



Australian Government
AusAID

Evaluation Report

Evaluation Capacity Building Program (ECBP) Indonesia

Mid-Term Review

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Disclaimer:

This report reflects the views of the independent evaluation team and those who participated in this Review, rather than those of the Government of Australia.

Acronyms and Abbreviations

A-Based	Australian based staff in AusAID
AMP	Aid Management Pathway
APPR	Annual Program Performance Report
ARF	Adviser Reunumeration Framework
AUD	Australian Dollar
AusAID	Australian Agency for Indonesian Development
CAP-F	Comprehensive Aid Policy Framework
Corporate	Generally refers to PEPD, but at times also relates to two other divisions in the Corporate Group, Canberra
ECBP	Evaluation Capacity Building Program
EL	Executive level position
EOPO	End of Program Outcome
EP	Education Partnership
FTE	Full time equivalent
ICR	Independent Completion Report
IET	Indonesia and East Timor Branch
IPP	Individual Performance Plan
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
NGO	Non government organisation
O-Based	Locally engaged staff in AusAID
ODE	Office of Development Effectiveness
OPS	Operations, Policy and Support Branch
P&Q	Performance and Quality
PEPD	Program Effectiveness and Performance Division
PMEP	Performance Management and Evaluation Policy
POM	Performance, Oversight and Management
Post	In-country AusAID office/representation
QAI	Quality at Implementation
QPR	Quality, Performance and Results Branch
RP	Reflective practice
SSQ	Schools and Systems Quality
ToR	Terms of Reference
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group

Executive Summary

Background to the evaluation and evaluation approach

The Evaluation Capacity Building Program (ECBP) commenced in 2010 as a five-year program within AusAID's Indonesia Post to improve the quality and credibility of M&E products and their use. This was to be achieved through a multi-pronged approach which included: (1) the development of standards for design documents, initiative level M&E systems, commissioned independent evaluations, and initiative supervision visits to articulate a more consistent expectation of information needs to both staff and outside providers/partners; (2) engagement with evaluation providers and other partners to promote the standards; (3) targeted but voluntary training on M&E co-ordination to the varying levels of staff in Indonesia and Canberra offices; (4) the creation of an enabling environment and culture within the AusAID Indonesia program. The ECBP is supported through an externally contracted ECB expert, as well as staff from the P&Q Unit, Jakarta and the IET desk in Canberra.

Several clearly articulated end of program outcomes were detailed in the original design document for ECBP and included:

- Information that is generated by M&E systems and activities have a credible basis;
- Quality information informs and influences decision making at the initiative, sectoral, thematic and country program levels;
- Effective mechanisms for integrating lessons from the ECBP and integrating Corporate developments into the ECBP are operational;
- The Performance and Quality Unit is fully institutionalised;
- The Performance and Quality Unit is harmonised with the IET Performance Unit in Canberra.

This independent mid-term review was commissioned by AusAID in late 2012 to assess the degree to which the ECBP was making adequate progress towards its end of program goals in an effective and efficient manner; and whether such progress was both sustainable and remained relevant to the current needs of the Indonesia program and AusAID as an organisation. The review team, comprising two external evaluators and one internal evaluator visited AusAID offices in Canberra once, and the Indonesia office (Post) twice in late 2012 to conduct interviews and workshops preparatory to publishing this report.

Key conclusions

The ECBP has accomplished a great deal and proved its value to staff from activity level up to strategic management level. It is making good progress at its midpoint towards meeting most of its immediate outcomes. Strategic management regard the program as providing value for money in terms of up-skilling staff in a key, front-of-house role of managing partnerships and interactions with implementers. There is some evidence—not yet robust—that the use of the IET M&E Standards has some potential to generate improved M&E products (reports, evaluation systems, progress reports) and the Standards themselves have been well-received by M&E providers and contractors.

These accomplishments relate to the original context of the program. As the context shifts, so different demands are placed on ECBP, particularly: (a) the need to develop higher-level, judgement-based skills; and (b) the need for improved interactions between activity-level and strategic management in reflecting on evaluation evidence. The division between the ECBP and its host, the P&Q Unit, erodes in the minds of staff who learn from ECBP and then look to P&Q Unit to continue that learning in dealing with M&E interactions and to play a knowledge management role in respect of M&E resources. There is a case for the unit to take more of an outreach function, conducting training needs analysis and extending ECBP into a more wide-ranging knowledge service to programs.

A clear issue for the ECBP is the scale-up of AusAID's investment in Indonesia. This places increasing demands on activity and unit managers who take the bulk of the responsibility for sensitive and demanding front-of-house roles—often involving close interactions with implementing partners to ensure accountability for monies expended on large-scale programs that are functioning in highly complex settings. ECBP addresses some of this challenge but not yet all. As one provider¹ put it: *“The standards barely begin to address the complexity of [programs]. Okay - you can tick the box that says 'there is a robust program logic' - but this means nothing compared to the real problems.”* Devising and applying Standards is a strong foundation, but still leaves some emerging complexity unaddressed. This suggests that ECBP broaden its focus from M&E *products* to the management and co-ordination of M&E *relationships* and program *interactions* with partners.

The cohort of program staff who emerge from ECBP training speak of higher levels of both competence and confidence in the ability they have to discern useful information that is produced from M&E about the programs they manage, and have it inform decisions they make. With this improved and more sophisticated information about their programs and the contexts they operate within in, the question may increasingly arise as to how strategic managers access that knowledge located at the activity management level. The program has already showed some potential for activity level staff to move ahead of senior/strategic managers in their expectations of rigour in the application of evidence to decision-making and strategic directions of AusAID in Indonesia. Some of this may be due to much lower rates of participation in ECBP activities, thus far, from senior managers than activity staff. ECBP needs to better cater its core messages and activities to the unique constraints and needs of senior/strategic managers to ensure that it is equally relevant to all within the organisation. There is also a need for greater integration of M&E learning across the organisation and especially between activity managers and strategic management, particularly if ECBP's longer-term outcome of shaping future strategic directions of the aid program through credible information is to be achieved. ECBP must move beyond its immediate target of training activity staff on core M&E principles into a longer-term strategy that contributes to professional and organisational development at all levels.

Specific recommendations

1. ECBP should be mandatory for all activity and unit managers engaged in external partnerships and incorporated into the IPP process. These participants should be invited to identify learning goals of a personal and professional nature (i.e. confidence as well as competence).
2. Consideration should be given to developing ECBP into a role more closely reflecting the broad professional development needs of program staff. This would involve a more explicitly work-based learning model targeted at the development of independent judgement rather than compliance with the M&E standards. This implies more on-the-job/peer-based critical reflection, less didactic input and a curriculum that is less content-driven. Doing so might require contracting specialists in professional development and work-based learning as well as M&E specialists to be involved in designing and facilitating ECB sessions. There would be merit in retraining P&Q Unit staff in the theory and practice of professional development and adult learning, and occasional placement of P&Q Unit staff in program/M&E interactions to develop first-hand experience of the challenges faced by activity managers.
3. There also appears scope and need to align the ECBP with existing AusAID training in managing partnership interactions currently offered through Corporate, and complementing and expanding on this training within specific work related tasks. To that end, there should be a review of job descriptions for activity managers with a training needs analysis in respect of partnership working, relationship management and M&E co-ordination. ECBP pedagogical strategies should be designed to address these.
4. P&Q Unit should play more of a proactive and outreach role in the office, conducting training needs analyses and promoting ECBP to all grades. This might involve

¹ 221107-30

² Brief Overview of the State of Performance Management and M&E Systems (15 June 2008)

³ AusAID Indonesia Country Program: ECBP Design 2010-2015 (2 July 2010), p. 2

- relaunching the M&E Focal Point network with the unit taking a co-ordinating role. This should also involve a more concerted role in promoting good practice in the integration of QAIs, APPRs and the AusAID results agenda into the ECBP.
5. Relevant staff from PEPD and the Indonesia program should work collaboratively on the development of an engagement strategy which formalises PEPD's involvement in the ECBP and establishes clear communication protocols between areas based on a mutual understanding of the salient roles and responsibilities of branches, sections and individual positions. This should involve a requirement that ECBP guidance and curriculum be exposed to peer review from PEPD and potentially other parts of the agency to ensure alignment with Corporate M&E guidance.
 6. There should be more positive engagement with multilaterals and the Government of Indonesia on AusAID's M&E approach and expectations, including discussion on how/whether existing systems within these partners complements or contradicts aspects of AusAID's requirements and how this can be addressed.
 7. Opportunities should be given for more collaborative engagement with M&E specialists in both the development of the ECBP's future strategy and as contributors to existing and new training modules. This would require greater recognition of M&E providers as proactive partners rather than as compliant 'contractors' and could open up space for methodological diversity on the purpose, role, design, function and utilisation of M&E within AusAID as an organisation.
 8. Consideration should be given as a matter of urgency to the development of M&E/program design guidance for 'non-linear' (i.e. non theory of change based) programs and Facilities. This should be adopted by the Corporate Division and fed back into the ECBP. The P&QU should develop a relevant knowledge base of specialists and approaches in the interim.
 9. To diversify and strengthen the existing pool of M&E expertise on the supply side, AusAID should develop a coherent strategy for improving the capacity of Indonesian M&E specialists. This could be based on institutional development (the in-country tertiary sector, evaluation association and policy research institutes, where available) and might involve consideration of supporting the development of in-country professional associations of evaluators.
 10. A more concerted approach to the development of an ECBP 'Community of Practice' across Indonesia, Timor-Leste and Vanuatu, which is more closely aligned with the Corporate Group in Canberra, and that adopts the ECBP edited guidance and Standards should be done with urgency.

1. Assessment of progress towards End of Program Outcomes

EOPO1: Information that is generated by M&E systems and activities have a credible basis

The outcome concerns the validity of M&E reports as a basis for making confident and relevant program decisions. Validity is given by compliance with ECB Standards. Though evidence from program staff, and a summative overview of the baseline follow-up suggests that there is some progress towards this goal, there are some key standards (for evaluation reports) such as "*it is possible to trace issues through the text from description to analysis to conclusion,*" and "*all recommendations are supported by the text*", which have shown little improvement, and in some circumstances deterioration. M&E providers welcome the Standards, however, as a guide to recognised practice. To achieve this outcome in a robust and sustainable way there will need to be a coherent strategy for capacity development in the 'supply-side'.

Likelihood of meeting the outcome by end of program: Inconclusive

EOPO2: Quality information informs and influences decision making at the initiative, sectoral, thematic and country program levels.

There is evidence that M&E information influences decisions at the Initiative level, but that the further 'up' the chain towards higher-level outcomes and strategic decision making the more that impact on decision making erodes. There are three reasons for this: (1) there is

ineffective communication between program staff and strategic managers – strategic managers are at risk of losing their contact with an improving evidence-based understanding of context at activity level; (2) whilst processes and products are well established at the initiative level at present there is an absence of delivery strategies and associated performance assessment frameworks at the sector level and beyond; and (3) the EOPO is overly rational in its assumptions and does not take account of the fact that at the higher level decisions are *shaped* rather than *made*—in the light of political and other contextual considerations. M&E evidence may play a part in determining sector or country program-level policy—but this will be confined, realistically, to a proportionate reading of ‘informs and influences’. Improved communication between strategic, program and activity-level managers would bring evaluative information (especially information on local contexts for interventions) into focus.

Likelihood of meeting the outcome: Medium

EOPO3: Effective mechanisms for integrating lessons from the ECBP and integrating Corporate developments into the ECBP are operational

There is evidence that this is being realised and is likely to be met by the end of the program with some adjustment. There is take-up of ECB Standards by the Corporate division and the assignment of the Director of QPR (Canberra) to the evaluation team is likely to have an impact. There is insufficient evidence as yet of ECB responding robustly to Corporate guidance regarding M&E. Nonetheless, the inclusion of a key AusAID staff member as an internal evaluator on this evaluation team will create a foundation for enhanced judgements regarding closer integration.

Likelihood of meeting the outcome: Medium

EOPO4: The Performance and Quality Unit is fully institutionalised

This is met. There are high levels of expectation and approval of the support provided by the Unit – among program staff, but also among managers. The ECB-related work of the P&Q Unit forms part of the routine of a growing number of activity-level staff. There is both demand and scope for the P&Q Unit to expand its role into knowledge management in respect of M&E resources.

Likelihood of meeting the outcome: High

EOPO5: The Performance and Quality Unit is harmonised with the IET Performance Unit in Canberra

At present this is assured on the basis of personal relationship and commitment. However, this is not sustainable in itself, especially with the departure of the IET Performance Manager. There is, at present, evidence of responsibilities for tasks being indeterminate. What will assure harmonisation is a clear specification of complementary roles and an assignment of tasks according to role-specification. Nonetheless, a precedent has been set for close collaboration between P&QU and IET desk.

Likelihood of meeting the outcome: High

1. Introduction

1.1 Initiative Background and Context

The Evaluation Capacity Building Programme (ECBP) began in 2008, with a modest investment from AusAID. An M&E Specialist (Susan Dawson) had written a briefing paper highlighting concerns about the absence of evidence underpinning Agency interventions in Indonesia. The rationale put forward by her² was that M&E Frameworks lacked technical quality and relevance and were often not implemented effectively; and reports were too infrequently based on robust evidence. The paper argued that under these circumstances, and owing to lack of capacity on both the demand (AusAID) and supply (M&E contractors and specialist) side, it would be almost impossible for M&E to inform decision making at the country, sector, thematic and initiative levels. In 2011, a baseline assessment of M&E products against then draft standards verified the generally poor quality of such products at the time.

Between 2008-2010, this specialist was commissioned to provide training in M&E management in the Indonesia office but quickly it became clear that this level of input was insufficient to bring about the desired change. AusAID senior management within the IET unit articulated³ the need for “*a more consistent and adequately resourced investment.*” The response was to formalise Evaluation Capacity Building (ECB) as an Indonesia Post five-year program with specified end-of-program outcomes (see above).

A program of work was developed for the ECBP by the contracted M&E specialist, which was focussed on multiple entry points to bring about the institutional change it desired (see above). To promote the program the P&Q Unit was established in Jakarta to support the implementation of ECBP with four staff including an A-based Senior Program Manager (SPM). This has since been reduced to less than two FTE O-based positions in Jakarta. The fluid staffing situation has required continual adjustments to the focus and coverage of the ECBP, as well as a reconsideration of whether its End-of-Program Outcomes (EOPO's) remain realistic.

The P&Q Unit has been supported in Canberra by the Performance and Evaluation Manager for the Indonesia/East Timor (IET) desk who has supported AusAID staff at Post on commissioning and reviewing independent evaluation products for their programs, as well as serving as an ECBP focal point for Corporate. The originally contracted M&E Adviser (now the ECBP Coordinating Facilitator for Timor-Leste, Vanuatu, and Indonesia) continues to provide technical expertise and supports design and ECBP activities within AusAID Indonesia as part of a new two-year contract that commenced in late 2011.

The organisational context to ECB has changed since its inception. AusAID as an organisation has been moving through a period of change in terms of the Aid Effectiveness agenda⁴ and the Australian government's own independent review of the agency. This has led to changes in Corporate M&E practices, guidance and policies with the aim of improving their quality and utilisation and ultimately the efficiency, effectiveness and accountability of interventions. This has been demonstrated through: (1) a renewed mandate and function for the Office of Development Effectiveness (ODE) and (2) the establishment of the Program Effectiveness and Performance division within which sits the Quality, Performance and Results branch, (2) the development of the Quality Reporting system including renewed guidance for Quality at Implementation (QAI), Annual Program Progress Reports (APPR) and independent evaluation (3) introduction of the Comprehensive Aid Policy Framework (CAPF) and associated with this the AusAID results agenda; and (4) the introduction of the proportionality principle to investment design and the attendant investment design quality standards.

² Brief Overview of the State of Performance Management and M&E Systems (15 June 2008)

³ AusAID Indonesia Country Program: ECBP Design 2010-2015 (2 July 2010), p. 2

⁴ This includes fulfilling the Australian government's commitment to the Paris Declaration, Accra Accords, and Busan Partnership Agreements

At the same time, the Indonesia program itself has and continues to go through a process of growth, as the Australian government increases its aid investments in the country. The magnitude and complexity of new initiatives is greater than that which existed at the outset of the ECBP, and coupled with greater demands on the existing human resources available at Post, this is seen to challenge “*the incremental, long term nature of the ECBP.*”⁵

1.2 Review team’s understanding/characterisation of the ECBP

ECBP is a program designed to improve the flow of valid and relevant evaluative information on its programs into the Indonesian AusAID office by improving M&E products (reports and systems). Despite its title, this is not a program to develop M&E capacity in AusAID, but to develop capabilities in the commissioning and management of M&E services. Working on the ‘demand side’ – the commissioning of evaluation – is a strategy for improving products from what is known as the ‘supply side’ (external M&E providers).

ECBP includes a professional training curriculum aligned to a set of performance standards for commissioning and conducting M&E. The training is designed to induct AusAID staff into the skills and competencies for applying those standards by taking them through work-based, problem-solving activities. Developing these skills and competencies—especially in program staff—is intended to generate information of higher quality which, itself, is expected to lead to improved capacity of AusAID to make decisions about the design, conduct and impact of its programs.

The curriculum has a number of distinctive features:

- it takes a behavioural change approach to organisational development⁶ as well as to the development of individuals;
- it has a given sequence of learning (described by a member of the P&Q Unit): understanding of ‘Key Concepts’; from which is derived an understanding of ‘M&E Standards’; then comes learning how to apply the Standards; and finally a return to higher-level concepts;
- it employs what is called a ‘just-in-time approach’ in that a significant element of teaching and learning is tailored to immediate program tasks and dilemmas;
- there is a blend of conventional classroom-based learning with a pre-specified content, learning based on ‘doing’, and learning based on coaching and mentoring;

The ‘work-based learning’ dimension of the curriculum is the use of ‘live’ examples which participants bring with them. Notwithstanding this, most of the professional learning takes place away from the workplace, in classrooms and ‘clinical’ settings (though still in the office – i.e. still in a work context). The focus on the Standards and a behavioural change approach indicates that this is a rule-bound system rather than one based on the development of personal judgement (though that may evolve in individual cases).

The curriculum is voluntary and relies for its uptake on a combination of ‘*persuasive communication*’ and a state of ‘*readiness*’ which, in the case of ECBP, is given by a hitherto absence of support for what are seen to be responsibilities which program staff find challenging⁷. Much of the ‘persuasiveness’ of ECBP rests in the esteem with which its Coordinating Facilitator is held, and the confidence that she is able to solve a wide range of problems AusAID staff encounter on the basis of extensive knowledge of AusAID Indonesian programs. There is a significant element of personalisation in the program.

Though the curriculum is designed and targeted at changed practices among AusAID staff, a secondary impact is intended to be enhancement in the *quality* of reports provided by contracted M&E consultants as a result of exposure to the M&E Standards. By *quality* is meant greater credibility (validity), and this comes from conclusions and recommendations being grounded in evidence or disciplined professional judgement.

ECBP Is a ‘competency-based’ curriculum in that it is designed to build in a certain level of competence among program staff that will guarantee minimum levels of quality and diligence

⁵ ToR for MTR, p.3

⁶ Armenakis, A.A., Harris, S.G. & Field, H.S. (1999) ‘Making change permanent: a model for institutionalising change interventions’ in *Research in Organisational Change and Development*, 12, pp. 97-128

⁷ Ibid

that render practice safe, relevant, defensible and sustainable. The M&E Standards take the place of competency statements in that they show the components of tasks that staff are expected to master as they oversee the production of M&E reports. Competence lies on a continuum between 'novice' and 'expert'⁸ and is generally taken to show the capacity to accomplish work tasks at the minimum acceptable levels of safety and quality.

A critical review of this curriculum strategy follows in Section 4.

There is a sense of 'exceptionalism' in the rhetoric of ECBP. *"This is not just another M&E training session – theory – we know what's out there, we know the reality...In the development world – no-one's interested in the quality of information – this is why AusAID is at the cutting edge"*⁹. The principle of training 'dosage' (*"it takes 10 doses to change behaviour"*) is thought to be unique – *"completely new concept"*¹⁰. Whether or not such claims are justifiable they are a distinctive part of the appeal of ECBP and they have their effects. They are not, for example, suggestive of collaboration or collegialism with other training providers or agencies who are committed to their own approach, but who may also be working on similar fundamental issues.

1.3 Evaluation Objectives and Questions

A key focus for this MTR was to inform and assist the further development of the ECB Program in Indonesia over its remaining course. The ToR for this evaluation articulated an extensive range of questions covering *Relevance* (especially the correspondence between ECB and strategic changes in AusAID and globally); *Effectiveness* (especially the extent to which ECB has stimulated changes in practice at various levels in Canberra and in the Post); and *Efficiency* (especially the performance of management and the resource base). The evaluation team summarised and rationalised them into six key evaluation questions in the evaluation plan that followed suit:

- **Relevance:** Given the rapidly changing context of the AusAID Indonesia Country Program and the Development Pathways strategy, to what extent are the ECB Program outcomes and its current approaches still relevant?
- **Achievement and benefits of ECBP to AusAID:** What perceived value and benefit do varying levels of AusAID staff (program level to senior management) see from their participation in the ECB program (in terms of changed attitudes, behaviours, actions)? What evidence exists for this and how are these gains valued in AusAID?
- **Sustainability:** To what degree has the ECB program become independent of its original developers such that it readily lends itself to replication elsewhere or indeed continuation in Indonesia beyond the tenure of those currently associated with it? What is its likely sustainability by the end of the program?
- **Impact on supply side:** What impact, in terms of changed practices, has the ECB program had on the evaluation providers/industry that supplies AusAID with M&E products? Does working on the 'demand' side complement other 'supply' side initiatives to improve the quality of M&E provision?
- **Integration with AusAID:** How well integrated is the ECB program with the agency's M&E policy¹¹ and other M&E initiatives being promoted and vice-versa?
- **Resourcing:** Is the ECB appropriately resourced given its expected outcomes? Do these outcomes represent value for money?

At the same time, there was a focus on identifying key enablers and barriers related to findings. We return to these evaluation questions in the concluding section.

⁸ See Dreyfus, S E (1981) *Four models v human situational understanding: inherent limitations on the modelling of business expertise* USAF Office of Scientific Research, ref F49620-79-C-0063

⁹ 091014-17

¹⁰ *ibid.*

¹¹ The Performance Management and Evaluation Policy (PMEP) sets out AusAID's requirements and expectations for performance management at all levels of the agency. Under the auspices of the PMEP are a range of performance management tools and processes are prescribed for Indonesia and other programs to utilise, these include; Quality at Implementation (QAI) reports, Annual Program Performance Reports (APPR) and independent evaluations.

1.4 Evaluation Scope and Methods

(i) The team

This was an independent evaluation team comprising two external evaluators (University of Auckland) and one internal evaluator from AusAID (Canberra). The team leader, Professor Saville Kushner, is a long-standing theorist and practitioner of program and policy evaluation, an ex-Regional M&E Officer for UNICEF (TACRO) and an international evaluation consultant. Ritesh Shah is a PhD student and has served as an international evaluation consultant on a number of INGO and donor based program activities in the Pacific, Middle East and Southeast Asia. Complementing the team was Simon Ernst (internal evaluator) who is currently director of AusAID's Quality Performance and Results Branch. Simon has extensive experience in the delivery of development assistance programs and has led and/or participated in a number of program evaluations.

(ii) Methods

The evaluation conducted 56 separate events including approximately 45 group and individual interviews, four issues-focused workshops, five observations of ECBP sessions and two feedback sessions with the P&Q Unit and its associates.¹² More than 80 AusAID staff, including a sample of Senior Management, Unit Managers, Senior Program Managers and Activity Managers were interviewed, as were a handful of M&E providers and representatives from managing contractors. P&Q Unit staff were interviewed on a number of occasions as was the ECBP Coordinating Facilitator.¹³

Two members of the team spent two days in Canberra interviewing program and strategic managers about their experience and judgements of the ECBP and to document the policy context.¹⁴ This was followed by two separate one-week visits to Jakarta by all three team members for further intensive interviews with AusAID staff and partners, direct observation of ECB sessions, and a series of feedback and analysis workshops.

The evaluation used condensed fieldwork techniques¹⁵ the combination of comprehensive coverage with attenuated bursts of fieldwork. The technique is used to 'condense' longitudinal approaches which involve waiting for long periods of time for conclusions about change processes. Condensed techniques are based on the assumption that change (personal, organizational) can be observed as it happens, through asking people to reflect on the circumstances of their life and work and how they respond and adapt.

Fieldwork was designed as an iterative process. The first week in Jakarta was to collect an initial evidence base. This was subjected to analysis in order to identify 'key issues' which were mostly associated with the agreed evaluation questions in the Evaluation Plan. These issues were illustrated with data sampled from the evidence and were supplemented with comment and explanation from the evaluators. The resulting Key Issues Framework (KIF) was designed to lift the analysis to a strategic level of thinking about the program and to engage AusAID staff in a participatory approach to theorizing about the program as it moved forward. The primary purpose of the second fieldwork exercise was to use the KIF to move to 'second-order' data—in other words, more in-depth reflections on the evidence—or data about data. These two fieldwork periods were also distinct in that the first was largely retrospective ('*why did...*', '*how was that...*' etc.) while the second tended more toward the prospective ('*what if...*', '*what might you...*'). This represents a shift from description of ECBP to judgement about it; from operational to strategic thinking.¹⁶ The second Jakarta visit

¹² A full list of the interviews, workshops and focus groups conducted in included in the Appendices. Each session has been assigned a unique identifier code to protect the confidentiality of participants in this MTR. The only identifying details included are the general groups (senior manager, activity manager, supplier, unit manager, etc.) that the individual and/or individuals in each session belonged to.

¹³ The team's log indicates 90 engagement counts, reflecting that some staff participated in interviews or workshops more than once.

¹⁴ A key objective of time spent in Canberra was to better understand the level of integration that the ECBP has with the agency's M&E policy and other M&E initiatives being promoted and vice-versa. Subsequent to this initial visit, a focus group discussion with the management team of the Program Effectiveness and Performance Division (PEPD) was held in early December to discuss key issues that the evaluation team had discovered through fieldwork.

¹⁵ See Simons, H (2005) *Case Study Research in Practice*, London: Sage and Wilcox, B. (1992) *Time Constrained Evaluation*, London: Routledge

¹⁶ See Rist (1990) *Program Evaluation and the Management of Government*, London: Transaction Pubs, p.4 who shows that judgement over what has happened is interactive with decisions about what *should* happen.

involved three feedback workshops with AusAID staff and a further one for contractors and M&E providers to discuss and verify the KIF. The KIF was an analytical tool as well as a data collection instrument.

At the close of the first visit a summary of findings and issues was given to AusAID as a presentation, stimulating a critical review and discussion. At the close of the second visit a further presentation was made reviewing progress and findings against the key evaluation questions in the Evaluation plan, again stimulating critical review and discussion.

The evaluation, therefore, was issues-focused¹⁷, which is to say using the analysis of contestable or controversial propositions about ECBP to stimulate participants to make evaluative judgements – to share control of evaluative analysis with participants. Issues form the basis of discussion and debate. The KIF submitted by the evaluators was used, not as an interim report, but as a data-gathering instrument. The evaluation could also claim to be participatory in that it sought to share control for the interpretations of the evaluation on six separate occasions, in workshops and feedback meetings. Its credibility rests upon *respondent validation*.

Iteration and verification was not confined to feedback sessions. Interviews were also opportunities to test out the evaluation's thinking. On some occasions, for example, an interview might begin with a statement of the story the evaluation was shaping at that time, asking the respondent to start there with a critical response – again, this was a tool for initial data analysis. This guaranteed the testing of evaluation interpretations, but also the ratcheting-up of data to 'second-order' data. The relatively unstructured nature of the interviews was intended to encapsulate and verify/refute the evaluation teams' evolving theories about ECBP. For this reason, no interview guide is appended to this report.

Analysis of all evidence was conducted as a disciplined process, but adopting no instrumental technique (such as coding). It included respondent validation (see above) with the particular use of workshops for verification of the current state of the evaluators' understanding; triangulation (interview data checked against a small set of direct observations); and in-team triangulation and mutual challenge. The latter was based upon a careful assignment of team members to interviews and events where, usually, at least two were present and able to mutually challenge interpretations and check the selection of evidence. Team discussions served as a quality control process for data and interpretation. So, for example, the issue of ECB having a didactic dimension (an observation that was challenged and runs somewhat counter to the values and claims of ECB) passed through each of these analytical filters and was tested in follow-up interviews and in the workshops. A number of observations, proposed conclusions and interpretations of data were either discarded or adapted because the team did not reach a consensus.

All interview and observational notes were recorded systematically into a common matrix that was aligned against the six principle evaluation questions. From this the team could easily catalogue, thematically organise and share internally key quotes or issues raised. Throughout the text of the evaluation report, where direct quotes are utilised, they are taken verbatim from this matrix using the identifier codes for the particular interview or session where it was first stated.

(iii) Limitations of the evaluation

The MTR team initially proposed using 'Most Significant Change'¹⁸ as one of its approaches to engage participants in identifying and sharing pivotal moments of program experience. However, this proved incompatible with a condensed fieldwork schedule spread over two distinct time periods, and the busy schedule of interviewing and feedback that entailed.

The team interviewed AusAID staff, M&E contractors and providers, and a select number of multilateral partners as end-users of the ECBP, but no other stakeholders or 'beneficiary' groups were spoken to (namely the Government of Indonesia). Given the limited amount of time the evaluation team had on each of its field visits, ECBP sessions were observed on an opportunistic basis and the MTR team was able to observe only a limited number of facilitated learning and application sessions during its first field visit to Jakarta.

¹⁷ See Stake, R.E. (2004) *Standards-Based and Responsive Evaluation*, Thousand Oaks: Sage

¹⁸ Davies, Rick (2005). *The 'most significant change' (MSC) technique: A guide to its use*. see: www.mande.co.uk/docs/MSCGuide.pdf

The definition of the exercise as a 'program' evaluation would have benefited from a closer specification as a 'training curriculum' evaluation. ECBP is a curriculum for professional (and organizational) development. Curriculum evaluation makes particular demands on method such as an essential focus on the relationship between teaching and learning, the nature of knowledge, theory of pedagogy and the relationship between training and the operational demands of the related work. The shift of emphasis from a program evaluation to a curriculum evaluation would have necessitated a more sustained process of direct observation of ECBP sessions with follow-up interviews with both participants and facilitators. What is reported here is an evaluation that leans towards a curriculum evaluation.

The evaluation team proposed a case study approach to supplement this approach. With the assistance of the P&Q Unit, and utilising the M&E Standards, three different evaluation products were to be selected as examples of 'improved M&E products'. Selected cases were: (1) one initiative M&E plan; (2) one initiative progress report; and (3) one initiative final evaluation product. The evaluation team then backwards-mapped the chosen product with the processes, systems, and activities that occurred prior to its finalisation to determine the factors that impacted on its observed quality. We conducted interviews with commissioning staff and M&E specialists involved.

In the event the case studies did not meet the selection criteria. One case had no direct involvement with ECBP; one had a highly complex history which overwhelmed any ECBP dimension – and was too controversial to be easily negotiated. In the event, though completed, AusAID stated a preference for not publishing them. One case, in particular, revealed high levels of controversy and confusion over the design of a flagship program. The evaluation consented to this preference, accepting the substantial data loss in favour of reassuring AusAID and not compromising individuals.

We report this as a limitation on evaluation reporting, since case studies feature in our Evaluation Plan. We do not regard AusAID as unreasonably withholding the case studies and we respect that decision. Nonetheless, the fact of losing these case studies has some significance. First, it shows the limits of tolerance for controversy in an administrative organisation. There will always be limits, of course – the question being where they fall. In this case, they fell at the point where the evaluation made transparent program/M&E tensions and complexities through direct and detailed observation.

The other possible significance relates to an issue to be raised later in this report (Section 2.2). Some program staff expressed a need for support with the evaluation of what are talked of as 'non-linear programs' – i.e. programs with emergent designs or unspecified goals (technically, which cannot be affirmed as 'evaluative'). As we suggest later, the methodology designed specifically for these cases has historically been case study – an approach which shifts focus from outcomes to process and context, and which involves direct observation of program interactions. These events, again, suggest limits to methodological possibilities where case studies prove to be sensitive to manage.

Finally, the evaluation team was asked to take into account the transfer of ECBP to Vanuatu (not, however, to its third site, Timor Leste) insofar as resources allowed. Though the team endeavoured to fulfil this request, no additional resources were provided to do so, and for that reason only the ECB Facilitator for Vanuatu was interviewed.

2. Key Evaluation Findings

2.1 Achievement and benefits of ECBP to AusAID

Across AusAID Indonesia program ECBP is valued by staff at all levels, though activity managers were the group most able to articulate concrete benefits and improvements to their work. They spoke of new knowledge, new skills, and frequently of enhanced levels of confidence in managing M&E activities as part of their program responsibilities. They felt that ECBP had given them the ability to: (1) discern what good quality M&E products should look like, and ways in which they could ensure that such products were generated, (2) better articulate their information needs to M&E providers and provide feedback on products received from them, and (3) better understand the purpose, function and role of M&E within the aid management cycle.

What many activity managers appreciate about ECBP is that it deconstructs the mystique around M&E and breaks it down into foundational concepts such as “CFIR” a mnemonic device promoted by ERCB for thinking around four key analytic questions.¹⁹ For many activity managers ECBP was more than training on M&E, but rather provided them a space to think critically and in an evaluative way about the work that they do. Thus, a contribution of ECBP noted by more than one individual, summarised by this quote—“*ECBP has stimulated the need and demand for evidence*”²⁰—was seen as a contribution to the push within the organisation for informed and reasoned decision making.²¹

Managers and senior managers at Post were able to cite a number of the same benefits of the ECBP, noticing this enhanced confidence and competence among activity managers. Senior managers perceived activity-level staff to be the ‘face’ of AusAID to M&E providers, largely because of their extensive involvement in articulating AusAID’s information needs. According to the Minister, the activity level is where the ECBP has been pitched because [citing a recent World Bank study], “*the quality of the [activity manager]...was one of the biggest determinants of whether a program was successful or not...sitting where I am – investing in skills to manage programs, ECB is one of our best tools for doing that – it’s really critical.*” For example one counsellor²² felt that, “*After ECBP I can see a culture change amongst my staff. They now have the confidence and knowledge to ask the right questions when commissioning an M&E product. They now are leading the evaluation process, and have the right resources to draw on.*”

The perceived value of ECB to the organisation did not necessarily equate with active participation in the core facilitated learning sessions that were part of the program, prior to its redesign. Participation data, suggests that activity managers were most involved in such sessions, with unit and senior managers less so.

¹⁹ They are: (1) What is the current situation; (2) What are the factors (both positive and negative) that have led to this situation; (3) What are the implications of the situation; (4) What management responses have been taken or will need to be taken to address the situation.

²⁰ 111410-11

²¹ This is one of the key concepts that the ECBP stresses in all its curriculum materials and facilitated learning sessions, and is an explicit criterion in the M&E standards for all products.

²² 091011-12

Table 1: Rates of participation in selected ECBP sessions by position

SESSION	Counsellors and other senior management	Unit managers	SPM, Advisers and Specialists	Program officers and program managers
Introduction to ECB	33%	46%	36%	57%
Key concepts	53%	57%	49%	83%
M&E systems	27%	32%	22%	62%
Progress reports	33%	21%	4%	52%
Supervision visits	N/A	18%	13%	51%
OVERALL	37%	35%	25%	61%

One explanation given is that ECB sessions do not have direct pertinence to the daily work of senior managers, as much as they do to activity managers, and to a lesser extent, unit managers. Some senior managers appreciated that efforts had been made by the Coordinating ECBP Facilitator to condense key messages and incorporate them into shortened 30-minute sessions that were offered as an addendum to regularly scheduled strategic management meetings. Also valued by senior and unit managers is a more recent initiative of the ECBP to offer ‘higher-level’ training on concepts such as *accountability*, *relevance*, and *sustainability* which offer ways to think about M&E in a more strategic way.

Yet a lack of senior management engagement in ECBP can raise concerns among activity-level staff. More than one activity manager discussed experiences where their senior managers continued to view M&E from a compliance perspective, rather than a part of strategic planning, and dismissed valid issues and concerns that program staff raised on M&E as inconsequential to the ‘real work’ at hand. As observed by one M&E specialist²³, those “...working at program level have a better sense of what to ask for from M&E, because they have been more involved in [ECBP] activities...[middle] managers and above...do not seem to have universally taken up utilisation of standards and use of shared M&E terminology in the same way that [program] staff have...ECBP’s strength is that it helps set a base to work against and leave less to the personal preference and knowledge/lack of knowledge of AusAID staff - but they must participate for it to work.”

One senior manager²⁴ emphasised the importance of greater knowledge-integration between lower- and higher-grade managers as the organisation moves into new futures:

“There’s this traditional thinking in silos...It’s our Unit structures – you know, you have your Unit Manager, SPM or a couple of SPMs then PMs – almost this pyramid structure. The need for us as we move to larger initiatives which means less administration and more thought process around, our structure will shift to more of a diamond shape – fatter in the middle with more thematic capacity and expertise.”

A senior program manager²⁵ suggested that despite valuable and important information coming through from a recent progress report and evaluability assessments, there was still no way for that to be immediately “presented to senior managers two levels up and a reflection process and discussion held,” despite the fact that it could usefully inform current program activity. Some activity managers attributed this to the existence of an institutional culture where highlighting shortcomings of initiative activity, or its design/program logic through M&E

²³ 111019-21

²⁴ 111013-14a

²⁵ 081007-09

was still not readily accepted within the agency – or to the fragmented ('silo') nature of the organisation.

Yet, evidence and logic suggest that the ECBP might cause something of an organisational shift in which higher quality knowledge is increasingly held at the activity level (where the greatest number of staff are located) along with understanding of context and heightened expectation of evidence-based decision-making. For example, in one meeting²⁶, program staff expressed bemusement at the apparent absence of evidence-based arguments underpinning their relevant section of the draft Country Strategy currently in discussion.

Can ECBP help to broker knowledge-based relationships between increasingly empowered (and knowledgeable) activity-level staff and their senior managers? The greater utilisation of M&E products in decision making – with the wash-back effect of higher expectations of strategic thinking in program evaluation by managers – may be less a matter of rational decision making, and more one of strengthening internal relationships in such a way as to permit managers to recognise the knowledge held at the activity level. If anything, ECBP assumes too rational a view of decision *making* - that there is a direct relationship between evidence and decision. It is more realistic to take a view at the strategic level in which decisions are *shaped* by multiple considerations, one of which may well be – and sometimes is - M&E evidence. Nonetheless, it is unreasonable to hold against the ECBP an expectation that M&E products generated at Unit level will drive strategic decision making at sector and country program levels. The management response is to say that there is awareness of this and that in sessions such as *Knowledge to Policy* and *Preparing for and Conducting Effective Policy Dialogues* “we are (and will continue) addressing the limited role that evidence often plays in decision making. This is an issue at organisational level”.

In analysing data on ECBP's coverage across and within various units, it would appear that its reach has been variable. One unit sent 10% of its staff to core facilitated learning sessions, while another sent almost all its members. Most units sent fewer than half their staff – and there appeared to be a preponderance of O-based staff taking up ECBP training opportunities. One counsellor²⁷ reflecting on this data felt that, “*ECBP needs greater push from senior managers across all thematic groups. They need to stress the fact that it provides an important intellectual space to understand and interface with local understandings of program management and development agendas in Indonesia.*”

Several examples were given of the ways in which increased confidence and knowledge about basic M&E principles and AusAID expectations around them, had led to better M&E products, particularly improved M&E systems and evaluations that include ToRs, evaluation plans and the report itself. The gains that are noted were attributed to the ‘just-in-time’ support provided by the M&E help desk (i.e. working on immediate dilemmas faced by staff), and the individualised application sessions in which activity managers could workshop particular M&E products they were working on at that time.

2.2 Relevance to the context

The curriculum of the ECBP is useful for those AusAID programs that have a clear theory of change (ToC). The orientation of the M&E Standards and the ECBP Key Concepts is towards the use of logic modelling and much of the consistency and standardisation promoted by the approach revolves around that—for example, the assumption that a program must be evaluable, and that evaluability is given in part by a ToC and an analysis of causal mechanisms which lead to pre-specified results (Standard 1 – particularly S: 1.6 but see S2.4 for an explanation of ‘evaluability’). Staff faced with M&E demands for such programs are well-served by ECB. Less so are programs that employ what one Unit manager²⁸ called “*non-linear*” approaches to programs – as where AusAID provides direct budget support to a government institution or agency. As he explained:

“ – *our program....is going to be very difficult to monitor, looking at policy changes by governments and looking at research which may not have any influence on policy making....I don't feel I have the expertise and haven't been able to access that through the team*

²⁶ 141110-12

²⁷ 121009-10

²⁸ 151113-14b

yet...[ECBP] was pushing down this other path [to make us] a lot more specific and results oriented....we don't get that sort of support."

It is anticipated that this will eventually be covered by Level 2 ECB training (*Addressing Higher Level Performance Concerns*) though as yet there remain no methodological guides specific to this need – or to resolve the implicit tension between results-based management/ToC and non-linear programming and its evaluation. Nonetheless, the ToC approach is a general orientation of the Agency and, in that sense, ECB is appropriate and 'tailored to AusAID's needs'. The issue of 'non-linear programs' may yet emerge as an important theme across the Agency, and ECB is not yet equipped to respond at the level of method. *"The ECBP follows an 'engineering view of M&E' with inputs and outputs. This presents a very linear and mechanistic view of M&E which may not represent the complexity of development interactions we work in"*²⁹ – i.e. non-linear programming may demand non-linear approaches to M&E³⁰ - evaluation case study was designed for this purpose³¹ shifting focus from outcomes to process and context. This reflects a tension experienced across the international development field: the current emphasis on results/impact measurement comes at the expense of apprehending program quality³²; the emphasis on logical demonstration comes at the expense of evaluative reasoning and argumentation³³.

As the agency moves into a period of intensifying political accountability of aid funding provided by the Government of Australia, ECB emerges also as a timely instrument. It helps to provide evidence and respond to what are expected by strategic managers to be ever-more searching questions of AusAID-sponsored programs from political actors and their constituencies. Staff who have taken advantage of ECB and who are better able to both ensure robust evaluation information and better able to access evaluation products will be an enhanced resource in making programs more transparent and defensible to these audiences.

As identified elsewhere, ECB addresses competencies that are relevant and timely to AusAID. In particular, though the focus of ECB is on M&E, the aim of the program is to develop skills in the management and co-ordination of M&E, not its conduct. This is appropriate and is applied successfully. The Standards translate easily into competency guides and to enabling conditions to perform the competency.³⁴ In relation to the particular challenge of the Indonesian portfolio, especially at this particular time, the management of M&E in order to improve its products is at the forefront of need as a substantial number of programs are up for renewal in the immediate future.

The relevance of ECB to the particularities of the Indonesian program is less certain. Though widely seen as an 'Indonesian product', M&E Standards and Key Concepts are framed in general terms and do not, of themselves, reflect the country context. For example, a common challenge in Indonesian programs is to understand the dynamics of a highly decentralised social planning system with extended networks of institutions and participatory forums and diverse regional cultures. Another, is to learn how to interact with a government administration that is complex, diverse and internally competitive. These are not addressed in the Standards or in ECB other than a general guidance to take account of 'the role of context' (e.g. S: 6.11) and opportunistically in informal interactions in ECB sessions.

As noted by other AusAID M&E trainers, ECB develops low-to-medium-level professional skills. Conversations with strategic managers at Post suggested that new aid delivery models will increasingly demand higher-level skills which go beyond basic competencies. This is confirmed in conversation with program managers who also discussed growing expectations on them to manage partnership relationships: *"ECB needs to evolve with that"*.³⁵ What is often talked of as a 'didactic approach' in ECB is less appropriate to the development of these

²⁹ 181114-15

³⁰ see Patton, M.Q. (2011) *Developmental Evaluation (etc.)* NY: Guilford Press – especially pp.284-288

³¹ Stake, R.E. (2003) *Standards-Based and Responsive Evaluation*, Thousand Oaks: Sage

³² Stake *ibid.*

³³ House, E (1980) *Evaluating with Validity*, Thousand Oaks: Sage and Schwandt, cited in Patton

³⁴ e.g. S: 2.1 'Relevant aspects of the context are monitored' translates into competency statement, 'understands how to assure that relevant aspects of the context are monitored' – and S: 6.7 'There is a good balance between operational and strategic issues' translates into, 'understands how to distinguish between operational and strategic issues'. In terms of enabling conditions, for example, S: 4.10 'Adequate time has been allocated for document review and document appraisal' creates space for competencies associated with facilitating the review and appraisal of M&E products.

³⁵ 10109-10

higher-order skills (see Section Four for a discussion of this issue). The core reliance on Standards have a reported tendency to be used rigidly, despite clear advice that they should be treated as flexible guidance.³⁶ This is not helped by the practice of using a checklist and giving a score to individual M&E products for their levels of compliance.³⁷

In a sense, ECB is a victim of its own success in that its high profile in the office and the gains it has made in supporting staff lead to greater demands made on it. There is a case for the P&Q Unit to play a more proactive and outreach role in the office—conducting needs assessments and seeking recruits. One of these demands that emerge in the evidence is an extension for P&Q Unit into a knowledge management function in respect of M&E. What people are seeking is archival access to M&E products as exemplars³⁸, for cross-sector generalisation and for ‘lessons learned’, as well as timely information on M&E providers and models. Lodging M&E reports on the Web is seen to be a useful source, but does not solve the issue of access.

2.3 Sustainability

The sustainability and the Institutionalisation of the program are overlapping, but separate issues. The sustainability of the program beyond its ‘scaffolded’ period may or may not depend upon its institutionalisation. There is a consistent view among senior management, for example, that it remains appropriate for the Coordinating ECBP Facilitator and Coordinator roles to be taken by external consultants on grounds of cost, agency commitment, and a lack of internal M&E expertise. That notwithstanding, other development agencies take different institutional approaches to building and sustaining a robust M&E skills base within their organisation.³⁹

Institutionalisation at the Agency level

The reliance of ECBP on current and future external consultants remains both a strength and a weakness. It is a strength, in those three terms noted above; it is a weakness in that (a) external consultants are free to move on when they wish, (b) they tend to come with personal views and approaches that may or may not be contestable, and (c) a hand-over from one external consultant to the next is more likely to lead to discontinuity rather than continuity, as a result of the intellectual independence of the consultant.

At present there is no strategy for sustainability or development other than a commitment to find an eventual replacement for the current ECBP Facilitator for Indonesia. This would need to be replicated in each country that were to adopt ECBP. This is not unfeasible, but there remains a question concerning the balance between the country contextualisation of ECBP and whatever degree of consistency is required for it to be owned by AusAID. At present, the combination of the Jakarta-based P&Q Unit with the IET Desk in Canberra provides that consistency. Full institutionalisation would involve the governance of ECBP across the agency by the Quality, Performance and Results (QPR) Corporate branch. The outcome, therefore, would be that a Country Office (Indonesia) develops a model (ECBP) to a high level of specification and hands it over for Centre-Periphery diffusion. The model comes complete with comprehensive guides and supporting documentation—that documentation is edited for application as an Agency instrument. Country Offices are invited to propose modalities and personnel for adoption, overseen by the QPR Corporate branch.

Institutionalisation at the individual level

At present the ECBP is a voluntary program which, with current levels of take-up that are detailed in Sections 2.1 and 2.6 is adequately resourced. Given the intensification of

³⁶ 131010-13

³⁷ As observed by the MTR team in an application session during its visit, but also reflected in comments of M&E providers spoken to, as well as the way in which M&E products are ‘scored’ into ‘meets’, ‘partially meets’, or ‘does not meet’ vis-à-vis the baseline and follow up to baseline assessments.

³⁸ Whilst the original design for the ECBP suggested that a series of case studies for the variety of M&E products would be compiled as exemplars for staff at Post, this turned out to be a difficult, time-consuming and taxing exercise for P&Q, according to several members of the Unit. For this reason, only one case study was fully completed.

³⁹ For example, UNICEF has an in-house network of M&E officers at Country, Regional and H/Q levels with a continuous program of capacity development through conference attendance, publication, membership of evaluation associations and contact with independent M&E specialists. They, too, work to Standards (e.g. UNICEF Reporting Standards, UNEG Norms & Standards). DfID has a semi-independent body of evaluation ‘Commissioners’ who procure and publish independent evaluations of DfID programs to which DfID is expected to publish responses.

accountability pressures on AusAID and the growing complexity of partnership arrangements there is a case for a management expectation that staff at activity level participate in a version of ECBP extended to embrace reflective practice and relationship management. This is especially the case for A-based staff for whom the nuance and contextualised nature of local interactions will be largely unfamiliar and for which they may have little experience to prepare them. AusAID invests considerable confidence in interactions involving relatively junior staff in potentially sensitive exchanges with government counterparts, civil society leaders and multilateral partners. This is particularly so in relation to M&E which can be an especially sensitive field, not least where enhanced evaluation activity gets better at revealing shortcoming. It is to some extent surprising that such training has not been in place for staff who carry weighty responsibilities with often little salient experience.

In this case it would be appropriate for ECB to feature in the Individual Performance Plan (IPP) as a method of formal review of staff capabilities in managing AusAID 'front-of-house' interactions. This would allow for the personal development action planning that would embed ECBP into reflective practice. Such a measure is not proposed for accountability purposes, but as a means for AusAID to have formal feedback on the changing nature of work and emerging training needs in this increasingly sensitive 'front-of-house' field of operation.

2.4 Impact on the supply side

Effective engagement of the M&E supply side – in many ways, the key to the program's success - has been claimed to be a weakness of the ECBP thus far, articulated in both this evaluation's ToR and the P&Q Unit's own progress report from 2011. Though AusAID remains shy of calling this a capacity development program for M&E providers, this is effectively what it is. The overall purpose of the program is to improve the flow of M&E 'products', and there are just two routes to this goal: finding M&E providers with more appropriate skills to deliver desired products; enhancing the capacity of existing providers. ECBP aims at the second, and the principle means is by making clearer its expectations with the use of the Standards, and enhancing the commissioning process through a work-based training program.

Nonetheless, engagement with M&E suppliers does not feature in the EOPOs and there is no 'theory of change' for ECBP which would make the link explicit between EOPOs and enhanced capacity on the supply side⁴⁰. A common complaint expressed in ECBP contexts is of the paucity of M&E consultant expertise in this region; on the other hand, M&E providers, often with extensive experience, talk of their expertise sometimes being dismissed or disregarded. What emerges from the data is occasional discomfort in relationships between activity managers and M&E providers. It is worth standing back for a moment to take into account what is happening on the broader front.

Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E), was originally conceived as an *external* and independent service to the official administrative system and public sectors—developed, provided and refined mostly in the university sector.⁴¹ It has since become increasingly internalised into that same administrative system—no less in the case of international agencies⁴². One of the more significant influences on this movement was the *Rothschild Report*⁴³ which introduced the 'customer-contractor' principle—i.e. the administrator is the customer; the evaluator is the contractor (in AusAID terms, the 'provider'). Rothschild's aim was to bring research and evaluation more closely into the policy sphere, to align it with the needs of the administrative system. Rothschild also introduced the notion of 'the informed customer' – i.e. as the official agency contracts with a 'provider' it should do so with enough understanding of the service (M&E) to be able to specify it.

This is one way of seeing the ECBP: as a process to produce the 'informed customer' among AusAID program staff, exposing AusAID program staff to enough information about M&E to be able to specify their needs as 'customers'. Though the providers remain outside the

⁴⁰ It is not being sardonic to note that though ECBP has no explicit ToC and does not, therefore, qualify for an evaluability assessment, it has been possible to conduct this program evaluation of it. This merely confirms the frequent injunction in ECBP guidance materials to treat the Standards with flexibility.

⁴¹ House, E. (1993) *Professional Evaluation*, London: Sage

⁴² See Volkov, B.B. & Baron, M.E. (2011) *Internal Evaluation in the 21st Century*, New Directions in Evaluation #132, AEA Monograph, San Francisco: Wiley

⁴³ The Rothschild Report (1971). *A Framework for Government Research and Development*. London: HMSO

agency, the function itself is internalised as staff develop the capacity to stipulate the content and scope of evaluations.

The 'informed customer' principle, however, creates an inevitable tension, and we see this repeatedly in interactions between activity managers and M&E providers. AusAID seeks to empower its staff to control the agenda of evaluation, but still values the independence of evaluation providers.⁴⁴ For their part, evaluation providers express a desire to respond to AusAID information needs, but seek to protect their reputation and commitment to their own independence. Evaluation independence and administrative control of evaluation agendas are not easily reconciled. For example, the reported increase in confidence about M&E after participating in ECBP is noticed by providers, but not always in a positive way. One M&E contractor⁴⁵ felt that:

"Part of the problem is that [Activity Managers] don't have the 'on-ground' experience in how to manage a program so quite often they adopt quite simplistic thoughts about how you should be responding or doing something. While they may be expressing they have the confidence...that's being expressed in ever-increasing micro-management...."

For their part, M&E providers—many who embody advanced skills and deep understanding of AusAID and its processes—have not been able systematically to address 'supply-side' preoccupations of the Agency. This is due, in part, to the individualistic, uncoordinated and sometimes competitive nature of the practitioner community. This is a 'cottage industry' with no institutional base and no coherent, professional infrastructure.

It is also to be noted that ECBP Standards do not take into account that AusAID is only one audience for M&E reports – sometimes not the most immediate. Contractors and partners have at least as pressing information needs from M&E – they are responsible for delivering results⁴⁶. AusAID staff can interrupt the flow of important information in other directions.

Even so, ECBP has scored gains in engagement with the supply side, not least the widespread, positive reception by M&E contractors of the ECB Standards and an acknowledgement that they bring consistency and transparency; as well as more recent efforts by P&Q Unit to 'socialise'⁴⁷ M&E specialists on developments of ECBP. While some M&E providers felt the standards did not specify anything novel or unique in terms of what quality M&E constitutes, the fact that there was now a clearly articulated set of expectations and benchmarks allowed "a shared and common language"⁴⁸, around M&E products produced for AusAID Indonesia. This was important given that, "In the past there was a lot of wasted time and energy spent trying to figure out what [AusAID] wanted in terms of M&E products. The standards provide a clear benchmark in terms of AusAID expectations in terms of focus, size, content, and presentation [of M&E products]."⁴⁹ The perceived structure and clarity of standards also led some specialists to use them in work they were doing in other contexts for AusAID.⁵⁰

Again, that it was left to AusAID to develop the Standards indicates the limitations of a fragmented and individualistic (i.e. non-institutional) provider constituency.

While interactions between program staff and providers were often seen as a productive experience, those tensions mentioned above surfaced from time to time as activity managers became more assertive in their demands to providers (i.e. 'more 'informed' as 'customers'). Some providers talked about "lack of respect"⁵¹ for the professionalism and experience of M&E specialists – a not untypical 'Rothschild' effect. This may also partly be due to a reflection of the tone in which ECBP documentation has portrayed the supply side as

⁴⁴ "Administrators find evaluation too valuable to be left to outside agencies and too dangerous to be removed from administrative control." House, E. (1986) 'Internal evaluation' in *American Journal of Evaluation*, 7(1) pp.63-64

⁴⁵ 101017-18

⁴⁶ 101016-17b

⁴⁷ We note in passing the risk of a condescending implication of the term 'socialise'. It does not, for example, admit the possibility of mutual learning or co-construction.

⁴⁸ 111016-17a

⁴⁹ Ibid

⁵⁰ As of late 2012, most country programs did not have a similar set of M&E standards in place for their contractors and providers, and AusAID Corporate had not yet published a set of agency-wide standards for M&E products. This is expected to occur sometime in 2013.

⁵¹ 111014-15b

inadequate and failing to meet the standards.⁵² The sense from some contractors and M&E specialists is that the Standards had given activity managers, if anything, too much confidence to question the technical expertise or judgement of those they had contracted, and led to a situation where AusAID felt the need to react to anticipated failure rather than proactively rehearse their information needs clearly and trust their providers to do a good job. More than one provider⁵³ talked of interacting with as many as half-a-dozen program staff, all of whom felt the need to make a comment on an evaluation plan or an evaluability assessment, though this is matched with AusAID staff facing a diverse and undifferentiated myriad of M&E providers.

One senior manager⁵⁴ acknowledged heightened sensitivities over professional judgement, noting that the *“questioning of one’s work can be seen as threatening by providers.”* Her recommendation was that *“[the providers] need to be adequately prepared for the questioning of their work that ECBP now demands,”* through more regular communication with P&Q Unit regarding the standards and the key concepts that ECBP stresses. Indeed, the Coordinating ECBP Facilitator was observed in one application session stressing to a program manager that it was critical that when feedback on the progress report that had been assessed against the standards was provided, it be done through conversation rather than just as a series of demands.

One implication of this analysis is that ECBP should pay more attention to the nature and quality of the *interactions* that must precede and follow the drive for improved *products*. The M&E standards themselves and much of the ECBP’s individualised support (i.e. application session) focus on the product. The unintended consequence is that in some instances the standards are used as a checklist and interactions are focused on compliance and production rather than mutual learning and exchange, especially where Rothschild-type tensions over customer-contracting prevail. A good example of what can be suppressed by contractual relationships was described by one activity manager⁵⁵ who reflected on her experience of working with P&Q Unit on a recent MTR:

“...when we took it to P&Q they were most concerned with the quality of the product. Admittedly it was very poorly written, and did not meet the standards, but for us as program staff, we had taken the information presented in the MTR and already made significant changes to the direction of our activity. The information in the MTR was catalytic for us in terms of changing our thinking about what we were doing. For us this was more important that the quality of the M&E product, in terms of its written expression, but the [P&Q unit] seems to focus more on the product.”

An area of M&E provision where the ECBP has had little impact thus far has been with multilateral agencies, despite the fact that they are significant supply side partners in Indonesia. A range of AusAID staff, members of the P&Q Unit, and the Coordinating ECBP Facilitator all shared concerns regarding the lack of effective engagement with multilaterals on their utilisation of the M&E Standards, or more broadly, considering AusAID’s specific information needs from M&E in the products they submitted. For activity managers from AusAID who are the direct intermediaries in discussions around M&E products, this had led to frustration. One manager⁵⁶ recounting a recent progress report that was submitted by one UN agency felt that, *“their reports come in multiple formats with a lot of repetition...they use their own template and cannot adopt to AusAID requirements”*, and similarly reflecting on an M&E plan submitted by the same partner, *“[it did] not comply with the ECB guidelines, there were no End of Program Outcomes or indicators, it was very general.”*

Interactions with multilateral agencies remains problematic for AusAID, partly, it seems, as a result of conflicting expectations. One senior manager⁵⁷ noted, *“I have had really tough negotiations with the [XX agency] and [YY agency] about AusAID information needs—these*

⁵² For example, the ToR states that, *“Networks that allow access to methodologically competent Monitoring and Evaluation Advisers have not been adequately identified or utilized. The particular skill sets that are still required are concerned with methodological expertise to design and carry out robust monitoring and evaluation activities. As a result the quality of M&E products has not yet met expectations.”* This is a view that was contested by some M&E specialists.

⁵³ 101017-18; 101016-17b

⁵⁴ 151113-14

⁵⁵ 101015-16

⁵⁶ 161013-14

⁵⁷ 151110-11

needs have been articulated but it does not mean that we have got traction with these organisations on meeting the...standards." Part of this is due to the nature of the relationship that AusAID has had historically with multilaterals, where expectations around accountability have been much less stringent.

However, many multilateral partners have their own M&E guidelines and standards. ECBP Standards have their own features but they join an already crowded market of advocates for evaluation standards, and, for the most part (as noted above) the Standards are not seen as distinctive in relation to others. There is not a great deal to distinguish them from, for example UNICEF Report Standards or UNEG Norms and Standards. One implication is that there might be an acknowledgement that the important factor is recognition of ECBP Standards in the absence of others – but an acceptance that (multilateral) partners might make a case for following other published guidelines to the same desired effect. The question is how ECBP provides a basis for entering into constructive collaborations with multilaterals and other partners in enhancing the validity of M&E.

Finally, the evaluation team notes two key constraints in working with M&E suppliers. The first is that though the language of an 'industry' is frequently used, this is, at best, a 'cottage industry', highly fragmented, ideologically diverse, much individualised in small-scale units and with no professional or institutional linkages and geographically dispersed. One activity manager⁵⁸ felt that *"It is difficult to bring our contractors up to 'standard'—there is so much they need to change that sometimes we don't know where to start."* Securing behavioural compliance with the standards can be (and is being) accomplished on a case-by-case contractual basis, albeit at the price of the tensions described above. However, this does not, of itself, generate capacity for professional renewal among M&E specialists, methodological development or a discourse around development evaluation that is present in some other regions. For example, in Europe, Latin America and Africa (and the USA) the quality of evaluation provision - and its extension as contexts change – is supported by the presence of evaluation associations and by institutional hosts of evaluation, mostly universities and policy research institutes. These allow for the integration of practice with teaching and theorising about evaluation. There is no such strategy or resource in Indonesia which is possibly unique among large nation states in not having a national evaluation association. It is worthy of note that at present AusAID is supporting an institutional strengthening program for policy research institutes and is developing another for tertiary education. UNICEF has been active in supporting the International Organisation for Co-operation in Evaluation (IOCE), a global network supporting the development of professional associations for evaluators. One M&E specialist argued that there was no alternative to institutional capacity development for M&E in Indonesia.⁵⁹ Their view was that AusAID does not get value for money out of employing international consultants to conduct evaluations. *"They should use me to mentor Indonesian nationals doing the evaluation...build home-grown talent"*.

The second constraint is that ECBP reinforces a contractual/client-based relationship with M&E providers (on the Rothschild principle), rather than moving it towards one that engenders stronger partnership as is now required under the aid effectiveness agenda⁶⁰. This can threaten the independence of evaluation in the way described by the 'informed customer' principle, but also has the effect of encouraging compliance at the 'minimum' level. Nor does it cast interactions with M&E specialists as collaborative and as learning opportunities. Relationships founded on contractual, essentially economic, terms are not helpful in resolving the tensions that inevitably arise when an agency seeks to control an evaluation agenda while continuing to value the evaluator's independence. ECBP is ideally placed to build collaborative relationships with M&E specialists of diverse methodological persuasions, by including their experience in facilitated learning sessions, help-desk functions and application sessions – it is, to an extent, surprising that this resource has not been exploited.

⁵⁸ 111015-16

⁵⁹ 121201-30

⁶⁰ Some of these issues are shown in the EP M&E system case study that is appended to this MTR.

2.5 Integration with AusAID

“The danger with devolution is that everyone is doing what they want...it is not an efficient way to run an organisation like AusAID....for ECBP to be sustainable, it needs to be taken up by Corporate rather than seen as just an Indonesia Post project. There must be a core group in Canberra who understand and value ECBP”⁶¹

Institutional linkages

While the importance of maintaining strong linkages between the Indonesia program, the ECBP and Corporate are widely acknowledged, most informants suggest this is, as yet, only happening to a limited degree.

‘The ECB program will ensure that any tools or standards that are developed are approved by either the Office of Development Effectiveness or the OPS as trials, and any lessons learned are fully described and shared with these offices in Canberra.’⁶²

The ECBP documentation, as quoted above, acknowledges the importance of Corporate engagement but the Coordinating ECBP Facilitator and the Canberra based performance and evaluation manager both report a concern that ECBP has not been sufficiently well understood by the Corporate Division. This has been mitigated with the assignment of a QPR manager to this evaluation team.

A number of PEPD informants reflected that Corporate and the Indonesia program were lacking a shared language of quality and monitoring and evaluation; that translation was required to and from ‘ECB-ese’ and that ECBP was not anchored in agency wide policy and practice. Deliberative questioning of relevant staff, both past and present, reveals that despite intentions, PEPD has not been consulted on the development of ECBP tools, materials and standards.

Corporate and Indonesia program staff alike agree on the need to maintain and strengthen engagement. Indonesia staff query the sustainability of ECBP if effective linkages with Canberra are not maintained; noting that AusAID is now a very different organisation from when the ECBP first began with a stronger emphasis on evidence apparent across the organisation. PEPD staff generally affirm the goals of the ECBP and report that *‘Other programs tend to want access to what Indonesia has produced....In this regard, PEPD needs to take to Indonesia’s work and ‘catch-up’ (provide to) the rest of the agency.’⁶³*

The roll out of ECBP to the Vanuatu and Timor Leste programs has further highlighted the need for stronger Corporate involvement. As additional ECBP materials are developed and a growing community of ECBP practice emerges, PEPD perceives there to be some risk of these programs ‘running off on their own’ with ECBP consultants setting the agenda rather than AusAID itself.

In relation to these issues and perceptions the role of the Performance and Evaluation Manager for the IET Branch located in Canberra is critical. As one Indonesia program staff member⁶⁴ put it.

“The role and function of [this person] is absolutely vital to ensuring that we remain connected and relevant to developments with M&E requirements and guidance on that end. We absolutely need that person, to give us accurate, up to date and appropriate advice based on Canberra as there is a reliance on this individual to convey messages through the pipeline.”

Integration with Agency-wide processes and directions

The evaluation heard conflicting messages of how the ECBP does/does not support agency wide M&E processes and tools. Some staff indicated that the ECBP had assisted them to prepare better Quality at Implementation (QAI) reports while others, including a mid-level manager⁶⁵ said *“I sense a disconnect between the ECB and the mandatory P&Q processes”*. A review of ECBP documentation reveals clear messages targeted at improving the quality of QAI reports. However ECBP support for related processes is less apparent, *“...it is not cost-*

⁶¹ 101016-17

⁶² AusAID Indonesia Country Program, Evaluation Capacity Building Program, 2 July 2010

⁶³ 271109-10

⁶⁴ 151113-14

⁶⁵ 121009-10

effective to ask P&Q Team members to read, study and comment on a large number of QAIs (for larger posts); and second, it does not build the confidence and capacity of the QAI authors who are simply responding to the comments or instructions of others⁶⁶. While this statement is made in relation to QAI Self-Discovery learning Workshops it could also be read as challenging the practice of QAI moderation as generally occurs in other parts of AusAID. As noted elsewhere in this evaluation, the ECBP primarily focuses on making improvements at the initiative level. Its influence on higher-level M&E products such as APPRs is less apparent.

There is some evidence of ECBP serving to filter or mediate Corporate guidance on M&E. A workshop with Indonesia program staff revealed the tendency of some staff to look to the ECBP to provide guidance around all performance and quality matters, including on recent policy developments such as those relating to initiatives requiring improvement. It was evident that these staff either do not look to Corporately maintained guidance on the AusAID intranet site or expect the ECBP to provide a more detailed interpretation of it.

The review team also noted some dissonance at Post around high-level policy positions, particularly the Comprehensive Aid Policy Framework (CAP-F). *“ECB and CAP-F are moving in the opposite directions in terms of what they hope to achieve with M&E and program effectiveness.”*⁶⁷

The ECBP plans to develop two additional products, namely Country Program and Sectoral Strategies and Country Program Monitoring and Evaluation Strategies. Corporate guidance exists for (Sectoral) Delivery Strategies and is soon to be released guidance for Performance Assessment Frameworks (i.e. Country Program Monitoring and Evaluation Strategies). Ideally the Corporate areas who own these business processes might be consulted in the development of related ECBP derivatives, and the two integrated.

AusAID response to a draft of this section:

It is not clear to what extent the Indonesia program would not be adhering appropriately to corporate QPR and relevant guidance. QAI and APPR have been conducted over the last 5 years and Indonesia program is consistently getting good feedback on the usefulness and quality of these products. Indonesia program have adhered to the PMEP guidance and contributed to the updated version (released during the conduct of the MTR). It is also useful to distinguish between the program ECB and the P&Q (desk and post) staff. Since P&Q staff was quite involved in discussion on how to deal with initiatives requiring improvement to ensure efficient use of resources and use the opportunity to enhance the use of QAIs more broadly. Guidance on QAI moderation is just being developed by the corporate area and the approach taken by the Indonesia program up until now is a reflection on what has worked in terms of using program staff time efficiently (the quality of Indonesia program QAIs is reported to be among the better ones in ODEs annual spot checks). Guidance how to work with and report on the CAPF is also being developed and the first comprehensive overview to the Indonesia program was given by the ADG for Program Effectiveness and Performance Division during [a] visit to Jakarta.

2.6 Resourcing

A detailed investigation of the value for money provided by the ECBP is not a straightforward task and given the array of other evaluation questions being addressed by the MTR only a limited exploration of value for money has been provided here.

No attempt has been made by the review team to monetize the value of the ECBP’s potential or realized outcomes. However it has been possible to quantify the level of resources being provided to the ECBP. Calculations on the coverage of the ECBP have also been undertaken. This has enabled a simple comparison of the ECBP against the resource requirements and coverage of the theory of change and monitoring and evaluation training modules offered through the Aid Management Pathway. While this highlights the relative levels of investment

⁶⁶ AusAID IET and Pacific Branches, Evaluation Capacity Building Program – Learning Opportunities and Syllabus 2012 (Updated), p. 18.

⁶⁷ 10109-10

inherent in these two different capacity building approaches, it does not compare the relative outcomes achieved by the two.

ECBP coverage

The following table presents the Indonesia Program P&Q Unit's own analysis of participation in the ECBP since inception.

Table 2: ECBP gross participation rates⁶⁸

Overall coverage per core module	Target population	Number of persons attending	Percentage attending
Introduction to ECB	154	71	46%
Key Concepts	154	99	64%
M&E System	154	61	40%
Progress Report	154	41	27%
Supervision Visit	154	43	28%
Total (person attendance)	770	231	30%

These figures provide an indication of the degree of coverage the ECBP has achieved but do not reveal the full picture. The evaluation revealed instances of the ECBP standards and guidance being used without individuals actually attending ECBP training sessions. These records also do not reflect much of the one-to-one responsive assistance provided by the P&Q Unit and the ECB Facilitator. Nevertheless senior managers at Post expressed some surprise and disappointment that participation rates were not higher although noting staff churn may be a factor.

The evaluation also undertook analysis derived from the comprehensive database maintained by the P&Q Unit. This analysis presented in the table below reveals that after a peak of participation in 2011 the number of AusAID staff attending ECBP modules in the past year has declined (32%) and a decline in the number of staff attending more than two sessions is also evident (30% down from almost 65% in the previous year). This suggests that the majority of staff only formally engaged with the ECB for a few hours over the last year.

⁶⁸ These figures do not include staff that have since left the Indonesia program and as noted below there are other participation measures which are not captured. The vigilant reader will notice that these figures are at variance with figures giving similar coverage in Section 2.1. This is due to (a) slight variance in the way numbers are calculated, and (b) percentages in Section 2.1 figure are averaged to arrive at the right-hand column here.

Table 3: Intensity of ECBP participation over time⁶⁹

Number of sessions attended by each participant	7 or more Sessions	6 Sessions	5 Sessions	4 Sessions	3 Sessions	2 Sessions	1 Sessions	Total – Participants	Total – Sessions x Participants
Since October 2011	1	0	1	7	14	24	29	76	159
October 2010 – October 2011	8	7	14	18	25	20	20	112	381
October 2009 – October 2010	4	4	3	9	7	24	28	79	200
Since inception	45	12	15	15	16	26	24	153	722

ECBP Resourcing

Resourcing dimensions of the ECBP include consultant time and costs associated with the Coordinating ECB Facilitator and the direct staff costs associated with those AusAID staff who have a significant role in implementing the ECB.

The Indonesia program has contracted in a Design and Evaluation Capacity Building Adviser to provide up to 200 days input per year, for two years with a further extension option. This is close to the equivalent of one full time position, although this is not exclusively dedicated to the ECBP and AusAID is not currently drawing down on the full allocation of days available. The Indonesia program estimates that in the last year approximately 89 days of consultant input were provided to the ECBP which includes some support to the Vanuatu and Timor-Leste programs as the current coordinator. Inputs over the last year have included 5 trips to Jakarta within inputs also in Canberra and from home base. The adviser's contract stipulates D4 premium rates, the maximum payable under AusAID Adviser Remuneration Framework (ARF). Indonesia program staff estimate the total cost of consultant inputs over the last 12 months to be in the order of \$169,000 inclusive of travel costs.

Direct AusAID staff inputs to the ECB have been estimated by the relevant staff and managers to equate to 5% full time equivalent (FTE) of the Program Director's role (EL2), 65% FTE for the Canberra based Performance and Evaluation Manager (EL1), 10% FTE for the Unit Manager (OB7) and 90% FTE for the M&E Facilitator (OB5). Combined these positions represent a commitment of 1.7 FTE in AusAID staff resources to the ECBP. This is a lower level of resourcing than that applied in earlier years when the P & Q Unit in Indonesia also included an A-based position.

AMP Resourcing

Under the Aid Management Pathway AusAID has contracted the services of a trainer to design and deliver a 1.5 day module in program logic and a 2 day module in monitoring and evaluation. Over a period of 18 months the trainer has been contracted to deliver 16 training sessions in Canberra (11) and selected posts (5). Contract details have been used to calculate the approximate annualised consultant cost associated with this training program which are in the order of \$287,000 inclusive of travel costs.

Direct staff inputs to the AMP have been estimated by the relevant manager to equate to 0.75 FTE across a team of 5 staff. This figure also includes a modest allocation for AusAID co-facilitators who have supported delivery of training modules during the second half of this training program.

Detailed participation records were not available to the review team although credible estimates were provided. A significant factor bearing on the cost effectiveness of the AMP modules is vacancies associated with staff that have enrolled, but then do not attend.

⁶⁹ Table includes both current and former Indonesia program staff.

Cost comparison

The evaluation conducted an approximate comparison of the cost per participant associated with the two different approaches.

Table 4: AMP-ECBP cost and resource comparison

Approach	Number of participants	Number of sessions delivered	Contact hours ⁷⁰	Consultant costs per participant	Number of participants per 1.0 FTE position
ECBP ⁷¹	76	159	318	\$2,223	44
AMP ⁷²	225	11	4,725	\$1,275	300

Note: Contact hours for the AMP are calculated on the basis of 225 staff having each attended 21 hours of training (225 x 21 = 4725). Contact hours for the ECB are derived from training records (see table 3) – ECB modules are generally 2 hours in length. Some staff attended multiple sessions. The number of staff x the number of session x 2 = 318 contact hours. The two approaches are quite different as many ECB sessions are based on a facilitator ratio of 1:1 or 1:2 whilst the AMP ratio is more typically 1:12 or 1:15.

This table demonstrates that the ECBP has required a larger investment of finances and staff time than the PEPD-delivered approach to M&E capacity building. Some of the ECBP's proponents argue that the ECBP is not well resourced in relation to the scale of the Country program it serves; while this may have some validity relative to its expected outcomes, in organizational terms it represents a substantial but valued investment. What should also be taken into account is that ECBP achieves beyond its stated outcomes and provides professional and organizational development in an area of immediate need.

Value

The above comparison of costs should not be confused with an assessment of value. As outlined elsewhere the ECBP has made progress against its end of program outcomes and is highly valued by Indonesia staff and managers at all levels. Unlike the AMP, the ECBP represents a sustained, longer-term approach to building M&E capacity which embodies principles of repetition, just-in-time engagement and tailored support. This has resulted in a level of achievement that could not be expected of the one-off training currently provided under the AMP.

⁷⁰ Contact hours = number of hours of training delivered multiplied by the number of participants

⁷¹ Figures are for the period October 2011 – October 2012

⁷² Figures pro-rated based on AMP manager's estimate of 300 staff attending 3.5 days of training delivered across 14 sessions over period of 16 months.

3. Adequacy of Progress

3.1 Credibility of M&E products

“When I first arrived, the attitude around M&E was ‘I’ve got to do another evaluation...let’s just get it done’. We’d copy and paste the DAC standards, find whomever we could (i.e. consultant) to do the work and pay him/her a lot of money, and just get it out of the way. After ECBP I can see a culture change amongst my staff. They now have the confidence and knowledge to ask the right questions when commissioning an M&E product. They now are leading the evaluation process, and have the right resources to draw on. This helps AusAID make sure every dollar that they are putting into their programs count, and helps to build greater transparency within AusAID.”⁷³

The ECBP outlines a set of monitoring and evaluation standards which help define quality expectations and what constitutes credible information. These standards have recently been peer reviewed by Professor Patricia Rodgers and adapted by AusAID for use across the agency. As such the review team did not engage in a detailed assessment of the standards but does concur that these are a practical and sound means of defining quality of information requirements and broadly reflect the values underpinning other evaluation standards in the global field. The baseline assessment conducted by the P&Q Unit in 2011 reveals a generally low level of achievement against the standards. This assessment is consistent with the findings of other reviews examining the quality of AusAID M&E.⁷⁴

Over the course of this MTR, the P&Q Unit has been undertaking a follow-up assessment of performance against the standards. This assessment is not yet complete but unanalysed data on evaluation products was made available to the review team.⁷⁵ Around ten examples in each category (terms of reference, evaluation plans and evaluation reports) were sampled and ratings of ‘met’, ‘partially met’ or ‘not met’ applied to each of the 85 standards.

Table 5: Progress against evaluation standards

Standard	Baseline (2009)			Follow-up (2012)			Overall Improvement
	MET	PARTIAL	NOT MET	MET	PARTIAL	NOT MET	
TOR	52%	8%	39%	70%	12%	18%	39%
Plan	10%	9%	81%	48%	25%	26%	93%
Report	50%	20%	30%	60%	17%	23%	17%

2

Note: This presents the % of all sub-standards which were assessed as being met. So for example, for TORs there are 33 sub-standards. A sample of between 6 and 13 TORs were examined against the sub-standards (not all TORs were reviewed against all sub-standards). For this group if every TOR met every sub-standard it was assessed against then this would result in 347 instances of the sub-standards being met. The follow up assessment revealed that 182 sub-standards were met or 52% an ideal score of 347.

The table suggest that some progress has been made on the standards relating to evaluation TOR and plans (which were largely absent prior to the ECB). However, with a small sample size of this nature (many of these percentages relate to n=<10 and even <5) we must be cautious in using percentage scores. These are, at best, indicative and cannot be a basis for generalisation (for example, to suggest that there has been a X% improvement in one item). Nor do they provide a strong basis for cross-item comparisons (say, ToR performance is improving more than reporting performance). These scores are arrived at through reading

⁷³ 091011-12

⁷⁴ For example, Bazely, P. (2011) *Study of Independent Completion Reports and other evaluation documents*. Canberra: AusAID Office of Development Effectiveness.

⁷⁵ Unfortunately data to guide an assessment of improvements in the quality of information arising from M&E systems and progress reports was not provided to the review team.

reports and making judgements. There is no procedure for determining attribution of improvement to ECBP.

Yet data also suggests, that less progress has been made in terms of improving the quality of evaluation reports themselves. According to P&Q documentation, and interviews with members of the P&Q Unit and the Coordinating ECBP Facilitator, much of this is attributable to issues on the supply side—a lack of methodological and evaluation expertise to deliver against the standards (a view not supported by the evidence of this evaluation)—though one M&E specialist and seasoned AusAID consultant⁷⁶ said that this was more attributable to a change in the AusAID approach to which providers had not had sufficient time to adjust. Above all, these data affirm findings from earlier which suggests that where ECBP has had its greatest impact thus far is with internal AusAID staff. ToR's are products crafted 'in-house', whilst evaluation reports are products that are largely done independent of AusAID involvement until the review stage.

In relation to the 'credibility of reports', the baseline follow-up study proves to be ambiguous. On five key indicators there is no suggestion of progress (this time we will see the data in raw scores rather than percentages):

Indicator	2009 Baseline			2011-2012 follow-up		
	Met	Partially met	Not met	Met	Partially met	Not met
Basis of findings/conclusions communicated clearly	7	3	3	7	2	2
Full analysis of causative factors underlying...findings are provided	6	4	3	6	1	4
Possible to trace key issues from description to analysis to conclusion	8	2	3	5	2	4
Recommendations supported by text	10	2	1	6	3	2
Recommendations feasible	8	5	-	8	-	3

There is, nonetheless, a logical inference that increased exposure to ECBP and the Standards is likely to lead to enhanced validity in M&E products over time and dealing on a case-by-case basis. Whether ECBP is the most effective means for accomplishing this (compared, for example, to a national institutional development approach) is a more complex issue. That complexity has three dimensions:

- (i) it is inefficient in the long-run to work repetitively with individuals where the problem (it is said) is one of a *culture of practice* that promotes low validity standards. Behavioural change approaches are not designed to change professional cultures;
- (ii) it is not sustainable, in the sense that application of a rule system (Standards) promotes a *status quo* and does not, of itself, stimulate the reflection and intellectual exchange that forms the basis of methodological development. An example of this is the need in the office for non-linear (non-rule-bound) approaches to the evaluation of programs whose design is emergent;

⁷⁶ 221107-30

- (iii) it is not culturally responsive, in that national skills are always likely to be overwhelmed by international skills and further delay imposed on the emergence of distinctively Indonesian cultural approaches to evaluation.

3.2 Evidence influences decision making

“ECB establishes an important first step, a level of technical skills and knowledge around M&E, but to lead to its EOPO around better informed decision making it needs to also work on the relationships that underpin aid delivery because that is what matters at the end of the day.”⁷⁷

The evaluation heard multiple accounts of the increasing demand for evidence that has arisen as a result of the ECBP. This has also created an expectation that higher level, strategic decision making is also influenced by analysis of good quality information; to the extent that some staff were critical of decisions being made without an adequate evidentiary basis.

Informants relayed to the review team at least seven examples of how better quality M&E had helped improved both aid initiatives and development outcomes. One AusAID officer⁷⁸ reflected *“It is a lot of money involved. We will need to ask the Director General for an additional \$30 million to do this and we need to be able to present the evidence”*. Another⁷⁹ indicated *“..by tidying up the TOR you ask the right questions, by getting answers to the right questions we are able to make changes to the program”*. In each of these cases informants had not only used M&E data to inform decisions, but had specifically used the commissioning processes to ensure required information needs were addressed.

These success stories are offset to some degree by the frustration expressed by other staff who have observed missed opportunities in this domain. A cited example was the ill-timing of evaluation studies with findings not being available in sufficient time to inform operational decision making; *“we need to get better at overlapping the design of future programs and the evaluation of existing ones”*.⁸⁰ Another shortcoming observed by informants was that the management response process has not been incorporated into the ECBP standards. It is the *“missing step in the ECB, it is one thing to improve quality of M&E products, but another skill is how to communicate these messages to the management”*.⁸¹

The ECBP maintains a principal focus on M&E at the initiative level with fewer if any standards and processes targeted at improving the quality of data, analysis and decision making at the thematic, sector or country program level. As reported previously, the evaluation did not uncover concrete examples of M&E information substantively shaping such strategies. Indeed discussions with senior management explored the complexity inherent in decision-making at this level and acknowledged that while data can be a useful input, decisions are also influenced by many other factors.

Evidence from the P&Q Unit’s progress report suggests that integrated M&E utilisation practices are not uniform across the agency.⁸² It states that, *“significant challenges remain in ensuring M&E information is used. Some...still see M&E systems as a milestone, rather than an integral program management tool. QAIs are seen as a compliance reporting process, rather than a tool to manage program performance. Designs are not drawing upon the previous body of evaluation work.”* For the unit, the aspiration is that senior managers are planning for M&E well in advance within their strategic plans, and thinking about how M&E can meet management information needs on current and future program directions. Yet, according to one P&Q Unit member⁸³, such practices depend to a large extent on the engagement senior management have had with formalised learning opportunities within ECBP thus far, and varying degrees of pressure that have come from the Minister on the importance of the ECBP in helping to institutionalise a culture of reflective practice in program activity at all time.

⁷⁷ 181114-15

⁷⁸ 111410-11

⁷⁹ 13119-10

⁸⁰ 111410-11

⁸¹ 151110-11

⁸² pg.6

⁸³ 111013-14b

While a foundation has been established at the initiative level the ECBP may need to specifically adjust its focus to integrate M&E feedback at the sectoral, thematic and country program decision-making processes if this program outcome is to be fully achieved, taking into account what was said earlier that strategic decision making is unlikely to be driven exclusively or even substantially by M&E evidence alone. However, this has more to do with ECBP brokering improved communication between activity-level staff and strategic management. This will require ECBP to engage more with the *utilisation* of monitoring and evaluation information, rather than just its generation.

3.3 Institutionalisation of the Performance and Quality Unit

In conducting this review the review team spoke with many AusAID staff at all levels of the organisational hierarchy. From these interactions it is apparent that the Jakarta P&Q unit is integral to the running of Jakarta Post. Staff place great value in the client service approach that the P&Q team employs, and would seek to have it expanded. The evaluation had discussions with staff about reinvigorating the M&E focal points as an alternative form of support and expansion, but this drew little interest. The view of many staff was that dedicated P&Q resources are required, and that M&E focal points could further strengthen the work of P&Q rather than substitute for it. Although there is perhaps scope for the P&Q unit to become more active at higher levels of the program architecture the review team believes the unit to already be adequately institutionalised.

3.4 The Performance and Quality Unit is harmonised with IET Performance Unit in Canberra.

At present this is assured on the basis of personal relationship and commitment between P&Q Jakarta and the Performance and Evaluation Manager for IET Branch in Canberra. However, this is not sustainable in itself, especially with the departure of the IET Performance Manager. There is, at present, evidence of responsibilities for tasks between and amongst the P&Q Unit and the IET Performance and Evaluation Manager being indeterminate. There is also evidence, in speaking to staff at Post, that key messages and developments at Corporate have not been shared effectively through the IET Unit with relevant counterparts in P&Q Unit Jakarta. What will assist harmonisation is a clear specification of complementary roles and an assignment of tasks according to role-specification.

4. Curriculum evaluation: Positioning the ECBP as a professional development approach

The ECBP is one among number of approaches to professional development – one which, as this report shows, has its own strengths. Much of the strength lies in the fact that it is rule-bound system. The Standards provide a fixed point of reference for good (competent) practice – a set of benchmarks against which behavioural outcomes (‘doing things differently’) can be measured for compliance with a pre-specified identification of what counts as quality.

Alternative approaches are judgement-based rather than rule-bound – i.e. the use of situational judgement to decide what counts as quality rather than making reference to a Standard. This is the approach claimed by the Clear Horizon (CH) training organisation which provides M&E capacity development exercises to AusAID as well as to other Australian government agencies. The evaluation did not observe CH training, but did interview its Director (also a high-level AusAID M&E provider). What follows, therefore, is not verified.

Clear Horizons training engages participants in the joint construction of a model of the ‘product’ that is the target of the training – say, a log-frame, a complete M&E framework – in order to develop autonomous problem-solving and judgement capabilities. A behavioural change model is based on the principle of ‘a learned response to a given stimulus’ – i.e. adapt your behaviour according to given rules and principles under certain conditions. There may be side-effects, such as raised levels of confidence in problem-solving - but these are not directly addressed by the teaching and are incidental.

The intention is that the engagement of participants in the creative aspect of a task, and sharing intellectual control of the task with participants works directly on those qualities of situational analysis, personal judgement and discernment that make up the complex business of decision making. ECBP retains intellectual control in its coordinating facilitator who also takes the lead in problem solving. ECBP – through its pedagogical approach and through the sheer proximity of the P&Q Unit – can be more practically engaged, but is more likely than *Clear Horizons* to create a dependency relationship in which participants learn to refer themselves to the Unit for assistance. One Counsellor⁸⁴ put it: “*too much dependency on [the ECBP Coordinating Faciliator], whilst it is okay now in the long run probably we need to do something about it, at the moment when you are not with her, immediately you feel the gap.*”

Another model would be one of the more widespread approaches to professional development known as *Reflective Practice*.⁸⁵ This involves critical self-reflection both *in* and *on* action – i.e. reflecting on practice while doing it.

*“RP improves practice by developing the practitioner’s capacity for discrimination and judgement in particular, complex, human situations. It unifies enquiry, the improvement of performance and the development of persons in their professional role.”*⁸⁶

Where the content of the training experience in ECBP is given by the Key Concepts and Standards, in RP the content is the practice of the participant. The facilitator has the role of supporting the practitioner in critically analysing their practice – for example, through the intensive review of decisions and events, theorising about how they might have been approached differently. In RP the practitioner builds a repertoire of experiences which they can draw from to inform their own judgement. This approach works directly on developing autonomous and independent judgement in the practitioner. RP is probably the approach of choice for work-based learning, since reflection happens *in* the workplace and during practice, though it can be debriefed in the classroom.

It is in this sense that, though ECBP works with real and immediate dilemmas (where it can), it is not strictly a work-based learning approach. Learning happens through reflection *on* action, rather than *in* action; quality criteria are derived ‘elsewhere’ than in the work (i.e. may or may not coincide with what is demanded *in situ*); and the control of judgement lies with Facilitators, not with practitioners.

⁸⁴ 131109-10

⁸⁵ Schon, D. (1987) *Educating the Reflective Practitioner*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass

⁸⁶ Elliott, J (1991) *Action Research for Educational Change*, Buckingham: OUP, p. 52

In a 'reflective practice' approach staff learn how to critically reflect on their practice and interactions they are engaged in – largely through the study of exemplary cases and through reporting on their practice and dilemmas they face. Where ECBP (and behaviourist approaches) see a separation of knowledge and action (i.e. knowledge is generated in one place to be applied in another) reflective practice integrates the two by making practice itself a form of enquiry – typically, proponents of reflective practice talk of reflection 'on' and 'in' action⁸⁷. Such an approach may be particularly suited to the high-level of intellectual challenge of program and interaction management, and to the typically high intellectual abilities of program staff. A characteristic curriculum activity would be developing a refined and evidence-based sense of 'what is *my* approach to practice'. Key curriculum dimensions and 'higher-order skills include:

- Situational judgement in which rules are adapted to fit circumstances;
- Teaching of enquiry skills to research practice;
- The analysis of context and contingency (how one thing depends on another and how context determines that);
- Study of exemplary cases to refine analytical skills;
- Coping with uncertainty and emergent challenges;
- Developing a personal theory of action.

Which of these approaches is successful and most suited to the AusAID challenge and changing contexts?

As AusAID shifts the basis of its partnerships from conventional contractors – whose relationships are managed technically, as it were, through contract specification – to multi-laterals and government, so the demands of relationship-management become more challenging. These are more assertive, sophisticated organisations, often with their own M&E systems in place and with their own information needs and cultures. These interactions become more demanding of autonomous action than those with conventional private sector contractors with whom there are frequently long-standing relationships and familiarity.

To date, the ECBP shows evidence of success – as noted earlier, at low-to-medium levels of skill development. Participants attest to higher levels of confidence and capacity and their managers speak of their having greater confidence in activity-level staff. These levels of success and enhanced confidence are founded on the Standards as a stable point of reference, and a knowledge that staff can refer to the P&Q Unit for support. The curriculum appears to be effective and relevant to the immediate task of bringing greater consistency and predictability to interactions with M&E partners. In terms of content, the Standards provide a *bridge of understanding* and a *common vocabulary* for activity managers to interact in an informed way with M&E providers. In this sense, the curriculum has been well judged and appropriately resourced.

Nonetheless, the evidence suggests that (a) higher levels of confidence are based, not necessarily on enhanced personal capabilities, but on *extrinsic* factors such as the promise of support from the P&Q Unit; and (b) that these successes come up against limits – as when activity managers resort to bringing in alternative M&E 'experts' to arbitrate or to bolster their position (see case studies in the Appendix); and as when providers sometimes say that activity managers are more confident, but not always more able to articulate their information needs. These limitations are consistent with a behaviourist/competency-based approach which instils skills and capabilities into the practitioner which work *under familiar, predictable and known circumstances*, but which are fragile to unpredictable or unstable circumstances. Behaviourist approaches can be effective where tasks are easily specified, coincide with the breaking down of tasks into component parts (as in a competency framework) and are predictable. *"In attributing competence to individuals across a whole range of practices which call for situational understanding and intelligent action, one is not primarily making predictions about what they will do in a given range of contexts. The complex and dynamic character of*

⁸⁷ Schon, D (1987) *Educating the Reflective Practitioner*, SF: Jossey Bass
Elliot, J. (1991) *Action Research for Educational Change*, Milton Keynes: OUP

*the unstructured situations which have to be handled requires that...an appropriate response has to be left open to the discretion of the practitioner.*⁸⁸

The other two approaches, and especially Reflective Practice, are more suited to coping with uncertainty and complexity in 'unstructured situations' since they go beyond developing task-specific skills to developing generic skills such as independent judgement, discrimination, discernment and situation analysis – in fact, the ingredients of the high-level decisions and relationship-management challenges increasingly faced by activity managers who have to use their 'discretion'. ECBP trains staff to cope with known situations, but less so in dealing with uncertainty.

The competency-based approach, in particular, can be thought to have a short half-life – effective up to a point. Behavioural competence lies on a continuum from 'Novice' to 'Expert' – the development of expertise is a journey into situational understanding and mastery of context - not dissimilar to the Workforce Development Plan continuum of 'awareness-operational-expert' progression. Competence lies somewhere along that journey (see Appendix Five for the Dreyfus model).

Novice → Advanced Beginner → Competent → Proficient → Expert

Behavioural competence covers those components of tasks (e.g. application of the Standards) that can be specified, repeated and 'ticked-off'. The more challenging the task, the more the practitioner moves beyond easily specified components and into the realms of judgement and discernment. *"Quality does not refer to a tangible end-product that conforms to pre-specified functional standards. Rather it refers to the human values realised in social transactions between people...to grasp the evaluative significance of the situation."*⁸⁹ This is the area between 'competence' and 'excellence'. It is into this area that we interpret strategic managers in AusAID as saying that the agency and activity managers are increasingly finding themselves, one in which the AusAID practitioner is part of a *"culture of evaluative thinking"*⁹⁰ and, as one Activity manager⁹¹ put it, *"thinking evaluatively"* rather than just applying Standards.

⁸⁸ See footnote 69, p. 122-123

⁸⁹ See footnote 70

⁹⁰ 151110-11

⁹¹ 151110-12

5. Analysis, enablers and barriers

The ECBP has accomplished a great deal and proved its value to staff from activity level up to strategic management level. It is making good progress at mid-point towards meeting its program outcomes, though this may require adjustments to the program and some adjustment to the outcomes. Strategic management regard the program as providing value for money in terms of up-skilling staff in a key, front-of-house role of managing partnerships and interactions with implementers. There is some evidence – not yet robust – that the use of the ECBP Standards generates improved M&E products (reports, evaluation systems, progress reports) and the Standards themselves have been well-received by M&E providers and contractors. These accomplishments relate to the original context of the program. As the context shifts, so different demands are placed on ECBP – particularly (a) the need to develop higher-level, judgement-based skills; and (b) the need for improved interactions between activity-level and strategic management in reflecting on evaluation evidence.

Evident from discussions with a number of stakeholders within AusAID Indonesia is the strong management support at Post that ECBP enjoys. The active and involved interest of the Minister in ECBP, and more broadly engagement in M&E processes, has been important to the program's successes thus far, and has greatly contributed to a stronger level of organisational motivation and a supportive organisational culture for ECBP to take hold in. Similarly, counsellors and unit managers who saw value in ECBP and the improvement of M&E quality were critical to creating a time, place, and space for their staff to participate in ECBP. When they engaged actively in understanding the ECBP Key Concepts and theory of change, there was evidence to suggest that this contributed positively to an enabling environment where the link between M&E, credible evidence and decision-making was supported and fostered through dialogue and discussion.

A significant amount of the value of the ECBP is located in the knowledge, skills and reputation of the Coordinating ECBP Facilitator. Given that the program has largely been conceptualised, advocated for, and promoted by this individual, this is perhaps not surprising. Staff at all levels of the organisation saw this facilitator as having the necessary technical expertise, intellectual rigour, field experience, reputation/clout with providers, and facilitation skills to add significant value to the program in its current form. In turn she was a well-utilised resource and wellspring of information for AusAID staff and the P&Q Unit, whom often sought her advice on both technical and pedagogical aspects of the ECBP. But as noted in the section on institutionalisation, this presents some challenges to ECBP as it moves forward and goes through a period of expansion to other country programs. The current facilitator signalled to the evaluation team that she would like to hand over the role of Indonesia Country Program ECB Facilitator when her contract expires next year, but given that so much of the ECBP is associated with this individual in Indonesia, there are risks to this moving forward. Evident from discussions within P&Q Unit, and more broadly with senior management is that AusAID will need to continue to rely on this type of expertise for ECBP to remain successful.

Also clear from discussions with both AusAID staff and suppliers is the general relevance that such an intervention has to the current context of the organisation, and of development activity more generally. In an era where there is greater demand for quality M&E due to a need to understand the efficiency, accountability and effectiveness of aid investments, ECBP helps to reduce some of the mystique that has traditionally surrounded the field of evaluation. The evaluation team heard from one sector where ECBP has helped them to usefully respond and critique elements of the draft Indonesia country program strategy that is currently in development. But where ECBP is seen to be of greatest value to staff at all levels is its contextualisation in the daily work and activities of AusAID as an organisation, and Indonesia Post in particular. This sense that ECBP is 'purpose-built' for AusAID Indonesia (despite the evaluation team's assertions that this may be somewhat deceptive) contributes greatly to it being seen as generally responsive, relevant and effective, particularly to activity level staff.

ECBP distinguishes itself to other training opportunities offered to AusAID staff by labelling itself as a behavioural/organisational change process. Much of this depends on the continuing engagement and utilisation of core messages that the ECBP promotes by individuals across the organisation. As the ECBP's own documentation notes a key to the ECBP's own success

is staff having sufficient exposure to these messages⁹² - “dosage” is the preferred term. Yet, analysis undertaken by the evaluation team suggests that as of late, many participate in one or two learning sessions before their interest wanes and they ‘drop out’ of the ECBP. Insufficient engagement, either through repeated participation or non-participation amongst AusAID staff in Indonesia is a barrier to the achievement of AusAID’s EOPO’s. The evaluation team feels that this matter may account for many of the issues noted earlier in the report, namely tensions between junior and senior staff over M&E information needs, utilisation of the standards as a checklist rather than a set of guidelines internally and with M&E providers, and the continuing view of M&E as serving accountability rather than organisational change functions. The recent redesign for the ECBP syllabus is meant to address some of these issues, but still requires all participants to go through three compulsory sessions—Introduction to the ECB Program, Introduction to the M&E Standards, and The Key Concepts—before entering into the Core Experiential Learning Cycle. ECBP continues to wrestle with the issue of how to effectively engage all staff given the voluntary nature of participation in the program.

Related to this is the question of whether ECBP has the right mix of interest, expertise and skill within P&Q Unit at present to effectively support the work of their contracted Coordinating ECBP Facilitator. ECBP participants were quick to note the difference in the quality of support and facilitation skills of the external facilitator versus the internal AusAID team that supports her efforts. A perception by many program staff that learning sessions facilitated by P&Q Unit were “overly didactic” appears to be a comment on the pedagogical style of facilitators rather than the content. P&Q Unit staff, by their own admission, noted that they were still struggling to be effective facilitators of adult learning, particularly when such interactions involved more junior P&Q staff interacting with senior managers within the organisation. These, however, are sophisticated pedagogical skills that are required and we conclude that a barrier to ECBP success is lack of training in professional development and professional learning for P&Q Unit staff (notwithstanding extensive training they receive in the delivery of ECBP).

At the same time, the success or failure of ECBP is in large part influenced by an organisational structure that is capable of supporting this, as well as an organisational culture that fosters rather than impedes such efforts.⁹³ Evidence suggests that particular aspects of the organisational culture and organisational structure impede ECBP in achieving some of its longer-term outcomes. This includes the ‘churn’ of A-based staff. Many of these individuals are concentrated at higher levels of the organisation at Post, where associations between M&E and AusAID’s information needs must be strengthened. Yet, the constant churn of A-based staff makes gaining traction on this front may be difficult, given that it takes time for such individuals to find their feet at Post and as one senior manager noted, “come to understand what they still don’t know.” The added concern is that A-based managers who leave their units and sections may take with it the support they have extended to ECBP working with its activity staff. Addressing this issue of churn, which is and will continue to be a factor within the organisation must be better considered.

This also includes the aid programming cycle. For units that are managing older initiatives, the imposition of M&E standards on poorly conceived designs or M&E systems is often difficult. For this reason, ECBP is likely to have greatest traction on programs that commence their life founded on an appropriate and well-reasoned design, and that is founded in some of the core tenets of the ECBP principles. Additionally, the traditional notion of evaluation activity occurring at particular points in a program life cycle needs to be challenged for information to usefully feed effectively into decision making processes. According to many managers interviewed, as well as the P&Q’s own progress report, the timeframe between the commissioning of an evaluation project, and the implementation of management responses is often too long for it to be a formative exercise.

⁹² See for example Dawson, S. (2010) Institutionalising High Quality Monitoring and Evaluation Systems or AusAID IET and Pacific Branches (2012) , Evaluation Capacity Building Program – Learning Opportunities and Syllabus (Updated)

⁹³ In this discussion, the evaluation team draws on Lusthause et. al (2002), *Organizational Assessment: A Framework for Improving Performance*. IDRC: Ottawa.

6. Conclusions

(i) Summative statement:

ECBP can be seen against the back-drop of similar efforts in other regions to improve the quality of M&E practices and products through institutional means⁹⁴. For the most part, the issue of demand for evaluative information running ahead of capacity for its supply is met elsewhere by stimulating the emergence of evaluation associations and networks and by developing institutional capacity in the public sector⁹⁵. ECBP may be unique in (a) seeking to enhance capacity on the 'supply' side by extensive work on the 'demand' side; and (b) confining its activities to the private sector. On the evidence of this evaluation this is a legitimate initiative with numerous merits and some evidence of success – it is welcomed by most of those who come into contact with it, and it fills a gap in terms of transparency and mutuality of expectation.

On its own, however, and without an external strategy to professionalise a disparate evaluation community, it is unlikely to succeed. Raising client expectations is not a coherent or effective strategy for improving professional practice. This requires direct engagement with practitioners through the medium of a practical, meaningful and substantive discourse around the practice itself. The current isolationism of ECBP prevents rich engagement with a cadre of sophisticated regional M&E consultants. Experience in other regions of the world shows that the history and emergence of program evaluation as both a discipline and a practice – mostly through collective and institutional development⁹⁶ - has to be revisited for each new context.

The aspect of ECBP that shows even greater evidence of success is its providing opportunities for the professional development of program staff. ECBP, on a daily basis, exposes the lack of sustained impact of induction and training for staff in key front-of-house roles, managing large resources in often highly sensitive situations. There is a sense in which ECBP – in providing opportunities to focus and reflect – would be effective no matter whether its focus were on M&E or on something else. The simple and recurring theme – that ECBP exposure and the presence of the P&Q Unit raises the confidence of staff - cannot be minimised. The reciprocal case, that so many highly competent staff in key roles appear to lack confidence or institutional support to fulfil the demands of that role, is a matter of concern and for critical reflection on the induction training they do receive. Nor do we say lightly that program staff (some have said to us, especially O-based staff) feeling newly empowered by their professional development in ECBP and apparently developing a common allegiance to evidence-based practice, over the medium-term represents a shift in the nature of the organisation – a 'fattening' of the knowledge and competence base at its lower reaches.

So, in its time and against its initial aspirations the ECBP has been successful in that it has demonstrated the capacity to instil confidence and competence in program-level staff and has created at least an expectation of for the flow of more valid evaluation information into the Indonesian office. A different level of demand for skills and professional development, however, is overwhelming this success, and ECBP now faces the challenge of responding to a changing context.

(ii) Key Evaluation Questions summarised:

- **Relevance:** Given the rapidly changing context of the AusAID Indonesia Country Program and the Development Pathways strategy, to what extent are the ECB Program outcomes and its current approaches still relevant?

The ECBP approach remains relevant and can be adapted for agency-wide application, following a critical consensus review and editing of Key Concepts, Standards and Guidance. The overall professional development approach may benefit from adapting to focus less on M&E products and more on partnership interactions. In this regard, ECBP teaches low- to medium-level skills while emerging forms of AusAID intervention and partnership working increasingly demand higher-level skills associated with the development of independent judgement and coping with uncertainty. The Standards

⁹⁴ See, for example, the case study on evaluation capacity development in Niger and Africa by Marco Segone on pp. 40-41 of Mathison, S. (Ed.) (2005) *Encyclopedia of Evaluation*, Thousand Oaks: Sage

⁹⁵ See URL for the International Organisation for Co-operation in Evaluation: <http://www.ioce.net/>

⁹⁶ See House, E. (1993) *Professional Evaluation*, Thousand Oaks: Sage; Norris, N. (1990) *Understanding Educational Evaluation*, London: Kogan Page; Alkin, M. (Ed.) (2004) *Evaluation Roots*, Thousand Oaks: Sage

themselves are in keeping with other such instruments in use across the family of development agencies and would be appropriate for AusAID to be associated with.

- **Achievement and benefits of ECBP to AusAID:** What perceived value and benefit do varying levels of AusAID staff (program level to senior management) see from their participation in the ECB program (in terms of changed attitudes, behaviours, actions)? What evidence exists for this and how are these gains valued in AusAID?

The ECBP fills a significant gap in the preparation and professional development of staff who lack experience in carrying significant levels of responsibility and representing the agency to its partners and contractors. This is especially so among activity managers and program staff up to Senior Program Manager level. Activity managers frequently talk of enhanced levels of confidence generated by the training. The P&Q Unit's work in promoting the ECBP – especially through its help-desk provision – is valued by staff who are responsible for generating and managing M&E products. Unit Managers consistently attest to their own enhanced levels of confidence in those of their staff who have received ECBP training. Senior and strategic managers have varying levels of commitment to their own engagement with the program, but place a high value in it for their junior staff.

- **Sustainability:** To what degree has the ECB program become independent of its original developers such that it readily lends itself to replication elsewhere or indeed continuation in Indonesia beyond the tenure of those currently associated with it? What is its likely sustainability by the end of the program?

The Indonesian program has not yet found independence from its original developers and now faces the dilemma of finding a replacement for the Coordinating Facilitator. There is a high degree of personalisation in the program, which has not succeeded in producing a 'generic' model. To some extent this is due to the fact that AusAID has not brought other M&E or professional development specialists in to collaborate with the program and to provide succession planning. The P&Q Unit has earned the respect of the office and can carry much of the responsibility for delivery of the ECBP, but they are limited as a resource, do not have the experience and skill in M&E, and are not yet ready to cope with the changes and adaptations needed for ECBP to continue in new and emerging aid delivery contexts. Up-scaling ECBP to other parts of AusAID may be the opportunity to create the generic..

- **Impact on supply side:** What impact, in terms of changed practices, has the ECB program had on the evaluation providers/industry that supplies AusAID with M&E products? Does working on the 'demand' side complement other 'supply' side initiatives to improve the quality of M&E provision?

This relates most immediately to the ECBP Standards which have been widely welcomed by M&E specialists as providing fixed reference points for mutual expectation. There is some evidence that staff can and do use the Standards and the P&Q Unit to secure enhanced 'supply' of M&E products, though evidence of 'enhanced credibility' of M&E products in the baseline follow-up exercise is inconclusive. The ECBP at present does not have a coherent strategy for capacity development on the supply-side and it is unlikely that the Standards alone will have a sustainable impact on the supply of valid and enhanced M&E products.

- **Integration with AusAID:** How well integrated is the ECB program with the agency's M&E policy and other M&E initiatives being promoted and vice-versa?

There is no robust evidence that the ECBP feeds directly into enhanced internal reporting in the form of APPRs and QAls – though there is evidence that the program is effective in improving the quality of ToRs and Evaluation Plans. ECBP is yet to be integrated with the workforce development plan or the M&E training programs delivered under the auspices of the AMP. Nonetheless, this MTR itself, including the assignment of an internal evaluator to the team, provides a solid foundation of insight, understanding and informed judgement that would allow for a subsequent appraisal of these integration opportunities.

- **Resourcing:** Is the ECB appropriately resourced given its expected outcomes? Do these outcomes represent value for money?

ECBP is appropriately resourced for its current level of operation and staff engagement, and senior management in the Indonesia Office are satisfied that the program provides value for money. Though the ECBP costs, in crude cash values, substantially more than the AMP, it offers a wider palette of benefits than is suggested by a training program. In the Indonesia Office ECBP operates in an area of significant need and sensitivity and provides a rare opportunity for program staff to acquire skills specific to their responsibilities.

Appendix 1: Summary of interviews, workshops, focus groups conducted as part of the MTR

Code utilised in evaluation report	ROLE/NUMBER OF INDIVIDUAL(S) SPOKEN TO					
	SM Indo	SM CBR	UM	SPM	PM	Supplier (Managing contractor, M&E specialist, or multilateral)
24909-12					1	1
24913-14		2				
24914-15		1			1	
2590830-0930		1				
2591130-12		1				
2591330-1430		1			2	
081010-11	1					
081013-14	1					
081015-16						
091009-10						
091010-11			1			
091011-12		1				
091014-17						
10109-10			2	1		
101010-11			1	2		
101010-11			3			
101013-14				2		
101014-15			1	2	5	
101015-16				3		

Code utilised in evaluation report	ROLE/NUMBER OF INDIVIDUAL(S) SPOKEN TO					
	SM Indo	SM CBR	UM	SPM	PM	Supplier (Managing contractor, M&E specialist, or multilateral)
101016-17a						
101016-17b						1
101017-18						1
101018-19						1
111013-14a	1					
111013-14b						1
111014-15a	1		2			
111014-15b						2
111015-16					7	
111016-17a						1
111016-17b						
111019-21						1
121008-09						
121009-10					3	
121013-15						
121015-17						
131010-13						
151014-15	1					
151016-17			1			
161009-10			1			
161013-14						4
12119-10	1					

Code utilised in evaluation report	ROLE/NUMBER OF INDIVIDUAL(S) SPOKEN TO					
	SM Indo	SM CBR	UM	SPM	PM	Supplier (Managing contractor, M&E specialist, or multilateral)
121114-16					7	
13119-10	7					
131113-14			1	1		
14119-10	1					
141110-12			2	1		
141113-14			1		1	
141114-16						6
15110830-0930	1					
151110-12					6	
151113-14a	1					
151113-14b				1	1	
161110-12	1	1	1		1	
161113-14						1
191113-14						1
191115-16						1
201108-09			1			
221107-30						1
271116-1630						1
261121-22						1
TOTAL NUMBERS INTERVIEWED⁹⁷	17	8	18	13	34	24

⁹⁷ It should be noted that some of the individuals were spoken to more than once. For this reason the total numbers of distinct individuals spoken to in each category is less than the number indicated here.

Appendix 2: Terms of Reference for the ECBP MTR

Terms of Reference

Mid-Term Review (MTR)

Evaluation Capacity Building Program (ECBP) – Indonesia Post

August 2012

A. Background

The Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID) will undertake an independent mid-term review of the Evaluation Capacity Building Program (ECB Program). The ECB Program is an institutional change program embedded in the Indonesia Country Program and implemented by the Performance and Quality Unit. The program aims to improve the quality and utilization of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) products so that credible information will be available to inform decisions, and M&E processes will be more efficient.

The Indonesia Country Program is the largest bilateral program within AusAID. Current levels of expenditure are around AUD400,000,000 per year across ±75 initiatives/projects. There is approximately 160 staff overseeing the design, delivery, and monitoring and evaluation of programs. The Evaluation Capacity Building Program was formally established in the Indonesia Country Program in 2009. This 5-year Program aims to sustain institutional performance in the use of credible information to improve aid effectiveness and efficiency of monitoring and evaluation specifically, the end-of-program outcomes of the ECB are:

- a. Information that is generated by M&E systems and activities have a credible basis;
- b. Credible information informs and influences decision making at the initiative, sectoral, thematic and country program levels;
- c. Effective mechanisms for integrating lessons from the ECB program and integrating Corporate developments into the ECB program are operational;
- d. The Performance and Quality Unit in Jakarta is fully institutionalized;
- e. The Performance and Quality Unit is harmonized with IET Performance Unit in Canberra.

The ECB program builds incrementally, and has multiple entry points to bring about institutional change. Interventions address behaviour change from a range of stakeholders within AusAID (the demand side) and from the evaluation industry that supplies the quality M&E products (the supply side). This focus on sustained behaviour change requires the program to apply the theory and practice of institutional and individual behaviour change. It goes beyond a simple training program that utilizes standardized curricula, and aims to bring about higher level performance of the Country Program to diagnose and respond to unanticipated or more complex problems relating to performance management. It is designed to be practical and responsive to staffs' immediate needs in their normal work routines. Technical support and guidance is provided by the P&Q Unit team⁹⁸ in response to demand, and not according to a pre-planned training schedule. High level facilitation skills are required for this approach to be successful. The Program also addresses other important areas to bring about sustained performance change. These are related to AusAID and private sector incentive systems, and policy engagement within the Indonesia Country Program, other Country Programs and AusAID Corporate areas.

The ECB Program has recently been expanded to include the Vanuatu Country Program as an example of the approach operating in a small Country Program with a staff complement of about 18.

B. Key Issues

⁹⁸ One full-time and one half-time ECB facilitators in Jakarta, one Evaluation Manager in Canberra, and a part-time contracted Monitoring and Evaluation adviser who provides technical support on M&E issues as well as the design and implementation of the Evaluation Capacity Building Program itself.

The ECB program has been progressing with the improvement of performance on the demand side. Several AusAID personnel are beginning to change practices, and meet performance expectations of the ECB program. However, the ECB program has not yet achieved changes on the supply side. Networks that allow access to methodologically competent Monitoring and Evaluation Advisers have not been adequately identified or utilized. The particular skill sets that are still required are concerned with methodological expertise to design and carry out robust monitoring and evaluation activities. As a result the quality of M&E products has not yet met expectations except in a very limited number of cases.

Staffing and resourcing of the P&Q Unit has been dynamic since the beginning of the program. The initial vision was a single, full time officer with technical skills in managing monitoring and evaluation systems. This individual would be supported by another position in Canberra. After a short time the unit in Jakarta was expanded to four staff, and as a consequence, the complexity of the program increased to exploit the new opportunities the additional resources allowed for. After a period of time, the unit was reduced to three, and then later to two staff which required additional adjustments to the focus and coverage of the Program. It is likely that the current structure will continue into the future. The contracted part-time M&E Adviser (ECB Facilitator) who designed the ECB Program is still supporting the Program. It is expected that some form of contracted technical support to the program will be required long-term.

A regular challenge in the institutionalization of improved performance is the effect of staff turnover. AusAID, like other public sector bureaucracies must design change programs so that they address this reality. Over the past few months there have been significant changes in the structure and personnel across the program particularly at the strategic, but also at the operational levels. This will test the extent to which the Program has affected the performance culture of the organisation.

The AusAID Indonesia Country Program is currently planning for a rapid and extensive scale up in aid investments. New initiatives are not necessarily expanding in number, but the magnitude and at times the complexity of investments is increasing rapidly without a proportionate expansion in resources available to the program. This expansion necessarily competes with personnel time and attention and may challenge the incremental, long-term nature of the ECB program.

AusAID is also experiencing a period of rapid and wide-ranging change in response to a number of agency-wide reforms relating to aid effectiveness in this context of scale-up. As a result personnel are required to address a number of areas that require deep and sustained change. At the same time, these changes are required at a pace that is very challenging for operational teams. This also challenges the ECB program that encourages and requires intellectual space and sustained effort to perform well.

C. Purpose of the Review

The main purposes of this Mid-Term Review is to assess the potential value of the program against the resources provided; to improve the on-going design and implementation of the ECB program; and to develop knowledge which may be of use to other AusAID ECB programs, or the ECB literature more broadly.

D. Key Evaluation (Review) Questions

Relevance:

- 1.1 To what extent are the ECB Program outcomes still relevant in the rapidly changing context of the AusAID Indonesia Country Program?
- 1.2 To what extent are the approaches to institutional and individual behaviour change employed in the ECB program still relevant with regard to the rapidly changing context of the AusAID Indonesia Country Program?

- 1.3 To what extent are the Indonesia Program M&E Standards a reflection of international standards, and adapted to meet the needs of AusAID staff roles and functions in relation to M&E.

Effectiveness:

- 2.1 What is the current quality of M&E products against the standards (baseline and follow-up assessment will be available for review)?
- 2.2 What are the perceptions of AusAID staff about any changes in their capacity to manage or oversee M&E systems after participation in the ECB program?
- 2.3 What are the perceptions of AusAID staff about the value of the ECB key concepts in their day-to-day work?
- 2.4 To what extent has AusAID program level staffs adopted the following priority behaviours:
- Attend facilitated learning sessions and application sessions in accordance with the M&E requirements of their portfolio;
 - Appropriately interpret the M&E Standards and consistently articulate expectations to M&E suppliers;
 - Use of the M&E Standards to develop Independent Evaluation (Review) terms of reference;
 - Use of the M&E Standards to assess the quality of M&E products;
 - Use of the M&E Standards to provide effective, structured feedback to M&E suppliers and negotiate solutions where required;
 - Use information from M&E products to inform programming decisions.
- 2.2 To what extent has Senior Management and Middle-Level Managers adopted the following desired behaviours?
- Require staff to adhere to desired behaviours (listed above);
 - Provide program staff with effective incentives to perform the desired behaviours;
 - Support programming staff (where necessary) to negotiate with M&E suppliers when M&E standards are not met;
 - Provide feedback to the P&Q Unit where barriers to behaviour change are encountered;
 - Use information from M&E products to inform programming decisions.
- 2.3 To what extent have the P&Q Unit (Jakarta and Canberra) adopted the following desired behaviours?
- Manage the delivery of the ECB program independently from the contracted ECB facilitator;
 - Planned and conducted facilitated learning sessions and application sessions to reach an adequate level of coverage (and repeated exposure) of AusAID staff;
 - Conducted effective facilitated learning sessions and applications sessions in accordance with the principles of adult learning and behaviour change;
 - Conducted effective meetings with Senior Management to communicate key issues experienced in the ECB program;
 - Processes program-wide information and present to Senior Management in a format that allows for use in decision-making;
 - Incrementally take on more technical tasks independent of the ECB facilitator (reducing the number of days support required while maintaining an effective service to Program staff);
 - Meet AusAID staff's reasonable expectations of service delivery;
 - Effectively communicate expectations for quality M&E products to M&E suppliers (as formal workshops or in one-to-one sessions as needed).
- 2.4 To what extent has the ECB Facilitator adopted the following desired behaviours?
- Designed a robust ECB program;

- Developed effective materials and tools to progress toward the end-of-program outcomes;
 - Provide effective mentoring and coaching to P&Q Unit staff to improve their ECB performance;
 - Progressively withdraw technical assistance to enable an independent P&Q Unit (in recognition that some technical support will always be required)?
 - Stimulate and sustain the motivation for change within the P&Q Unit and the wider program.
- 2.5 To what extent are M&E suppliers adopting the following desired behaviours?
- Identify, recruit and maintain M&E advisers that can meet the expectations of the ECB program;
 - Communicate to P&Q Unit or AusAID program staff factors that facilitate or inhibit their ability to deliver on these expectations:
 - Negotiate effectively with AusAID where expectations have not been met.
- 2.6 To what extent have key M&E processes become more efficient?
- Commenting processes for Independent evaluation TORs;
 - Assessing the quality of M&E products;
 - Providing feedback to M&E suppliers;
- 2.7 Is the ECB Program likely to meet the end-of-program outcomes by 2015?

Efficiency:

- 3.1 Is the current resourcing of the ECB worthwhile in proportion to likelihood of achievements?
- 3.2 Are the resources (human resources, time, and financial) adequate for PQU to implement the ECB to be able to achieve the expected end-of-program outcome?
- 3.3 How efficient are the key management systems in PQU for implementing the ECB Program

For all key findings and issues identified, the evaluation team should provide a **thorough analysis** by not only describing the situation, but also exploring key enabling or inhibiting factors, as well as identifying the significance of the implications (to the program and to AusAID). This will result in recommendations for management responses to improve the program.

It is expected that during the analysis, the Review Team will identify **lessons learned** that could be used for consideration in replicating ECB program in other Country Programs.

E. Duration of the Review

The expected period for the evaluation process is to be negotiated with aim of having the final report by end of December 2012. This evaluation period includes time for desk review, preparation of the evaluation plan, the collection and processing of information, and preparation of the draft and final report. Tasks are elaborated in Section F.

F. Review Process

1. Conduct a desk study to review relevant documentation provided by AusAID and advise AusAID of any additional documents or information required prior to the in-country visit (3 days)
2. Develop an evaluation plan that meet the M&E Standards, which includes methodology, tools, identification of key respondents, documents or observations required and guidance for a schedule (3 days)
3. Travel time from location to Jakarta and Canberra, return (2-4 days)

4. Participate in an AusAID briefing session in Jakarta at the start of the in-country mission, including introduction to the PQU team and Senior Management (1 day)
5. Conduct meetings in Jakarta or other places if necessary (10 days)
6. Conduct preliminary analysis of the findings (2 days)
7. Prepare an Aide Memoire for submission at the end of the in-country mission which outlines the major findings and preliminary recommendations of the MTR (1 day)
8. Participate in an AusAID debriefing session in Jakarta at the completion of the in-country mission and present the Aide Memoire of the MTR to AusAID Jakarta (1 day)
9. Complete processing of the data (5 days)
10. Submit the draft MTR Report (7 days of writing for the Team Leader and 2 days for the Team Member)
11. Submit the final MTR Report (2 days of writing for the Team Leader)

G. Reporting Requirements

Evaluation Plan

The Review Team will develop an evaluation plan that will describe the overall design and methods of the review. The plan will include: the methodology to be used; the process for data/information collection and analysis, including tools for data collection; identification of any limitations; allocation of tasks of the evaluation team; any required guidance for the development of a schedule of activities;.

It is expected that this Evaluation Plan be submitted to AusAID at least 3 weeks before the in-country mission.

Aide Memoire

The Review Team Leader will submit and present an Aide Memoire (maximum 5 pages) on key findings upon completion of the in-country mission.

Mid-Term Review Report

The Team Leader will have up to seven working days to write and submit the draft MTR Report (max 30 pages in length, excluding annexes). AusAID will provide feedback to the Evaluation Team within 10 days upon receipt of the draft report from the Team Leader. The Team Leader will then submit the Final MTR Report up to two weeks later after receiving feedback from AusAID. The Mid-Term Review Report should meet the AusAID M&E Standards for Evaluation Report.

H. Team Composition and Roles

The Review team will comprise two members, an international evaluation expert with expertise in the theory and practice of Evaluation Capacity Building as a Team Leader and an ECB Practitioner from AusAID Canberra or other AusAID post.

M&E and ECB Specialist / Team Leader

The Evaluation Capacity Building Specialist (Team Leader) will have an experience in the theory and practice of organizational Evaluation Capacity Building (as recognised as a sub-discipline of the field of Evaluation). The Team Leader will be able to draw on international good practice, and will be able to demonstrate direct practical experience in the design and oversight of such a program. This is expected to lead to significant insights that will lead to program improvement.

The Team leader will also possess practical experience in the design, conduct and management of reviews or evaluations. They will be familiar with international standards of evaluation and will be able to bring technical expertise to the review so that judgments can be made about the appropriateness of the expectations and the quality of advice communicated by the ECB program implementers.

The Team Leader will also have the ability to identify and address strategic as well as operational issues, and will bring a high level of analytical skill to the exercise.

The Team Leader will be responsible for the following: negotiating the final terms of reference for the review; drafting and submitting an Evaluation Plan; drafting and finalising the Aide Memoire, presenting preliminary findings to AusAID, in addition to drafting and finalising the MTR Report. The Team Leader will lead the evaluation process, and take responsibility for assigning tasks to the team member.

ECB Practitioner from AusAID Canberra or other AusAID Post (Team Member)

The purpose of including an ECB Practitioner from AusAID Canberra or another Country Program is to ensure that insights and lessons are available to other AusAID Programs. The ECB Practitioner is not expected to possess expertise or direct experience in the design and conduct of an evaluation. Expectations on their ability to conduct and process data should be modest. They will be encouraged to participate in the collection and processing of data under supervision of the Team Leader; however this is not intended to be a major training exercise and should not draw significant time away from the main purposes of the review. The Team Member will be expected to participate in discussions throughout the mission, and to contribute to several aspects of the final report.

I. Key Documents

Key documents will be provided by AusAID to the Review Team at commencement of the assignment as below:

- a) The design document of ECB
- b) M&E Standards
- c) Progress Report of ECB
- d) Baseline Assessment Report and Follow-Up Report

Appendix 3: Evaluation Plan for the ECBP MTR

Evaluation Team

Saville Kushner (Team Leader) – University of Auckland, Professor of Public Evaluation. Saville is an experienced evaluation consultant, he is widely published on program evaluation and he served as Regional M&E Officer for UNICEF (TACRO)

Ritesh Shah (Team member) – University of Auckland, Senior Research Associate. Ritesh has extensive background in international development both academically and professionally, and has led or participated in a number of program and policy evaluations across the Pacific, Southeast Asia and Middle East.

Simon Ernst (Internal evaluator) – AusAID, Director, Quality Performance and Results Branch, Program Effectiveness and Performance (PEP) Division. Simon has extensive experience in the delivery of development assistance programs and has led and/or participated in a number of program evaluations.

Background and purpose

The Evaluation Capacity Building Program (ECB) is a five-year program to enhance AusAID's human resource in the field of Monitoring & Evaluation, but more broadly in relation to decision making and design and procurement procedures. The program, designed as a pilot with potential for up-scaling, was a response to a perceived lack of evidence and confidence in decision making in the Indonesian Post. ECB is now also being implemented in East Timor and Vanuatu.

The program claims certain features which distinguishes it from conventional professional development and training – (a) that it is offered on a 'just-in-time' basis – i.e. participants attend with an immediate and concrete dilemma in practice; (b) that it is almost exclusively focused on work-based learning; and (c) that it targets organisational practices rather than individual skills (it is claimed to be a program for organisational behavioural change). The substance of the program comprises face-to-face training sessions, an M&E help-desk (48-hour response time) and a face-to-face clinic for more complex issues. Its principal andragogical modalities are said to be facilitation, coaching and mentoring.

The long-term objective of the ECB initiative in Indonesia, and elsewhere, is to ensure that as an organisation AusAID is operating in a more effective, accountable and efficient fashion through robust and formative M&E processes, and that staff practices are more informed and confident. By the end of the ECB Program in Indonesia in 2015 it is to be expected that: (1) Information from M&E systems and processes informs and influences decision-making at all levels; (2) Information produced through M&E systems and processes has a credible basis; (3) mechanisms for integrating lessons from ECB Program into AusAID Corporate developments and vice-versa are in place; (4) that the PQU in Jakarta is fully institutionalised and sustainable; and (5) Jakarta-based P&Q Unit and the Canberra-based Indonesia Desk are harmonised. At the time of this review in late 2012, these outcomes are yet to fully be realised, nor should this be fully expected at this point, suggesting a formative role for this evaluation and review. Hence a key focus for this MTR is to inform and assist the further development of the ECB Program in Indonesia over its remaining course.

This draft evaluation plan has been developed following two days of meetings in Canberra, phone/email conversations with relevant AusAID staff, and a review of initial project documentation. It has been designed with the interest of the MTR's primary intended users in mind—namely the ECB Facilitator, P&Q Units in both Canberra and Jakarta and their senior managers (including PEP Director), ECB Program staff in Indonesia and other country programs, namely East Timor and Vanuatu. Importantly the MTR design also targets the information and decision-making needs of AusAID PEP Division, which is located within the Corporate Group and has responsibility for the development of agency wide policy and capacity development in monitoring and evaluation and aid management generally.

The Mid-Term review

This Review comes at the mid-point of the ECB program in Indonesia. It is conceived and commissioned as an independent evaluation. The evaluation team comprises (see above)

two external consultants and one internal evaluator. The positioning of the team is as 'critical-friend' to AusAID and the ECB program itself. We see AusAID as our principal audience.

This Plan for the Mid-Term Review of the Evaluation Capacity Building Program (ECB) in Indonesia has been developed with four principal formative objectives in mind. They are to:

- Report on the quality and impact of the ECB program;
- Assess the potential value of the program against the resources provided;
- Improve and inform the ongoing design and potential up-scaling of the ECB program in relation to organisational and professional development; and
- Develop an evidence base which may be of use to other AusAID Programs including Corporate strategies for program/M&E capacity development.

We will critically review the ECB's qualities and impact through a collaborative exploration of key issues, promises and dilemmas raised by the program. This will involve a three-stage approach:

Stage 1: (Canberra, Indonesia) Developing an evidence base out of which we will derive a Key Issues Framework (KIF) and overview of the ECB Program;

Stage 2: (Indonesia) Verifying, negotiating and developing the KIF through participatory processes and further data collection; and

Stage 3: (Canberra) Presenting and negotiating the Draft Final Report with strategic actors at AusAID (both program and Corporate).

The key element of this approach is the production of a Key Issues Framework in place of an *Aide Memoire*. This will be a 3 – 5 page document serving as an interim report on evaluation evidence, but framed as a set of dilemmas and issues arising from the implementation and the character of the CB program. Each issue will be exemplified with evidence. We opt for an issues framework since this allows the evaluation to be *prospective* and to point forward to improvements and developments. Issues will focus on *enabling* and *inhibiting* factors in embedding ECB.

A second advantage of an issues-based approach is that it invites collaboration by providing opportunities for people to engage with the evaluation at the level of interpretation and analysis (rather than merely providing data). We will disseminate the Issues Framework prior to our second visit, and use that second visit to mount workshops/focus groups to critically review the issues, refine, extend and verify them.

The final advantage of this approach is that it allows the evaluation and its participants to move to second-order analysis – i.e. having summarised experience in the issues framework, subsequent critical discussions move the analysis to a higher level.

Evaluation questions and themes

The Terms of Reference for this evaluation set out an extensive range of questions which the evaluation adopts as a starting point. These cover *Relevance* (especially the correspondence between ECB and strategic changes in AusAID and globally); *Effectiveness* (especially the extent to which ECB has stimulated changes in practice at various levels in Canberra and in the Post); and *Efficiency* (especially the performance of management and the resource base). We summarise and rationalise these questions into the following:

- Given the rapidly changing context of the AusAID Indonesia Country Program and the Development Pathways strategy, to what extent are the ECB Program outcomes and its current approaches still relevant?
- What perceived value and benefit do varying levels of AusAID staff (program level to senior management) see from their participation in the ECB program (in terms of changed attitudes, behaviours, actions)? What evidence exists for this and how are these gains valued in AusAID?
- To what degree has the ECB program become independent of its original developers such that it readily lends itself to replication elsewhere or indeed continuation in Indonesia beyond the tenure of those currently associated with it? What is its likely sustainability by the end of the program?

- What impact, in terms of changed practices, has the ECB program had on the evaluation providers/industry that supplies AusAID with M&E products? Does working on the 'demand' side complement other 'supply' side initiatives to improve the quality of M&E provision?
- How well integrated is the ECB program with the agency's M&E policy⁹⁹ and other M&E initiatives being promoted and vice-versa?
- Is the ECB appropriately resourced given its expected outcomes? Do these outcomes represent value for money?

Following an initial field visit to AusAID offices in Canberra, the following emerge as second-order evaluation themes:

- What is the impact on AusAID as an organisation of the professional development stimulated by ECB?
- What dimensions of quality (i.e. in M&E, administrative action, program design) are advocated or developed through exposure to ECB?
- To what extent can ECB be scaled up in relation to its resource demand?
- What do we learn from ECB about the balance between autonomous initiatives at Post and central (Corporate) guidance?
- To what extent does ECB contribute to the capacity for AusAID to meet external accountability pressures?

Given the nature of the ECB, whose efforts focus on repositioning the behaviours and actions of individual actors with the goal of altering an institutional culture, our chosen evaluation approach emphasises qualitative approaches that allow us to examine such change in depth.

The evaluation will adopt the following sampling procedures:

1. Interviews with key individuals involved in the ECB program since the ECB program commenced – encompassing different levels of seniority, length of service with AusAID, nationality, and degree of engagement with the program;
2. Interviews with some of those whom have provided M&E services to AusAID Indonesia programs, including both providers who are deemed to comply with the M&E standards and those that do not.
3. Case studies of M&E products that have been produced since the commencement of the ECB;
4. Analysis of stories of significant change to be collected from ECB program participants;
5. Review and synthesis of existing ECB project documentation; and
6. Observations of ECB training activities.

The goal through these techniques is to gather a series of archetypal examples that exemplify the outcomes of the ECB thus far, and highlight the mitigating factors behind this. This will include issues raised in the Evaluation ToR, especially that of staff turnover and whether this has implications for the integrity and sustainability of the Program.

Most Significant Change Approach

MSC is a collaborative, qualitative evaluation method that has gained significant attention within international development circles in the past decade.¹⁰⁰ It provides information that can be used to identify impacts of an initiative and promote ongoing programme learning (such as improving implementation, and identifying and addressing negative or unexpected outcomes). In MSC, participants of an initiative, as well as those responsible for managing and implementing such activity are asked in an interview to identify at least three positive or negative changes, from their perspective, that are the result of the initiative in question. From this, each individual selects the one change that they believe is most significant to them, and the interview commences an evaluative audit of the change process and its impact in

⁹⁹ The Performance Management and Evaluation Policy (PMEP) sets out AusAID's requirements and expectations for performance management at all levels of the agency. Under the auspices of the PMEP a range of performance management tools and processes are prescribed for Indonesia and other programs to utilise, these include; Quality at Implementation (QAI) reports, Annual Program Performance Reports (APPR) and independent evaluations.

¹⁰⁰ See Davies, R. and Dart, J. (2005). The 'Most Significant Change' (MSC) Technique. A Guide to Its Use. www.mande.co.uk/docs/MSCGuide.pdf

narrative format. Though the MSC methodology is based on *retrospective* views ('why did this happen...?', 'why did you do that...?'), it provides a basis for the analysis of 'inhibitors' and 'enablers' of change and program improvement.

Direct Observation of ECB

The ECB program has a mix of technical and values-based aspirations. These are represented as claims in documents and through interview. Such claims can, however, be tested in practice – through direct observation of program interactions and products.

Session observations: Where our visits coincide with ECB training sessions we will conduct a sample of direct observations. These will focus on the following dimensions:

- The extent to which the andragogy and the facilitator/participant interactions reflect the values and aims of the program;
- Approaches and methods being advocated;
- Visions of quality being propounded.

Audit of M&E products: With the assistance of the P&Q Unit, and utilising the M&E Standards, a selection of up to four different evaluation products produced since the roll out of the ECB Initiative in Indonesia will be selected. These products may include: (1) one initiative design document; (2) one initiative M&E plan; (3) one initiative progress report; and (4) one initiative final evaluation product that includes the ToR, evaluation plan and actual report. The intent is to have the P&Q Unit select products that represent work against the Standards (where available) and at high levels of assessed quality. The aim is to see the ECB at its best so as to assess its promise to AusAID. The evaluation team will then backwards-map the chosen product with the processes, systems, and activities that occurred prior to its finalisation to determine the factors that impacted on its observed quality, including interviews with commissioning staff.

Review of project documentation and interviews with project participants/beneficiaries

Prior to and throughout the fieldwork period, manuals, syllabi, and training materials produced as part of the ECB program will be analysed by the evaluation team. The team will approach either the ECB Consultant or members of the P&Q Unit to provide required documents as the need arises.

A key component of the ECB program is the M&E Help Desk that has been established to provide ongoing coaching and support to ECB participants after the completion of learning sessions. According to the syllabus, the ECB Facilitators maintain a record of how this service is utilised and the nature of the request. During the second visit to Indonesia, the evaluation team will review this log book and code the types of assistance that the Help Desk has provided in an attempt to provide an overview of the relevance, utility, and effectiveness of this service.

Additionally, given the need to assess the efficiency of the ECB in terms of resources, the evaluation team will review the budget for ECB activity over the course of the program. To the extent feasible this may involve a comparison of the costs associated with the M&E training delivered under the Aid Management Pathway.

In the case of this evaluation, a sample of AusAID Program Managers, Senior Program Managers, Procurement Staff, and Unit Staff who have participated in ECB activities will be interviewed and asked to provide description and analysis of the ECB experience. Assistance will be sought from the P&Q Unit Jakarta in recruiting, identifying, and organising meetings with these individuals (1 hour in duration). A small sample of M&E providers, also selected with the assistance of P&Q Unit Indonesia, will also be interviewed by telephone to ascertain their experiences with the M&E standards and the AusAID programme staff that have gone through ECB training. Informing the content of both sets of interviews will be issues that are noted in the ECB Baseline Assessment for Indonesia.

Summary of data collection methods against specified research questions

As the table below suggests, each of the evaluation questions will be explored through multiple data sources as a way of increasing the credibility and validity of subsequent analysis.

Question	Semi-structured interviews	Most significant change	Documentary review	Case studies of evaluation activity	Observations of ECB Training
Given the rapidly changing context of the AusAID Indonesia Country Program, to what extent are the ECB Program outcomes and its current approaches still relevant?	X		X	X	X
How relevant, appropriate and adaptable are the Indonesia Program M&E standards to the needs of AusAID staff roles and functions, and this evolving context?	X	X		X	X
What perceived value and benefit do varying levels of AusAID staff (program level to senior management) see from their participation in the ECB program (in terms of changed attitudes, behaviours, actions)? What evidence exists for this?		X		X	X
To what degree has the ECB program become managed in a sustainable fashion independent of the involvement of the contracted ECB facilitator?	X		X	X	X
What impact, in terms of changed behaviours, has the ECB program had on the evaluation providers/industry that supplies AusAID with M&E products?	X	X		X	
How well integrated is the ECB program with other M&E initiatives being promoted through AusAID Corporate activities and vice-versa?	X			X	
Is the ECB adequately resourced given its expected outcomes? Do these outcomes represent value for money?	X		X	X	

Ethical considerations and limitations of the evaluation

Ethical considerations apply and intensify where we are reporting on individual's life and work, or where views and actions may controversially attributed to individuals or groups. We will avoid this so far as we are able, by focusing on issues and by anonymising views where this is feasible. We will be constrained in this to the extent that AusAID and the Indonesian Program – as well as ECB itself – are relatively intimate settings with high levels of familiarity among staff. We will tackle this in two ways, as well as using anonymity:

Confidentiality: where we are garnering sensitive or controversial views we will invoke confidentiality – which is to say that we will not use or publish data without the permission of the individual or group implicated or attributed. Each person owns the data over their own lives and work and we will respect that.

Review of drafts: Where resources allow we will share drafts of attributed material to the individual for comment and amendment.

We do, however, call for all involved to acknowledge these limitations and to invoke a sense of reasonableness in dealing with the evaluation. People have the right to be cautious or reserved in dealing with external and independent evaluators and we will honour that.

A key limitation of this evaluation is that we are mostly confined to direct access to AusAID – i.e. the ‘demand-side’ of the M&E procurement process. A key target for improvement through ECDB is, nonetheless, the ‘supply-side’ – external consultants. We will sample this group through telephone interviews.

This evaluation has access limited by time and resource. The external evaluators will be present in Jakarta for a total of 22 person days, dependent on ECB staff for contacts with respondents. We do not have the resource to independently develop a sampling frame, nor to sample on an opportunistic basis. We will compensate by including a second visit to Jakarta and a second visit to Canberra in each of which we will verify the evidence base and cross-check data.

The team also recognises that relative to the life and intensity of ECB our encounter with this program is fleeting. Ideally, any program evaluation is conducted in real time so as to witness at first-hand the formative challenges faced by the program and the manner of the emergence of its most cherished and enduring values. We will respect that, too, and acknowledge our dependence on participants to ‘get the story right’. In the balance between our version of events and those of participants we will lean more towards the latter.

Schedule of evaluation activities and persons responsible

Dates	Activity	Person(s) responsible	Number of person days
September 25-26	Meetings in Canberra with P&Q Unit, Corporate and programme officers	Saville, Simon	2/each
September 27-29	Review of ECB documentation and development of draft evaluation plan	Saville, Ritesh	3/each
		Simon	1
By Oct 3	Consultation with AusAID (through email/phone) on evaluation plan	Saville	1
October 8-16 Saville: Oct 8-12 Ritesh: Oct 9-13 Simon: Oct 11-13; Oct 15-16	Field visit #1 to Indonesia. Observation of ECB Training sessions; collection of MSC stories from program officers, senior managers, procurement officers; and, identification and selection of four case studies, interviews with P&Q Unit (Canberra and Jakarta) and ECB Facilitators/Consultant	Saville, Ritesh, Simon	5/each
Mid/late October	Fieldwork from home base. Collection of MSC stories from M&E providers, develop draft KIF based on first field visit, review of case study products and contact made with M&E providers who produced the product, telephone interviews with ECB facilitators, c from AusAID Vanuatu Post.	Saville, Ritesh	2/each
November 12-19	Field visit #2 to Indonesia. Presentation of draft KIF to P&Q Unit Canberra/Jakarta and other relevant parties and subsequent refinement of KIF after further data collection; MSC Selection panel facilitated; semi-structured interviews with AusAID staff (Indonesia and Canberra based) associated with the four case study products selected; review and analysis of ECB Program documentation; additional follow up interviews with P&Q Unit members and ECB Facilitators/Consultants	Saville, Ritesh, Simon	6/each
By Nov 23	Development of and submission of FINAL KIF	Saville	1
By Dec 7	Data processing, verification of results, finalisation of analysis and drafting of final report for submission to AusAID	Ritesh, Saville	7/each
		Simon	3
Dec 18	Visit to Canberra. Discussion and negotiation of draft evaluation report	Saville, Ritesh, Simon	1/each
By Dec 31	Incorporation of feedback from AusAID (oral and written) on draft and finalisation of MTR	Saville	2

Evaluation Fieldwork Workplan for Indonesia Visits One and Two (Indicative only)

Date	Person(s) responsible from Evaluation Team	Activity
Oct 8	Saville	Introductions with P&Q Unit Indonesia and other relevant Indonesia Post officers; orientation to additional ECB project documentation; observations of ECB training
Oct 9	Saville	Observations of ECB training and M&E Help Desk activities; review project documentation
	Ritesh (from midday onwards)	Interviews and collection of MSC Stories (1 hr/each duration) from: a selection of AusAID program officers (at least 12-15 in total across a range of sectors), procurement officer(s), senior managers (associated with the above program officers) who have had varying levels of involvement (from limited to extensive) with ECB activities.
Oct 10	Saville	Observations of ECB training and M&E Help Desk activities; review project documentation
	Ritesh	Interviews and collection of MSC Stories (1hr/each duration) from: a selection of AusAID program officers (at least 12-15 in total across a range of sectors), procurement officer(s), senior managers (associated with the above program officers) who have had varying levels of involvement (from limited to extensive) with ECB activities.
Oct 11	Saville, Simon and Ritesh (together)	Individual interviews and collection of MSC stories (1.5 hrs/each duration) with ECB Facilitator, P&Q Unit members (from Canberra and Jakarta), PEP Director Indonesia
Oct 12	Saville and Simon (together)	Individual interviews with Indonesia Post senior officials (Minister or designee, etc.) regarding their knowledge of ECB Activities; review and selection of four ECB case study projects based on compilation/summary provided by P&Q Unit Indonesia
	Ritesh	Interviews and collection of MSC Stories (1hr/each duration) from: a selection of AusAID program officers (at least 12-15 in total across a range of sectors), procurement officer(s), senior managers (associated with the above program officers) who have had varying levels of involvement (from limited to extensive) with ECB activities.
Oct 15	Simon	Review and analysis of ECB financial expenditures and budgets

Date	Person(s) responsible from Evaluation Team	Activity
Nov 12	Saville, Simon, Ritesh (together)	KIF Workshop and MSC Selection Panel with P&Q Unit Indonesia/Canberra, ECB Facilitator Indonesia, PEP Director Indonesia (all day)
Nov 13-15	Saville, Simon, Ritesh (individually)	Case study review of four M&E products produced since initiation of ECB. Each individual will take responsibility for one or two cases and identify the person(s)—on both demand and supply side—they would like to speak to prior to second visit in consultation with P&Q Unit Jakarta.
Nov 16	Saville, Simon, Ritesh (together)	Follow up interviews with ECB Facilitator, P&Q Unit members (from Canberra and Jakarta), PEP Director Indonesia as deemed necessary; team works together to rework KIF
Nov 19	Saville, Simon, Ritesh (together)	KIF Workshop with P&Q Unit Indonesia/Canberra, ECB Facilitator Indonesia, PEP Director Indonesia (half day)
Dec 18 (provisional)	Saville, Ritesh, Simon	Visit Canberra to negotiate and amend final report

Appendix 4: The Dreyfus competency model

Stage	Characteristics	How knowledge is treated	Recognition of relevance	How context is assessed	Decision making
Novice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rigid adherence to taught rules or plans • Little situational perception • No discretionary judgement 	Without reference to context	none	analytically	rational
Advanced Beginner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guidelines for action based on attributes or aspects (aspects are global characteristics of situations recognisable only after some prior experience) • Situational perception still limited • All attributes and aspects are treated separately and given equal importance 	In context	present	analytically	rational
Competent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coping with crowdedness • Now sees actions at least partially in terms of longer-term goals • Conscious, deliberate planning • Standardised, routinised procedures 				
Proficient	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sees situations holistically rather than in terms of aspects • Sees what is most important in a situation • Perceives deviations from the normal pattern • Decision-making less laboured • Uses maxims for guidance, whose meanings vary according to the situation 			holistically	
Expert	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No longer relies on rules, guidelines or maxims • Intuitive grasp of situations based on deep tacit understanding • Analytic approaches used only in novel situations or when problems occur • Vision of what is possible 				intuitive

Adapted from: Dreyfus, S E (1981) *Four models v human situational understanding: inherent limitations on the modelling of business expertise* USAF, Office of Scientific Research, ref F49620-79-C-0063