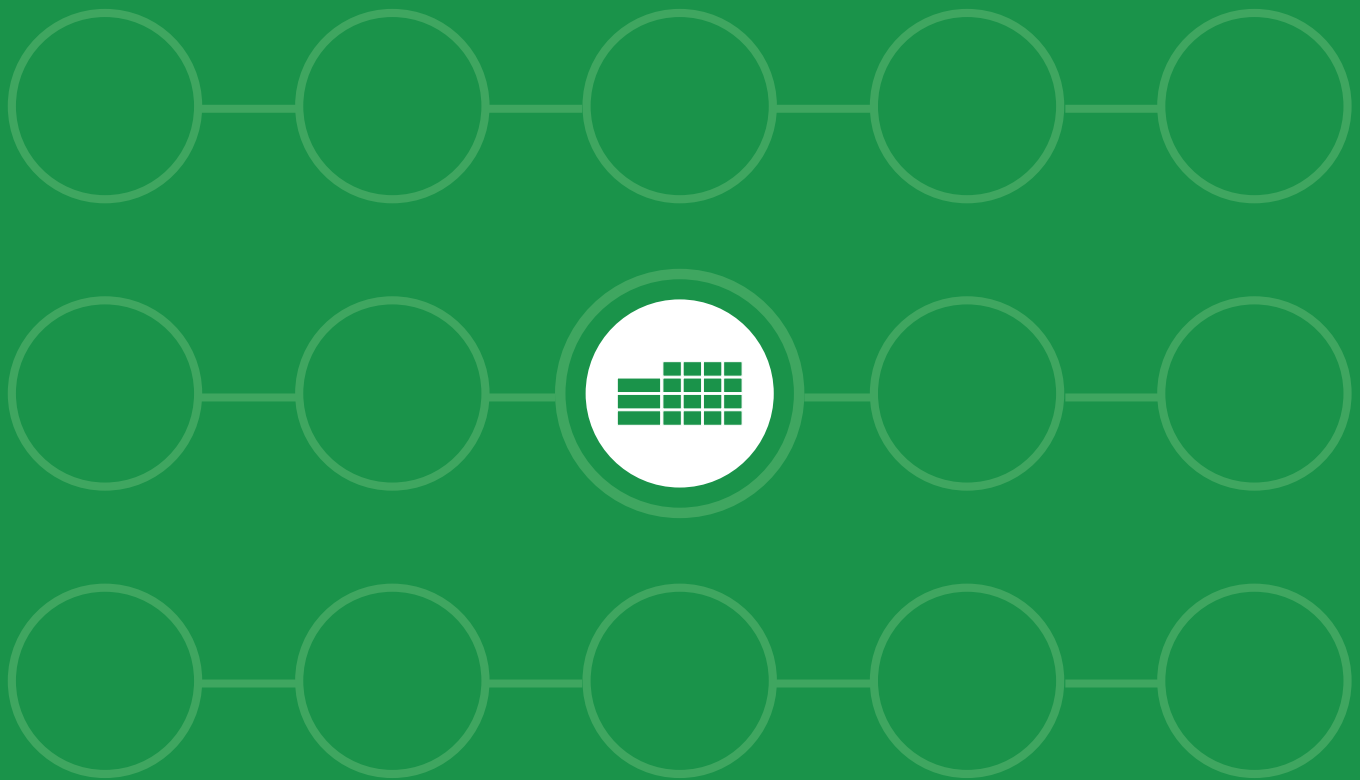


# A quick guide: How to build an evaluative rubric



# What is an evaluative rubric, and what is it useful for?

Allen + Clarke has over 20 years of experience conducting complex evaluations in Australia, Aotearoa New Zealand and across the Pacific. Many of these evaluations have involved developing and applying evaluative rubrics.

Rubrics explicitly identify the shared set of values (criteria and performance levels). We find evaluative rubrics useful as they support transparent and defensible reasoning by defining what good looks like.

They provide an analytic framework against which the evidence can be compared to make a high-level evaluative judgement about an intervention's performance.

They are also useful for evaluation planning, for example identifying what information needs to be collected.



## Three components of a rubric.

### DETERMINE CRITERIA

Defines quality or success against which an evaluative judgement will be made

### PERFORMANCE LEVELS

A rating scale  
(e.g. from low to high; 1–5)

### PERFORMANCE DESCRIPTORS

Describes what performance looks like for each criterion at each performance level

# Tips in building evaluative rubrics

It takes practice to build a comprehensive and defensible rubric.

Here is some guidance to get you started.

## 1 DETERMINE CRITERIA

### Who determines what success looks like?

Consider multiple sources, e.g.

- Those who will be most impacted by the initiative
- Other experts (cultural, subject)
- Needs assessment
- Program goals
- Research literature

### Check your criteria\* are:

- **Comprehensive** = No important dimensions of quality are missing
- **Non-overlapping** = Avoids double-counting
- **Clearly described** = So it is obvious when you stumble upon this dimension of quality/success
- **Measurable** = Important that they are reliably inferable

\* From Scriven, M. 1994. "The Final Synthesis." American Journal of Evaluation 15(3):367–82.

### TIPS:

- Allow enough time and resource to develop the constructs that define quality or success if you want your evaluation to be defensible.
- Make it an iterative process – be open to new criteria emerging as you collect data; if they are important – add them to the rubric.
- Avoid indicators unless they fully describe 'quality' for the thing you're evaluating.

## 2 PERFORMANCE LEVELS:

- Labels can be generic (e.g. 'low' to 'high'; '1' to '5') **OR** customised
- A greater number of levels allows for finer distinctions **BUT** can result in less consistency when multiple evaluators are involved in the assessment process.
- Consider where you want your performance levels to be most sensitive to difference.

### TIP:

- Consider using strength-based terms for your rating scale. (e.g. 'emerging' rather than 'weak')

## 3 PERFORMANCE DESCRIPTORS:

- Include the key features for each criterion, at each quality/success level

### TIP:

- Start with middle level of your scale and describe the minimum expected performance for each criterion. Then describe performance at the levels on either side.

# Applying a rubric

The decision to use evaluative rubrics will depend on the evaluation scale, complexity of evidence and purpose.

Applying a rubric may not always be useful or suitable in an evaluation. For example, in very complex evaluations, the performance of an intervention may be better described in the form of a nuanced and multi-faceted narrative.

Rubrics can be applied either in a generic format, using general terms and labels, or they can be tailored to the specific intervention context and key evaluation questions.

## Generic Rubric

Allen + Clarke evaluation of the Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy

Emerging	Enabled	Established	Embedded
Evidence of emerging performance. Evidence is patchy or not clear overall. This may be because it cannot be seen yet rather than the performance being unsatisfactory	Evidence of fair performance. Some positive achievements and some weakness but these are not 'deal breakers'. Heading in the right direction	Evidence of good performance overall. May have some weakness which are easily rectified	Evidence of very good to excellent performance on this aspect, which is embedded as business as usual. No weaknesses of any consequence. Some examples of exemplary performance

## Tailored Rubric

Allen + Clarke evaluation of the Kāhui Investment Model

Rau Tū	Rau puta	Rau ora
Initial or emergent phase	Becoming established and effective	Thriving
This aspect of the model is still developing Significant challenges identified that require some course correction to ensure it is effective and fit for purpose	This aspect of the model is heading in the right direction and is generally effective and fit-for-purpose. The evaluation identifies examples of good performance. There are some weaknesses that require minor changes or adjustments.	Clear evidence that this aspect of the model is working well, is fit-for-purpose and meets the needs of Te Mātāwai, each Kāhui and the community. The evaluation identifies examples of exemplary performance. No changes or adjustments are needed.

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