



Outcome Evaluation

Given the recent rapid uptake of digital service delivery and the pace of technological change, community-managed organisations need to continuously evaluate whether digital service delivery is appropriate and effective. Community-managed organisations should work with people who use services and support them (see Codesign & Collaboration) in the co-planning and co-designing of services, as well as co-production and implementation, measurement, review and evaluation of digital mental health services.

Funding bodies are increasingly engaging in outcomes-based funding, which means that services that can demonstrate positive outcomes may be more competitive for funding. It is essential to establish an evaluation tool that can be used to draw conclusions about the impact of the digital service.

It is important to define specific outcomes that relate to your digital service. For example, it may be difficult for a social support service to demonstrate they achieved the general outcome of 'improved mental health' if the consumer is working with multiple services. A specific outcome of 'a better understanding of their mental health' or 'improved social skills' may be easier to measure. It is important to focus on what your service can measure based on the information you have access to.

Community-managed organisations need to regularly survey consumers to evaluate if the various modes of digital service delivery are meeting their needs and goals, and how the different services have impacted their recovery and wellbeing.

Best practice evaluation is based on a mix of feedback from people as well as digital data. It is important to hear from consumers and staff about their experiences. This information could be collected through established research studies, surveys, conversation, user testing and ad hoc feedback.

For example, your organisation may wish to ask consumers and staff about whether they had any technical difficulties, how they rated the quality of care and information provided digitally, and their willingness to continue to engage in the digital service in future. Where possible, evaluations should be conducted by someone not providing the delivery of a service.

Some digital services can provide real time data about how the service is being used. For example, if your organisation provides psychoeducation through a website, the organisation could analyse which resources were most accessed within a particular time-period.

Checklist: Outcome evaluation

In your organisation:

Do you partner with consumers, carers and families from the intended consumer groups in the evaluation of digital services?

Have you articulated:

- what your digital service is trying to achieve (i.e., outcomes) and how you will measure this?
- what information will be collected, how, when, by whom?
- how the information will be analysed, and by whom?
- what the process is for using the findings to inform quality improvement?

Can you measure the impact that digital services have on consumers, carers, staff, and volunteers?

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Is your evaluation approach sustainable to run in terms of time, effort, and cost?

Have you made any organisational efficiencies because of the use of digital service?

Do you share your experiences with other similar services? For example, in communities of practice?

Further resources

- [Evaluation Resource Guide Allied Health Telehealth Capacity Building Project](#): This Guide supports allied health professionals or teams evaluate their use of telehealth. Most content in the Guide has broader application to service evaluation beyond telehealth.
- The Centre for Evaluation and Research Evidence and the Victorian Government have created [a webinar](#) about the impact of telehealth during the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020. This seminar features multiple presentations, covering the topics of performing rapid evaluations of telehealth, telehealth for Indigenous health and rural healthcare delivery and how to embed telehealth in the healthcare system.
- Guide for Developing a Theory of Change, from IDEO
- Exploring your Theory of Change, from Design Kit
- The [Patient Activation Measure](#) is an example of an indicator in the health space when measuring outcomes. Patient activation describes the knowledge, skills and confidence a person has in managing their own health and health care.

