

**Municipal Public Health Planning Framework:
Brief for Contract to Evaluate the Effectiveness of
the Good Practice Program**

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1 Introduction

The Department of Human Services is seeking suitably qualified and experienced evaluators to assist the Department to support the evaluation component of a major program to support innovation in municipal public health planning.

1.1 Background

The Local Government Partnerships Team is part of the Public Health Group of the Department of Human Services (DHS). It has responsibility for strengthening links with key public health stakeholders in local government, to strengthen public health planning and encourage quality public health practice. The team's focus is on identifying and communicating the inter-relationship between health and wellbeing and social, environmental and economic planning. In particular, the team supports Councils to integrate this understanding into their municipal planning.

A new Framework for municipal public health planning, *Environments for Health*, was released in October 2001. The Framework was developed by the Local Government Partnerships Team and the Public Health Group, in partnership with the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV), Victorian Local Governance Association (VLGA), local governments and other stakeholders.

The new Framework provides an approach to planning that considers the overall impact on health and wellbeing of factors originating across any or all of the built, social, economic and natural environments. It encourages municipal public health planning of a high standard and consistency in the scope and approach across the State, while valuing diversity.

The Good Practice Program is one part of a comprehensive Framework implementation support program, which will also include workforce development and professional networking initiatives.

1.2 The Need for Evaluation

As part of the development of *Environments for Health*, a questionnaire was sent in August 2000 to all Victorian local governments. The questionnaire sought information about the status and content of current MPHPs, and to uncover issues requiring consideration in the development of a new planning framework. A noteworthy feature of the questionnaire analysis was the scarcity of reported evaluation strategies and performance indicators built into MPHPs. Evaluation was rated as a first-order priority in regards to the need for improved planning. Many respondents stated that evaluation strategies need to be developed and embedded at the planning stage, engage internal and external stakeholders, and produce information that can be used to enhance future plans.

*Environments for Health*¹ contains a detailed discussion of evaluation, in section 6.5. Local governments are actively encouraged to engage stakeholders in evaluating their MPHPs in ways that are practical, accurate, ethical, and in particular, useful. The municipal public health planning Good Practice Program therefore needs to be evaluated in a way that upholds this philosophy, and draw explicitly on the many evaluation resources and ideas provided in the Framework.

¹ Available: <http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/phd/localgov/mphpf/index.htm>

1.3 The Good Practice Program

The Good Practice Program² is one component of an ongoing commitment to providing assistance to local governments for public health planning. The Objectives of the Good Practice Program are:

- a. To support application of the new framework *Environments for Health*, with explicit involvement of the four environmental dimensions across council functions.
- b. Integration of planning effort (both within and beyond local government).
- c. To support quality municipal public health planning practice.
- d. To support models of good practice and support their broader application.
- e. To encourage good practice through action learning.

The Good Practice Program aims to stimulate new developments and creative approaches to municipal public health planning using the new framework. The Program will produce a body of material and knowledge to assist all councils to engage successfully in public health planning.

The Program supports projects in individual municipalities, or groups of municipalities, that can serve as models for broader application, and recognises that councils vary considerably in their resources and their stages of planning, and that they may require different types of support. Particular emphasis has been given to applications from rural municipalities, in recognising both the lower health status experienced in many rural areas and the relative lack of resources available for effective health planning.

Sixteen projects covering 26 municipalities have been funded. The projects selected provide a wide range of initiatives that seek to emphasise integrated planning processes, foster community involvement and ownership of health plans, and demonstrate the value of such approaches in addressing specific priority health issues. All projects are encouraged to undertake monitoring, review and evaluation activities that enhance the quality of planning. Approximately \$25,000 has been allocated to each project. As part of conditions of funding, evaluation strategies were built into each project within existing budget. A summary of selected projects is attached.

2 Purpose

The aim of this project is to evaluate the Good Practice Program, in terms of the effectiveness of the individual projects, and the program overall. By supporting project participants to embrace and conduct useful evaluation, and disseminate their experiences, the project also aims to help develop an evaluation culture amongst the wider field of local government health planners. Furthermore, it is intended that the evaluation reports and implications gained from this evaluation project will be used to improve workforce development, and future editions of *Environments for Health*.

² See attached Guidelines

3 Objectives

The project aims to:

- Support practitioners to develop and conduct evaluation strategies for their Good Practice Projects in ways that:
 - Draw on *Environments for Health*, and
 - Add to the body of knowledge about effective municipal public health planning and practice
- Promote best practice in evaluation amongst local government health planners in Victoria
- Evaluate the Good Practice Program

4 Key Activities

The key activities are to:

- Develop a utility-focused evaluation strategy³ for the Good Practice Program that draws on the approaches outlined in *Environments for Health*
- Support practitioners, individually and collectively, to develop and implement evaluation strategies for their projects by:
 - Assisting in the facilitation of Good Practice evaluation meetings
 - Providing feedback and assistance on the evaluation process
 - Supporting data collection, analysis and interpretation
 - Writing reports and disseminating findings
- Encourage DHS regional staff to take an active role in supporting the evaluations of Good Practice Projects within their regions
- Evaluate the overall effectiveness of the Good Practice Program against objectives
- Work closely with the Good Practice Program Reference Group established by the Local Government Partnership Team
- Write a final report for the Local Government Partnership Team that can be disseminated to the field. This report will contain:
 - A summary of each Good Practice Project (up to two pages)
 - Overall discussion of the Good Practice Program

5 Project Management

The Department of Human Services will engage the contractor, with the Local Government Partnership Team of Public Health Group overseeing all project activities. The contractor will report to the Team Leader of the Local Government Partnership Team. In addition, the Good Practice Program Reference Group, established by the Local Government Partnership Team, will oversee the project in conjunction with external experts and stakeholders, and provide advice to the contractor on key elements of the project as required.

³ See:

Patton, M. Q. (1982). *Practical evaluation*. London: Sage

Patton, M. Q. (1997). *Utilization-focused evaluation: The new century text* (3rd Ed.). Thousand Oaks, California: Sage

6 Timelines

The Evaluation Project will need to synchronise with the Good Practice Program. Good Practice Projects are scheduled to commence in March 2002, and run for approximately 12 months. Although the successful applicant is required to submit a proposed timetable for the project, it is intended that the project should finish no later than May 2003. Project activities can commence after the signing of a contract with Department of Human Services.

7 Deliverables

The contractor will be required to produce a detailed report with the following components:

- Context and rationale for the evaluation approach selected
- Summary of each Good Practice Project:
 - Goals, strategy and outcomes
 - Evaluation questions posed and methodology adopted, findings and implications
- Evaluation of the overall Good Practice Program
- Implications for municipal public health planning and the Municipal Public Health Planning Framework

8 Budget

- DHS expects to purchase the services and product described in this brief at a total cost of less than \$40,000.
- An itemised budget is to be included with the tender. This is to include all costs associated with the project, the production of the report and written materials during the contract.

9 Selection Criteria

The successful applicant will be determined by written application and interview. Selection will be based on relevant skills and experience, including:

- Understanding of the project brief and required outcomes;
- Expertise in evaluation;
- Demonstrated knowledge of evaluation activities in the field of health promotion and community development;
- Knowledge of contemporary health promotion and public health issues;
- Proven record in project management;
- Capacity to engage and communicate effectively with local government practitioners and other relevant stakeholders;
- The development of an effective project plan and methodology with strict timelines for the duration of the project.

10 Applicant Information

Applications should include the following information:

- Contact details (if the project is being tendered for by a team of contractors, please provide the name and address of the principal contact person or project manager);
- A company or agency profile and details if it is a registered business;
- The names and curriculum vitae of the principal contractors who will be responsible for the project, noting specialist expertise as appropriate;
- A detailed work plan which includes a thorough outline of the proposed methodology;
- Examples of previous work which is directly relevant to the requirements of the project;
- A detailed budget for the project in which costs should be all inclusive;
- Indicative time frame for delivery of each component of the project;
- Names and details of two referees.

Closing date for submissions is close of business **Monday, 15 April**

All supporting material/ information provided by applicants will be considered as having been submitted in confidence.

It is a mandatory requirement that the contractors sign a Standard Department of Human Services Contract. A copy of a Standard Contract can be provided.