



UNIVERSITY  
OF WOLLONGONG  
AUSTRALIA



# UOW Framework for Evaluation of Equity Programs

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## AIM

The *UOW Framework for Evaluation of Equity Programs* aims to support higher education equity program designers to formulate, implement and enhance programs and initiatives that promote positive participation and outcomes for the equity cohorts they aim to support. To achieve this successfully requires meaningful, actionable and sustainable evaluation, which enables program designers to react to and pre-empt issues that may emerge over time. This Framework aims to specify the core principles of effective evaluation, which can be used to guide design, implementation and appraisal of program evaluation activities.

## PHASES OF PROGRAM EVALUATION

The *UOW Framework for Evaluation of Equity Programs* is designed around four phases of program evaluation:

1. **PLANNING & DESIGN** – explicit and structured pre-planning to generate meaningful, actionable and reliable data from which to appraise the effects of the program
2. **IMPLEMENTATION** – the process of putting the structured plan into action
3. **ANALYSIS & INTERPRETATION** - interrogation of the data through statistical (quantitative) or qualitative techniques to identify and describe trends in the data, as they pertain to the aims and intended outcomes of the program
4. **DISSEMINATION** - the reporting and circulation of findings to key stakeholders, funding bodies and the wider community

## PRINCIPLES

Nine core principles were developed through an iterative process of literature and theoretical review, stakeholder and expert consultation, and piloting. The intent of this consultative approach was to develop principles to guide design of program evaluations from the bottom up, rather than imposing a particular framework upon an existing program. The result was nine principles that represent the foundations, requirements and essential characteristics of an effective equity program evaluation. What follows is an overview of these principles, their meaning and, in brief, their implications for program evaluations. The companion document, *Background Information on Evaluation of Equity Programs*, further elaborates upon these principles, as well as their importance and supporting evidence. The supplementary *Action Tool for Evaluation of Equity Programs* provides a working document to aid the planning of a program evaluation, or the appraisal of a program evaluation proposal.

1. Widely Consultative
2. Sensitive
3. Well-aligned
4. Coordinated
5. Impactful
6. Sustainable
7. Integrated
8. Carefully Managed
9. Disseminated

## USING THE FRAMEWORK FOR PROGRAM EVALUATION

For those wanting further information about these principles, what they entail and why these particular principles were chosen, a detailed document outlining background information and underpinnings for each principle is available in the *Background Information on Evaluation of Equity Programs* companion document. This provides further information about what is meant by each principle, why they are important and how they can best be achieved.

For those wanting to propose or conduct an evaluation, there is a companion document, *Application of Evaluation Principles*. It is intended to support practitioners and coordinators of equity programs to design and implement an evaluation program that is aligned with the *UOW Framework for Evaluating Equity Programs* and is consistent with best practice associated with program evaluation. The reflection questions are designed to support your planning and design. You don't have to answer every question in each section; only those that seem relevant and/or appropriate to your program and context. Also included in the reflection tool is a range of suggested resources aligned to the Framework. There is also an Action Tool that assists you to transform your responses to this reflection into a clear and coherent plan for implementing your program evaluation.

## PRINCIPLE 1:

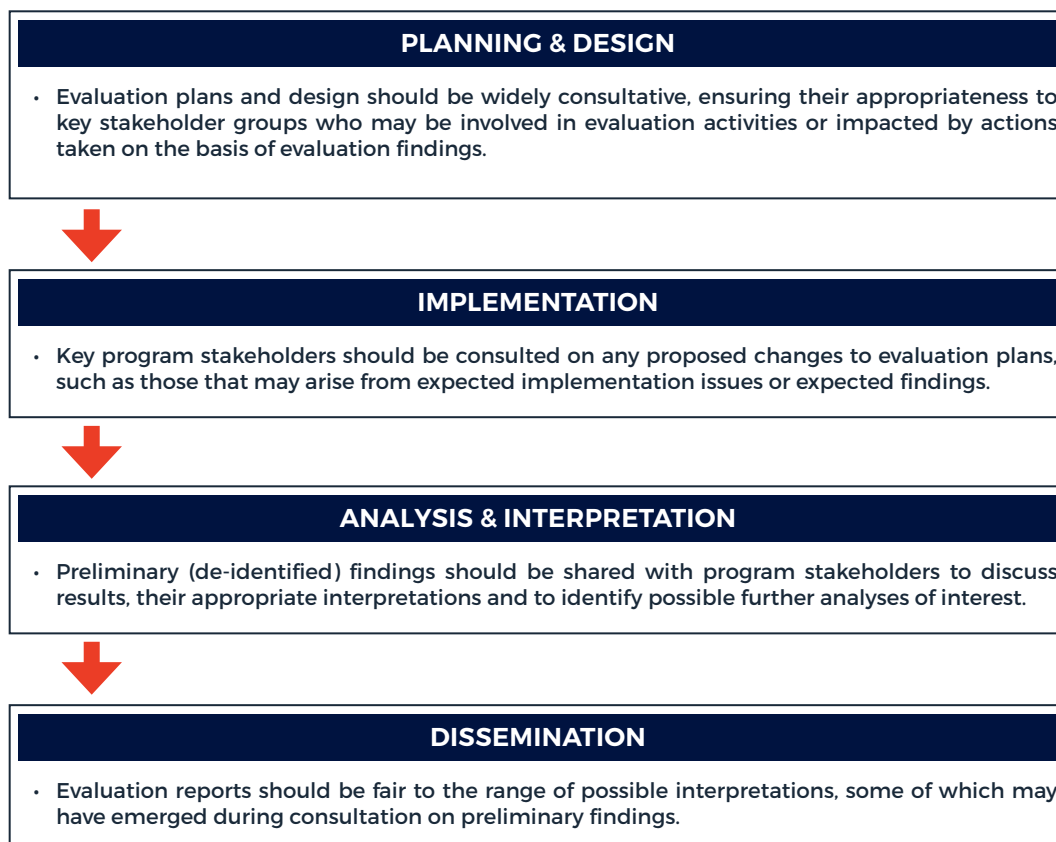
# Widely Consultative

Program evaluation seeks input from a range of key stakeholders.

*In brief:* Program evaluations should consider perspectives, experiences and impacts of the program across a range of stakeholders. This includes not only program participants, but also its facilitators, organisers, supporting institutions/organisations and the families of participants. While not all stakeholder groups must be consulted in every evaluation activity, understanding how a program's impacts are distributed is important. This consultation can be achieved in numerous ways: inviting stakeholders onto a project oversight panel to discuss plans, progress and findings (i.e., consultation); adopting a 'students as partners' approach to design and implementation of the evaluation (i.e., collaboration). For further background, rationale and importance of this principle, see *Application of Evaluation Principles*.

Relevance to Evaluation Planning (see also *Evaluation Action Tool*):

### Principle 1: Widely Consultative



## PRINCIPLE 2:

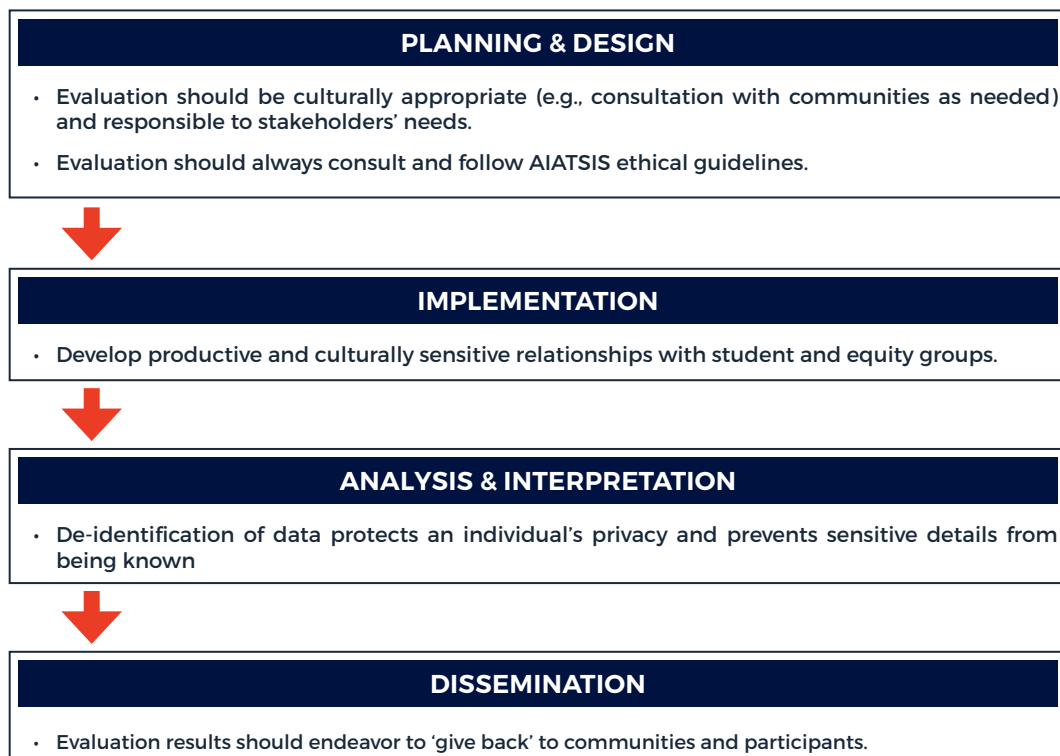
# Sensitive

Program evaluation is sensitive to the equity groups that interact with the program and evaluation process.

*In brief:* All program evaluations should aim to develop productive and culturally sensitive relationships with diverse students and recognised equity groups. We propose that the AIATSIS ethical guidelines should always be consulted to ensure that respectful relationships are developed with stakeholders and participants. While these guidelines have specifically been developed to guide researchers engaged in Australian Indigenous studies, its principles (e.g., respect, negotiation, collaboration, giving back) reflect good practice for evaluation with participants from diverse backgrounds and/or cultural groups. As such, these guidelines will ensure that any evaluation is both culturally appropriate and also responsive to stakeholders' needs. In particular we recommend that program evaluations strive to incorporate 'consultation, agreement and mutual understanding' in all activities and where possible, design should be framed around partnership and also collaboration amongst all parties. Evaluations should also be student centred, recognising that diversity is both an enriching and valuable resource for the higher education setting. As such, students should be considered holistically and in terms of their strengths, starting with what is present rather than what is absent. Finally, evaluation results should endeavour to 'give back' to the respective communities and participants. For further background, rationale and importance of this principle, see *Application of Evaluation Principles*.

Relevance to Evaluation Planning (see also *Evaluation Action Tool*):

### Principle 2: Sensitive



## PRINCIPLE 3:

# Well-Aligned

Program evaluation is well-aligned with the intended aims and outcomes of the specific program being evaluated.

*In brief:* Program evaluations must be well-aligned to the program's intended aims, to yield insight into the extent to which the program is achieving each of its intended outcomes (as determined by the program stakeholders). Usually programs expect to have an impact over time, across each of its iterations and whenever improvements are made. As such, program evaluations should complement and extend any existing, past or planned evaluations or data sources, to give the fullest possible picture of a program's outcomes (i.e., across a variety of outcome areas, participants over time, comparing a revised version of the program to a previous iteration). To achieve this often requires triangulation of multiple sources of data – which also serve to ensure the accuracy and robustness of conclusions. For further background, rationale and importance of this principle, see *Application of Evaluation Principles*.

Relevance to Evaluation Planning (see also *Evaluation Action Tool*):

### Principle 3: Well-Aligned



## PRINCIPLE 4:

# Coordinated

Program evaluation articulates with a common set of outcomes to be captured across all programs ('whole-of-institution'), the entirety of the student ('whole-of-student') and over the entire student lifecycle ('whole-of-journey').

*In brief:* Program evaluations should evaluate a common and comprehensive set of outcomes across programs and time, rather than only evaluating individual programs and instantiations in isolation. That is, while there will certainly be unique foci and aims for each program that should be captured, there should also be an overarching set of outcomes that apply across all programs; these should be identified, specified and agreed. Evaluation activities that aim to capture unique aspects of a particular program (e.g., HSC results in comparison to Year 11 results, as an outcome of a university preparation program) should also aim to articulate with a core set of outcomes established, to ensure a cohesive story can be told when combining these data. This permits a higher-level strategic evaluation of the full suite of program offerings, to ensure that the programs that exist: effectively contribute a positive and cumulative effect toward participants' immediate, short-term and long-term outcomes; and are evidence-based. Oversight of this 'big picture' evaluation should be monitored by an overarching governance group. At the same time, evaluation should be open to innovation and change, rather than strict adherence to the methods of previous evaluations. For further background, rationale and importance of this principle, see *Application of Evaluation Principles*.

Relevance to Evaluation Planning (see also *Evaluation Action Tool*):

### Principle 4: Coordinated



## PRINCIPLE 5:

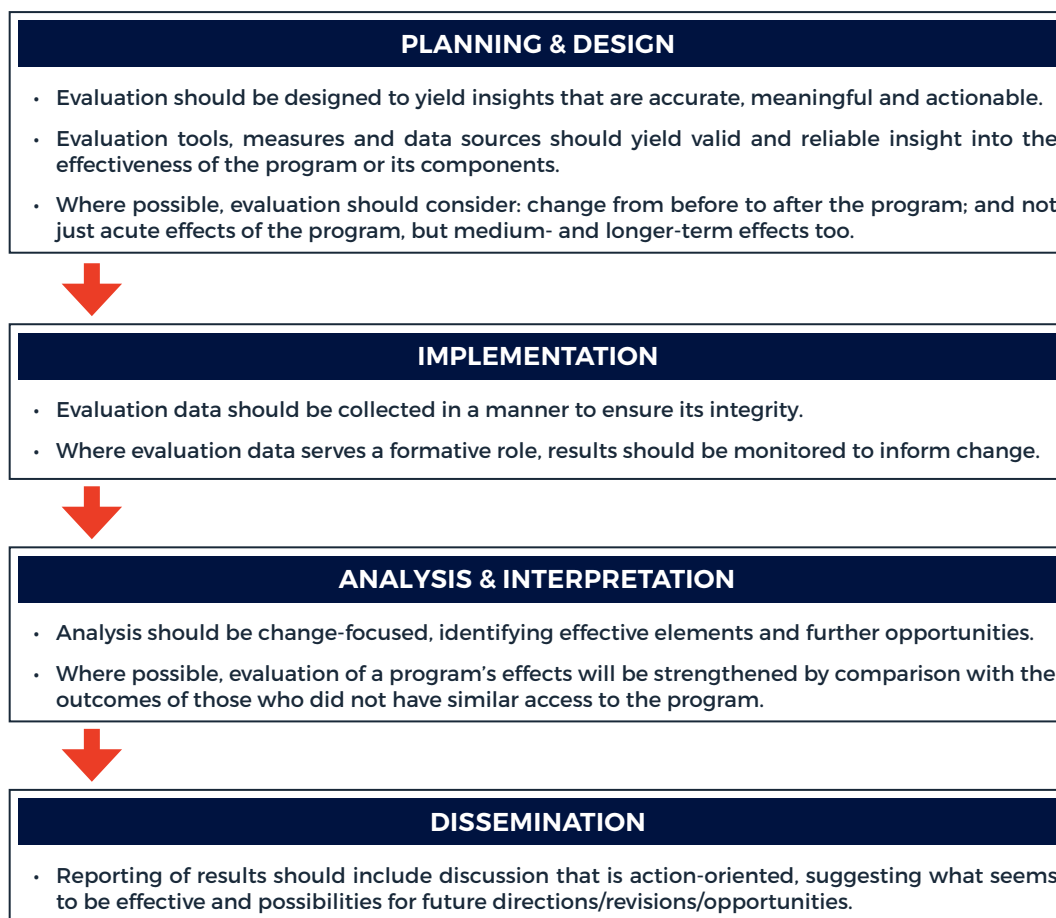
# Impactful

Program evaluation is designed to generate conclusions that are accurate, meaningful, and action-oriented.

*In brief:* A principle rationale for conducting a program evaluation is that it yields conclusions that are action-oriented. This action might take the form of other programs replicating the success of the evaluated program or making necessary revisions to the evaluated program. For this to occur, conclusions need to be accurate (e.g., triangulated across multiple data sources), meaningful (e.g., yield data that speaks to the real-world outcomes of program participants) and actionable (e.g., provide clear guidance about what, when, why and how a program is, or is not, having a particular impact). Anticipated changes need not be identified in advance of the evaluation; rather, evaluations may also be open, exploratory and creative to generate insight about the effective and efficient functioning of the program. Evaluation designs also need to be change-focused, looking at aspects of the program that do (or do not) yield short-, medium- and long-term benefits for participants. In addition, to enable changes that benefit the students currently participating in the program, evaluation should ideally also have a formative function (e.g., collection of data that can be used to inform delivery of the program), rather than only an end-of-program evaluation from which changes are too late to benefit the current cohort of participants. For further background, rationale and importance of this principle, see *Application of Evaluation Principles*.

Relevance to Evaluation Planning (see also *Evaluation Action Tool*):

### Principle 5: Impactful



## PRINCIPLE 6:

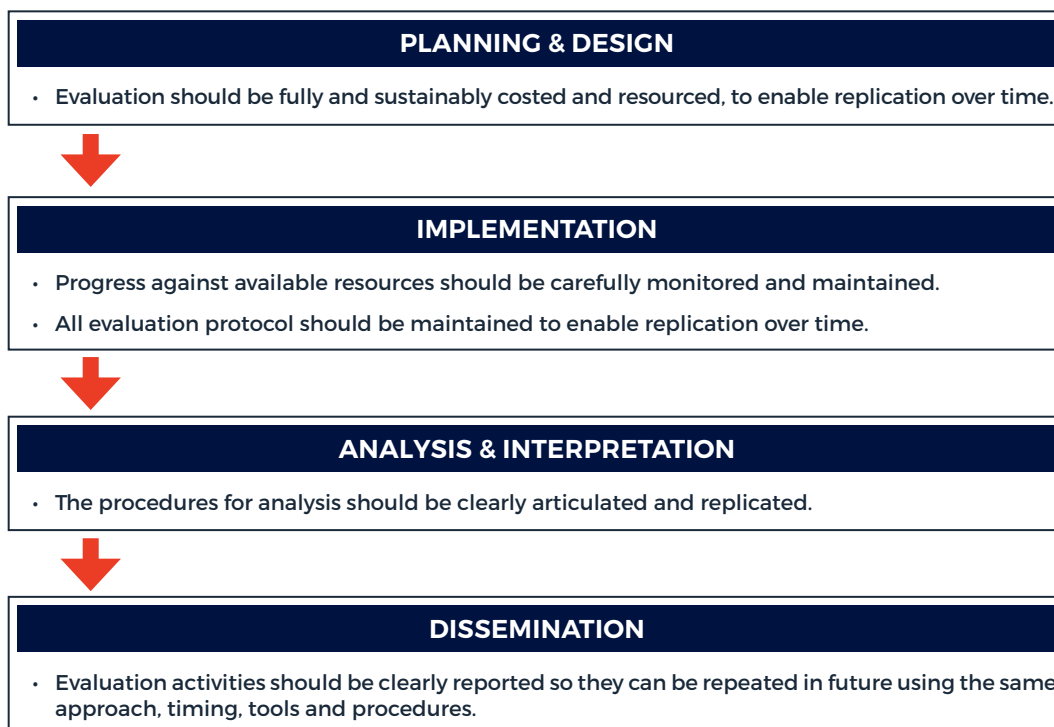
# Sustainable

Program evaluation requires and employs resources (e.g., finance, personnel, time) in a manner that ensures evaluation activities can be sustained over time, if desired.

*In brief:* Evaluation activities should, wherever possible, leverage existing program activities, contexts and resources to ensure cost-effective evaluation. Program evaluations also need to be adequately and sustainably resourced (e.g., should be a line item in a program's budget) to ensure its viability over time. Another important aspect of sustainability involves ensuring the presence, development and continuity of relevant expertise within the team responsible for ongoing evaluation activities. For further background, rationale and importance of this principle, see *Application of Evaluation Principles*.

Relevance to Evaluation Planning (see also *Evaluation Action Tool*):

### Principle 6: Sustainable





## PRINCIPLE 7:

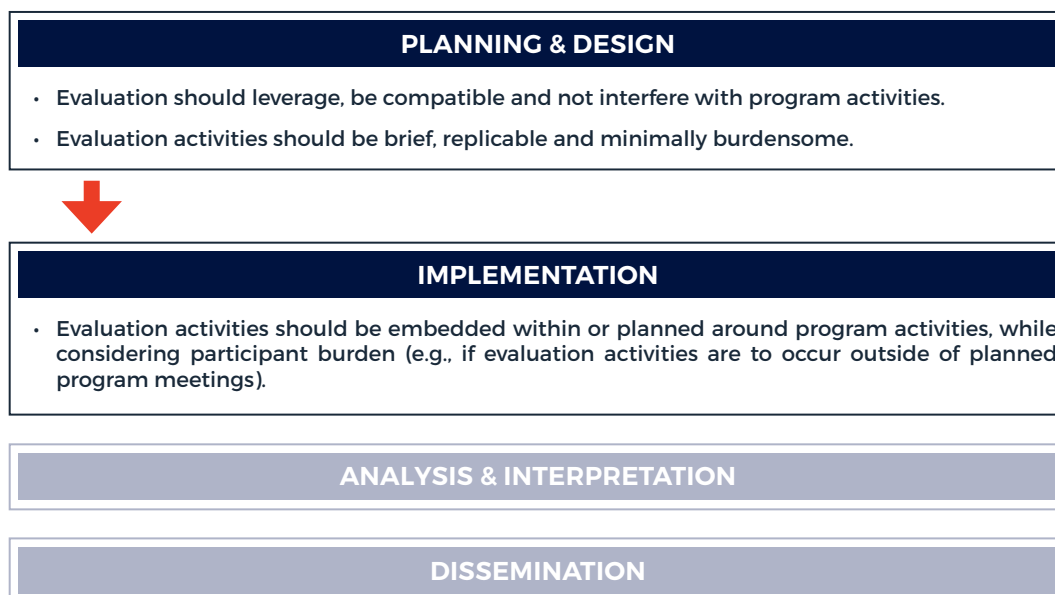
# Integrated

Program evaluation should minimise interference with the program's activities.

*In brief:* Evaluation activities should, wherever possible, leverage existing program activities, contexts and demands to ensure that evaluations are compatible with (rather than interfere with) the program. To achieve this, evaluation activities that are efficient and place minimum burden on program staff and participants (e.g., occur within planned program activities without hindering them) should be privileged. For further background, rationale and importance of this principle, see *Application of Evaluation Principles*.

Relevance to Evaluation Planning (see also *Evaluation Action Tool*):

### Principle 7: Integrated



## PRINCIPLE 8:

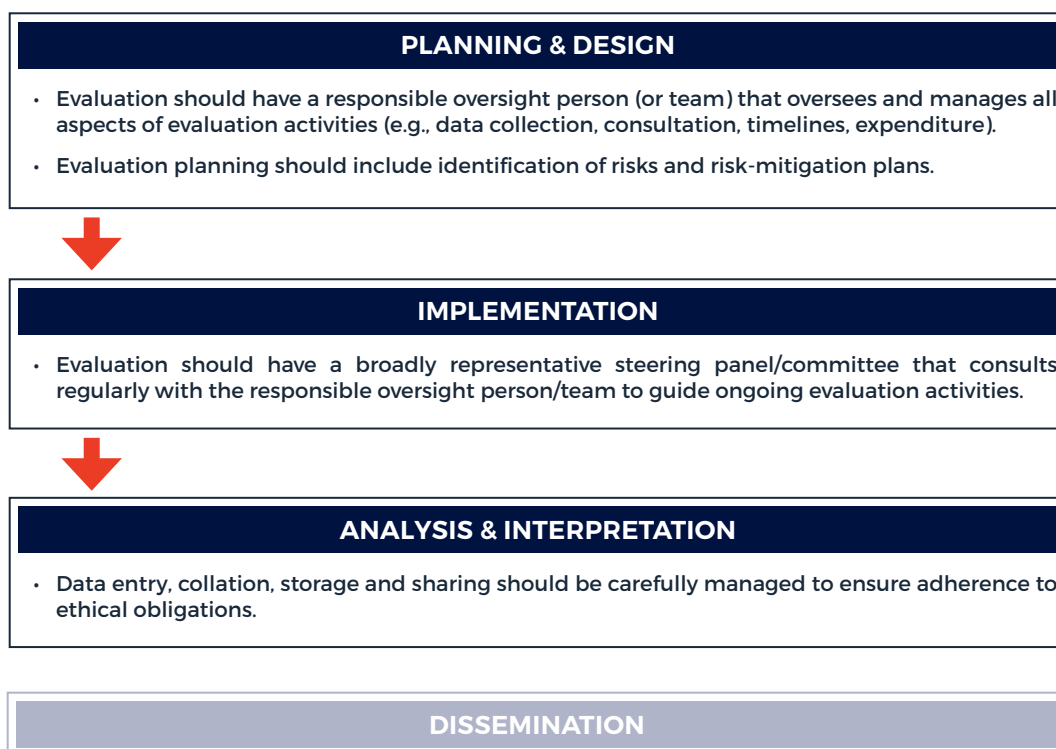
# Carefully Managed

Program evaluation has a designated individual or team to carefully manage the evaluation process, including planning for and monitoring risk assessments and mitigation.

*In brief:* Successful program evaluation requires careful planning, organisation and adherence to plans – and someone to ensure and certify this adherence. An oversight person, team or panel should have a clearly articulated, written plan for evaluation (i.e., what, when, where, by whom), and regularly review and ensure progress against this plan. Risks should also be monitored and planned for. These extend beyond ethical risks (e.g., informed consent), to include things like risks related to timing (e.g., data collection not being ready in time for planned program meetings), reliability of data (e.g., data collected accurately and appropriately) and funding (e.g., exceeding evaluation funding prior to completion). For further background, rationale and importance of this principle, see *Application of Evaluation Principles*.

Relevance to Evaluation Planning (see also *Evaluation Action Tool*):

### Principle 8: Carefully Managed



## PRINCIPLE 9:

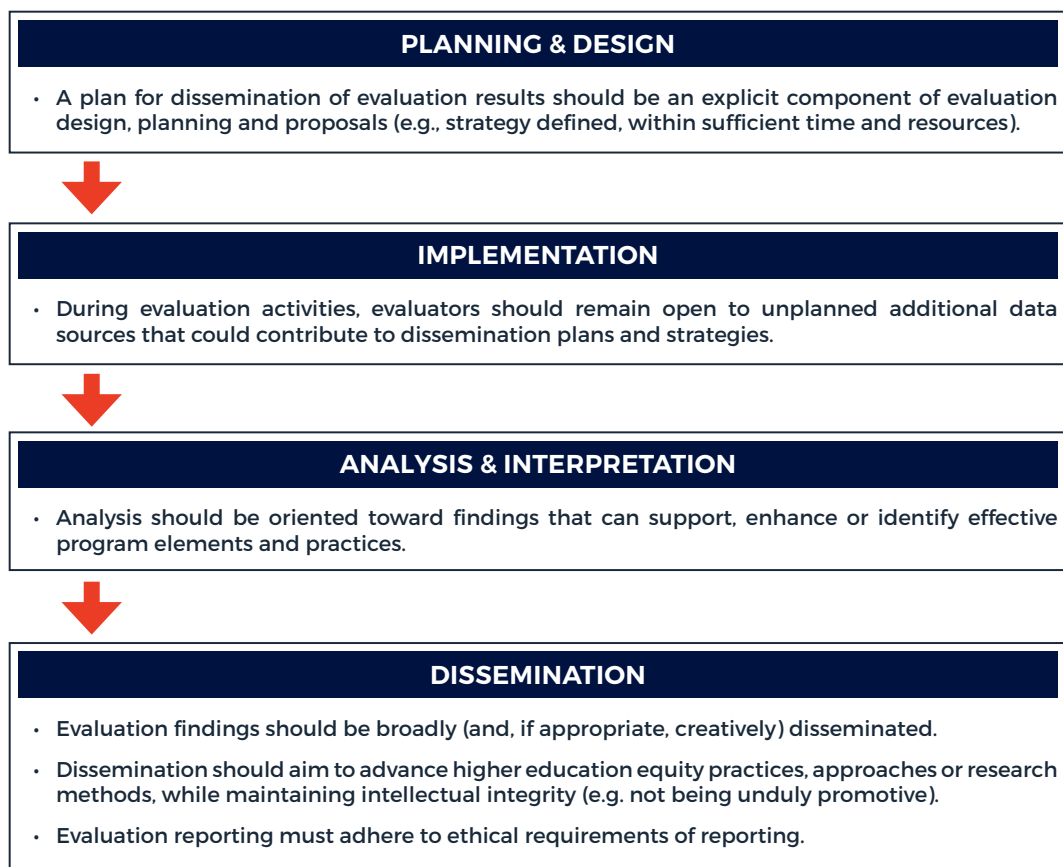
# Disseminated

Program evaluation findings are disseminated with maximum impact.

*In brief:* Dissemination of program evaluation findings is essential to enhance practices and approaches in the field. Even null or negative findings tell us something important. As such, program evaluations should be reported. Part of the dissemination strategy might include the discussion of preliminary findings with a group of key stakeholders, to ensure conclusions are accurate and appropriate. Be creative in the dissemination of findings to ensure maximum impact and exposure. This might extend beyond the traditional reports to include scholarly journal articles, media releases and social media postings. At the same time, dissemination strategies must always adhere to ethical requirements of reporting, such as the anonymity and confidentiality of evaluation participants. Sufficient time and resources for dissemination should be explicit in the evaluation protocols and budget, to ensure this important stage gets attention. As part of the dissemination process, an institutional response to evaluation should be sought and provided, to facilitate internal dissemination, strategising and institutional buy-in. For further background, rationale and importance of this principle, see *Application of Evaluation Principles*.

Relevance to Evaluation Planning (see also *Evaluation Action Tool*):

### Principle 9: Disseminated





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