

Improving Outcomes for Aboriginal Communities

Building an Evidence Base



VACCA
Connected by culture

VICTORIAN ABORIGINAL CHILD CARE AGENCY



What we will talk about

- Background on VACCA
- VACCA's context
- VACCA's work to develop outcomes and build an evidence base of Aboriginal programs
- What we have learnt



VACCA

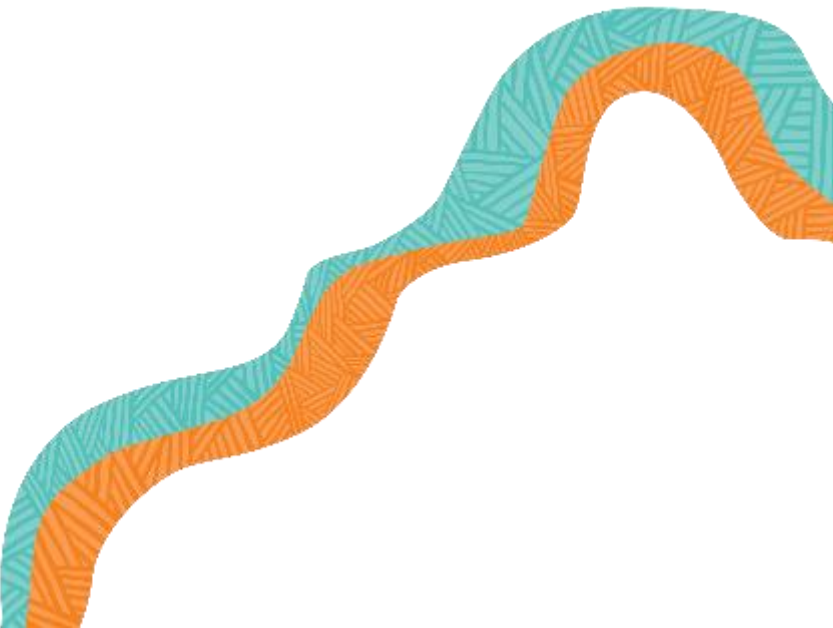


Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation - established in 1977

Vision: Aboriginal self-determination- Live, Experience and Be

Purpose: Supporting culturally strong, safe and thriving Aboriginal communities

Principles:

- Best interest of the child
 - Aboriginal Cultural Observance
 - Respect
 - Self Determination
 - Healing and Empowerment
 - Excellence
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Context

- Use of evidence and outcomes measurement
- Funding environment encouraging use of evidence-based programs (EBPs)
- Lack of Aboriginal EBPs
- Limited applicability of EBPs in our context, lack of cultural outcomes and lack of alignment of EBPs with the right to self-determination
- Western evaluation methods and approaches not always the right fit

Our approach to evidence

- Context is critical for program design
- Evidence needs to be relevant
- Outcomes need to be important to our communities
- Evaluations - supporting self-determination and culturally safe





VACCA is building evidence informed practice

Three sources of evidence:

- Research evidence – existing research evidence – if relevant to our context
- Practice wisdom - the knowledge and experience of our staff
- Client preferences and values – what we know about our clients

Building VACCA's evidence base

- Documenting our approach to working with children and families
- Identifying outcomes and measures of success
- Building evaluation systems, policies, procedures and tools



Cultural Therapeutic Ways

- Agency approach to guide VACCA's practice of healing for Aboriginal people, as well as creating a safe and supportive workplace for staff
- Intersection of cultural practice with trauma informed theories and self-determination
- Articulates how we will work with children and families



VACCA's Outcomes



Empowerment

VACCA clients understand and are empowered to exercise their rights – and discharge their associated obligations – as First People

Culture

Culture is embedded in VACCA clients as a resource to draw on for strength, resilience and healing

Safety

VACCA clients are safe – and feel safe – and are supported to make safe lifestyle decisions through family and community relationships

Health and Wellbeing

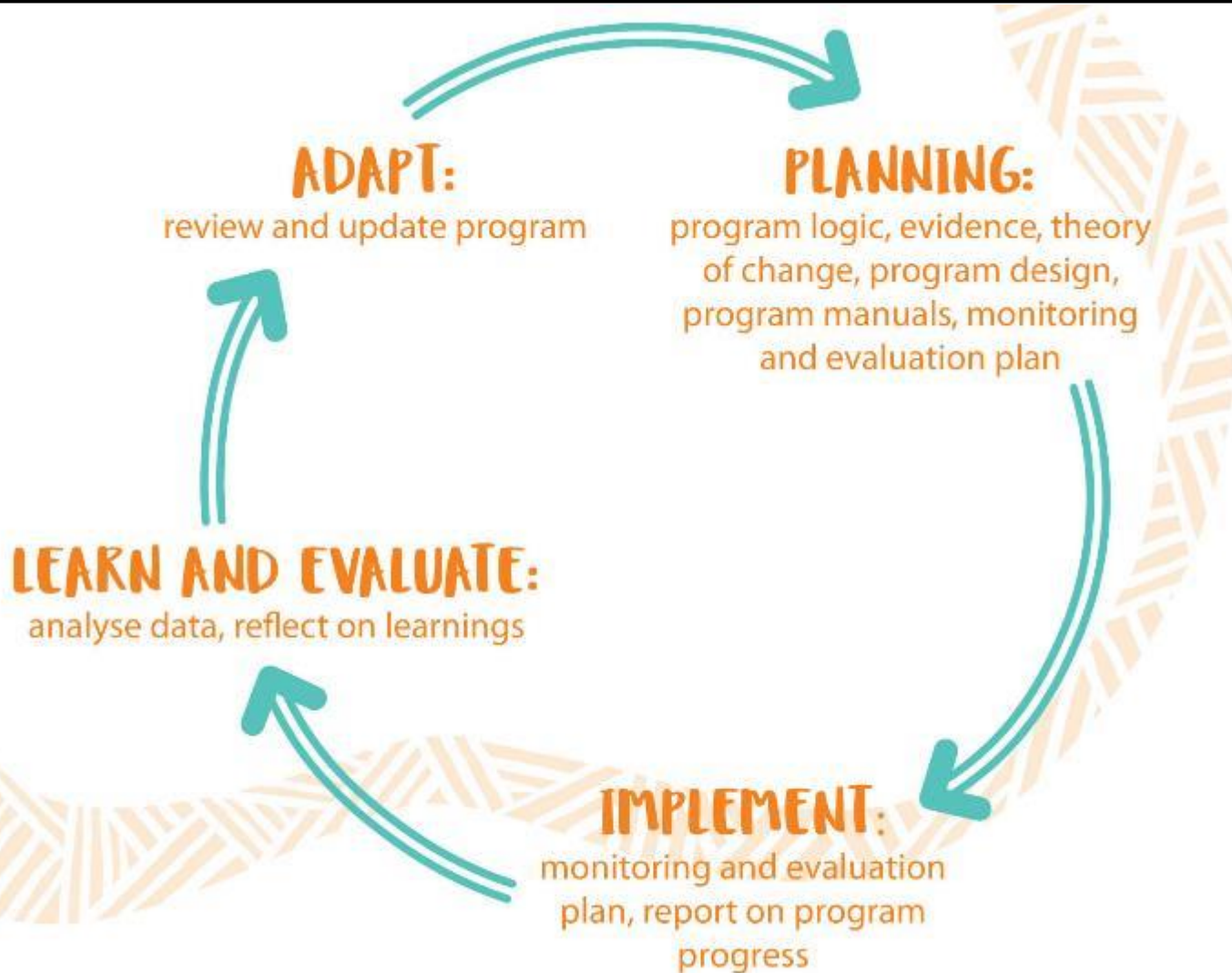
VACCA improves the physical, social, emotional and spiritual wellbeing of its clients.

Evaluation



- Building Aboriginal programs and practice
- Centrality of self-determination
- Recruiting and training of internal team
- Redefining and leading partnerships with external evaluators
- Developing Outcomes important to Aboriginal people
- Embedding evaluation into practice

VACCA's Evaluation Framework



VACCA has drawn inspiration from the adaptive management cycle, DPIPWE 2014, Jones 2005, 2009, as cited by Better Evaluation, https://www.betterevaluation.org/en/evaluation-options/adaptive_management

What have we learnt?

- Indigenous evaluation knowledge and skills is critical
- Evaluation needs to be resourced across programs
- Funding submissions need to reflect all stages of evaluation across program implementation
- Skilled research and evaluation staff and project management (or good partnerships)
- Program staff need to be trained and supported to engage effectively in evaluation



Building systems and capability

- Long-term implementation planning
- Review and development of policies and frameworks
- Evaluation is everyone's business
- Approach needs to be empowering for program staff
- Impact of managing external evaluations



Conclusion



- As an ACCO VACCA knows what works for our local communities
- We need to develop evidence of the programs we have designed with local communities and are delivering
- Self-determination needs to be at the core of our work and a key principle in evaluation partnerships
- We need to conduct and advocate for ethical and rigorous evaluations that are culturally appropriate
- Tell the story we want to be heard - what outcomes are important to Aboriginal people



Questions?