the Front Project

# Measurement, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) Strategy Refresh

2 November 2022

## Disclaimer

This document has been produced with information supplied to Clear Horizon by The Front Project (TFP), including via meetings with the TFP team and a review of the original MEL Strategy. While we make every effort to ensure the accuracy of the information contained in this report, any judgements as to suitability of the information for the client's purposes are the client's responsibility. Clear Horizon extends no warranties and assumes no responsibility as to the suitability of this information or for the consequences of its use.

# Contents


| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1. | Introduction | 4 |
| 2. | Theory of Change | 7 |
| 3. | Key Evaluation Questions | 9 |
| 4. | Measurement and Learning | 11 |
| 5. | Evaluation and Reporting | 30 |
| 6. | Operationalising MEL at TFP | 34 |
| 7. | Governance, Scrutiny and Ethics | 37 |
| Annex 1: | Toolkit | 41 |
| Annex 2: | Workstream theories of change | 49 |
| Annex 3: | Plan for 2022-2023 Annual Report | 53 |


# List of figures


| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Figure 1. | The Front Project's whole-of-initiative Theory of Change (version updated in April 2022) | 8 |
| Figure 2. | TFP MEL project structure | 38 |
| Figure 3. | Apiary Theory of Change (updated April 2022) | 49 |
| Figure 4. | Strategic Communications and Advocacy Theory of Change (updated April 2022) | 50 |
| Figure 5. | Impact Foundry Theory of Change (developed April 2022) Figure | 51 |
| Figure 6. | Workforce Initiatives Theory of Change (updated April 2022) | 52 |


# List of tables


| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Table 1. | Key evaluation questions | 9 |
| Table 2. | Measurement and Learning Plan | 14 |
| Table 3. | Reporting requirements | 30 |
| Table 4. | Overview of proposed annual reporting | 31 |
| Table 5. | Operationalisation table | 34 |
| Table 6. | MEL project timeline FY22-23 and indicative of upcoming years to align with organisational strategy | 35 |
| Table 7. | Roles and responsibilities | 39 |
| Table 8. | Population-level monitoring indicators | 45 |
| Table 9. | Guidelines for ethical conduct | 48 |
| Table 10. | Structure of stories for each Strategic Imperative | 53 |

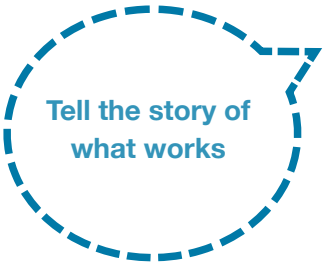
# 1. Introduction

## About this MEL strategy

This document presents the updated Measurement, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) Strategy for The Front Project (TFP). Produced with the support of Clear Horizon, this strategy will equip TFP to conduct MEL activities in an aligned and integrated manner across TFP's multiple workstreams. This MEL strategy is intended to sit alongside the TFP organisational strategy and, as such, will be operational for FY23 through to FY27.

### Purpose

The purpose of this MEL strategy is to:




- Ensure we have useful and reliable data to inform strategy and decision-making for learning and iteration
- Serve TFP's **accountability** needs
- Generate evidence of and **demonstrate** our impact on the early childhood education system, and the effectiveness of our approach to systems change, and to share that with our critical stakeholders.

- Support TFP to work in system-aware ways, including both diagnosis and evaluation.

### Scope

This MEL strategy covers **TFP's whole of organisation initiative**. All TFP work is guided by the strategic intent to address disadvantage and improve outcomes for children and society by realising the benefits of quality early childhood education.

TFP works across the entire early learning system, connecting with people who work in and on the system and have the potential to affect change and remove barriers that disadvantage children and families. This is a systems change approach that looks at the big picture. This approach identifies what can be done to ensure Australia's Early Childhood and Education (ECEC) system becomes the best it can be today and continues to deliver for generations to come.

To support that approach, TFP is built around five ***workstreams*** which act as levers for change within the system. These workstreams are:

- The Apiary Fellowship
- Strategic Communications and Advocacy
- Impact Foundry
- Workforce Initiatives
- CEO/Operations

The strategy also includes a focus on learning and improvement for our overall strategy, workstreams and individual work.

### Audiences

The **primary** audiences of this MEL strategy include:

- TFP staff (CEO, project leaders, team), Board, funders.

The **secondary** audiences of this MEL strategy include:

- government, business, social sector (impact of TFP, impact of systems approach)
- Upskill Program participants and online community members who engage with TFP under a fee for service arrangement
- Apiary Fellows, their employers and stakeholders
- other ECEC intermediaries and system change initiatives, such as Early Years Catalyst
- others in the early childhood sector (students, teachers, educators, parents, providers, centre directors)
- universities.

## Resources

TFP has a dedicated evaluation budget. There is also internal capacity for the collection of routine data, team members with good evaluation skills and experience, and strong culture of learning and reflection. Additionally, there is a budget to commission external evaluation and MEL expert support, as needed. TFP also has enterprise software (such as Salesforce) to support MEL activities.

## Key framing and definitions

This revised MEL strategy aims to be more systems aware. TFP is committed to taking a system change approach as the ECEC system faces deep, persistent and structural challenges, which "are characterised by a structural mismatch between the sector, the context it works in, and needs it meets"[1]. To improve outcomes for children and families TFP needs to be able to shift entire systems. That requires an approach to innovation tailored to the highly interconnected nature of systems in which many parts are related. Single point, service designs will not bring about innovation across entire systems. System change requires a combination of forces to come together, from the macro to the micro, at the right time, in a conducive context. These may be shifts in public narratives and conversations about the issue; changes to policy frameworks which facilitate innovation in services; new flows of finance and investment; investment in new infrastructures and institutions, alongside new habits, new working practices and roles among staff. System innovation is never the product of just one of these but several in combination. Finding the right keys to shift a system is a long-term endeavour. Just as system shifting requires new approaches to innovation, so it requires new approaches to measurement and evaluation, as well shifts in how innovation and evaluation work together. (Drawn from Building Better Systems — The System Innovation Initiative, 2020 [2])

To support that kind of innovation requires new approaches to the role of evaluation and evaluators to underpin learning across different stages of the innovation journey, at different levels and points of a system. This strategy breaks evaluation into three elements – measurement, evaluation and learning.

- **Measurement** is the ongoing collection of data (numbers and stories) to understand what is changing. It can be done at different 'levels' of our theory of change as follows:
  - changes in progress and the conditions that support systems change
  - changes in systems
  - changes for those within systems.

1 Building Better Systems — The System Innovation Initiative, 2020

2 Jennie Winhall and Charles Leadbeater (2020), Building better systems. Systems Innovation Initiative, Rockwool Foundation, Denmark, Building Better Systems original — The System Innovation Initiative more can be found at Publications — The System Innovation Initiative

- **Evaluation** in this framework involves commissioning independent studies that cross-check and calibrate our internal measurement system. They also involve examining the data and stories that have been collected through our internal measurement system and asking, 'so what?', 'what does that mean for us?' and 'what should we do as a result of this judgement?'
- **Learning** refers to the systematic and deliberate practice of strategic learning to inform activity refinement, strategy, and behaviour, and includes both formal and informal learning.

# What does MEL mean to TFP?

## Our principles to adopting MEL

**Flexible and iterative approach**. To address the emergent and fluid nature of TFP, it is important that we take a flexible and iterative approach to MEL. Our approach is to put the detailed work into phases of evaluation and measurement that can be adapted as we learn. To this end, we see this strategy as an umbrella framework to connect the phases of work together. This umbrella evaluation strategy (this document) describes the principles and general approach for evaluation, with some high-level questions raised and a commitment to resourcing detailed. (Here, we are inspired by the work of Henry Mintzberg on 'emergent strategy'. **The Umbrella Strategy in *Of Strategies, Deliberate and Emergent (Mintzberg 1985).***

**Measuring at different scales.** Another feature of systems change are the different **scales of work**. We often find that we see phases of intense activity as well as broader enabling or advocacy work. These phases of more in-depth work might be prototypes or pilots. For each of these, there may be instances of impact on clusters of families or workers that we might miss by only measuring at the population level.

**Managing expectations around results using theory of change**. Systems change approaches are often very ambitious as we mobilise people around the intention to shift the system and create lasting population change. With this comes the risk of raising expectations about when the results will arrive. It tends to take many years to see population level changes, as it is a long-term venture. This is especially tricky for funders. Proving progress can be difficult as the trajectory of change is rarely linear or directional. To manage expectations around results we firstly developed our theory of change, outlining what systemic changes will be needed. Through MEL, we will measure progress towards these shifts in systems conditions (these tend to happen sooner than population level changes) as well as keeping an eye on the population level. At the same time, we will build stakeholder awareness and buy-in to our theory of change. It will help us with our results-based story of TFP and create a good case for why these shifts and changes are directly related to the work that our initiative has been doing.

**Use of systems–aware methods.** The work of intermediaries trying to influence the field may produce changes that are emergent and unexpected. We can't necessarily predict them in advance, and they could be positive or negative. This has an implication for the sort of data-collection tools that are suitable for use with these approaches. We need to use methods that can capture unexpected outcomes and include sensemaking functions to help us understand the changes after the event. A mix of both qualitative and quantitative methods are appropriate. These include rigorous story-based approaches as well as real-time data collection and visualisation. We also need to include evaluation and learning questions that are generative and help us elevate our thinking to diagnose and develop interventions that support systemic change.

**Including external scrutiny.** Our approach to MEL is to set up systems for measurement and include points for external scrutiny of our data to ensure transparency and rigour.

# 2. Theory of Change

The following section presents our overarching theory of change for TFP.

## About Theory of Change

Theory of change (TOC) is a tool used in evaluation planning to determine how change is expected to happen. It considers what needs to be in place (sometimes called preconditions) to deliver desired outcomes. TOC consists of a series of levels organised hierarchically to illustrate the changes brought about by the program over time, and the causal links between short-, medium-, and longer-term changes. The causal links can then be read as the theory of how the change will occur, and this can then be evaluated and tested.

## TFP's TOC

Figure 1 shows the theory of change for the whole of TFP as described at the time of writing this version of the MEL strategy (June 2022). It is important to note that theory of change is rarely "right" or "finished", rather it is our understanding at the time, and is expected to evolve with our learning. This TOC has been updated since it was originally developed in October 2020, to reflect changes to TFP's strategic direction and learnings from working within and on the system.

### Assumptions

Currently, there are 6 key assumptions identified by TFP that underpin the theory of change. These are captured in Figure 1.

### Timeframes for the Theory of Change

It is important to note that the 'outcomes for children and families' are long-term in nature. For this reason, it is important to track strategic outcomes and levers for change as they are more likely to be responsive to the work of TFP in the short term.

**Figure 1. The Front Project's whole-of-initiative Theory of Change (version updated in April 2022)**

# 3. Key Evaluation Questions

TFP's MEL activities will focus on five higher-level evaluation questions (referred to as 'key evaluation questions' or KEQs). These KEQs are broken down further into sub-questions that will help guide TFP's data collection and analysis. The full set of KEQs and sub-questions is listed in Table 1. Key evaluation questions.

**Table 1. Key evaluation questions**

| KEQ | Sub-KEQ |
|---|---|
| **Strategic Anchor** | |
| 1.What is happening in population and systemic trends for overcoming children's experiences of inequity, vulnerability and entrenched disadvantage? | 1a. What is happening in population trends for overcoming children's experiences of inequity, vulnerability and entrenched disadvantage and how are we influencing this? *(Measured against selected population indicators).* |
| | 1b. What examples are there that showcase how children's experiences of inequity, vulnerability and entrenched disadvantage have been overcome as a result of our and our partners' collective work? *(Stories demonstrating one or more 'outcomes for children and families' from the TOC)* |
| **Systems Change conditions** | |
| 2.To what extent are we progressing against our strategic imperatives and effecting change within the system? | How have the following components of the system changed, and to what extent and how have we influenced those changes:<br>2a. Building and shaping the **dominant narratives** (SI 1)<br>2b. Contributing to shifts and major changes in the **policy landscape** (SI 2)<br>2c. Supporting the sector's ability to **innovate and influence** (SI 3)<br>2d. Increasing the number of confident and valued **ECEC professionals** (SI 4)<br>2e. Increasing awareness and demonstration of **quality** in ECEC settings (SI 5) |
| 3. What favourable and unfavourable unintended consequences of our strategic work are evident within the system? | 3a. For each of the strategic imperatives, how are relationships and power dynamics shifting within the system and what impact is this having on the system?<br>3b. What other (beyond power dynamics) unintended consequences are we seeing through our work, or in the ECEC ecosystem. |

| **TFP Influencing Work** | |
|---|---|
| 4. How effective were each of the TFP workstreams in achieving engagement and knowledge generation in service of the strategic imperatives? | 4a. To what extent did we reach the right people with our work? |
| | 4b. To what extent did we equip key stakeholders, including children and families to amplify their voices and become advocates? |
| | 4c. To what extent did we build evidence and galvanise the system into action by applying research insights? |
| | 4d. To what extent did we develop and enhance stakeholders' capabilities in the system to incubate, prototype and implement ideas? |
| | 4e. To what extent did we build new relationships and alliances, and scaffold collaborative action, needed for this work? |
| | 4f. To what extent did we strengthen potential of practitioners to improve their practice and create change in ECEC system? |
| | 4g. To what extent have we prototyped our practices and ways of working? |
| **Organisational learning** | |
| 5. What are we learning about our work, the sector and the broader system? | 5a. What are we learning about the ECEC **system**, **sector** and our role within it? What are the most significant learnings? |
| | 5b. Across our **work** (including our assumptions, understanding and thinking/strategy), what are we learning about what is working and what needs improving, including our relationships? Which learnings are most significant? |
| | 5c. To what extent and in what ways are we **adapting** and **responding** based on what we are learning? |
| | 5d. How are our ways of working, [including sharing insights at meetings, MSLs and adaptive leadership learnings and practices, and other practices we undertake to explore and affect systems change] impacting our work and the system? |

# 4. Measurement and Learning

**Definition: Measurement** is the ongoing collection and analysis of data (numbers and stories) to inform our progress against our theory of change. We are interested in measuring change across the different 'levels' of our theory of change.

**Definition**: **Learning** refers to using both monitoring and evaluation data to answer key inquiry questions, and more general learning questions to inform strategy, practice and delivery adaption, and includes both formal and informal learning.

**Workstream-level actions**

- Routine data collection to inform measurement
- Routine participation in activities to inform learning

**TFP-level actions**

- Aggregation of measurement data across workstreams
- Aggregation of learnings across workstreams
- Commission any additional data collection and learning activities, as required

## Methods for measurement and learning

Below is a suite of data collection and analysis methods that TFP will adopt in their ongoing monitoring and learning. In the pages that follow, the methods are allocated to key evaluation questions and their indicators.

### Activity log

Routine tracking and storage of activity and output data by each workstream. This log may include the number of people engaged, campaigns rolled out as well as the date and type of adaptations employed by each workstream, as well as tagging activities to the relevant strategic imperative and how this links to work being done by other workstreams, if appropriate.

### Bellwether informant interviews

This tool explores how decision makers and other influencers are thinking and talking about a reform area, and how likely policymakers are to act on it. The methodology involves structured interviews with "bellwethers" or influential people in the public and private sectors whose positions require that they are politically informed and that they track a broad range of policy issues. Bellwethers are knowledgeable and innovative thought leaders whose opinions about policy issues carry substantial weight and predictive value in the policy arena. Bellwether informant interviews will be undertaken annually by TFP's evaluation partner.

Guide: Tools for evaluating advocacy.

### Impact Log

A simple tool to harvest potential impacts of TFP's influencing work. To be populated by workstreams on an ongoing basis, examples of impact observations may include changes to policy, new strategic collaborations in the ECEC sector etc. Similar to the Activity Log, inputs into this log will be tagged against both the Strategic Imperatives and the KEQs. The impact logs can also be used to harvest select stakeholders for Most Significant Change interviews (see below).

## Media analysis

Ongoing monitoring and analysis of website statistics, social media, Google analytics, as well as tracking mentions and citations. It is expected that TFP's Communications workstream will undertake routine media analysis. Analysis will be tagged against the strategic imperatives and KEQs.

## Monthly feedback session

Each month, two of the workstreams will provide feedback on their learnings from their MEL activities. This might include so what's, key learnings and/or bright spots. The purposes of these sessions are to ensure MEL remains part of the daily work at TFP and to share and reinforce learnings across the organisation.

## Most Significant Change (MSC)

MSC is a form of participatory measurement and evaluation. It is good at capturing changes such as mindset shifts, practice changes and other outcomes. MSC is a harvest tool and involves stakeholders collecting stories about significant change directly from families and individuals, key stakeholders and partners. MSC interviews with TFP staff and key stakeholders will be undertaken on an annual basis by TFPs evaluation partner. Domains of change will be developed to categorise the stories.

Guide: MSC User guide and MSC community of practice.

## Most Significant Learnings (MSL)

A simple tool for exploring and capturing learnings. MSL asks participants to consider what assumptions they held that did not turn out to be correct. The MSL tool can be used to capture developmental moments and is a variation of the MSC technique. MSL key learnings will be reviewed annually within TFP by the internal MEL team who will also interview all TFP workstreams about their specific learnings.

## Population data analysis

Population-level datasets that provide evidence against TFP's select population level indicators (see Table 4 for a collection of population level data sources and baseline findings) will be reviewed periodically, depending on the frequency of production of each of the datasets.

## Significant instances of policy and systems improvement (SIPSI)

This tool is a mash up of MSC and outcomes harvesting, developed by Clear Horizon originally for the Australian Aid program. It tracks possible systems and policy changes and captures them by way of an evidence-based story. The narratives are reviewed by a panel to determine the level of contribution and significance. SIPSI case studies will be produced by TFP's evaluation partner.

Guide: SIPSI

## Workstream Surveys

A combination of online surveys will be employed to understand the achievement of outcomes for TFP's stakeholders. These surveys will be administered by select workstreams on an as-needed basis, to correspond with the completion of programs and events. The surveys are:

- Pulse surveys: routine short survey tailored to track progress of key outcomes including relationships and connection, confidence, application of skills, capability
- Follow-up surveys: survey administered after completion of a program, Fellowship or event to follow up in intermediate outcomes.

## Population survey (optional)

As part of this refreshed MEL strategy, the evaluation partner will pilot one broadscale sample survey directed at families with children and ECEC front line workers and staff. This survey will capture data related to the dominant narratives (SI1) and awareness and demonstration of quality (SI5) and provide a baseline for how the perceived 'purpose' of ECEC is changing. These surveys should draw upon existing work that defines 'what quality means and looks like' and responses should be linked (where relevant) to providers for comparison with existing quality data available through the National Quality Framework. The survey of ECEC staff will be tailored for front line workers to avoid duplication with this existing quality reporting, which is completed at a provider management level.

## Network relationship evaluation tool (optional)

TFPs evaluation partner will explore the use of a modified approach to social network analysis to measure changes in relationship strength. This would include some discovery work around how it might be done using existing systems such as Salesforce, and social media contacts etc. The key here will be to ensure a focus on the quality and purpose of the relationships, TFP's evaluation partner would pilot this work with one workstream and check that it is providing useful insights before using more broadly.

## Power evaluation tool (optional)

TFP's evaluation partner will select one area of TFP's work to conduct discovery, prototype and pilot a power evaluation tool. This might be most fruitful in the work areas where pilots to centre the voice of families and children in the policy decision-making process are being undertaken. The tool would need to be highly contextualised for this purpose. Existing tools, such as the power cube and work on evaluating power to develop the approach, could provide a foundation for this work. Depending on the value and use of the framework, this could potentially be extended into other work.

## Reflection workshops

Reflection workshops are a critical aspect of strategic learning. Here we analyse data and ask what this means for us and adapt our work accordingly. Reflection workshops can be held at a frequency determined by TFP and are to be facilitated by TFP's evaluation partner. Ideally, reflection workshops will include representatives from all TFP workstreams. To supplement the annual reflection cycles, we also suggest three shorter sense-making workshops to be held at the end of the first three quarters of each year. These workshops will involve data from all TFP workstreams and be attended by all TFP staff. As well as ensuring data are regularly interrogated, these workshops will support the team to get skilled in sense-making and adopting a systems change lens. Please see Annex 1: Toolkit for further guidance on undertaking the workshops. Guide: Reflections workshop guide

# MEL Plan

**Table 2. Measurement and Learning Plan**

(Note: indicators marked with * are required under our current funding agreement.)

| Sub-KEQ | Focus | Indicator | Methods | Source | Responsibility |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Strategic Anchor: 1. What is happening in population trends for overcoming children's experiences of inequity, vulnerability and entrenched disadvantage?** | | | | | |
| 1a. What is happening in population and systemic trends for overcoming children's experiences of inequity, vulnerability and entrenched disadvantage and how are we influencing this? | TFP's contribution to its strategic anchor, as measured against select population-level indicators. | • Increase in number of 0–5-year-old children enrolled in ECEC services*<br>• Increase in number of children enrolled in kinder (by 3- and 4-year-old kinder)*<br>• Decrease gap in % developmentally vulnerable by SEIFA<br>• Decrease % Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children developmentally vulnerable*<br>• Improved access to quality ECEC services in regional, rural and remote areas*<br>• Increase % services meet or exceed the National Quality Standard | • Population data analysis | See Table 8 | • Research and policy workstream/ Impact Foundry |

| Sub-KEQ | Focus | Indicator | Methods | Source | Responsibility |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | • Improvements in engagement with quality ECEC by children experiencing disadvantage, including children who are developmentally vulnerable and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children*<br>• Improvements in outcomes for these children*<br>• Increase % of children developmentally on track<br>• Decrease % of children developmentally vulnerable | | | |
| 1b. What examples are there that showcase how children's experiences of inequity, vulnerability and entrenched disadvantage have been overcome as a result of our and our partners' collective work? | Stories demonstrating TFP's contribution to its strategic anchor, aligning to one or more 'outcomes for children and families' from the organisational TOC (includes changes in workforce practices etc.). | Not applicable | • Impact log<br>• MSC interviews<br>• SIPSI case studies | • All workstreams<br>• TFP and relevant stakeholders<br>• TFP and relevant stakeholders | • Workstream teams<br>• Evaluation partner<br>• Evaluation partner |

| Sub-KEQ | Focus | Indicator | Methods | Source | Responsibility |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Systems Change conditions: 2. To what extent are we progressing against our strategic imperatives and effecting change within the system?** | | | | | |
| 2a. How have the following components of the system changed, and to what extent and how have we influenced those changes:<br><br>Building and shaping the dominant narratives. | TFP's progress against its strategic imperatives | • TFP's actions contribute to:<br>– Shifting narratives in the public sphere reflect improvements in the perceived value of ECEC*<br>– Identified recognition of the multiple benefits to children in attending ECEC, including early learning*<br>– The voices of children and families are sought and included in the policy process regarding ECEC issues*<br>– TFP's actions directly impact favourable action from target audiences reflecting the benefits of ECEC* | • Impact log<br>• MSC interviews<br>• SIPSI case studies<br>• Population survey (optional) | • All workstreams<br>• TFP and relevant stakeholders<br>• Streem with identified keywords<br>• TFP and relevant stakeholders<br>• TFP and relevant stakeholders | • Workstream teams<br>• Communications team (Streem)<br>• Evaluation partner<br>• Evaluation partner<br>• Evaluation partner |
| | | • Proportion of media articles using favourable vs unfavourable keywords (as identified in row above) | • Media analysis | • Streem and manual calculation | • Communications workstream |

| Sub-KEQ | Focus | Indicator | Methods | Source | Responsibility |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2b. How have the following components of the system changed, and to what extent and how have we influenced those changes:<br><br>Contributing to shifts and major changes in the policy landscape | | • TFP's actions directly impact:<br>– Federal and State/ Territory Government reflects elements of TFP's policy recommendations and resourcing agenda specific to the ECEC workforce*<br>– Shifts in policy landscape supporting increased quality, affordability and access to ECEC services*<br>– Shifts in policy that support children and families experiencing inequity, vulnerability and entrenched disadvantage*<br>– Shifts in language and framing of ECEC issues in the policy landscape reflect the recognition of the benefits of ECEC | • Impact log<br>• MSC interviews<br>• SIPSI case studies | • All workstreams<br>• TFP and relevant stakeholders<br>• TFP and relevant stakeholders | • Research and policy workstream/Impact Foundry<br>• Evaluation partner<br>• Evaluation partner |
| | | • Number of positive policy changes in ECEC towards which TFP's work contributed* | • Impact log | • Research & Policy team | • Research and policy workstream/Impact Foundry |

| Sub-KEQ | Focus | Indicator | Methods | Source | Responsibility |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2c. How have the following components of the system changed, and to what extent and how have we influenced those changes:<br>Supporting the sector's ability to innovate and influence | | • TFP's actions directly impact:<br>– The voices of children and families are incorporated by the sector in practice in a way that is reflective of their needs and experiences*<br>– The voices of children and families are sought and included in the practice process regarding ECEC issues.*<br>– Innovation targets improvements for children, including children experiencing inequity, vulnerability and entrenched disadvantage* | • Impact log<br>• MSC interviews<br>• SIPSI case studies | • All workstreams<br>• TFP and relevant stakeholders<br>• TFP and relevant stakeholders | • Research and Policy/ Impact Foundry & the Apiary workstreams<br>• Evaluation partner<br>• Evaluation partner |
| | | • Number of stakeholders in TFP's network collaborating on initiatives | • Impact log | • All workstreams | • Workstream teams |

| Sub-KEQ | Focus | Indicator | Methods | Source | Responsibility |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | • Number of TFP's major strategic partnerships or engagements with other organisations seeking to improve ECEC access and outcomes* | • Activity log | • All workstreams | • Workstream teams |
| | | • Number of engagements with other organisations seeking to improve ECEC access and outcomes* | • Activity log | • All workstreams | • Workstream teams |
| | | • In-depth analysis of instances of innovation in the sector* | • Impact log<br>• SIPSI case studies | • All workstreams<br>• TFP and relevant stakeholders | • All workstreams<br>• Evaluation partner |
| 2d. How have the following components of the system changed, and to what extent and how have we influenced those changes:<br>Increasing the number of confident and valued professionals in ECEC | | • TFP's actions contribute to:<br>– Identified recognition of the value of the ECEC workforce*<br>– Improved pay and conditions to attract and retain ECEC workforce are integrated into the policy landscape and industry standards* | • Impact log<br>• MSC interviews<br>• SIPSI case studies | • All workstreams<br>• TFP and relevant stakeholders<br>• TFP and relevant stakeholders | • All workstreams<br>• Evaluation partner<br>• Evaluation partner |

| Sub-KEQ | Focus | Indicator | Methods | Source | Responsibility |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | • Increase in median pay for ECEC professionals | • Publicly available data | • See Table 8 | • Workforce Initiatives workstream |
| | | • Increase in the number of ECEC graduates in the sector | • Publicly available data | • See Table 8 | • Workforce Initiatives workstream |
| | | • Increase in ECEC professionals as a proportion of the workforce<br>• (Note: professionals are diploma-trained educators, early childhood teachers, and managers of services) | • Publicly available data | • See Table 8 | • Workforce Initiatives workstream |
| 2e. How have the following components of the system changed, and to what extent and how have we influenced those changes:<br>Increased awareness and demonstration of quality in ECEC settings. | | • Instances of impact, such as:<br>– Practitioner-led improvements to practice in ECEC sector | • Impact log<br>• MSC interviews<br>• SIPSI case studies | • All workstreams<br>• TFP and relevant stakeholders<br>• TFP and relevant stakeholders | • Workstream teams<br>• Evaluation partner<br>• Evaluation partner |
| | | • Number of engagements with sector leaders on quality | • Activity log | • All workstreams | • Workstream teams |
| | | • In-depth exploration of impact | • Impact log<br>• MSC interviews<br>• SIPSI case studies<br>• Population survey (optional) | • All workstreams<br>• TFP and relevant stakeholders<br>• TFP and relevant stakeholders<br>• TFP and relevant stakeholders | • Workstream teams<br>• Evaluation partner<br>• Evaluation partner<br>• Evaluation partner |

| Sub-KEQ | Focus | Indicator | Methods | Source | Responsibility |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Systems Change conditions: 3. What unintended consequences of our strategic work are evident within the system?** | | | | | |
| 3a. For each of the strategic imperatives, how are relationships and power dynamics shifting within the system and what impact is this having on the system? | | Not applicable | • Power evaluation tool (optional)<br>• Network evaluation tool (optional) | • TFP and relevant stakeholders<br>• TFP and relevant stakeholders | • Evaluation partner<br>• Evaluation partner |
| 3b. What other (beyond power dynamics) unintended consequences are we seeing through our work, or in the ECEC ecosystem. | Emergence of positive and negative changes in the system as a result of TFP's work that is not captured in its strategic imperatives or the TOC. | Not applicable | • Impact log<br>• MSC interviews | • All workstreams<br>• TFP and relevant stakeholders | • Workstream teams<br>• Evaluation partner |

| Sub-KEQ | Focus | Indicator | Methods | Source | Responsibility |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **TFP Influencing Work: 4. How effective were each of the TFP workstreams in achieving engagement and knowledge generation in service of the strategic imperatives?** | | | | | |
| 4a. To what extent did we reach the right people with our work? | Reach and engagement of TFP's influencing work. | • Number of targeted policy engagement campaigns aimed at directly influencing government (e.g. engagements with ministers/MPs offices or government departments)*<br>• Number of meetings with government Ministers and MPs directly<br>• Number of ongoing engagements with Ministers/MPs offices<br>• Number of ongoing engagements with government departments | • Activity log | • Workstreams | • Research and Policy workstream/Impact Foundry teams |
| | | • Number of opinion pieces and commentary* | • Activity log | • Workstreams | • Communications workstream |
| | | • Number of media releases* | • Activity log | • Workstreams | • Communications workstream |

| Sub-KEQ | Focus | Indicator | Methods | Source | Responsibility |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | • Number of Apiary Fellows* | • Activity log | • Workstreams | • Apiary workstream |
| | | • Descriptive characteristics of people engaging with TFP website<br>• Number of visits to TFP website<br>• Number of social media followers on each of our channels<br>• Descriptive characteristics of people engaging with TFP on each of our channels | • Activity log<br>• Website analysis<br>• Channel analysis<br>• Channel analysis | • Google Analytics<br>• Google Analytics<br>• Channel analytics | • Communications workstream |
| 4b. To what extent did we equip key stakeholders, including children and families to amplify their voices and become advocates? | Whether TFP's work is amplifying voices and increasing advocacy. | • Self-reported perception of increased capacity to amplify voices and become advocates | • Pulse survey<br>• Follow up survey | • Apiary fellows<br>• Select TFP stakeholders as appropriate | • Apiary workstream<br>• Evaluation partner |
| | | • Self-reported perception of increased support to amplify voices and become advocates | • Pulse survey<br>• Follow up survey | • Apiary fellows<br>• Select TFP stakeholders as appropriate | • Apiary<br>• Evaluation partner |

| Sub-KEQ | Focus | Indicator | Methods | Source | Responsibility |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | • Number of educational resources* | • Activity log | • Workstreams | • Workstream teams |
| | | • Number of downloads of educational resources | • Media analysis | • Google analytics and website statistics | • Communications workstream |
| | | • Number of Impact Foundry innovations | • Activity log | • Workstreams | • Impact Foundry |
| 4c. To what extent did we build evidence and galvanise the system into action by applying research insights? | Whether TFP's research is building evidence and supporting the system to take action. | • Significant reaction to TFP's work* | • Media analysis, interviews, case study, Bellwether interview, SIPSI as appropriate | • Streem (captures sentiment)<br>• TFP stakeholders | • Communications workstream<br>• Evaluation partner |
| | | • Instances of evidence-based action in the ECEC sector as a result of TFP's work | • Impact log | • Workstreams | • Workstream teams |
| | | • Number of TFP research publications focusing on quality* | • Activity log | • Workstreams | • Research and policy workstream/Impact Foundry |
| | | • Number of TFP research publications supporting changes to early education and care policies* | • Activity log | • Workstreams | • Research and policy workstream/Impact Foundry |

| Sub-KEQ | Focus | Indicator | Methods | Source | Responsibility |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | • Number of TFP targeted publications for GR campaigns* | • Activity log | • Workstreams | • Research and policy workstream/Impact Foundry |
| | | • Proportion of TFP knowledge products that drew the attention of Bellwethers | • Bellwether informant interviews | • Bellwethers | • Evaluation partner |
| | | • Number of media mentions of TFP or TFP's research* | • Media analysis | • Streem | • Communications workstream |
| 4d. To what extent did we develop and enhance stakeholders' capabilities in the system to incubate, prototype and implement ideas? | Whether TFP's work is developing and enhancing stakeholder capabilities. | • TFP stakeholders' (incl. Apiary Fellows) self-reported perception of increased capability to incubate, prototype and implement ideas | • Pulse survey<br>• Follow up survey | • Select TFP stakeholders (incl. Apiary Fellows)<br>• Select TFP stakeholders (incl. Apiary Fellows) | • Select workstreams (incl. Apiary)<br>• Select workstreams (incl. Apiary) |
| | | • Number of collaborative initiatives and campaigns in which TFP is playing a lead/ catalyst role* | • Activity log | • All workstreams | • Workstream teams |
| | | • Number and type of innovations | • Activity log | • All workstreams | • Workstream teams |
| 4e. To what extent did we build new relationships and alliances needed for this work? | Whether TFP is facilitating increased collaboration and new relationships within the ECEC sector. | • TFP's actions contribute to increased level of collaboration in the ECEC sector leads to innovative systemic change* | • Impact log | • All workstreams | • Workstream teams |

| Sub-KEQ | Focus | Indicator | Methods | Source | Responsibility |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | • Number of visits to online community | • Website analysis | • Google analytics and website statistics | • Workforce Initiatives team |
| | | • Number of Convenings and meetings of Apiary Fellows* | • Activity log | • Apiary workstream | • Apiary team |
| | | • The sense of support that the sector feels to implement practice change and advocate for policy change on ECEC issues, through the Apiary fellows and the Impact Foundry* | • Pulse survey<br>• Follow up survey | • Apiary Fellows and Impact Foundry stakeholders<br>• Apiary Fellows and Impact Foundry stakeholders | • Apiary and Impact Foundry teams<br>• Apiary and Impact Foundry teams |
| | | • The sector has increased capacity to implement evidence-based practice change which translates to tangible actions, through the apiary fellows and the Impact Foundry* | • Pulse survey<br>• Follow up survey | • Apiary Fellows and Impact Foundry stakeholders<br>• Apiary Fellows and Impact Foundry stakeholders | • Apiary and Impact Foundry teams<br>• Apiary and Impact Foundry teams |

| Sub-KEQ | Focus | Indicator | Methods | Source | Responsibility |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | • Number of collaborations and initiatives*<br>– On ECEC reform initiatives and advocacy campaigns<br>– To improve ECEC access and outcomes<br>– Where TFP is playing a lead/catalyst role*<br>– Where TFP is participating<br>– To facilitate greater knowledge on ECEC outcomes for children | • Activity log | • All workstreams | • Workstream teams |
| 4f. To what extent did we strengthen potential of practitioners to improve their practice and create change in ECEC system? | Whether TFP's work is strengthening practice. | • TFP stakeholders' (incl. Apiary Fellows) self-reported perception of increased capacity to implement evidence-based practice change* | • Pulse survey<br>• Follow up survey | • Select TFP stakeholders (incl. Apiary Fellows)<br>• Select TFP stakeholders (incl. Apiary Fellows) | • Select workstreams (incl. Apiary)<br>• Select workstreams (incl. Apiary) |
| | | • Number of educational resources* | • Activity log | • All workstreams | • Workstream teams |
| | | • Number of downloads of educational resources* | • Online analytical analysis | • Google analytics and website statistics | • Communications workstream |

| Sub-KEQ | Focus | Indicator | Methods | Source | Responsibility |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 4g. To what extent have we prototyped our practices and ways of working? | Identification of TFP's pivots and adaptations | Not applicable | • Activity log | • All workstreams | • Workstream teams |
| **Organisational learning: 5. What are we learning about our work, the sector, and the broader system?** | | | | | |
| 5a. Across our work what are we learning about what is working and what needs improving, including our relationships? Which learnings are most significant? | Documentation of learnings about TFP's strategy and approach from the delivery of TFP's work<br>Extent to which TFP is prototyping its own practices and ways of working | Not applicable | • MSL interviews<br>• Reflection workshops<br>• Impact log | • All workstreams<br>• TFP-wide | • All TFP workstreams<br>• Evaluation partner |
| 5b. What are we learning about the ECEC system, sector and our role within it? Which learnings are most significant? | Documentation of learnings about the ECEC sector from the delivery of TFP's work<br>Documentation of learnings about the broader system from the delivery of TFP's work<br>Documentation of learnings about TFP's role in the ECEC sector | Not applicable | • MSL interviews<br>• Reflection workshops | • All workstreams<br>• TFP-wide | • TFP MEL team<br>• Evaluation partner |

| Sub-KEQ | Focus | Indicator | Methods | Source | Responsibility |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5c. To what extent and in what ways are we adapting and responding based on what we are learning? | | Not applicable | • Activity log<br>• MSL interviews<br>• Reflection workshops | • All workstreams<br>• All workstreams<br>• TFP-wide | • Workstream teams<br>• TFP MEL team<br>• Evaluation partner |
| 5d. How are our ways of working, including sharing insights at meetings, MSLs and adaptive leadership learnings and practices, and other practices we undertake to explore and affect systems change, impacting our work and the system? | | Not applicable | • MSL review<br>• Adaptive leadership session review<br>• MSL/adaptive leadership interviews<br>• Reflection workshops | • All workstreams<br>• All workstreams<br>• All workstreams<br>• TFP-wide | • TFP MEL project team<br>• TFP MEL project team<br>• TFP MEL project team<br>• Evaluation partner |

# 5. Evaluation and Reporting

**Definition:** Evaluation studies in this framework mostly involve commissioning independent studies that cross-check and calibrate internal measurement systems. They also involve examining the data and stories that have been collected through the internal measurement system and asking: 'so what?', 'what does that mean for us?' and 'what now (what should we do as a result of this judgement)?'

**Reporting** relates to outputs and visualisations across TFP from all components.

**Workstream-level actions**

- Participate in and provide data for annual and point-in-time evaluations

**TFP-level actions**

- Scope and commission external evaluation studies to complement the measurement system

**Likely types of reporting**

- Synthesis of measurement and learning into an **annual impact and learning evaluation report for TFP as a whole** (June each year, with a deep dive into different strategic imperatives each year)
- End of funding cycle impact evaluation

## Existing reporting and evaluation requirements

The table below depicts the timing of current reporting requirements for TFP.

**Table 3. Reporting requirements**

| Audience | Date/timing | Purpose |
|---|---|---|
| Board | Every 2 months | Routine performance reporting through the Activity Table and Board papers. |
| Paul Ramsay Foundation (PRF) | Every 6 months, August and December | Interim (end December) and annual (by 1 August) progress reporting |

## Reporting/outputs

The following schedule of reports/outcomes has been designed to meet our reporting needs, and to provide data for strategic learning:

- An annual evaluation report to synthesise the learning and outcomes across TFP
- Formal point-in-time evaluation studies

### Annual report

An annual formal evaluation will enable TFP to have external, independent evaluation of the process and emerging impact. These evaluations will draw on measurement and learning activities across a year to produce a synthesis of impact and learnings. Each year, the annual report will seek to understand TFP's emerging impact against select strategic imperatives and will do so by employing the SIPSI method (see Table 4. Overview of proposed annual reporting).

**Table 4. Overview of proposed annual reporting**

| Year evaluated | Strategic Imperatives in Focus | KEQs reported against |
|---|---|---|
| 2022-2023 | Strategic Anchor, SI 1 and 5 | 1, 2a and 2e, 3, 4, 5 |
| 2023-2024 | Strategic Anchor, SI 2 and 3 | 1, 2b and 2c, 3, 4, 5 |
| 2024-2025 | Strategic Anchor, SI 4 | 1, 2d, 3, 4, 5 |
| 2025-2026 | All SIs and Strategic Anchor | All KEQs |
| 2026-2027 | All SIs and Strategic Anchor | All KEQs |

This process will involve TFP staff and be supported by an external evaluator for rigour and independence.

The proposed output of the annual learning and evaluations include for each selected strategic imperative:

- A description of the activities and engagement over the year as related to that strategic imperative
- Reporting of achievements against relevant indicators
- Findings against the relevant key evaluation questions
- A summary of the extent to which TFP has affected change for the strategic imperatives in focus for the year
- Key learnings and proposed adaptations.

In order to move away from activity reporting, towards a more outcome focused style of reporting, TFP's evaluation partner will explore structuring the reports around the 'story' of each selected strategic imperative, what was done, what shifts occurred in the four keys of systems change (power, purpose, relationships and resource flows), what were the learnings and adaptions made, and what this means for the work going forwards. Annex 3 shows the proposed structure for the 2022-23 Annual Report.

## End of funding cycle impact evaluation

Annual formal evaluation will enable TFP to have external, independent evaluation of the process and impact. External evaluation will focus on one or two of the Strategic Imperatives and KEQs, as outlined in Table 4. Overview of proposed annual reporting.

These evaluations will involve a more in-depth study focused on impact, drawing links between changes across our measurement levels and contribution to our strategic imperatives over a longer period, rather than focusing on an annual cycle. These evaluations will look at data collected across previous annual reporting cycles as well as new data to answer the overarching inquiry framework for the whole of initiative. They will use the SIPSI method to understand and communicate TFP's contribution to its Strategic Anchor and Imperatives. These evaluations may also look to draw comparisons between TFP and best practice, including any leading global practices.

## Optional components to build and test

This refreshed MEL strategy places a stronger focus on systems change and on the strategic imperatives. Amongst other things, this phase of evaluation will explore some new ways to factor in relational and power dynamics operating within the system.

Systems change approaches (increasingly referred to as systems transformation) aim to address the underlying causes that hold the system in a non-optimal state. The argument is that by addressing only surface-level symptoms, the system will naturally return to the non-optimal state. So instead, in order to create long-term change, TFP needs to shift the **conditions** that are holding that system in place. There are a number of frameworks that propose what these systems conditions are. For example, the Rockwool foundation has recently released some work that offers a pragmatic framework proposing that there are four interconnected keys that are universal to all systems: **power, purpose, relationships and resource flows**. Systems are transformed when these keys are unlocked, loosened and reconfigured in new ways to create new systems. Systems innovation can unlock these keys and influence the intentional emergence of a new system (reference: Systems Innovation[3] Initiative, Rockwool Foundation).

Evaluating systems change initiatives is challenging. A key challenge is knowing whether the system is changing, whether the direction of change is good, and if the innovation is contributing to this shift. This is complicated by the long timeframes and non-linearity of progress. The conventional notions of causality and attribution don't hold up well. Instead, progress, changes in dynamics, signs of change and tipping points become more important anchors. Recent thinking suggests that evaluation of initiatives with systems change intentions can be usefully structured to consider these four keys of power, purpose, relationships and resource flows. The Rockwool Foundation are piloting the use of these four keys in evaluating systems change initiatives. The Front Project could benefit from piloting the concept over the next 3 years.

The benefit of these keys is they provide a framework for the optional tools being considered by TFP, which allows the evaluation partner to align the development of tools with emerging best practice in evaluating systems change initiatives. The table below identifies the optional tools, the corresponding 'key', and how that key aligns to TFP Strategic Imperatives. These tools are identified in Section 4 as optional methods.

| Key | Optional tool | Relevance to TFP | Possible timing |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Benefits of ECEC (Purpose)** | A population survey tool to understand the extent to which the perceived benefits of ECEC are changing. | This tool key aligns with SI1, that is, the perceived benefits that ECEC delivers. It will also capture dominant narratives and perceptions of quality. | 2023 to feed into 22/23 annual evaluation |
| **Power** | A power measurement tool. | This will be relevant to SI4, and to shifting the role of families and children's voices in the policy cycle. | Discovery work in first half of 2023, piloting in second half of 2023, to feed in 2024 report. |

3 Jennie Winhall and Charles Leadbeater (2022), The Patterns of Possibility. Systems Innovation Initiative, Rockwool Foundation, Denmark, Publications — The System Innovation Initiative

| Key | Optional tool | Relevance to TFP | Possible timing |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Relationships** | The use of modified approach to social network analysis to measure changes in relationship strength. This would include some discovery work around how it might be done using Salesforce, and social media contacts etc. The key here will be to ensure we are focusing on the quality and the purpose of the relationships. | This might best be suited to the workstream level due to the clear boundaries of the network (for example, we can define the network in relation to Apiary Fellows or those recorded in the CRM). Relationships fit across all SIs. | We could begin on discovery work in 2023 with one-workstream and test how useful it is |
| **Flows** | Flows are tracked to some extent through tracking federal and state government decisions, and workforce pay. | It may be particularly well suited to looking at strategic imperative 5. | Discovery work in 2023, to use the additional elements in 2024 |

In addition to prototyping with new tools, the evaluation partner aims to also modify the approach to reflection and learning to better incorporate the systems perspective. The evaluation partner will experiment with different types of generative questions, to see how best to support the team to keep the systems perspective forefront of conversation and reflection.

At the end of the year, the evaluation partner will create a guidance note/ learning brief on what was learned about how to measure and evaluate progress in systems change work. This would draw on international work, as well as documenting learnings from The Front Project as a case study. This would include challenges in elevating findings and framing within a systems transformation narrative, as well as insights into what has worked so far. The evaluation partner could do some collaborative sense-making as part of this work that would serve to build capability in the Front Project team around how to evaluate systems change efforts.

# 6. Operationalising MEL at TFP

The following table steps out how the measurement and learning methods may be operationalised at TFP for the purposes of evaluation and reporting. This includes the alignment of methods to the KEQs, who is responsible for them and how regularly they will be applied.

**Table 5. Operationalisation table**

| Method | Alignment | Responsibility | Frequency |
|---|---|---|---|
| Bellwether informant interviews | KEQ 2, 3 and 4 | Evaluation partner | Annually |
| Impact log | KEQs 2, 3 and 4 | All TFP workstreams to create and complete their workstream impact log<br>TFP MEL team responsible for set up and management of organisation-wide impact log | Ongoing |
| Indicator log | KEQs 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 | All TFP workstreams to complete<br>TFP MEL team responsible for set up and management | Monthly |
| Media analysis | KEQs 2, 3 and 4 | Communications workstream | Monthly |
| Sense making/ reflection workshop | KEQs 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 | Evaluation partner<br>Evaluation partner | Four-monthly<br>Annually |
| MSC | KEQs 1, 2 and 3 | Evaluation partner | Annually |
| MSL | KEQ 5 | All TFP workstreams | Bi-monthly |
| MSL review | KEQ 5 | TFP MEL team | Annually |
| Network evaluation tool (optional) | KEQ 3 | Evaluation partner | Piloted once, then TBC |
| Population data analysis | KEQs 1 and 2 | Evaluation partner | Annually |
| Power evaluation tool (optional) | KEQ 3 | Evaluation partner | Piloted once, then TBC |
| Population survey (optional) | KEQ 2 | Evaluation partner | Three-yearly |
| SIPSI | KEQs 1, 2 and 3 | Evaluation partner | Annually |
| Team feedback | KEQs 1-5 | All TFP workstreams | Monthly |
| Workstream surveys | KEQ 1, 2, 3 and 4 | Select TFP workstreams<br>Workforce initiatives team<br>Apiary team<br>Impact Foundry | As required |

*__TFP MEL team__ refers to Lead Impact Foundry, Manager Evidence and Evaluation and Policy and Project Officer.

**Table 6. MEL project timeline FY22-23 and indicative of upcoming years to align with organisational strategy**

| Month/Year | Actions | Meetings |
|---|---|---|
| **July 2022** | • Data collection for FY22 Progress report<br>• Continue finalising the MEL organisational strategy | • **Fortnightly MEL implementation meetings** with Clear Horizon and MEL team as necessary<br>• **No feedback meetings** as processes being set up |
| **August 2022** | • Finalising the FY22 Progress report – first draft due from Clear Horizon 10 August<br>• Finalise the MEL organisational strategy<br>• Begin designing FY23 Data collection with teams – proposal endorsed by SLT<br>• Roll out of ongoing data collection process – mid-end of August | |
| **September 2022** | • Progress report finalised<br>• Continuing ongoing data collection across teams<br>• Re-design ongoing engagement with Clear Horizon | • **Monthly feedback loop:** Checkout, September 13<br>• **Fortnightly MEL implementation meetings** with Clear Horizon and MEL team as necessary |
| **October 2022** | • Continuing ongoing data collection across teams<br>• Finalisation of MEL strategy refresh | • **Monthly feedback loop:** Checkout, October 11<br>• **Fortnightly MEL implementation meetings** with Clear Horizon and MEL team as necessary |
| **November 2022** | • Continuing ongoing data collection across teams<br>• Share data with Clear Horizon | • **Monthly feedback loop:** Checkout, November 8<br>• **Fortnightly MEL implementation meetings** with Clear Horizon and MEL team as necessary<br>• **Mini-sensemaking workshop** (every 4 months) |
| **December 2022** | • Continuing ongoing data collection across teams<br>• Sensemaking workshop<br>• Report due to PRF | • **Monthly feedback loop:** Checkout, December 13<br>• **TFP end of year review:** December 15<br>• **Fortnightly MEL implementation meetings** with Clear Horizon and MEL team as necessary |
| **January 2023** | • Continuing ongoing data collection across teams | • **Monthly feedback loop:** Checkout, January 13<br>• **Fortnightly MEL implementation meetings** with Clear Horizon and MEL team as necessary |

| Month/Year | Actions | Meetings |
|---|---|---|
| **February 2023** | • Continuing ongoing data collection across teams<br>• TFP MEL team begin designing mid-year report to funders | • **Monthly feedback loop:** Checkout, February 14<br>• **Fortnightly MEL implementation meetings** with Clear Horizon and MEL team as necessary |
| **March 2023** | • Continuing ongoing data collection across teams<br>• Clear Horizon undertaking SIPSI, sample surveys and/or case studies as necessary | • **Monthly feedback loop:** Checkout, March 14<br>• **Fortnightly MEL implementation meetings** with Clear Horizon and MEL team as necessary<br>• **Mini-sensemaking workshop** (every 4 months) |
| **April 2023** | • Continuing ongoing data collection across teams<br>• Data collection cut off and handover to Clear Horizon | • **Monthly feedback loop:** Checkout, April 11<br>• **Fortnightly MEL implementation meetings** with Clear Horizon and MEL team as necessary |
| **May 2023** | • Continuing ongoing data collection across teams (limited to quantitative data to satisfy quantitative funding indicators)<br>• Data analysis and follow up interviews by evaluation partner | • **Monthly feedback loop:** Checkout, May 9<br>• **Fortnightly MEL implementation meetings** with Clear Horizon and MEL team as necessary<br>• **Interviews with TFP:** Clear Horizon to undertake follow up interviews as part the data analysis process to ensure accurate context and clarify any gaps in data provided |
| **June 2023** | • Continuing ongoing data collection across teams (limited to quantitative data to satisfy quantitative funding indicators) | • **Monthly feedback loop:** Checkout, June 13<br>• **Larger, organisation-wide sense-making workshop with Clear Horizon.**<br>• **Fortnightly MEL implementation meetings** with Clear Horizon and MEL team as necessary |
| **July 2023** | • Continuing ongoing data collection across teams<br>• Report drafting and finalisation | • **Clear Horizon leading; TFP providing input; meetings as required**<br>• **Monthly feedback loop:** Checkout, July 11<br>• **Fortnightly MEL implementation meetings** with Clear Horizon and MEL team as necessary |
| **August 2023** | • Continuing ongoing data collection across teams<br>• Submit report to PRF | • **1 August submission deadline**<br>• **Monthly feedback loop:** Checkout, August 8<br>• **Fortnightly MEL implementation meetings** with Clear Horizon and MEL team as necessary |

# 7. Governance, Scrutiny and Ethics

Careful and inclusive oversight, external scrutiny and governance of the MEL activities are critical to the successful delivery of the MEL strategy. To address this element, we will endeavour to follow these principles:

- Clear roles and responsibilities
- Welcoming of external scrutiny
- Adhering to ethical standards and privacy laws
- Attention to data management and security

## Roles and responsibilities

Within TFP, the MEL Team carries responsibility for actioning each of the items below while the CEO is responsible for approvals. Items include:

- Changes to the overall MEL strategy
- Reporting outputs
- Recommendations for adjusting TFP strategy

People with governance and sign off roles may need capability development support to fulfil this somewhat technical role. Additionally, the governance arrangements need to establish internal and external responsibilities.

## External scrutiny

External scrutiny is encouraged through the MEL strategy methodology through the following approaches:

- Recruiting an external evaluation partner to provide objectivity in the work they do (including through data collection, analysis and reporting processes)
- Undertaking quarterly sense-making workshops facilitated by an external evaluation partner to interpret data in real time as well as to assess the quality and relevance of ongoing data collection.
- Undertaking annual external evaluations to provide the highest level of rigour

The Funder may also invoke the Special Condition in Clause 8 of the agreement whereby they undertake or commission an independent evaluation of TFPs work. This will form part of the ongoing communication with the Funder. Any additional evaluation strengthens this existing strong MEL strategy and current use of an external evaluation partner and annual externally verified reports.

## Adhering to ethical standards and privacy laws

All evaluations and data collected must adhere to ethical standards – please see the tool kit for resources on this. Any external evaluator commissioned should be a member of the AES and thus bound by the code of ethics.

## Data management and security

Measurement data should be stored in a secure data platform. TFP will store the data collected as part of its MEL activities and notify stakeholders who participate in data collection about how their data will be stored and used as part of MEL. This will help us to ensure we maintain data rigour and integrity.

MEL project governance and operational structure

**Figure 2. TFP MEL project structure**

Please see Table 7 for roles and responsibilities.

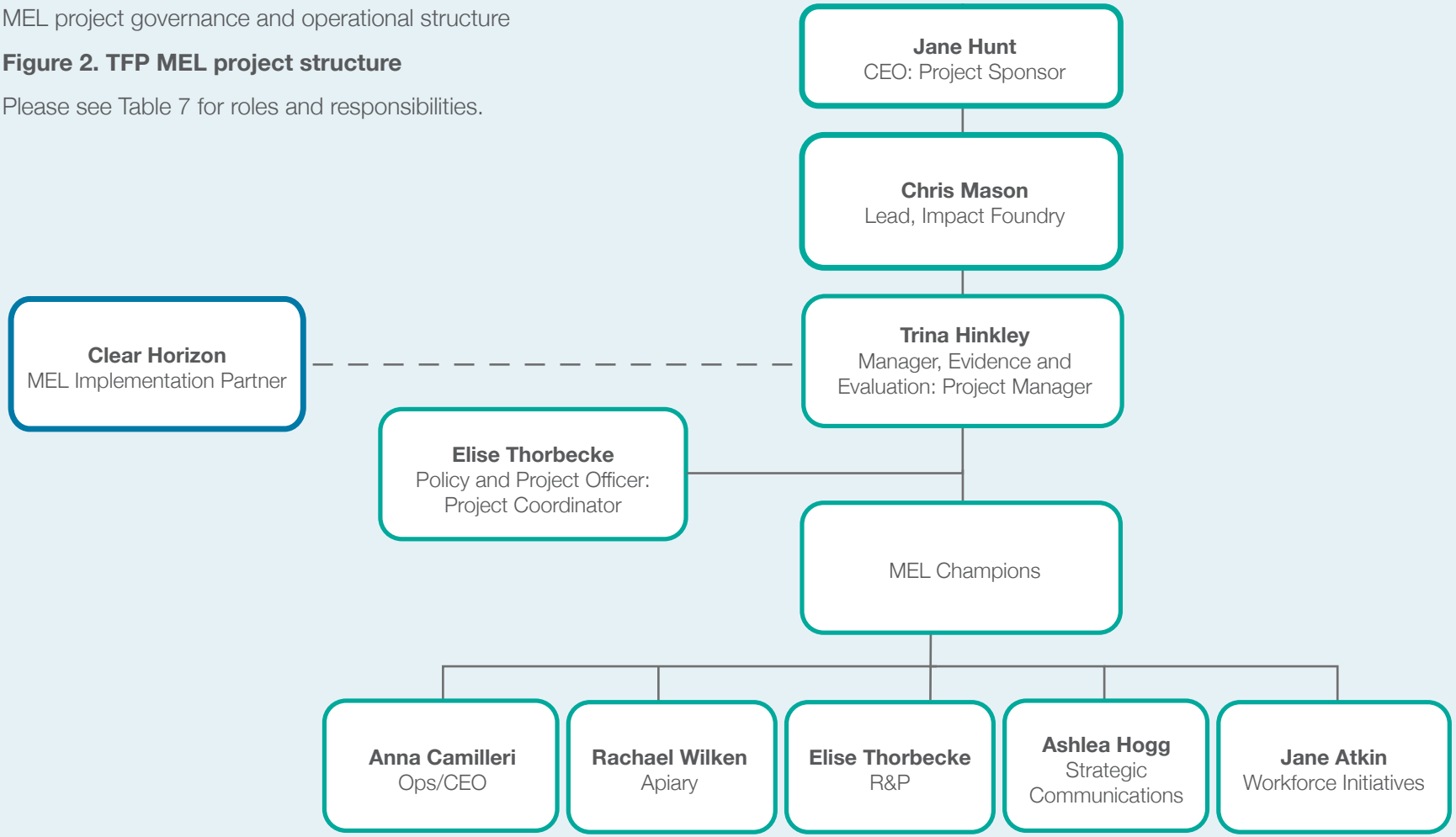


**Table 7. Roles and responsibilities**

| Role | Responsibilities |
|---|---|
| **Project sponsor** | Overall oversight and direction, lead organisational expertise, final decision-maker and approvals. |
| **TFP MEL Team**<br>Project Lead – Lead, Impact Foundry | Accountable for MEL project work. Provides strategic advice from a 'whole of organisation' perspective into the design and operational decisions and direction. Reviews all deliverables before final approval, and supports the implementation team with process and deliverables, including in conversations with MEL Champions, Senior Leadership Team and Clear Horizons, where appropriate. Responsible for maintaining the budget and managing external evaluation partner/s. |
| • Project manager – Manager, Evidence and Evaluation | Leads MEL project work. Provides senior organisational expertise, day-to-day decisions and direction. Holds the full picture of MEL project components and chairs the MEL Champions team. Leads sense-making, reporting and system review components with expert contributions from Clear Horizon as appropriate. Contributes to and has oversight of the learning organisation design component and supports teams in implementation. Provides direction to Policy and Project Officer in MEL project coordination and updates to CEO. |
| • Project coordinator – Policy and Projects Officer | Supports all aspects of MEL. Contributes to design of the project and runs the operations of the project, including but not limited to drafting project plans and updates and maintaining Asana, coordinating meetings and capacity building opportunities, setting agendas, recording actions, reports WIP. Leads communication with Clear Horizon. |
| **MEL champions** | This team is responsible for the two-way traffic of information, feedback and directions between workstreams and the MEL project team. Champions support the effective implementation of the MEL strategy. Champions will let the project coordinator or manager know what the blocks are to implementing within workstreams (capacity, capability, technical, structural, cultural) to keep data collection and learning routines to the agreed cycle. In turn, members receive advanced information about the project and additional exposure to the expertise of Clear Horizon. Champions will occasionally be required to attend regular MEL implementation meetings with the TFP MEL team and Clear Horizon. |

| | |
|---|---|
| **Clear Horizon** | Clear Horizon supports the implementation of TFP's MEL strategy. Currently the TFP MEL team engages with Clear Horizon in fortnightly MEL implementation meetings, with the MEL champions attending when necessary. Clear Horizon offers TFP expert guidance and support in the design and implementation of the MEL strategy. TFP currently engages Clear Horizon through a drawdown model, which allows TFP to engage with Clear Horizon in a flexible manner based on the type of support needed.<br><br>Key responsibilities include:<br><br>— Designing the 'sense-making workshop' agendas and facilitating the workshops. Mini sense making workshops will be held in November and March, with a larger sense-making workshop in June. These workshops will allow TFP team members to understand how we are having impact across the organisation, allow the TFP team to feel ownership of their data, as well as ensure the data are regularly interrogated. The workshops will also allow the Clear Horizon team to elevate the individual workstream data to look at 'whole of organisation' and through a systemic lens, pulling out 'harder to capture' impact such as that connected to relationships and power.<br><br>— Feedback on TFP data-collection tools.<br><br>— Analysis of all data collected and provided to Clear Horizon.<br><br>— Drafting and production of final version of progress and impact reports with the final version being suitable for sharing with key external stakeholders, including funders.<br><br>In addition, evaluation will need to consider the relational and power dynamics operating within the system. One approach to undertaking this could be through assessing power dynamics through network analysis of key actors within the system. Additionally, data collected by TFP in their Impact Log can provide insight into networks, relationships and power dynamics at play in the system. All data will be provided to Clear Horizon for analysis and can be used to inform discussions during sense-making workshops, as appropriate. |

# Annex 1: Toolkit

This attachment outlines the tools, baseline data and other useful resources to inform TFP's MEL activities.

## MEL activity tools and guidelines

### Bellwether informant interviews

1. Currently, what three issues do you think are at the top of the [state/federal/local] policy agenda?
2. How familiar are you with [the policy of interest]?
3. What individuals, constituencies, or groups do you see as the main advocates for [the policy]? Who do you see as the main opponents?
4. Considering the current educational, social, and political context, do you think [the policy] should be adopted now or in the near future?
5. Looking ahead, how likely do you think it is that [the policy] will be adopted in the next 5 years?
6. If [the policy] is adopted, what issues do you think the state needs to be most concerned about related to its implementation?
7. Are you aware of the following resources/events? [List TFP resources/events]

Thank you for your time and comments, they have been most useful. If you would like to see a copy of the notes I have taken during the interview, feel free to get in touch. If you have any questions regarding this interview, my manager is **[insert name]** and you can contact her at **[insert number]**.

### MSC

#### Preamble

Hello, my name is **[insert name]** from **[insert organisation]**. We have been contracted by the Front Project (TFP) to undertake an evaluation of The Front Project. Your details were provided to us by TFP as someone who would be important to talk to.

The purpose of the interview is to gather stories of change and identify outcomes resulting from your participation in events/activities organised and performed by The Front Project.

Participation in the interview is voluntary and will remain anonymous. You will not be identified by name in our report to The Front Project. However, as we are interviewing a limited number of people and collecting stories of significant change, we cannot guarantee your anonymity. If there are any comments you would not like to be associated with, please let me know so that I can ensure anonymity.

We can stop the interview at any time, and you do not have to answer a question if you do not want to. If you would like to withdraw your comments after the interview concludes, I will provide you with my contact details and you can contact me to remove them from our database

This interview is expected to take 30 minutes. Are you happy to proceed? **Y/N**

We will be recording this interview for the purposes of its transcription. The recording will **[specify data privacy and storage processes of organisation]**. It will not be provided to TFP or any other third party. Do you consent to this recording? **Y/N**

### Most significant change

1. Tell me a little about yourself and how you've been involved with The Front Project.
2. Please list any changes that you feel have resulted from your collaboration, work or involvement with TFP. They can be changes to your knowledges and skills, changes in the way you practice, or even changes to or in your networks.
3. Of these changes, which one is the most significant change for you? Can you tell us the story of this in some depth?
   - What was it like before this change happened?
   - What happened?
   - What is it like for you now?
4. Why was this change the most significant for you?

### Other

5. What do you feel the future holds for the ECEC sector? (Follow up: what role could TFP and partners play in shaping this?)
6. Do you have any other feedback you'd like to share today?

### Closing

Thank you for your time and comments, they have been most useful. If you would like to see a copy of the notes I have taken during the interview, feel free to get in touch. If you have any questions regarding this interview, my manager is **[insert name]** and you can contact her at **[insert number]**.

## MSL

### Preamble

Hello, my name is **[insert name]** from **[insert organisation]**. We have been contracted by the Front Project (TFP) to undertake an evaluation of The Front Project. Your details were provided to us by TFP as someone who would be important to talk to.

The purpose of the interview is to talk about your learnings resulting from your participation in events/activities organised and performed by The Front Project. We hope to use the MSL stories to help us pool common learnings, make improvements to our work, and we may use it for reporting. You will not be identified in any reporting.

This interview is expected to take 20 minutes. Are you happy to proceed? **Y/N**

### Most significant change

1. Tell me a little about yourself and how you've been involved with The Front Project.
2. Please list any assumptions that you held that turned out not to hold true, over the past [4-12 months].
3. We have been talking about a number of learnings (refer to list provided in question above). Of these learnings, which one is the most significant learning for you? Please try to describe it in the form of a story and in as much detail as you can.

- What assumption was it that you held at the beginning, and what was the basis of this

belief?

- What happened to shed new light on this? How did you discover this assumption wasn't holding true?
- What happened next? How did this learning affect you/ your work?

4. Why was this change the most significant for you?

### Closing

We may like to share your story for learning and reporting. Do you:

- want to have your name on the story? (Y/N)
- consent to us using your story for publication? (Y/N)

## SIPSI

### Preamble

The Front Project (TFP) has contracted Clear Horizon to support their evaluation activities in the period between **[enter dates]**. You are invited to participate in this interview as a representative of an organisation that is a key stakeholder of TFP. This document provides you with information about the interview process, including its purpose, what data we will collect from you and how they will be used and handled. Please read this information carefully. Please reach out to **[insert name]** on **[insert number]** if you have any questions. Your participation in the evaluation is completely voluntary.

### What is the purpose of the interview?

We are currently collecting data regarding the impact of TFP's contributions towards **[enter strategic imperative and date range]**. We are seeking to interview key stakeholders to hear their perspectives about how TFP's activities and actions may have contributed towards and/or supported change in the **[insert strategic imperative]**.

In this interview, we would like to hear:

- How you have been involved with TFP
- Changes you have seen that TFP has contributed towards in the last year
- Which changes have been significant

The information from the interviews will be used to evidence and support case studies about TFP's work, which will be submitted as a report to TFP's Board and potentially to funder/s. These case studies may be further developed for publication, in which case TFP and/or Clear Horizon will contact you.

### What happens if I agree to participate?

This interview will take approximately 30 to 45 minutes via videoconferencing (Zoom, Microsoft Teams, or another platform of your choice). The interview will be recorded, with your permission, to ensure we capture everything correctly. We can stop the interview at any time, and you do not have to answer a question if you do not want to.

You can choose whether you would like to be identified by name in our reports and whether you would like your organisation to be identified. If you choose not to, we will assign you a pseudonym. However, as we are interviewing a limited number of people/organisations, we

cannot guarantee that no one would be able to identify you or your organisation based on your responses. Please identify in the interview if you say something that you would prefer not to be included in the report.

As stated above, the interviews will first be used to support a report for TFP's Board. The case studies may be further developed for publication, in which case TFP and/or Clear Horizon contact you.

### What are the possible benefits or risks?

Possible benefits include helping improve TFP's activities, which may in turn affect your organisation as a key stakeholder with TFP and/or in the early childhood education and care sector. Also, people often report that interviews like this provide them with an opportunity to reflect on their own activities and changes in their sector.

Risks may include possible discomfort associated with discussing any issues or problems that might have involved TFP or your organisation. You may feel concerned about the consequences of disclosing certain information, which could compromise relationships. However, we are implementing the process described above to minimise this risk.

### What will happen with the information I provide?

Information collected in this interview will be stored on a secure server at Clear Horizon for four years, after which it will be destroyed. Only the Clear Horizon evaluation team will have access to the raw data (recording and transcripts), and we will not share them with anyone else, including TFP. As described above, we will implement a process to eliminate sensitive and confidential information, to the best of our ability, before sharing data with TFP.

If TFP decide to use your comments in the reports for marketing and communication purposes in the future, they will contact you to seek additional consent.

## Surveys

### The Apiary

In the first 12 months of Fellowship, fellows are asked to complete an impact or progress survey post their first convening and post their third convening. Ongoing, while fellows are active they are asked to complete this survey annually.

During their first year of Fellowship and ongoing, fellows are asked to complete a short post-event survey after convenings.

Post convenings, the Apiary Design team completes the systemic thinking and talking rubric to assess progress of participants.

**Strategic Communications and Advocacy** does not currently use surveys but wishes to operationalise them in the future. The team sees surveys as a way to gather additional data on current and future campaign contacts to assess demographic data and trends.

**Workforce Initiatives** uses a number of surveys. At the time of writing, these are under-going review and are therefore not included in their current form.

**Impact Foundry** will use surveys for evaluation and research purposes as needed. These will be developed specific to need and are not included here.

## Reflection workshops

### Sense-making/reflection workshops

Workshops held in November and March of each financial year for 90 minutes. At these workshops, sense-making will not be undertaken against the KEQs. Rather, we suggest sense-making be a simpler, overview of what TFP workstreams have done against their workplans, any impacts from this work and what has been learned about activities, strategy, and TFP. An agenda will be developed before the first sense-making workshop by the evaluation partner and in consultation with TFP.

### Annual reflection workshop

Three-hour workshops held in June each year. These workshops will be structured against the KEQs that are to be evaluated as part of the annual evaluation cycle. An agenda will be developed before the annual workshop by the evaluation partner and in consultation with TFP.

### Roles and responsibilities

Clear Horizon will facilitate the reflection workshops. For annual reflection workshops, TFP will provide consolidated raw data to Clear Horizon by a pre-determined cut off (see Table 6. MEL project timeline FY22-23 and indicative of upcoming years to align with organisational strategy). Clear Horizon will analyse the data to produce preliminary evaluation insights that will be tested and verified by TFP during the workshop. Structure of the sense-making workshops is to be agreed between Clear Horizon and TFP at an up-coming partnership meeting.

# Population data

**Table 8. Population-level monitoring indicators**

| Indicator | Source | Details | 2020/2021 baseline |
|---|---|---|---|
| Decrease gap in % developmentally vulnerable by SEIFA | AEDC | AEDC 2021 National Report, Table 18 p. 45 | 18.5% of the most disadvantaged children are developmentally vulnerable, compared to 6.5% of the most advantaged |
| Decrease % Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander developmentally vulnerable | AEDC | AEDC 2021 National Report, Table 18 p. 46 | 25.8% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander children are developmentally vulnerable, compared to 10.1% of other children |

| Indicator | Source | Details | 2020/2021 baseline |
|---|---|---|---|
| Increase % services that meet or exceed Exceeding the National Quality Standard | ACECQA National Snapshot | ACECQA, National Snapshot Q1 2020, Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority, Sydney, 2020 https://www.acecqa.gov.au/nqf/snapshots<br>National Snapshots are published quarterly, data items do change between editions but this item will always be reported | 30% of services rated Exceeding (Q1 2020) |
| Increase children enrolled in preschool<br>Increase in 0-5 year olds enrolled in ECEC services | Report on Government Services, Early Childhood Education | PC, Report on Government Services, Early Childhood Education, Table 3A.18, Children enrolled in a preschool program in the state-specific YBFS, Productivity Commission, Canberra, 2020<br>https://www.pc.gov.au/research/ongoing/report-on-government-services/2020/child-care-education-and-training/early-childhood-education-and-care<br>ROGS is published annually. The data items sometimes change but the state-specific YBFS measure is likely to remain consisten | 91% of children in year before school<br>44.4% of 0-5yo in ECEC |

| Indicator | Source | Details | 2020/2021 baseline |
|---|---|---|---|
| Increase in teachers as a proportion of the workforce | Early Childhood Workforce Census | Department of Education and Skills, Early Childhood Workforce Census, Table 5, Highest Level of Qualification of Paid Contact Staff (Long Day Care only), Canberra, 2017 - https://docs.education.gov.au/system/files/doc/other/2016_ecec_nwc_national_report_sep_2017_0.pdf<br><br>Census held only every 3 years, regularly data unlikely, but this data item is always likely to be c ollected | 12.9% of ECEC workforce in long day care have a bachelor's degree |

# Resources

## Guides for ethical conduct

**Table 9. Guidelines for ethical conduct**

| Tool | Description | Link to guide |
|---|---|---|
| **Ethical conduct guide and forms** | A resource suited to place-based approaches and collective impact initiative – includes a guide to ethics in a complex and template for permissions form. | Clear Horizon's 'Ethics, privacy and safety' |
| **Ethical conduct guide and forms** | A series of guidelines made in accordance with the National Health and Medical Research Council Act 1992. | National Health and Medical Research Council: National Statement |
| **Code of ethics for AES** | All evaluators who are members of the Australian Evaluation Society (AES) are bound by the code of ethics. | AES code of ethics; and AES Guidelines |
| **Example Participant Informed Consent Form** | Example participant information and consent form. | Clear Horizon's 'Ethics, privacy and safety' |
| **National ethics application form** | Where a full ethics process is required by the client and they have not provided a preferred ethics form, the Human Research Ethics Application (HREA). | National Health and Medical Research Council: HREA |

# Annex 2: Workstream theories of change

The following represents the TOCs for the Apiary, Communications, Impact Foundry and Workforce Initiatives workstreams. Some of these TOCs have been updated from prior iterations while others are newly developed.

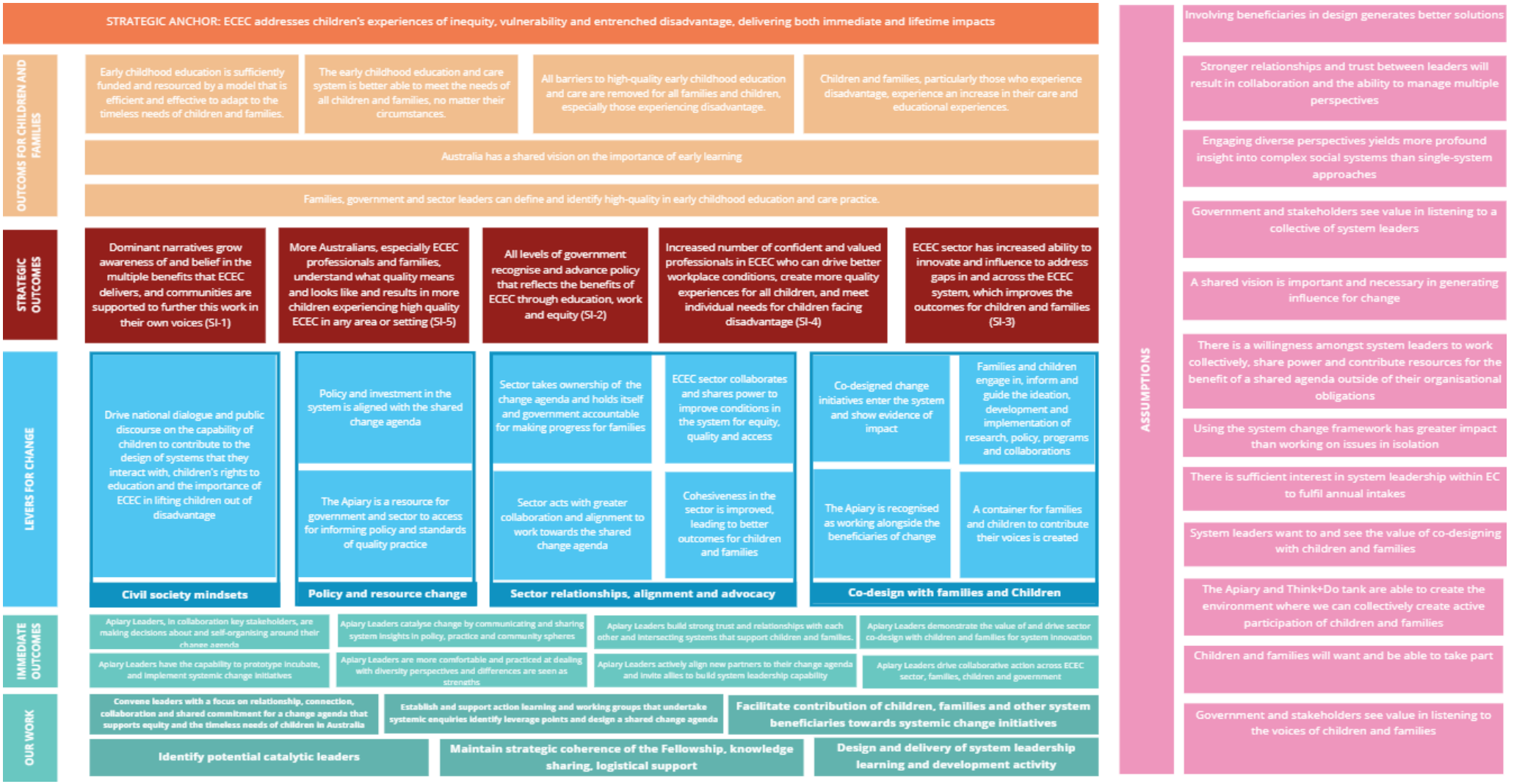



**Figure 3. Apiary Theory of Change (updated April 2022)**

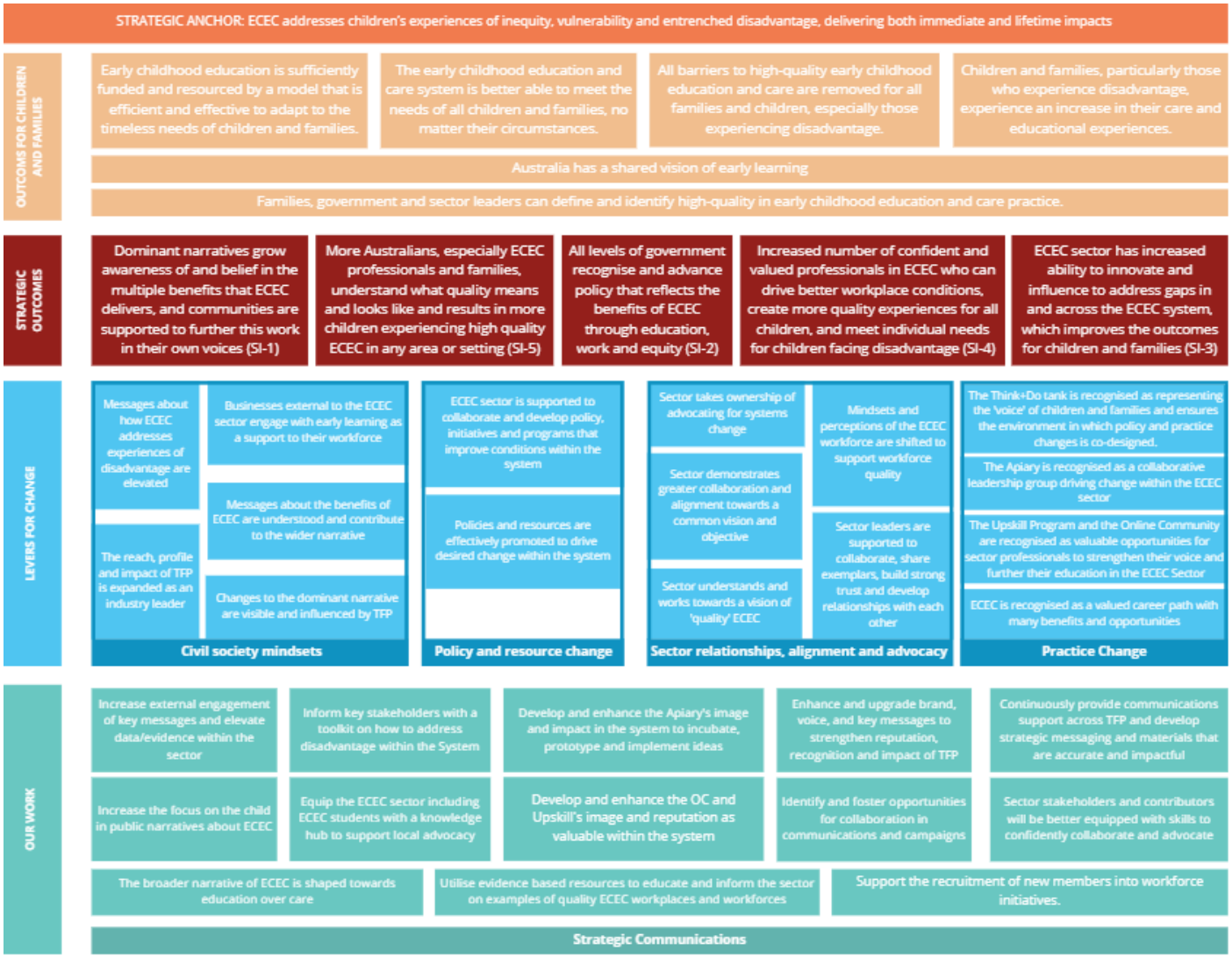



**Figure 4. Strategic Communications and Advocacy Theory of Change (updated April 2022)**

**Figure 5. Impact Foundry Theory of Change (developed April 2022)**

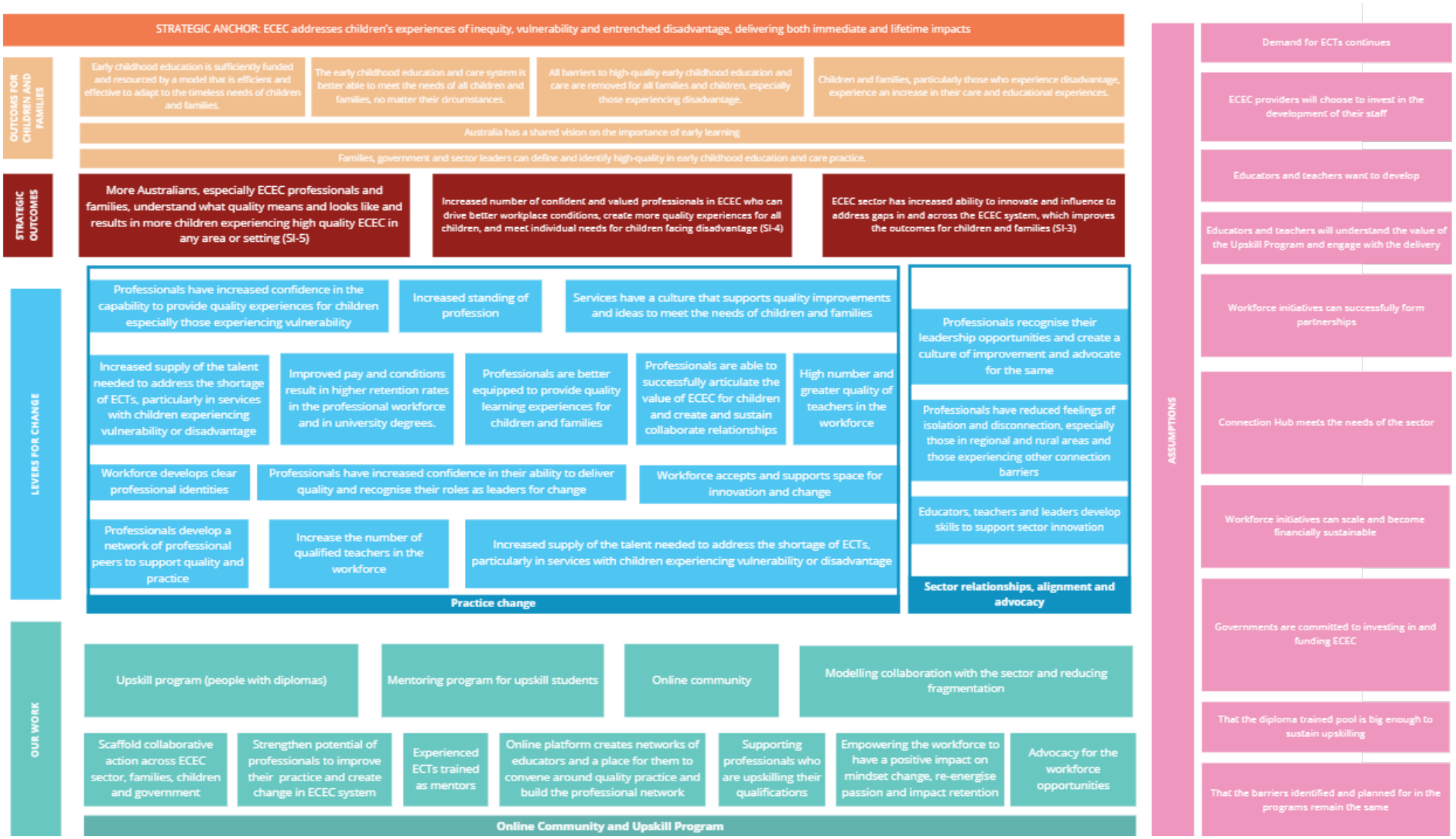



**Figure 6. Workforce Initiatives Theory of Change (updated April 2022)**

# Annex 3: Plan for 2022-2023 Annual Report

The 2023 annual report will focus on the Strategic Anchor and Strategic Imperatives 1 and 5. The report will include the following sections:

- Executive summary
- Introduction
- Findings against the Strategic Anchor (KEQ 1)
- Two stories, one for each Strategic Imperative as shown in the Table below.
- Key learnings
- Conclusion

**Table 10. Structure of stories for each Strategic Imperative**

| Section | Relevant KEQs |
|---|---|
| Description of activities and engagement | KEQs 4a, b, c (SI1)<br>KEQs 4a, b, c, d, f (SI2) |
| Reporting of achievements and shifts, and summary of how TFP contributed to these shifts | KEQs 2a, 3 |
| Key learnings and proposed adaptations | KEQ 5 |
| What this means going forwards | NA – recommendations |

thefrontproject.org.au

info@thefrontproject.org.au

the Front Project