

Clear Horizon

Better Communities for Children Leadership Network: Monitoring and Evaluation Framework

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Design. Evaluate. Evolve.

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Contents

1. Introduction	1
1.1. Background	1
1.2. Purpose and scope of this framework	1
1.3. Audience for the network's M&E	2
1.4. Principles for M&E	2
2. Program logic and narrative	3
2.1. Network program logic model description	3
2.2. Assumptions	6
3. Evaluation Plan	7
3.1. Key evaluation questions	7
3.2. Overarching approach and steps for doing M&E	7
3.3. Data sources and collection methods	7
3.4. Data analysis and synthesis	10
3.5. Reflection and improvement	12
3.6. Future planning	12
3.7. Reporting	13

List of figures

Figure 2: BCFCLN program logic model.....5

List of tables

Table 1: Audiences for network M&E2

Table 2: Assumptions of the BCFCLN program logic model.....6

Table 3: Evaluation question for the network and working parties, suggested focus of enquiry and data collection method.....[1112](#)

Table 4: Reporting.....[1314](#)

Acronyms

BCFCLN
M&E

Better Communities for Children Leadership Network
Monitoring and Evaluation

1. Introduction

1.1. Background

The “*Better Communities for Children Leadership Network*” (“the network”) is made up of local and regional leaders representing early years and childhood services (0-12 years) in the Mansfield Shire. Established in 2009, the network develops and delivers a Child and Family Well-being Strategic Plan for the Shire. The purpose of the plan is to “contribute to better safety, health, well-being and social belonging for all children within the Shire” (BCFCLN Strategic Plan 2013-17).

Using a devolved leadership approach, the network is facilitated and supported by Mansfield Shire Council. The planning cycle for the network follows and is informed by the statutory Municipal Public and Health and Wellbeing Plan 2013-17. The network is also influenced by the Children and Youth Area Partnerships, a Department of Health and Human Services initiative that establishes new ways of working at the local level to more effectively join up social services in Victoria at the system level.

There are four top priority areas for the network: Increased Speech Therapy Services, Respectful Relationships; a Public Campaign, Better Service Co-ordination and Parent Support. Each priority area is organised through a working party that reports through to the central network and implements various projects. These priority areas were identified by the network through interviews with twenty five leaders representing twenty two organisations and a voting process with the network. The projects in the priority areas are at various stages of implementation.

This document provides the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework for the network. The framework was developed through a series of participatory facilitated workshops and interviews with the network members and the working parties in mid-June 2016.

1.2. Purpose and scope of this framework

This framework has been developed to guide 1) the M&E activities of both the network and working parties to June 2017; and 2) frame an independent evaluation in June 2017. The framework was developed through a series of participatory facilitated workshops and interviews with the network members and the working parties in mid-June 2016. Specially, M&E activities of the network, working parties and independent evaluation will:

1. **Inform** the future direction of the network in 2017 and beyond
2. **Demonstrate** progress towards strategic goals, enabling the network to tell its story as part of the collective impact technique
3. **Identify lessons** for current and future work.

1.3. Audience for the network's M&E

There are two types of audiences for the network's M&E outputs - primary and secondary audiences. The primary audiences are those whom require M&E information for decision making, while secondary audiences are those whom may have an interest in the results of M&E, but whom typically do not directly use this information. The audiences for the network's M&E activities are provided in Table 1.

Table 1: Audiences for network M&E

Primary Audiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The network• The working parties• Mansfield Shire Council• Children and Youth Area Partnership
Secondary Audiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Philanthropic audiences (potential funders)• Children and parents• The Mansfield Shire community

1.4. Principles for M&E

M&E for the network and working parties needs to:

- Inform, hone and refresh the future direction of the network and working parties
- Identify what is working and what is not, to learn as projects are implemented
- Test whether the goals of the network and working parties are achieved – while telling the story of the network and working parties
- Test whether the working party model is working
- Check that the network and working parties are meeting the needs of the community and engaging with them
- Ensure information is shared between network members and services
- Learn as projects are implemented as part of adaptive management
- Focus on the past but also include tools for future M&E.

2. Program logic and narrative

It is helpful to articulate the theory of change underpinning the *Better Communities for Children Leadership Network* in order to identify the network's expected outcomes and enable assessment of its effectiveness. A program's theory of change is frequently presented as a 'program logic' model and accompanying narrative, which outlines the rationale behind a program by describing the cause-and-effect relationships between program activities, outputs, intermediate outcomes and ultimate objectives. The model captures the rationale of the initiative and is accompanied by a narrative that 'tells the story' of how change is expected to occur.

A narrative of the network's program logic is provided in Section 2.1, followed by a diagrammatic representation (figure 2). The assumptions underpinning the program logic are set out in [Table 2](#).

2.1. Network program logic model description

The following narrative has been developed to articulate the cause and effect relationships underlying the network's logic model.

The **broader goals** of the network are outlined in the BCFLN charter. These are to ensure children are effective communicators; children are confident and involved learners; children have a strong sense of wellbeing; children are connected with and contribute to the world; children have a strong sense of identity; parents of children are better supported and resourced in ways that are helpful and meaningful to their family and cultural heritage; children grow up in a safe, welcoming and inclusive environment; and there is better safety, health, well-being and social belonging for all children within Mansfield Shire. The premise of operating as a network is that working collectively will have more of an impact on children, family and community outcomes, as opposed to working as individual agencies.

The network began with **foundational activities** which included developing the Child and Family Four Year Strategic Plan, which prioritised the issues affecting the wellbeing of children, and research such as mapping community needs and gaps. The network also established Working parties based on prioritised action areas. Initially, three Working parties were established, with a fourth established in the second year of the strategy. On-going foundational activities are keeping up-to-date on the latest research and strategic government direction, facilitation, mentoring and support from the Mansfield Shire Council and monitoring and evaluation.

Influence activities include leaders meeting as a group and the network acting as a formal consultancy reference group for the Council. The network undertakes communication and public education, knowledge shaping and capacity building, and co-ordination of service delivery (including pooling resources) through the working parties. The network's four working parties work on four 'strategic priorities' issues: increased speech therapy services, respectful relationships, better service co-ordination and parent education. The relationship between the network, the working parties and their associated strategic priorities is illustrated in Figure 1 and is further expanded on in appendices 1-4.

As a result of the network's foundational and influence activities in the **short term**, the network works to an agreed set of priorities and messages. This leads to the working parties delivering

against an agreed set of priorities and messages; the network continuously communicating and sharing information amongst members; and the network pooling and collaboratively advocating for more funding and services.

With the network and working parties delivering against agreed priorities, communicating and sharing information, and pooling/ advocating for more money and services, professionals in the community have a clearer idea about children and family needs and are focusing on priority issues. Also, the community is aware and reflects behaviour in line with the network's priority messages. It is expected that there will be an overall increase in resources for the network's priorities and therefore more services available for families and children to access. As a result of this it is expected that families and children in Mansfield Shire are directed to and access appropriate services. Together, these are the **intermediate outcomes** of the network.

The **end-of-strategy outcome**, which is the consequence of the intermediate outcomes of the network, is that children, families and the community in Mansfield Shire are supported to be the best they can.

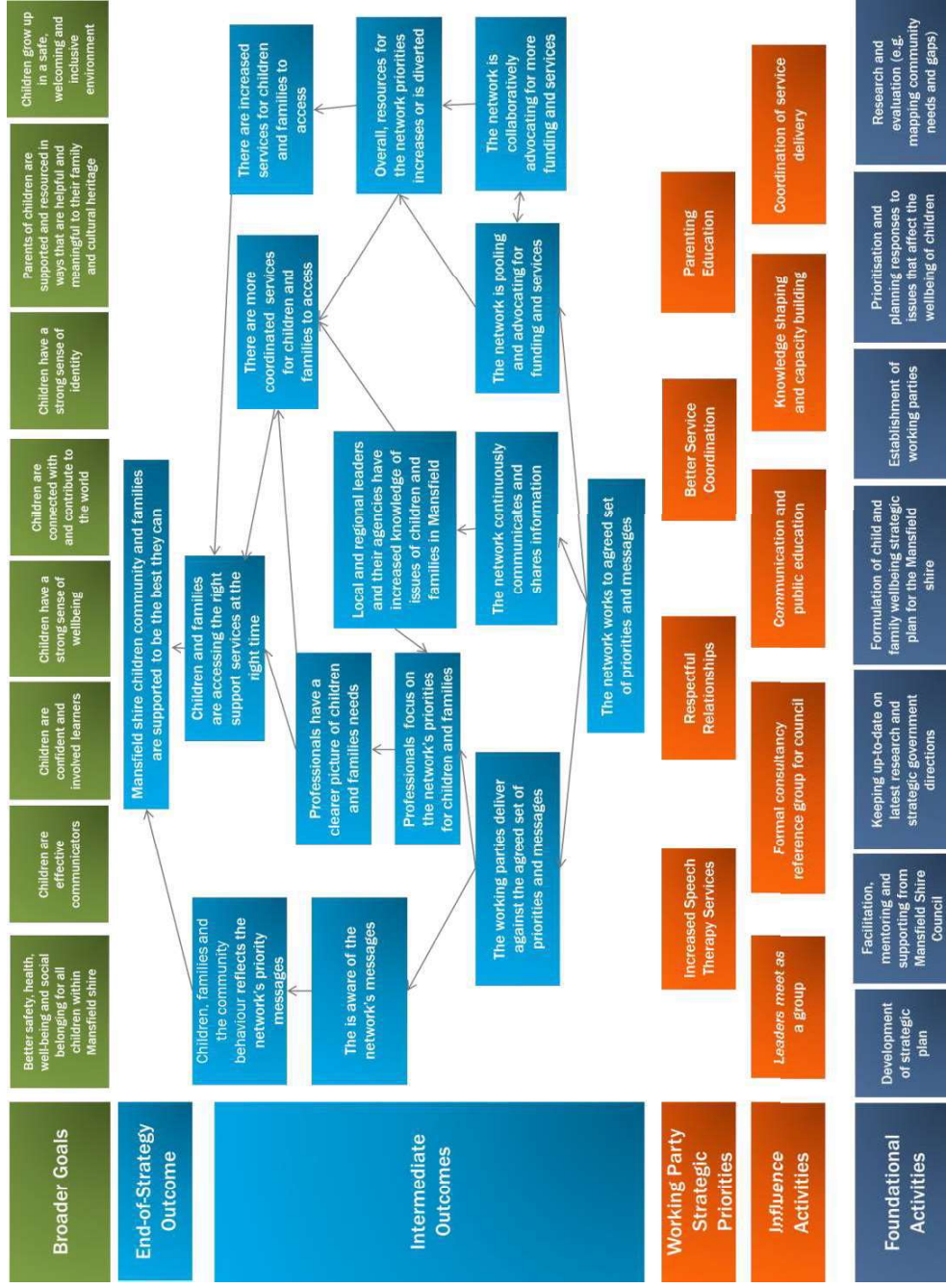


Figure 12: BCFCIN program logic model

2.2. Assumptions

Assumptions underpinning the network's program logic are outlined in [Table 2](#). Assumptions include things that we assume will occur and are necessary in order to achieve the outcomes identified for the network. It is important to monitor assumptions that we have less confidence in and/or there may be major consequences should they turn out to be incorrect.

Table 2: Assumptions of the BCFCLN program logic model

Key Assumptions	Evidence to support the assumption	Likelihood that the assumption is wrong?			Risk to achievement of the end-of-strategy outcome?			Investigate this assumption further?
		Low	Medium	High	Low	Medium	High	
1. Children and families are accessing right support services at the right time	Waiting list for service from Integrated Family Services (Mansfield Shire Council) Referrals to other services made by Family, Youth & Children's Services team at Council Demand for speech pathology	✓				✓		No
2. The community is aware of the network's messages	TBC		✓				✓	Yes
3. Professionals focus on the network's priorities for children and families	TBC	✓				✓		No
4. Community behaviour reflects and reinforces the network's priority messages	TBC		✓				✓	Yes

3. Evaluation Plan

3.1. Key evaluation questions

Key evaluation questions (KEQs) are overarching questions that guide data collection, analysis and reporting. Four KEQs were identified for the network and working parties:

1. How effective was the network and working parties in delivering their intended outputs and outcomes?
2. How appropriate are the network and working parties' processes and activities, considering the needs of children, families and the community? (optional)
3. How successful was the network delivery model, considering effectiveness, efficiency and international best practice? (optional)
4. What is the future direction of the network and its working parties?

3.2. Overarching approach and steps for doing M&E

The approach taken for the network's M&E activities is highly collaborative and learning focused, while ensuring that the effectiveness of the network can be reported in a transparent, evidence-based way. The approach is both top down and ground up; the working parties will collect information that will be fed into the network level evaluation.

The majority of the data to answer KEQ1 will be collected by the BCFCLN, leading up to the evaluation in mid 2017. Resources permitting, it is anticipated that an external evaluator will collate, synthesise and analyse the data collected against KEQ1 and collect additional data to answer KEQ2 and KEQ3. KEQ 4 will be answered at a 'summit workshop'.

The first step is for the network and working parties to collect the data that focuses on KEQ1. In step two an external evaluator will collect data on KEQ2 and KEQ3. In step three an external evaluator will facilitate a summit workshop with the network and working party members to answer KEQ4. The fourth step is for the external evaluator to write the evaluation report. The final step is to revise and implement the M&E framework alongside the next phase of BCFCLN's work. It is expected that ongoing reflection and learning will occur throughout the life of the network (both current and future phases) and feed into and influence M&E activities

3.3. Data sources and collection methods

This section sets out the proposed data sources and collection methods to be used throughout the network's implementation, both in preparation for the proposed evaluation in mid-2017 and beyond. Table three sets out the data collection methods that are relevant for the BCFCLN.

KEQ1: How effective was the network and working parties in delivering their intended outputs?

The BCFCLN will collect the data to answer this KEQ (including all sub-questions), leading up to the 2017 evaluation. The external evaluator will undertake a 'check' of the data collected by the network, including collation, synthesis and analysis of all data sources. The main data sources and data collection methods for KEQ1 are summarised in [Table 3](#).

Data collection

Survey: one questionnaire with separate questions for a) the network and working party members, and b) child and family professionals to gauge the network's progress towards the outcomes described in the program logic as well as any unexpected outcomes. The questionnaire will include questions relevant to collect data against network outcomes and the working party outcomes.

Most Significant Change (MSC) interviews: with network and working party members; child and family professionals; and children families and community members not captured through the MSC technique data collection undertaken by the working parties. These stories will be used to capture evidence about changes (intended and unintended) as a result of the network. Given that the working parties will be collecting their own MSC technique stories, these interviews should target network-level stakeholders not captured through the working party data collection. Draft MSC technique data collection tools are included in the M&E toolkit.

Desk top review: the external evaluator will collate, synthesise and analyse all data collected by the network in relation to KEQ1, including the working party summaries and network-level MSC technique and survey data. The evaluator will also collate and analyse any other network-level documentation, including network meeting minutes, planning and other strategic documents. The desktop review will also include quantitative analysis of website data, access of parent support services, and speech and language services. This may also include the quantification of the number of key activities such as meetings held.

Working party summaries: each working party will develop a short one-two page summary capturing the results of their work in relation to their program logic, with an emphasis on the outcomes of most importance identified by the working parties. These summaries should also include the results of any surveying and MSC technique story collection undertaken by the working parties. Refer to the working party nested M&E plans, including their program logic.

KEQ 2: How appropriate are the network and working parties' processes and activities, considering the needs of children, families and the community?

This KEQ is optional may be addressed during the evaluation in mid 2017 and data will be collected by the external evaluator. Any evidence of appropriateness collected by the BCFCLN between now and then will also be included in the evaluation data sources. Suggested data sources and data collection methods for the external evaluator are:

Data sources

1. Relevant documents, including BCFCLN Strategic Plan, working party summaries, project plans, network and working party minutes, service data (website, parent support services, speech and language services)

2. Network members, target audience/beneficiaries and other stakeholders, including:
 - Network and working party members
 - Children and family professionals.

Data collection

Desktop review: of any evidence collected by BCFCLN.

Survey: to all network partners about working party processes (i.e. survey used to address KEQ1).

Semi-structured interviews: with child and family professionals about the needs of children, families and the community.

KEQ 3: How successful was the network delivery model, considering effectiveness, efficiency and international best practice?

This KEQ may be addressed during the evaluation in mid 2017 and the data will be collected by the external evaluator. Suggested data sources and data collection methods for the external evaluator are:

Data sources

- Local and international literature on good practice partnership models
- “Experts” on partnership models.

Data collection

Literature Scan: of local and international secondary sources on best practice partnership models. A key output of the literature scan would be a distilled set of criteria for best practice in preparation for the network member rating as part of KEQ4.

Semi-structured interviews: with a small number of “experts” about best practice in partnership models. Ideally experts would be identified and selected with input by the network.

KEQ 4: What is the future direction of the network and its working parties?

The external evaluator will present draft findings in relation to the KEQs to the network at a ‘summit workshop’ to answer KEQ4. At the workshop, network members (including working parties) will be invited to analyse and reflect on the draft findings and help develop evidence-based recommendations for the future of the network. While not proscribed, the summit workshop may cover:

- a ‘sense check’ of the draft findings developed by the external evaluator, i.e. do they make sense? Where is the network doing really well, and where it is not?
- MSC technique story selection process
- network member rating against good practice criteria from the literature scan (i.e. KEQ3)
- discussion on the future direction of the network

- re-modelling of the network's program logic based on the evaluation findings and discussion of future directions.

3.4. Data analysis and synthesis

Approach

The external evaluator will play a key role in analysing and synthesising all the data collected by the working parties and BCFCLN in relation to KEQ1. The working parties will be responsible for providing the evaluator with one to two page summaries of the data they have collected against the sub-questions as outlined in the working party plans. The external evaluator will collect additional data to address KEQ 2 and 3 in June 2017, if required. They will also collate and synthesise data from KEQs to address KEQ4, with input from the network at an 'evaluation summit'.

Qualitative analysis

Qualitative analysis will occur at both the working party and network levels. Working parties will qualitatively analyse documents, survey and MSC technique data in relation to KEQ1 and other matters for measurement outlined in their nested M&E plans. This will likely include thematic analysis in relation to pre-determined and emergent themes and will be summarised in the 'working party summaries'.

The external evaluator will conduct qualitative thematic analysis in relation KEQs1 to 3, including analysis of pre-determined and other themes emerging from the working party summaries, network survey, MSC technique stories, literature scan and so on. The exact detail of this analysis will be determined by the evaluator.

At the proposed summit workshop, network stakeholders will also engaged in participatory qualitative analysis of MSC technique stories and other data.

Quantitative analysis

Quantitative analysis will also occur at both the working party and network levels. It is anticipated that the working parties will generate simple descriptive statistics to summarise the type and number of activities undertaken, for example meetings, presentations and so on. Where relevant and feasible, they may also prepare simple frequencies around the services utilised by children, families and the community as they relate to their group's work, for example web analytics for the better service coordination working party, school and speech and language therapist data for the speech therapy services working party, parent support data and so on. The surveys undertaken by the working parties should also lend itself to some quantitative data analysis.

The external evaluator will also likely generate some simple numerical frequencies at the network level, particularly in relation to the number and type of activities undertaken across the network. The evaluator should be able to aggregate activity data from the working party summaries. The network-level survey is also an important tool for generating any numerical information considered important or necessary, for example stakeholder satisfaction with the network.

Table 3: Evaluation question for the network and working parties, suggested focus of enquiry and data collection activities to address MEQ1

KEQs	Suggested focus of enquiry	Data collection method
1. How effective was the network and working parties in delivering their intended outputs and outcomes?	<p>To what extent has the network and working parties delivered intended outputs?</p> <p>To what extent is the network and working parties delivering against the agreed set of priorities and messages?</p> <p>To what extent is the community aware of the network's messages?</p> <p>To what extent is the community reflecting and reinforcing the network's priority messages?</p> <p>To what extent are professionals focusing on the network's priorities for children and families?</p> <p>To what extent have resources for network priorities been increased or diverted?</p> <p>To what extent are services for children and families more co-ordinated?</p> <p>To what extent are families and children accessing the right support services at the right time?</p> <p>To what extent have children, families and the community supported to be the best they can be?</p> <p>Were there any unexpected outcomes as a result of the network and working parties' work?</p>	<p>Desk top review of project plans and network and working party minutes</p> <p>Desk top review of the strategic plan, project plans and network and working party minutes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Desk top review of service data • MSC technique interviews with children, families and community members • MSC technique interviews with children, families and community members • Survey with child and family professionals and network and working party members • Desktop review of service data • Survey with child and family professionals and network and working group members <p>Survey with child and family professionals and network and working group members</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MSC technique interviews with children, families and community members • Survey with child and family professionals and network and working party members • Desk-top review of survey data • MSC technique interviews with children, families and community members • Survey with child and family professionals and network and working party members • MSC technique interviews with children, families and community members • Survey with child and family professionals and network and working party members <p>MSC technique interviews with children family and community members, child and family professionals, network and working group members</p>

3.5. Reflection and improvement

Reflection and improvement should occur throughout the year leading up to the June 2017 evaluation and beyond. Ideally, reflection and learning should be a standing agenda item at both network and working party meetings; structured and documented reflection¹ is an important source of data for the network's evaluation. Given the value of structured reflection for continuous improvement, it is recommended this occurs regardless of whether there is new M&E data or not. At the network meetings, reflection could be scheduled to flow-on from the working party reports so that everyone has a clear idea of the activities undertaken since the previous meeting, which is a useful starting point for reflection.

The ongoing reflective sessions at network and working party meetings should include discussion and documentation of the groups' answers to the following questions:

- What have been the highlights since we last met?
- What challenges or issues have we encountered?
- Thinking about our program logic, what progress have we met since we last met?
- What new M&E data, if any, has been collected since we last met?
- What is the data telling us?
- What is/isn't working?
- How can we improve?
- Thinking about what we have discussed, are there any potential cases for a Most Significant Change story/s?
- What data collection, if any, do we need to do between now and when we next meet?

3.6. Future planning

The 2017 evaluation report and the network and working party's ongoing reflection and learning will be critical inputs into the network's future planning, including development of the strategic plan for 2017 and beyond. Data collected in relation to the KEQs will help shape strategic planning in the following ways:

- KEQ1: will help the network understand if they have achieved what they planned to and how far they progressed towards achieving the broader goals of the strategic plan. Demonstrating effectiveness will also enable the network to promote and celebrate achievements and better understand what does and does not work in their community.
- KEQ2: will help the network understand if they are meeting the needs of local children, families and communities. Through helping the network understand if they (including the Working parties) are focused on the right priorities, or, if priorities have changed, data collection in relation to KEQ2 will also critically inform the network's future priorities.
- KEQ3: will help the network understand if its delivery model (i.e. an overarching network with working parties) is the most effective and efficient way to achieve the child, family and community outcomes they are seeking. This will be significant in shaping future delivery modes of the strategy.
- KEQ4: will help to network and working parties consider and document their future direction.

¹ Documented in meeting minutes

3.7. Reporting

Below are the specific reporting requirements for the network's M&E activities. This includes continual reflection and improvement reporting via the meeting minutes at each quarterly BCFCLN and working party meeting, as well as the evaluation report due in 2017 to the network, working parties, Mansfield Shire Council and evaluation funders.

Table 4: Reporting

Reporting to	What	When
BCFCLN	Meeting minutes	Quarterly
Working party	Meeting minutes	Quarterly
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• BCFCLN• Working parties• Mansfield Shire Council• Evaluation funders	Evaluation report	September 2017