



AUSTRALIAN

**EVALUATION**

SOCIETY



Improving the theory, practice and  
the use of evaluation

**DEVELOPING AND IMPLEMENTING  
AN EFFECTIVE EVALUATION  
MATURITY MODEL**

**Wednesday 27 September 2023**

4.30 – 5.30pm

**Presenters:** Jade Maloney, Scott  
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# AGENDA

1

A quick summary of the international capacity building/diagnostic literature

2

An overview of the importance of evaluation maturity and how it relates to the Department of Finance's new evaluation guidance

3

A presentation of a maturity model and how it could be used to strengthen evaluation capacity

4

An opportunity for participants to discuss and share their own experiences

# THE INTERNATIONAL LITERATURE



# INTERVENTION POINTS

EXTERNAL  
ENVIRONMENT

Leadership's demand/use + Supply

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Institutional infrastructure

# COMMONWEALTH EVALUATION POLICY

## Aims to

- embed a **culture of evaluation and learning** from experience to underpin evidence-based policy and delivery
- support entities to improve evaluation practices and capability

## Identifies key governance actions to support an evaluative culture, such as

- **Plan** to conduct fit for purpose monitoring and evaluation activities before beginning any program or activity (considering resourcing and timeframes).
- Use strategic, risk-based approaches to **identify, prioritise and schedule** evaluation activities.
- Align **internal activities with external requirements**, such as reporting requirements under legislation.
- **Assign responsibility** for considering the outcomes of regular performance monitoring activities or the implementation of findings from any evaluation report. Identify who is responsible for implementation and establish timeframes for actions.

# BEHIND THE POLICY

APS review identified

## concerns about

- the quality extent and use of evaluation
- the quality of outcomes evaluation, including the need for better data
- the usefulness of evaluation
- the support of senior staff and Ministers for evaluation

## challenges of

- establishing a culture of evaluation
- structuring and resourcing evaluation

# THE OPPORTUNITY PROVIDED BY APS REFORM AND AUSTRALIAN CENTRE FOR EVALUATION

- The APS reform identifies a key role for evaluation in supporting better policy and outcomes
- The Australian Centre for Evaluation (ACE) forefronts the role of evaluation in reform
- Announcements have identified a role for ACE in embedding a culture of evaluation in the public service
- There is an emphasis on growing evaluation capability across the public service
- An evaluation maturity model could help to track this

# CASE STUDY (A LINE AGENCY)

Our brief, in brief:

Consult with staff (various levels) about:

- current state of play re. evaluation in the agency (strengths and weaknesses, enablers and barriers)
- priorities for development of evaluative practice (next 5 years)
- potential strategies for addressing these priorities

Gain consensus on priorities  
(with senior exec)

Flesh out the promising strategies  
(further consultation)

Once agreed, develop an  
implementation plan  
(further consultation)

## Their vision

Evaluation is a critical part of the policy development cycle. Our goal is to **evaluate the right things, evaluate them well and use the insight effectively** to drive the performance of our policies and programs for the benefit of the people we serve.

## Their 10 commitments

At present, our capability and maturity to undertake and use evaluation varies from one group to the next. To strengthen our evaluation practices, we are making a commitment to:

1. **Bolster demand** across the department for good quality evaluation evidence that is useful in decision making
2. **Prioritise evaluation effort** strategically, focusing on known gaps in the evidence base and the scale and risk of our investments
3. **Budget appropriately** for evaluation, including as part of new funding proposals
4. **Integrate evaluation planning** as part of program and policy design
5. **Use robust evaluation designs and approaches** that are well suited to the evaluation questions we are asking and the policy, program and population context we operate in
6. **Leverage existing data** for evaluative purposes, to maximise their value
7. **Use evaluation evidence** for continuous improvement through the program and policy lifecycle
8. **Retain and share the lessons** from across the department and beyond, building our knowledge base about what works and why
9. **Strengthen staff capability and business processes** in support of evaluation design, conduct, commissioning and use
10. **Grow our evaluation maturity** across the whole department, each group building on its current strengths

# THE NOTION OF A MATURITY MODEL

For each commitment, the maturity model provides a set of descriptors for what ‘limited’, ‘developing’, ‘delivering’ and ‘excelling’ practice looks like.

## The structure we used

### Limited

Evaluative practices are underdeveloped. Evaluation tends to be an afterthought. When evaluation is undertaken, it delivers little benefit to the department or its stakeholders.

### Developing

Evaluative practices are growing, but inconsistent. There are examples of good practice, but the department and its stakeholders don’t derive full benefit from the evaluation that takes place.

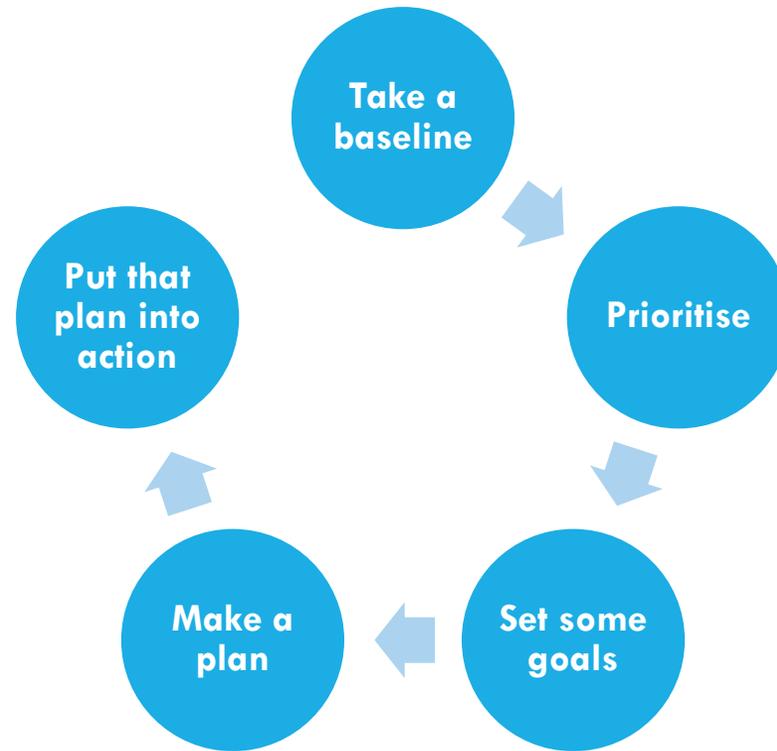
### Delivering

Evaluative practices are established and consistent. The department commissions and conducts evaluation well, building and using its evidence base strategically.

### Excelling

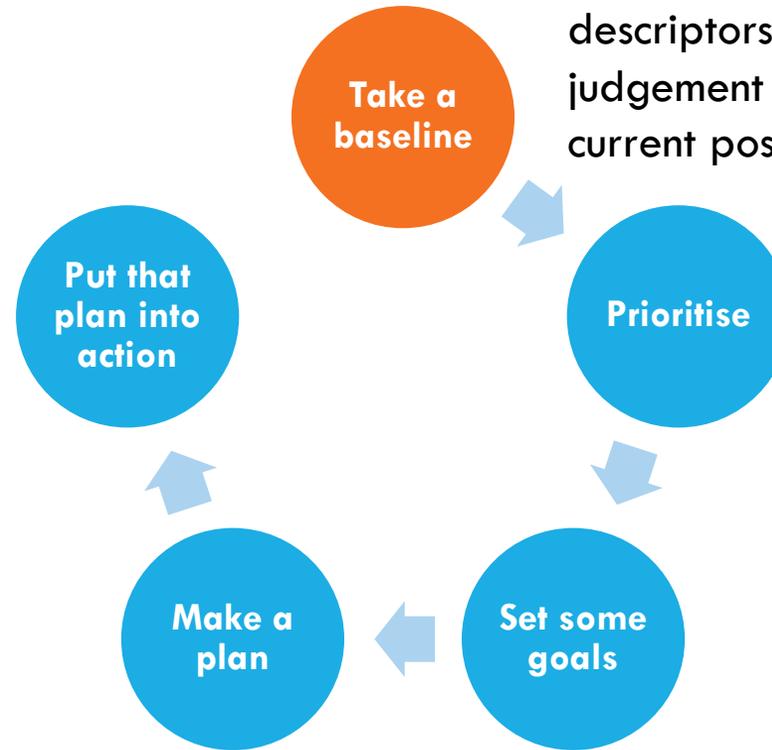
Evaluative practices are exemplary. The department and its stakeholders benefit greatly from the evaluation activity that occurs. Others regard the department as a leader in this field.

The maturity model can be used as part of a continuous improvement cycle across the organisation

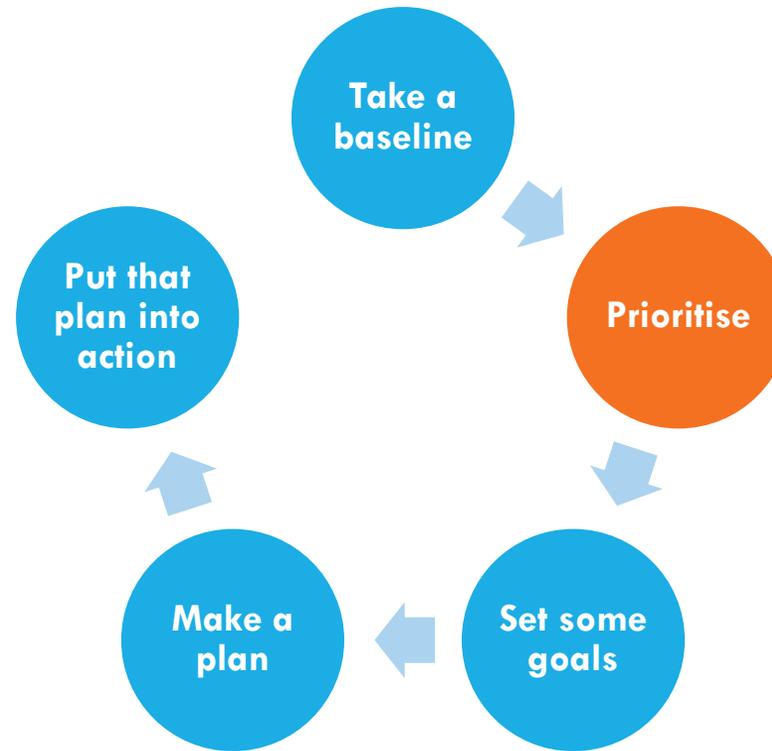


The maturity model can be used as part of a continuous improvement cycle across the organisation

Use the maturity model as a reflection tool. For each commitment, consider your practice in light of the descriptors in the table. Make an 'on balance' judgement about which category best describes your current position. If in doubt, consult.

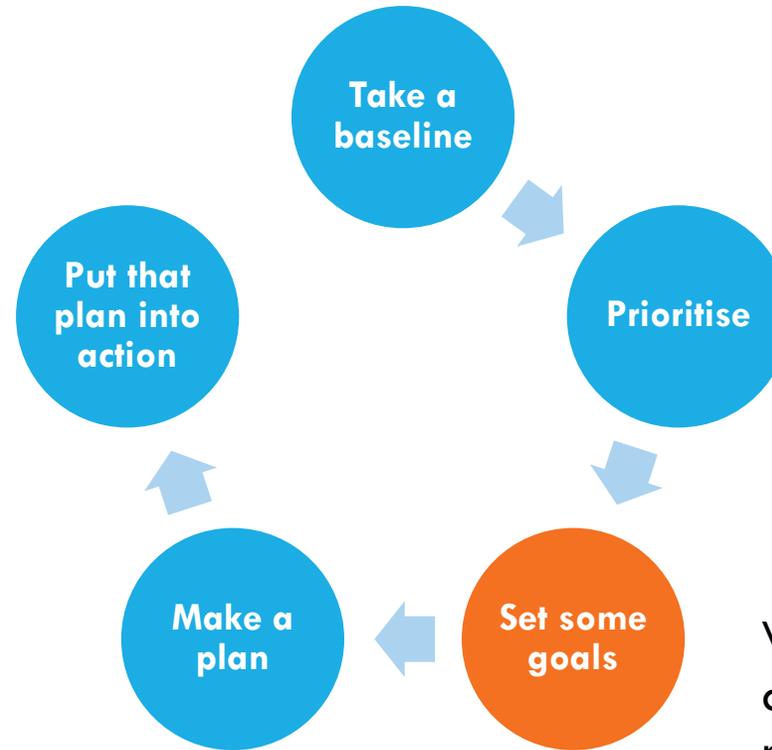


The maturity model can be used as part of a continuous improvement cycle across the organisation



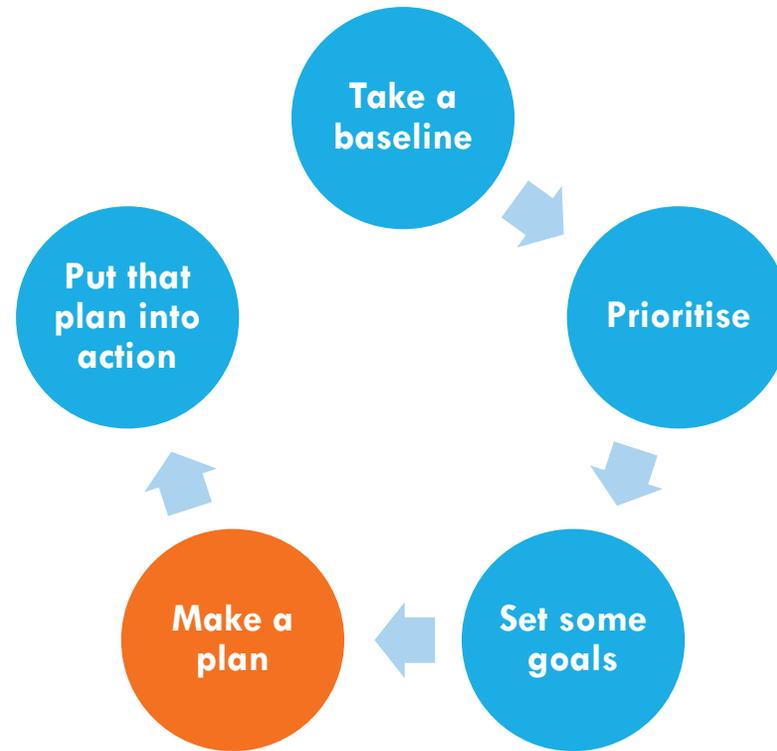
Identify the domains where you would most like to see improvement. Why those ones?

The maturity model can be used as part of a continuous improvement cycle across the organisation



What level would you like to be operating at? Be as specific as you can: What gaps in practice are you trying to close? What would 'success' look like in your context, for this cycle?

The maturity model can be used as part of a continuous improvement cycle across the organisation



Identify improvement strategies you can put in place to strengthen your practice. Set some tangible milestones you can use as markers along the way, to help you know you are on the right track. Give yourself a reasonable (but limited) timeframe to make progress.

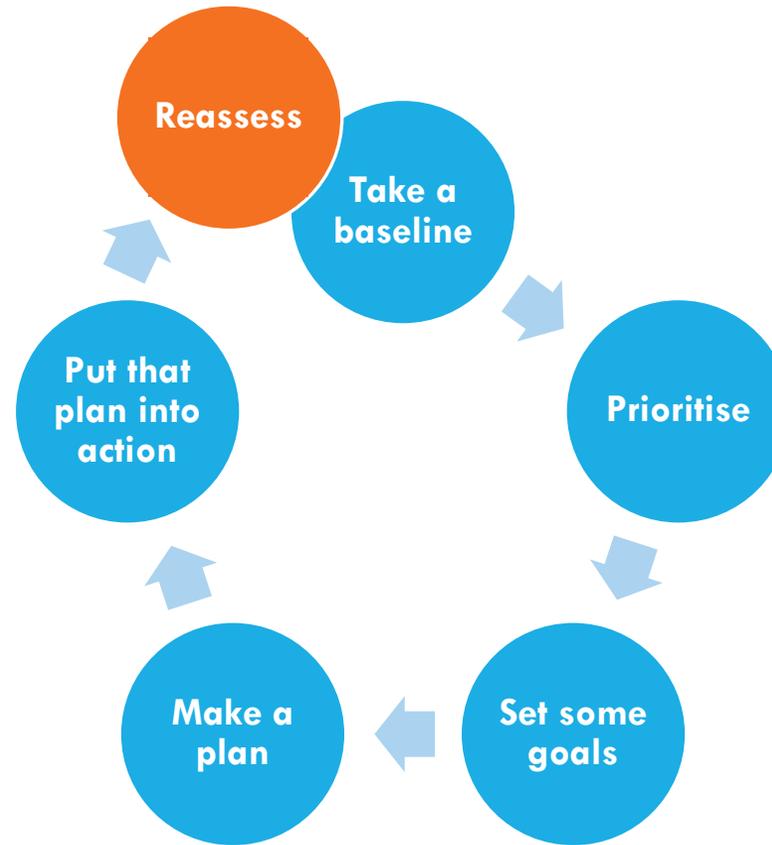
The maturity model can be used as part of a continuous improvement cycle across the organisation

As you implement your plan, keep yourself accountable both for the actions you take and the results they deliver. If you divert from the plan, document this and the reasons for it.

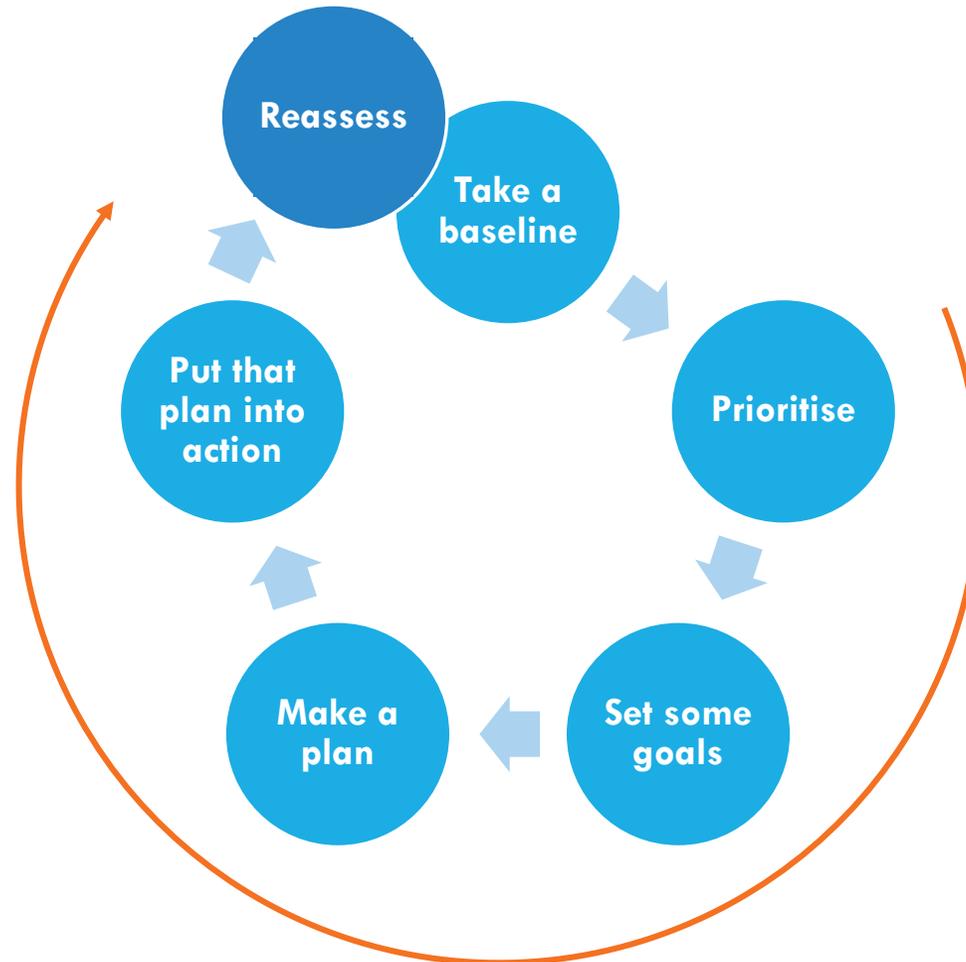


## The maturity model can be used as part of a continuous improvement cycle across the organisation

Once your improvement strategies have had enough time to take effect, reassess your practice against the descriptors in this maturity model. Has practice matured? If yes, congratulations! What did you learn from that journey? Do you have a story worth sharing with others?



The maturity model can be used as part of a continuous improvement cycle across the organisation



### Go again

Remember, this is a continuous improvement cycle, not a quick fix or a one-off push. Your reassessment gives you a new baseline from which you can update your priorities and goals, refresh your plans and keep pressing forward.

# COMMITMENT 1

Commitment: **Bolster demand** across the department for good quality evaluation evidence that is useful in decision making

Limited	Developing	Delivering	Excelling
<p>Departmental and group awareness of the benefits of evaluation is limited.</p> <p>There is limited engagement by senior leadership in the development and use of evaluative evidence.</p> <p>Generating and reporting performance information is either viewed as a compliance activity or as a threat that should be avoided.</p> <p>When people make judgements about program effectiveness, they rarely draw on evaluation findings.</p>	<p>The benefits of developing and using strategic performance information are occasionally highlighted by the department's senior leadership within each group.</p> <p>Evaluation is increasingly viewed as an important aspect of the department's business.</p> <p>The department has a scattering of mid-level evaluation champions, working to strengthen evaluation policies and practice in their team or group.</p>	<p>Most senior leaders actively support the development and use of high-quality strategic performance information.</p> <p>Leaders allocate the necessary resources and time for evaluation and learning to occur.</p> <p>A culture of evaluative thinking and continual improvement is evident across the department and within groups, with lessons being learned, shared and acted upon.</p> <p>Evaluation is seen as a core aspect of every group's business.</p>	<p>The department is recognised for its evaluation and performance management expertise, innovative systems and procedures.</p> <p>The leadership team in each group shares a clear vision for using evaluative feedback to achieve desired results and drive performance improvements.</p> <p>Senior leaders in every group across the department actively use performance information.</p> <p>The department has a network of evaluation champions at various levels in every group, including in the senior leadership team.</p>

# COMMITMENT 2

Commitment: **Prioritise evaluation effort strategically**, focusing on known gaps in the evidence base and the scale and risk of our investments

Limited	Developing	Delivering	Excelling
<p>There is no forward planning process for conducting evaluations. Evaluations are seen as an optional activity.</p> <p>No-one is sure exactly what is being evaluated, and when.</p> <p>Programs that are prioritised for evaluation tend to be those with identified immediate problems or those where there is a 'success story' that needs telling.</p> <p>There are substantial gaps in the evidence base. Evaluation reports don't address these gaps.</p>	<p>The gaps in the evidence base of the department and individual groups are known and prioritised.</p> <p>Some parts of the department have a process in place for prioritising their evaluation agenda.</p> <p>A whole-of-department process to determine evaluation priorities is being developed.</p> <p>Large and risky programs are prioritised for evaluations at short notice.</p>	<p>Guidelines for prioritising and scaling evaluation are used by most groups.</p> <p>Strategic forward planning of evaluation takes place for all major policies and programs in the department.</p> <p>The gaps in our evidence base are closing, partly due to the well targeted evaluation program.</p>	<p>The department and individual groups have evaluation plans in place covering all policies, programs and corporate functions.</p> <p>These evaluation plans are consistent with assessed risks, including gaps in the evidence base.</p> <p>Evaluation activity is effectively coordinated and monitored within groups and across the department as a whole.</p>

# COMMITMENT 3

Commitment: **Budget appropriately** for evaluation, including as part of new funding proposals

Limited	Developing	Delivering	Excelling
<p>Securing funding for an evaluation requires a special effort or request.</p> <p>Funding for evaluation is usually not available, unless it looks like there will be resources left over at the end of an initiative.</p> <p>People are unsure how to budget for evaluation – what it is likely to cost, and what approaches may provide good value for money.</p>	<p>Funding for evaluations is ad hoc, driven by the priorities and preferences of senior leaders and/or requirements of particular program funding arrangements.</p> <p>Budgeting for evaluation normally takes place after program delivery budgets has been approved.</p> <p>Where they exist, evaluation budgets tend to be arbitrary amounts, with little thought in the budgeting process about how much the evaluation will actually cost.</p>	<p>Most program budgets have a line item for evaluation.</p> <p>New Policy Proposals always contain a budget for evaluation.</p> <p>The amount earmarked for evaluation is usually in line with the level of resourcing that the evaluation will require.</p>	<p>Funding to enable the conduct of evaluations is seen as non-negotiable.</p> <p>Adequate funding allocations are consistently included in program budgets, funding bids and new policy proposals.</p>

# COMMITMENT 4

Commitment: **Integrate evaluation planning** as part of program and policy design

## Limited

Evaluations are usually triggered by lapsing funding or external criticism.

Planning for evaluation occurs in an ad hoc manner, with little consistency from one evaluation plan to the next.

It is common to regretfully think 'if only we had got onto the evaluation planning sooner'.

## Developing

Evaluation planning is sometimes a component of new policy and program development.

There are examples available for people to use as templates or models.

There are examples of programs being designed with evaluation in mind, e.g. to allow testing of assumptions and embed the necessary data collection into program administration systems.

## Delivering

Evaluation planning is a standard component of the policy and program development process.

Consistent evaluation planning processes are in use. These are flexible, scalable and adaptable to context.

Evaluation planning is supported by a good range of suitable examples, templates and decision support resources.

## Excelling

Evaluation planning is a mandatory component of the policy and program development process, in conjunction with a dedicated budget allocation.

Evaluation planning is a recognised strength of the department. Other organisations have adapted the department's evaluation planning processes and resources for their context.

# COMMITMENT 5

Commitment: **Use robust evaluation designs and approaches** that are well suited to the evaluation questions we are asking and the policy, program and population context we operate in

## Limited

Evaluative assessments are generally based on the reporting of stakeholder perceptions and/or key performance indicators.

Evaluation data tend to focus on inputs and activity, rather than outcomes and impact.

Evaluations usually feature the same small set of favoured methods, irrespective of the program context.

Evaluation findings are often supported by incomplete or unreliable evidence.

## Developing

Departmental staff have experience in applying a range of evaluation designs and approaches, including observational approaches, surveys, qualitative methods, case studies and quasi-experimental program designs.

Some evaluations make use of theories of change to inform their evaluation design and approach.

Evaluation findings are supported by a few data sources, and there are examples of triangulation in analysis.

## Delivering

The department consistently selects evaluation designs and approaches that suit its evaluation needs, timelines and resources.

Evaluations consistently make good use of theories of change to inform and justify their design and approach.

Evaluation findings are highly credible, supported by an appropriate mix of short- and longer-term quantitative and qualitative data, with sound triangulation and analysis.

## Excelling

The department innovates to address its emerging evaluation challenges and advance the field of applied evaluation more broadly.

Completed evaluations are consistent with internationally recognised standards.

The department undertakes meta-analysis to generate systematic evidence-based policy and the benchmarking of performance.

These meta-evaluations are also used to improve the quality of evaluation practice.

# COMMITMENT 6

Commitment: **Leverage existing data** for evaluative purposes, to maximise their value

## Limited

The data systems that exist operate independently from each other, and it is difficult to link data sources together for evaluation purposes.

The department collects information for evaluation purposes that it then doesn't need or can't use

The department misses opportunities to collect information that it needs for evaluative purposes.

## Developing

There are some good practice examples of robust and integrated data systems that provide useful performance information for evaluation purposes.

Corporate and program areas are in discussion about how they can work together to strengthen the collection and use of administrative data for evaluation purposes

## Delivering

Most areas in the department are well served by a robust and integrated data system that allows them to gather and share performance information for evaluation purposes

Gaps in the administrative data sets and data linkage are well understood, and there are plans in place to address them.

## Excelling

The department is recognised for its data systems and management of administrative data for evaluation purposes.

The department pursues new opportunities for data linkage and data analytics that respond to emerging evaluation priorities.

# COMMITMENT 7

Commitment: **Use evaluation evidence** for continuous improvement through the program and policy lifecycle

## Limited

Program staff mostly use monitoring data to report on expenditure, activities, and outputs.

Evaluation findings are shared openly only when the results are glowing.

Mixed or critical findings tend to be buried. Sharing them, even internally within the department, is seen as a high risk activity.

In cases where evaluation findings are used to inform program or policy design, this tends to be at the end of a completed program or policy cycle.

## Developing

Some evaluations are designed to deliver timely feedback through interim reporting. However, many deliver their findings too late to make a difference within the current program or policy cycle.

There are some good practice examples of evaluation findings being used to manage program risks and support performance improvements during the life of the program or policy cycle.

Some program areas have in-built reflection processes where evaluative findings are used as part of iterative program improvement. This is regarded as good practice, but it's not common.

## Delivering

Evaluations are routinely designed to deliver timely feedback through interim reporting.

Evaluation findings are routinely used to manage program risks and support performance improvements during the life of a program or policy cycle.

Most program areas have established reflection processes where evaluative findings are used as part of iterative program improvement.

Programs use evaluation to validate and test their theories of change and the assumptions that underpin them.

## Excelling

The department is innovating its evaluation approaches to deliver real-time (or close to real-time) feedback and insight about program performance.

The use of evaluation findings is systematically integrated into departmental systems for policy making, information management, budgeting, planning and reporting to drive ongoing continuous improvement.

The department is known for its strong reflective processes and models of iterative review and program improvement.

# COMMITMENT 8

Commitment: **Retain and share** the lessons from across the department and beyond, building our knowledge base about what works and why

## Limited

There are no processes to support internal learning and sharing of evaluation findings outside of the team directly responsible for the policy or program that was evaluated.

There is no external sharing of evaluation results, unless they are very positive.

Knowledge management (KM) is a low priority. The department does not intend to strengthen its KM systems or processes.

We rarely seek out or refer to evidence from other jurisdictions.

## Developing

There are various structures and systems in place to store data. These differ from group to group.

You can find and access previous evaluation reports if you know where to look and who to ask.

Processes to support internal learning and sharing of evaluation data occur occasionally, mostly when there is leftover funding or when a crisis occurs.

The department is in the process of developing stronger KM practices.

There is some limited external sharing of selected evaluation reports.

There are examples of where we have made good use of evidence from other jurisdictions.

## Delivering

A strategy for integrated KM is in place across the department.

Guidance is available on how to access existing evaluation resources (e.g., websites, professional organizations, evaluation consultants).

There are established internal processes to support learning and sharing from evaluation.

Prior evaluation plans and reports are archived and indexed in a way that allows them to be searched and found when required.

The knowledge base from prior evaluations is routinely used as part of design processes.

We systematically use and share evidence from other jurisdictions.

## Excelling

A well-resourced KM strategy is implemented across the department.

All key information is recorded and stored, and can be extracted to inform monitoring, evaluation and reporting by operational staff and senior management.

Currently available information tells us what we need to know about the effectiveness of our programs, processes, products, and services.

We undertake meta-analysis of our own prior evaluations, and compare this with the findings from international evidence.

# COMMITMENT 9

Commitment: **Strengthen staff capability and business processes** in support of evaluation design, conduct, commissioning and use

## Limited

Few departmental staff have well developed evaluation skills and experience.

The department does not support staff to develop advanced evaluation skills.

There are no formal evaluation policies, procedures or governance mechanisms in place.

## Developing

A limited number of individual staff have well developed evaluation skills.

The department has a plan and funding for building staff evaluation capacity.

The department has formal evaluation policies in place.

Evaluation procedures and governance mechanisms are inconsistent and not always followed.

## Delivering

General evaluation skills are widespread.

Technical specialisation in evaluation is present wherever it is required.

Dedicated resources for evaluation training, and other capacity development activities, are available. These include an emphasis on learning by doing and peer support.

There are formal evaluation policies, procedures, and governance mechanisms in place. These structures are followed and used.

## Excelling

The agency is recognised for its evaluation expertise and innovative procedures and systems.

Relevant staff have higher order skills and experience, which is leveraged by the broader department.

Evaluation responsibilities are reflected at the appropriate level in all role descriptions, recruitment priorities and (where capability development is required) performance agreements.

Evaluation policies, systems, procedures and governance mechanisms are robust, integrated and periodically reviewed to ensure fitness for purpose.

# COMMITMENT 10

Commitment: **Grow our evaluation maturity** across the whole department, each group building on its current strengths

Limited	Developing	Delivering	Excelling
<p>No group in the department has the evaluation capability or processes that they need.</p> <p>Not many people engage in evaluative thinking, and those who do are seen as 'overthinking it'.</p> <p>There is little interest in developing evaluation maturity, either among individuals or as a group.</p> <p>Those who do have an interest in developing evaluation capability or processes are largely unsupported in this.</p> <p>It is rare to see people reflecting on evaluative practice. This mostly happens only when an evaluation has been particularly hard to undertake.</p>	<p>There are good practice examples of groups that have well-developed evaluation capability and processes. These groups are seen as leaders in the department.</p> <p>Evaluative thinking is valued in some parts of the department more than others.</p> <p>Most groups in the department have at least a few people with an interest in evaluation.</p> <p>Some groups have assessed their evaluation maturity, set goals and made plans for improvement.</p> <p>People sometimes reflect on their evaluative practice. This mostly happens after evaluations have drawn to a close.</p>	<p>Most groups have the evaluation capability and processes they need.</p> <p>Evaluative thinking is highly valued across the department.</p> <p>There is a network of evaluation advocates across the department.</p> <p>Evaluation champions in the executive are leading the push for evaluation maturity.</p> <p>Each group in the department is on its own trajectory of growth in evaluation maturity.</p> <p>There are good resources and support materials available for strengthening evaluation maturity.</p> <p>People regularly reflect on their evaluative practice, during and after evaluation processes.</p>	<p>The department has exemplary evaluation practices and processes.</p> <p>The department is seen as a great place to work among people who are passionate about evaluation.</p> <p>Evaluation advocates across the department are well connected and well supported, both by resources and the evaluation champions in the executive.</p> <p>The department can demonstrate its growth in evaluation maturity over time and articulate the benefits of this for its stakeholders and clients.</p> <p>Others seek to learn from the department about how to strengthen evaluation maturity.</p>

# WORLD CAFÉ DISCUSSION – 10 MIN THEN ROTATE

## **A: Discussing our evaluation maturity model example:**

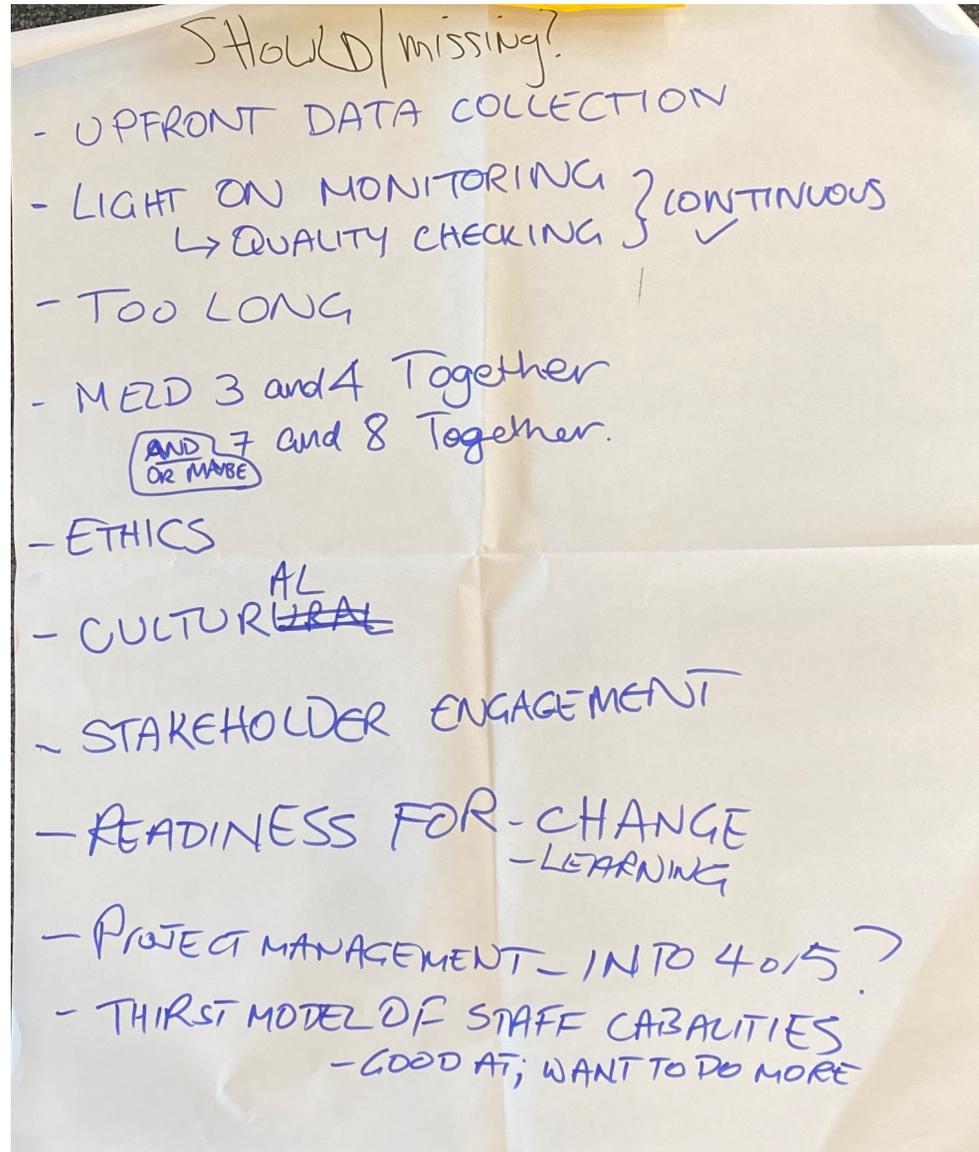
- Group 1 (with Scott): What should be included in a maturity model, what might be missing from the example?
- Group 2 (with Brad): How applicable is the example to different organisations, settings and contexts?

## **B: Discussing how to implement evaluation maturity models:**

- Group 3 (with Jade): What must be in place before an organisation introduces an evaluation maturity model (i.e., pre-conditions to consider)?
- Group 4 (with Duncan): What strategies and tactics might be useful to support implementation of an evaluation maturity model?

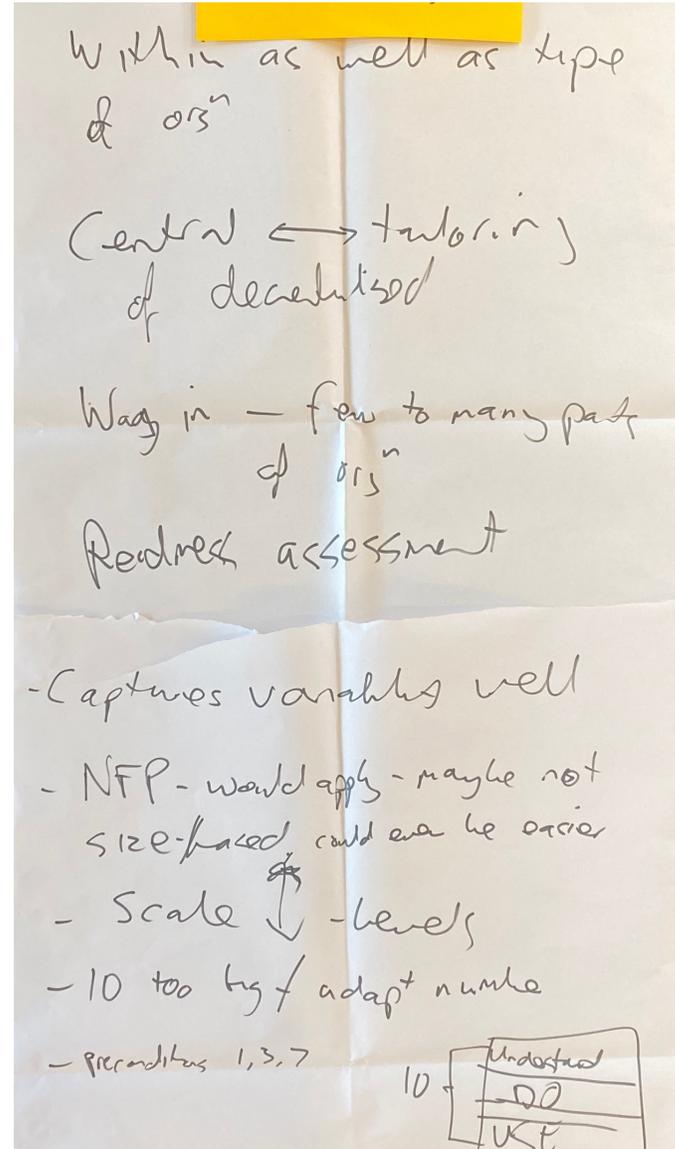
## A: Discussing our evaluation maturity model example:

- Group 1 (with Scott): What should be included in a maturity model, what might be missing from the example?



## A: Discussing our evaluation maturity model example:

- Group 2 (with Brad): How applicable is the example to different organisations, settings and contexts?



## B: Discussing how to implement evaluation maturity models:

- Group 3  
(with Jade):  
What must be in place before an organisation introduces an evaluation maturity model (i.e., pre-conditions to consider)?

- Leader from within + process

- Understand the value proposition

External pressure could help

- processes + systems can build hooks into

- Governance before the process, principles to guide start small

Unpack to meaningfully assess

Optimism

- (s) Budget appropriately - privilege

- Understand why this is important (other success cases)

- Start with readiness assessment  
↳ can be before leadership

Process Limit the scope of change  
Where you are in other change cycles } time of change  
↳ capacity + stability } potential

Mandate  
↳ communication tool

- Understanding something not working { Open to discuss this  
can handle it if say it isn't going well

- Prior experience of smaller scale change (or related eg data maturity)

- Time commitment + resources

## B: Discussing how to implement evaluation maturity models:

- Group 4 (with Duncan): What strategies and tactics might be useful to support implementation of an evaluation maturity model?

x Don't...

- > Add to list of tasks
- > Leave it to individuals
- > Don't try to eat the whole elephant
- > Defensiveness
- > No accountability / accountability without engagement and learning

✓ Do...

- > Baby steps
- > Bring middle management onboard.
  - ↳ Champions; communicate value proposition for every role; allocate time, budget, people power; Bright Spots; strong support
- Build on current support
- > Quick wins + socialise success stories
- > Leadership act as models
- > Where have we been? What do we already have permission to question status quo & process to do so (facilitation)
- > Unfreeze, change, refreeze (strategy!)
- > Having a change framework
- > Realistic timeframe
- > Motivating w Benefits AND Costs of inaction (risk!)
- > Adding accountability for eval to role KPI's (context dependant)
  - > embed into onboarding

John Kotter  
Accelerate org change model

Missing: why are we where we are? barriers / blockers

## DEBRIEF AND NEXT STEPS

- Summary of discussion by facilitators (3 min each)
- Process for sharing findings from the session
- Ideas and opportunities to continue the conversation