



EVIDENCE CENTRE

TE POKAPŪ TAUNAKITANGA

PROFILE

UNDERSTANDING WHAT WORKS FOR TAMARIKI

The Oranga Tamariki Evidence Team works to build the evidence base that helps us better understand wellbeing and what works to improve outcomes for New Zealand's children, young people and their whānau.





OUR MANDATE

The Expert Advisory Panel was clear about the positive role of research, evaluation and data analysis to support decisions and develop insights about child and youth wellbeing.



A TE AO MĀORI WORLDVIEW

Acknowledging a te ao Māori worldview in the generation and dissemination of knowledge and evidence

In the design, generation and dissemination of evidence we need to respect the value of different knowledge streams and, more importantly, for there to be dialogue between these knowledge streams. We acknowledge a te ao Māori world view in the generation and dissemination of knowledge and evidence*. This is critical to providing a nuanced understanding of ‘what works for whom and in what context’.

**Bridging Cultural Perspectives, published by Superu, is a framework that will help us work with integrity with the knowledge that we generate and use.*

<http://www.superu.govt.nz/publication/bridging-cultural-perspectives>



OUR CONTRIBUTION

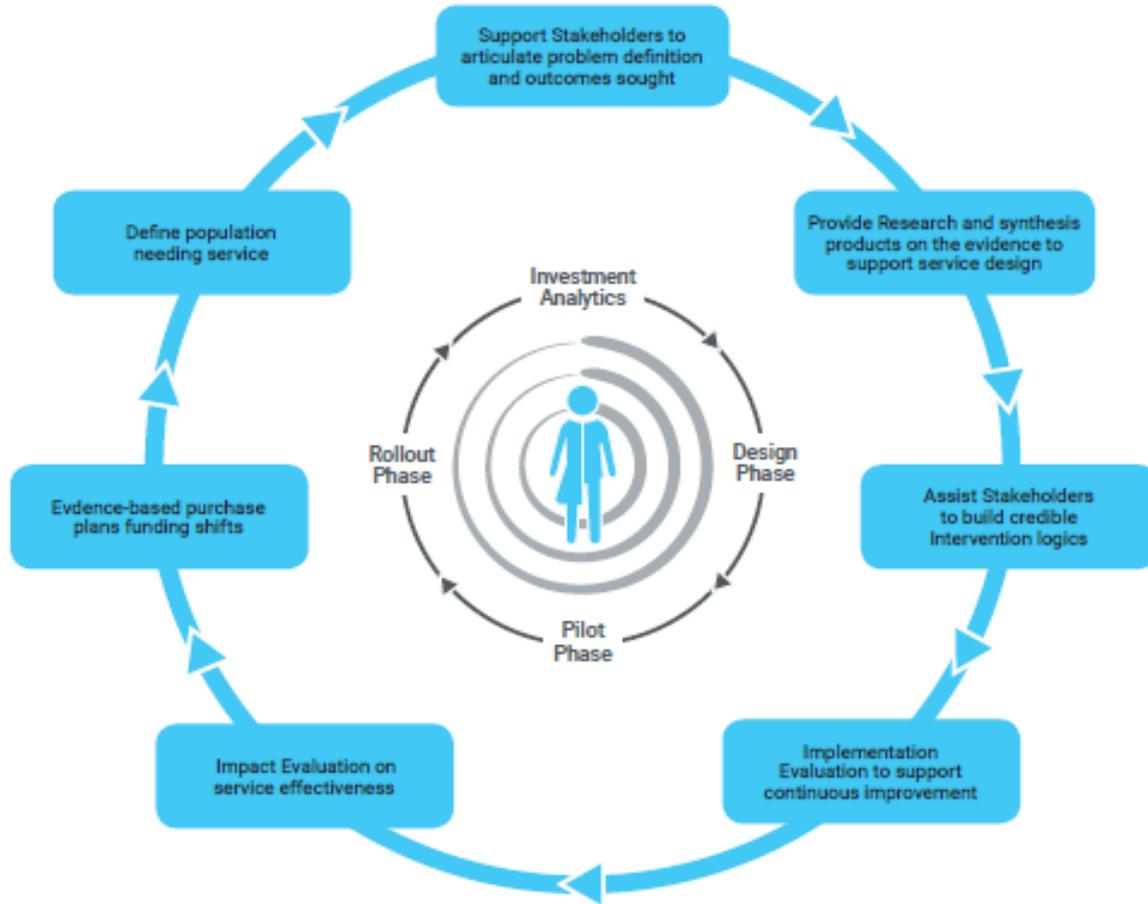
We provide an authoritative voice on evidence about child wellbeing and what works to improve it. We will:

- Use our **wellbeing model** to identify groups of children in need of services to help direct resources where they are most needed
- Build a strong and relevant **evidence base** to support the design of new interventions, so that we can be confident they are contributing positively to tamariki wellbeing
- Embed a **learning culture** of evidence-informed decision-making in Oranga Tamariki, to facilitate continuous improvement as we transform the system.





CHILD-CENTRIC INSIGHTS & EVIDENCE PLATFORM



Our evidence-building cycle connects with and supports the Oranga Tamariki commissioning cycle used by Partnering for Outcomes.

OUR STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

Capacity building

We will **work with our internal business partners** as services are developed and purchased, and new methods are designed and implemented, to:

- Understand how we can most **usefully contribute** to wider organisational objectives, providing the information and evidence the business needs, in ways and at times it is needed
- Define the **intervention logic** and rationale for services
- Deliver implementation lessons and **insights** from trialling and testing services in practice
- **Assess the difference services make** to tamariki throughout their lives – immediately, and in the medium and longer term

We undertake and facilitate **high quality research, evaluation, and data analytics** to understand child and youth wellbeing and vulnerability, drivers of outcomes and what works to improve outcomes.

We **align evidence-building** to support the development of optimal policies and programmes to maximise the likelihood of achieving positive outcomes for children and young people.



OUR STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

Leadership

We have a [cross-sector leadership role](#) in understanding what works for children, including a common measurement approach, in partnership with the funding and performance group.

We provide a [central platform for the creation and sharing of knowledge](#) about child wellbeing, which includes the wellbeing model as a population level source of intelligence about how children are doing and who is in need.



OUR STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

Leveraging international linkages

We will **identify, understand and synthesise international research** to establish a centre of excellence for child wellbeing, that:

- Describes and monitors **trends** and variations in outcomes for children and young people
- Understands the multiple **causes** of variations in outcomes for children and young people
- Monitors key causal factors associated with **variations in outcomes** for children and young people
- **Analyses what works**, for whom and in what context to create positive outcomes for children and young people
- Anticipates likely future **implications of social, demographic and economic change** for child and youth wellbeing
- Ensures that **current knowledge is harvested and shared** so that research can be focused efficiently on knowledge gaps
- Includes both **evidence-based practice** and **practice-based evidence**.





“Better decisions are more likely to be made when they are informed by evidence.”

Prof Sir Peter Gluckman,
PM’s Chief Science Advisor,
July 2017



PRIORITISATION

It's important to strategically align our efforts so that we focus on highest-value work and make decisions systematically. The following tables set out the criteria we use to assess the risk profile and importance of initiatives, to help us to identify where we can use our research and evaluation resources to make the most impact.

Risk is assessed on the following factors	
Degree of innovation	Innovative or pilot initiatives exploring new approaches to difficult problems are considered high risk, as by definition there are multiple unknowns involved
Programme maturity	This means the extent to which the programme is able to be evaluated: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Has it reached a point where an outcomes evaluation is useful? - Does the programme have the data and systems to enable an evaluation?
Cross-sectoral involvement or implications	Programmes that rely on multiple agencies or interact with multiple agencies are considered to be higher risk
Financial	This refers to the level of funding and also the degree of control (devolved or outsourced funding involving multiple suppliers may carry a high level of risk)
Population served	Programmes which serve specific high-needs groups carry a greater risk of harm should they under-perform
Other external factors	Some initiatives may be highly susceptible to external pressures which contribute to, for example, reputational risk.



PRIORITISATION

Importance is assessed on the following factors*	
Size and reach of programme	A programme that involves high expenditure and / or that affects a large proportion of our target population would be considered of high importance
Alignment with government priorities	A programme related to a specific government or ministerial priority would rank highly
Use of the evaluation to inform future decisions	If the evaluation feeds directly into future investment decisions then it would score highly
Level of existing evidence	A programme where there is already reasonably strong evidence would not rank as highly as one where there is not yet evidence of effectiveness

Note: In a few instances there may be external imperatives that mean the initiative is considered important.



DECISION MATRIX

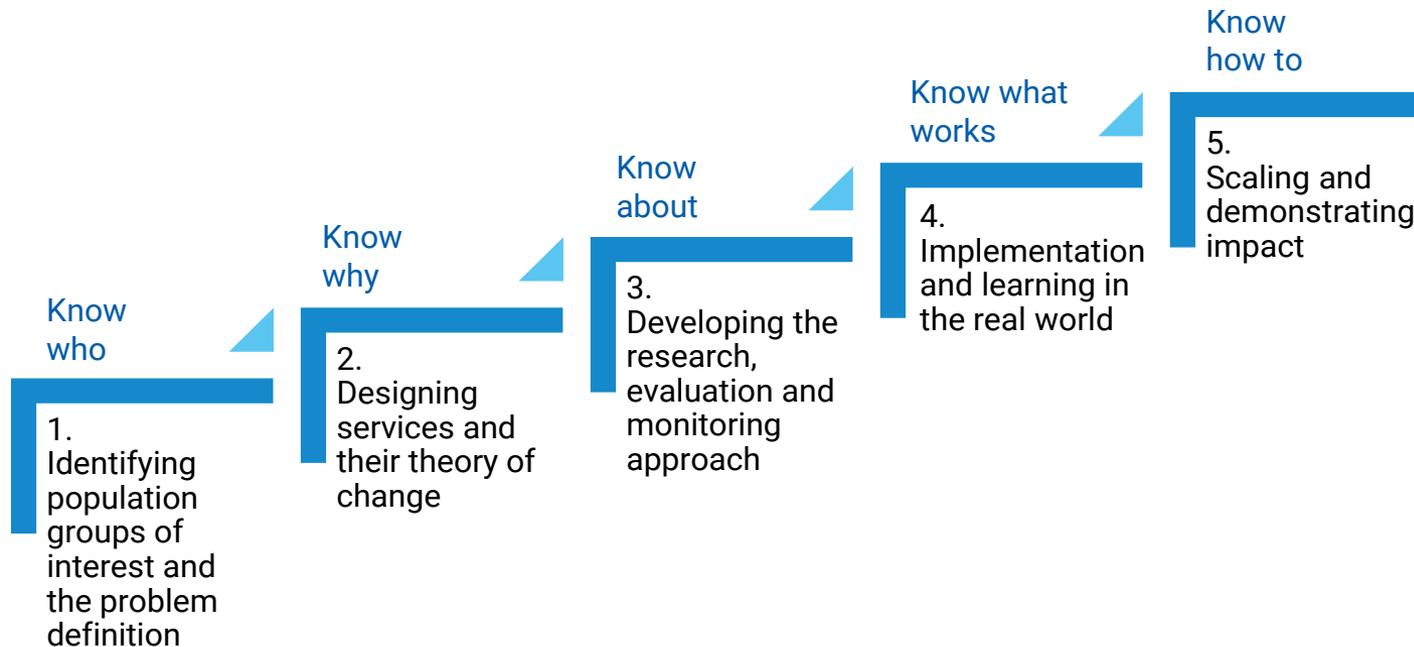
The following matrix shows how the risk profile and importance of initiatives determines the Evidence Centre’s response:

		RISK		
		HIGH	MEDIUM	LOW
IMPORTANCE	HIGH	We will prioritise this and provide a full research or evaluation service	We will prioritise this and provide a full research or evaluation service	We will ensure this is completed; the approach to be agreed with the client
	MEDIUM	We will ensure this is completed; the approach to be agreed with the client	We will ensure this is completed; the approach to be agreed with the client	We will ensure this is completed; the approach to be agreed with the client
	LOW	We will ensure this is completed, but this may be a “light touch” approach	We will provide support and tools to the client to manage their own research or evaluation	We will provide support and tools to the client to manage their own research or evaluation



SUPPORTING THROUGH DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION

Our work programme is spread across five stages:





WHAT WE DO

The Evidence Centre is structured around three teams that work collaboratively, but with a primary focus on:

- **Analytics and Investment**
 - Strategic advice and insight from operational data
 - Strategic advice and insight from population and wellbeing data
- **Research and Synthesis**
 - Research strategy and priorities
 - Producing evidence briefs, literature reviews and other research products
- **Evaluation**
 - Organisational capacity building to better understand the difference we are making for tamariki
 - Commissioning, monitoring and undertaking evaluations



WHAT WE PRODUCE

The Evidence Centre has a standard set of products to meet most research and evaluation needs:

Category	Product type	Timeframe	Details
Desk-based document analysis	Topic scan	2 weeks	Synthesises a limited amount of existing literature relating to a topic area. Can usefully inform organisational decision-making or contribute to on-going work; a pragmatic product but quality can be affected by the short time frames. For internal use only. Informal peer review process.
	Evidence brief	3-4 weeks	A good summary of existing literature and/or assessment of the strength of existing evidence relating to a topic. Value is similar to a topic scan, but content is more detailed. Usually for internal use only. Informal peer review process.
	Literature review	2-3 months	A comprehensive and up-to-date summary of existing evidence relating to a topic. High-quality product that contributes to existing knowledge. Suitable for internal and external use. Formal peer review process.
Data support	Ad hoc data analysis support	1-2 weeks	Supports the organisation's data analysis needs. Can usefully inform organisational decision-making or contribute to on-going work. For internal use only. Informal peer review process.
	On-going data analysis support	Dependent on project	Provides on-going data analysis support across the length of a project. Outputs are usually integrated into other project reporting. Informal peer review process.



WHAT WE PRODUCE

Category	Product type	Timeframe	Details
Evaluation	Process evaluation report	4-5 months	A qualitative insight into how effectively an initiative is implemented and recommendations for future improvements. High-quality product that contributes to existing knowledge. Suitable for internal and external use. Formal peer review process.
	Outcomes / impact evaluation report	12+ months <i>(including commissioning & sign off)</i>	A mixed-methods / quantitative insight into an initiatives' outcomes / impact. High-quality product that contributes to existing knowledge. Suitable for internal and external use. Formal peer review process.
Research	Qualitative or quantitative research report	4-5 months	Qualitatively or quantitatively addresses a particular research question. High-quality product that contributes to existing knowledge. Suitable for internal and external use. Formal peer review process.
Other	Survey development and / or analysis	1-2 months	Undertake or contribute to survey development. Undertake data analysis and report writing. Usually for internal use only.
	Evaluation design, preparation and coaching	As required	Helping with preparation of logic models, outcomes frameworks and evaluation plans. Coaching and training teams in evaluation practice.
	Ad hoc advice	As required	While not a "product" a such, we also often provide ad hoc advice to other sections of the Ministry on research and data methodologies and processes.



HOW WE WORK

The Evidence Centre works collaboratively, with integrity, and shares its research widely. We will:

Foster a **critical mass** of research, evaluation and data and investment experts to build breadth and depth of knowledge and expertise in our team.

Establish and maintain a **reputation** for **excellence in our work**:

- recognising the importance of this work for children
- taking care and paying attention to privacy, human rights and ethics as we handle personal information
- recognising whakapapa, and the role that context, whānau and community play in tamariki's wellbeing
- being culturally sensitive and open to learning what works in Te Ao Māori
- reinforcing children's mana by valuing their voices, the experience of frontline professionals and the contribution of experts, as we develop insights
- operating with integrity –being tika and pono – and embracing initiative and innovation.

Build a **positive profile** and partnerships (national and international), and work collaboratively.

Facilitate training and development for those who need to build **evaluative thinking** into their services.

Sponsor, facilitate and **present at conferences, workshops and seminars**, where there are clear benefits for Oranga Tamariki and the children we serve.

Publish and disseminate our work:

- We model transparency by sharing our work and contributing meaningfully to Oranga Tamariki's learning culture.



TOOLS AND STANDARDS

Quality evidence

The Evidence Centre generates, synthesises and uses evidence. We are conscious that our advice needs to be informed by evidence that is rigorous, transparent, reliable, reproducible and relevant.

To help us, we use the New Zealand *Evidence rating scale* to gauge the quality and appropriateness of our evidence, whether from New Zealand or from overseas. This helps us to ensure that the evidence that underpins our advice stands up to scrutiny.

Using evidence in policymaking

The policy cycle is non-linear, but there's a place for evidence-use at all stages. DPMC's Policy Project aims to improve the quality of policy making and stewardship across government and their *Policy Quality Framework* embeds the use of evidence, insights and sound analytics into the process.

Making sense of evidence is a Superu publication that puts the case for a broad evidence base, comprising research, contextual and experiential sources.

Alignment with government priorities

The Government *Outcomes Catalogue Tool* maps government priorities, outcomes and proposed (or actual) measures for a range of social sector programmes. The information is organised around the OECD "Better Life" framework and the Catalogue allows you to search using a range of demographic and geographic factors.



WE'LL BE SUCCESSFUL IF:

- **Evidence produced contributes to public discourse and debate** about what works to improve outcomes for children and young people
- All change projects have research and evaluation plans
- Policy and service delivery are consulted on information needs
- All work is **peer reviewed** by internal and external experts, and positive reviews build our reputation
- All projects are completed according to agreed timeframes
- National and international **networks are established** and maintained in order to ensure we stay connected with the emergent knowledge base
- We **work collaboratively** across the social sector
- **Evidence is considered** in the development and review of policies and practices, and informs decision making
- Oranga Tamariki stakeholders are satisfied that **evidence is relevant** to policy and practice planning and review
- **Evidence is shared** and leads to increased knowledge and capability within the Ministry and across the sector
- Strategic priorities and our work programme are reviewed and updated regularly



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READ OUR RESEARCH:

Check out the Research web page at
<https://www.orangatamariki.govt.nz/news/category/research>

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