



YOUTH PROJECTS FINAL REPORT

Empowerment Fund
30 July 2025



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Project Summary

The initiative addressed a capability gap by establishing a comprehensive evaluation framework, enhancing our internal capabilities, and promoting knowledge sharing across the sector. By aligning with the Victorian Government's early intervention and evidence-based service delivery objectives, the project demonstrated the value of government investment in strengthening evaluation systems.

This project sought to increase Youth Projects' evaluation capabilities by engaging the support of Impact Co., a Melbourne-based consultancy experienced in working across health, mental health, First Nations, and social sectors, to create a fit for purpose by evaluation framework and a suite of evaluation tools and training to support the uplift of the organisations' evaluative capability and capacity.

Key deliverables included:

- A comprehensive Evaluation Capacity Development and Implementation Framework
- Training resources and template materials to support staff in conducting evaluations
- A Monitoring and Evaluation Framework to track evaluation maturity and capability growth
- A partnership model that leveraged external expertise from Impact Co. to build internal capacity.

This approach represented a strategic investment in data-driven improvements, ensuring that Youth Projects can deliver impactful, adaptable, and sustainable support for vulnerable young people, with clear alignment to Empowerment Fund goals and strong value for money.

Objectives:

- To develop a comprehensive evaluation framework for Youth Projects' QPOP (Queer Psychosocial Outreach Program), ensuring the program's interventions are effective and meet the needs of the LGBTIQ+ youth community.
- To build internal evaluation capabilities within Youth Projects, enabling ongoing assessment and evidence-based improvements to our programs and services.

Deliverables:

- A detailed Evaluation Capacity Development and Implementation Framework, specifying methodologies, training needs and resource requirements for program evaluation.
- A suite of template materials and training resources to support Youth Projects' staff in conducting effective evaluations.
- A Monitoring and Evaluation Framework to track evaluation maturity and the impact of capacity-building initiatives.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS/FINDINGS

Youth Projects developed a comprehensive Evaluation and Implementation Framework to build our evaluative capability across our health, employment, and outreach teams. Supported by our partner Impact Co., we delivered practical training, tools, and governance processes that embed ethical, inclusive, and strategically aligned evaluation practices. A Monitoring and Evaluation Framework was also introduced to track capability uplift and organisational maturity. We are now applying this approach through a formal evaluation of our Queer Psychosocial Outreach Program.

INSIGHTS

Learnings for the Organisation

- The project has driven meaningful organisational reform, including the establishment of dedicated resources within a specialised Executive function, focused on practice development and impact.
- We have strengthened our understanding of what it takes to embed a sustainable culture of evaluation across programs and teams.
- A commitment to evaluation must be embedded at the governance level to ensure it is prioritised, resourced, and aligned with strategic goals.
- There is a clear need for Youth Projects to invest in data architecture and governance systems to support structured, consistent, and secure data collection and use.

- Cultural considerations must be embedded in evaluation design, including training staff and working in collaboration with Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations and other cultural specialists to ensure evaluations are culturally safe and inclusive.
- The lack of inclusive data sets, particularly regarding LGBTIQ+ populations, highlights a critical gap in broader data infrastructure (e.g. ABS datasets) that limits the sector's ability to measure and respond to the needs of marginalised cohorts.
- Building internal capability through training, tools, and practical support is essential for enabling staff to engage confidently and meaningfully in evaluation activities.
- Embedding co-design and co-leadership across all evaluation stages is critical for relevance, inclusion, and systems-level impact.
- This project has demonstrated clear value for money by building Youth Projects' internal capability and contributing to sector-wide learning and enabling the promotion of cost-effective early intervention for vulnerable young people.

Learnings for the Broader Social Services Sector

- Evaluation requires dedicated time and resources - it cannot be an afterthought or added on at the end of a project.
- Organisational commitment is critical - building a culture of evaluation takes leadership buy-in and staff engagement across all levels.
- Capability building must come first - equipping teams with the skills, tools, and confidence to engage in evaluation is essential for meaningful results.
- Early planning matters - evaluations are most effective when embedded into service design and implementation from the outset.
- Ethical and purposeful design - evaluation should be client-centred, inclusive, and focused on learning, not just accountability.

- Upcoming QPOP evaluation will test this approach. We are applying these learnings to ensure it is well-resourced, impactful, and relevant to young people experiencing complex disadvantage.
- Sharing knowledge strengthens the sector and we are committed to sharing our frameworks, tools, and insights to support evidence-informed practice across the sector.



Additional Information

Youth Projects will be undertaking a formal evaluation of the Queer Psychosocial Outreach Program (QPOP) in late 2025, applying the evaluation capability, tools, and frameworks developed through this project. This evaluation will provide critical insights into the program's outcomes and impact for LGBTIQ+ young people experiencing complex disadvantage. The findings will be publicly available on our website in November 2025, contributing to the evidence base for inclusive and affirming models of care in the community services sector.

Enquiries

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