Our children; every choice; every chance

BEYOND THE BELL MEASURING IMPACT FRAMEWORK – Executive Summary

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Executive Summary

This report outlines a conceptual framework and lifecycle to guide Beyond the Bell's evaluation work in the future, as well as a series of measurement plans for each Strategic Priority Area. The work in this report reflects the activities and direction of Beyond the Bell at the time it was written. The framework is designed to be a living document that grows and adapts alongside the work over time. This evolution will be supported by regular reviews of the framework and indicators, undertaken collaboratively between Beyond the Bell Board, staff, and Local Action Group representatives.

Conceptual framework summary
The dynamic theoretical underpinnings of Beyond the Bell's work lead us to consider how the work, and the nature of its impacts, changes over time. In order to capture this, we have used a 'splash and ripple' metaphor to inform the mapping, monitoring and evaluation of Beyond the Bell's work.

Our monitoring, evaluation and learning plans for each element of Beyond the Bell (Evaluating the Collective, Evaluating the Overall Effort, and Evaluating Strategic Priorities) have been structured to indicate the types of things we can expect to measure and reflect on at various time points.
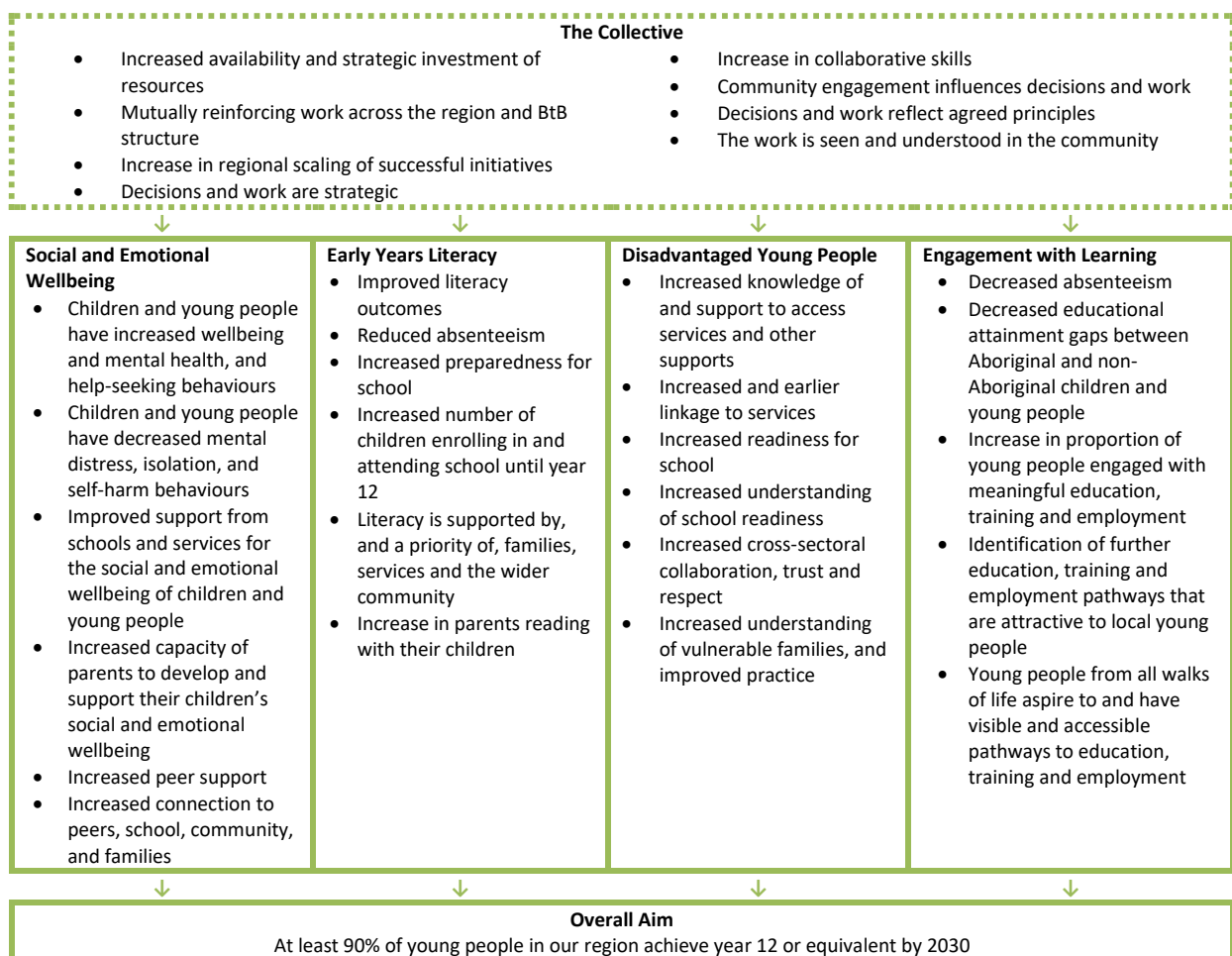
	Digging up the stone (Year 0)	Throwing the stone (Years 0-3)	Splash (Years 3-5)	Ripples (Years 3-5)	Ripples hitting the shore (Years 5-10)
Evaluating the Overall Effort	**Starting conditions** *e.g. interconnections, communication, values*	**Enablers for change** *e.g. resources*	**Local systems change** *e.g. processes, place-based work*	**Systemic change embedded** *e.g. self-organisation, learning and adaptation*	**Emergence** *e.g. evolution beyond the scope of individual projects*
	In our work, this looks like…				
Evaluating the Collective	**Backbone support** *e.g. providing forums, processes, opportunities to facilitate co-work*	**Evolution of partnership** *e.g. communication, collaboration, knowledge exchange, structure*	**Evolution of work by partners** *e.g. co-production of initiatives, trusting relationships, processes, changes in knowledge, behaviours and attitudes*	**Positive impacts** *e.g. more seamless, appropriate, or sensitive governance structures*	**Positive outcomes** *e.g. funding*
Evaluating Strategic Priority Areas	**Pre-existing conditions + inputs** *e.g. community readiness, existing relationships, resources*	**Strategies / activities** *e.g. offer professional development opportunities*	**Outputs** *e.g. workshop for educators*	**Positive impacts (for "next users")** *e.g. increased educator capacity to deliver trauma informed care*	**Positive outcomes (for "end users")** *e.g. increased student engagement with school*

Table 1

Measurement plan summary

A series of 76 medium-term and long-term indicators are available to measure progress against the four strategic priority areas, plus 'the collective' effort. A small number of indicators will be matched to each local project, using the program logic and aims of each LAG as a guide. A summary of key indicators can be found below.

The Collective

- Increased availability and strategic investment of resources
- Mutually reinforcing work across the region and BtB structure
- Increase in regional scaling of successful initiatives
- Decisions and work are strategic
- Increase in collaborative skills
- Community engagement influences decisions and work
- Decisions and work reflect agreed principles
- The work is seen and understood in the community

Social and Emotional Wellbeing	Early Years Literacy	Disadvantaged Young People	Engagement with Learning
- Children and young people have increased wellbeing and mental health, and help-seeking behaviours - Children and young people have decreased mental distress, isolation, and self-harm behaviours - Improved support from schools and services for the social and emotional wellbeing of children and young people - Increased capacity of parents to develop and support their children's social and emotional wellbeing - Increased peer support - Increased connection to peers, school, community, and families	- Improved literacy outcomes - Reduced absenteeism - Increased preparedness for school - Increased number of children enrolling in and attending school until year 12 - Literacy is supported by, and a priority of, families, services and the wider community - Increase in parents reading with their children	- Increased knowledge of and support to access services and other supports - Increased and earlier linkage to services - Increased readiness for school - Increased understanding of school readiness - Increased cross-sectoral collaboration, trust and respect - Increased understanding of vulnerable families, and improved practice	- Decreased absenteeism - Decreased educational attainment gaps between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children and young people - Increase in proportion of young people engaged with meaningful education, training and employment - Identification of further education, training and employment pathways that are attractive to local young people - Young people from all walks of life aspire to and have visible and accessible pathways to education, training and employment

Overall Aim
At least 90% of young people in our region achieve year 12 or equivalent by 2030

Our aims for this work

Partners and staff of Beyond the Bell identified the following aims of developing this evaluation framework:

- Address the complexity of intersecting issues and contributing factors
- Leverage stories of our work and successes
- Increase our ability to advocate for the benefits of our work, to attract funding
- Ensure our evaluation has rigour
- Align our monitoring efforts with other wellbeing initiatives, and share data and resources where possible
- Clearly communicate our indicators to each other, to funders, and to the wider community
- Build a culture of evaluation within Beyond the Bell

The benefits of evaluation

In addition to the above, this evaluation framework will support the interests of a number of stakeholders, including:

- Beyond the Bell Local Action Groups and partners, by ensuring activities are as effective and relevant as possible;
- the regional collective, by enabling the identification and expansion of effective projects, and effective advocacy; and
- funding bodies, by demonstrating the outputs and impacts of initiatives.

Measuring our work

The conceptual framework above gives us the opportunity to use both **monitoring** and **evaluation** to describe Beyond the Bell's work. Both are important, and are used for different purposes.

Monitoring is a way of getting updates on how an initiative is tracking towards its goals. Imagine going on a bushwalk: as you travel through the forest, you stop to check where you are using your compass and map. You can compare that to where you thought you'd be, and where you're hoping to go. This information can help us measure the distance, direction, and speed that we have travelled.

Evaluation is a way of giving meaning to experiences and initiatives. On the same bushwalk, we might sit down at the end of the day and have a group debrief: What did we enjoy about the day? What worked well, and what didn't? What were some unexpected things that we had to deal with? This information can help us determine meaning and value, to describe *why* we had the results that we did, and to refine our future efforts.

Before we monitor our progress and evaluate our efforts, we need to decide on **indicators**. These are the evidence, or proof, that we have made progress or that our work is important. In our bushwalking example, the indicators are our compass bearings, our map coordinates, or the number of steps we have taken. Drafting indicators for community-based work – determining what sort of compass and map we need to give the project just the right kind of information - is a particularly

tricky task that usually involves trial and error. Indicators need to give accurate and reliable evidence, and the information has to be easy to gather and useful to those making management decisions. Indicators may be qualitative (descriptive) or quantitative (numerical).

This framework offers a mixed methods approach, which used both quantitative and qualitative data to investigate the initiative. This will assist Beyond the Bell in adequately describing the complexity of the work, and also in identifying unexpected impacts. Where possible, multiple data sources including both qualitative and quantitative data should be used to evaluate each element of a project – this is sometimes called 'data triangulation'. This enables us to see the same output or impact from multiple perspectives, to ensure that we have a reliable and true description of what's going on.
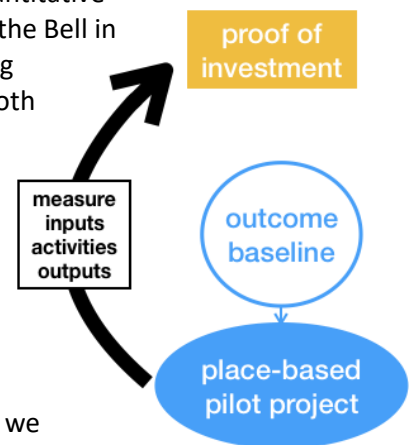
Figure 4: Proof of investment evaluation loop

The evaluation life cycle

The splash and ripple framework (Table 1) shows us that *what* and *how* we measure our progress changes over time. The reason *why*, or the explicit benefits, of evaluating our work also changes over time.

In the early stages of a new place-based project, practitioners are often working with *emerging practice*: they are undertaking work that they reasonably suspect will bring about change, based on data (outcome baseline), adapting relevant ideas from other sectors or places, or local knowledge. As the work is starting, capturing project starting conditions, and monitoring inputs, activities and outputs ('digging up the stone', 'throwing the stone', 'stone splash') offer us **proof of investment.** This demonstrates to funding bodies and partners that we are doing what we said we would, and how we said we would do it, with what they gave us.

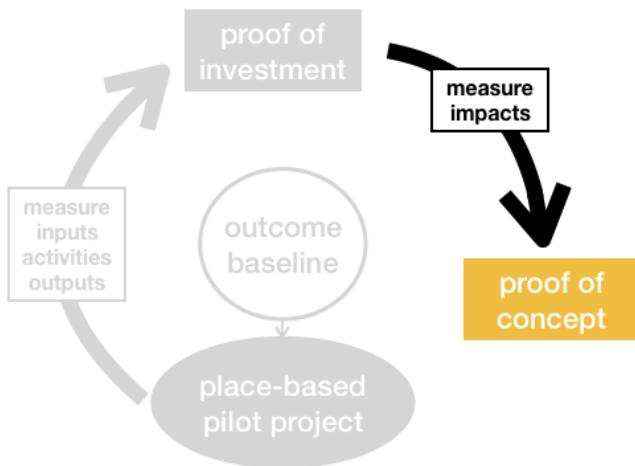Our children; every choice; every chance

Figure 5: Proof of concept evaluation loop

Monitoring and evaluating project outputs and impacts ('stone splash' and 'ripples') demonstrate a link between our activities and the changes that we are seeing in a particular community, or **proof of concept.** This demonstrates to Beyond the Bell, the community, and also importantly to potential funding bodies, that the logic model and assumptions that underpin a particular initiative are accurate, and have been tested. In other words, the project becomes *promising practice.* At this point, an external qualitative evaluation can be useful, to interrogate 'why' and 'for what purpose' / 'for who' change occurred or did not occur.

At this point, an initiative that has been piloted in one community can be tested in a second community. Repeating the monitoring and evaluation cycle again for starting conditions, inputs, outputs, and impacts in a second community shows whether the project model is adaptable to different contexts. This is **proof of replication**. At this point, a project logic model can be adapted to incorporate learnings from implementing the same idea in multiple contexts. This might include which parts of a project are integral and which are negotiable, and specifics of how project elements can be adapted to suit various situations. It may be useful to undertake a second, external qualitative evaluation.
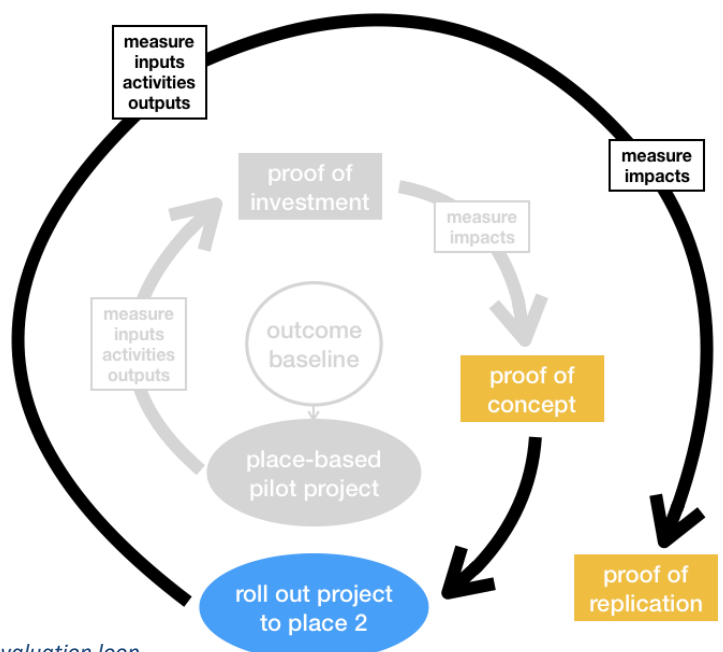

Figure 6: Proof of replication evaluation loop

The refined project and logic model can now be applied at a wider, regional level. Any measurement of inputs, activity, and outputs at this stage are for project monitoring purposes only: to help practitioners on the ground to do their work as efficiently as possible. Impacts and outcomes should be monitored regularly, to ensure that the expected changes are occurring. If the anticipated changes do occur, including longer-term health, social, and educational outcomes, this offers **proof of practice**: the project can reliably be rolled out across multiple areas, with consistent and demonstrated success. If Beyond the Bell chooses to report on their evaluation findings, for example through research publications, the project or approach may become *best practice*.
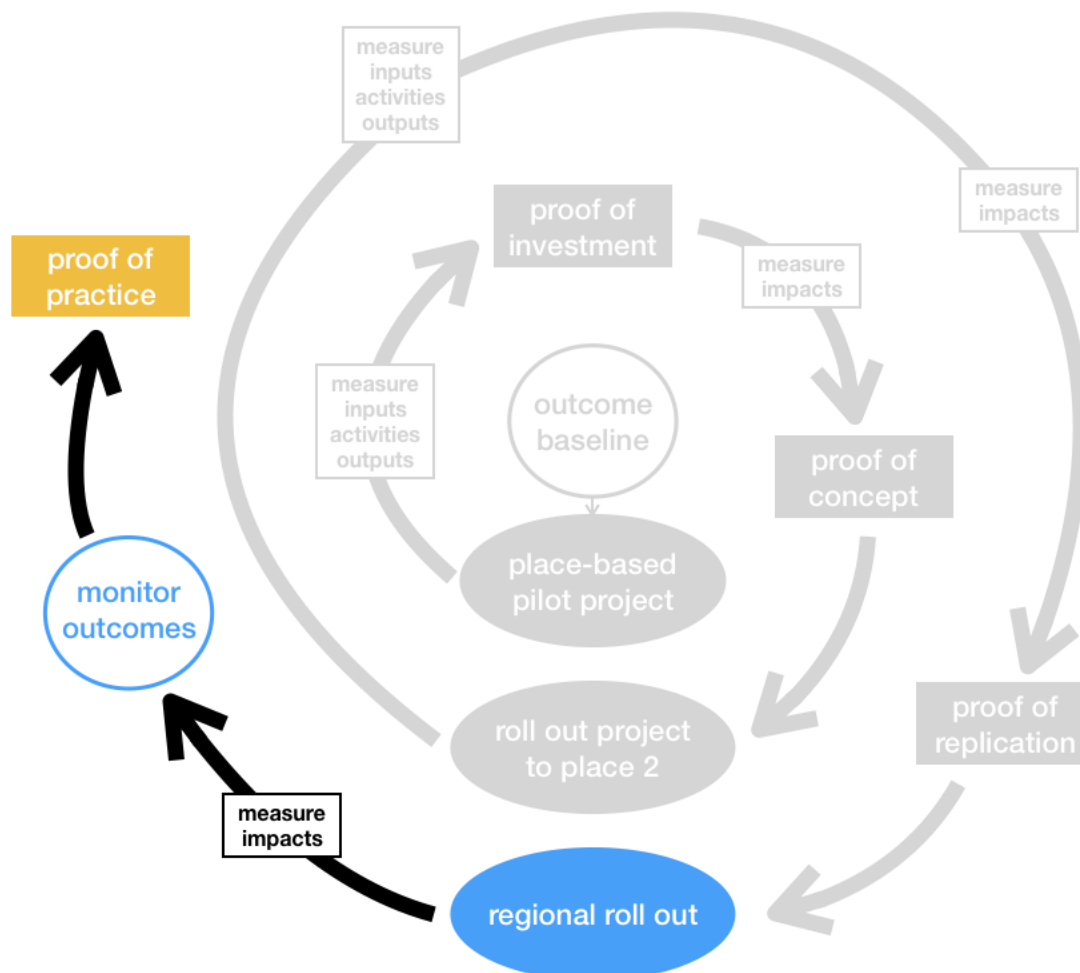

Figure 7: Proof of practice evaluation loop

To enhance the perceived quality, objectivity, and validity of evaluation throughout this cycle, there are particular points that it may be useful to engage an external evaluator or university researcher partnership (noted on Figure 5 as green stars). Utilising these external resources is potentially

important if Beyond the Bell wishes to contribute to the evidence base by publishing research articles, or successfully influencing 'best practice' standards.
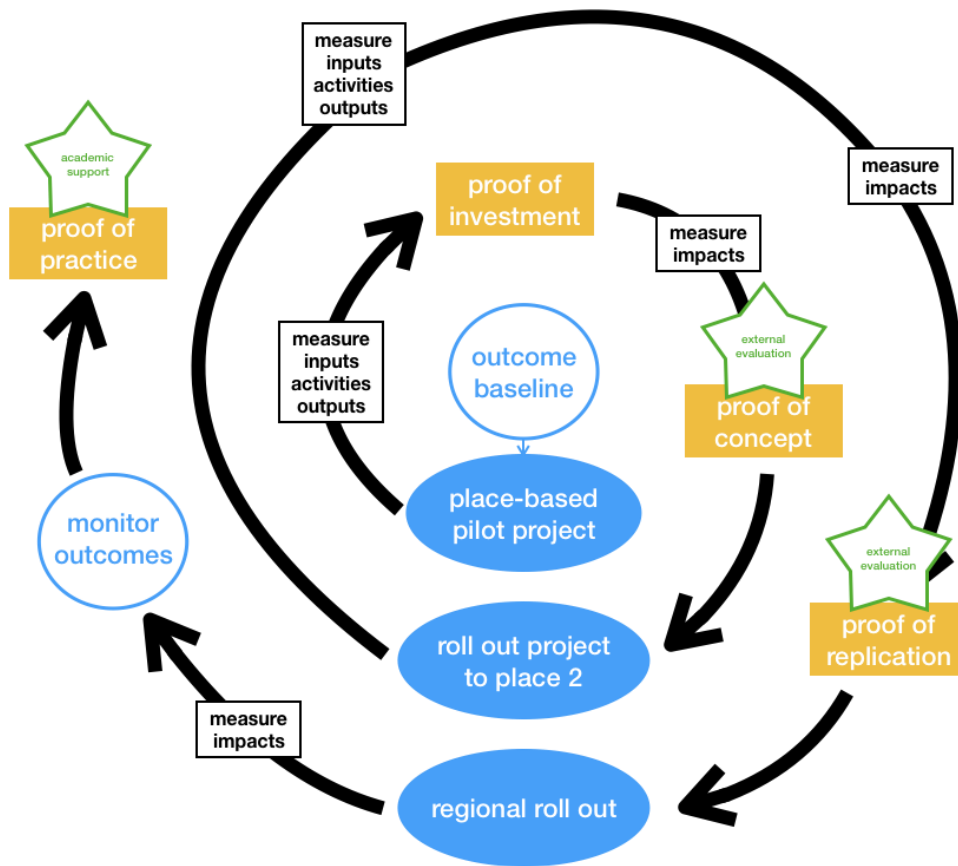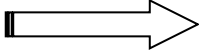

Figure 8: Evaluation loop with external input

Evaluation templates

PROJECT BACKGROUND : What is the central reason (ie. the why?) we are doing this? PROJECT SCOPE:		NAME INITIATIVE/PROJECT:		
		PROJECT PURPOSE:		PROJECT TIMEFRAME:

HOW?				WHAT WE WANT?		WHY?
INPUTS *(stone)*	ACTIVITIES *(throwing the stone)*	WHO	TIME FRAMES	OUTPUTS *(stone splash)*	SHORT TERM IMPACTS *(next users / ripples)*	LONGER TERM IMPACTS *(end users / ripples hitting the shore)*

Understanding the project to be evaluated – what success would look like & links to broader goals

What would success look like for your project? What will the next-users be doing differently as a direct result of your project? Success at this level should describe what your project is <u>directly responsible</u> for.	What would success look like at the broader (community/society) level? If your next users are intermediaries, what change will they bring about for others? How does this success contribute towards improved economic, social and environmental conditions?
Next User Groups	End user groups

Indicators, outputs and outcomes

| **INDICATORS** |
| This is the evidence, or proof, needed to show progress toward your outputs and outcomes. Imagine the dials and displays inside the cockpit of an airplane. These provide important information to the pilots about the performance status of the plane and its position in relation to its destination.

Without these indicators, the pilots would have very little to guide them on their journey. Drafting indicators – determining which dials and displays are going to give the project just the right kind of information - is a particularly tricky task that usually involves trial and error. Indicators need to give accurate and reliable evidence; the information has to be easy to gather and useful to those making management decisions.

Indicators can be quantitative or qualitative. |

Indicators What's already being collected? By whom and how often? What's not being collected that we need to collect?	**Outputs**	**Shorter term impacts** **(next users)**	**Longer term impacts** **(end users)**
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			
6.			
7.			
8.			
9.			

Choosing Methods: considering alternatives – exercises

Method	Advantages	Disadvantages	Appropriateness
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			
6.			

Management, Utilisation and Learning Strategies

Managing the monitoring and learning: (a range of people may be needed for the different activities)	
1. Who will manage the implementation of the MEL plan	
2. Who will develop the formats	
3. Who will collect routine monitoring data?	
4. Who will compile it into the results ladder?	
5. How often?	
6. When will the team reflect on monitoring data?	
7. How will you ensure lessons are captured and used to improve practice?	

Evaluation: (a range of people may be needed for the different activities)	
1. Who will conduct the fieldwork to address the evaluation questions? – additional resources required?	
2. Who will develop the final evaluation findings/recommendations?	
3. How will the results of the final evaluation be presented and reported?	