



# **RAWCS Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Policy**

**August 2024**

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## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 *Who we are*

1.1.1 Rotary Australia World Community Service Ltd (RAWCS) is a registered charity with the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC). We back doing good by supporting and facilitating a broad range of humanitarian and development projects, both in Australia and in developing countries. RAWCS administers three Tax Deductible funds:

1. **Rotary Australia Overseas Aid Fund (RAOAF):** This fund supports efforts by Rotary Clubs, Rotary Districts and other partners to deliver humanitarian assistance in developing countries. RAOAF focuses on both sustained development and immediate disaster response, working collaboratively with communities to deliver impactful, sustainable projects to meet identified needs.
2. **Rotary Australia Benevolent Society (RABS):** RABS supports Rotary Clubs, Rotary Districts and other partners to respond to specific community challenges within Australia. It offers an avenue for wider community involvement through tax-deductible donations. The Rotary Australia Compassionate Grants Projects within RABS uses matching funds from donations, such as those provided by Dick Smith's Trust, to assist Australians facing hardship.
3. **Rotary Australia Relief Fund (RARF):** This fund is dedicated to responding to national appeals and efficiently disbursing funds to appropriate aid projects. RARF's focus is on mobilising rapid support during national crises, such as natural disasters, providing a structured channel for public generosity to be transformed into effective aid. This fund acts as a hub for contributions from both Rotary and non-Rotary sources, ensuring swift and effective aid delivery to disaster-affected areas.

### 1.2 *Purpose*

1.2.1 The purpose of this policy is to set out the approach to assessing the performance of RAWCS's programs and projects.

### 1.3 *Scope and Governance*

1.3.1 This policy applies to RAWCS and all of its administered funds and subsidiaries – referred inclusively within this policy as RAWCS

1.3.2 This policy applies to all RAWCS staff, volunteers, Board members, committee members, suppliers and contractors. Within this policy all of these are represented by the term: "**our people**". It also extends to all our partners.

### 1.3 *Policy References*

- ACFID Code of Conduct
- RAWCS Code of Conduct
- RAWCS Child Safeguarding Policy and Code of Conduct
- RAWCS Prevention of Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment Policy
- RAWCS Disability Inclusion Policy
- RAWCS Gender Equity Policy
- RAWCS Whistleblower Policy and Procedure
- RAWCS Complaints Policy and Procedure

- RAWCS Risk Management Framework
- RAWCS Cyber Security Policy

## 1.4 Definitions

Term	Definition
<b>Monitoring</b>	The routine collection, analysis and use of data, usually internally, to track how an initiative's previously identified activities, outputs and outcomes are progressing.
<b>Evaluation</b>	The systematic process of collecting and synthesising evidence to determine the merit, worth, value or significance of an initiative. Evaluation needs to be planned for and embedded within the management of a project or program.
<b>Learning</b>	The reflection on lessons learnt from the project delivery to guide and enable continuous improvement for future project delivery.
<b>Learning organisation</b>	An organisation that creates an environment which produces honest, accurate, high-quality information and where learning from mistakes as well as successes is valued and celebrated.

## 2. Principles

### 2.1 Guiding Principles

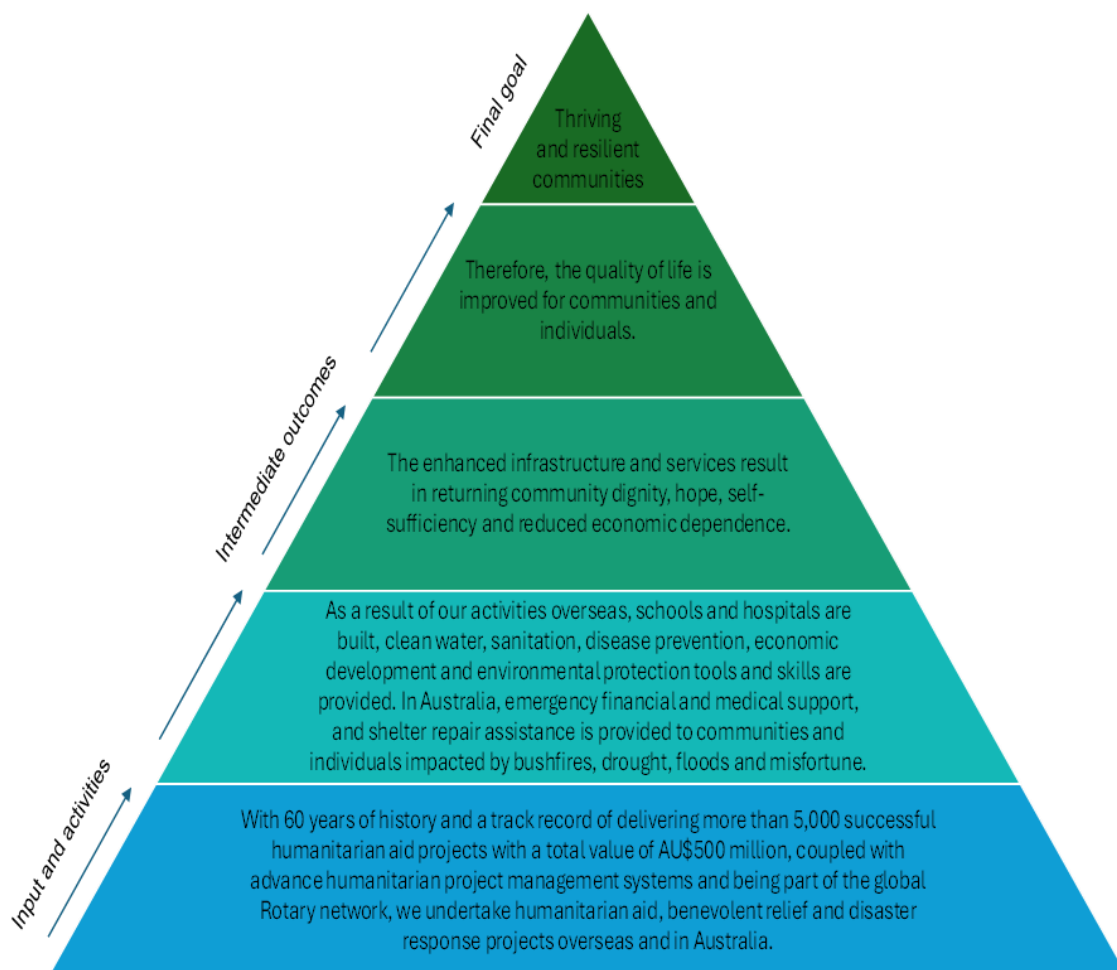
The following principles guide the approach to MEL at RAWCS:

- 2.1.1 **Stakeholder participation:** ensure that the needs and priorities of all stakeholders are taken into account throughout the process.
- 2.1.2 **Relevance:** programs and projects are designed to meet the needs and priorities of program participants and stakeholders.
- 2.1.3 **Efficiency:** Monitoring and evaluation are conducted in a timely and cost-effective manner.
- 2.1.4 **Sustainability:** Monitoring and evaluation activities should be designed to assess not only the short-term impact but also the long-term sustainability of the programs or projects.
- 2.1.5 **Ethical considerations:** Monitoring and evaluation should be conducted in an ethical manner that upholds the dignity and rights of all individuals involved, including program participants, staff, volunteers and stakeholders.
- 2.1.6 **Learning and Improvement:** Monitoring and evaluation activities should be designed to identify strengths and weaknesses of programs and projects, and make recommendations for future action to improve performance and impact.

### 3. Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Framework

#### 3.1 RAWCS Theory of Change

- 3.1.1 The Framework is not an all-encompassing system designed to capture all the information required by our people at different levels to track, report and communicate progress and results to internal and external stakeholders (which occurs through a range of reporting processes). Rather, it articulates the types of information we require to understand the extent to which our activities bring results and learn about how to improve the effectiveness of our approaches.
- 3.1.2 A theory of change can be used to provide a conceptual framework for monitoring, for evaluation or for an integrated MEL framework.
- 3.1.3 The RAWCS Theory of Change serves as a guiding framework, outlining our approach, objectives, and expected outcomes. At the heart of the RAWCS Theory of Change lies a comprehensive understanding of the interconnected elements necessary for effective community development. This theory outlines a structured approach to mobilising resources, fostering partnerships, and implementing sustainable projects.



### 3.2 *Planning*

3.2.1 At the start of any project or program, RAWCS will ensure that a comprehensive MEL plan is developed. The plan will include:

- **The rationale and context for the project or program:** a description of the geographic location, the proposed timing, the target group with a rationale why they were selected.
- **Goals, objectives and indicators:** the goal is the wider aspiration of the project or program; the objectives describe the changes the project or program intend to bring about; the indicators identify whether progress has been made against the objectives.
- **Project or program design:** a description of key working processes, a clear description of what activities will be undertaken over the project period, including an exit strategy.
- **Key people:** This will include main partners, program participants, stakeholders and their role in the project or program.
- **Inclusion of vulnerable and marginalised groups:** Consideration of how vulnerable marginalised and excluded people have participated and what strategies have been used to address their needs, rights and inclusion, in particular, promoting gender equality and the empowerment of people with disabilities.
- **The inclusion of children with programs that target them:** Ensure meaningful inclusion of children in programs designed for them.
- **Resources:** What resources the project or program need for implementation, including human resources and financial resources.
- **Monitoring and evaluation:** this should include any baselines completed, how the project or program will be monitored, when evaluations will be carried out, reporting schedules and details of how learning will be shared both within and outside the project or program

### 3.3 *Stakeholder analysis*

3.3.1 Effective stakeholder participation is crucial for the success of RAWCS projects and programs. A stakeholder analysis will be conducted at the outset to identify and categorise stakeholders as primary, secondary, or tertiary. This categorisation guides how and when each group should be involved:

- **Primary Stakeholders:** Program participants or users of the program's services.
- **Secondary Stakeholders:** Partners such as statutory agencies, voluntary groups, private sector entities, and potential co-funders.
- **Tertiary Stakeholders:** Entities like suppliers, customers, contractors, and regulatory bodies that may become important for long-term sustainability.

3.3.2 Stakeholder involvement will be guided by the following considerations:

- Clarify stakeholders' expectations and potential benefits.
- Identify resources stakeholders may contribute.
- Address any conflicting interests.
- Ensure diverse representation and inclusion.
- Establish clear processes and ground rules for collaboration.

- 3.3.3 A diverse range of stakeholders with different perspectives might also be consulted about the scope of the evaluation or on specific issues such as the accuracy of the program logic or the interpretation of findings.

### **3.4 Document management processes and agreements**

- 3.4.1 It is important to document decisions about the management of evaluative activities, including any processes for monitoring compliance with ethical and quality standards during the evaluation. These documents will also ensure that different stakeholders, whether funders, partner organisations, communities or expert advisors are clear about what is being done, how and when, and their responsibilities and accountabilities for the evaluation.

### **3.5 Data Collection Tools**

- 3.5.1 **Interviews:** Interviews can be carried out with an individual or a group of people and can be structured with a core set of questions or semi-structured also with a set of questions but giving the interviewer the opportunity to ask further questions as required.
- 3.5.2 **Focus Group Discussions:** Facilitated discussions held with small groups of 6-12 people based around a short list of guiding questions, to explore in-depth information. Focus groups are aimed at including people who may not be willing to speak alone or in larger meetings.
- 3.5.3 **Observation:** Observations can be direct (external observer watches and records) or participatory (the observer becomes part of the setting for a period of time). Observations can also be carried out as a participatory exercise where the clients are involved in the observation exercise.
- 3.5.4 **Questionnaires/Surveys:** Questionnaires designed to collect information from many people in a consistent way, often a printed form, where responses can then be coded consistently.
- 3.5.5 **Case Studies:** A case study is a way of setting out results in a story that can be descriptive or explanatory providing in-depth information on a topic that has often been acquired through an interview or observation.
- 3.5.6 **Media Monitoring:** Media monitoring encompasses a range of processes for tracking the appearance in the media of matters of interest (e.g. child labour issues). This is typically outsourced to an agency and increasingly employs electronic search technology.
- 3.5.7 **Examining existing data:** Existing data is available in through a range of government reports, statistics, other organisations' project reports, existing MEL data in other projects and published literature.

### **3.6 A guide to help decide which tools to use**

- 3.6.1 **What information are you looking for?** Is it quantitative/ qualitative? Is it sensitive? Is it about changes in knowledge, attitudes, practice?
- 3.6.2 **Who has that information?** Women, children, excluded or vulnerable groups? Where is it? Is it easy to collect?

3.6.3 **When** – can it only be collected or gained at certain times? What timeframes/deadlines are you working towards?

3.6.4 **Why are you using a certain tool?** Is it the most appropriate/cost and time effective

### **3.7 Ethical data collection**

#### **3.7.1 Getting consent to collect information**

Ask yourself:

- Do you have permission from users or participants to collect their data?
- Have they been made aware that their involvement is voluntary?
- Is it clear that participants are free to withdraw from any active data collection program at any point without pressure or fear of retaliation?

#### **3.7.2 Protecting users' confidentiality and anonymity when collecting data**

Where possible, avoid collecting personally identifiable information. Ask yourself:

- Do you really need to collect personally identifiable information at all?
- If yes, have you taken steps to de-identify a dataset by removing all personally identifiable information data before analysing or sharing the insights?
- Have you considered how different data points could be used in conjunction to reverse engineer identity or identifying characteristics?

#### **3.7.3 What do you intend to do with the data you're collecting?**

If you collect information just because you think it might be useful for the future there is a very good chance it will never be used. Ask yourself:

- How will this data contribute to my overall aim?
- Could this data point be used in conjunction with others to reveal personally identifiable information?
- What would the results mean for my overall predictions or aims?

### **3.8 Guiding questions for data collection**

#### **3.8.1 Change questions:**

- 1) What knowledge, practice, systems and policy changes have the project contributed to?
- 2) To what extent are these changes (knowledge, practice, systems) resulting in changes in people's lives (boys, girls, men, women, gender diverse people, people with disability, minority ethnic groups), (access to assets, power, protection)?
- 3) What are the unintended outcomes of the project, both positive and negative?
- 4) What is the likely sustainability of outcomes?

#### **3.8.2 Process questions:**

- 1) What is the quality and relevance of our interventions?
- 2) Are the strategies and approaches used the right ones needed to bring about the outcomes we are seeking?
- 3) Have the right partners and stakeholders been appropriately engaged by the project to bring about the outcomes sought?
- 4) What are the key successes and what factors underpin success?
- 5) What key challenges have been encountered and how effectively were they overcome?



**3.8.3 Learning questions:**

- 1) For stakeholders that have received capacity building support, what enables them to apply and use new knowledge and skills, and what hinders and prevents them?
- 2) What motivates and inspires stakeholders to act and make change (i.e. lead actions or drive systems change)?
- 3) What can be learned about how RAWCS should focus its activities, expertise and resources in this location and sector in order to have the greatest impact?

**3.9 Analysing Data**

**3.9.1 Collect and store data:** Gather all data, like surveys, interviews, and notes, in one place. Keep it organised and secure.

**3.9.2 Organise and log data:** Label and record all data using a simple system. Note down details like dates and who was involved.

**3.9.3 Process the Data:** Review the data to understand it. Group it by type (numbers or text) and key topics.

**3.9.4 Analyse and Interpret:** Look for patterns and key points in the data. Think about what it tells you and whether it supports your program goals.

**3.9.5 Validate Findings:** Share your findings with others for feedback. Adjust based on their input to ensure accuracy.

**3.10 Final evaluation report**

**3.10.1** A final report brings together the story of your evaluation in one place. It explains to the reader:

- the context and purpose of the evaluation;
- the way in which you intend to measure change;
- your data collection story;
- what you found; and
- what meaning you have made from your data. Meaning, in your evaluation, is made by using the data to answer your evaluation questions.

**3.10.2** In terms of structure, a template for evaluation reports includes the following sections:

- executive summary;
- introduction that contains background and/or context to the project itself, and the evaluation;
- methodology and data collection methods;
- findings (often grouped in themes);
- conclusions/insights – your ‘evaluative’ view (the ‘value’ part of ‘evaluation’); and
- recommendations.

**3.11 Learning**

**3.11.1** RAWCS is committed to creating an environment which produces honest, accurate, high quality MEL information and where learning from mistakes as well as successes is valued and celebrated.

3.11.2 RAWCS is dedicated to embedding learning into every aspect of our work. The following principles outline how learning is integrated into our MEL processes:

- Learning is recognised as a fundamental part of each individual’s role within RAWCS. It is considered an integral part of job responsibilities.
- Learning is actively promoted within RAWCS. We foster a learning culture by encouraging our people to contribute to the continuous improvement of the organisation’s practices and policies.
- RAWCS ensures that sufficient resources, including time and financial support, are allocated to facilitate learning and development initiatives that align with our MEL objectives.
- RAWCS is committed to identifying and overcoming internal barriers to learning.

3.11.3 RAWCS is committed to recognising and thanking volunteers who contribute to data collection efforts, fostering a culture where monitoring, evaluation, and learning are valued.

3.11.4 RAWCS will undertake to provide training to ensure staff and volunteers have the required skills to undertake MEL activities.

## 4. Roles and Responsibilities

Roles	Responsibilities
<b>National Board of Directors</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Approving this policy and holding the CEO accountable to how effectively this policy is implemented.</li> </ul>
<b>CEO</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement and track the effectiveness of this policy.</li> </ul>
<b>National Manager Projects &amp; Volunteers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure adequate resources are allocated in project budgets to cover MEL-related activities, including reviews and evaluations.</li> <li>• Ensure each project has a MEL plan and it is implemented.</li> </ul>
<b>RAWCS Regional Projects Supervisor</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure adequate resources are allocated in project budgets to cover MEL-related activities, including reviews and evaluations.</li> <li>• Ensure each project has a MEL plan and oversee implementation.</li> </ul>
<b>District RAWCS Chair</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure adequate resources are allocated in project budgets to cover MEL-related activities, including reviews and evaluations.</li> <li>• Ensure each project has a MEL plan and it is implemented.</li> </ul>
<b>All our people</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read and understand this policy.</li> <li>• Contribute to evidence gathering and monitoring and evaluation as required.</li> </ul>

## 5. Policy Distribution

5.1 We will ensure that all our people are notified of and made aware that they are required to comply with the policy.

## 6. Review

- 6.1. We are committed to continuous improvement to our policy, procedures and practices. This policy will be reviewed at least every three years by the CEO and approved by the National Board of Directors to ensure it is working in practice and updated as required.
- 6.2. Feedback on this and other policies is openly encouraged from our people, partners, stakeholders and the communities we work with. Feedback, as well as emerging good practice and collaborative lessons learnt across the development sector, will be used to strengthen this and related policies and procedures.

## 7. More information

- 7.1. If you have a query about this policy or need more information, you can contact us via:
- email: [info@rawcs.org.au](mailto:info@rawcs.org.au)
  - phone: +61 2 8833 8306
  - post: Rotary Australia World Community Service Ltd  
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Norwest NSW 2153

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### *Document Revision History*

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