



# The Evaluation Capacity Building Project

Developing an evaluation capacity assessment tool and process for New Zealand NGOs

*Using Evidence for Impact*

AUGUST 2016



### About

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The Social Policy Evaluation and Research Unit's (Superu's) purpose is to increase the use of evidence by people across the social sector so that they can make better decisions – about funding, policies or services – to improve the lives of New Zealanders, New Zealand communities, families and whānau.

The *Using Evidence for Impact* project takes a big picture approach and aims to inspire all those working in the New Zealand social sector to use evidence in decision-making.

The objectives behind the programme are to drive:

- greater accessibility to evidence
- greater transparency of evidence
- capability development and good practice in using evidence.

### Acknowledgements

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Superu commissioned Research Evaluation Consultancy Limited – a member of the Kinnect Group to complete this research. Opinions expressed are those of Research Evaluation Consultancy Limited.

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Superu commissioned this report as part of our ongoing work to help Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) develop their evaluation capacity and inform funders about where they can best assist NGOs with building evaluation capacity. We are publishing the report so you can see where some of our later work originated.



## Evaluation team

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Superu contracted Research Evaluation Consultancy, a member of the Kinnect Group, to carry out this project. The team comprised Kate McKegg, Nan Wehipeihana, Kataraina Pipi and Pale Sauni.

## Kinnect Group Acknowledgements

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**Disclaimer:** The information in this report is presented in good faith using the information available to us at the time of preparation. It is provided on the basis that the authors of the report are not liable to any person or organisation for any damage or loss that may occur in relation to taking or not taking action in respect of any information or advice within this report.



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# Executive summary

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There is a growing expectation from government that NGOs receiving government funding are able to demonstrate their effectiveness. This Evaluation Capacity Building (ECB) project (the project) is one of several funded by the Social Policy Evaluation and Research Unit (Superu) to help position non-government organisations (NGOs) to grow and increase their evaluation culture, capacity and evidence base so they can improve their ability to demonstrate the impact their programmes and services are having for their clients, whānau and communities.

## Project Methodology

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The project involved developing and trialling an Evaluation Capacity Assessment (ECA) Tool through a process undertaken with three NGOs (Māori, Pacific and mainstream). It also involved supporting them to develop their Evaluation Capacity Building (ECB) strategy. There were three key components of the methodology: a brief literature scan<sup>1</sup> to inform the development of the ECA Tool; development of an ECA Tool; and a series of three workshops with the NGOs that focused on engaging NGOs in the ECB process, assessing NGOs' evaluation capacity and using NGOs' ECA results to develop their ECB strategy.

A participatory facilitation approach, including graphic facilitation (Agerbeck, 2012) and TetraMap (Brett & Brett, 2007), was used in the workshops. Individual and group feedback on the process and the ECA Tool was collected in each workshop. Brief interviews to capture feedback on the value of the ECA Tool and process were undertaken two to three months post completion of the project.

## The ECA Tool

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The literature and NGO feedback informed the development of the ECA Tool. Three key areas (i.e., contextual, organisational and individual/people), along with 12 dimensions (such as readiness, skills and knowledge, resources and infrastructure etc), were identified for assessing and developing evaluation capacity in organisations. For each of the 12 dimensions, 4-6 criteria were also identified (e.g., IT system fit for purpose). The areas, dimensions and criteria were all brought together into an assessment framework. A four-level rating scale of qualitative descriptors was attached to the framework to make the ECA Tool. The tool was developed as a paper-based questionnaire and graphic design services were used to enhance the presentation, understanding and ease of completion.

## Key evaluation findings

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NGOs were highly satisfied with their experience of the project and described the overall process as easy, engaging, informative and visionary. In particular, the style of facilitation contributed to a sense of safety, both to participate and culturally, i.e. participants felt safe to share their thoughts in a judgement-free environment. The workshops enabled NGOs to reflect on their practice and to identify what they value and consider markers for success. Participants were also highly satisfied with the process of trialling the ECA Tool (including having it explained, completing it, and making sense of the results), and expressed motivation to make use of the results and build evaluation capacity going forward.

After completion of the project, NGOs identified three main benefits of the ECA process: the process, in conjunction with the tool, enabled NGOs to explore their organisational strengths and areas for development; the importance of evaluation capacity within NGOs was elevated; and NGOs were able to develop a plan to 'kick start' or guide their evaluation capacity building activities.

## What did we learn about engaging NGOs in ECA and ECB?

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Overall, this project has shown that NGOs are able to engage effectively in data-based enquiry to make sense of ECA findings (e.g., link quantitative ECA results with own experience and knowledge). With the right support and resources in place, NGOs can undertake comprehensive evaluation capacity self-assessments in a relatively short timeframe (e.g., in this trial, NGOs committed three days<sup>2</sup> of approximately four to six hours duration over a four to six month period).

Key learnings from this project are that:

- Evidencing outcomes has become a key priority for NGOs and they are highly motivated to build evaluation capacity. In particular, NGOs are looking for ways to tell an evidence-based performance story that affirms who they are and meets the needs of funders (two things often experienced as being in tension).
- Both the literature and our experience indicate that ECB needs to be grounded in the context of NGO visions, values, goals and aspirations to be effective. For Māori and Pacific NGOs it is particularly pertinent that tools are responsive and relevant to their specific contexts.
- By using a facilitated process to link ECB to NGO values, principles and aspirations, NGOs can become very clear about the purpose and value of ECB to support evidence-based performance reporting and to demonstrate their worth to funders.

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<sup>2</sup> Excluding the initial evaluator introductory meeting and project briefing of approximately one to two hours.



- Our experience facilitating the ECB process mirrors the literature. Key factors that facilitate engagement and effectiveness include: a high degree of trust and ‘cultural fit’ between the NGO and external advisors; willingness, buy-in and involvement by people from all levels of the organisation; and an environment where people feel safe – culturally and as an active participant (e.g., to open up about organisational strengths and limitations).
- Participatory approaches and using visuals support meaningful and effective participation.

Key challenges for NGOs centred on knowing what to do with the ECA results, and limited resources within the organisations to realise their ECB visions. This presents an opportunity to support capacity building in this area and to provide examples of what providers might do and how to do it.

## Going forward

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Based on their extensive experience<sup>3</sup>, the evaluators are of the view that the ECA Tool and subsequent planning process are much more likely to be effective with external support and facilitation. This will go some way towards the sector’s ability to demonstrate performance and be more evaluative.

Something similar to MSD’s Community Investment Resource (CIR) – which provides the opportunity for organisations to work with a capability mentor to review and plan for their own capability development, or to put capability plans into action may be a suitable format for providing targeted ECA and/or ECB support.

Further, in the New Zealand context, whilst there has been some focus on developing the organisational capacity of NGOs, there is a lack of New Zealand specific tools and guidance for developing evaluation capacity. This ECB tool was developed as a prototype for this project and trialled with three NGOs. It goes some way towards addressing the gap but further refinement and testing of the tool are needed for wider use.

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<sup>3</sup> For example, ECB with 100 iwi and Māori providers for Child Youth and Family, and involvement in the development of the CIR tool and other evaluation capacity building.

# 01

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## Introduction





This document reports on the development and trialling process of an evaluation capacity assessment (ECA) tool for Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) as part of the Evaluation Capacity Building (ECB) Project (the project) funded by the Social Policy Evaluation and Research Unit (Superu). Superu contracted Research Evaluation Consultancy to implement and evaluate the project. A literature scan was undertaken to inform the development and trialling process and is provided in a separate document.

This section provides the background to the project in terms of the New Zealand policy and NGO context, an overview of the project and an outline of the project methodology. Section 2 presents a summary of findings from the literature scan whereas Section 3 summarises the development and trialling process. This is followed by evaluation findings from undertaking the development and trialling process and a collation of evaluator reflections in Section 4. Finally, Section 5 provides the conclusion.

## 1.1. Background to the project

### The policy context

At current, there is a strong government aspiration to build a more evidence-based approach to policy and investment in social services.

*As the Minister of Finance puts it, the current system is very strong on accountability for money but not so on accountability for results (Eppel, 2011, p. 14).*

One of the features of New Zealand's (and many other countries') government management over a number of years has been the use of results-based or outcomes-based frameworks as mechanisms of accountability. These frameworks rely on clear specifications of performance (at a number of levels of the system) as exemplified by this quote from a recent State Services paper: "A critical factor determining the performance of the public services is the clarity and focus of the results that they are seeking to deliver. If these results are clearly defined, it would be possible to organise the public services more effectively around those results" (State Services Commission, 2011a, p. 3).

The Ministry of Social Development's (MSD) Community Investment Strategy (CIS) is another example of the emerging results orientation in the public sector. The strategy clearly signals a focus on results, that is, that "things are getting better for individuals, families, whānau and communities because of the services being delivered" (Ministry of Social Development, 2015).

Results or outcomes-focused public management also relies on high-quality performance data, reporting and assessment (Bourgeois & Cousins, 2013; Boston & Gill, 2011). The recent CIS also signals a focus on "evaluating service effectiveness to help providers and ourselves understand what works to make a difference in people's lives" (Ministry of Social Development, 2015, p. 4). The strategy is strongly supported by a results measurement framework that is intended to ensure MSD focuses "on the right results", measures the right things and has certainty that the work being done "is making a measurable difference in people's lives" (Ministry of Social Development, 2015, p. 12). This framework is an example of a sector-wide orientation to results clarification and specification.

Recent research indicates that, although there is more performance data in government systems, there are still many questions about the use and usefulness of the data for decision-making and budget allocation (State Services Commission, 2011b). It is now being suggested in the literature that there may be a need for support to increase the capacity of organisations delivering services to collect and use data to make decisions (Bourgeois & Cousins, 2013). The CIS signals recognition of this need for support for NGOs to grow their organisational capacity to implement services, collect data and monitor and evaluate their services.

### **The NGO context in New Zealand**

The increasing emphasis on outcomes in government is replicated in the NGO sector. There are growing expectations among funders (government, private and philanthropic) of NGOs that they will be able to clearly articulate their intent and purpose, understand the needs they are addressing, as well as their theory of change, and be able to measure and report on their activities, results and effectiveness (Cousins et al, 2008).

In an environment characterised by shrinking budgets and increased competition, accountability to funders is very much about demonstrating programme and service results and value for money. For NGOs, being able to do this is a matter of survival; without evidence of programme and service intent, and quality of delivery and results, hopes of ongoing financial support are much less realistic.

Recent dialogue with the community sector found that NGOs and community organisations have come a long way in the last few years in relation to reporting on outcomes, with some having good levels of understanding of tools and approaches for doing so. However, there remain many organisations that are uncertain as to what is required, or how to go about reporting on outcomes.<sup>4</sup>

Although there has been investment made by government into broad-based NGO organisational development through the Capability Investment Resource (CIR) Fund, in place since 2012, this resource has not necessarily addressed capacity in relation to evaluation, outcome and results specification, measurement and reporting. There is still a real need for support for NGOs to identify, understand and report on their effectiveness, results and outcomes.

There is strong support in the sector for building cultures of learning and improvement in ways that recognise the diversity of the sector and the many needs of whānau and individuals. Whilst there is scepticism about measurement, there are also high levels of interest in developing the capacity to use a range of tools and approaches in ways that are practically useful and proportionate to the size and scale of organisations (Nowland-Foreman, 2013).

## **1.2. The Evaluation Capacity Building Project**

### **Purpose and intent**

As outlined above, there is a growing desire by government to improve the evidence they have about the outcomes that are being achieved by the NGOs they fund to deliver services to New Zealanders.

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<sup>4</sup> See Social Development Partners <http://www.socialdevelopment.org.nz/featured/having-community-dialogue/>



There is also a growing desire among NGOs themselves to improve their own understanding of the results they are achieving as well as the quality of their service delivery, as this aligns very much with their aspirations to make a difference for those communities they are working among and with.<sup>5</sup> In order to achieve this, the government is aware that many NGOs require further support to develop the evaluative/evidence capacity needed to design and implement systems that can document, measure, analyse and report on the quality, value and impact of what they do.

The questions of how government might target support to NGOs, what kind of support might be needed (i.e. nature, size, subsector of NGOs etc.) and what form the support might take are still to be answered.

### Trialling an ECA Tool and process

This project forms one part of the response to the above questions as it focused on understanding the ability of NGOs to self-assess their own evaluation capacity and capability.

The project aimed to develop a tool and process that can support NGOs to self-assess and develop plans for improving their evaluation culture and capacity that Superu and other government agencies can also use as part of their targeting of NGO support.

However, the tool can also be used with external facilitation. There are some clear benefits gained from having the support of an independent facilitator, such as managing power dynamics, eliciting feedback and contributions at all levels of the organisation through probing and reflective questions, and being a critical friend by creating the environment for free and frank sharing.

The project is one of several funded by Superu to help position NGOs to grow and increase their evaluation culture, capacity and evidence base so they can improve their ability to demonstrate the impact their programmes and services are having for their clients, whānau and communities. The evaluation fund has two focus areas:

1. The pilot fund, which targets specific priority programmes delivered by selected NGO providers with a focus on outcomes, impacts and effectiveness.
2. The advice and expertise fund, which focuses on increasing capability.

Working alongside three NGOs (mainstream, Māori and Pacific), the project involved the development and trialling of an evaluation capacity self-assessment tool (the ECA Tool) for each NGO. The ECB team (the evaluators), consisting of Kate McKegg, Kataraina Pipi, Nan Wehipeihana, and Pale Sauni variously worked with all three NGOs to use the results of the assessment to develop an ECB plan for each organisation.

Three NGOs were:

- **Fonua Ola** is a social service 'for Pacific, by Pacific' based in South Auckland. They provide social work, counselling, youth work, financial literacy, community support and family violence work. Their aim is to achieve better outcomes for the most vulnerable Pacific families and individuals.

<sup>5</sup> Consultation findings by Community Solutions for Community Research, November 2013.



- **Ngāti Hine Health Trust** provides services that promote the social and economic advancement of whānau, hapū and iwi. The trust's three strategic priorities focus their delivery in the areas of (i) early childhood education, youth services, support of parenting capability and primary health services; (ii) iwi radio, enhancing te reo and the preservation of Ngāti Hine history including working alongside marae and charitable work; and (iii) working with others such as Northland District Health Board, the Ministry of Education and the University of Auckland; undertaking Whānau Ora initiatives and developing much-needed resources.
- **Life to the Max** is a social work agency based in Whanganui that was established in 2001. It has earned a reputation of being a well respected and valued community organisation in the area. The trust works with the Whanganui community to reduce offending and high-risk factors for actual or potential youth offenders aged between 5 and 13 years old and their families and whānau.

### 1.3. Overview of the project methodology

This project involved developing and trialling an ECA Tool and process, and supporting the development of an ECB plan. The three main components of the project were as follows:

1. A rapid and targeted scan of the literature on ECB (available as a separate document). The methods for undertaking the scan are detailed in Appendix A.
2. Using the literature scan to inform the development of an ECA Tool to assess evaluation capacity.
3. A series of three facilitated workshops with each NGO that focused on:
  - > Engaging NGOs in ECB (workshop 1)
  - > Assessing NGO evaluation capacity by trialling the ECA Tool (workshop 2)
  - > Using NGO evaluation capacity assessment results to plan for ECB (workshop 3).

The workshops took place between September 2015 to January 2016. The process involved:

- Engaging with providers about ECA and ECB drawing on a summary of the literature scan
- Evaluation capacity visioning and values clarification
- Individual completion of the ECA Tool (in the form of a written, paper-based questionnaire) to collect individual perspectives on NGO evaluation capacity
- Reflections and analysis of results by all participants
- An overall judgement for each evaluation capacity dimension reached by the group with independent moderation and assessment by the evaluators
- Participative planning using assessment results for future development of evaluation capacity in the participating organisations.

The second and third component of the methodology are described in detail in Section 3.

# 02

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## What we learnt from the literature



A key finding of the literature scan was that the field of ECB is emergent, and although ECB is an expanding field of research and activity, there is very little literature available on how it is defined, understood and might be used or applied in New Zealand. There is less still about what ECB might look like for Māori and Pacific NGOs. Therefore, this project is breaking new ground.

The literature confirmed however, that ECB is dynamic, complex, multidimensional and contextual and it is both a process and outcome with many interrelated, interacting elements. This section presents the key components of evaluation capacity, explores why evaluation capacity is important and how it is developed, describes ECA and provides a summary of practical considerations for undertaking ECA and ECB.

## 2.1. The key components of evaluation capacity

Evaluation is widely understood to be about the systematic determination of the merit, worth and importance of things (Davidson, 2005; Scriven, 1991). Evaluation can serve a hard-nosed, judgemental, accountability function and/or it can support learning through inquiry about the strengths and weaknesses of a strategy, programme or project in an improvement or developmental-oriented manner (Patton, 2012 Labin et al, 2008).

Evaluation capacity is context and culture dependent (Taylor-Ritzler et al, 2013; Stockdill et al, 2002) and is multifaceted, made up of both individual and organisational factors (Fetterman et al, 2015; Taylor-Ritzler et al, 2013). Recent definitions of evaluation capacity also highlight the ability to both do and use evaluation (Bourgeois & Cousins, 2013) as well as a focus on routine and sustainable evaluative practice integrated into organisational decision-making processes.

Both scholars and practitioners alike assert the need for more empirical research on the factors that comprise evaluation capacity and the relationships among these factors (Taylor-Ritzler et al, 2013). However, our analysis of the literature identified three key areas to consider when assessing and developing evaluation capacity in organisations – contextual, organisational and individual. For each area, a range of dimensions were also identified. These are set out in Table 1 below.

**TABLE**  
**01**  
Areas and dimensions of evaluation capacity

Contextual area	Organisational area	Individuals/people area
• Values and principles	• Leadership, attitude and behaviours	• Readiness
• Kaupapa/history	• Learning culture	• Skills and knowledge
• Enabling environment	• Communication and information sharing	• Level of involvement
• ECB purpose	• Resources and infrastructure	• Opportunity



For each of the 12 elements, we also identified a number of criteria that were used in the assessment tool developed for the project. These criteria were sourced from the literature as well as from feedback from each of the NGOs. See Appendix 2 for a summary of the literature and frameworks we accessed to develop our understanding of the different components (areas, dimensions, and criteria) of evaluation capacity.

## 2.2. Why is evaluation capacity important?

There is a growing body of evidence that having evaluation capacity contributes to improved learning, adaptation and sustainability (including the ability to attract resources) of organisations (Labin et al, 2012; Forti & Yazbak, 2012). The literature is clear that, for organisations to continue to effectively meet the needs of their clients and whānau, they need to be learning organisations, capable of inquiring daily about their progress as well as the value of what they do, and using their learning to improve, adapt and renew (Suarez-Balcazar et al, 2010; Preskill & Torres, 1999).

It is also clear in the literature that, when organisations build this evaluation capacity to primarily ensure they are continuing to meet client and whānau needs, they find they are able to meet funders and other stakeholder needs (Forti & Yazbak, 2012).

## 2.3. How is evaluation capacity developed?

Developing or building evaluation capacity is complex and demanding as well as rewarding in many cases. It does not happen in a nice linear fashion, and there is no single right way to do evaluation capacity building (Bourgeois & Cousins, 2013). However, the literature does offer some general insights about how this capacity can be developed, and these are briefly outlined below.

One of the key findings from the literature is that, for the capacity development investment to be realised, organisations need to be 'ready' to engage in the process of capacity building (Connelly & Lukas, 2002). The use of evaluation and the sustainability of evaluation capacity building will, to a great extent, depend on the motivation and ability of people in organisations to take ownership, commit and engage in the effort (Baser & Morgan, 2008).

Secondly, any evaluation capacity building process will be inextricably linked to wider organisational development, requiring consideration of the ways individual and organisational factors interact with the culture of the community and the organisation (Suarez-Balcazar et al, 2010, p. 309). Therefore, the form and type of evaluation capacity development that takes place should be tailored to the unique circumstances of each context.

Thirdly, there are stages and transitions of organisational and evaluation capacity development that most organisations go through at some point, and our experience and the literature confirm that you cannot necessarily rush this process. Some organisations will take longer than others, some will move reasonably smoothly through the different stages and transitions, others will get stuck in a particular stage for some time and all are likely to experience ups and downs, opportunities and setbacks along the way (Carmen & Fredericks, 2010; Simon, 2001).

Finally, the literature is fairly clear that collaboration is “the essential thread in the fabric of ECB efforts” (Labin et al, 2012, p. 324). Collaborative and participative efforts, co-producing evaluation tools, systems and practices across and within organisations combined with training, coaching and trusted advice from external expertise are widely considered to be the most successful approach to ECB (Cousins & Chouinard, 2012).

## 2.4. Evaluation capacity assessment

As suggested above, if ECB efforts should be tailored to the unique contexts of NGOs, some form of assessment is likely to assist the selection and implementation of the ECB strategies (Labin et al, 2012). The literature is clear that ECB is highly context sensitive, and assessment of organisational readiness for ECB is a vital first step of any ECB process (King, 2007).

However, the evaluation field lacks empirically validated models and corresponding assessment instruments that integrate and synthesise currently agreed-upon components of evaluation capacity and allow for its measurement (Labin et al, 2012; Taylor-Ritzler et al, 2013).

Measuring evaluation capacity has been a challenge for evaluation scholars and practitioners. The majority of current instruments were developed from case studies and systematic analyses of the literature (for example, Preskill & Torres, 1999; Volkov & King, 2007). None were designed to validate empirically a conceptual model of evaluation capacity, and only a few provide psychometric data (Taylor-Ritzler et al, 2013).

In New Zealand there have been a number of organisational capacity assessment tools and processes developed and used (Cram, 2006; Cram & Wehipeihana, 2007; Ministry of Social Development, 2015; Platform Trust et al, 2016). However, these do not focus specifically on evaluation capacity. Almost all the capacity development assessment approaches discussed in the literature, as well as the ones currently being used in New Zealand including the few evaluation assessment tools, use some form of self-assessment. Our reading is that this is because most of the tools and approaches aspire to organisational development principles that emphasise the importance of organisational buy-in, strengthening, asset building and ultimately control of the capacity development process and the consequences of it.

## 2.5. Summary of practical considerations

Of interest to this project, the scan of the literature suggests there are pre-conditions for NGO success undertaking an ECB process. These include the following:

- The NGO is clear about the purpose of ECB, and that purpose aligns with its values, principles and wider aspirations.
- The NGO knows what values and principles it wants to see reflected in its assessment and subsequent capacity building processes.
- There is a trusted relationship between the NGO and those supporting/helping it to undertake the ECB assessment and the subsequent planning and capacity building processes.
- There are sufficient resources (time, people, funding) to do the assessment as well as to do something useful with the results of the assessment.



- People at all levels of the organisation need to be ‘on board’, especially the leadership, who need to visibly model their support for the assessment process.

In addition, the literature highlighted some important features to consider when getting started on an ECB process:

- Ensuring participation and transparency so the process is as honest and accountable as possible.
- Beginning by making sure everyone is clear on why the assessment is being done and that all the right people are in the room. The assessment process needs to take account of the organisation at all levels – governance, leadership, management and staff. Having some way of representing the voices of clients or whānau in the process could also be of benefit.
- Taking a strengths/assets-based approach. Building on strengths is more likely to lead to positive engagement and subsequent learning. For example, reflecting NGO experience and knowledge in the assessment and subsequent ECB development process.
- Not rushing – taking one step at a time.
- Recognising that evaluation capacity assessment, planning and development is not a quick fix or even a one-off event. It takes time to make it part of ‘business as usual’ and embed it into the organisational culture and way of doing things.



# 03

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## Trialling an ECA Tool and process – the process





As discussed above, the evaluators developed an ECA Tool based on areas, dimensions and criteria identified in the literature. The tool was presented in a questionnaire format and trialled by the three participating NGOs. The ECA process consisted of three facilitated workshops (for each NGO) in which participants were given time to build relationships with the evaluators and orient themselves to the ECB literature; undertake an ECA (i.e., through trialling the ECA Tool); and develop a plan for ECB. This section describes these processes in more detail.

### 3.1. Development of a tool to assess evaluation capacity

The evaluators developed an ECA Tool to assess the evaluation capacity of each NGO. The ECA Tool was informed by findings from the literature scan and centres on three key areas (e.g., context, organisational, individual/people) and 12 dimensions (e.g., resources and infrastructure, learning culture, readiness) outlined in Section 2, Table 1 above.

To enable assessment of evaluation capacity, the areas and dimensions have a range of criteria attached to them – these are also informed by the literature. In addition they reflect feedback by NGOs collected at the the first facilitated workshop. For example, based on NGO feedback, criteria that recognise the cultural and spiritual roots of the organisation,<sup>6</sup> the history of the organisation<sup>7</sup> and cultural foundations as a basis for leadership and governance<sup>8</sup> were added. On the basis of feedback from the NGOs, we also made reference to clients *and* their whānau in the criteria developed for the element ‘communication and information sharing’.<sup>9</sup>

The TetraMap model<sup>10</sup> was also used to filter and cluster the criteria to ensure we had recognised and explored all the conceptual possibilities for the tool from the literature and NGO feedback. The ECA Tool is summarised in Figure 1 below.

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6 For example, “There are strong cultural values and principles that anchor and guide strategy and decision making” (see Figure 1, context dimension – values and principles).

7 For example, “Governance, leadership, staff and management are firm in their understanding of where the organisation has come from, why it exists and where it’s going” (see Figure 1, context dimension – history).

8 For example, “There are strong cultural foundations that form the basis for they way the organisation is governed, as well as how it operates every day” (see Figure 1, Organisation dimension – leadership, attitudes and behaviours).

9 For example, “We ensure there are regular and relevant opportunities for our clients and whānau to provide us with feedback about the quality and value of our services” (see Figure 1, Organisation dimension – communication and information sharing).

10 TetraMap is a behavioural model based on the elements of nature that is also used in organisational development and change ([www.tetramap.com](http://www.tetramap.com)).

**Figure 1\_ ECA Tool areas, dimensions and criteria**

<b>Context</b>	<b>Values and Principles</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Strong Cultural values anchor strategy &amp; decisions</li> <li>2. Policies grounded in cultural identity &amp; values, give effect to kaupapa</li> <li>3. Consideration given to diverse community needs</li> <li>4. Cultural processes affirming for internals and externals</li> <li>5. Leadership &amp; staff look to cultural, spiritual roots for affirmation &amp; motivation</li> </ol>
	<b>Kaupapa / History</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Governance, leadership &amp; staff understand organisation history &amp; future</li> <li>2. Clear understanding of systems &amp; policies required to perform well</li> <li>3. Organisation's values &amp; beliefs widely shared and direct behaviour</li> <li>4. Optimism &amp; future focused strategy ensures org aspirations sustained</li> </ol>
	<b>Enabling Environment</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Organisation strongly positioned with funders &amp; community</li> <li>2. Organisation has clarity re policy &amp; legislative environment</li> <li>3. Organisation is well respected &amp; services valued by clients, communities and funders</li> <li>4. Organisation has quality internal &amp; external relationships</li> <li>5. Organisation scans &amp; attracts diverse funding &amp; other resources</li> </ol>
	<b>ECB Purpose</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Everyone understands purpose and benefits of building evaluation capacity</li> <li>2. Everyone understands ECB as a mechanism for capturing knowledge and practice</li> <li>3. Leadership committed to involving stakeholders to develop evidence base &amp; capacity</li> <li>4. Excitement about building evaluation culture and possible benefits</li> </ol>
<b>Organisational</b>	<b>Leadership, Attitude &amp; Behaviours</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Leadership demonstrates commitment to learning</li> <li>2. Strong cultural foundations basis for governance &amp; operations</li> <li>3. Leadership shares clear vision for performance, results, improvement &amp; development</li> <li>4. Rewards for practices that contribute to organisational learning &amp; development</li> <li>5. Leadership models insatiable curiosity to improve</li> <li>6. Innovation &amp; risk taking supported &amp; encouraged</li> <li>7. Performance improvement &amp; development seen as a challenging adventure</li> </ol>
	<b>Learning Culture</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. People use evaluative information to make decisions</li> <li>2. Everyone knows how they fit – systems in place to monitor performance</li> <li>3. Everyone feels they are contributing to shared vision &amp; mission</li> <li>4. Time &amp; resources available to support learning &amp; improvement</li> <li>5. Creative thinking &amp; practice is visible &amp; encouraged</li> <li>6. Learning opportunities embraced by staff &amp; leadership</li> <li>7. Organisation open to adapting to opportunities and challenges</li> </ol>



<b>Organisational</b> continued	<b>Communication &amp; Info Sharing</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Quality of info &amp; communication contribute to effective decision making</li> <li>2. Info &amp; communication systems are up to date, relevant &amp; meaningful</li> <li>3. Regular and relevant opportunities - whanau feedback</li> <li>4. There are regular opportunities for sharing practice &amp; learning from each other</li> <li>5. Internal &amp; external communication attracts &amp; inspires others</li> <li>6. Info &amp; ideas are constantly explored &amp; sought out</li> </ol>
	<b>Resources &amp; Infrastructure</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Evaluation systems contribute to high levels of accountability to whanau &amp; funders</li> <li>2. Outcomes negotiated with stakeholders, clearly stated &amp; linked to theory of change</li> <li>3. Our IT systems and databases are fit for purpose</li> <li>4. Structures &amp; systems support monitoring &amp; evaluative activity</li> <li>5. Professional development is prioritised</li> <li>6. Resources distributed to enable infrastructure to measure performance</li> <li>7. Evaluative systems contribute to service, development &amp; success</li> </ol>
<b>Individual</b>	<b>Readiness</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Governance, management &amp; staff engaged in evidence based reflection &amp; learning</li> <li>2. Clarity about the data &amp; systems needed for evaluative activity</li> <li>3. People feel able to share good and not so good practice</li> <li>4. People have high levels of motivation to understand the difference they are making</li> </ol>
	<b>Skills &amp; Knowledge</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. People have skills needed to understand &amp; use data</li> <li>2. People know what kind of data they need to do informed &amp; evidence based job</li> <li>3. People feel able ask for support to collect, interpret &amp; use data</li> <li>4. There is a real thirst for ongoing learning &amp; practice</li> </ol>
	<b>Level of Involvement</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. People regularly engage in data based conversations about the quality &amp; value of their work</li> <li>2. Opportunities available to come together to frame questions &amp; design data based inquiry</li> <li>3. Decisions about quality &amp; value of practice and performance informed by evidence</li> <li>4. High levels of collaboration to prioritise questions to guide evaluative inquiry</li> <li>5. Ongoing cycles of collaborative inquiry result in learning and adaption of services &amp; systems</li> </ol>
	<b>Opportunity</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Time available for questioning, reflecting, sense-making informed by evidence</li> <li>2. People have opportunity to practice &amp; share skills in interpreting and using data</li> <li>3. People are clear about support, resources &amp; infrastructure to support inquiry &amp; learning</li> <li>4. Organisation ensures processes &amp; opportunities for coaching &amp; peer learning</li> <li>5. Networks of peer learning are a feature of organisation culture &amp; practice</li> <li>6. People's potential for learning and improving outcomes is leveraged by org learning culture</li> </ol>

An assessment scale with four levels was attached to the ECA Tool. This four-level scale with rich qualitative descriptors had overall appeal among all of the participating NGOs in terms of ease of understanding. These are the four levels used in the tool:

- **Highly developed:** This is evident at all levels of the organisation and appears strongly embedded in the organisation's governance, leadership, systems, structures and practices.
- **Consolidating:** We see this regularly in our organisation. However, not everyone is yet on board.
- **Developing:** There is some evidence of this occurring in our organisation. It happens sometimes but is not well embedded in our routines.
- **Emerging:** There is very little or no evidence of this occurring.

Once the initial set of areas, dimensions, criteria and assessment scale had been developed, these were transferred into a questionnaire format that could be answered by individual participants in each NGO.

A graphic designer worked on this questionnaire to make it 'NGO friendly'; so that it would have higher face validity for participants. A decision to print in colour was made to ensure the questionnaire was interesting and easily accessible.

An analysis spreadsheet was developed to capture data in real time and represent the data in a visually appealing way to assist analysis in a workshop setting.

This questionnaire was trialled in workshop 2 with all three NGOs and involved individual completion of the questionnaires followed by analysis of the results (data) in small groups. This process is further described below under the heading 'Workshop 2: Trialling the ECA Tool/undertaking the ECA'.

Although the overall design (areas, dimensions and criteria) and the scale used are closely aligned to two other ECA Tools found in the literature (Russ-Eft & Preskill, 2001; Taylor-Ritzler et al, 2013), the assessment tool has yet to be further reviewed, tested and validated.





## 3.2. Engaging NGOs in evaluation capacity building

We used a facilitated approach to engage NGOs in the project in order to bring about project success. We drew from the PATH methodology (Pearpoint, O'Brien, & Forest, 2008) and combined this with some graphic recording to capture NGO feedback and insights (Pipi, 2016).

The intentional use of facilitation draws from our experience as well as from the literature on evaluation use, ECB, organisational development and facilitation. We know that:

- Intentional, high-quality facilitation ensures that a group is able to identify issues and solve problems in ways that increase the chances of success or effectiveness (Schwarz, 2005).
- There are many benefits, including greater sustainability of evaluative practice as well as use of results, when stakeholders are engaged in the development of shared meaning (Patton, 2008, 2012).
- In order to create the motivation for new learning and behaviour, the approach used needs to be culturally relevant, appropriate and accessible across a range of contexts (Britton, 2005).

The following sections describe the processes used in each facilitated workshop.

### Workshop 1: Engaging and orienting NGOs to ECB

This first workshop focused on building relationships between the evaluators and NGOs and orienting NGOs to the ECB literature. There were four main components to the first workshop:

**Whanaungatanga:** This was a facilitated process to build relationships with each NGO through exploring and surfacing their organisational values, principles and wider aspirations and creating relational trust and a 'safe' environment. Personal and professional connections were shared, alongside evaluation stories from participants' cultural and personal knowing and understandings.

**Orientation to evaluation and ECB:** The evaluation team facilitated a process to elicit the range of perspectives and experiences of evaluation among participants as well as NGO-specific vision and desired outcomes from ECB for each NGO. Questions such as 'What is evaluation?' and 'What is ECB?' were explored in groups.

**Engaging with the ECB literature:** A summary of the draft ECB literature review was developed and shared with NGOs (through a PowerPoint presentation) to build a shared understanding of ECB in New Zealand and the NGO sector including why ECB is important and the key components of ECB. NGOs were invited to share any relevant resources they believed could be incorporated into the literature scan which resulted in two additional documents.

**Developing a framework for assessment of ECB:** NGOs gave detailed feedback on contextually valid ECB definitions, criteria and nuanced cultural understandings of evaluation capacity to include in the development of the ECA Tool. The TetraMap model was used again to help separate aspects of the ECB definition (e.g., use, systems, intent, create) so that participants could engage in generating language and concepts from their own contexts.

Figure 2\_ Workshop 1 outline

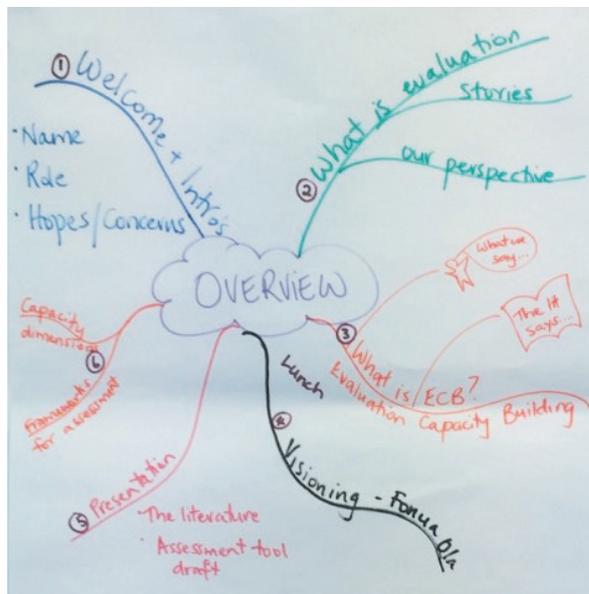
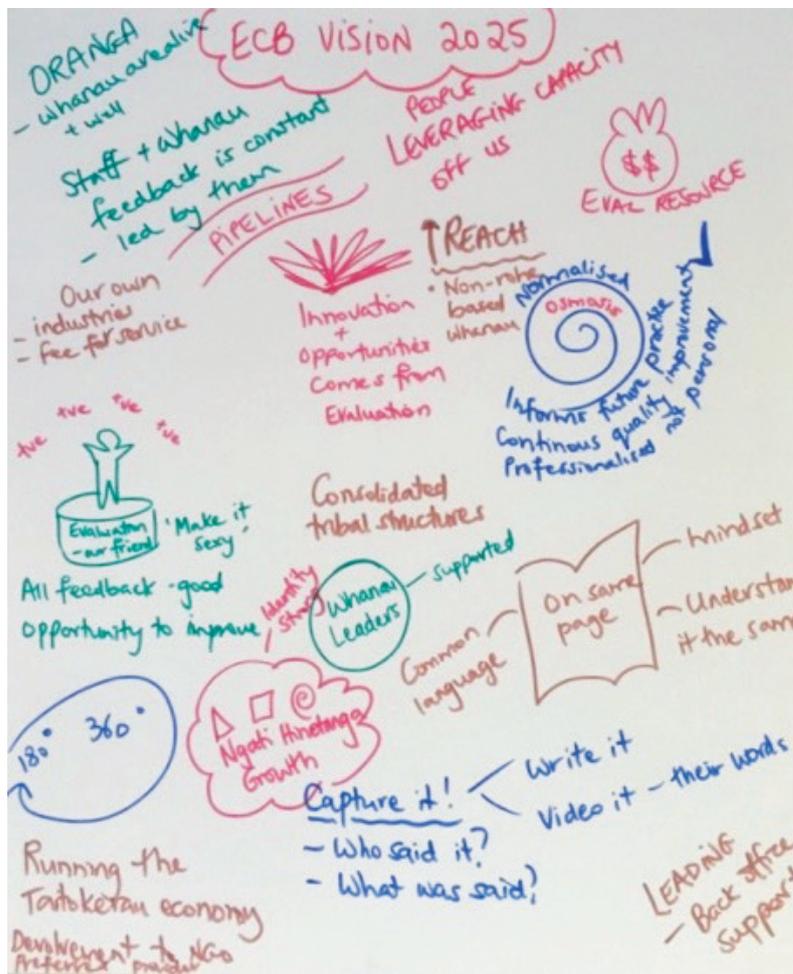


Figure 3\_ Example evaluation vision – Ngāti Hine Health Trust





## Workshop 2: Trialling the ECA Tool/undertaking the ECA

The second workshop focused on undertaking the ECA and analysing the results as well as reflecting on the process used. The ECA Tool was trialled in these workshops with all three providers; this involved individual completion of the questionnaires followed by analysis and discussion of the results in small groups. This was followed by a brief session identifying priorities for planning ECB.

The workshop had four main components:

- *A recap of the journey to date*, which involved a facilitated process of reflection on the learning to date and setting out the agenda for the day. The evaluation team presented back a documented summary of the previous workshop during this phase.
- *NGO self-assessment* of their evaluation capacity using the ECA Tool. All three providers trialled the ECA Tool, which involved individual workshop participants completing the ECA questionnaire.
- *Facilitated NGO analysis and reflections on the self-assessment results and process*. The data from each questionnaire was immediately entered into a spreadsheet following completion. The spreadsheet displayed actual scores for each participant, as well as average scores for each area, dimension and criterion. This data was shared with the group in real time and was further analysed and discussed in small groups using a facilitated sensemaking process.<sup>11</sup> NGOs documented their reflections on the process, content and results on a series of templates that included a series of probative and reflective questions (see Appendix C).
- *Initial planning for ECB*. Using a planning template (see Appendix D), NGOs were facilitated to consider what actions they might take to build their evaluation capacity in light of their results. They were encouraged to consider actions that would be positive and possible to achieve in a one-year timeframe.

**Figure 4\_ Workshop 2 group work – Ngāti Hine Health Trust**



<sup>11</sup> In the organisational context, sensemaking is about looking for explanations and answers in terms of how people see things, and the source is people's way of thinking (Weick, 1995). In the evaluation context, we use the term sensemaking to describe a facilitated data analysis process in which people make sense of the data through a series of probative and critically reflective questions. In this context, the source is the data; 'sense is made'; and meaning is derived through the process.

### Workshop 3: Planning for evaluation capacity building

The final workshop focused on further development of the ECB plans for each NGO. The components of the workshop were as follows:

- *A recap of the journey to date*, which involved a facilitated process of reflection on the learning to date and setting out the agenda for the day. The evaluators provided each NGO with a written summary of the second workshop process as well as a detailed summary of the ECA Tool results including evaluative judgements on the results.
- *Planning for ECB*. Through a facilitated process, NGOs finalised their ECB plans, including key agreed actions, measures, strategies to support the achievement of actions and resources required.
- *Finalising ECB plans*. Following the workshop, the evaluators finalised the ECB plans and provided each NGO with a written ECB plan that included a summary of the ECA results, their ECB vision, values, priorities, actions, measures, strategies and resources.

**Figure 5\_** Workshop 3 group work – Fonua Ola

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# 04

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## Trialling an ECA Tool and process – findings



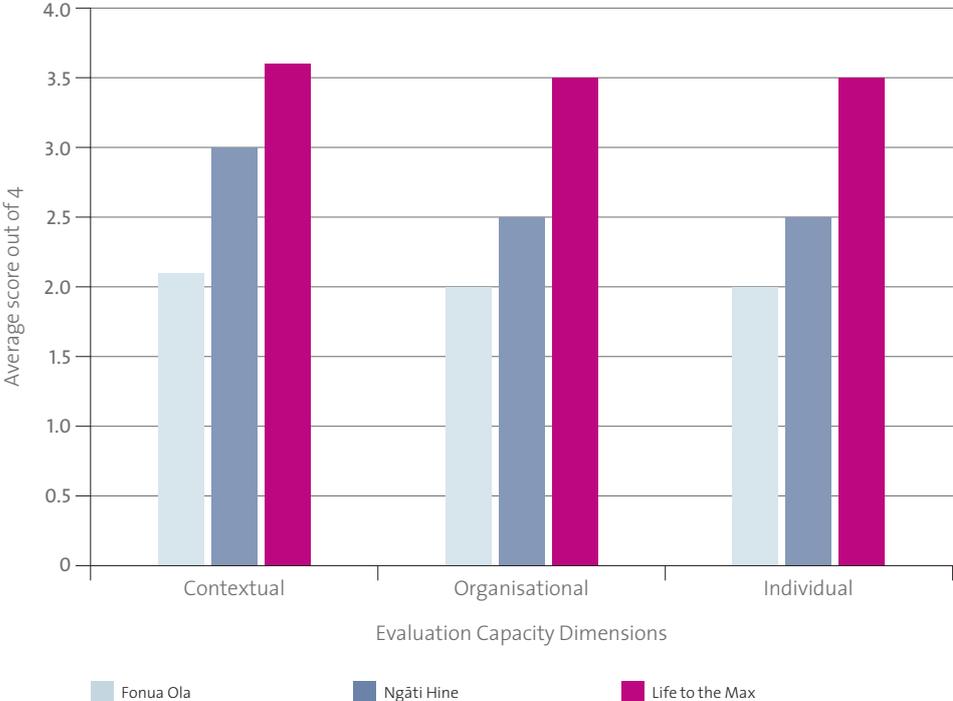
This section summarises the results of the ECA undertaken by the NGOs as well as NGO and evaluator reflections on key learnings from the trial process.

### 4.1. ECA results

The scores for each participant who completed the ECA Tool were entered into a spreadsheet. The average scores for each area, dimension and criterion were then calculated and graphed for each NGO. These results were shared with and later provided to each NGO.

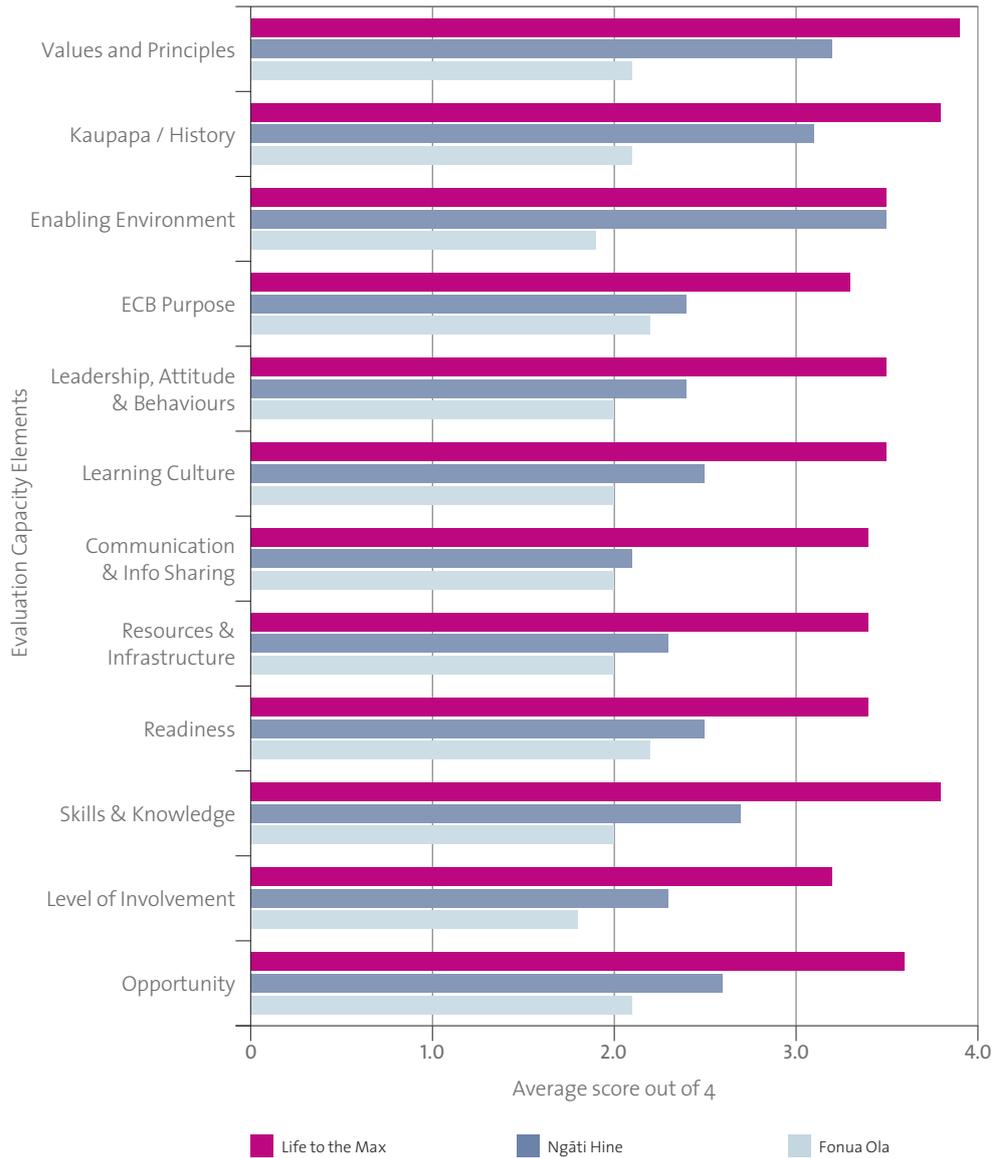
As Figure 6 below shows, the NGO results were internally consistent across all three areas – Life to the Max scored highest, Ngāti Hine Health Trust scores were more mid-range and Fonua Ola’s scores were lowest. These results seemed consistent with the development phase, complexity and size of the NGOs (Speakman Management Consulting, n.d.). Life to the Max is a well established organisation; it is a small, niche NGO that has had very stable governance, management and staffing. Ngāti Hine Health Trust is also a well-established organisation; however, it is reasonably large with multiple large funders and a more complex programme and service delivery to manage. Fonua Ola is a reasonably large, newly established collective that brings together a range of services working across the Auckland region. It is still in the early stages of developing its culture, systems and processes.

**Figure 6 \_ Average ECA scores for ECB areas – all NGOs**



As Figure 7 below shows, there was a bit more variability when looking at the scores for each of the evaluation capacity elements by NGO, with Ngāti Hine Health Trust having a 14-point spread from its lowest score of 2.1 to its highest score of 3.5, Life to the Max having a 7-point spread and Fonua Ola only having a 4-point spread.

**Figure 7\_ Average ECA scores for ECA elements – all NGOs**



It is also interesting to note similar patterns across the NGOs for some elements. For example, all three NGOs felt relatively 'ready' to engage in evaluation, but across all three, there were low scores for the level of involvement individuals felt they have in evaluation processes currently.

## 4.2. NGO feedback on the ECA process

Following each workshop, the evaluation team gathered a range of feedback on the trial process. Overall, NGOs were very positive about the process of ECA.

All NGOs felt that the facilitation had created a safe space that ensured everyone was able to participate freely and equally. This was valued by many participants, because the openness and transparency of people in the process contributed to the richness of information generated.

*The Facilitators did a great job of the keeping the environment 'safe' so everyone felt they could contribute constructively*

NGOs also felt that the process was culturally safe. It helped them reflect on what makes them unique and the importance of bringing that to the fore so that it can be recognised by others.

*The process acknowledged and affirmed that culture is embedded and woven through all aspects of our work. It's what makes us unique and distinctive. We just do it naturally, we take it for granted but we need to get better at explaining what this looks like and why it is important in our work with whānau.*

*... an excellent way to avoid complacency ... about what value we give to our community and what greater value we can add.*

Feedback also suggests that the process enabled NGOs to reflect on, and consider why, evaluation and ECB are important.

*The process was valuable in getting everybody enthused about the importance of evaluation and I think it reminded us that we need to be continually reflecting on the difference we make for whānau – at a personal level and as an organisation.*

*It's really helped us to get clear about what we need to do, what evidence we need to collect to be able to demonstrate the value of our work with whānau.*

NGOs agreed that the process provided valuable information about how they may proceed with evaluation activities.

*For us, it's important to know where to start, to have some idea of what we should or could be doing so we are not wasting our time or money. This got us somewhere, moved us in the right direction.*

*Its about getting a plan and a set of actions or activities that will help us build our capacity to tell the story, have the data to showcase the difference we make with whānau, our performance.*

*From this opportunity I'd like to follow through with the feedback for the organisation and develop an ECB team for the Trust.*

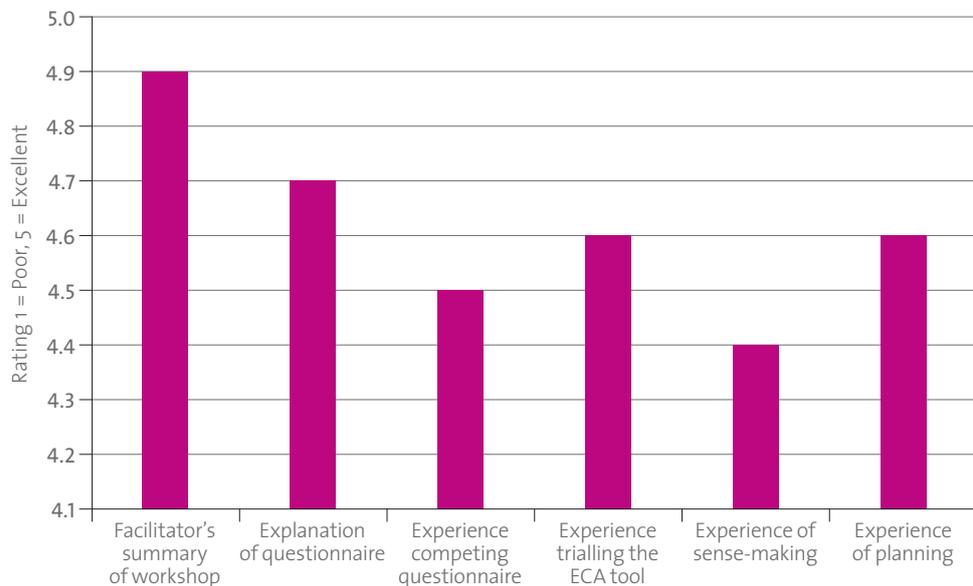


They also agreed that the involvement of board members, management and staff was an important and critical part of the process. All considered the robust discussion and analysis of the results across all levels of the organisation was very important for their future development. In particular, participants noted the value of coming together with colleagues and gaining deeper understanding of each other's roles and perspectives on the organisation.

*It was valuable having Board and management joining staff and getting to listen to staff's honest and open feedback.*

NGOs rated their experience of using the ECA Tool very highly. Figure 8 below shows the ratings given by workshop participants.

**Figure 8 \_ NGO ratings of ECA process**



Participants appreciated the participatory facilitative process employed and commented that it supported their engagement in the process and completion of the ECA and development of their ECB plan.

*In terms of the process ... it's easy, it's engaging, it's informative, it's visionary, we can see the end because we have said what it looks like.*

*I enjoyed the workshop environment and different tools to present data. [It was] a great opportunity to share thoughts with colleagues.*

The following comment summarises a common sentiment expressed by many participants following the ECA process and ECB planning, i.e. that the NGOs would follow through and commit to doing something with the findings and the ECB plan:

*One of my hopes is that now that we have participated, that [the NGO] does take this seriously and follow through on some of the opportunities in evaluation culture building ... It would be great if everything we said becomes a reality.*

### 4.3. The value of participating in the ECA process

Approximately two to three months following completion of the individual NGO ECB plans, we sought feedback from each organisation on the value of participating in the project and the ECA process.

Three major themes are evident in the feedback from NGOs. The value of the tool and process for exploring organisational strengths and areas for development; elevation of the importance of evaluation capacity within NGOs and having a plan to ‘kick start’ or guide their evaluation capacity building activities.

#### The opportunity to explore organisational strengths and areas for development

*What was valuable was... we had to look closely at all aspects of our organisation; our systems and policies, our people and our context – our whānau and funders when assessing our evaluation capacity and developing a plan. While the process was focused on evaluation capacity, the framing of the assessment has value beyond the [ECB] process.*

*What was valuable... was that it gave us the ability to look critically at the organisation and be more solutions focused through sharing ideas with peers.*

#### The ECA process elevated the importance of evaluation capacity within NGOs.

*What was valuable... was that it gave importance to the process of building our evaluation capacity. By setting aside three half days with board members, managers and staff in attendance, it was clearly signalling that evaluation capacity and being able to report on our performance was important to our organisation.*

*What was valuable... was having dedicated time, free of other tasks or distractions to think about what was needed to improve our ability to report on what we do. So having time, and the inclusion of our board members in some workshops highlighted the importance of evaluation.*

#### Having a plan to develop their evaluation capacity

*What was valuable... was the plan for developing our evaluation capacity. It was our plan, developed with our input and our understanding of what was positive and possible for our organisation... and so we had a good idea of where to start, what to do first, second and so on.*

Feedback also reaffirmed earlier NGO reflections including the value of: participatory facilitative processes; organisational-wide participation including governance; and the creation of a ‘safe’ space which allowed for free and frank discussion to take place amongst participants.

NGO feedback directly to Superu reported finding “the ECA experience positive” and “are now progressing the agenda” to build their evaluation capacity.





## 4.4. Evaluator reflections on the project

### Evidencing performance and outcomes is a priority for participating NGOs

The three NGOs volunteered to be part of the development and trialling of an ECA Tool and process. This highlights NGOs' motivation to build their evaluation capacity to enable them to evidence performance and outcomes. On an individual level, some wanted to know if they were 'doing a good job', and others wanted to be able to more strongly evidence the work they do and the positive difference they believe they make for whānau and clients. Meeting the needs of funders was also a key consideration.

NGOs also had specific organisational motivations for participating in the trial, including: proactively seeking out opportunities to strengthen organisational data collection and evidence systems aligned to organisational reputation and credibility; strengthening the legitimacy and credibility of the organisation through improved reporting and compliance; wanting to be seen as a leader in the field; and being on the cusp of new and emerging developments in the NGO sector.

### ECB needs to be grounded in the context of NGO visions, values, goals and aspirations

From the literature (Preskill & Torres, 1999; Connelly & Lukas, 2002; Fetterman et al, 2015) and our experience engaging with the NGO sector over many years, we know that, in order to be responsive and effective, ECB needs to pay attention to context in all its historical and cultural richness and diversity (Greene, 2005).

Tools need to be responsive and relevant to the context of each NGO if they are to be perceived as legitimate, and this is particularly so for Māori and Pacific NGOs. NGOs need to feel that capacity building is 'fit for context', tailored to meet their needs (Grantmakers for Effective Organizations, 2015). We therefore addressed this priority first up in the whanaungatanga component surfacing personal and organisational values, cultural principles and the wider aspirations of each NGO, and linking ECB to the achievement of these values and principles. This process helped ensure essential connections were made between ourselves and the NGOs (Kennedy & Cram, 2010).

Engaging in this kind of critical reflection from a cultural base is essential for Māori and Pacific NGOs so that the process validates and reflects their realities and worldviews, values, progress and achievements (Kennedy et al, 2015). Being a capable NGO in Māori and Pacific terms embodies and embraces cultural dimensions such as knowledge and understanding of language and whakapapa as well as the many other principles and practices embodied in the Māori and Pacific worlds (Cram, 2007; NGO feedback).

### Opportunity to demonstrate value in own terms ensures buy-in

The NGOs we worked alongside were clear about the purpose and value of ECB as a mechanism to support evidence-based performance reporting and for demonstrating their worth to funders. Importantly, they were also excited about the possibility that, through an ECB process, they might be able to demonstrate their value in their own ways, on their own terms and in ways that make sense to their communities, clients and whānau. This ensured good buy-in to the project/process and participation from all levels of the organisation, particularly from board members and senior managers.

*... at the end of the day, it's about the value of working together for the betterment of our people.*

*... we need to be intelligent and reveal unto our own people their treasures ... and to do this successfully ...*

*... it's finding that alignment between the heart and the head ...*

*Realised we do what we do well, but it is being able to share that, get that out there ... our value.*

*... evaluation is a priority for me in practice, how does that look like for whānau and our community?*

NGOs want to be recognised and validated for who they are, but they are constantly pulled into a compliance-oriented space responding to funder reporting expectations. NGOs are looking for ways to tell an evidence-based performance story that affirms who they are and meets the needs of funders. Currently, these two things are experienced as being in tension with each other.

### **Evaluation capacity assessment needs to reflect NGO realities in New Zealand**

Although there are a couple of existing ECA Tools available, there are good reasons for a tool to be developed for New Zealand NGO realities. As the previous discussion implies, given the strong feelings among NGOs about being able to evidence their value, it would seem appropriate for a capacity assessment tool to be home grown and able to reflect issues and values important to NGOs, particularly Māori and Pacific NGOs.

*I am pro doing things our way ... we should know what our people want and our whānau want and how they want to be treated and what they expect from us.*

*... we really need to identify the needs of our clients and what their needs are ... it's not just housing and WINZ, and different social issues. But also how the cultural issues impact on these social issues, and this needs to be evidenced in what we do.*

Moreover, we found very little reference to culture or history in the overseas assessment tools. In the New Zealand context, cultural aspirations, values, principles and ways of working are embedded in NGO cultures and therefore should be reflected in an assessment tool used in New Zealand.

A constant challenge during the design and development process was to be mindful of the importance of ensuring the tool and the process would be easy, accessible and relevant to NGO contexts, particularly for Māori and Pacific, while also incorporating the key findings from the literature. One way we tried to address this challenge was to design a process that ensured maximum participation and engagement of multiple perspectives throughout.

### **Evaluation capacity support – 'the right fit' supports success**

The evaluation team thought carefully about the match of evaluators to each NGO, taking account of culture and ethnicity and previous engagement with the NGO, including past and present personal and professional relationships with the NGO board and staff. As facilitators and guides to the capacity building process, we were aware that our participation in the process would influence it. Because this was a pilot, we were also seeking to be influenced and learn. Past relationships facilitated the initial engagement with each NGO, and the whanaungatanga component was also important in establishing credibility and relational trust between the evaluators and the NGOs (Maister, Green, & Galford, 2004). Achieving a high degree of 'cultural fit' between the organisation and external evaluators is highly valued by organisations and arguably increases chances of effectiveness, particularly for Māori and Pacific organisations (Goodwin, Sauni, & Were, 2015). This was confirmed by each of the NGOs.

*It's like a treasure when we have you here with us ... the facilitation was stunning.*



### The creation of a ‘safe’ environment supports NGO engagement

There are historical fears<sup>12</sup> and negative experiences and perceptions of evaluation (and, by association, ECB), particularly in Māori and Pacific communities (Smith, 2012). There are also many known barriers to open and honest reflection on performance of any kind (Brafman & Brafman, 2008; Cannon & Edmondson, 2005). The creation of a safe environment was critical if NGOs were to be open and be honest in the discussion of their organisational evaluation capacity strengths and limitations. Our primary focus in the first workshop was to ensure we had created a ‘safe’ environment that validated the perspectives and views of those in the room – safe enough for people to engage openly in the ECA process, including critiquing it, since we were trialling a tool and process that other NGOs might use in the future.

*Facilitators did a superb job of keeping the environment “safe” so everyone felt they could contribute constructively.*

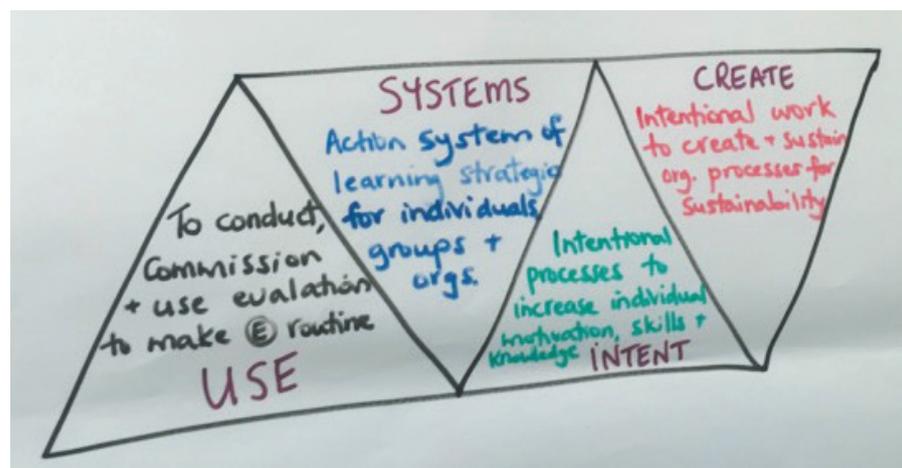
### Do not underestimate the capacity of NGOs to engage in data-based enquiry

We had initially thought it would be challenging for NGOs to engage in data-based enquiry and analysis. However, we were pleasantly surprised at how readily they responded to the quantitative results and combined this evidence with their qualitative experiential knowledge to make sense of the findings.

### How you facilitate and present resources matter

The high levels of engagement in the data analysis process confirmed for us the value of using a visually appealing questionnaire and real-time data presentation alongside facilitated reflection and sensemaking to assist in analysis processes. It also confirmed for us that the facilitation processes we adapted and used (PATH, TetraMap and graphic facilitation), were helpful in anchoring participants’ experiences with culturally grounded visual cues, affirming and validating their own knowledge and experience (Pipi, 2016).

**Figure 9\_ Defining ECB with TetraMap**



<sup>12</sup> Linda Smith, in her book *Decolonizing Methodologies* (2012) describes how research has played a crucial role in ‘problematizing the indigenous’ in academic discourse and theorising, thus contributing to a continuing legacy of viewing indigenous people through from a deficit perspective (see pages 94-96). This ongoing legacy has led to indigenous communities ‘switching off’ from discussions about research, with many indigenous communities coming to view research itself as meaning ‘problem’.

### **Developing an ECB plan that is meaningful and useful is harder than it looks**

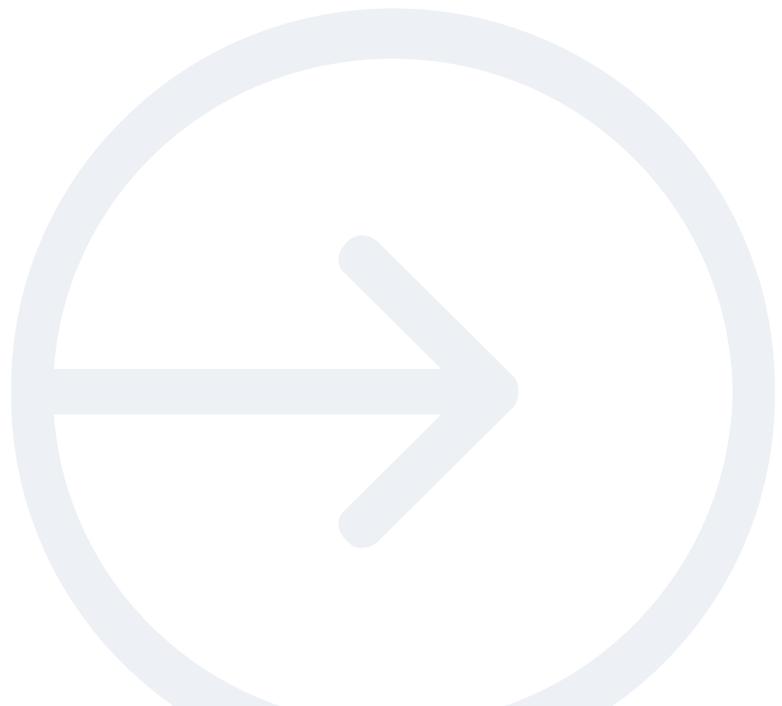
A key challenge for the three NGOs was moving from having assessment results to knowing what to do with them. Even with prompts and carefully structured planning templates (see Appendix C and D), the task of developing ECB plans from the evidence was difficult for all NGOs involved in the project. The process required careful facilitation and external moderation and support to complete.

One of the challenges we noted is that many participants in the process did not necessarily know what an appropriate action might be to improve a rating on different areas and dimensions in the assessment. Furthermore we found that ECB actions did not necessarily line up in a one-to-one manner with the areas and dimensions in the ECA Tool. Very often, ECB actions spanned more than one or all areas. In our judgement, there is a real need and opportunity to support capacity building in this area, for example, by developing really concrete examples of the kinds of things NGOs might think about doing, given their results.

The opportunity (and challenge) is to be able to provide examples of what providers might do, clarity on how to do it as well as confidence that they can do it and sustain the motivation to do so.

### **Willingness to act on ECB plans**

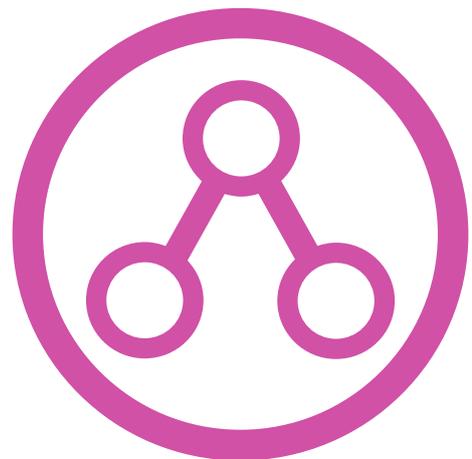
The three NGOs were motivated to take their ECB plans further, although without exception, they were clear that the resources they needed to fully realise their ECB visions did not exist in their organisations. Although there were a lot of assets and strengths in each of the NGOs, additional resources were identified as being necessary to completing many of the ECB actions.



# 05

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## Conclusion



Based on the researchers' past experiences and current involvement with these three NGOs, the researchers feel there are high levels of motivation among NGOs to be able to evidence outcomes and performance. On the one hand, NGOs are committed to meeting the needs of their communities and be able to report well to communities and funders on quality, value and results. On the other hand, NGOs are also committed to meeting the needs of funders. However, these two things are often seen as being in tension. NGOs are looking for ways to tell an evidence-based performance story that affirms who they are and what they have achieved, and meets the needs of funders.

The ECA Tool and process developed and trialled in this project go some way to addressing this tension. The tool and the process draw on national and international ECB literature and take account of the Aotearoa New Zealand NGO context.

For ECB to be successful, it needs to be grounded in the NGO's visions, goals, and aspirations and the process requires recognition of the organisational and NGO contexts. When done well, ECB processes, such as ECA generate real excitement and momentum for learning and development. These key factors are reflected in the ECA Tool and process.

This trial demonstrated that NGOs are more than able to undertake a comprehensive evaluation capacity self-assessment process. However, the success of the trial with all three NGOs appeared to rely considerably on the facilitation of the process by expert evaluators.

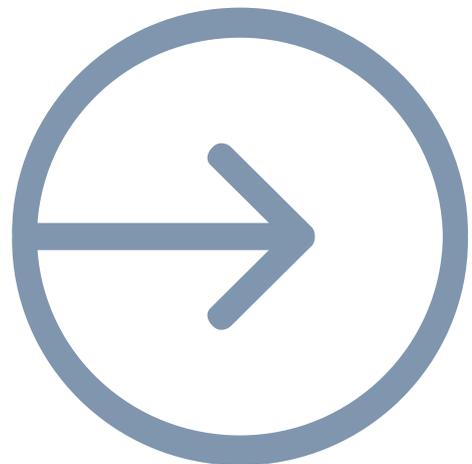
NGOs rarely have dedicated facilitation or evaluation expertise in house, so they require specialist expertise and support to ensure the process achieves the results needed. One of the benefits of external support and facilitation was that a climate of safety and honesty was created, so that NGO participants felt able to complete the assessment in a truthful way.

Further, ECB is not a one-off, it is a developmental process that takes time; it will ebb and flow with the day-to-day realities of organisational life. If NGOs are to embed evaluation capacity in sustainable ways, their governance and leadership needs to prioritise the development and maintenance of this capacity, as do their funders.

Going forward, the evaluators are of the view that the ECA Tool and subsequent planning process are much more likely to be effective with external support and facilitation. Something similar to MSD's Community Investment Resource (CIR) – which provides the opportunity for organisations to work with a capability mentor to review and plan for their own capability development, or to put capability plans into action may be a suitable format for providing targeted ECA and/or ECB support.

# Appendices

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# Appendix A

## Literature scan methodology

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Our **first search strategy** was to collectively source our own libraries for peer-reviewed and other literature and material on evaluation capacity building (ECB), evaluation capacity assessment, and Māori and Pacific capacity assessment. This strategy resulted in 34 items.

Because of the growing international interest in ECB and development as well as assessment, our **second strategy** was to search the following journals for recent syntheses of the literature:

- American Journal of Evaluation
- Canadian Journal of Program Evaluation
- Evaluation
- Evaluation and Program Planning
- Evaluation Journal of Australasia
- Journal of Multi-Disciplinary Evaluation.

The most recent synthesis of literature identified was:

- Susan N. Labin, Jennifer L. Duffy, Duncan C. Meyers, Abraham Wandersman and Catherine A. Lesesne (2012). A Research Synthesis of the Evaluation Capacity Building Literature. *American Journal of Evaluation* 2012 33: 307.

Our **third strategy** was to search well known evaluation resource sites such as Better Evaluation (BE) <http://betterevaluation.org> and Evaltalk (a listserv run by the American Evaluation Association) for resources and discussions about ECB and assessment.

This third strategy turned up a very recent publication by the Ontario Public Health Unit titled “Building Evaluation Capacity in Ontario’s Public Health Units”. This publication describes an initiative called the Locally Driven Collaborative Project (LDCP), Building Evaluation. The LDCP project had objectives very similar to our own, that is, to identify or develop a tool to assess evaluation capacity of organisations (in this case public health units); to use this tool or instrument to assess evaluation capacity more widely; and to identify strategies for building evaluation capacity.

The LDCP team conducted a very extensive search of the literature, and identified six existing evaluation capacity assessment instruments. The key evaluation capacity building and evaluation capacity assessment literature identified by the LDCP team was found to already include most of those items found in the first internal search strategy used by our team. Two further items were added to our original list.

In consultation with the team, we narrowed the list to 20 items to be more fully scanned and reviewed.



# Appendix B

## Components of evaluation capacity: sources from the literature

### TABLE 02

The components of evaluation capacity – a summary of sources from the literature

Contextual area		
Dimensions	Criteria	Sources
Values and principles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strong cultural values and principles anchor and guide strategy and decision making</li> <li>• Policies, procedures and practices give effect to kaupapa, vision and mission in ways that are grounded in cultural identities, values and beliefs</li> <li>• Careful consideration of diverse needs of communities</li> <li>• Cultural processes in place that are inclusive and affirming to those within the organisation as well as to whānau and communities</li> <li>• Leadership and staff look to cultural, spiritual roots for affirmation, motivation and inspiration</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Suarez-Balcazar et al (2010)</li> <li>• MSD Organisational Capability Self-Assessment Tool</li> <li>• Bourgeois and Cousins (2013)</li> <li>• Cram (2006)</li> <li>• Cram and Wehipeihana (2007)</li> <li>• Labin et al (2012)</li> </ul>
Kaupapa/history	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Governance, leadership, staff and management are firm in their understanding of where the organisation has come from, why it exists and where it is going</li> <li>• Clear understanding of systems, policies and procedures required to perform well given the age and stage of the organisation's development</li> <li>• Values and beliefs of the organisation are widely shared within the organisation and help to provide a shared sense of direction for behaviour</li> <li>• Optimism and future-focused strategy ensure the legacy, aspirations and dreams of the organisation can be sustained into the future</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preskill and Boyle (2008)</li> <li>• Frierson, Hood and Hughes (2010)</li> <li>• NGO feedback</li> <li>• McKegg (2014)</li> </ul>
Enabling environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The organisation is strongly positioned within its community and with funders</li> <li>• Clarity about policy and legislative environment</li> <li>• Well respected and services are valued by clients, communities and funders</li> <li>• High-quality relationships within the organisation as well as with the diversity of external stakeholders upon whom the organisation depends</li> <li>• Systematically scans and attracts a diversity of funding and other resources</li> </ul>	
ECB purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Everyone is on the same page as to what developing evaluation capacity will do for the organisation</li> <li>• Importance of ECB as a mechanism for capturing the organisation's thinking, knowing and being is well understood by everyone in the organisation</li> <li>• Leadership is committed to bringing all stakeholders together in a process that develops an evidence base as well as capacity to use the evidence in ways that affirm the values and principles of the organisation</li> <li>• Real excitement in the organisation about the possibilities that building evaluation culture brings for extending the opportunities to contribute to communities flourishing</li> </ul>	

Organisational area		
Dimensions	Criteria	Sources
<b>Leadership, attitude and behaviours</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leadership demonstrates a visible commitment to learning</li> <li>• Strong cultural foundations form the basis for the way the organisation is governed, as well as how it operates</li> <li>• Leadership shares a clear vision for performance, results, improvement and development</li> <li>• Visible and tangible rewards for practices that contribute to organisational learning and development</li> <li>• Leadership models an insatiable curiosity to improve</li> <li>• Innovative practice and risk taking is supported and encouraged</li> <li>• Performance management and development is seen as a challenging adventure</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fetterman et al (2015)</li> <li>• Taylor and Ritzer et al (2013)</li> <li>• Bourgeois and Cousins (2013)</li> <li>• Suarez-Balcazar et al (2010)</li> <li>• McKegg (2014)</li> <li>• Labin et al (2012)</li> <li>• Preskill and Boyle (2008)</li> <li>• Russ-Eft and Preskill (2001)</li> </ul>
<b>Learning culture</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People use evaluative information to make decisions</li> <li>• Everyone knows how they fit – systems are in place to track and report on performance</li> <li>• Everyone feels like they are contributing to a shared organisational vision and mission</li> <li>• Time, support and resource are available to support shared learning and sustain improvement</li> <li>• Creativity of thinking and practice is visible and encouraged within the organisation</li> <li>• Ongoing opportunities for learning are embraced by staff, management and governance of the organisation</li> <li>• The organisation is open and able to adapt and respond to external opportunities and challenges</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MSD Organisational Capability Self-Assessment Tool</li> <li>• NGO feedback</li> </ul>
<b>Communication and information sharing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The quality of information and communication channels contribute to effective decision making</li> <li>• Information and communication systems (both formal and informal) are up to date, relevant and meaningful</li> <li>• The organisation ensures there are regular and relevant opportunities for clients and whānau to provide feedback about the quality and value of services</li> <li>• There are regular opportunities for sharing practice and learning from each other</li> <li>• Internal and external communication attracts and inspires others</li> <li>• Information and ideas are constantly being explored and sought out</li> </ul>	
<b>Resources and infrastructure</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evaluation systems contribute to high levels of accountability to whānau and to funders</li> <li>• Desired outcomes have been negotiated with stakeholders, are clearly stated and are linked to a theory of change</li> <li>• IT systems and databases are fit for purpose, accessible, user friendly and capable of producing the reporting needed for decision making</li> <li>• Organisational structures and systems support systematic, regular monitoring and evaluative activity at all levels of the organisation</li> <li>• Professional development is prioritised within the organisation</li> <li>• Resources are distributed fairly to enable a resilient infrastructure necessary to measure and report on performance</li> </ul>	



Individual area		
Dimensions	Criteria	Sources
<b>Readiness</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Governance, management and staff are actively engaged in evidence-based reflection and learning about how well they are doing</li> <li>• Clarity among leadership, management and staff about the data that is needed and the systems that are required to regularly undertake evaluative activity</li> <li>• People feel able to talk about and share both the good and not so good practice in their daily work with their peers and others in the organisation</li> <li>• There is a high level of motivation and willingness among governance, management and staff to know what difference they are making – as individuals and as an organisation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Taylor and Ritzer et al (2013)</li> <li>• Bourgeois and Cousins (2013)</li> <li>• Suarez-Balcazar et al (2010)</li> <li>• McKegg (2014)</li> <li>• Labin et al (2012)</li> <li>• Duffy, Labin &amp; Wandersman (2007)</li> <li>• Cram (2006)</li> <li>• Cram and Wehipeihana (2007)</li> <li>• MSD Organisational Capability Self-Assessment Tool</li> <li>• NGO feedback</li> </ul>
<b>Skills and knowledge</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People have the skills and knowledge they need – according to their roles – to understand and use data</li> <li>• People in the organisation know what kind of data they need to do their jobs in an informed and evidence-based way</li> <li>• People at all levels of the organisation feel able to ask for help/support for the collection, interpretation and use of data</li> <li>• There is a real thirst for ongoing learning and practice among staff and management</li> </ul>	
<b>Level of involvement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People regularly engage in data-based/data-informed conversations about the quality and value of the work they are involved in</li> <li>• There are opportunities for people from multiple perspectives within the organisation to come together to frame questions and design data-based inquiry</li> <li>• Decisions about the quality and value of practice and organisational performance in relation to whānau and individual outcomes are informed by multiple kinds and layers of evidence including direct feedback from clients and whānau</li> <li>• There are high levels of collaboration and participation by management and staff in prioritising the questions that might guide an evaluative inquiry of service quality and value</li> <li>• There are ongoing cycles of collaborative inquiry within the organisation that result in ongoing learning, adaption and changes to services and systems</li> </ul>	
<b>Opportunity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is time in every person's work day/week for questioning, reflecting, sensemaking that is informed by evidence</li> <li>• People in the organisation are provided with regular opportunities to practise and share their skills and knowledge in interpreting and using data</li> <li>• People are clear about the kinds of support (formal and informal), resources and infrastructure that exists in the organisation to support their inquiry and learning</li> <li>• The organisation ensures there are processes and opportunities for coaching and peer learning</li> <li>• Networks of peer learning are a feature of the organisation's culture and practice</li> <li>• People's potential for learning and making a contribution to improving whānau outcomes is leveraged through the learning and evidence culture that exists in the organisation</li> </ul>	

# Appendix C

## Reflection and sensemaking templates

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### 1. Data summary worksheet

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Contextual/organisational/individual areas			
Dimensions	Average	Range	Commentary
Values and principles			
Kaupapa			
Enabling environment			
ECB purpose			
<i>Summary</i>			
<i>Overall judgement:</i>			



## 2. Reflection sheet – trialling the tool

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Questions for the group	
What does this tell us we are doing well on?	
What does this tell us we could do better?	
Any questions?	
What's missing – were there gaps or anything you felt should have been included?	
Surprises and puzzles?	

### 3. Sensemaking worksheet

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Questions for the group	
What's the data telling us about what the priorities are? (e.g. where the scores are lowest)	
How do we feel about this?	
What do we think is really going on here?	
What opportunities might this present?	
What do we need to do about this? (Refer to separate worksheet)	



#### 4. What do we need to do about this?

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Positive and possible	
What would we keep doing?	
What would or should we stop doing?	
What might we change?	
What might we need to create?	

# Appendix D

## ECB planning template

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<b>What are we going to do?</b>  3 priorities – positive and possible	<b>What evidence do we need?</b>  How will we know we have been successful? What will we see, hear and feel?  (What will be our measures of success?)	<b>What strategies will most help us achieve our results?</b>	<b>What kind of resources and support do we think we will need to achieve our results?</b>



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