



NATIONAL QUALITY  
FRAMEWORK

# THE EXCELLENT RATING

Writing an evidence statement  
for the Excellent rating



## EXCEPTIONAL PRACTICE

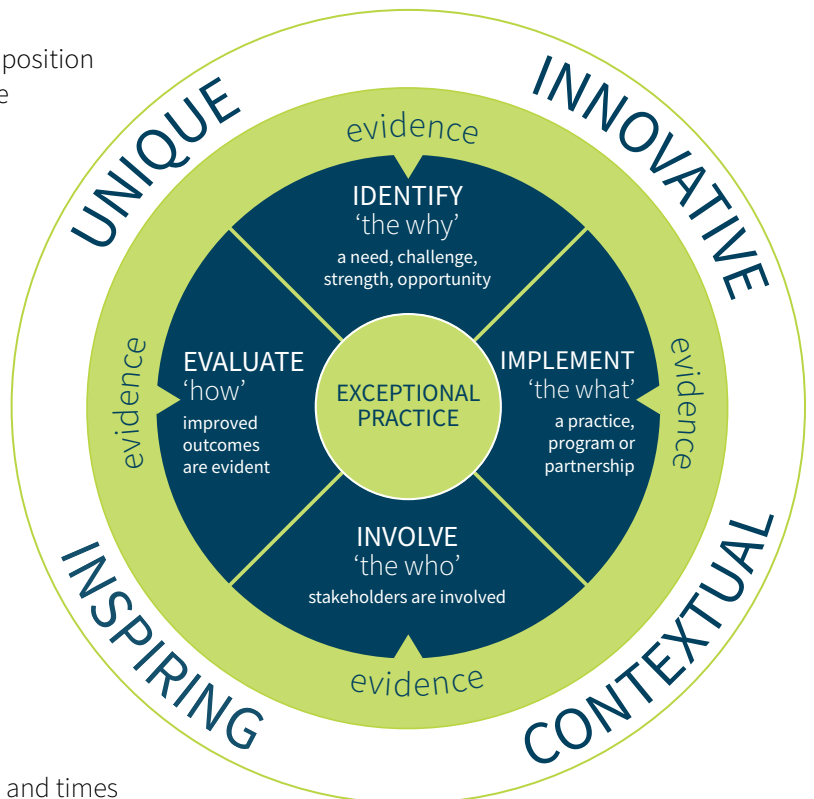
Achieving an Excellent rating is recognition of a service’s position as a leader in the education and care sector. For a service to demonstrate Excellence, they must clearly articulate exceptional practice and explain why it is exceptional, including how improved outcomes for children and families are evident, at the highest level.

The Exceptional practice framework may support services in writing evidence statements for the application or reapplication of the Excellent rating.

When services are writing an evidence statement under each of the criterion, they must clearly articulate all aspects of the exceptional practice framework. The analysis of this information is undertaken by ACECQA to determine whether the practice, program or partnership is deemed exceptional or non-exceptional.

As part of the unique context of each service and celebration of their inspiring and innovative practices, programs or partnerships, every application will look different.

Evidence must be specific, including documenting dates and times where possible, as well as clearly stating how the evidence has improved outcomes for children and families. Evidence will vary in length, content and style. Some applications may have a single statement per theme or criterion, whilst others may have multiple. Applications are only required to include a statement to address each theme or criterion, but can be supported by other forms of evidence. These may include, but not limited to: photographs, videos, website links, social media, documentation of children’s learning, or stakeholder feedback.



Exceptional Practice Framework	Reflective questions which should focus on a program, practice or partnership
<b>Identify ‘the why’</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Why was the practice, program or partnership initiated?</li> <li>• Was there a need, challenge, barrier, strength and/or interest identified?</li> <li>• Why and how did the service identify this need?</li> <li>• Why is it relevant to the particular needs of the children and families at the service and within the community?</li> </ul>
<b>Implement ‘the what’</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What has the service introduced and/or modified in response to the specific needs and circumstances of its children and families?</li> <li>• What does it look like in practice? How often does it occur?</li> <li>• What specific example/s can you identify that are embedded in the service, which are a result of ‘the why’?</li> <li>• If applicable, what has evolved since your last application?</li> </ul>
<b>Involve ‘the who’</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who introduced and/or was involved in the practice, program or partnership?</li> <li>• Who and in what capacity were stakeholders involved?</li> <li>• Did the service collaborate with external parties to enhance the practice, program or partnership?</li> <li>• Did the service provide any resources or professional learning to staff, families or other stakeholders to implement this practice, program or partnership?</li> <li>• Who provides input on the improvement of the practice, program or partnership?</li> </ul>
<b>Evaluate ‘how’</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How have the practices, programs or partnerships improved outcomes for children and families?</li> <li>• How has the service identified that outcomes have been improved or are meeting their intended purpose, as a result of the practice, program or partnership?</li> <li>• What methods did the service use to measure success, or evaluate the practice, program or partnership?</li> <li>• How does this practice enhance children’s learning and growth?</li> <li>• How has it contributed to the development of a community, local area or wider education and care sector?</li> </ul>





## CASE STUDIES

The case studies below are examples of clearly documented evidence statements within a particular service context. The information includes a collection of layered, detailed examples of how the framework is evident and specific to the identified theme. Please note: The examples demonstrate what an evidence statement might include and may be submitted as an independent statement or part of a collective of statements which address that theme.

### CASE STUDY ONE:

The following example is an outside school hours care (OSHC) service evidencing criterion one, Theme 5: Practice and environments that enhance children’s learning and growth.

‘IDENTIFY’ THE WHY

Riverside Outside School Hours Care (ROSHC) began to consider their impact on environmental sustainability. In July 2019 after a group of children expressed their dissatisfaction with their community’s use of single-use plastic. During a vacation care excursion to the local bushland, the children had located a series of plastic bottles, bags and straws in the creek and bush areas. A child who had recently participated in a local clean-up group suggested that ROSHC could clean up the bushland using gloves and rubbish bags.

‘IMPLEMENT’ THE WHAT

Two weeks later, the Educational Leader arranged two local rangers to attend the service to discuss its bushland conservation initiatives and encourage the children to advocate for the local environment’s ecosystem. From this visit, ROSHC introduced the ‘Riverside Bushland Clean Up’ event. During regular after school excursions to the local shops, the children took turns to talk directly to local businesses including the local butcher, newsagency, real estate agency and café about the upcoming event.

‘INVOLVE’ THE WHO

Additionally, the children wrote letters to their peers and teachers at Riverside Public School and sister school, Riverside East Public School, inviting them to also participate in the first annual Riverside Bushland Clean Up day. On 4 October 2019, the first annual Riverside Bushland Clean Up day occurred, and 150 community members participated, including 41 students from the two local primary schools. As a result of the event,

‘EVALUATE’ HOW

41kg worth of rubbish was removed from the Riverside bushland. Since 2021, the event has occurred once a year and a total of 318kg of rubbish has been removed. In 2022, the service evaluated the Riverside Bushland Clean Up day and decided to extend the event across two days to include the children from both local School Aged Care services, sorting through the rubbish to ensure not all the rubbish would end up in landfill. ROSHC educators identified that children were able to speak up for themselves and were empowered to build foundational advocacy skills. This included one child who generally withdrew from participating in group discussions, had the confidence to speak individually to the local butcher about the purpose of the Riverside Bushland Clean Up day event. Additionally, the evaluation included developing and completing a risk-assessment of the task to ensure the health and safety of all children and students and future plans to involve the local council in waste management and recycling discussions.



## CASE STUDY TWO:

The following case study is an example of a reapplication for a centre-based long day care service, evidencing criterion one: Theme 2: Commitment to children that respects, reflects and celebrates culture and diversity, including place of origin.

### 'IDENTIFY' THE WHY

In response to the service's previous Excellent rating assessment outcome decision notice, Gumnut Education and Care Service (GECS) established a culture and diversity initiative on 18 January 2022. Within the previous decision notice, ACECQA provided a consideration for future improvement for the service in response to an identified need for greater recognition of the culturally diverse families enrolled at their service. Within its reapplication, GECS shared that within their context they had enrolled families with diverse structures and cultural backgrounds however they did not have a deep understanding of each family to be able to authentically respect and embed their cultures, values and beliefs within their service. An educator suggested that they should begin a journey of inquiry to learn more about the diversity of their service to better support the wellbeing and inclusion of the service's children. This included an initial review of the 2021 Australian Early Development Census (AEDC), which identified a vulnerability in communication and language skills in their local area.

### 'IMPLEMENT' THE WHAT

GECS held a team meeting to determine the best strategy to begin their inquiry. The service team critically reflected upon the AEDC data and identified this may be due to a high number of children and families with English as a second language. They decided that informal parent surveys, in a range of formats (eg: written, digital, verbal) and translated in a range of languages, would be most useful. The surveys included open-ended questions on individual and family cultures, children's language and communication at home, as well as sharing the service philosophy for feedback on how to better include the diverse cultures. GECS educators also had planned and spontaneous conversations with children about their family structures and cultures, which was recorded on a large board that was consistently added to as more information was shared.

### 'INVOLVE' THE WHO

As responses to the surveys came through, GECS recognised that they could, in collaboration with children and families, develop a "statement of diversity" which would guide and lead culturally respectful interactions within the service. A parent advisory group of 7 members which represented a range of cultures and family structures was devised to develop the statement alongside the service team and children and consult on a number of matters that related to families and children. Educators and interested families also took part in a series of five workshops led by 3 speech pathologists, who were employed by the service for a short period through the use of a funding grant (more information provided in the next paragraph).

### 'IMPLEMENT' THE WHAT

The first draft of the statement of diversity was distributed to families two weeks after the initial event. All feedback provided was actioned and included and a final copy was developed. Many families highlighted in their feedback how they felt "seen, heard and included" in GECS. Some families noted that they now felt more represented in the service and comfortable approaching the service to initiate, help plan and participate in service events that reflect their cultural beliefs and practices. Feedback from one family included how their extended family who live overseas noticed an increased interest in and enthusiasm for learning about their language and cultural practices from their two children. Additionally, through the actions of the parent advisory group and in consideration of the AEDC data, GECS was successful in attracting a funding grant through the inclusion agency in May 2022, which funded a program on building confidence with children's communication and language skills in both English and in their other languages. Using the funding, the service employed 3 speech pathologists who speak 4 of the languages spoken by enrolled families one day per week over 6 months from June- November 2022, and who worked with educators and children to enhance communication in the identified languages. These workshops took place between July and November 2022 with the intention of providing strategies in building children's language and communication skills and learning key words and phrases in the identified languages.

### 'EVALUATE' HOW

In June 2023, the service collaborated with the speech pathologists, inclusion agency, service team and parent advisory group to evaluate the program and its outcomes. It was evident through observations that children's language skills, communication, confidence and social interactions had significantly improved as well as educators' intentional teaching in language and literacy concepts. These findings were shared in a newsletter by the inclusion agency.

