

The Evaluators' National Newsletter

December 2006

Welcome to the December 2006 edition of *The Evaluators' National Newsletter*. This series of regular newsletters provides information about the Stronger Families and Communities Strategy (SFCS) National Evaluation. This newsletter and the National Evaluation are funded under the Australian Government's Stronger Families and Communities Strategy 2004 - 2009.

NATIONAL EVALUATORS' NEWS

The National Evaluation is in full swing with National Evaluators, Local Evaluators and organisations funded under the SFCS working hard to make the project a success – thank you to all of you! This newsletter provides a summary of the main activities undertaken by the National Evaluators over the past six months.

Service mapping - In December last year Communities for Children (CfC) Facilitating Partners and Local Evaluators took part in the baseline service mapping of their site. We are now a year on and preparing to update the data. We will be emailing service mapping lists back to the Facilitating Partner in each site. For us to get a good idea of changes that may have occurred in the service network, this list can simply be updated and emailed back to us. This way we anticipate it being a much easier exercise the second time around.

Stronger Families in Australia (SFIA) is the core component of the outcome evaluation for Communities for Children sites and is referred to as the 'Family Study' in the SFCS Evaluation Framework. The first round of interviews commenced in June and finished in August 2006, with 2,200 families taking part in the study, including 110 Indigenous families. Interviews conducted in languages other than English were predominately held by I-view employees and included Arabic, Vietnamese and Chinese interviewers. Only 1% of families required another family member or friend to assist in the interviews.

The first phase of SFIA has gone very smoothly and we have received positive feedback from interviewers. Preparations for the next round of interviews are currently underway with fieldwork planned to start in early 2007. The information website for SFIA participants is available at <http://www.aifs.gov.au/cafca/sfia>.

Promising Practice Profiles (PPP) - Project staff and Local Evaluators from CfC, Invest to Grow (ItG) and Local Answers (LA) have been invited to submit to the *Promising Practice Profiles* database. A series of half-day workshops were held throughout September-October in Sydney, Adelaide, Perth, Melbourne and Brisbane. The interactive workshops provided an overview of the submission process, a case study and an opportunity for participants to discuss their own practice. Our sincere thanks to those who provided venues and offered assistance in organising the workshops. Thanks as well to all those who provided us with feedback - we will use your comments in designing future workshops. Feedback included:

"I really found it useful and I am very excited that FaCSIA is actually doing something with our projects".

"This was a very useful workshop for me. I see PPP as an opportunity to engage with our community partners".

"Working through some ideas on my own project was very helpful".

There will be up to three rounds of submissions for PPP, the first round of which closed on November 6. For further information, including the submission requirements, please go to <http://www.aifs.gov.au/cafca/ppp/ppp.html>.

Snapshot questionnaires - Final collection of snapshot questionnaires is now taking place. We are always keen to improve on our response rates so we can get the best picture of how services work together in each site. Keep returning questionnaires - there is still time for them to be included in the analysis!

If you have any questions about the snapshot questionnaires please contact strongerfamilies@unsw.edu.au or Freecall 1800 332 173.

At the invitation of Facilitating Partners from two sites in the Northern Territory, a member of the National Evaluation team went to Darwin and Bathurst Island to discuss the appropriateness of the snapshot survey for service providers in remote Indigenous communities. Following the advice of the Facilitating Partners and Local Evaluators from those sites and discussions with service providers on Bathurst Island, the snapshot survey was considered inappropriate and was not sent to service providers in these communities. Alternate means of conducting a snapshot study are now being investigated. We would like to thank everyone involved in this consultation for their generosity, time and assistance.

Demographic profiles - The final round of demographic profiles are being sent out to Facilitating Partners. Along with the service mapping and snapshot questionnaires, the demographic profiles help provide a baseline for assessing the impact of CfC initiatives in each site. We hope that they also provide a useful resource for planning future activities in each site.

Service coordination study – Throughout October and November the National Evaluators visited the ten *Stronger Families in Australia* study sites. Around 100 interviews were conducted with key personnel involved with CfC. Respondents included managers within the Facilitating Partner organisations, CfC committee members, service providers and government representatives. This is helping us understand how services are working together and how the Partnership model is working. Many thanks to all involved and for the warm welcome extended to the researchers.

LOCAL EVALUATORS' NEWS

The **SFCS Local Evaluators Extranet** was launched in September with evaluation resources from the Lismore site – thank you Sallie and team for starting the ball rolling. The extranet page is password protected and restricted for use by Local Evaluators as a specific forum to share evaluation ideas, experiences and documentation with other Local Evaluators. We encourage you to register for password access and to participate by providing resources that you think would be useful for the SFCS. To register or to access the page, go to <http://www.aifs.gov.au/cafca/lee/lee.html>.

**** PRIZE **** Be one of the **next three people** to submit resources to the *SFCS Local Evaluators Extranet* and receive one years FREE subscription to *Family Matters* (3 issues), valued at \$39.00. Be quick!

EVENTS AND EVALUATION ACTIVITIES

December 7-8 2006, Melbourne: *Using our Knowledge(s) to Grow Up Strong Kids* was a two-day event co-hosted by the Secretariat for National Aboriginal Islander Child Care (SNAICC) Resource Service and the Communities and Families Clearinghouse Australia. The event aimed to provide a venue for sharing knowledge about early childhood research and evaluation in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander contexts: <http://www.aifs.gov.au/cafca/evaluation/networkresources.html>.

Workshops are planned for 2007 to help SFCS Network members utilise the resources available to them as part of the SFCS. Dates and locations will be communicated in due course through *e-evaluate* and *CAFCA-chat*.

SFCS REPORTING UPDATE

An electronic Progress Report Template aimed to assist CfC Facilitating Partners in data collection and activity reporting was released in late November. A training package was sent to Facilitating Partners and FaCSIA state & territory officers to assist with using the template. In early December, the Progress Report Template for the period July - December 2006 was provided via email. The Invest to Grow and Local Answers Reporting Templates will be released separately at a future date.

RESOURCES & PUBLICATIONS

National Evaluation website: <http://www.aifs.gov.au/cafca/evaluation/sfcsevaluation.html>

SFCS website: http://www.facsia.gov.au/internet/facsinternet.nsf/aboutfacs/programs/sfsc-sfcs_evaluation_update.htm

Resources available at the CAFCA website:

- => Questionnaires: <http://www.aifs.gov.au/cafca/evaluation/questionnaires.html>
- => The National Evaluation Framework (PDF 611K): <http://www.aifs.gov.au/cafca/evaluation/pubs/framework.pdf>
- => National Evaluation Questions and Answers: <http://www.aifs.gov.au/cafca/evaluation/faqs.html>
- => Stronger Families in Australia participant site: <http://www.aifs.gov.au/cafca/sfia>
- => NGO Forum presentations: <http://www.aifs.gov.au/cafca/evaluation/networkresources.html>
- => ****NEW**** Promising Practice Profiles (PPP) site: <http://www.aifs.gov.au/cafca/ppp/ppp.html>
- => ****NEW**** Resources for PPP: <http://www.aifs.gov.au/cafca/ppp/pppresources.html>
- => ****NEW**** SFCS Local Evaluators Extranet: <http://www.aifs.gov.au/cafca/lee/lee.html>

CONTACT

If you would like to contribute to this newsletter, please email Ren Adams on cafca@aifs.gov.au.



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