



Australian Government
Department of Industry,
Science and Resources



Evaluation Strategy

2024–2028

Department of Industry, Science and Resources | February 2024

Our purpose is to help the government build a better future for all Australians through enabling a productive, resilient and sustainable economy, enriched by science and technology.

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Secretary's message

The Department of Industry, Science and Resources (DISR) plays a vital role in building a better future for all Australians. We do this by enabling a productive, resilient and sustainable economy, enriched by science and technology. To ensure we are doing that effectively, we undertake robust, transparent and consistent monitoring and evaluation of the programs and policies we are responsible for.

Evaluation uses evidence to make an informed judgement about the value or quality of something. In government, evaluation is an important tool to support good governance, accountability and evidence-based decision-making, as well as ongoing improvement and learning.

In an increasingly complex world, it is vital that decisions about the Australian Government's policies and programs are informed by robust evidence. Evaluation helps generate that evidence, maximising the value Australians receive from public funds. Though its form may vary, evaluation activities are not an optional extra, but instead are a core part of our ways of working. We evaluate no matter what we might find, because we know robust evaluation will help us learn and improve.

Our Evaluation Strategy 2024–2028 sets our vision for evaluation in the department. It provides a framework for high-quality, influential evaluation, structured around 3 pillars of success:

- establishing evaluative practices
- evidence and accountability
- increasing capability.

Evaluation is most effective when our whole organisation understands its value and takes responsibility. All areas in the department are responsible for monitoring and evaluating the implementation and impact of policies and programs.

Evaluative practices are a strategic investment. Through this strategy we are continuing to invest in our staff to ensure we can run effective policies and programs. We are striving to lead by example through best-practice evaluation and fostering a culture of organisational learning and continuous improvement informed by evidence.

Meghan Quinn

Secretary

Department of Industry, Science and Resources

Vision

We evaluate the right things, at the right time, in the right way.
We use what we learn to improve what we do to achieve better outcomes for all
Australians.

Purpose

The Evaluation Strategy 2024–2028 sets out the Department of Industry, Science and Resources’ vision for evaluation from 2024 to 2028.

Evaluation helps us meet our purpose: building a better future for all Australians through enabling a productive, resilient and sustainable economy, enriched by science and technology.

Evaluation is a tool of public governance. It improves policy outcomes by letting us learn from experience, test policy options and embed lessons learned. Good evaluation supports evidence-based policy decisions and continuous improvements.

The government has a renewed focus to improve the volume, quality, and impact of evaluations across the Australian Public Service (APS). This includes through establishing the [Australian Centre for Evaluation](#).

The strategy is grounded in the principles of the [Commonwealth Evaluation Policy](#). It provides a framework to encourage and support using evaluative practices in everything we do.

The strategy builds on our previous evaluation strategies and continues our commitment to best-practice evaluation. This strategy also recognises monitoring as an important evaluative activity and part of the evaluation cycle.

Scope

Evaluation is relevant to everything we do as a department. This includes policy development, program design and delivery, and corporate activities.

The strategy and its governance arrangements apply directly to policy and program activities in the department. However, staff can apply evaluative thinking, evaluative practices and the pillars and principles of the strategy to a broader range of activities in the department. For example, property, business services and IT projects.

This supports our broader commitment to continuous improvement and achieving value for money. This strategy’s scope does not limit the role of other assurance functions in appropriately managing and overseeing all types of department activities.

The strategy does not apply to portfolio entities. However, we will work across our portfolio to coordinate and align evaluation approaches and activities.

Pillars for success

The strategy is built on 3 pillars and supporting principles. These will help us achieve our vision for evaluation in the department.

Establishing evaluative practices



We embed systems for continual review and improvement to ensure we learn from experience.

Principle 1.1: We integrate evaluative practices into our end-to-end processes to build a culture of continuous improvement.

Principle 1.2: We learn from experience by deliberately seeking out, acting on and sharing evaluation evidence.

Evidence and accountability



We take responsibility for understanding the impact of our work through best-practice evaluation.

Principle 2.1: Our approach to evaluation aligns with government requirements.

Principle 2.2: We prioritise evaluation effort strategically and efficiently to maximise its utility.

Principle 2.3: We integrate oversight and accountability into our evaluation practices to produce credible and robust evidence.

Increasing capability



We invest in staff capability as the foundation for effective evaluation.

Principle 3.1: We understand our current evaluation maturity and target areas for growth.

Principle 3.2: Evaluation is most effective when the whole organisation understands its value and embraces shared responsibility for integrating evaluative practices.

About evaluation

‘Evaluation is the systematic and objective assessment of the design, implementation or results of a government program or activity for the purposes of continuous improvement, accountability and decision-making. It provides a structured and disciplined analysis of the value of policies, programs and activities at all stages of the policy cycle.’

Commonwealth Evaluation Toolkit (Australian Centre for Evaluation)

Evaluation can take many forms. But ultimately, it means using evidence to make an informed judgement about the value or quality of something.

The Commonwealth Evaluation Policy principles outline that evaluations need to be:

- fit for purpose
- useful
- robust, ethical and culturally appropriate
- credible
- transparent where appropriate.

Monitoring is also an evaluative activity and an important part of the evaluation cycle. Monitoring involves regularly collecting data on the operation of a policy or program to assess how it is achieving its intent or objective.

What good evaluation looks like depends on several factors, including:

- the scale of the policy or program
- its risk
- strategic importance
- the context in which it operates (for example. ethical and cultural sensitivities).

It is also informed by what other assurance activities have been, or will be, undertaken.

The range of evaluation activities

The appropriate evaluation activities depend on the size and impact of the program.

Small, low impact programs

Data is collected under a **monitoring and evaluation framework**, where regular reporting and program health checks inform ongoing program development. The team responsible for delivering the program does this monitoring and evaluation.

Large programs with a broad impact across the economy

A **formal impact evaluation** assesses the program's effectiveness and value for money. It is run independently to the program's administration.

The evaluation may use several tools, including the program's monitoring and evaluation framework and baseline data. These are established as part of evaluation planning at the start of the program and linked to the Policy Impact Analysis undertaken during policy design.

Evaluation may also include stakeholder surveys and a cost-benefit analysis to:

- determine if the program achieved its outcomes
- see if it had any other impacts (economic or otherwise),
- consider how the program could be improved
- provide lessons for future programs.

The strategy sets out how we will approach evaluation and which evaluation activity may be appropriate in different circumstances. More information is at Principle 2.2.

Why evaluation matters

Evaluation is an important part of developing and delivering evidence-based policy and programs. It is a foundational tool to support continuous improvement, good governance, risk management and accountability.

Good evaluation supports the department's core purpose by helping us understand if our actions are having the intended effect. It helps us understand what works and what does not, for whom and why, and how we can improve the way we do things. Evaluation helps us understand and reflect on if the purpose of a government intervention has played out through the lived experience of those involved. It also helps us understand if this experience differed between cohorts.

Along with other assurance activities – such as impact analysis and internal and performance audits – evaluation maximises the value Australians receive from public funds and helps manage risks. It also creates an evidence base to inform future policy, program and operational decisions.

Evaluation is successful if it informs decisions that drive effective actions. The strategy supports high-quality evaluation that is fit for purpose and influential. It also aims to embed a culture of learning from experience throughout the department.

Other assurance activities

Evaluation complements, and can inform, or be informed by, several other assurance activities. These assurance activities are some of the key mechanisms to help ensure that policies:

- are well defined and informed
- are executed successfully
- are delivered within constraints
- achieve their desired effects.

However, there are some key differences in scope, purpose and process.



Policy impact analysis

Policy impact analysis gives decision makers information on the potential economic, social and community impacts of a policy. It must demonstrate the proposal will deliver overall benefit to the community. It helps ensure policy options are well-designed, well-targeted and fit-for purpose.

Impact analysis (IA) can use a range of quantitative and qualitative tools, including cost-benefit analysis, stakeholder engagement and compliance costs calculations. Some large programs may also require a post-implementation review.

IA is required for ‘any policy proposal or action of government, with an expectation of compliance, that would result in a more than minor change in behaviour or impact for people, businesses or community organisations’.¹

The [Office of Impact Analysis](#) manages this process and determines the level of IA required for each proposed policy. More information is available in the [Australian Government Guide to Impact Analysis](#). DISR’s Analysis and Insights Division also supports IA.

IA will inform future evaluations, with a specific requirement to set out how the policy will be monitored and evaluated. An evaluation may assess if the objectives and impacts set out in the IA were realised or if there were other impacts or consequences. The IA will identify the metrics for measuring success and any data gaps (and how they will be closed to support future evaluations).



Whole-of-government impact assessment

Policy impact analysis (described above) is one type of whole of government impact that must be assessed for all new policy proposals (NPPs). In addition to IA, which is focused on economic, social and community impacts, all NPPs must include a whole-of-government impact assessment. This assesses the potential impacts of a proposed policy on other cohorts or areas of focus, including gender equality and First Nations peoples. It also assesses legal, digital and financial impacts.

This assessment looks at what might happen, rather than what has occurred. Further detail is in the [Cabinet Handbook](#).

Whole-of-government impact assessment also informs future evaluation. It helps to:

- determine the timing and scope of an evaluation by identifying risks and sensitivities
- identify particular cohorts to focus on as part of assessing performance.

¹ Office of Impact Analysis, *Australian Government Guide to Policy Impact Analysis* (2023)



Audits

An **internal audit** is an independent review of policies and operation that helps improve governance, risk management and control processes. Internal audits often focus on operations or systems, rather than the policy intent or impact of an initiative. These may be undertaken in response to a performance audit or be requested by senior executives (referred to as ‘management initiated reviews’).

A **performance audit** is undertaken by the Australian National Audit Office. It is an independent assessment of all or part of an entity’s operations and administrative support systems. It identifies where improvements to public administration can be made. An audit may make recommendations on how to improve cost-effectiveness, efficiency, effectiveness and compliance.

Evaluation can complement the audit program, including managing risks that may reduce the need or scope of a future audit. The findings of an audit can inform an evaluation.



Performance measurement and reporting

In our department, performance measurement generally means the entity-level measurement and reporting obligations under the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013* and Commonwealth Performance Framework.

Our portfolio budget statements and corporate plan set out our performance measures each year. DISR reports on these through the annual performance statements in our annual report.

Data collected by monitoring the progress of an initiative can inform performance measurement and reporting.



Initiative Support Model and Program Advisory Service

The Initiative Support Model (ISM) was introduced in DISR in 2023 to ensure robust program management and improve risk management. The ISM involves risk tiering the department’s projects, programs and initiatives.

The Program Advisory Service sets expectations for appropriate governance and assurance based on levels of risk and complexity. It then ensures that the right kind of support is provided for successful delivery.

The Program Advisory Service will prompt initiative owners to consider monitoring and evaluation and seek advice from the Evaluation Unit where appropriate.



Gateway reviews

[Gateway reviews](#) are managed by the Department of Finance and strengthen governance and assurance practices. They are used in high-risk proposals to provide independent assurance and advice to improve program delivery and implementation. As part of developing an NPP, the Department of Finance will determine whether a proposal will be subject to a gateway review.

A gateway review may provide input into an evaluation and may be a factor in determining the scope and timing of an evaluation.



External reviews

Occasionally the government may commission a review of a policy or program. This may consider its effectiveness, whether it remains fit for purpose and whether changes may be required. The department may also seek funding through the original NPP process to conduct an external review at certain points of program delivery. Parliament may also commission this type of review.

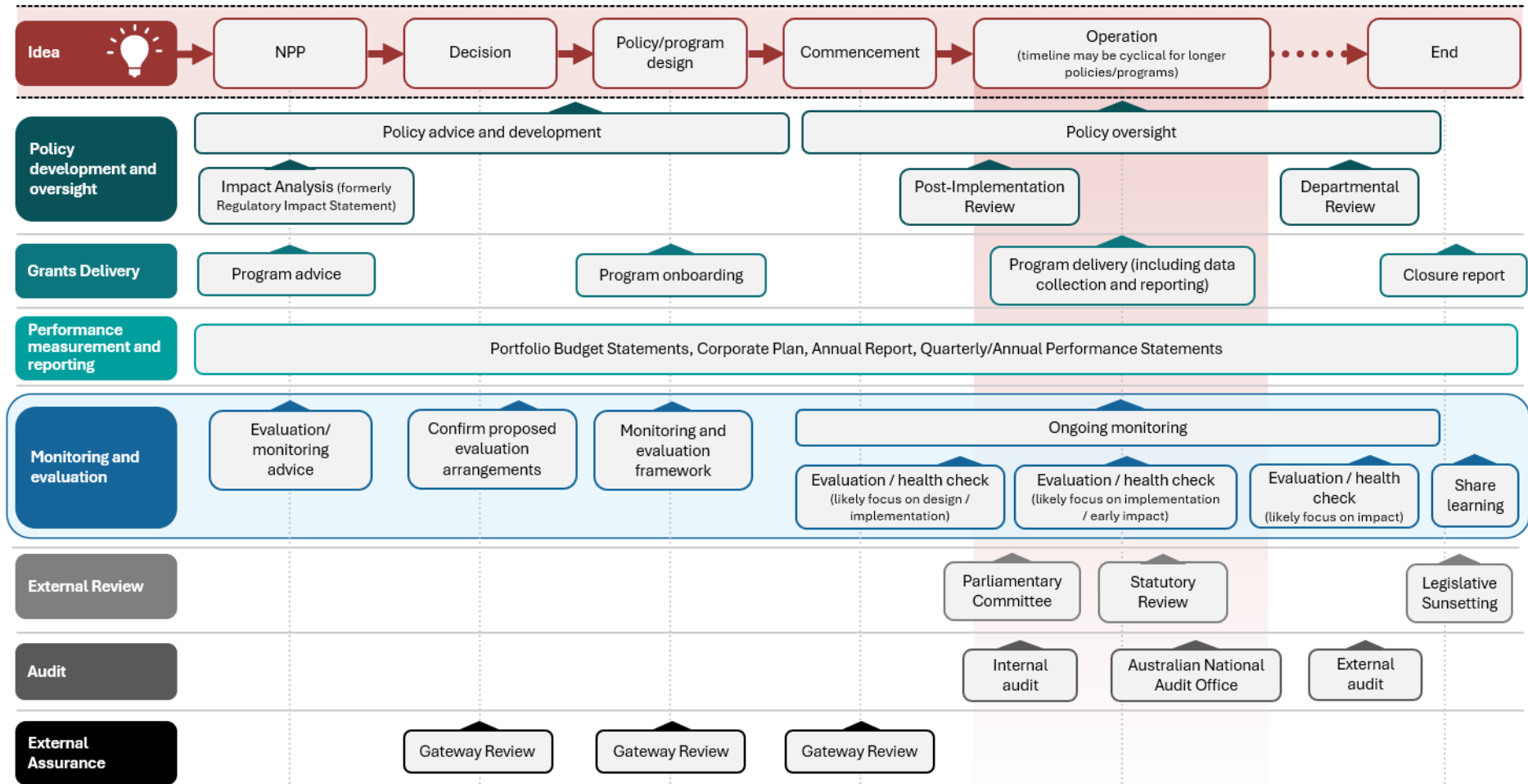
Reviews may be undertaken by the department, the Productivity Commission, an individual or a panel of experts.

The scope and tools used by the review vary, but normally draw on monitoring and reporting. They may include cost-benefit analysis and economic modelling.

A review complements evaluation. The form, scope and timing of an evaluation will also be informed by a review that has been undertaken.

² Figure 1 shows how evaluation fits with other assurance activities in the department. Principles 2.2 and 2.3 provide more detail on how the interaction between evaluation and assurance activities applies to individual policies and programs.

Figure 1: How evaluation fits in with policy development, program delivery and other assurance activities in the department²



*Note: this diagram groups activities into broad areas for illustrative purposes. It is not intended to indicate the team responsible for activities, as this will vary.

Pillar 1: Establishing evaluative practices



We embed systems for continual review and improvement to ensure we learn from experience.

1.1. Considering evaluation at all stages

Principle 1.1: We integrate evaluative practices into our end-to-end processes to build a culture of continuous improvement.

Embedding evaluation and evaluative thinking³ into our processes and systems is key to building a culture of learning and improvement. Evaluation is not a standalone or one-off process. It is an important element throughout the lifecycle of policies, programs and other activities.

This section outlines how considering evaluation at different stages of the policy cycle adds value in different ways (see Figure 2).

The following stages are numbered for clarity. However, these stages are part of a continuous, ongoing cycle that will repeat regularly. Sometimes the cycle may happen at a small scale, such as introducing a slight change to existing processes, monitoring performance and checking things are working as expected. At other times it will be a larger cycle, like when we develop, implement and formally evaluate a new policy.

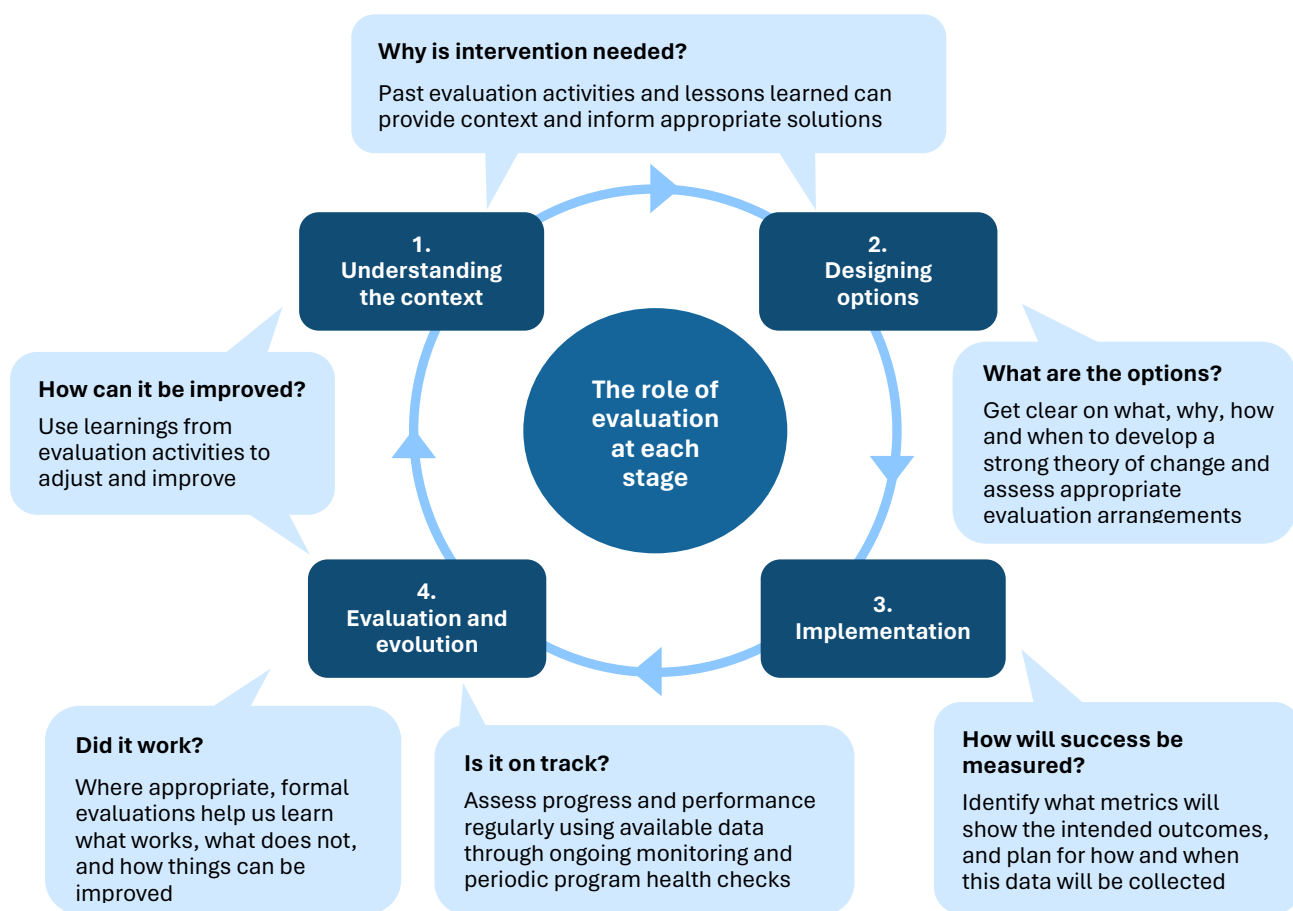
Stage 1: Understanding the context

When considering a change or intervention, it is important to understand the problem being addressed and its broader context. Then you can consider what, if any, intervention is needed.

Evaluation can provide a valuable source of insight and evidence at this stage. The lessons learned from past evaluation activities provide important insights about what works and what does not in different contexts. This evidence can be used to inform policy impact analysis. It also provides information for decision makers to support the need for an intervention and inform the appropriate solution.

³ Evaluative thinking is the continuous practice of taking an inquisitive, critical, unbiased and reflective approach to evidence and decision-making.

Figure 2: Evaluative practice throughout the policy lifecycle



Stage 2: Designing options

Past evaluations and lessons learned can provide key insights when designing options for new policies and programs. They give policy makers evidence of what has and has not worked, and what the department has learned from past experience.

As part of the design stage, evaluative thinking supports the development of robust policy frameworks and impact analysis. It does this by considering how a policy or program is expected to lead to change (known as the 'theory of change').

A theory of change is a description of how and why a desired change is expected to happen in a particular context. For programs and policies, the theory of change helps explain how and why a government activity is expected to address an identified need.

Articulating the theory of change can help clarify what effects the proposed policy or program is intended to have, how they are expected to happen and when.

This includes:

- what is being invested (inputs)
- who we need to involve (participants)
- what activities are planned (outputs)
- how these activities are expected to lead to change over time (outcomes).

Determining how to measure the success of these outcomes can also help clarify design options.

Like an initiative, appropriate evaluation activities take different forms and scale. So it is important to consider the most appropriate approach and whether resources should be dedicated to formal evaluation over the life of the initiative. Pillar 2 below provides more guidance on determining the type and scope of evaluation.

Undertaking this forward thinking and setting up the right evaluation approach at this stage will strengthen the following stages.

Stage 3: Implementation

After considering evaluation approach when designing options, developing a **monitoring and evaluation framework** is a key part of implementation. The framework will ensure everything is in place to support successful monitoring and evaluation.

The framework includes:

- **program logic** illustrating the policy or programs' theory of change and intended outcomes
- **a data collection plan** identifying how we will measure progress against expected outcomes, including what data we will collect and when
- **plan for future evaluation** outlining future evaluation activities, including timing of formal evaluations (where appropriate) or program health checks.

A monitoring and evaluation framework may also include tailored questions for collecting responses from grantees, users or participants to show progress towards program outcomes.

The appropriate level of detail for each component of the framework will vary depending on the policy or program and its context. All policies and programs must be monitored, regardless of whether a formal evaluation is planned.

Stage 4: Evaluation and evolution

Once the policy or program has been implemented, its performance is monitored over its lifecycle by collecting data in line with the monitoring and evaluation framework.

The framework is intended to be a living document and kept up to date with any changes to the program or planned activities.

Where the plan for future evaluation includes a formal evaluation, this will be subject to evaluation-specific governance arrangements, including inclusion in the forward work plan and annual schedule of evaluations. Once the evaluation is completed, the Evaluation Unit will include the report in the internal library of completed evaluation reports. It will also monitor the implementation of recommendations through regular reporting to the Performance and Risk Committee (refer Section 2.3 Evaluation governance).

Where the plan for future evaluation is limited to monitoring with no formal evaluation, the policy area should schedule and conduct periodic program health checks. These health checks involve reviewing the data collected through monitoring to assess the program's performance. They are not subject to evaluation-specific governance arrangements but should be appropriately managed by the policy area within existing reporting lines. This includes reporting to the Performance and Risk Committee where appropriate.

The information gathered through evaluative practices:

- let us know if it is on track
- helps improve the policy or program
- maximises the value Australians receive from the investment of public funds
- creates an evidence base to inform the government's future policy and program decisions.

1.2. Learning from experience

Principle 1.2: We learn from experience by deliberately seeking out, acting on and sharing evaluation evidence.

Completing an evaluation or program health check is an important step, but not the last step. It is important to translate the lessons learned from evaluation into action. This may include:

- shaping the design of new activities
- informing decisions about whether to continue existing activities
- making incremental changes in response to lessons learned
- sharing insights and learnings.

While evaluation activities may focus on a specific initiative, the insights gained have broader relevance. To maximise the value of evaluation activities, lessons learned need to be discussed openly and shared widely when appropriate.

A library of completed reports from formal evaluations is maintained by the Evaluation Unit and is available to all staff in the department. Under this strategy, a register of evaluation recommendations and lessons learned will also be developed for internal use. Governance arrangements to support this strategy will include greater reporting and tracking of outcomes from evaluations (see Principle 2.3 for more information).

Pillar 2: Evidence and accountability



We take responsibility for understanding the impact of our work through best-practice evaluation.

2.1 Government requirements

Principle 2.1: Our approach to evaluation aligns with government requirements.

Evaluating government activities ensures the effective and efficient use of government funding. There are several legislative and government requirements that apply to evaluation in the Australian Government.

The requirement to evaluate arises from our obligations under the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013* (PGPA Act) to measure, assess and report on performance.

The [Commonwealth Evaluation Policy](#), which sits under the PGPA Act, provides further guidance on evaluation activity. It sets out the principles guiding evaluation activity, including that evaluations need to be:

- fit for purpose
- useful
- robust, ethical and culturally appropriate
- credible
- transparent where appropriate.

To ensure evaluation is integrated into policy development, the Budget Process Operational Rules (BPORS) include evaluation requirements and requirements for policy impact analysis. The BPORS require all NPPs to show that an evaluation plan will be established in the early stages of implementation in line with the Commonwealth Evaluation Policy. In the department, this plan is referred to as a monitoring and evaluation framework.

Taken together, the impact analysis and evaluation requirements mean that, through the Budget process, the department is expected to:

- use evidence and the findings of previous evaluations to identify the policy problem and why the government needs to take action
- set out options to address the problem and their costs and benefits
- clearly explain objectives, expected outcomes and impact of the preferred policy option over the short, medium and long term
- establish baseline data and robust performance monitoring early so changes can be measured and assessed over time
- ensure credible data and evidence is collected throughout implementation to support future evaluations, reviews and performance assessments.

The government establishing the [Australian Centre for Evaluation](#) has put a renewed focus on evaluation in the APS. The centre aims to improve the volume, quality and impact of evaluations across the APS and improve evaluation capability across Australian Government entities.

2.2 Type and scale of evaluations

Principle 2.2: We prioritise evaluation effort strategically and efficiently to maximise its utility.

Evaluation can take many forms and is not a one-size-fits-all approach.

‘It is not feasible, cost-effective or appropriate to fully evaluate all government activities and programs. The cost of evaluation must be balanced against the risk of not evaluating, noting that sometimes performance monitoring by itself will be sufficient to meet the performance reporting requirements under the Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013.’

Commonwealth Evaluation Toolkit (Australian Centre for Evaluation)

We prioritise evaluation effort and resources with a decision-making framework (see Figure 3). This enables us to do a strategic, risk-based assessment of appropriate evaluation activities.

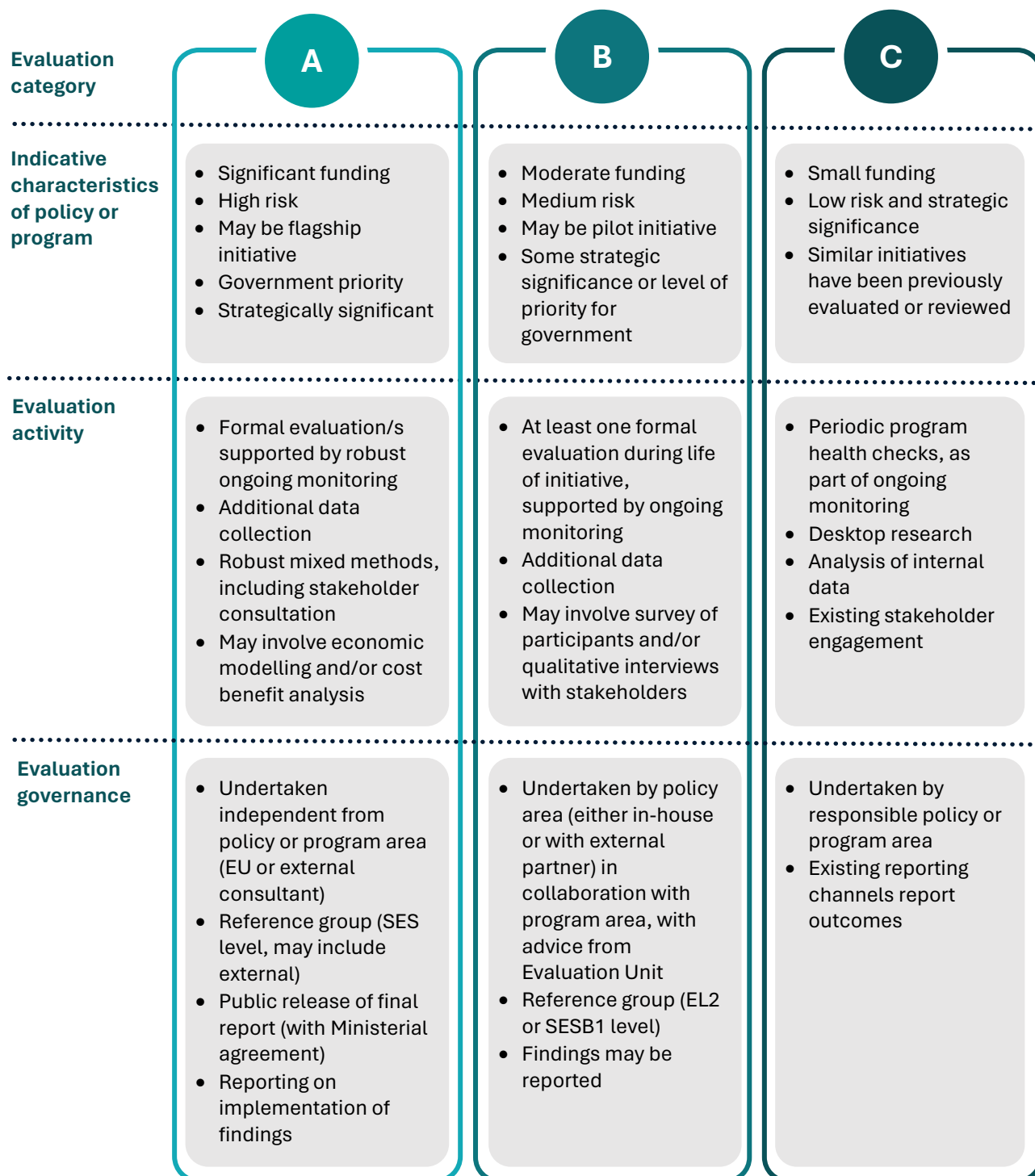
To determine what evaluation activity may be required, including its scope and timing, we need to consider:

- the characteristics of the policy or program
- other assurance activities that have been, or will be undertaken
- the context in which the evaluation will be undertaken, including related policy developments.

The Evaluation Unit will work with responsible areas to assess the evaluation category for each initiative and the evaluation activity required. This is done as the NPP or program proposal is being considered and will allow appropriate resourcing to be provided.

When this has been determined, the Evaluation Unit will track the activity and provide regular reporting. This ensures strategic oversight of evaluation activities across the department. Evaluation activities will be included in the responsible area’s business planning.

Figure 3: Framework for determining appropriate evaluation activity for policies and programs



Purpose-driven evaluation

To maximise usefulness, all formal evaluations in the department need a clear purpose. Evaluations are shaped by:

- the purpose and context of the initiative (including where it is in its lifecycle)
- the information needs of stakeholders
- ethical and cultural considerations.

Broad focus areas may include:

- Design – Did we do the right thing?
- Implementation – Did we do things in the right way?
- Impact – Did it work?

These focus areas inform the types of questions to ask in an evaluation and the most appropriate methodologies. Evaluations that focus on an initiative's impact must be timed so the expected outcomes have had time to occur.

The Evaluation Unit will provide internal resources and guidance for staff on planning, scoping and conducting formal evaluations. This includes determining evaluation questions, appropriate methodologies and other considerations such as ethics and privacy. The resources will also include guidance on program health checks.

Using external expertise

The department may not always have the expertise or capacity for evaluation activities.

When needed, we may engage external partners or providers (such as academics or research providers) to conduct or help with evaluation. These partnerships are a chance to draw on expertise and build our internal evaluation capability.

2.3 Evaluation governance

Principle 2.3: We integrate oversight and accountability into our evaluation practices to produce credible and robust evidence.

We all have a role to play in ensuring evaluation is part of our policy and program processes as we seek continuous improvement. Figure 4 below provides an overview of the evaluation roles and responsibilities in the department.

Department-level oversight

Appropriate governance helps ensure accountable and credible evaluations.

The Performance and Risk Committee (PaRC) is responsible for strategic oversight of evaluation. It also provides advice to the Executive Board on the current status and approach to evaluation in the department, including interactions with other assurance activities. Through these governance arrangements, PaRC is responsible for ensuring the department is undertaking monitoring and evaluation in line with this strategy and Australian Government requirements. The Evaluation Unit supports this oversight function.

PaRC endorses the annual schedule of evaluations. This includes:

- considering any requests to reschedule or cancel planned evaluations
- prioritising where in-house evaluation and external expertise is used across the schedule.

PaRC only considers requests to cancel planned evaluations in very limited circumstances. Once PaRC has endorsed the schedule, it will be presented to the Executive Board for approval.

The Evaluation Unit in the Analysis and Insights Division provides strategic management of evaluation activities in the department. This includes:

- monitoring and reporting on evaluation activities across the department, including implementation of evaluation recommendations
- managing the annual schedule of evaluations and forward program

- determining the appropriate evaluation activity and governance arrangements for individual policies and programs
- providing guidance and advice on evaluation design, frameworks, plans and methodologies
- undertaking some high-priority evaluations, as agreed with PaRC
- maintaining the register of evaluation recommendations and lessons learned and the library of completed evaluation reports
- liaising with the Australian Centre of Evaluation and DISR portfolio entities.

Activity-level oversight

As well as considering the form of evaluations, we must also consider the appropriate level of oversight for specific evaluation activities. This needs to account for context and manage issues such as the risk of bias and ethical or cultural considerations.

For formal evaluations, the Evaluation Unit will work with the responsible team to create a reference group of appropriate decision-makers. The reference group will oversee the evaluation from beginning to end. The level of the reference group is informed by the evaluation category of the policy or program being evaluated (see Figure 3).

For less formal evaluation activities, such as ongoing monitoring or program health checks, oversight through existing reporting channels may be sufficient, combined with the departmental oversight set out above.

Figure 4: Overview of evaluation roles and responsibilities throughout the policy lifecycle

Activity	Evaluation Unit	Responsible policy or program area	Other key stakeholders
Governance and strategic oversight			
Plan for formal evaluations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coordinate annual schedule of evaluations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure evaluation is included in divisional business planning and appropriately resourced 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Performance and Risk Committee: Endorse annual schedule of evaluations Executive Board: Approve the annual schedule
Maintain consistent approach to evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Liaise with other enabling areas and portfolio entities Engage with ACE and ensure adherence to Commonwealth requirements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct monitoring and evaluation in line with this Strategy and supporting guidance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Performance and Risk Committee: Provide strategic oversight and connect with other enabling areas Australian Centre for Evaluation: Oversee Commonwealth evaluation approach
Stage 1: Understanding the context			
Consider evidence from evaluation activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide guidance and support, including access to lessons learned and reports from previous evaluations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seek out and consider past evaluations and lessons learned in developing evidence-based policy proposals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Australian Centre for Evaluation: Facilitate evaluation knowledge sharing across APS
Stage 2: Designing options			
Determine appropriate evaluation approach for proposal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide advice on appropriate evaluation approach and costings where appropriate Assess evaluation category of proposed policy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Determine high-level outcomes and metrics for success Allocate resourcing for evaluation where appropriate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategic Policy Division: Coordinate budget process Office of Impact Analysis: Conduct threshold assessment for NPPs and provide advice on impact analysis requirements
Stage 3: Implementation			
Establish monitoring and evaluation framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide guidance on developing the framework 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop the framework and gain SES sign off 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data & Evaluation Branch: May facilitate access to appropriate data sources for monitoring performance
Stage 4: Evaluation and evolution			
Monitor performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide advice as required 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collect data and track progress in line with the framework Update the framework as needed to reflect any changes Report on performance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategic Policy Division: Facilitate entity-level performance measurement and reporting
Conduct program health check (Category C)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide advice and tools to support health check 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertake periodic health checks as scheduled in the framework, primarily using existing program data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Other stakeholders vary depending on context

Activity	Evaluation Unit	Responsible policy or program area	Other key stakeholders
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manage oversight and reporting through BAU governance mechanisms • Make improvements to program where appropriate 	
Conduct formal evaluation (Category A or B)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support policy area to scope, plan and conduct / commission evaluation in line with the Commonwealth Evaluation Policy and this strategy • Provide tools and templates to support evaluation • Take part in evaluation reference group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish reference group to oversee evaluation • Scope, plan and conduct / commission formal evaluation, including information gathering, analysis and recommendations • Ensure methodology is appropriate, robust and ethical 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Australian Centre for Evaluation: May undertake a formal impact evaluation of priority program in partnership with DISR • Analysis & Insights Division: May provide support where technical skills required for data and/or economic analysis
Post-evaluation activities			
Share learnings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add final report to library of completed evaluation reports • Share lessons learned internally and promote use 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek Ministerial approval to publish final evaluation report/insights 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance and Risk Committee: Note lessons learned from completed evaluations
Implement recommendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor and report on implementation of recommendations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respond to evaluation recommendations • Implement program-specific recommendations as appropriate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance and Risk Committee: Oversee implementation of recommendations
Capability building			
Build staff evaluation capability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide training, tools and guidance to build staff skills • Lead DISR Evaluation Community of Practice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure staff have appropriate time, skills and knowledge to meet monitoring and evaluation requirements, including through performance discussions and skills planning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Australian Centre for Evaluation: Lead APS-wide Evaluation Community of Practice and maintain Commonwealth Evaluation Toolkit

Pillar 3: Increasing capability



We invest in staff capability as the foundation for effective evaluation.

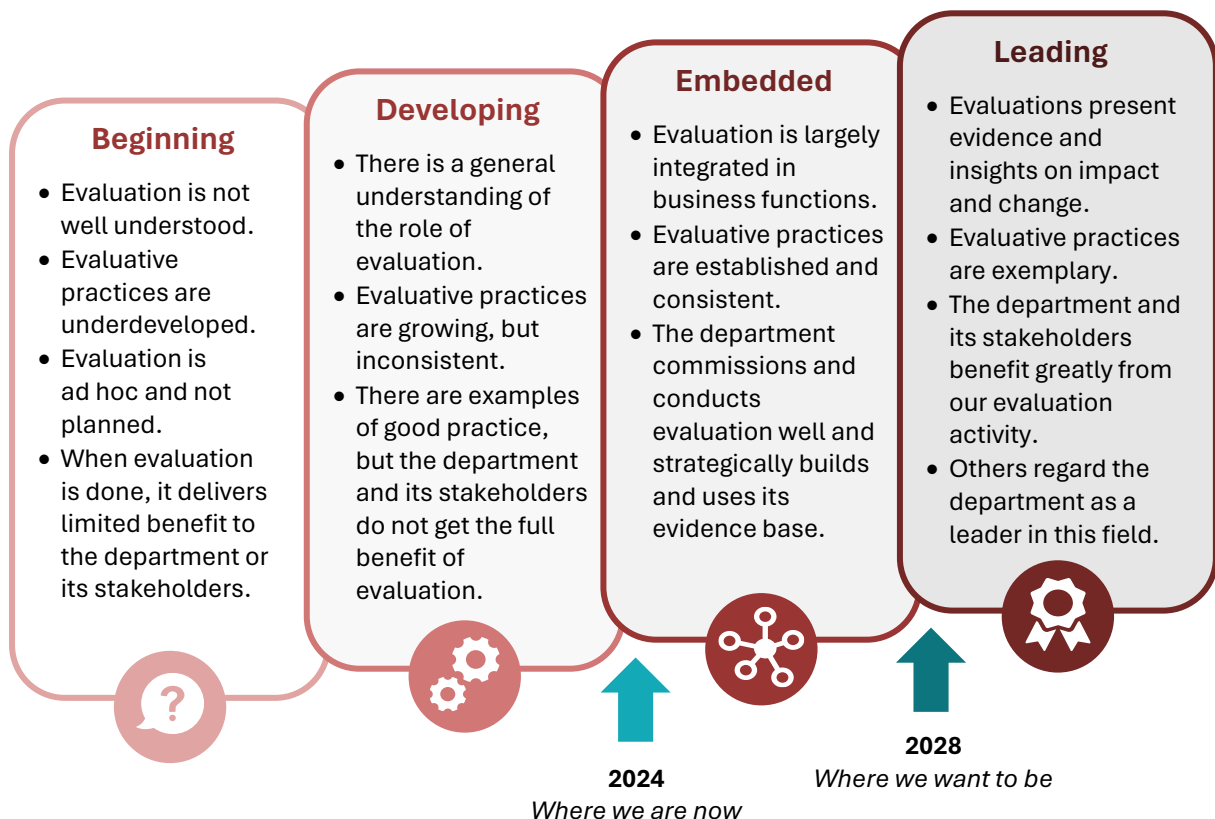
3.1. Evaluation maturity

Principle 3.1: We understand our current evaluation maturity and target areas for growth.

This strategy is supported by a maturity matrix outlining the characteristics of an evaluation practice at 4 levels of maturity: beginning, developing, embedded and leading. The below graphic illustrates these levels of maturity at a high level. The detailed maturity matrix (Appendix A) supports a consistent understanding of departmental evaluation maturity.

At the start of this strategy, the department's overall evaluation maturity is at the 'developing' stage, with aspects of 'embedded' practice. We identified this level based on department-wide evaluation processes and a survey of departmental monitoring and evaluation capability.

Figure 5: Levels of evaluation maturity⁴



⁴ Adapted from Australian Evaluation Society seminar, *Developing and implementing an effective evaluation maturity model* (May 2023)

Our strengths

- Our staff understand the value of evaluation. They understand its role in delivering efficient and effective initiatives that build a better future for all Australians in line with our departmental purpose.
- Some monitoring and evaluation processes are embedded in stages of the policy and program lifecycle.

Our challenges

- APS requirements change over time. The department will remain flexible in our approach to respond to shifts in the broader evaluation landscape.
- Evaluation can be resource-intensive. The department will plan fit-for-purpose evaluation activities and manage our resources strategically.
- Change is constant, and building evaluation capability is an ongoing exercise.

Increasing our maturity and capability

Developing and maintaining evaluation maturity is an ongoing process that is balanced with other organisational objectives. It requires continued investment.

Given our finite resources and current maturity, we need to lift our efforts to develop staff capability. We must move towards a widespread understanding and appreciation of the role and value of evaluation throughout the department.

We will assess our maturity across the 3 pillars every year. This will provide insights about our strengths and challenges and ensure our efforts adapt to the changing needs of staff and the department.

By 2028 we want to be at a 'leading' level of maturity. This is an ambitious target. Reaching an exemplary level of evaluative practice and fully embedding evaluative thinking into everything we do is a cultural shift. It will take time and ongoing commitment from staff and leadership.

'Leading' is not just about having a consistent framework for evaluation – it is about how:

- evaluation is used and resourced in practice
- its value is perceived
- it is communicated both inside and outside the department
- the evidence from evaluation is strategically and systematically applied to inform organisational learning.

3.2. Supporting the department to build the right skills

Principle 3.2: Evaluation is most effective when the whole organisation understands its value and embraces shared responsibility for integrating evaluative practices.

Increasing the department's evaluation capacity and capability requires all areas of the department to implement and support evaluative practices. To support this strategy, the whole department will need to:

- commit to undertaking evaluations scheduled for the initiative
- ensure decisions on evaluation activities are made in line with the strategy and the Commonwealth Evaluation Policy
- apply evaluative practices throughout the life of an initiative

- share and implements lessons learned from evaluation.

To do this, our people need the right skills and support.

The Evaluation Unit provides ongoing support and advice on evaluating policies and programs. To further build the department's skills, the Evaluation Unit will deliver several capability-building activities, including:

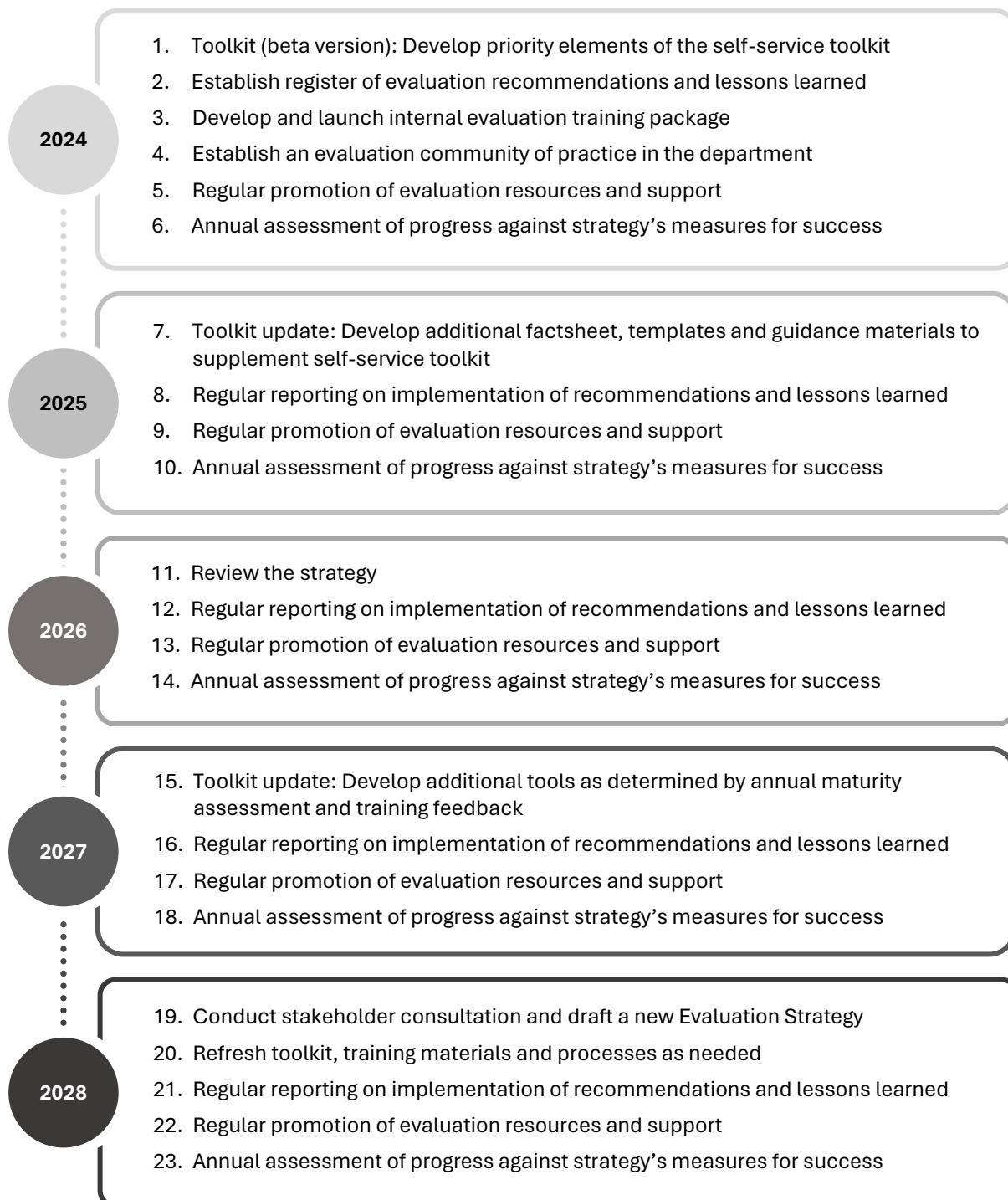
- raising awareness of the available guidance and support
- developing an online self-service toolkit for staff to access guidance and templates
- developing internal training sessions and workshops and identifying relevant external training
- setting up a community of practice to share knowledge and encourage collaboration.

There may be opportunities to use emerging technologies (such as AI) as tools in conducting evaluations, for example through streamlining evidence synthesis. The Evaluation Unit will continue to monitor and engage with potential opportunities to use improved technologies over the coming years. It will do this in line with relevant government guidelines and consider potential ethical implications.

Implementation



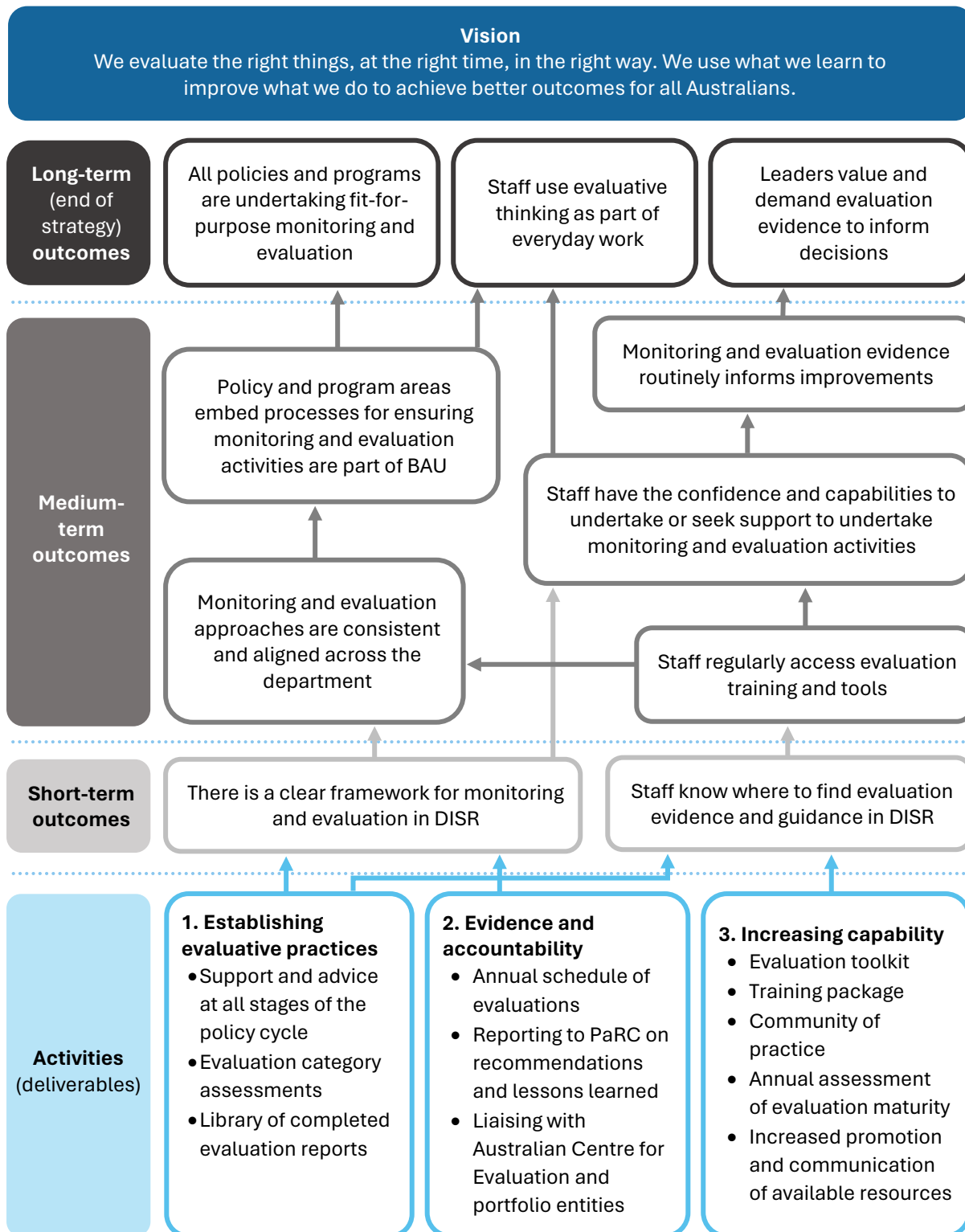
Figure 6: Planned timing of key deliverables



Our theory of change

This strategy is grounded in an overarching theory of change. It explains how implementing the strategy and its deliverables is expected to lead to change in the department over time. This theory of change is illustrated by the following program logic.

Figure 7: Evaluation Strategy program logic




Measures for success

We will assess our progress against this strategy’s pillars and principles for success through:

- annual assessments of evaluation maturity
- in-depth consultation
- monitoring the take up and use of the support services and capability-building activities.

The Evaluation Unit will provide these findings to PaRC annually. This will inform how we adapt the way we provide support if required. The strategy will be reviewed in 2026, informed by this monitoring framework and consultation with staff.

Figure 8: Metrics for measuring success


Pillar 1: Establishing evaluative practices

Principle	Metrics	Targets
1.1 – We integrate evaluative practices into our end-to-end processes to build a culture of continuous improvement	Proportion of approved budget measures with monitoring and evaluation frameworks in place	By 2025–26, 100% of approved evaluation Category A and B budget measures have monitoring and evaluation frameworks in place
	Proportion of evaluations that report significant data limitations impacting reliability of evidence	By 2027–28, 70% of evaluations report no significant data limitations that impact the reliability of evidence
1.2 – We learn from experience by deliberately seeking out, acting on and sharing evaluation evidence	Proportion of completed evaluation reports available to internal staff	All completed evaluation reports are available to appropriate internal staff within one month of final report delivery
	Register of recommendations and lessons learned is established and up to date	Register of recommendations and lessons learned is updated within one month of evaluation final report delivery

Pillar 2: Evidence and Accountability



Principle	Metrics	Targets
2.2 – We prioritise evaluation effort strategically and efficiently to maximise its utility	Proportion of DISR-led NPPs that receive advice from the Evaluation Unit regarding appropriate evaluation activity	100% of DISR-led NPPs receive advice from the Evaluation Unit regarding appropriate evaluation activity
	Proportion of evaluations that are conducted at an appropriate stage in the program lifecycle	At least 90% of evaluations are conducted at an appropriate stage in the program lifecycle
	Proportion of DISR evaluations conducted primarily in-house	By 2027–28, at least 75% of formal evaluations are conducted primarily in-house
	Proportion of accepted evaluation recommendations actioned within an appropriate timeframe	By 2027–28, 95% of accepted evaluation recommendations actioned within an appropriate timeframe
2.3 – We integrate oversight and accountability into our evaluation practices to produce credible and robust evidence	Proportion of evaluations deemed to have appropriate governance arrangements	100% of evaluations have appropriate governance arrangements

Pillar 3: Capability Uplift



Principle	Metrics	Targets
3.1 – We understand our current maturity and target areas for growth	Increase in departmental evaluation maturity	Evaluation maturity is measured annually and is at the ‘leading’ stage by 2027–28
3.2 – Evaluation is most effective when the whole organisation understands its value and embraces shared responsibility for integrating evaluative practices	Proportion of staff who consider the evaluation toolkit to be helpful	10% annual increase in proportion of staff who report toolkit is helpful in the annual survey
	Number of participants accessing internal training package	10% annual increase in training package participants
	Number of community of practice members	At least 25 community of practice members who regularly attend meetings by 2027–28

Appendix A: Evaluation maturity matrix

Background

A maturity matrix is a self-assessment tool that helps an organisation grade itself against a particular capability. The matrix does this by dividing the capability into focus areas, set against varying levels of maturity. Presented as a table, a maturity matrix shows an organisation the stages it needs to advance through to achieve greater maturity over time.

Developing and maintaining evaluation maturity is an ongoing process that must be balanced with other organisational objectives. While there is no policy requirement to reach a certain level of maturity by a specified time, the government has emphasised the importance of growing evaluation capability across the Australian Public Service.

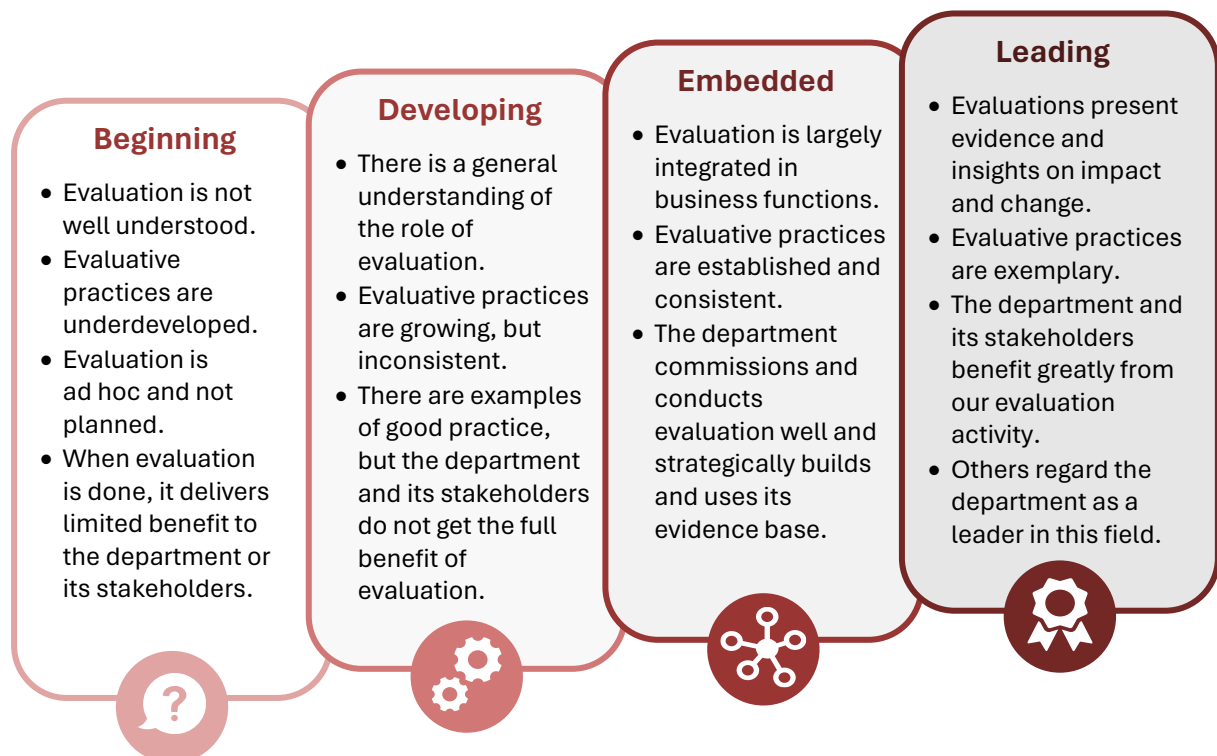
Use of the maturity matrix

The DISR evaluation maturity matrix can be used to:

- determine both the current and target levels of evaluation maturity, against 6 areas of focus
- provide a common understanding of evaluation culture, capacity, and practice
- develop strategies to address capability gaps, improve systems and better target critical resources to ensure a strong evaluation culture, in line with the [Commonwealth Evaluation Policy](#).

Levels of maturity

This maturity matrix sets out 4 levels of evaluation maturity. These are described at a high level in the graphic below:⁵



⁵ Adapted from Australian Evaluation Society seminar, *Developing and implementing an effective evaluation maturity model* (May 2023)

Pillar 1: Establishing evaluative practices



Focus area	Beginning	Developing	Embedded	Leading
Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low awareness of benefits. • Seen as a compliance activity. • Fear of negative findings and recommendations may lead to a perception of ‘mandatory optimism’ regarding program performance. • Decision makers do not consider evaluation a priority and rarely use evaluations as evidence for decision-making. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some appreciation of the benefits • Increasingly viewed as a useful tool for the department, not simply a compliance activity. • Decision makers start to seek evaluation evidence to support decisions but it is not easy to find. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seen as an important component of sound policy and program design and delivery. • Decision makers use evaluation evidence in decision-making. They openly communicate evaluation findings and lessons learned. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Considered integral to all aspects of the department’s work and the benefits are widely recognised. • Decision makers share a clear vision for evaluation in the department. • Evidence and opportunities for improvement are constantly sought. • Strategic decisions are routinely informed by evaluation evidence and insights.
Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluation planning is basic and of variable quality. • Frequency and quality of evaluation is lacking. • Insufficient resources are often allocated. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning for evaluation and performance monitoring is integrated at the program design stage. • Guidelines for prioritising and scaling evaluation activity are used. • Adequate resources are allocated to evaluation activities for strategically significant and highest risk programs only. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluation activities are planned and conducted as a fundamental part of policy and program design and delivery. • Priority programs are formally evaluated. • Evaluations use fit for purpose methodologies. • Adequate resources and time are allocated for evaluation across the department. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluations motivate improvements in program design and policy implementation. • Evaluation data is systematically used to make policy decisions. • Resource requirements for evaluations are thoroughly planned. • Allocated resourcing consistently enables high quality and fit for purpose evaluation.

Pillar 2:
Evidence and accountability



Focus area	Beginning	Developing	Embedded	Leading
Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of evaluation policies, procedures or governance mechanisms. • Monitoring and evaluation activities are inconsistent and often not proportionate to the scale and risk of an initiative. • Accountability for evaluation activities is not clear. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some policies, procedures and governance mechanisms exist, but are not consistently understood. • Activities are usually proportionate to the scale and risk of an initiative. • Some understanding of responsibility for evaluation throughout the policy or program lifecycle. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitoring and evaluation is regularly undertaken in line with departmental evaluation standards. • Strategic oversight is exercised at a departmental level. • Evaluation is understood as a shared responsibility and roles are clear throughout the policy and program lifecycle. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitoring and evaluation processes are formalised and performed regularly as part of expected workload. • Accountability is clear and exercised throughout the organisation. • Monitoring and evaluation roles and responsibilities are clearly documented and valued at all levels.
Knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluation findings and recommendations are held by policy areas and not widely available. • No process for sharing knowledge from evaluation to support broader learning. • No follow up on the implementation of recommendations. • Ineffective use of existing data for evaluation purposes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Findings and recommendations held centrally • Ad hoc processes to support learning and sharing knowledge. • Some data systems provide useful performance information for evaluation purposes. • Opportunities are identified to strengthen the collection and use of administrative data for evaluation purposes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Findings and recommendations are easily accessible for staff. • Established processes to support learning and share knowledge from evaluations. • Evaluation insights are shared externally where appropriate. • Staff are consistently able to collect and analyse data to assess performance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluation knowledge is strategically managed across the department. • Internal processes to support learning and sharing are regularly reviewed and updated. • Regular meta-analysis of findings and recommendations. • Findings have influence outside the department. • The department is recognised for effectively using a wide variety of data for evaluation purposes.

Pillar 3:
Increasing capability



Focus area	Beginning	Developing	Embedded	Leading
Capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluation skills and understanding is limited, despite pockets of expertise. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Most staff have foundational understanding of evaluation concepts and basic skills to assess progress against program outcomes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> General evaluation skills widespread. Robust research and analytical methods are commonly used to assess outcomes. Improved skills and knowledge in developing quality measures of success. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The department consistently applies robust research and analytical methods to assess impact and outcomes. There are experienced and capable staff able to undertake evaluative work throughout the department.
Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited opportunities for staff to develop their evaluation skills and understanding. Internal support and guidance is not available. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some time is available for building evaluation skills, at the expense of other priority work. Internal guidance material is developed but not widely accessed. Some internal support for evaluation activities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff have sufficient time to build evaluation skills and understanding on an ad hoc basis. Evaluation guidance materials are a valuable resource for staff. Dedicated support for evaluation activities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All staff have regular, planned opportunities for evaluative capability building. Demonstrated commitment to continuous learning and improvement throughout the department. Comprehensive support and guidance available.

Source: Adapted from the Department of Industry, Science, Energy and Resources (2017), *Evaluation Strategy 2017–2021*, pp. 38–39
 Informed by Australian Evaluation Society seminar, *Developing and implementing an effective evaluation maturity model (May 2023)*