

## Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Framework (2020)



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The Australian Volunteers Program is an Australian Government initiative. The program is managed by AVI, in a consortium with Cardno Emerging Markets Pty Ltd and Whitelum Group.

The views expressed in this publication are the author’s alone and are not necessarily the views of the Australian Government.

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## Abbreviations and Acronyms

AOs	Australian Organisations
AVP	Australian Volunteers Program (acronym for internal use only)
AVS	Australian Volunteers Section (in DFAT)
DFAT	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning
MELF	Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Framework
MIS	Management Information System
POs	Partner Organisations
RAVN	Returned Australian Volunteers Network
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal

## 1. Purpose of MEL Framework

The Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Framework (MELF) sets out the approach to assessing the performance of the Australian Volunteers Program. The Framework identifies the evidence that will be generated to enable:

- accountability to DFAT, program partners, and the public
- program performance and management decision-making for DFAT and the program team
- learning and continuous improvement to ensure effective program delivery
- stronger understanding of good volunteer practice within DFAT and the wider volunteer community
- communications to promote the value of volunteering in Australia and in partner countries.

The MELF covers the initial five years of the program. It will be regularly reviewed and updated to reflect changes as the program adapts and learns more about how to best monitor and evaluate the performance of the Australian Volunteers Program.

The MELF is a requirement of Clause 8.1 of the Head Contract with a due date of 1 December 2017. This document has been generated by the program team, with input from DFAT AVS. It was first submitted to DFAT on 1 December 2017, and reviewed and revised in February 2020.

## 2. Australian Volunteers Program

The Australian Volunteers Program is an Australian Government initiative. It builds on the Australian Government's investment in international volunteers over the past 60 years. The program replaced the Australian Volunteers for International Development (AVID) program, which concluded on 31 December 2017. The new program retains the core elements of AVID and enhances the program's reach, visibility and impact. The Australian Volunteers Program is managed by AVI, in a consortium with Cardno Emerging Markets Pty Ltd and Whitelum Group. It is a five-year program with an estimated total budget of AU\$190 million.

The Australian Volunteers Program matches skilled Australians from all walks of life with organisations in developing countries to help these organisations to deliver on their own objectives. The program uses international volunteering as a people-centred approach to capacity development. The Australian Volunteers Program is part of the Australian Government's people-to-people program portfolio, connecting Australians to Australia's aid program and the region.

The Australian Volunteers Program is guided by a Global Program Strategy that sets out the strategic direction, policy context, guiding principles and priorities for the program. It informs plans, partnerships and volunteer assignments at the country level, which align with partner countries developmental objectives and Australia's aid investment plans. The strategy is framed by and contributes to Australia's aid policy, the Foreign Policy White Paper and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The program's MELF, alongside a range other program-level strategies, supports the strategy and effective program implementation.

## 3. Overview of the MEL Framework

The core sections of the MELF articulate:

1. What the program intends to achieve: the program logic describes what the program hopes to achieve over the next five years, and how it aims to influence change, both in Australia and overseas.
2. How progress will be tracked, which includes:

- key evaluation questions to guide all monitoring, evaluation and learning activities
  - indicators for regular monitoring
  - tools to support regular data collection on the indicators, and
  - evaluative activities to provide a deeper understanding of aspects of the program
3. The process of making sense of program evidence and the ways the evidence will be used in the program.
  4. The roles and responsibilities for delivering on the MELF.
  5. The risks to MELF delivery.
  6. The annual priorities for the MELF.
  7. The ethical principles that guide the MELF.
  8. The Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) budget.

## 4. Australian Volunteers Program Logic

### 4.1. Program logic

The program logic identifies the relationship between the program’s actions and the intended changes it aims to support. It also identifies underlying assumptions that are key to ensuring outcomes will be achieved as planned.

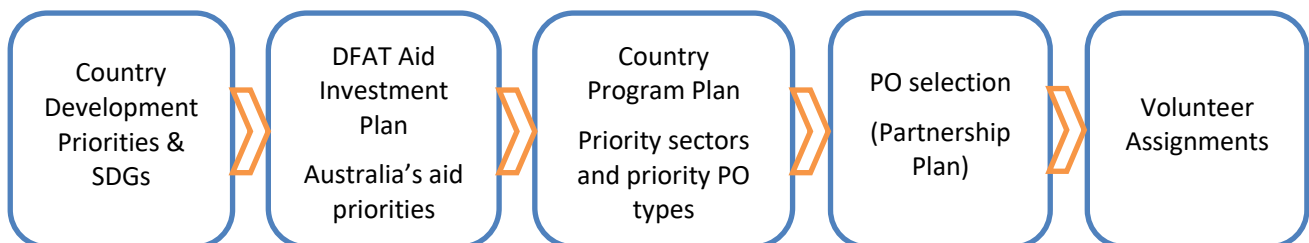
The program logic has been reviewed and refined with input from DFAT and Australian Volunteers Program staff. It is highly aligned with the program logic in the design document, with minor amendments to clarify some of the outcome statements, and more clearly articulate how the public diplomacy outcomes will be achieved.

The Australian Volunteers Program has three **end of program outcomes** that the program aims to deliver on over the next five years. These are described in more detail below:

- Partner organisations are supported by Australia to progress their development objectives.** The Australian Volunteers Program will partner with a range of organisations to help strengthen their capacity to deliver on their development objectives. The nature of partnership implies that both the partner organisations and the Australian Volunteers Program have shared objectives and both parties benefit from, and contribute to, the partnership.

The program supports a strong link between development objectives in partner countries, Australia’s development priorities, and the selection of partner organisations. (See Figure 1 below).

Figure 1 Relationship between partner organisation selection and development objectives



The logic states that if partner organisations have a strategic rationale for participating in the program<sup>1</sup> and provide a safe and productive working environment for the volunteers, the volunteer will have a good experience and strengthen capacity within the partner organisation. By strengthening partner organisation capacity (staff skills and capability, improving systems and contributing to improved organisational processes), partner organisations will be able to progress their development objectives.

The program will support partner organisations to progress their development objectives by:

- Establishing relevant (to country priorities) and diverse partnerships, both in Australia and overseas, with a range of organisations (community based organisations, private sector, government organisations, academic institutions, peak bodies, etc.).
- Establishing and regularly reviewing Partnership Plans<sup>2</sup> which set out how partners and the Australian Volunteers Program will work together to resource capacity needs that support partners to deliver on their development outcomes.
- Raising awareness in Australian organisations, potential partner organisations and within DFAT (post, state offices and Canberra) of the benefits of volunteers and the approaches of the Australian Volunteers Program.
- Trialling and offering different volunteering approaches to strengthen organisational capacity (e-volunteering, multiple assignments, cluster assignments etc.)

**B. The public in Australia better appreciates the value of international volunteering.** The Australian Volunteers Program has a purposeful focus on promoting the value of volunteering. The logic states that if Australian organisations, partner organisations, champions, volunteers (past and present) and DFAT promote the benefits of volunteering then the public in Australia will better appreciate the value of volunteering.

The program will support audiences in Australia and partner countries to better understand the value of volunteering. The aim is to ensure target audiences are aware of the program, and shift audiences (potential volunteers, potential partner organisations, potential Australian organisations) from awareness to being more engaged in the program through:

- Supporting volunteers, partner organisations, Australian organisations and Post to identify opportunities to engage and inform their constituencies about the value of volunteer contributions to international development outcomes.
- Supporting volunteers, partner organisations and Australian organisations to contribute relevant, engaging and influential communications to be distributed through program channels to external media and domestic and global target audiences.
- Capturing and promoting learning about achievements and innovations of the Australian Volunteers Program.

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<sup>1</sup> including identifying the capacity gaps and required skill sets of the volunteers, it is more likely they will work with the volunteer to progress their development objectives

<sup>2</sup> Partnership Plans include capacity development plans. Partnership Plans will be reviewed every 12 to 18 months. Defining capacity needs, assessment of capacity development, and sustainability planning are part of this process.

- C. **Australian volunteers gain professionally and personally.** Well supported and strategically placed volunteers that have a good experience and contribute to partner organisations are at the heart of a successful volunteering program. The logic states that if the program supports a diverse range of volunteers who have the right skills, attitudes and attributes for the assignment, then those volunteers will complete their assignments well and have a positive experience. Whilst on assignment and afterwards, volunteers will promote greater cultural awareness and build strong connections between partner countries and Australia which will result in the volunteers gaining both personally and professionally.

The program will support the volunteers to gain professionally and personally by:

- ensuring the program is inclusive and accessible to a broad range of skilled Australians (in line with the program's Diversity and Inclusion strategy's focus on: Disability inclusion; Indigenous persons; Diaspora and diverse cultural backgrounds; Gender equality; LGBT+; Remote, rural and regional persons; Younger and older persons)
- having strong volunteer recruitment practices (targeted to country needs)
- supporting volunteers prior to, on-assignment and afterwards with fit-for purpose learning and development programs and networks

By successfully achieving these three end of program outcomes, the Australian Volunteers Program will have contributed to **longer term development and diplomacy goals**:

- the Australian Government is achieving its development objectives
- Australians become more globally literate and connected
- Australian aid is perceived positively in Australia and overseas

The program logic is available in Annex 1.

#### **4.2. Assumptions (risks to delivery of program outcomes)**

The achievement of program outcomes, as articulated in the program logic, is based on a number of underlying assumptions, which define conditions assumed to be in place. Reframed, these assumptions are actually risks to the delivery of program outcomes.

Tracking progress against the program logic through monitoring and regular reflection, provides the opportunity to determine whether these assumptions have held or not, and whether or how they will affect the achievement of results. The MELF data collection tools aim to provide insights into these assumptions (risks). As part of the Annual Reflection events (Section 6.1), assumptions in the program logic will be reviewed and tested.

The assumptions are:

- there will be ongoing bi-partisan support for the Australian Volunteers Program
- volunteers have a positive volunteering experience
- the successful delivery of volunteer assignments will make a real contribution to partner organisations' ability to achieve their objectives
- the success of volunteer assignments and partner capacity development, will meaningfully contribute to Australia's development and public diplomacy objectives
- potential, current and returned volunteers have a positive perception of the Australian aid program and Australia's development objectives overseas



- most volunteers will want to share their volunteering experiences and articulate how volunteers contribute to development outcomes with others in Australia and overseas
- Australian organisations, partner organisations, champions and DFAT see value in and will actively promote the benefits of the volunteer program
- with the right support, volunteering overseas can be an attractive and accessible opportunity to skilled Australians from all walks of life
- a diverse and relevant range of Australian organisations and in-country partner organisations will be interested in and have the capacity to partner with the program
- DFAT post, Canberra and State offices will be interested in strategically engaging with the volunteer program and leveraging the program to support the delivery of development outcomes

Risks to delivery of the MELF are captured in Section 8.

## 5. Assessing progress

The approach to assessing progress in the Australian Volunteers Program draws on some of the key principles of developmental evaluation<sup>3</sup> to provide, as far as possible, real time data that helps to interpret what is working and what is not within the program. Whilst the Australian Volunteers Program has a (relatively) linear and seemingly simple program logic (Annex 1), the reality is that the Australian Volunteers Program is operating in a multitude of complex operating environments. Building capacity of partner organisations, and understanding how to influence public diplomacy are situation specific and complex undertakings. The elements of developmental evaluation being applied include:

- A heavy emphasis on **monitoring using multiple sources** and obtaining (as far as possible) **real time data**
- **Identifying patterns** in data that may prompt new thinking
- Interpretation and meaning being assigned by those involved in delivering the program through a process of asking **what** does the data tell us? **So what** does it mean for the way we operate and the partnerships we have? **Now what** are we going to do (same or differently)?
- **The focus is on learning and using reflection** to test whether we are on the right path to achieving the desired outcomes

### 5.1. Key evaluation questions

Key evaluation questions are high level questions designed to frame the analysis of progress and performance of the Australian Volunteers Program. They will be used by the program to help structure regular reflection events, and to guide reporting. The key evaluation questions in the design document were reviewed and refined by the program team.

#### Effectiveness

- What have been the outcomes<sup>4</sup> / results (intended and unintended, positive and negative) of the program for volunteers, partner organisations, development in partner countries, and raising awareness of the value of volunteering?
- To what extent has the program contributed to these outcomes?
- To what extent has the program improved the reach and diversity of:
  - partners in Australia and overseas (partner organisation type, size, sector)
  - volunteers including gender, disability, ethnic background (Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander, or diaspora community), age, location

<sup>3</sup> Patton, M (2010), *Developmental Evaluation: Applying Complexity Concepts to Enhance Innovation and Use*. New York, NY: Guilford Press

<sup>4</sup> Inclusive of outcomes in relation to gender equality, disability inclusion, private sector engagement, climate change, innovation and child protection.

- avenues and audiences for public diplomacy?

### **Value for money**

- How efficiently is the program being delivered, including achieving its outputs as intended (on time, of good quality, on cost)?
- To what extent has the program been able to learn and improve its approaches to managing a volunteering program, including through trialling new approaches?

### **Relevance**

- How relevant is the program to partner country priorities, Australian aid priorities<sup>5</sup>, and partner organisation priorities?

## **5.2. Program indicators**

This section provides a summary of the regular indicators of Australian Volunteers Program progress and the tools used to collect this data. Annex 2 provides more detailed information on the indicators and data sources.

The program indicators are used to gather regular information on the progress of the Australian Volunteers Program. They provide “windows” for viewing progress on the program. Regular data collection and analysis (using the key evaluation questions as higher level guides) will help the team to understand areas of progress, and risks to delivery. The interpretation of why progress is fast or slow, is done informally through regular feedback/conversations with implementing teams and partners, as well as formally through the annual reflection events (section 6.1). Where the Australian Volunteers Program team can’t plausibly explain reasons for progress, the MEL team can commission further evaluative research (section 5.4), or the program can revisit the assumptions in the Program Logic (section 4.2) to ensure these still hold true.

Whilst the program logic doesn’t detail key program management indicators, these support effective and efficient program management, are required as part of the contract, and provide the evidence base for answering the key evaluation questions on value for money. Management indicators are provided in the diagram below for consideration.

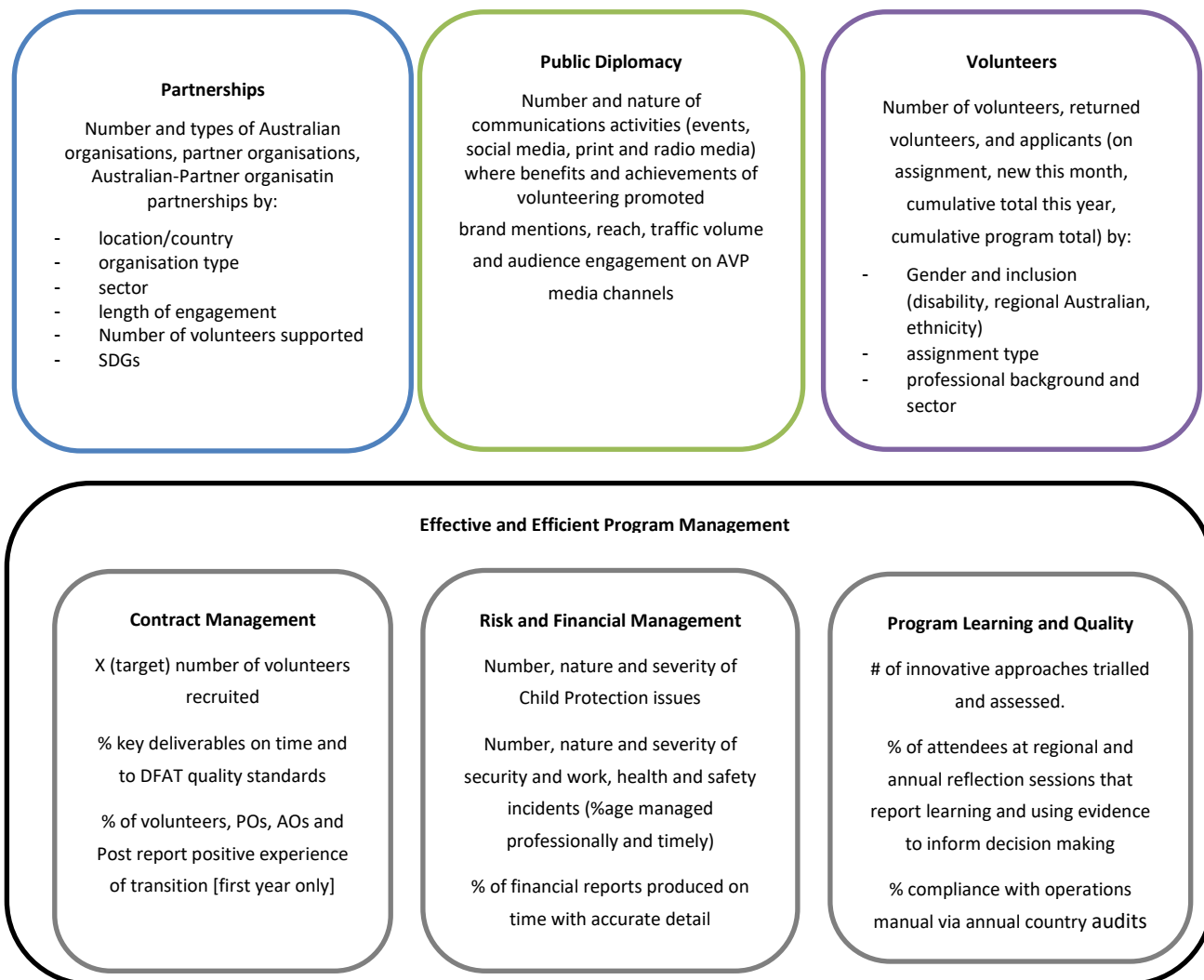
Most information is available through the online Management Information System. By integrating key data into the Management Information System the program will provide real time data on a number of key measures as outlined in Figure 2 below.

Where meaningful, all indicators relating to volunteers will be disaggregated by gender. Such indicators will be further disaggregated by other diversity characteristics where the sample size allows it and where doing so will not identify individuals.

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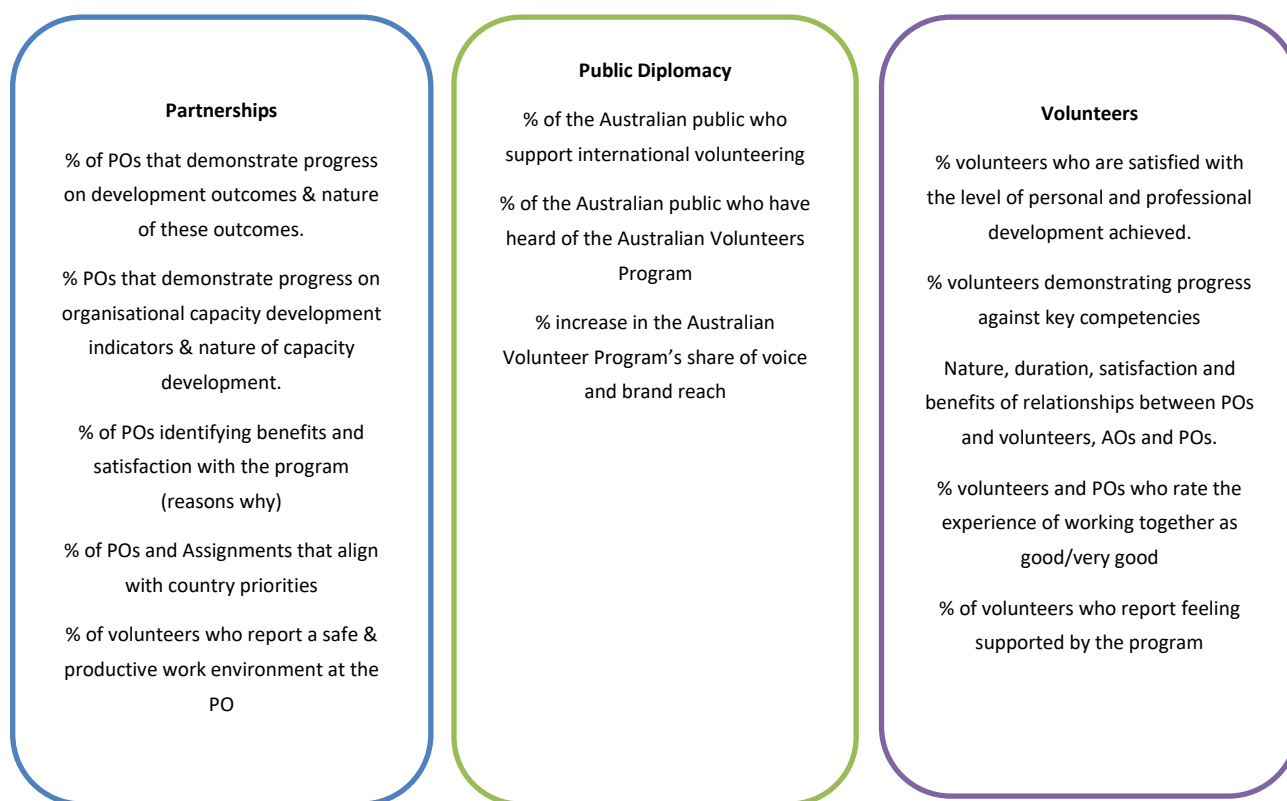
<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

Figure 2 Real time data collected through the MELF



Other indicators where data will be available but less frequently include:

Figure 3 Additional MEL data collected



### 5.3. Tools for data collection

The MELF uses new technologies for providing a more meaningful and robust data to measure the progress of the program. Advancement in digital technology has led to the creation of tools, offering a wide range of useful visualisations and qualitative and quantitative data capture and analysis.

Our approach to data collection and management will be:

- User-centric which ensures a meaningful involvement of service users from listening, acting upon user feedback, to consider user voice in planning, implementation and review.
- Using assessments to inform strategy and performance management by regularly analysing and responding to data and using it to change and improve. This means acting on assessment findings during the life cycle of the intervention rather than just at the end.
- Collection of data on a regular basis as opposed to a one off activity, and aimed at learning, making corrections, and addressing issues — rather than just reporting and accountability.
- Utilising a variety of data collection tools in line with the above-mentioned approach. These include conducting micro-surveys, social listening, and feedback from current and returned volunteers through interactive sessions and online tools.
- Proportionate, only collecting data and at a frequency that is necessary for the uses outlined in the MELF.

There are 11 key data sources for the Australian Volunteers Program **regular monitoring** approach as outlined in Table 1.

**Table 1 Data sources for the Australian Volunteers Program MELF**

Data Source/Tool	Description	Frequency of collection	Data availability
Volunteer assignment feedback Captured in MIS	At the commencement of the assignment partner organisations and volunteers complete an assignment plan. At the mid-point (for assignments 11 months and over) the partner organisations and volunteer review progress. At the end of the assignment the Volunteer provides feedback. (partner organisations feedback captured independently). The end of assignment evaluation is supplemented with an exit interview	Mid-point (for assignments 11 months and over) End of assignment	Continuous and ongoing
Partner organisation end of assignment evaluation Captured in MIS	At the end of each assignment, the program requests feedback from the partner organisations, provided independently of the volunteer	End of assignment	Continuous and ongoing
Partnership Plan and review. Captured in MIS	At the commencement of a partnership a three-year plan is established, identifying capacity needs and options for volunteer support. This generates volunteer assignments (including, where relevant, a pipeline for up to 3 years). The partnership plan is reviewed on a 12 to 18 month basis <sup>6</sup> to track progress, including on capacity development outcomes and to receive feedback on volunteer assignments.	Progressive roll-out and 12 to 18 month review	Progress against Partnership Plan updated on a rolling basis. Due to volunteer cycles, data on partner organisations capacity development may not be available until end Y2 and then can be updated annually.
Case studies / stories of change from partner organisations	Case studies collected from partner organisations about the impact of the program on their development outcomes, using an outcome harvesting approach. Analysed to share learning during reflection sessions.	Annual	Annually on a rolling basis.
Management Information System	Stores and enables analysis of basic information on volunteers and partner organisations	Ongoing	Continuous
Media monitoring and media analytics	Monitoring: To capture stories that are profiled in the media about international volunteering. Analytics: To capture insights about social media sites including engagement, reach, content performance, reactions, audience demographics.	Monthly	Available in Australia for social and online media.
Social listening analytics	Insights that go beyond the program's social platforms, listening to conversations about the program's brand. This includes sentiment toward the brand, trends, topics target audiences are interested in	Monthly	Continuous.
RAVN survey	To understand how returned volunteers continue to be engaged with and promote the value of volunteering and how the volunteer program can best support this.	Bi-Annual	Bi-Annually one month after survey closes
Public opinion research	To track understanding of the value of volunteering and brand awareness. Also to understand target audience needs, preferences and motivations to engage with the volunteer program, channels for engagement and how to best communicate.	Baseline (end Y1, midline, end Y3, endline, end Y5)	End Y1, End Y3, End Y5.
Spot checks of alignment between country program plans	Each region will conduct a spot check of alignment in one country in each region, each year.	Annual	Annually

<sup>6</sup> Feasibility of this will be tested in the pilot period.

Data Source/Tool	Description	Frequency of collection	Data availability
and partner organisations objectives			
DFAT Post survey	A survey to all Posts from AVS to get feedback on the alignment of the program at the country level and Post engagement	Annual	Annually, one month after survey closes
DFAT monitoring visits	DFAT monitoring visits and written reports will support data assurance and triangulation.	Ongoing	One month after monitoring visit
Transition Survey	To assess the quality and experience of the transition process for volunteers, partner organisations, and DFAT from AVID to the Australian Volunteers Program.	One off March 2018.	One month after survey closes.

### 5.3.1. When tools will be ready for use

With the exception of the volunteers' mid-term and end of assignment feedback, the remaining tools are new for the Australian Volunteers Program. They will be built, tested and refined in the first year of the MELF. Priority will be given to the tools which are used more frequently. This includes updating and aligning the volunteer assignment feedback with the new program requirements and establishing media monitoring and social listening approaches. The table below provides a summary of when tools will be developed and used.

Table 2 When tools will be developed and data will be available

Year 1 ( to June 2018)	Year 2 (2018/19)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Volunteer assignment feedback forms updated and rolled out</li> <li>▪ Partnership Plan method developed, tested and commence rollout</li> <li>▪ Media monitoring and analytics</li> <li>▪ Social Listening tools</li> <li>▪ Transition survey</li> <li>▪ Public opinion research - aim delivery for Annual Report– September 2018 (see section 5.4.1 below)</li> <li>▪ Volunteer demographic research – aim for delivery for Annual Report - September 2018 (see section 5.4.1 below)</li> <li>▪ Compliance audits – tools and guidance developed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Volunteer assignment feedback forms providing required data</li> <li>▪ Partnership Plan Annual Reviews providing data (towards the end of Y2)</li> <li>▪ Partner organisations Stories of Change collected &amp; analysed</li> <li>▪ RAVN survey</li> <li>▪ Spot check of alignment between country program plans and assignments</li> <li>▪ Compliance audits providing findings</li> </ul>

Depending on when the data is available (see table 2), baselines will be set, which will enable the setting of realistic targets. This means that for different indicators, the baseline will be set at different times. For example, some indicators will be baselined at the end of year one and others at the end of year 2. In line with the intent of the MELF as a rolling strategy, progress will be updated when data is available. As far as possible, data will be aligned with the MIS to support online data entry and more effective analysis.

## 5.4. Evaluation

### 5.4.1. Internal evaluation for program learning and improvement

The MELF is more heavily invested in regular monitoring and reflection, with a lighter focus on strategic evaluative activity that helps to better understand program achievements, and target program efforts. Priorities for evaluation (both formative and summative) will be established on an annual basis informed by the needs of the program. Through the annual reflection and planning process, priority will be given to evaluative activity which provides insight into how to increase program impact.

A workshop was conducted with the program team to identify the types of research that might be relevant and useful over the life of the program. A number of options were identified, for year one priorities and future areas of interest. The focus of evaluative activity will be decided on an annual basis as part of the program's annual planning. While the first years of the program are logically focused on establishing baselines and formative research, over the course of the program this focus will shift. First to more operational, action orientated evaluations with a focus on program learning and improvement; then to more summative evaluation questions of program results and impact. The key evaluation questions will continue to guide all evaluative processes, which will also be linked to the key objectives of the program logic.

#### **Year 1 priorities:**

**Identifying how to best define program target audiences, how to appropriately target messages, and baselining current awareness of target audiences of the value of volunteering, (Public Diplomacy)** The aim is to understand how to best define the Australian Volunteers Program target audiences, understand their information needs, preferences and motivations, and to baseline their current understanding of the value of volunteering. The formative research will focus on key messages and channels of communication most likely to engage and influence different target audiences. This will inform the program's public diplomacy approach.

**Understanding how to attract a more diverse pool of volunteers.** Currently 75% of applicants are female, and there are opportunities to expand inclusion from indigenous Australians, diaspora communities, those from regional Australia and males. Research into barriers of access to the program, as well as interest in international volunteering, would be identified, with a focus on generating useful and meaningful lessons for targeting future recruitment and communications approaches.

#### **Subsequent priorities:**

**Assessing the extent to which the program aligns with the Impact Areas (as per the Global Program Strategy) and assessing developmental outcomes of partner organisations working within those areas, and the program's contribution to such outcomes.** The Global Program Strategy identifies three impact areas (human rights, inclusive economic growth, and climate change, disaster resilience and food security). These are to be used as thematic lenses through which to view and explore the program's impact in detail.

**Longitudinal study on the value of volunteering to volunteers.** The five plus five-year timeframe of the program offers the opportunity to set up a longitudinal study of what happens after volunteers complete their assignment. Key aspects of the study could include whether volunteers are engaged, and for how long after returning, in advocacy for the benefits of volunteering, what has happened in their careers, and personal life (attributes / skills obtained). This would provide useful insights for the program, as well as powerful public diplomacy messages.

Additional reviews and operational research will be carried out in support of specific issues as they emerge. This may relate to activities carried out under the program's Innovation Fund, operational priorities such as Partnership Plans, or to address specific evaluation questions in more detail (for example relating to Value for Money). Qualitative case studies will also be collected about partner organisations developmental outcomes relating to cross-cutting issues. The aim would be to provide an insight into how volunteering assignments have contributed to partner organisation capacity development and development outcomes in different sectors and for different cross-cutting issues or development priorities.

#### **5.4.2. External evaluation**

In addition to the internal evaluative work, DFAT will commission an independent external evaluation every four years which will address the Key Evaluation Questions.

The Australian Volunteers Program MEL team will provide external evaluators with access to all required information.

## 5.5. Impact Areas, SDGs, cross-cutting issues and development priorities

The Australian Volunteers Program is guided by a Global Program Strategy. The strategy identifies three impact areas that act as lenses, helping the program demonstrate policy alignment, communicate stories about the program, and help measure the developmental outcomes achieved by partners in a more focused set of thematic areas of work. These impact areas are:

- inclusive economic growth
- human rights
- climate change, disaster resilience and food security

The program will conduct a formative evaluation of the impact areas to measure the program's global footprint in relation to them. Following this, the program will develop an approach to evaluating the program's contribution to partners' developmental outcomes using these three thematic lenses.

The program will also code and map its contribution to the SDGs. Partner organisations will be coded according to which SDGs their work primarily contributes.

The MELF will support the program to collate and analyse program outcomes in relation to **cross-cutting issues** including:

- gender equality (enhancing women's voice in decision-making, leadership and peace building, promoting women's economic empowerment, and ending violence against women)
- disability inclusion
- social inclusion of minority and under-represented groups in the volunteer program. Specifically:
  - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
  - people in rural Australia
  - youth
  - older generations
  - people with disabilities
  - culturally and linguistically diverse groups

These cross-cutting issues have been hardwired into the MELF using a twin-track approach.

1. **Mainstreamed:** The key evaluation questions, which guide the strategic analysis of the program, ensure there is regular reflection on progress against these issues. Additionally, all indicators can be disaggregated based on gender, disability and social inclusion criteria. Data collection tools are being designed to track outcomes related to cross-cutting issues and development priorities. For example, all assignment plans have a mandatory secondary outcome in relation to gender equality, disability inclusion and child safeguarding, and volunteers can identify where gender equality is a primary outcome. Through Partnership Plan reviews and assignment feedback it is possible to identify outcomes in relation to all cross cutting issues and development priorities. This enables the MEL team to cross-reference volunteer assignment and partner organisation capacity development outcomes with these different criteria.
2. **Targeted:** Identifying specific pieces of analysis that provide insight into these themes. For example, in the first year, the program proposes research to better understand how to attract a more diverse volunteer cohort, including understanding barriers to access and how these can be overcome. In future years, the MEL team will evaluate new approaches to volunteering that have been trialled, to report on program innovation.



The MELF's approach to documenting case studies of partner organisations' developmental outcomes, based on an Outcome Harvesting approach, will also enable the program to look at changes in relation to the cross-cutting areas. Case studies will be collected from partners' working in different areas and appropriately coded. Those that relate to the cross-cutting themes can then be periodically analysed and synthesised to explore common trends and lessons learnt. This will complement the in-depth approach of the Impact Areas with a broader process for measuring outcomes relating to the cross-cutting themes.

The MELF will be periodically updated and one of the key review criteria will be whether the current frame provides sufficient analysis and insight into cross-cutting issues and development priorities. The development of the Diversity and Inclusion Strategy, and monitoring of this, will provide further detail to the complement the approach outlined here. The team will remain in close contact with AVS, to receive updates as cross-cutting issues and development priorities evolve.

## 6. Understanding and using performance information

### 6.1. Annual reflection cycle

Core to the MELF approach is a series of annual reflection and planning events. These events have multiple purposes:

- review and interpret evidence of program progress
- identify and prioritise areas for program improvement
- feed into the key themes and messages for the annual report
- share learning across the program
- build relationships across the teams

The reflection and planning events will occur at the regional and global program level:

**Regional reflection events in August:** Attendees will include the Country Program Managers (and Program Officers to the extent possible), Regional Directors, Regional MEL Coordinators, one Melbourne MEL Representative, DFAT posts will be invited. The events will be led by the Regional MEL Coordinator and Regional Director with support from Melbourne MEL team.

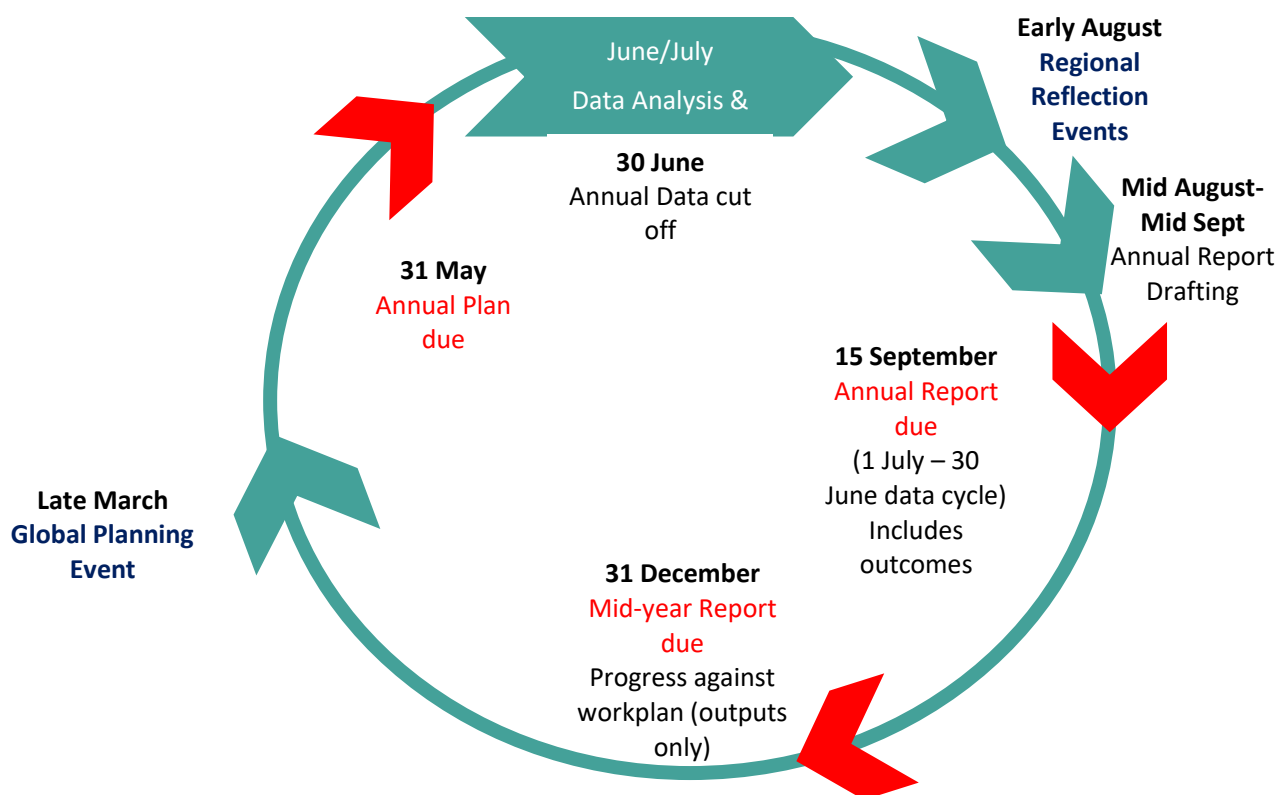
The key purpose is to analyse and interpret monitoring information, define key messages and learnings which will then feed into the Annual Report. The MEL team will prepare the analysis for the events, by:

- analysing regional evidence of progress against the key evaluation questions
- drawing on the indicators in the MEL framework to identify trends and possible areas of risk
- identifying issues that would benefit team interpretation and analysis

Based on this information the Regional Directors will set the agenda for the Regional Reflection Events.

**Global planning event in March:** Attendees will be the Australian Volunteers Program leadership team. The focus is to review performance over the last 12 months in relation to the annual plan, and set the strategic direction for the coming 12 months.

Figure 4 Annual cycle for data collection and analysis



Within this annual cycle is the continuous collection of data from partner organisations and volunteers on assignment. Annual Post surveys and DFAT monitoring visits feed into key points of the cycle, including the annual program performance appraisal.

## 6.2. Uses of MEL data

### 6.2.1. Program learning and information sharing

The MELF asks for feedback from different stakeholders at different points in time. The MEL unit has a responsibility to make sure that feedback collected is channelled to the right people, at the right time, in a format that is useful to them and aids decision making. The MEL unit have a duty to only ask for data if we know how that data is going to be analysed and who will use it. We need to be able to actively demonstrate to those giving feedback how the data they are providing is being used.

The following forums will be established to discuss the program learning and share information related to MELF. DFAT will be part of or have access to all forums except operational meetings (leadership team meetings, fortnightly MEL meetings).

Table 3 Forums for program learning and information sharing

Forum	Description
Annual regional reflection events	See above
Global planning event	See above

Forum	Description
Fortnightly MEL team meetings	An online platform (Zoom, Business Skype or Trello) will be used for ongoing communication as well as fortnightly structured MEL team meetings (MEL Manager, Advisor and Regional Coordinators). The purpose is to share information, discuss utility and challenges with tools, evidence and data collection, identify priorities, assign responsibilities and identify support needs and options.
Weekly leadership team meetings	The MEL Manager will share insights from the regions, monitoring data and evaluative studies with all members of the leadership team. Where findings are likely to be useful to program teams, the information will be presented to the global program teams (see below).
Video conference / workshops of MEL findings – as deemed useful.	Regional MEL Coordinators will best explore how to present the information to their country offices. Findings and potential application will be discussed/explored with countries. Materials will be uploaded and saved online for future reference. Wherever possible, users of MEL data will be involved in the process of analysing that data, through sense making workshops or reflection events.
All program communication channels including web, social media and electronic communications – for volunteers and partner organisations	MEL data to be presented in engaging formats/dashboards including infographics, animation, videos, case studies, stories, social tiles and banners. Key MEL data at program and country level will be presented on the AVP website through country summary reports.
MEL internal communications	Regular MEL updates will be provided to all country teams via appropriate communication channels.
Sharing learning at international volunteering and development forums	Papers on key program learning and insights will be presented at volunteering, international development learning and information sharing forums.

Quantitative MEL data (i.e. satisfaction rates with the program from volunteers and partner organisations) will be available to program managers and DFAT in real time through the program’s online MIS. The MELF will also support program-wide communication to multiple stakeholders, particularly through the program’s Annual Report and country summaries, and reports from regional reflection events. Research and evaluation products (or accessible summaries of these) will be made publically available on the DFAT website, alongside a DFAT management response, unless there are specific operational or contractual justifications to the contrary.

### 6.2.2. Governance and management decision making

The MELF will support the following management decision making processes:

- identifying annual plan priorities, based on progress to date
- identifying risks for the program leadership team
- identifying opportunities for program performance improvements

The MELF will be governed as outlined in Table 4 below.

Table 4 MELF governance

Governance Function	Participants	Governance Role
Strategic oversight and direction of the MELF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ DFAT AVS</li> <li>▪ AVP Program Director</li> <li>▪ AVP MEL Manager</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ensure that the MELF is fit for purpose, meets DFAT standards and provides the information required for program management, accountability, learning and communications needs.</li> </ul>
Management and delivery of the MELF across the Australian Volunteers Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ AVP MEL program team:</li> <li>▪ MEL Manager</li> <li>▪ MEL Advisor</li> <li>▪ Regional MEL Coordinators</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Develop, implement and refine MELF including supporting tools for the Australian Volunteers Program</li> <li>▪ Facilitate the collection and analysis of country, regional and program-wide data</li> </ul>

Governance Function	Participants	Governance Role
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Facilitate global reflection events, and support regional reflection events</li> <li>▪ Propose, scope, design, manage and/or undertake, and help the program team to interpret the relevance of findings for internal evaluative work required</li> <li>▪ Trial and improve different approaches to communicating MEL information clearly to program and non-technical audiences, in collaboration with the Communications team</li> <li>▪ Ensure all reporting requirements are met.</li> </ul>

Detailed roles and responsibilities are outlined in Section 7.

### 6.2.3. Public diplomacy and communications

The MELF will support the work of Public Diplomacy by:

- Formalising the monitoring of how volunteers and partner organisations understand their role in public diplomacy including preparing them for this role (professional development and skills development) and the public diplomacy outcomes both during and after assignments finish.
- Defining target audiences and understanding their needs, and developing benchmarks around brand awareness and engagement.
- Collaborating to collect and synthesise data throughout the entire volunteer, partner organisation and Australian organisation lifecycle. This will enable the program to assess progress against public diplomacy outcomes.
- Collecting and analysing stories from volunteers and partner organisations about their experiences. The learning and experience of a volunteer and partner organisation will be expressed through stories, which is a powerful tool to advocate for volunteering, international development and effectively links to DFAT’s public diplomacy policy.
- Capturing views, thoughts and levels of engagement of target audiences in Australian Volunteers Program communications channels and understanding the extent and around what issues the broader community is engaging in discussion around international volunteering.
- Providing a sound evidence base for communicating program impact and reach.

### 6.2.4. Reporting and accountability

The MELF generates information for use in reporting that is used to justify and account for aid program expenditure to the Australian public. The MELF will generate useful information for DFAT annual corporate reporting, a key requirement being the annual Aid Quality Check. There are two formal contractual reporting obligations.

Table 5 Reporting and accountability obligations

Mid-Year Report – 31 December (July–November data set)	Annual Report – 15 September (July–June data set)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Activity and output progress</li> <li>▪ Remedial action taken via the action plan</li> <li>▪ Financial reporting</li> <li>▪ Priorities for the next six months</li> <li>▪ Light touch informative operational summary report.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Activity and output progress in line with relevant strategies</li> <li>▪ Program outcome progress</li> <li>▪ Lessons learned</li> <li>▪ Priorities going forward</li> <li>▪ Full report compliant with DFAT M&amp;E Standard 3 for Progress Reporting and all requirements in Table 4 of the Contract.</li> </ul>

## 7. Monitoring and evaluation roles and responsibilities

Governance arrangements for the Australian Volunteers Program are clear and comprehensive. Strategic oversight and direction will be provided by DFAT. All stakeholders will interact in a collaborative, professional and responsive manner, ensuring a focus on the achievement of the end of program outcomes.

### 7.1. Australian Volunteers Program team roles

Table 6 below clarifies the roles of the Australian Volunteers Program team for delivering the MELF.

Table 6 Australian Volunteers Program team responsibilities for MELF delivery

Team Members	Responsibilities
AVP Program Director	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure the MEL meets reporting, accountability, learning and public diplomacy needs for the Australian Volunteers Program</li> </ul>
AVP MEL Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop and oversee the implementation of the MEL Framework</li> <li>Ensure all tools align with the MEL framework and are tested prior to adoption</li> <li>Ensure all supporting guidance is simple and user-friendly</li> <li>Oversee integration of MEL tools into online platforms</li> <li>Lead the framing, oversight and delivery of quality products for evaluative work</li> <li>Ensure Annual Reports are produced in line with DFAT quality standards</li> <li>Manage the MEL team annual work plan to ensure they deliver on the MELF</li> <li>Frame, and as required facilitate, Regional and Global Reflection events</li> <li>Ensure accurate, accessible and user friendly MEL products</li> <li>Share information across the team and with the program on new approaches/tools/thinking that could inform and improve program MEL.</li> </ul>
AVP MEL Adviser	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop, refine and test common MEL tools used across all countries/regions</li> <li>Support the Regional MEL Coordinators to trial and test MEL Tools and conduct regional reflection events</li> <li>Establish and moderate technology platforms to enable MEL Team to communicate and share information</li> <li>Work with the MIS team to ensure all MEL critical data is compatible with MIS requirements and facilitates simple data analysis</li> <li>Share information across the MEL team on new approaches/tools/thinking that could inform and improve program MEL</li> <li>Clearly communicate MEL requirements and support them to ensure we meet these requirements, with minimal disruption to the business</li> <li>Draft and coordinate annual and mid-year report</li> </ul>
AVP Regional MEL Coordinators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support country offices to use the MEL Tools, with particular emphasis on establishing partner plans – and capacity development approach, the annual review of these plans, volunteer feedback, and collecting stories of change</li> <li>Pilot, test and recommend refinements to MEL tools working in close collaboration with country programs and Melbourne MEL team.</li> <li>Clearly communicate and support country offices to understand the MEL cycle and data quality expectations</li> <li>Capture and analyse stories of change from Volunteers and Partner Organisations</li> <li>Work with Regional Directors to identify regional program information and communication needs, feeding these into the Annual MEL work plan</li> <li>Lead the Regional reflection events, working closely with the Regional Directors</li> <li>Identify opportunities and approaches to share MEL information with country teams</li> <li>Share information across the MEL team on new approaches/tools/thinking that could inform and improve program MEL</li> </ul>

Team Members	Responsibilities
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure that regional program progress on key indicators is updated monthly, or as required in the MELF</li> <li>Provide and coordinate country program input into Annual and mid-year Reports</li> </ul>

## 7.2. Approach to capacity building for Australian Volunteers Program staff

Building the capacity of Australian Volunteers Program staff to provide quality information into the MELF will be achieved through:

- On-boarding training for new country program staff in the monitoring tools, where to access them and how to use them. This training will be provided both remotely and in person.
- Developing online user-friendly tools with embedded guidance and instructions. The two main tools being created in an online environment are the Partnership Plans and the volunteer feedback forms.
- Developing comprehensive, accessible guidance for staff and volunteers on how to use MEL tools. Written guidance will be provided in the volunteers' MEL Manual, and the Operations Manual and Systems User Guides for staff.
- Providing email and telephone support for any queries. For country staff the first port of call will be the Regional MEL Coordinators.

## 7.3. DFAT roles

As advised in the MELF strategic guidance note, Table 7 clarifies the roles of DFAT for delivering the MELF.

Table 7 DFAT responsibilities for MELF oversight and delivery

Section	Responsibilities
AVS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with MEL Manager to develop MELF and oversee implementation, including ensuring that information assists program management decisions by DFAT.</li> <li>High level oversight of progress of inclusion and diversity priorities and approaches</li> <li>Monitor and assess overall program and consortium management performance through DFAT mandatory reporting requirements completed annually (Annual Report, Aid Quality Check and Partner Performance Assessments) and performance targets.</li> <li>Manage independent reviews and evaluations</li> <li>Conduct annual in-country monitoring visits and support DFAT Posts to conduct monitoring visits with volunteers, Posts and partner organisations</li> <li>Develop and provide monitoring visit guidance and templates for AVS and Posts</li> <li>Conduct monitoring of relevant in-Australia program activities, including but not limited to returned volunteers and Australian organisations</li> <li>Escalate program issues and achievements to Program Management Group (PMG), including progress of remedial actions in the action plan</li> <li>Work with AVS Public Diplomacy &amp; Communications team to communicate results to key stakeholders in DFAT (Posts, line areas, Senior Executive), Program Management Group, and Australian Government</li> <li>Develop pre-posting training and briefing for DFAT officers going to Post with Australian Volunteers Program responsibilities.</li> </ul>
Posts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conduct annual monitoring visits of volunteers and provide quality annual feedback on program performance in-country</li> <li>Provide country-specific performance feedback on program and contractor</li> <li>Develop the Country Program Plan with the Australian Volunteers Regional Director and in-country Program Manager</li> <li>Hold quarterly meetings with in-country Program Managers on Post priorities for the program and performance achievements and issues.</li> </ul>

## 8. Risks to effective MEL delivery

Risks to the effective delivery of the MEL Framework include:

- 1. Providing sufficient coverage in the Pacific.** The current staffing structure is for one Regional MEL Coordinator in the Pacific region, which includes 11 countries. There is a risk that the Regional MEL Coordinator will not be able to meet all the demands for the region. The Melbourne-based MEL Adviser will support the Pacific Regional MEL Coordinator to collate data for the Pacific region and provide responses to country staff. The MEL Manager will keep in contact with the team members to ensure any workload issues are appropriately managed.
- 2. The MEL team doesn't demonstrate value add to the program teams quickly.** Greater resources for MEL in the program, increase expectations. It is important that the MEL team position themselves as adding value to the country/regional program teams, as well as the leadership team, and are not seen as extractive for reporting purposes only. One of the first tasks of the Regional MEL Coordinators will be to work with the Regional Directors and discuss with the Country Program Managers to understand their information needs (types of information, frequency and data presentation preferences). These will be combined with the information needs identified in the MELF. The MEL team will then identify and share approaches to provide the information required by the Regional Directors and Country teams.
- 3. New tools place too much burden on country teams.** The introduction of the Partnership Plan and review process is a requirement that did not exist in the AVID program. This will require country offices to support partner organisations through a partnership discussion to develop a plan, and to review this plan on a regular basis. Key to mitigating the additional work for country teams is using online tools with in-time guidance that support a discussion and where data can be entered on the spot. Additionally, all new tools will be trialled in collaboration with in-country staff (with a range of partner organisations), to refine the content of the plans, the approach to rolling out the plans, and how frequently partner organisations can have their plans reviewed.
- 4. Data quality.** Numerous stakeholders are involved in entering data into the MIS, including program staff and volunteers themselves. The MELF aims to ensure consistency, accuracy and reliability of data, through its use of technology and its capacity building approach. However, data quality issues extend beyond the scope of the MELF to all aspects of the program and volunteer and partner data, and delivery of the MELF is reliant on the correct coding and entry of information into the MIS. Mitigation measures will include the design and system use of the MIS to minimise human error, providing support and guidance for its use, the work of the data integrity working group in Melbourne to examine data quality, and the rigorous data cleaning process of the MEL Unit in preparing data for analysis.
- 5. Insufficient opportunities, time and resources for decision-makers to reflect and adapt.** The MEL unit aims to support the global program with evidence and learning to facilitate continuous improvement. For decision makers at all levels, in DFAT and across the program, to make use of evidence, they need the resources, opportunities and time to reflect on evidence and their own practice. The MEL unit aims to support that reflection to the greatest extent possible (through organised reflection event, accessible communications and useful and useable data) but also recognises that decision makers are host to numerous other demands and pressures on their time and attention. There are also always limited resources for implementing improvements, and sometimes competing priorities. Mitigating

these risks will require on-going communication within the program leadership team and with DFAT, a commitment to evidence-based decision making, and an annual cycle of reflection and planning based on feedback and learning from multiple stakeholders.

- 6. Child Protection, Safeguarding and Preventing Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment (PSEAH).** Child Protection and PSEAH is an issue for all communities and programs and as with all development initiatives, a risk for the program that is shared by the MELF. The MELF includes consideration of ethical standards and approaches in data collection and use, which are guided by the program's Child Protection Policy and Code of Conduct. The program is committed to DFAT's PSEAH policy.
- 7. Changes in the aid policy context.** The MEL Framework and program logic is guided by a Global Program Strategy framed by Australia's aid policy. Baseline data and on-going monitoring data is collected to measure progress against this program logic. Were there to be a significant shift in Australia's aid policy it may pose a risk to the relevance of the data collected. The program is well adapted to be flexible to changing priorities, and the way in which data is coded on the program's MIS further mitigates the risk by allowing investigation of different developmental priorities.

These risks will be reviewed annually as part of the annual MELF planning process. Risks to delivery of the Australian Volunteers Program are outlined in the Global Risk Management Plan. As identified in the plan, there is a risk that the MEL team is not able to demonstrate program effectiveness and sustainability or program outcomes. That is a potential consequence of the risks outlined above. However, the residual risk is considered low as the MELF has been designed to demonstrate progress on program outcomes, as well as demonstrate program effectiveness and efficiency.



## 9. Annual MEL Plan

The initial annual plan outlined by the MELF covers the period October 2017 – September 2018 (Table 8). Subsequent MEL annual plans will be detailed in the program’s annual plan, due on the 30<sup>th</sup> May each year.

Table 8 MELF Annual Plan December 2017 – September 2018

Month	Activity
December	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 1 December – Final MELF</li> <li>▪ Development of core MEL tools, supporting guidance and alignment with MIS</li> <li>▪ Establish MEL dashboards</li> </ul>
January	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Development of core MEL tools, supporting guidance and alignment with MIS</li> <li>▪ MEL Coordinators induction in Melbourne and team work planning</li> <li>▪ Scope and contract key influencers (Public Diplomacy) baseline and research (due June 2018)</li> </ul>
February	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Development of core MEL tools, supporting guidance and alignment with MIS</li> <li>▪ Trial the Partnership Plan template in country (East Asia Region and Pacific)</li> <li>▪ Scope and contract the volunteer demographic research (due June 2018)</li> <li>▪ Design Transition Survey</li> </ul>
March	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Transition Survey out</li> </ul>
April	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Transition Survey analysed</li> </ul>
May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Define products and process for Regional Reflections</li> <li>▪ 30 May – Annual Plan Due</li> </ul>
June	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Update MELF including 2018–2019 Annual MELF Plan (align with Annual AVP Plan)</li> <li>▪ Collating baseline information current monitoring results in preparation for Regional Reflections</li> <li>▪ 30 June data cut off for 2016-17 Reporting</li> </ul>
July	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Collating data for Annual Report and Regional Reflection Sessions</li> </ul>
August	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Regional Reflection Sessions</li> <li>▪ Drafting Annual Report</li> </ul>
September	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 15 September – Annual Report Due</li> </ul>

## 10. Ethical Principles and Standards

The global program strategy sets out guiding principles that inform how the program works. These apply to the MELF. MEL activities are also guided by a set of ethical principles and standards. These principles and standards are not all encompassing, and many other issues may exist that need to be considered depending on specific contexts. They do not replace any other ethical commitments outlined in relevant Australian Volunteer Program policy documents or legal frameworks, and should be read alongside other Australian Volunteers Program policies including but not limited to:

- Code of Conduct
- Child Protection Policy
- AVI’s Privacy Policy Statement

Attention to ethical standards should be maintained throughout the entire MEL process: from identifying the potential issues and ensuring that the methodology is conducive to ethical practice; to planning and implementing data collection activities; and to the process of analysing, reporting and using/ storing the data.

Our ethical principles need to be considered at all times and in all MEL activities. Our ethical principles and standards must be considered when designing monitoring processes or considering changes to existing processes. They are of particular importance during research and evaluation activities that fall outside the scope of standard, on-going monitoring activities.

Where the principles and standards outlined below refer to 'research' and 'research activities' this is intended to cover all data collection exercises for the purposes of monitoring, evaluation or research.

These principles apply to all Australian Volunteer Program staff, partners, researchers and consultants carrying out research of any nature on behalf of the Australian Volunteers Program.

### **10.1. Ethical principles in MEL**

In all aspects of our research, Australian Volunteer Program staff, partners, evaluators, researchers and consultants should adhere to and uphold key principles to ensure the agency, safety and wellbeing of all – particularly the vulnerable and disempowered – in our activities.

In particular, the following principles should guide all of our work:

#### **Do no harm**

- We will not put participants at risk for research purposes or use any form of abuse or exploitation.
- We will not discriminate against participants on the basis of age, ethnicity, religion, ability, gender, socio-economic status or any other basis.
- We will not impose the research or the researcher's ideas on project participants.

#### **Always act in the best interests of research participants**

We will pay particular attention to the rights and interests of those who are often the most disempowered, particularly women, girls and boys, persons with disability and other marginalized groups.

- We will respect the rights of children as provided in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- We will ensure that the research is conducted in a way that benefits the physical, psychological and social development of Australian volunteers and our partner organisations.
- Whenever there is a potential conflict of interests between research participants and / or research users, we will privilege the interests of those who are in the position of least power

#### **Ensure that participants can benefit from the evaluation process and be accountable to them.**

- We will, at the start of any research activity, consider and document how and to what extent research participants will be meaningfully involved in research activities
- We will undertake measures to assist participants to engage with and understand research findings, ensure participants receive feedback on results and, where feasible, use of research findings
- We will, where feasible, provide participants with the opportunity to define research priorities, processes and outcomes, and thereby benefit more directly from the activity
- We will give materials gathered from research participants back to the participants, keeping copies only with their informed consent.
- We will disseminate findings to those that contributed to the research, in media and language that they can understand.

## 10.2. Ethical standards

To uphold these principles, we will adhere to the following standards in all our research activities:

**Child Protection:** All those engaged in research activities will abide by the Australian Volunteer Program's Child Protection Policy, as well as responsibilities under any relevant Policy or Code of their own organization if they are equal to or stronger than AVPs.

**Valid reason:** The information generated from any research activity must be used to inform AVPs work, and in particular to improve the delivery of the Program to achieve its end of program outcomes in line with Program strategies.

**Minimal intrusion:** Data collection exercises such as meetings and interviews must be scheduled at times and locations convenient for the participants and be coordinated between partners and/or volunteers to reduce duplication of activities.

**Safety:** Research activities should always take place in a safe environment. Participants should feel comfortable and secure in the surroundings. In order to maximise participation and minimise discrimination, staff must think about how easily different people can access the venue, including people living with disabilities, women and children.

**Confidentiality and anonymity:** Identity of individual participants must be protected, meaning that records and reports should be kept confidential, and no responses or quotes should be attributed to an individual without their prior written consent. Confidentiality should be assured, explaining the limitations (see box)

**Protecting participants from harm or discrimination:** Staff and researchers must make sure that participants suffer no harm or discrimination from the program, other development actors, or other groups or powerful individuals as a result of their participation or non-participation. The program must make sure that the exercise does not cause distress or tension within the group or in the community and ensure that groups are not created or isolated in a way that might expose them to increased stigmatisation.

**Inclusivity:** We must make active efforts to enable individuals /groups that might otherwise be excluded to participate e.g. by ensuring translation or support to access a particular location.

**Informed consent:** All participants should be asked for their informed consent to participate, based on an appropriate, detailed explanation of the process and use of information. This means carefully explaining the purpose of the exercise and how data will be used before starting. Participants should always be given opportunities to ask questions or raise issues about the exercise and if anybody decides (either before, during or after the exercise) that they want to withdraw this should be accepted without question.

**Handling difficult situations:** The exercise should be carried out in a way that doesn't intimidate participants, and prior to the exercise researchers must consider ways to respond to difficult situations or distress. All staff must be aware of appropriate reporting mechanisms and sources of support for any child protection, sexual abuse or other issue encountered.

### Limited confidentiality:

Confidentiality can never be 100% assured to participants, especially when working with children. If children disclose a need for protection by revealing alleged abuse, the staff member is obliged to take action, even if this means breaching confidentiality. These limits of confidentiality must be clearly communicated before starting the process. If during the process information is disclosed, the staff member must discuss with the participant(s) what action they need to take. In order to ensure that all members of the team are aware and clear about the procedures that must be taken concerning limited confidentiality, the team must discuss amongst themselves the steps prior to the data collection phase. If alleged cases of child abuse are disclosed, they should be immediately reported to the program's child protection focal point or Melbourne-based child protection advisor.

**Incentives:** We can never pay in cash or in kind for any participant to take part in research activities. However, it may be appropriate to provide refreshments and transport costs to participants, particularly if the evaluation exercise lasts more than one or two hours.

**Debriefing:** All participants should be given the opportunity for debriefing at the end of the session. This should involve repeating or summarizing the key points discussed, and explaining what will happen next, what the information will be used for, by whom and when.

**Feedback:** Once the analysis has been finalised and report prepared this should be shared with the participants (or representatives of participants) in an appropriate manner. We will actively ask for and welcome any and all feedback, acknowledge receipt of any complaint and respond to issues raised in a sensitive, timely and appropriate way.

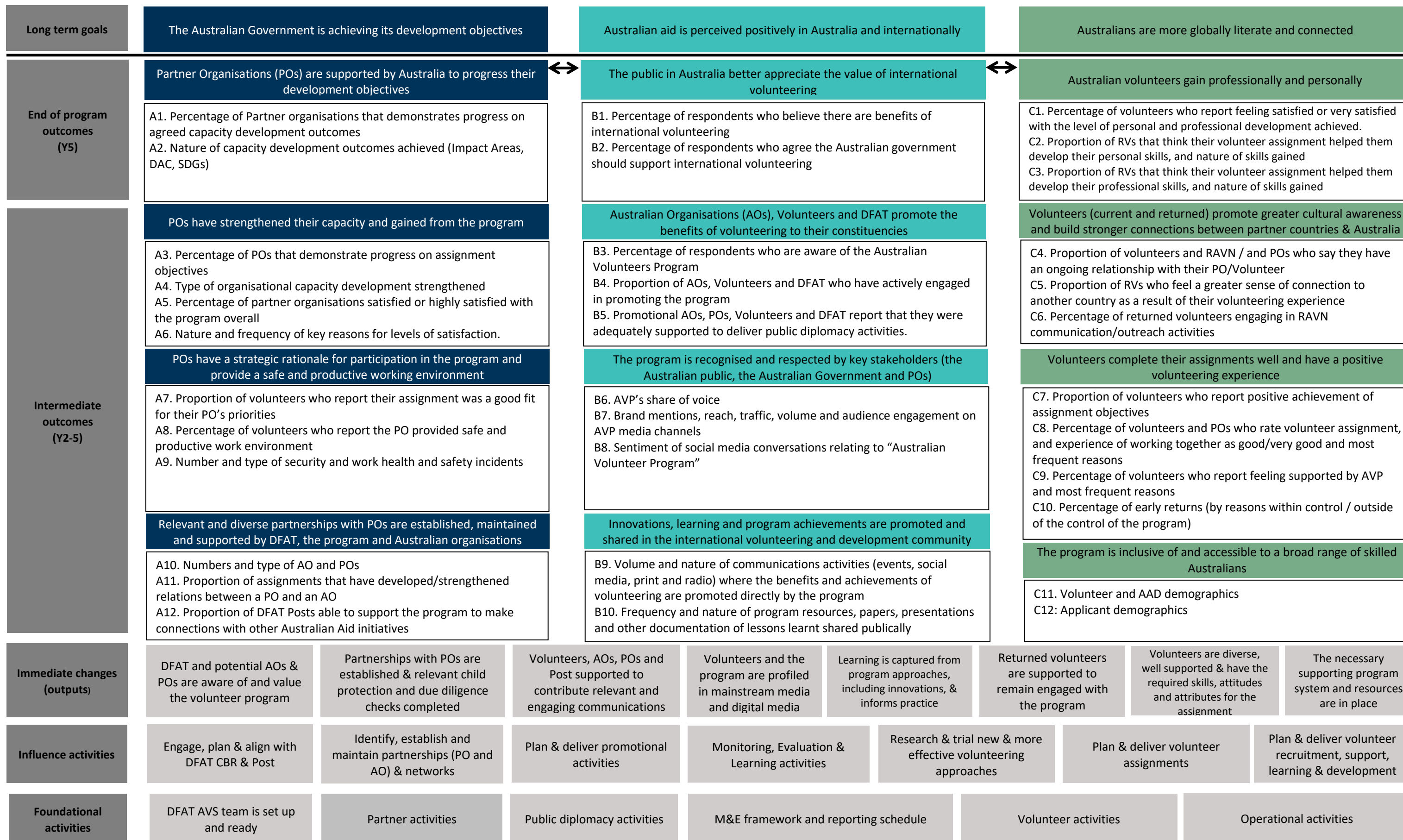
**Data protection:** All data (including written notes and reports, digital data, photographs video and audio recordings) must be handled in such a way as to ensure that confidentiality and anonymity is maintained at all times. Sensitive data must be securely stored.

**Photographs and video:** We will always ask permission from people (or, in the case of young children, their parent or guardian) before taking images of them and respect their decision to say no. Ensure that any images taken of children are respectful and do not impact negatively on their dignity or privacy. Stories and images of children and adults should be based on their own best interest.

## **11. MEL Budget**

The MELF has access to a share of the annual budget available in activity costs for Public Diplomacy, Partnerships and Innovation, and monitoring and evaluation (exclusive of costs for volunteers and staff salaries). MEL staff positions and budget are ring-fenced to ensure the on-going delivery of the MELF. The annual MEL budget will be detailed each year in the annual plan.

## 12. Annex 1: Program Logic with Indicators



Efficient and Effective Program Management Indicators (see Annex 2). Related to:

- Contract Management
- Risk and Financial Management
- Program Learning and Quality