

BUILDING YOUR ORGANISATION'S ABILITY TO DO EVALUATIONS

PART

1

Your guide to getting there

Using Evidence for Impact

AUGUST 2016





EVALUATION CAPACITY IS IMPORTANT

If you have some evaluation capacity, you can work out objectively how well your organisation is doing (e.g. delivering suitable services to your clients and implementing effective processes).

However, if you do *not* have evaluation capacity, it is difficult to assess what you are doing right and what needs to change.

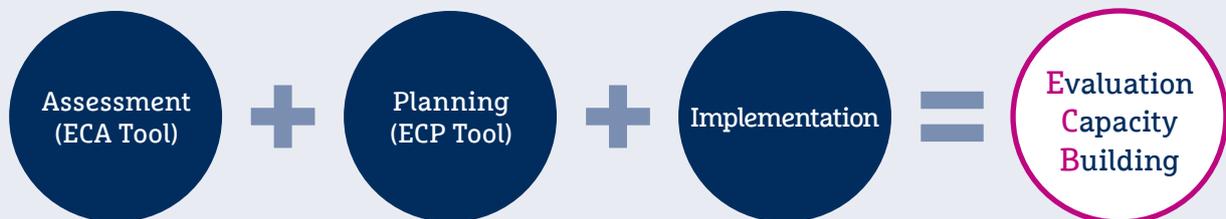
In a nutshell, your organisation needs to build its evaluation capacity to perform to its potential.

What is this document about?

This document sets out to explain a few things about why it is important for your organisation to build its evaluation capacity, and how you can do this. Building your organisation's evaluation capacity may sound daunting, but it does not have to be. This guide and the accompanying tools will help you navigate the process.

We have put together four complementary documents which constitute the package 'Building your organisation's evaluation capacity'. You need to access them all:

- Part 1 (this guide) provides you with information about 'why build evaluation capacity?', 'what to do?', 'how to do it?', 'who can do it?' and other questions you may have
- Part 2 (the Evaluation Capacity Assessment Tool or ECA Tool) helps you to work out where your organisation is at currently in terms of evaluation capacity
- Part 3 (the Evaluation Capacity Planning Tool or ECP Tool) enables you to work out a plan to build your organisation's evaluation capacity
- Part 4 (Implementing your plan) gives you some directions on how you can put your plan into practice and check that you are achieving your goals.





What is Evaluation Capacity Building (ECB)?

Evaluation capacity building is both a *process* and an *outcome* for organisations.

- The process entails intentionally supporting staff and leadership to gain skills, knowledge and attitudes needed to do useful evaluations.
- The outcome is ongoing evaluation and thinking to improve and adapt services for clients and report effectively to funders and communities.

Evaluation Capacity Building covers three key areas of influence:

- The *Context* that shapes your organisation and in which it operates
- Your *Organisation* itself
- The *People/Individuals* that make up your organisation.



Why is it important to build your evaluation capacity?

It helps NGOs to deliver higher quality services that consistently meet the needs of their communities. It also helps NGOs to undertake a high standard of measuring and reporting on their activities, results and effectiveness.

The purpose of using the ECB method, and the ECA and ECP Tools, is to gain a solid understanding of your organisation's current evaluation capacity, and where to go next.

What are the ECA and ECP Tools?

ECA stands for Evaluation Capacity *Assessment*:

- The ECA Tool is a questionnaire which enables you to 'take stock' of your organisation's current evaluation capacity, as well as highlight the areas where your organisation is doing well and where it could improve when it comes to evaluation capacity.

ECP stands for Evaluation Capacity *Planning*:

- The ECP Tool is made up of 'my summary worksheet' and a 'group planning worksheet'. These enable you to think about strategies that will help you to strengthen your evaluation capacity, based on the results from the ECA questionnaire. The ECP Tool also helps you to develop a basic plan of action that focuses on the few critical areas you will have identified as being key to growing your organisation's evaluation capacity.

Instructions on how to use the ECA and ECP Tools are provided on the front page of each, in the following documents.

The prototypes (ECA and ECP Tools) were developed as part of the project *Developing an effective evaluation culture in NGOs*. The project was commissioned by the Social Policy Evaluation and Research Unit (Superu). The ECB method was informed by international literature and input from three New Zealand NGOs (one Māori, one Pasifika and one mainstream). These three organisations also trialled this tool as part of undertaking a three-stage facilitated process to assess the evaluation capacity of their own organisation and then develop a plan to build their evaluation capacity.

Who should be involved in developing the organisation's evaluation capacity?

Leaders, managers, staff and volunteers all have a role to play in building the organisation's evaluation capacity. However, the role of leaders and managers is more critical in ensuring the uptake of ECB by everyone in the organisation.

Ideally, the following people should be part of the team using the ECA and ECP Tools:

- Board members
- Leaders
- Managers
- Staff members
- Advisory groups

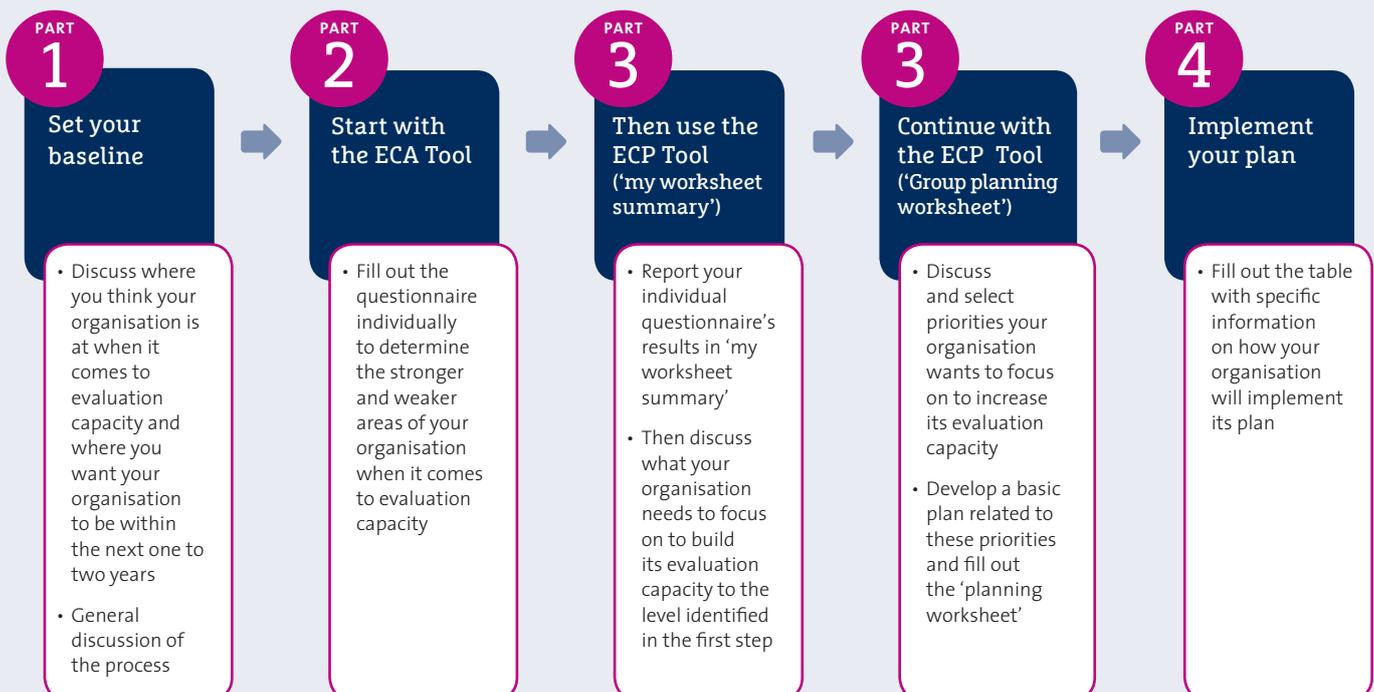
The tools work best with a team of between six and 12 people.



How do we use the ECB method?

The ECB method can be used in two ways, either self-directed by following the accompanying instructions (preferred way) or with external facilitation.

The following flow chart shows the steps involved in using the ECB method, regardless of whether it is self-directed or externally facilitated.





1_ Self-directed

Before the session – planning for the day:

1. Decide who is going to be part of the session (e.g. Board members, leaders, managers and staff members) and plan the logistics of the session. A day-long workshop may be more effective than two half days, as the latter is more likely to cause repetition of introductory sessions and mean different people participate in the different steps. Organise an invitation from a senior person in the organisation to signal the priority and importance of the work.
2. Appoint two or three people who have familiarised themselves with the ECA and ECP Tools to run the day. They need to have facilitation skills and be able to encourage the creation of a 'safe' environment in which participants feel able to contribute openly and honestly. The facilitators could be a mix of internal and external people.

During the session – setting the baseline

1. Explain what evaluation capacity building is about, why it is important and what the ECA and ECP Tools aim to achieve. Also discuss the structure of the day and facilitate a group discussion about making the session a full, frank, open, safe space for discussion. Identify how people feel about having their name attached to their 'summary worksheet'.
2. Discuss participants' perceptions of the organisation's overall current level of evaluation capacity, and what would be a realistic development goal for the organisation for the next one to two years. For example, you may get the sense that your organisation's evaluation capacity is 'Emerging' and your goal will be to move it to the next stage which is 'Developing'. This general baseline needs to be realistic and will guide the following discussions, such as where you want your organisation to be in the short term, how you will get there and what you will do to get there.

During the session – completing the questionnaire in the ECA Tool (situation assessment)

1. Get each participant to individually complete the questionnaire in the ECA Tool (allow approximately one hour). Tell them it should be from their own knowledge and experience, therefore there is no right or wrong answer.
2. Once the questionnaire in the ECA Tool is completed, participants briefly discuss their initial general thoughts. This initial discussion does not yet focus on participants' individual ratings. Depending on the size of the group, it may be more practical to discuss general thoughts in pairs and then have a group discussion. Notes need to be taken (e.g. post-it notes, flipchart) to capture thoughts, ideas and learnings. These initial thoughts (e.g. similarities and differences in perceptions about the organisation's evaluation capacity) need to be presented back to the group.

During the session – completing the two worksheets in the ECP Tool (planning)

1. Each participant needs to report the results of the ECA questionnaire into 'my summary worksheet'. This will enable participants to see their ratings of the 55 statements at one glance and help to focus subsequent discussions.
2. If possible, participants split into three groups: one will think about and discuss planning with regards to *Context*; another will do the same with regards to *Organisation*; and the third group will focus on *People/Individuals*. Each group's discussion needs to identify the organisation's stronger and weaker areas related to evaluation capacity. Each group also needs to identify three critical areas to be addressed to build the organisation's evaluation capacity. The critical areas are reported in the 'group planning worksheet' with ideas on how to address them.



3. Each group then presents their initial planning worksheet back to the rest of the group, which provides feedback. A group discussion may follow in order to refine how to address the critical areas selected.

After the session – implementation of the plan

1. An additional half day may be needed to complete a full ECB plan, i.e. to identify the specific milestones, timeframes and resources required to meet the organisation’s goal in building its evaluation capacity. Scheduling this planning session for a few days after the day-long workshop provides time for participants to process and think through ideas before finalising the plan.
2. This plan is a living document. It needs to be referred to and used regularly by the organisation in order to track progress and achieve the specified evaluation capacity goal. For example, the plan may be informally reviewed monthly and formally reviewed six-monthly.

2_ External facilitation

For some organisations, it may be preferable or more effective to seek external facilitation from someone who can take charge of the entire process. However, the external facilitator needs to follow the same steps described in the section above.

The facilitator does not have to be an evaluation specialist. It could be someone with strong facilitation skills or from an organisation you know who has already used the tool.

How long does the process take?



Completing the questionnaire takes about one hour. Discussing the results and developing an action plan takes longer, as it involves reflecting on and discussing the results of the ECA Tool, as well as thinking about the future through the ECP Tool (i.e. developing a realistic plan to build the organisation’s evaluation capacity). Ideally, a full-day workshop is required with a subsequent meeting to complete a full plan and confirm the directions to be taken to build the organisation’s evaluation capacity.

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