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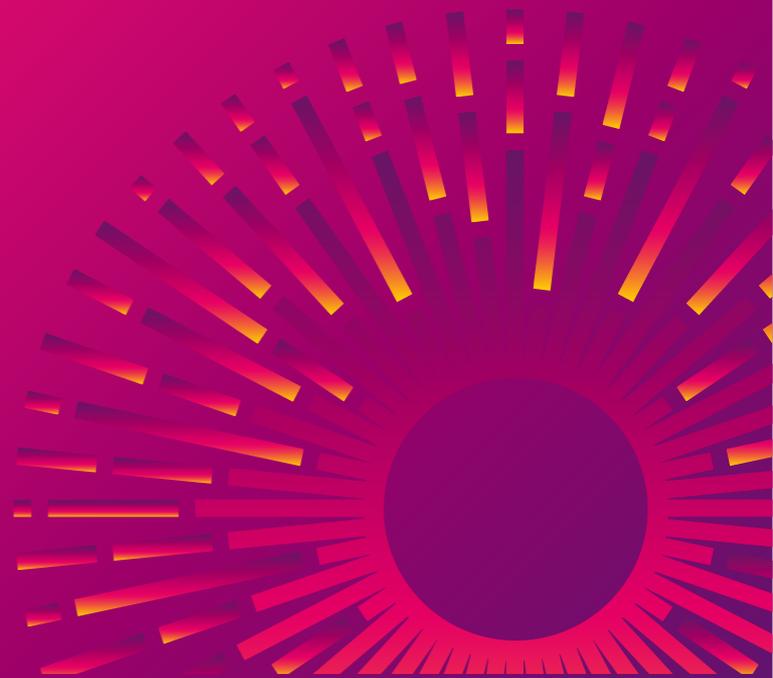
Discovering what
works for families

Inside, outside, all around: Three perspectives on evaluation capacity building

Stewart Muir - the Australian Institute of Family Studies

Alisha Heidenreich - Relationships Australia South Australia

Mandy Charman - Outcomes, Practice and Evidence Network (OPEN)





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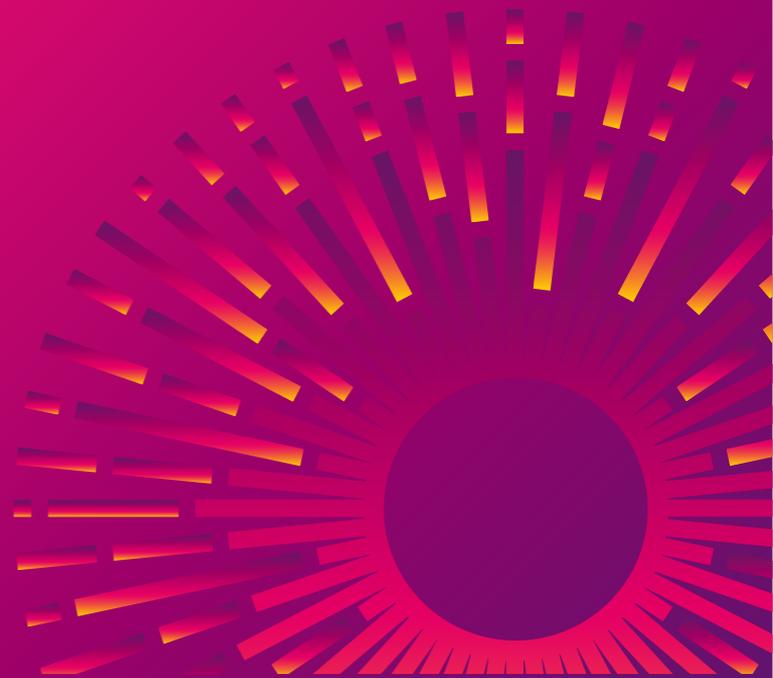
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Discovering what
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Experiences from the Families and Children Expert Panel Project

Stewart Muir, Jessica Smart, Sharnee Moore, Eleanor
Kerdo - Australian Institute of Family Studies



The Families and Children Expert Panel Project



- Project funded by the Department of Social Services (2014-2020)
- Aim is to support providers funded under DSS Families and Children Activity (FaC) to:
 - plan and implement “evidence-based” programs
 - conduct evaluations and measure outcomes
- <https://aifs.gov.au/cfca/expert-panel-project>



The project context



- General move to measuring outcomes in social services
- Little existing evidence of FaC program benefits
- Previous national evaluation showed limited positive change
- From 2015, a Commonwealth requirement that services direct 30% of funding to ‘evidence-based programs’ (50% from 2017).
- BUT limited existing evaluation capacity in the child and family sector
- AIFS helps and advises services but also advises DSS on whether services meet requirement
 - ECB for a whole service sector on a national scale



Capacity Building model: Tiers of support



1. Universal support via online resources and tools
 - Practitioner guides, instructional videos, webinars
2. Broad support via workshops
3. Program level support via one-on-one assistance
 - Troubleshooting and help with evaluation planning
 - Advising service providers on how to meet contractual 'evidence-based' requirement
4. Assistance with accessing external expert help



Lessons learnt



- Legislative requirements means some services doing evaluations for the first time
- Services still often see evaluation as a tick-box exercise
 - Can lead to evaluations that are not useful to them (or anyone else)
- Services often have limited budgets for evaluation
- Complex environment = lack of clear outcomes
- Personal support is highly valued

