CONFERENCE WORKSHOPS
Program and registration details

When: **Monday 15 and Tuesday 16 September 2025**

Venue: **National Convention Centre Canberra (NCCC)**
              31 Constitution Avenue, Canberra, ACT, 2601

Contents

NOTE: The AES cannot guarantee that each workshop will go ahead as scheduled. If a workshop is cancelled, you will be offered a place in another workshop, or a refund.

Last updated: 19 May 2025

Target audience

The following categories will help you select sessions best suited to your interests:

Foundation

Foundational sessions assume no previous knowledge from the audience – they are beginner-friendly. The topic is presented at an introductory level using accessible language that can be understood by non-expert audiences.

Intermediate

Intermediate sessions assume the audience has a working knowledge of the topic or concept but provides accessible language and avoids technical details to ensure engagement from non-expert audiences.

Advanced

Advanced sessions assume the audience has in-depth experience with and/or technical understanding of the topic. This stream is also suitable to presentations on niche topics that demand the use of technical language to convey complex concepts with precision.

AES Evaluators' Professional Learning Competency Framework

Each AES professional learning workshop is designed to align with the [AES Evaluators' Professional Learning Competency Framework](#), which outlines the key domains and capabilities essential for quality and ethical evaluation practice. This framework supports evaluators at all stages of their careers by providing a foundation for reflective practice, technical skills, cultural competence, and evaluation management.

Monday 15 September

9 am to 12:30 pm	FULL DAY WORKSHOP **An introduction to theory-based randomised controlled trials** Presented by Andi Fugard (KEYNOTE) FOUNDATION / INTERMEDIATE	FULL DAY WORKSHOP **Mixed methods mastery: Practical approaches for evaluators** Presented by Brad Astbury, Andrew Hawkins FOUNDATION / INTERMEDIATE	FULL DAY WORKSHOP **Evaluating place-based and system-wide approaches** Presented by Jess Dart INTERMEDIATE	FULL DAY WORKSHOP **Navigating AI in evaluation, from basics to advanced applications** Presented by Gerard Atkinson, Tuli Keidar FOUNDATION / INTERMEDIATE	FULL DAY WORKSHOP **Introduction to evaluation: Core concepts and methods** Presented by Charlie Tulloch, Arun Jyothi Callapilli FOUNDATION	FULL DAY WORKSHOP **Getting below the surface: Qualitative methods in the evaluation context** Presented by Joan Young FOUNDATION / INTERMEDIATE
12:30 pm to 1:30 pm LUNCH						
1:30 pm to 5 pm	Fugard workshop continued	Astbury, Hawkins workshop continued	Dart workshop continued	Atkinson, Keidar workshop continued	Tulloch, Callapilli workshop continued	Young workshop continued
5 pm END OF DAY 1 OF WORKSHOP PROGRAM						

Tea breaks: Morning tea 10.30 am to 11 am | Afternoon tea 3 pm to 3:30 pm

Tuesday 16 September

8 am to 9 am REGISTRATION						
9 am to 12:30 pm	FULL DAY WORKSHOP **Cultivating evaluation: Exploring an expanded garden of approaches for diverse contexts** Presented by Bianca Montrosse-Moorhead (KEYNOTE), Daniela Schroeter FOUNDATION / INTERMEDIATE	FULL DAY WORKSHOP **Practical approaches to evaluating impact without experiments: Contribution, analysis, process tracing and more** Presented by Patricia Rogers INTERMEDIATE / ADVANCED	FULL DAY WORKSHOP **Evaluation and value-for-money: An inter-disciplinary, participatory approach using evaluative reasoning and mixed methods** Presented by Julian King FOUNDATION / INTERMEDIATE	FULL DAY WORKSHOP **Cultivating our bubble: Using developmental rubrics to enhance evaluation** Presented by Amy Gullickson, Ben Lawless FOUNDATION / INTERMEDIATE	FULL DAY WORKSHOP **Making it stick: Increasing the power of evaluation reports using easy-to-play principles, tools, tips and tricks** Presented by Samantha Abbato FOUNDATION / INTERMEDIATE	HALF DAY WORKSHOP **Strong stories, strong outcomes: Narrative practice and strength based evaluation** Presented by Donna-Maree Stephens FOUNDATION
12:30 pm to 1:30 pm LUNCH						
1:30 pm to 5 pm	Montrosse-Moorhead, Schroeter workshop continued	Rogers workshop continued	King workshop continued	Gullickson, Lawless workshop continued	Abbato workshop continued	HALF DAY WORKSHOP **Observation methods** Presented by Emma Williams FOUNDATION / INTERMEDIATE / ADVANCED
5 pm END OF DAY 2 OF WORKSHOP PROGRAM						

Tea breaks: Morning tea 10.30 am to 11 am | Afternoon tea 3 pm to 3:30 pm

MONDAY 15 SEPTEMBER
CONFERENCE WORKSHOP DESCRIPTIONS

An introduction to theory-based randomised controlled trials

Presented by Andi Fugard

FULL DAY WORKSHOP | FOUNDATION / INTERMEDIATE

WORKSHOP DESCRIPTION

Randomised controlled trials (RCTs) are often referred to as the 'gold standard' of evaluation and placed at the top of evidence hierarchies. A distinguishing feature of RCTs is that participants (or areas or other 'units') are randomly assigned to the programme under evaluation and one or more other conditions such as usual practice. RCTs can make it easier than other approaches to infer that a social programme was causally responsible for outcomes; however, random assignment makes them more challenging to implement.

This workshop will introduce RCTs, highlighting the similarities and differences with other approaches that they build on and key issues to consider when designing and running them. We will explore these issues together with the overall aim to help deepen participants' understandings of RCTs, and when they can and cannot be used.

WORKSHOP CONTENT

1. How do RCTs relate to other approaches and why are they so revered and often misunderstood?
2. The ethics of running RCTs, including unique issues and issues in common with other approaches
3. The 'fundamental problem of causal inference' and how randomisation helps
4. Key steps in designing and running RCTs, from idea and preregistration to final analysis and report
5. Common methods of randomisation and the challenges they present, including individual and cluster randomisation
6. Key issues in choosing a sample size
7. The role of mixed methods implementation and process evaluation in RCTs
8. Best practice in analysing data from RCTs and reporting analyses (including common mistakes)

By the end of the workshop, participants will be able to:

1. Critically appraise the ethics of RCT designs
2. Understand what randomising people to intervention conditions does and does not achieve and how RCTs relate to neighbouring approaches such as quasi-experiments
3. Understand and explain the key steps in conducting an RCT, from initial idea to final report
4. Understand the central importance of theories of change and in what sense an RCT should be theory-based
5. Understand the role of implementation and process evaluation
6. Be able to make a robust case against RCTs when necessary, particularly when attempting to run one would be unethical or unfeasible
7. Critically appraise RCTs designs and reports

This workshop aligns with Domains 1, 2 and 4 of the [AES Evaluators' Professional Learning Competency Framework](#).

WHO SHOULD ATTEND

Foundational – Foundational sessions assume no previous knowledge from the audience – they are beginner-friendly. The topic is presented at an introductory level using accessible language that can be understood by non-expert audiences.

ABOUT THE FACILITATOR

Andi Fugard, keynote speaker at aes25, is a Senior Director in Verian UK's Evaluation Practice. They have experience designing, project managing, and analysing data from large-scale randomised controlled trials and quasi-experiments across a range of policy areas including mental health, education, and housing. Before joining Verian, Andi co-directed the Evaluation team at the UK's National Centre for Social Research and prior to that they were an academic, teaching quantitative research methods at University College London and Birkbeck, University of London. Andi is also a member of the UK Evaluation and Trial Advice Panel, which provides advice to government on evaluation methodology.

Workshop title:
Mixed methods mastery: Practical approaches for evaluators

Presented by Brad Astbury, Andrew Hawkins

FULL DAY WORKSHOP | FOUNDATION / INTERMEDIATE

WORKSHOP DESCRIPTION

This workshop is designed for evaluators and commissioners of evaluation seeking practical guidance on integrating qualitative and quantitative methods in evaluation. Mixed methods evaluation is increasingly used to enhance the depth, breadth, and validity of findings, particularly in complex policy and program contexts. Participants will gain insight into different mixed methods designs, strategies for integrating data, and practical considerations when planning and conducting mixed methods evaluations.

The workshop will also cover real-world challenges and solutions, using case studies and creative interactive activities to illustrate key concepts.

This applied workshop will provide participants with:

- an overview of mixed methods evaluation and when to use it
- common mixed methods designs and integration strategies
- techniques for collecting and analysing qualitative and quantitative data in tandem
- strategies for managing and presenting mixed methods findings
- space for creative reflection on the extent of 'mixing' within mixed methods
- practical case studies demonstrating mixed methods in action

Participants will have the opportunity to engage in discussions, apply concepts through exercises, and reflect on their own evaluation practice. Cross-disciplinary creativity will be encouraged as participants reflect on the different ways by which methods may be mixed, and what that means for an evaluation.

By the end of this workshop, participants will:

- understand the value of mixed methods evaluation and how it enhances evidence-based decision-making
- be familiar with key mixed methods designs and how to select an appropriate approach
- learn practical techniques for data collection, analysis, and integration
- develop strategies for overcoming common challenges in mixed methods evaluation
- be enthused to explore new ways to mix data

This workshop is suited to evaluators and commissioners of evaluation who are:

- new to mixed methods evaluation and want to build foundational skills
- experienced in either qualitative or quantitative methods and looking to integrate both approaches more effectively
- seeking practical tools and frameworks for applying mixed methods evaluation in real-world settings

This workshop aligns with Domains 1, 2, 3 and 4 of the AES Evaluators' Professional Learning Competency Framework.

ABOUT THE FACILITATORS

Brad Astbury has more than 20 years' experience in evaluation, particulary in evaluation theory, mixed methods and impact evaluation. He was part of the AES Best Study awards team in 2007. Brad has published the following publications: Program Theory, in *Research Handbook on Program Evaluation;* and co-authored 'Evaluating the implementation of a digital coordination centre in an Australian hospital setting: A mixed method study protocol', in *BMJ Health & Care Informatics*.

Andrew Hawkins has worked at ARTD for almost 18 years, leading hundreds of evaluation projects across the public policy spectrum. Andrew's technical expertise spans experimental, quasi-experimental, realist, and systems-based evaluation approaches and methods. With a deep respect for ethics and the philosophy of science, and both quantitative and qualitative data he maintains a pragmatic focus on how evidence can inform real-world decisions. His interdisciplinary background in public administration, psychology, philosophy, statistics, and administrative law equips him to help clients navigate uncertainty and complexity in diverse policy environments. This experience led him to develop Propositional Evaluation as a pragmatic, cost-effective approach to evaluation focused on preventing failure rather than measuring it. This sets out a cooperative form of inquiry to develop logical propositions for action and a structured approach for adaptive management in complex systems – it's a theory for evaluation that simply reflects how may practicing evaluators work and what their clients need, it's about developing plans that make sense and then adapting them to emerging conditions.

Brad and Andrew have co-delivered many professional development workshops together, including AES conferences.

Workshop title:
Evaluating placed-based and systems-wide approaches

Presented by Jess Dart

FULL DAY WORKSHOP | INTERMEDIATE

WORKSHOP DESCRIPTION

The world in which 'program evaluation' was born and crafted has shifted. To address 'wicked' challenges such as entrenched placed-based disadvantage or climate change, no one person, organisation, sector, or discipline can hope to achieve lasting change. There is a call to move beyond traditional programmatic and sectoral approaches. There is increasing recognition that we need to place community and people with lived experience in the centre of this work, and address the way local efforts are connected to one another and the wider systems that create the conditions for these local efforts to be successful. 'Systems-wide' and 'place-based' initiatives are gaining considerable philanthropic and government attention and funding.

Unsurprisingly, these non-programmatic approaches do not lend themselves to being evaluated using traditional program evaluation.

The purpose of this full day workshop is to learn about placed-based and systems-wide approaches and practical frameworks and tools to evaluate them.

To kick this workshop off, we spend time getting clear on what we mean by systems wide and place-based approaches and then invite participants to explore the evaluation challenges for this type of work. Drawing on both international literature and practice we explore practical and tested frameworks and tools that work in these settings. We will look at a typical arc of evaluation across a 9-year initiative, from developmental through to shared results. We will explore the messy middle of systems change and how to do 'patch evaluation' and 'systems shift monitoring'. We share our favorite tools for collective learning.

The learning outcomes are:

* identify the key characteristics of systems-wide and place-based approaches, distinguishing them from traditional programmatic interventions
* understand the unique challenges presented when assessing these approaches
* select relevant tools to evaluating these approaches

This workshop is pitched at the intermediate level, but all are welcome. This workshop aligns with Domains 3 and 7 of the AES Evaluators' Professional Learning Competency Framework.

ABOUT THE FACILITATOR

Receiving the 2018 Award for Outstanding Contribution to Evaluation, **Jess Dart** is a Fellow of AES and a recognized thought leader and 'evaluation entrepreneur'. With a PhD in evaluation, she has a wide range of interests in evaluation, with a speciality in systems wide approaches. She is a highly experienced evaluator and workshop facilitator, with over 25 years of experience. She has presented over ten pre-conference workshops and over 30 conference sessions, including keynote addresses and received extremely positive feedback. She is trained in adult learning techniques and is an evaluation educator. She is author of the 'Evaluation Framework for place-based approaches', launched by the Federal Minister for Families and Social Services in 2020.

Navigating AI in evaluation, from basics to advanced applications

Presented by Gerard Atkinson, Tuli Keidar

FULL DAY WORKSHOP | FOUNDATION / INTERMEDIATE

WORKSHOP DESCRIPTION

In the ever-evolving landscape of policy and program evaluation, this workshop aims to equip evaluation professionals with a comprehensive understanding of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and its strategic integration into the evaluation process. The workshop comprises five distinct subsessions, each addressing crucial aspects of AI in evaluation.

The purpose of the workshop is to demystify AI through hands-on learning, offering participants:

- a foundational knowledge base in AI models and approaches
- an appreciation of ethical considerations in applying AI
- insights into the range of AI tools available to evaluators
- practical experience in applying AI tools, including prompt engineering for evaluation contexts
- resources to enable effective evaluation that leverages AI technologies

The instructional methods will include a blend of presentations with recap quizzes, case discussions to stimulate critical thinking, and hands-on practical exercises applying OpenAI's ChatGPT and Anthropic Claude to a simulated evaluation. This diverse approach ensures an engaging learning experience that caters to the different learning styles of participants.

The target group for this workshop is intermediate-level professionals in the field of policy and program evaluation. While no specific prerequisites are mandated, participants with a basic understanding of evaluation concepts will benefit most from the workshop. No prior experience of AI is required, though participants will need access to a computer, tablet or phone to complete exercises.

This workshop aligns with Domain 4 and 5 of the [AES Evaluators' Professional Learning Competency Framework](). It caters to professionals seeking to enhance their evaluation practices by incorporating cutting-edge AI techniques.

ABOUT THE FACILITATORS

Gerard Atkinson is Managing Director of Iris Ethics. Prior to taking on this role he was a Director and Chair of the Learning and Development committee at ARTD Consultants. He has worked with big data and AI approaches for over 20 years, originally as a physicist then as a strategy consultant and evaluator. He has an MBA in Business Analytics focusing on the applications of machine learning to operational data. Gerard has previously presented at AES conferences on big data (2018) and on experimental tests of AI applications in evaluation (2023, 2024), and has delivered this workshop in 2024 and 2025.

Co-facilitator **Tuli Keidar** is a member of the Innovation committee at ARTD Consultants and is working with ARTD founder Michael Brooks to develop AI-driven methods for evaluation. Prior to working in evaluation, Tuli worked as a company manager, operations manager and educator in the specialty coffee sector. Drawing on a modular education model, Tuli launched a barista and coffee roaster training school, developed the course structures and content, and managed its launch and marketing.

Workshop title:
Introduction to evaluation: Core concepts and methods

Presented by Charlie Tulloch, Arun Jyothi Callapilli

FULL DAY WORKSHOP | FOUNDATION

WORKSHOP DESCRIPTION

The aim of the workshop is to familiarise participants with the main aspects of evaluation practice and to share resources for further development. It will help people who are attending the conference for the first time to feel very comfortable engaging with diverse topics over coming days, within a framework that is clear and easy to understand.

The workshop will position evaluation within different policy and organisational contexts. It will define key terms, talk about what evaluators do, why and when evaluations happen (or do not), with practical tips for evaluation commissioners and personal practice development over time.

The most substantive element of the training is to step through a seven-stage process for planning and conducting an evaluation via a case study approach. This allows participant to explore the different ways that evaluation can be done.

Specific techniques to take away include: logic modelling, designing interview questions, forming value judgements and selecting evaluation approaches/methods.

The workshop is targeted at evaluators or interested non-evaluators who wish to reflect on, or build, familiarity with key aspects of evaluation practice.

Teaching and learning strategy, plus resources: The work will be participatory throughout. Initially, we will undertake facilitated discussion. This will move into case-study based small group exercises as we move through the seven stages of evaluation. There will be various periods for open questions and tackling emerging dilemmas that participants are facing.

All attendees will receive a workbook with templates for their use at the workshop and afterwards.

The workshop touches on all areas of AES Evaluators' Professional Learning Competency Framework, but is focused primarily on Domains 1, 3 and 4.

ABOUT THE FACILITATORS

Charlie Tulloch has been an evaluation consultant since 2008, with seven years running his own business. He has delivered variety of evaluations, ranging from small desktop studies through to multi-year, national longitudinal studies. Charlie is a generalist evaluator, but with deeper expertise in impact evaluation, program logic, question design, defining M&E plans, analysing data, writing for government and data visualisation. Since 2016, Charlie has delivered introductory evaluation training to over 1,000 learners via the AES and direct to client organisations.

Charlie has presented at the India Urban Space Conference (Mumbai, 2007) on Torrens Land Title and at various AES conferences (Launceston, Sydney, Canberra, Adelaide, Melbourne). Charlie has also provided AES online training to over 20 cohorts.

Arun Jyothi Callapilli works with Charlie and is an emerging evaluator. She has a Masters in Statistics and has worked in State Government (Telangana, India) and the community sector (Jameel Poverty Action Lab).

Getting below the surface: Qualitative methods in the evaluation context

Presented by Joan Young

FULL DAY WORKSHOP | FOUNDATION / INTERMEDIATE

WORKSHOP DESCRIPTION

The purpose of the workshop is to develop knowledge and understanding to assist participants to identify when qualitative methods would add value, the range of techniques and practices available and to build competency in how to undertake qualitative research in an evaluation context.

The training objective is to increase knowledge and skills to conduct qualitative data collection and analysis in an evaluation context. The workshop will use theory, case-studies and practical exercises to cover the what, when, why and how of qualitative data collection and analysis.

It aims to deliver the following learning outcomes:

- Increased knowledge about approaches to qualitative data collection and analysis and ability to select the most appropriate to meet specific evaluation objectives
- Increased competency in developing qualitative research questions and techniques to address key evaluation questions including the use of open-ended questions, probing and projective techniques

Participants will be asked to share their learning objectives and to reflect on progress during each session to ensure the workshop is focused on supporting each participant to achieve their learning outcomes.

Knowledge, techniques, and practices include:

- developing a program logic, theory of change and evaluation framework
- how theory e.g. the transtheoretical Model and COM-B can guide evaluation design, data collection and analysis
- the value of segmentation in understanding expectations and experiences and how to incorporate into data collection and analysis
- interviewing and focus group moderation skills
- limitations of qualitative methods

The workshop targets evaluators, policy makers and program managers who wish to build their capacity to use and get the most from the inclusion of qualitative methods in their evaluation practice.

The workshop will be conducted in alignment with the specific competencies within Domain 1 and 4 of the [AES Evaluators' Professional Learning Competency Framework](#).

ABOUT THE FACILITATOR

Joan Young has over 30 years' evaluation experience in New Zealand, MENA, Africa and Australia. She has dedicated her career to working with government and not for profit organisations to develop and evaluate social policy, programmes, services and communications. Joan was made a Fellow of The Research Society in Australia in 2021 and has been a member of the Australian Evaluation Society since 2000.

Joan's research and evaluation work has contributed to strategies addressing gender and financial inequality, domestic and family violence, homelessness, child protection, alcohol and drug consumption, road and sea safety, community violence, recidivism, positive parenting, literacy and early childhood education, environmental sustainability, health, employment, education, taxation, voting and workplace safety.

A published example of one of the evaluations Joan contributed to which integrated qualitative, quantitative and secondary data sources resulting in insights that were translated into actionable outcomes for policy and community impact is the Mornington Island Restorative Justice Project Evaluation.

Joan's research and evaluation has been extensively published. Joan has received numerous awards and acknowledgements, and she has presented at AES conferences in New Zealand, Australia, and internationally and recently facilitated two qualitative research workshops for AES.

TUESDAY 16 SEPTEMBER
CONFERENCE WORKSHOP DESCRIPTIONS

Workshop title:

Cultivating evaluation: Exploring an expanded garden of approaches for diverse contexts

Presented by Bianca Montrosse-Moorhead (KEYNOTE), Daniela Schroeter

FULL DAY WORKSHOP | FOUNDATION / INTERMEDIATE

WORKSHOP DESCRIPTION

Evaluation approaches shape the credibility, utility, and relevance of evaluations. Choosing the right approach is complex due to diverse stakeholder needs, power dynamics, and methodological constraints. This workshop introduces the Garden of Evaluation Approaches, a structured framework first published in the American Journal of Evaluation. Participants will learn to select, adapt, and apply evaluation approaches based on context, values, and goals.

By the end of the workshop, participants will:

- identify key evaluation approaches and their applications
- use the Garden Framework to make informed methodological choices
- evaluate the relevance of various approaches in different contexts
- apply selected approaches to a real-world case study

Participants will explore the foundations of evaluation approaches; and the expanded Garden as it has unfolded to support evaluation decision-making. Purposely selected approaches illustrating different worldviews for evaluation will be examined based on their underlying paradigms, preferred methods, and dimensions of values and valuing, as well as the breadth and depth of stakeholder engagement, power dynamics, role in promoting social justice, and power dynamics in evaluation decision-making. Possible approaches include realist evaluation (understanding causality and mechanisms in complex systems), outcome harvesting (using backward mapping to track outcomes and contributions), adaptive evaluation (assessing interventions in dynamic and evolving contexts), inclusive systemic evaluation for gender equality, environments and marginalised voices (a gender-responsive and equity-focused approach) and made in Africa evaluation (a culturally grounded approach integrating local knowledge and perspectives).

Strategies include:

- small group activities for peer learning
- a case study to analyze complex challenges
- facilitated discussions and polls to encourage reflection and engagemen
- hands-on exercises using the Garden framework

This workshop aligns with Domains 1– 3 of the [AES Evaluators' Professional Learning Competency Framework](#).

ABOUT THE FACILITATORS

Daniela Schroeter (Associate Professor at Western Michigan University) and **Bianca Montrosse-Moorhead** (**aes25 keynote speaker;** Professor, University of Connecticut) have collaborated since 2016 to cultivate the garden of evaluation approaches. With over 20 years of experience each, their expertise spans evaluation theory, methodology, capacity-building, and education across multiple sectors. Bianca directs the PEER lab and is Co-Editor-in-Chief of New Directions for Evaluation. Daniela co-edits Teaching & Learning of Evaluation (American Journal of Evaluation, AJE) and is Associate Editor for the Journal of MultiDisciplinary Evaluation (JMDE). Their research and publications have shaped the understanding of evaluation's distinct role. Recognized for engaging, high-impact sessions, they have presented extensively at major international conferences (AEA, EES, UNEG), earning positive feedback and repeat invitations. Their collaboration continues to expand the evaluation landscape, fostering innovation and intentionality. Their evolving work on the 'garden' metaphor has inspired evaluators worldwide, advancing both theory and application.

Practical approaches to evaluating impact without experiments: Contribution analysis, process tracing and more

Presented by Patricia Rogers

FULL DAY WORKSHOP | INTERMEDIATE / ADVANCED

WORKSHOP DESCRIPTION

There is increasing demand for high quality impact evaluation, but it is not always possible – or appropriate – to use experimental methods (such as randomized controlled trials) or quasi-experimental designs. This workshop will explore rigorous non-experimental approaches to impact evaluation, focusing on contribution analysis and process tracing.

For evaluators, the workshop will strengthen their ability to design and conduct high-quality non-experimental impact evaluations. For evaluation commissioners, it will strengthen their ability to frame appropriate terms of reference, select and manage appropriate evaluation teams and support use of findings.

By the end of this workshop, participants will:

- understand why experimental approaches are not always feasible and how non-experimental methods can still provide strong evidence of impact
- learn the key principles of contribution analysis and process tracing and how they help answer impact questions
- apply these methods to practical exercises, improving their ability to assess whether and how a program has contributed to observed changes
- identify how they might apply these approaches in their work

The workshop will employ adult learning strategies including case studies, group exercises and individual reflection.

The full-day advanced workshop is intended for people with a good understanding of foundational evaluation concepts and data collection, analysis and reporting options. It addresses Domain 4 of the AES Evaluators' Professional Learning Competency Framework.

ABOUT THE FACILITATOR

Patricia Rogers has over 30 years of experience conducting evaluations, teaching evaluation courses and workshops, conducting research into evaluation and strengthening evaluation capacity with government and non-government organisations in Australia and internationally.

She is the founder of BetterEvaluation, the global knowledge platform on evaluation methods and processes and has an enduring commitment to supporting appropriate choices in evaluation design. She has presented keynote and plenary addresses at evaluation conferences in Australasia, Europe, Asia, Africa and North America and successful evaluation workshops in Australia and internationally including AES pre-conference workshops. She has written on appropriate methods for impact evaluation and ways of addressing complexity in evaluation. Her publications include Purposeful Program Theory: Effective Use of Theories of Change and Logic Models (with Sue Funnell) and Choosing Appropriate Designs and Methods for Impact Evaluation (with ARTD Consulting) for the Department of Industry, Science and Resources. She is a Fellow of the AES, and recipient of the AES Outstanding Contribution to Evaluation Award and the American Evaluation Association's Myrdal Evaluation Practice Award.

Evaluation and value for money: An inter-disciplinary, participatory approach using evaluative reasoning and mixed methods

Presented by Julian King

FULL DAY WORKSHOP | FOUNDATION / INTERMEDIATE

WORKSHOP DESCRIPTION

This workshop provides practical guidance, underpinned by sound theory, for evaluating VfM. It unpacks a process of explicit evaluative reasoning (using rubrics) and the use of mixed methods. A sequence of steps will be shared to help evaluators and commissioners to develop and use context-specific definitions of good VfM. These definitions provide a system for ensuring the evaluation: is aligned with the design and context of the policy or program; engages stakeholders in evaluation design and sense-making; collects and analyses credible evidence; draws sound conclusions; and answers VfM questions. The approach is intuitive to learn and practical to use.

Participants will learn how to: frame an evaluative question about VfM; develop rubrics setting out VfM criteria and standards; combine multiple sources of evidence; incorporate economic evaluation within a VfM framework where feasible and appropriate; interpret the evidence on a transparent basis; and present a clear and robust performance story, guided by the rubrics.

The workshop involves a mix of powerpoint presentations, group discussions and examples. Participants will receive optional pre-workshop reading, and a post-workshop take-home pack including a copy of the slides, exercises and links to online resources.

This workshop includes a brief overview of economic methods of evaluation (e.g. cost-benefit analysis) including considerations for determining when to use them in a VfM assessment. It doesn't provide detailed instruction in the design and implementation of economic evaluations. There are courses already on offer that focus on economic methods of evaluation.

This workshop aligns with Domain 2, 3, 4, and 7 of the [AES Evaluator's Professional Learning Competency Framework](#).

ABOUT THE FACILITATOR

Julian King is a NZ based public policy consultant. His professional background includes over 20 years evaluating policies and programs in high, middle and low-income countries. The Value for Investment (VfI) approach, developed through Julian's doctoral research, is used worldwide to evaluate complex and hard-to-measure policies and programs. Julian received the 2021 AES Evaluation System Award in recognition of the contribution made through the VfI approach. Julian is a member of the Kinnect Group, an Associate of Oxford Policy Management, a member of Verian Group's Centre for Value for Money (VfM), an Honorary Fellow at the University of Melbourne and a University Fellow at the Northern Institute. He is a member of the evaluation societies of Australia, NZ, UK, USA, and Europe. Julian specialises in VfI capability-building. He regularly provides training workshops on Evaluation and Value for Money in Australia, NZ and globally.

Cultivating our bubble: Using developmental rubrics to enhance evaluation

Presented by Amy Gullickson, Ben Lawless

FULL DAY WORKSHOP | FOUNDATION / INTERMEDIATE

WORKSHOP DESCRIPTION

This full-day workshop brings together best practice in rubrics with best practice in evaluative reasoning: developmental rubrics. A powerful tool for qualitative, growth-oriented program evaluation, developmental rubrics offer deeper insights for monitoring, evaluation, and learning at any point in a program's lifecycle by replacing traditional static ratings with nuanced performance descriptors. Workshop participants will learn the basics, practise on examples, and create developmental rubrics for their own projects.

Participants will learn to:

- distinguish between developmental and traditional rubrics
- design rubrics that capture stages of progress with clear criteria and descriptive indicators
- apply these rubrics to real-world program and systems evaluation contexts
- avoid common pitfalls such as pseudo-counting and overly vague language

Drawing on educational research and established frameworks, the workshop emphasises:

- structuring effective rubrics with progressive, observable quality markers
- integrating rigorous evaluative reasoning into rubric design
- providing meaningful feedback for decision-making and stakeholder engagement

This interactive session uses hands-on activities, small-group discussions, and case studies to guide participants in creating or refining their own developmental rubrics. Templates, sample rubrics, and follow-up materials will be provided to enable immediate application.

Designed for evaluators, commissioners, and policymakers with foundational to intermediate experience in evaluation, though no prior rubric-writing expertise is required. Familiarity with basic evaluation concepts is helpful but not mandatory.

Aligned primarily with Domain 3 (Theoretical Foundations) of the AES Evaluators' Professional Learning Competency Framework, the workshop also addresses evaluative reasoning and stakeholder engagement domains. It fits both the 'New Approaches and Ways of Thinking' and 'Foundational Evaluation Skills and Capabilities' categories.

Through practical exercises and expert facilitation, participants will leave with the skills to implement robust developmental rubrics in their evaluation work.

ABOUT THE FACILITATORS

Associate Professor Amy Gullickson is an AES Fellow who has been doing, researching, and teaching evaluation for more than 20 years. She is in demand internationally as an expert in evaluation-specific methodology, evaluation teaching and learning, and evaluation capacity building for individuals, organisations, and systems. As a member of the AES Pathways committee, she co-leads the ongoing work on evaluator competencies and self-assessment.

Ben Lawless is an educator and researcher at a large P-12 College in northwest Melbourne. He writes textbooks, lectures in assessment at the University of Melbourne, worked with VCAA to improve their assessment practices, written units of work for the National Museum and presented widely on the topics of developmental learning, assessment, well-written rubrics, and using assessment data to target teaching. He has won a number of awards, including Hume's Graduate Teacher of the Year and being a finalist for ResourceSmart teacher of the year. He has created a number of international political simulation games putting students in the role of world leaders to solve various political, environmental and social challenges, one of which was in the Top 10 for Australia for the HundrED prize. His personal education passions are using evidence to improve teaching, and learning through games. He is currently in the process of developing a PhD proposal, with the thesis being "Bringing developmental education rubrics into the field of evaluation".

Making it stick: Increasing the power of evaluation reports using easy-to-apply principles, tools, tips and tricks

Presented by Samantha Abbato

FULL DAY WORKSHOP | FOUNDATION / INTERMEDIATE

WORKSHOP DESCRIPTION

Communicating evaluation findings through effective reporting is for those of us who commission, plan and do evaluations. This workshop builds on the AES online Making it Stick 1-3 series to introduce practical activities for strengthening participants' evaluation reporting across the suite of report types, including written reports, infographics, data dashboards, video reports and PowerPoint presentations.

Drawing on the principles of effective communication and evaluation use, this workshop incorporates activities and techniques from various disciplines. Throughout the day, participants can apply the learnings to real-life examples, including the opportunity to volunteer their own reporting projects for small-group work.

Activities include:

- crafting the report message using the Rule of Three for a three-part and three-minute story
- increasing the effectiveness of communication with report audiences using visual empathy mapping
- use of storyboarding and story-arc tools to effectively 'show' the report story through images, drawing and data visualisation, and structure your story for greater impact
- script-writing techniques for decluttering and creating powerful language to deliver directly, using video and increasing the report audience's engagement with written text

Workshop participants will have the chance to use cost-effective digital kits to present their report message on video. Easy-to-use tools, templates and checklists will enable participants to directly apply the workshop learnings to their own reporting projects.

Workshop learning outcomes include:

- the ability to use empathy mapping to communicate with evaluation stakeholders effectively
- skills in crafting and delivering a potent core message
- practice using storytelling tools to structure the report, create powerful language, and 'show' the message through visuals

This workshop is an ideal introduction for those who write or commission reports. It provides an opportunity for participants of the Stick 1–3 online workshops (2020–2025) to further their skills in reporting through new materials and tools that are best delivered face-to-face.

This workshop aligns with Domains 1, 3, 5 and 6 of the AES Evaluator's Professional Learning Competency Framework.

ABOUT THE FACILITATOR

Samantha Abbato has completed more than 100 evaluation and research reports and papers for various government, non-government organisations and community stakeholders. She has published numerous book chapters and peer-reviewed journal articles and has worked as a freelance journalist for several years. She received the 2015 AES Evaluation Publication Award (Caulley Tulloch Award).

With a passion for communication and maximising evaluation use, and an extensive understanding of the evaluation commissioner perspective through her work on Visual Insights organisational capacity building, Samantha can offer a wealth of case studies of the good, the bad and the ugly of evaluation reporting.

As the director of Visual Insights People since 2013, she has introduced a pictures and stories and play approach to evaluation reporting and the delivery of workshops. Using cartoons and a range of visual tools, templates and checklists that workshop participants can take away with them, Sam is passionate about participants' continued use of learnings for sustained improvement of their evaluation reports..

Strong stories, strong outcomes: Narrative practice and strength based evaluation

Presented by Donna-Maree Stephens

HALF DAY WORKSHOP (MORNING) | FOUNDATION

WORKSHOP DESCRIPTION

This interactive workshop will focus on applying Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander narrative practice methods.

The workshop will cover:

• defining Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander narrative practice and storytelling
• share a narrative framework for understanding narrative practice and processes in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, particularly drawing from remote NT contexts
• practice drawing strength-focused messages and metaphor using narrative inquiry

As an interactive half-day session, this workshop is open to all levels of evaluators but may suit early career and First Nations evaluators best.

This workshop aligns with Domains 1, 2, and 3 of the AES Evaluators' Professional Learning Competency Framework. It is a valuable opportunity for evaluators especially those early in their careers or from First Nations backgrounds to enhance their culturally responsive and narrative-based evaluation skills.

ABOUT THE FACILITATOR

Donna-Maree Stephens is a Muran/Iwaidja women whose family come from Northwest Arnhemland. She grew up living on Larrakia Country in the Northern Territory. In 1992, Donna began working as a teacher in Belyuen School on the Cox Peninsula. Her early work focused on teacher professional learning, including literacy pedagogy and e-learning in remote settings. In 2010, Donna moved to higher education as a lecturer for the CDU School of Education, during which time she focused on First Nations and international student support - working in the Growing Our Own First Nations remote preservice teacher program and as the NT Teaching Schools Coordinator. In 2014, Donna moved to a research-focused role addressing education pathways and remote community development.

Donna has worked in research and evaluation roles focused on AOD, mental health, social and emotional wellbeing and workforce development. In 2019, Donna started work as a consultant and has had the honour of being the inaugural Community First Development Research and Evaluation Fellow. She also contributed to the Better Evaluation Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Evaluation Protocol. Donna has more than a decade of experience in research and evaluation project management and administration, reporting, publications and presentations at local, national and international forums. Her research and evaluation interests include remoteness, poverty, mobility, flourishing, organisational change, ecosystems thinking, generative design and narrative inquiry.

Observation methods for evaluators

Presented by Emma Williams

HALF DAY WORKSHOP (AFTERNOON) | FOUNDATION / INTERMEDIATE / ADVANCED

WORKSHOP DESCRIPTION

This half-day workshop will build participants' awareness of the potential of observational data to answer evaluation questions and build skills in rigorous, ethical observational techniques. There are many variants of observational data; it may be quantitative or qualitative, gained through trace, overt or covert observation in controlled or natural situations, and recorded digitally or manually.

This workshop will explain how each type of observational data suits a different range of evaluation questions and situations; it will focus on data gained through the observation of human behaviour in public places, which is typically of most use to evaluators. Ethical issues, particularly where evaluations include vulnerable populations, will be a special focus of the workshop.

By the end of the session, participants will be able to:

• distinguish between different types of observational data
• identify the evaluation situations for which each type of observational data is suited
• implement strategies to ensure rigour in observational data collection, recording, and analysis
• formulate strategies to ensure their observations are ethically designed and collected.

Five real-life cases will be used to illustrate the range of approaches and issues that observational research can provide, with interactive exercises conducted after each case.

No prerequisites are required; this is a foundational skills workshop targeted to those without a great deal of experience in evaluation, although it may be of use to those with intermediate and even advanced skills in other areas of evaluation, if they do not have observational experience.

The workshop focuses on the Research Methods and Systematic Inquiry domain of the AES Evaluators' Professional Learning Competency Framework, although elements of it, particularly the ethical exercises, address the Culture, Stakeholders and Context domain, and all of it is relevant to the Evaluation Activities domain.

ABOUT THE FACILITATOR

Emma Williams is a Credentialed Evaluator with experience in realist, observational and participatory evaluations on topics including throughcare, family violence, service access, employment, environmental issues, and international development. She was co-editor, with Ana Manzano, of *Realist Evaluation: Principles and Practice* (2024), and her chapter on observational techniques will come out in Sage's Data and Research Literacy collection mid-year. Emma is currently undertaking a realist investigation of evaluation ethics for a PhD that also uses Q methodology and would love to talk about evaluation ethics with anyone at the conference.

Workshop registration fees

Member Only Early Bird	**14 to 22 May**
Early Bird	**23 May to 19 June** *or when allocation is exhausted*
Registration	**20 June to 1 September** *or when sold out*

Online registrations close on **1 September 2025**. Registrations after this date will only be available onsite and will be charged at the onsite rates.

Please note: **Onsite workshop registrations** will be strictly limited and subject to availability. **Workshops that have sold out in advance will not be available for registration on the day**. Participants who register onsite are not guaranteed access to a workbook or any materials prepared for pre-registered attendees**. Additionally, dietary requirements for onsite registrations** cannot be guaranteed, either at the venue or at any offsite conference events. **To ensure your place and receive all workshop benefits, including materials and full catering consideration, please register by Sunday, 1 September.**

Please note: Registration includes access to the workshop only, along with catering and any workshop-related materials. **Conference access is not included** and requires separate registration.

Full day registration fees, per workshop and delegate (including 10% GST)

FULL DAY WORKSHOP	Member Early Bird	Early Bird	Registration	Onsite rego
Individual Member 15 or 16 September	A$475	A$553	A$599	A$599
Organisational Member staff* 15 or 16 September	A$580	A$672	A$725	A$725
Non Member 15 or 16 September	N/A	A$750	A$805	A$825
Full-time Student# 15 or 16 September	N/A	A$415	A$475	A$475

Half day registration fees, per workshop and delegate (including 10% GST)

HALF DAY WORKSHOP	Member Early Bird	Early Bird fee	Registration	Onsite rego
Individual Member 15 or 16 September	A$275	A$330	A$385	A$385
Organisational Member staff* 15 or 16 September	A$400	A$472	A$525	A$525
Non Member 15 or 16 September	N/A	A$525	A$580	A$605
Full-time Student# 15 or 16 September	N/A	A$310	A$365	A$365

 # Full-time student discount: For your registration to be valid, you must provide proof of their full-time student status to conference@aes.asn.au. Should proof not be provided we reserve the right to charge for the difference between the full-time student and non-student registration, and cancel the registration should the full fee not be paid.

* Organisational Staff Member rates: Before choosing this rate, please check with your organisational member status with your organisation or aes@aes.asn.au. You will be invoiced for the difference if you're not a staff member of an organisational member of the AES.