



**ACT**  
Government

Justice and Community Safety

# BUILDING AN EVALUATION-READY ORGANISATION

## ACT CORRECTIVE SERVICES PROGRAM EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

ACT CORRECTIVE SERVICES

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## 1. PURPOSE

This Framework contributes to developing the evaluation capacity and evaluation-readiness of ACT Corrective Services by ensuring: the ACTCS Executive, functional heads, managers and staff are aware of their roles and responsibilities in ensuring ACTCS is evaluation-ready; and providing guidance for evaluation-readiness and evaluation planning.

## 2. BACKGROUND

The ACT Government is committed to strengthening the way its policies and programs are evaluated to improve performance and accountability in its functions and across the services it provides (ACT Government, 2010).

The *ACT Evaluation Policy and Guidelines* (ACT Government, 2010) requires all ACT Government directorates to develop an evaluation plan annually. ACTCS are responsible for reporting evaluation activities to the Justice and Community Safety (JACS) Directorate for inclusion in the JACS Evaluation Plan. The Framework has been developed to assist in meeting these requirements, as well as meeting requirements of the *ACT Government Performance and Accountability Framework* (ACT Government, 2011).

Challenges in collating and providing necessary data for the external evaluation of the Extended Throughcare Program (conducted by the University of NSW in 2016) also revealed a need for ACTCS to ensure high profile and high cost programs are evaluation-ready.

The Framework will also assist in developing evaluation maturity within ACTCS, in line with the JACS Evaluation Plan. This includes fostering a culture of evaluation, building evaluation capability, and assisting relevant functional areas in the planning of appropriate evaluation activities to meet ACTCS goals, taking into consideration the need to tailor and scale evaluation activities appropriately to the size, risk, and prominence of rehabilitation-related programs and services.

In line with ACT Government and JACS policy, the Framework provides the necessary guidance to assist ACTCS to prepare for and conduct appropriately scaled, accurate, outcome-focussed evaluations, and to increase the sharing of knowledge necessary for best practice in the delivery of rehabilitation-related programs and services.

### 3. SCOPE

#### 3.1 WITHIN FRAMEWORK SCOPE

The Framework applies to all ACTCS personnel responsible for the management or delivery of rehabilitation-related programs and services, and for offender management policies, including:

- ACTCS Executive and functional heads with oversight of rehabilitation-related programs and services, and for offender management policies
- Managers, team leaders and staff with a responsibility for delivering rehabilitation-related programs and services, and for offender management policies
- Program facilitators who are responsible for the professional delivery of programs in accordance with program manuals and other program integrity measures.<sup>1</sup>

The Framework applies to all ACTCS rehabilitation-related programs and services, whether delivered in custody or the community, including:

- Offence-specific or offence-related programs and individual services
- Therapeutic programs and individual services provided by ACTCS staff, as well as programs and services provided to ACTCS under contract from outside providers
- Education programs and services
- Life-skills, cultural and recreational programs and services
- Reintegration programs and services.

It also applies to policies and frameworks relevant to offender management and offender rehabilitation, such as the Sentence Management Framework.

The Framework should be read in conjunction with the ACTCS Rehabilitation Framework and the ACTCS Evaluation Plan.

#### 3.2 OUT OF SCOPE

Where rehabilitation-related programs and services are provided to detainees or offenders under contract to another ACT Government Directorate, ACTCS will actively seek to participate in the governance directing the evaluation of such programs and provide feedback through the evaluation process. Copies of any finalised evaluations should be made available to the ACTCS Executive.

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<sup>1</sup> However, addressing the underperformance of staff remains the purview of relevant ACTPS, JACS and ACTCS Human Resources policies and relevant Enterprise Agreements.

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Where programs and services are not provided under contract to an ACT Government Directorate, functional heads with oversight for these service providers should request copies of evaluations or other evidence demonstrating program or service efficacy where available.



#### 4. FRAMEWORK STATEMENT

Evaluation is an essential component in the management and delivery of ACTCS policies, programs and services. Appropriately designed and executed evaluations are an essential component in strengthening the quality, efficiency, and effectiveness of programs and services, and generating positive outcomes for ACTCS offenders, detainees and clients. This Framework outlines a strategic approach to evaluation activity to meet these goals.

The benefits of a strategic approach to evaluation activity for ACTCS include developing a robust evidence base for informing ACTCS priorities and resource allocation, improved service delivery, and building organisational reputation for innovation and continuous improvement in the delivery of rehabilitation-related programs and services.

The Framework is intended to be a resource for ACTCS managers and staff who are responsible for developing, implementing and managing programs and services to ensure all programs and services are evaluation-ready.



## 5. THE ACTCS PROGRAM EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

### 5.1 WHAT IS EVALUATION

For the purposes of this Framework, evaluation refers to the process of measuring and assessing the impacts and merits of rehabilitation-related programs, services and policies. It is a means of determining the appropriateness, effectiveness and efficiency of programs and services, and contributing to service improvement and innovation (ACT Government, 2010).

#### Why is evaluation necessary?

Evaluation is necessary to ensure policies, programs and services are meeting their stated objectives. Lessons from program evaluations can be used to modify and improve programs and services to ensure they are meeting organisational goals and the rehabilitation-related needs of ACTCS offenders, detainees and clients. Results from evaluations contribute to sharing knowledge and lessons necessary for continuous program and service improvement.

Evaluation may also inform contract management activities in terms of contractor performance feedback, contract variations to facilitate service improvement, and establishing future procurement criteria.

#### Establishing evaluation priorities

Given the large number of programs and services provided by ACTCS and its contractors, it is not feasible to evaluate all programs and services at once. Therefore, a strategic approach will be taken in determining the priorities and order of evaluation activity. Generally, the following matters should be considered when prioritising evaluation activity:

- Alignment with ACTCS and government priorities
- Meeting government requirements for review
- Size of the program
- Where there are concerns or uncertainty about a program
- Costs associated with conducting evaluation.

ACTCS evaluation priorities are outlined in the ACTCS Evaluation Plan.

### 5.2 EVALUATION-READINESS

It is difficult to evaluate a program without clearly specified objectives or where a program was implemented without any means of tracking and measuring program performance. Evaluation-readiness should be a key consideration when designing or purchasing new programs or services,

prior to any implementation. Rather than being a discrete and disconnected activity, evaluation should be an essential component for program planning and implementation, and data for evaluation should be collated on an ongoing basis.

Evaluation requirements must be built into program or service implementation planning, and implementation plans should incorporate a clear evaluation plan that anticipates future evaluation needs, including:

- A clear program logic model (see section 5.3 below)
- A clear description of the program
- Clear guidelines for program delivery, including program integrity measures
- Well-defined measures of success – including performance measures, targets, milestones
- Well-defined questions for future evaluation, based on the program logic
- Clear evaluation standards that are appropriate for the size, risk and priority of the program
- A list of relevant stakeholders and how they will be engaged
- An appropriate structure for baseline and future data collection, and user-friendly systems to capture relevant information.

### Data capture and collection

An evaluation is only as credible as the data it is based on. Anticipating data needs and preparing the foundations for data capture should be built into the implementation plan for every ACTCS program or service, whether it is to be evaluated internally or by external evaluators.

Accountable program management also includes appropriate and accurate record keeping, and essential to this task is good data management. Careful consideration should be given regarding the objectives of the program or service when planning data collection. Data collected should assist in providing an answer to the question – does the program meet its objectives?

Data may be qualitative or quantitative. Qualitative data (such as data from interviews with program participants) is usually collected and analysed when the evaluator seeks to answer open-ended or exploratory questions. Quantitative data (such as program data or financial data) is collected when the evaluator seeks to answer questions related to specific performance measures or indicators and is essential for effectiveness evaluations and efficiency evaluations (see below). Further guidance regarding the data requirements for different types of evaluation is incorporated in the ACTCS Evaluation Plan Template.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> The ACTCS Evaluation Plan Template is attached to the ACTCS Evaluation Plan 2019-2024.

Data is essential to all evaluation activity, whether it is a process review of a small program or an external evaluation of a large-scale or high-profile program. When ensuring programs and services are evaluation-ready the following questions should be answered:

- What data is already being collected / available?
- When is the data collected? In what format?
- Is the data being gathered capable of giving a reliable and consistent measurement against the program objectives and performance measures?
- What additional data needs to be collected to ensure data capable of measuring program performance? Can it be collected in a cost-effective manner?
- Who will be responsible for collecting and ensuring the integrity of data collected?
- Is data collected in an appropriate and timely fashion?

Managers should also be aware of secure information storage, confidentiality, information privacy and ethical issues when collecting and using data. No program or service data should be shared or provided to any agencies or persons without the written permission of the Executive Director.

Enquiries should be forwarded to the ACTCS Policy, Legal and Research Unit:

[ACTCSPolicy@act.gov.au](mailto:ACTCSPolicy@act.gov.au)

### Contracted programs and services

Accountability requirements are essential for programs and services delivered by external providers and evaluation mechanisms should be built into these contracts. Managers should consult with ACTCS Head of Procurement and Contracts to assist in establishing these contractual provisions.

### Choosing appropriate evaluation types and methods

There are many evaluation types and methods and further information about this topic can be found in the evaluation guides in the resource list on page 19 of this document.

In terms of evaluating programs and services, identifying the relevant questions to be addressed will determine the type of evaluation to be conducted. For example:

- **A process evaluation** can assist in answering questions regarding the design, implementation and delivery of the program or service
- **An effectiveness evaluation** can assist in answering questions regarding whether a program or service is achieving stated results or outcomes
- **An efficiency evaluation** can assist in answering questions regarding whether a program or service is achieving beneficial outcomes relative to the resources used.

### 5.3 WHAT DOES THE PROGRAM DO? - DEVELOPING A PROGRAM LOGIC

Robust evaluation will depend on the program having clearly defined and measurable objectives against which success can be assessed.

Program managers should therefore clearly identify:

- **Why** the program is required
- **Objectives** - What are you trying to achieve with the program? What problem will it solve?
- **Inputs** – What resources are required? (e.g. staff, equipment, overall cost per participant etc)
- **Activities** - What service is the program delivering to participants? (e.g. therapy, training, individual or group, number of sessions etc)
- **Outputs** – What should program participants receive from the program? (e.g. program completions, skills development, change in attitude etc.) Outputs are how you achieve outcomes.
- **Outcomes** – What would indicate that participants benefit from the program? How will you determine success? (e.g. change in behaviour, lowering risk of re-offending etc). Define your expected outcomes as specifically as possible so that they can be measured.

#### Developing a Program Logic

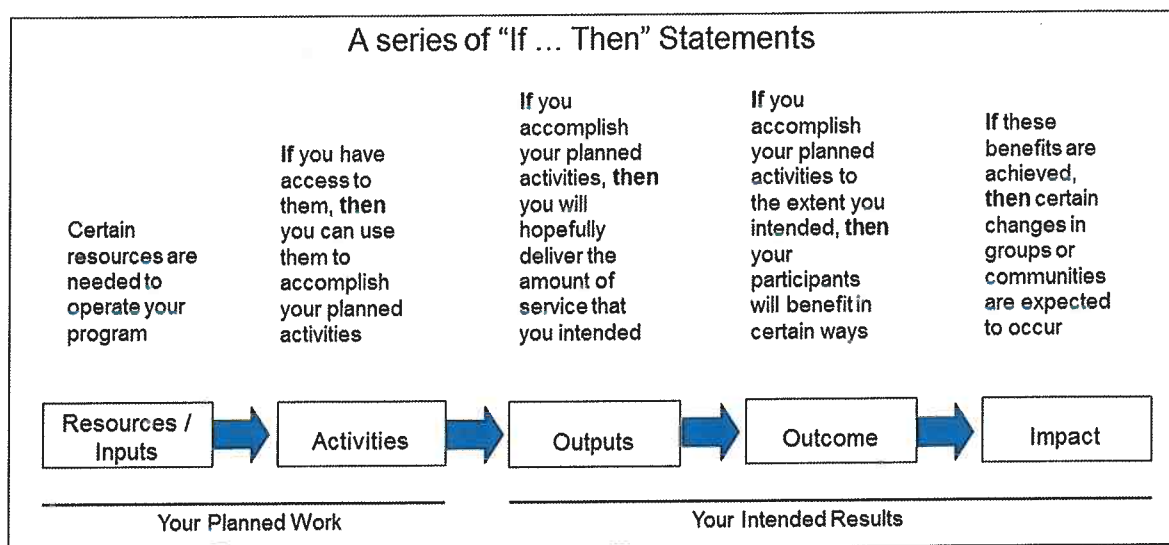
A program logic is a visual representation that explains how you expect the program or service will achieve its goals. It explains the underlying theory and assumptions that the program or service is based on and assists in explaining how the program is intended to work and what the program is trying to achieve. Developing a clear program logic is key to systematic and accountable program development.

The program logic should not be confused with an implementation plan. A program logic explains why the program will work, rather than being a plan for delivering the program. It articulates what you expect to achieve and the pathways towards desired outcomes.

The program logic explains the pathways between objectives, inputs, activities, outputs and impacts:



A well-constructed program logic model should clearly explain in one page the purpose of the program and expected results. It tells the story about the resources needed, how these resources will be used, and what you expect to achieve from the program. Constructing 'if ... then' statements as outlined in the following diagram may assist in constructing a program logic for your program or service:



(Source: US Centre for Disease Control, Undated)

Below is the ACT Government program logic model template which can be adapted to construct a program logic model for your programs and services:

Objective	Resource inputs	Activities	Outputs	Beneficiaries and target groups	Short-term outcomes	Long-term outcomes	Measure of Performance

(Adapted from ACT Government Evaluation Policy and Guidelines, 2010)

### Funding evaluations

When planning for evaluations the timing of decision-making cycles such as the annual budget process should be considered – whether seeking funding for new programs or services or seeking to expand the funding base of existing programs and services. An evaluation plan including costings should be included in budget bids. In turn, results of previous evaluations can provide an evidence base to support future budget bids.

When considering the size and scale of evaluations, the cost of evaluation must be considered in terms of opportunity cost, that is, the resources used for an expensive evaluation may have been put to better use. It is therefore not always advisable to conduct large-scale or external evaluations on programs and services unless they are high-cost, high-profile or high-risk. The scale of the evaluation activity should therefore be proportionate to the scale of the program or service.

### Ensuring program staff are evaluation-ready

Essential to evaluation capability is supporting staff to be evaluation-ready. This includes:

- Informing staff of ACTCS evaluation requirements
- Informing staff of their expected contribution to ensuring their programs are evaluation-ready
- Ensuring staff have the skills and training appropriate for their expected contribution to evaluation activity
- Facilitating opportunities for staff to be involved in program evaluation activities
- Providing staff with the results of evaluation activity relevant to their work.

## 5.4 ENSURING PRE-EXISTING PROGRAMS ARE EVALUATION-READY

While evaluation requirements should be built into the development stage of any new program, ACTCS have numerous pre-existing programs and services that need to become evaluation-ready for future evaluation activity. While this task may be time-consuming at the outset it is essential to ACTCS meeting its obligations under the ACT Government Evaluation Policy, supporting development of an evidence base for future service planning and delivery, and developing future business cases and budget bids. To these ends, functional heads and managers should complete the following for each program or service:

- Identify each program or service they have oversight or responsibility for (this includes programs provided by external providers under contract)
- Investigate whether any evaluation plans are in place
- Where applicable, obtain and study evaluations of the same program conducted in other jurisdictions
- Describe program performance to date, including any problems and opportunities for improvement
- Develop a program logic model (see section 5.3 above)
- Develop an evaluation plan (see section 5.5 below)
- Delegate responsibility for managing the evaluation plan for the program or service, and for ensuring that data capture and collection takes place in a timely manner.

## 5.5 ENSURING NEW PROGRAMS AND SERVICES ARE EVALUATION-READY

### Developing an evaluation plan

When planning new programs and services, the future needs of evaluating the program should be considered and specified. An evaluation plan is therefore a central part of any new program or

service design. Planning and incorporating evaluation activity into the design of new programs and services also offers a strategy for ameliorating the resource burden of later evaluation.

Your evaluation plan should include:

- A clear description of the program
- A clear description of how the program links to ACTCS and government priorities
- A program logic model (see section 5.3 above)
- Clear guidelines for program delivery, including program integrity measures
- An explicit criterion for determining success, including clearly defined evaluation questions and performance measures
- A clear plan of what aspects of the program are to be evaluated
- A project governance plan outlining appropriate governance arrangements suitable to the size, scale and risk of the evaluation activity, and identifying roles and responsibilities of the governance team
- A plan for baseline data collection and appropriate infrastructure for future data collection
- Delegated responsibility for ensuring pre-agreed baseline data and evaluation data is collected and securely stored in a suitable format for future evaluation
- A plan for resourcing evaluation activity
- A timeline for routine review of how the program is functioning
- A plan for disseminating findings of routine reviews and more formal evaluations to inform service improvement.



## 6. HOW ACTCS WILL USE INFORMATION GENERATED FROM EVALUATIONS

Communication of evaluation results helps to disseminate key lessons and experience, inform decision making and promote transparency and accountability. To this end, ACTCS will:

- Present evaluation findings plainly and accurately, while acknowledging any strengths and weaknesses or limitations of the evaluation
- Produce defensible recommendations arising from the evaluation findings to support service improvement
- Disseminate findings to relevant stakeholders, and key decision makers
- Ensure copies of all reviews and evaluations are forwarded to the ACTCS Policy, Legal and Research Unit - [ACTCSPolicy@act.gov.au](mailto:ACTCSPolicy@act.gov.au)
- Tailor the presentation of findings to the needs of each audience
- Align reporting to decision-making and budget cycles
- Allocate responsibility for implementing agreed recommendations to contribute to service improvement.

## 7. EVALUATION-READINESS CHECKLIST

### Stocktake of pre-existing programs and services

- I have identified each ACTCS delivered program or service that I have responsibility for
- I have identified each contracted program or service that I have responsibility for

### Checklist for each pre-existing program or service

- I have investigated whether evaluation plans are in place
  - Yes – use this checklist to update plan
  - No – develop a plan using this checklist
- Where applicable, I have obtained and studied evaluations from other jurisdictions
- I have described program performance to date
- I have developed a program logic model, clearly describing:
  - Objects – what ACTCS are trying to achieve with the program or service
  - Inputs / resources required
  - Activities – what will be delivered to program participants
  - Outputs – what the participants will receive from the program
  - Outcomes / Impacts – specific measurable achievements
- I have developed an evaluation plan, including:
  - A clear description of the program
  - A clear description of how the program links to ACTCS and Govt. priorities
  - A program logic model
  - Clear guidelines for program delivery, including program integrity measures
  - An explicit criterion for determining success, including clearly defined evaluation questions and performance measures
  - A clear plan of what aspects of the program are to be evaluated
  - A project governance plan outlining appropriate arrangements suitable to the size, scale and risk of the evaluation activity, and identifying roles and responsibilities of the governance team
  - A plan for baseline data collection and appropriate infrastructure for future data collection
  - Delegated responsibility for ensuring pre-agreed data is collected
  - A plan for funding evaluation activity
  - A timeline for routine review of how the program is functioning
  - A plan for disseminating findings of routine reviews and (if applicable) formal evaluations

Checklist for each new program or service

Prior to implementation:

- I have developed an evaluation plan, including:
  - A clear description of the program
  - A clear description of how the program links to ACTCS and Govt. priorities
  - A program logic model, clearly describing:
    - Objects – what ACTCS are trying to achieve with the program or service
    - Inputs / resources required
    - Activities – what will be delivered to program participants
    - Outputs – what the participants will receive from the program
    - Outcomes / Impacts – specific measurable achievements
  - Clear guidelines for program delivery, including program integrity measures
  - An explicit criterion for determining success, including clearly defined evaluation questions and performance measures
  - A clear plan of what aspects of the program are to be evaluated
  - A project governance plan outlining appropriate arrangements suitable to the size, scale and risk of the evaluation activity, and identifying roles and responsibilities of the governance team
  - A plan for baseline data collection and appropriate infrastructure for future data collection
  - Delegated responsibility for ensuring pre-agreed data is collected
  - A plan for funding evaluation activity
  - A timeline for routine review of how the program is functioning
  - A plan for disseminating findings of routine reviews and (if applicable) formal evaluations
  - Where applicable, I have consulted with the Head of Procurement and Contracts to ensure that an evaluation plan and performance measures are included in external service provider contracts
- I have incorporated all the above in the program implementation plan

## 8. RESOURCES

ACT Government (2010) ACT Government Evaluation Policy and Guidelines. Accessed online: [http://www.cmd.act.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0004/175432/ACT-Evaluation-Policy-Guidelines.pdf](http://www.cmd.act.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0004/175432/ACT-Evaluation-Policy-Guidelines.pdf) 14/03/2019

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## 9. ENQUIRES

ACTCS Policy, Legal and Research Unit: [ACTCSPolicy@act.gov.au](mailto:ACTCSPolicy@act.gov.au)



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