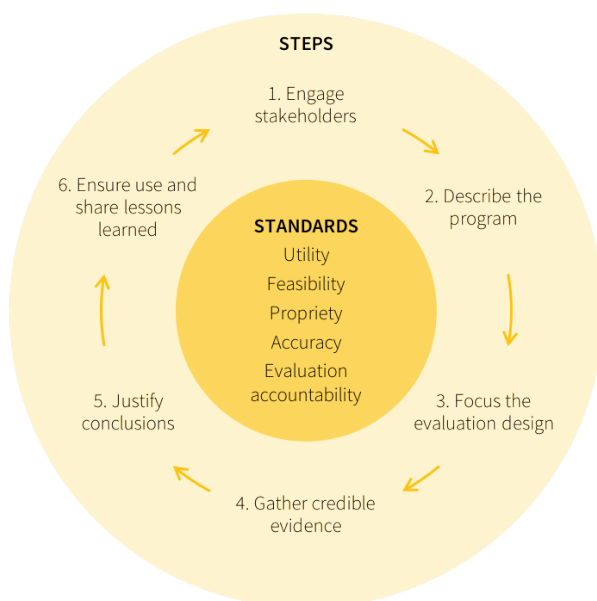


Figure 1. Framework for Program Evaluation in Public Health¹

Step One: Engage Stakeholders

Identify and engage stakeholders with an interest or investment in the evaluation and how the information will be used:

- Those involved in program operations (e.g., program administrators, managers, or personnel engaged in planning or implementation)
- Those served or affected by the program directly or indirectly (e.g., participants and their family members; community organisations; government and relevant departments, professional associations, or organisations relevant to the program or populations served)
- Primary users of the evaluation who will do or decide something regarding the program based on the evaluation

¹ MacDonald, G. (2013). Framework for program evaluation in public health: A checklist of steps and standards. Retrieved from <https://wmich.edu/evaluation/checklists>

Step Two: Describe the Program

Describe aspects of the program in sufficient detail to ensure shared understanding of the evaluation (i.e., the program or components of the program to be evaluated):

- Need:** the nature and magnitude of the problem or opportunity the program aims to address
- Expected effects:** what the program must accomplish or achieve to be considered successful in the short, medium and long term
- Activities:** what the program does to create or contribute to change presented in a logical progression or sequence
- Resources:** assets available to plan and conduct activities (e.g., human and fiscal resources information or evidence relevant to the program)
- Stage of development:** the maturity of the program
- Context:** setting and environmental influences relevant to the program or the evaluation (e.g., social or economic conditions, efforts of other organisations to address the same or similar needs and the possibility of working in collaboration with these organisations)
- Logic Model:** picture or summary of the program's mechanism of change (i.e., the progression from program processes to benefits or results), including how and why we expect the inputs, activities, and outputs of the program to cause or contribute to the intended outcomes (i.e., the knowledge or evidence used to inform program design)

Step Three: Focus the Evaluation Design

Not all options for the design of the evaluation result in usable information that meets the needs of stakeholders. To establish important parameters for the evaluation, define all of the following:

- Purpose:** common purposes of program evaluation in public health include improve knowledge or understanding of the program, provide data or information to improve the program, determine the effects of the program, or affect change among participants in the program or the evaluation
- Users:** the specific persons expected to receive the evaluation findings for consideration or action
- Uses:** the specific ways in which information from the evaluation will be applied to meet the purposes of the evaluation
- Questions:** define precisely which aspects of the program will be addressed, including lines of enquiry
- Methods:** how credible information will be collected to achieve the purpose of the evaluation, address the evaluation questions, and meet the intended uses
- Agreements:** summarize the procedures and responsibilities relevant to conduct of the evaluation (e.g., procedures or safeguards to protect human subjects, how resources will be used, timeline for implementation or reporting)

Step Four: Gather Credible Evidence

Five items likely to influence perceptions of the credibility of evidence collected as a part of the evaluation:

- Indicators (documentable or measurable pieces of information regarding the evaluand):** select indicators that yield reliable and valid information relevant to the evaluation questions
- Sources:** use multiple sources of evidence to incorporate different perspectives or understandings of the program being evaluated; criteria used to select sources should be made explicit to inform assessments of the credibility of evidence
- Quality:** data or information collected should meet stakeholders' expectations and thresholds for credibility (e.g., appropriateness and integrity of information)
- Quantity:** estimate the amount of data or information needed and assure that all data to be collected is matched to a pre-determined intended use
- Logistics:** the infrastructure and methods used to collect and handle data or information

Step Five: Justify Conclusions

Conclusions must be well-linked to the evidence and reflect the standards or values agreed upon with stakeholders:

- Standards:** when operationalised, standards establish the criteria or norms against which the program will be judged (e.g., the items used to determine whether a program is successful or unsuccessful)
- Analysis and Synthesis:** whether isolating key findings (analysis) or combining data sources to reach larger conclusions about findings (synthesis), all decisions regarding organisation, classification, determining interrelationships or comparisons of data, and display of information should be guided by the questions or lines of enquiry the evaluation was designed to address, the types of data collected, and input from stakeholders
- Interpretation:** the work of figuring out what the findings mean; data collection and analysis is not sufficient in and of itself to draw conclusions regarding the program, this information needs to be assessed in the context of the short, medium and long term goals of the program
- Judgments:** statements regarding the merit, worth, or significance of the program or components of the program; consider the findings, and interpretations of findings, against standards agreed upon with stakeholders
- Recommendations:** the specific actions that should be considered based on the evaluation; preparing these recommendations requires information beyond what is needed to make judgments regarding the merit or worth of the program

Step Six: Ensure Use and Share Lessons Learned

Preparing for use of the evaluation requires deliberate action and begins at the earliest stages of planning:

- Design:** how the evaluation questions, methods, and processes are constructed to achieve the desired uses
- Preparation:** provide time and opportunities for primary users to practice or rehearse how evaluation findings may be received or used; this activity gives stakeholders time to explore positive and negative implications of potential results and identify options for program improvement
- Feedback:** the communication that occurs among all parties to the evaluation; this exchange throughout the evaluation aids in building trust among stakeholders and keeping the work on track
- Follow-up:** the emotional and technical support that users need during the evaluation and upon receipt of findings or recommendations; active follow-up with users may be required to remind stakeholders of planned uses, prevent lessons learned from being overlooked amidst other decisions or discussion, or prevent misuse of information (e.g., information taken out of context or used in ways other than what was agreed to among stakeholders)
- Dissemination:** the process of communicating the procedures or lessons learned from an evaluation to relevant audiences in an appropriate fashion; the content and format of this information should be discussed with stakeholders well in advance of release
- Additional Uses:** changes in thinking or behaviour (among individuals or within organisations) that occur as a result of participation in the evaluation (e.g., personnel clarify or establish a shared understanding of program goals, more attention to decisions based on data or information from a systematic inquiry)