

## Strengthen evaluation capacity

An important aspect of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) ‘systems’ is strengthening the M&E capacity of individuals, organisations, communities and networks.

While there are other terms used for this, we suggest using the term ‘evaluation capacity strengthening’ to emphasise the value of recognising, reinforcing and building on existing capacity.

## Understanding capacity

M&E capacity is not just about developing competencies for doing monitoring and evaluation. It also includes competencies in effectively designing, managing, implementing and using monitoring and evaluation. It includes strengthening a culture of valuing evidence, valuing questioning, and valuing evaluative thinking. This can include the capacity of evaluators, as well as the capacity of evaluation and programme managers, internal staff, and community members.

When we think about evaluation capacity, it's more than an individual or organisation's ability to undertake technical tasks; it also includes a range of areas such as interpersonal communication and group facilitation, as well as the ability to frame evaluations, make sense of them, support their appropriate use.

## Kinds of capacity

When we talk about strengthening evaluation capacity, we refer to building three types of capital:

- **Human capital** — knowledge and skills and the ability to apply them in contextually appropriate ways
- **Social capital** — supportive networks of trust and reciprocity to support work
- **Organisational capital** — including infrastructure and organisational culture

## Change theories for capacity strengthening

It can also be useful to consider three broad change theories (drawing on Mitchie et al. 2011 meta-theory of behaviour change):

- increasing motivation
- increasing capacity
- increasing opportunity –including an enabling environment for M&E

## Evaluation capacity strengthening is not just about training

One-off training is a common approach to evaluation capacity strengthening but it may not be the most appropriate way to address a capacity strengthening need.

Individuals, groups and organisations should think about different types of capacity strengthening activities and support and consider how these can be integrated to best address their specific needs.

We invite you to explore the full range of methods and processes available to you. Let us know if you have any further suggestions.

## Methods

### Increasing skills and knowledge

- A range of methods related to various strategies to increase skills and knowledge - among evaluators, others doing evaluation, and people who oversee monitoring and evaluation systems (for example, program managers).

### Competency assessment

- [Self-assessment](#)

Self-assessment is an individual reflection on one's skills, knowledge and attitudes related to evaluation competencies.

- [Peer-assessment](#)

Peer assessment can provide additional benefits beyond self-assessment – in particular, the opportunity for peer learning through the review process.

### Knowledge, skills, attitudes (KSA) development and ongoing development

- [Coaching](#)

Coaching can involve supporting an individual during training or development in order for them to reach a specific personal or professional goal, or providing expert and practical help to improve and apply specific skills and knowledge.

- [Dialogues](#)

Dialogues refer to a range of learning conversations that go beyond knowledge transfer to include knowledge articulation and translation.

- [Expert advice](#)

Expert advice provides advice in response to specific queries.

It might include a process to clarify and reframe the question that is being asked.

- [Fellowship](#)

A fellowship is an extended position that provides paid employment and support for people who have completed formal coursework in evaluation.

- [Internship](#)

An internship is a paid or unpaid entry-level position that provides work experience and some professional development.

- [Mentoring](#)

Mentoring is a process where people are able to share their professional and personal experiences in order to support their development and growth in all spheres of life.

- [Learning circle](#)

A Learning Circle allows a group of individuals to meet and explore an issue and learn from each other in the process.

- [Peer learning](#)

Peer learning refers to a practitioner-to-practitioner approach in which the transfer of tacit knowledge is particularly important (Andrews and Manning 2016).

- [Reflective practice](#)

Reflective practice involves an individual reflecting on their work allowing them to learn from their own experiences and insights and engage in a practice of continual learning.

- [Self-paced learning](#)

Viewing learning materials, such as previously recorded webinars, at your own pace.

- [Supervised practice in teams](#)

Supervision of practice is an approach often used in social work where it is expected that all practitioners will engage in regular discussions of and reflections on their practice; it is not an approach only intended to support novices.

- [Training and formal education](#)

Formal courses can be a useful way to develop people's knowledge and skills in conducting and/or managing an evaluation.

Courses range from one day introductory short courses to complete doctoral programmes in evaluation.

## **Building and sharing knowledge**

- [Community of practice](#)

A community of practice allows a group of people with a common interest or concern to share and learn through a series of interactions, thus reflecting the social nature of human learning.

- [Conferences](#)

Attendance at professional conferences to understand how other evaluators frame and discuss their findings is a key component of building evaluation capacity.

- [Evaluation library](#)

In many organisations, a print or digital collection of books, manuals and other documents has been gathered to form an evaluation library that can be jointly accessed.

Decisions to be taken include:

- [Evaluation journals](#)

Evaluation journals play an important role in documenting, developing, and sharing theory and practice.

The journals below are divided into three categories:

- [Learning partnerships](#)

Learning partnerships involve structured processes over several years to support learning between a defined number of organisations working on similar programs, usually facilitated by a third party organisation.

- [R&D projects](#)

Evaluation associations can leverage their membership to engage in knowledge construction through research and development.

## Other strategies

### Reference points for professional practice

- These reference points can be used to guide activities aimed at increasing capacity – for example, when developing a training course or a peer learning program – or activities aimed at increasing motivation – for example, supporting a shared professional identity to motivate individuals.

- [Ethical guidelines](#)

A number of organisations have developed ethical guidelines to cover the conduct of evaluation, including the responsibilities of those conducting and managing evaluations.

- [Evaluation competencies](#)

Evaluator competencies generally refer to the skills, abilities, knowledge, experience, and/or qualifications that an evaluator is expected to have depending on their role in the evaluation process.

- [Organisational policies and procedures](#)

Organisational policies and procedures provide guidelines for decision-making processes and the way that works in an organisation should be carried out.

- [Distinct occupational category](#)

A distinct occupational category or role title recognised at a national or organisational level.

- [Expectation of ongoing competency development](#)

An expectation that members of an association or organisation will engage in ongoing competency development.

- [Evaluation policy](#)

An evaluation policy outlines the definition, concept, role and use of evaluation within an organisation.

- [Evaluation standards](#)

Evaluation standards identify how the quality of an evaluation will be judged.

They can be used when planning an evaluation as well as for meta-evaluation (evaluating the evaluation).

## **Engagement with professional associations**

- Professional associations play an active role in supporting capacity development – for example, by offering workshops and encouraging the development of supportive professional relationships. They can also contribute to motivation by providing inspirational exemplars of practice and practitioners.

- [Evaluation societies and associations](#)

Evaluation societies and organisations are an important pathway for developing evaluation capacity.

- [Other professional associations](#)

Associations from different but related sectors and fields can be good places to find useful events and training, network connections, and ideas.

## **Public recognition of good practice**

- [Awards](#)

An award is a formal recognition by peers of outstanding individuals or practice.

Some awards are made for cumulative good practice, and others are for exemplars of good practice, such as awards for the best evaluation.

- [Fellows](#)

Fellow is a category of membership of an association or society, often awarded to an individual based on their contributions to evaluation.

## **Increasing opportunity for professional practice**

- A range of options for building a better informed and motivated demand side of evaluation and a more conducive enabling environment. Some relate to educating the public and evaluation managers and users about evaluation and evaluators, and others relate to engaging in wider organisational and public processes with implications for evaluation practice.

## **Educating the public, evaluation managers and users**

- [Public information about evaluation](#)

An important part of evaluation capacity strengthening is providing a clear definition or explanation of evaluation in online and printed materials.

- [Public information about professional practice](#)

As part of its public advocacy role, a professional association can provide potential clients with information about engaging with evaluators effectively.

## **Strengthening the enabling environment for good evaluation practice**

- [Engagement in relevant organisational processes](#)

For evaluation to be truly useful it needs to be embedded in organisational processes.

Particularly relevant issues include strategic changes to how government and non-government organisations plan, manage and implement.

- [Engagement in relevant public processes](#)

For evaluation to be truly useful it needs to engage in public discussions about relevant issues.

## **Review of practice**

- Some methods which relate to the task 'Evaluate evaluation' can be used as part of evaluation capacity strengthening, as they can both improve a specific product and also develop internal skills and knowledge.
- [Expert review](#)

Expert review involves an identified expert providing a review of draft documents at specified stages of a process and/or planned processes.

- [Peer review](#)

Conducting an evaluation using individuals/organizations who are working on similar projects.