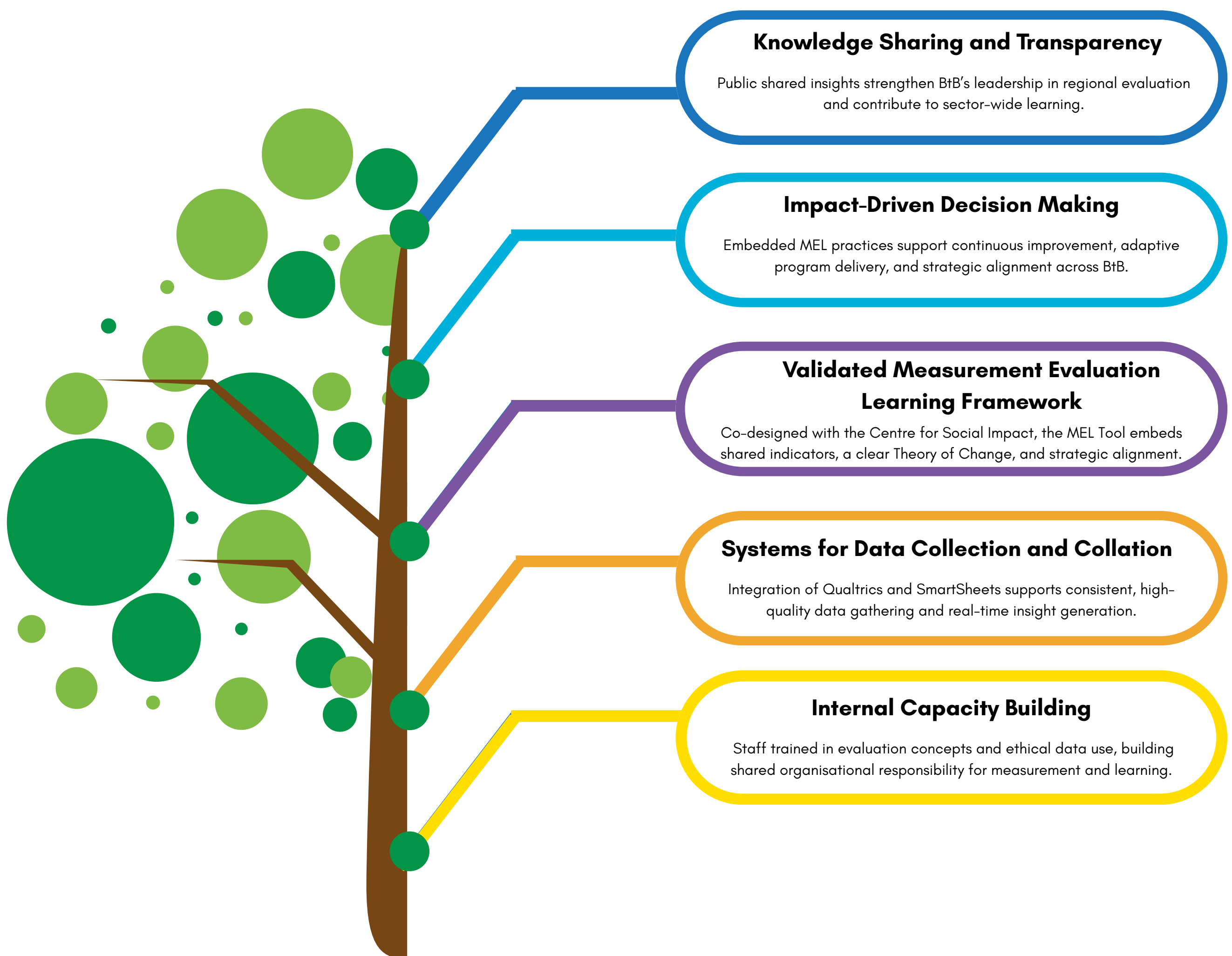




Beyond the Bell

Growing Evaluation Capability: Building the Foundations for Evidence-Informed Practice

Theory of Change





Beyond the Bell

Beyond the Bell Great South Coast – Final Report Empowerment Fund

Project Summary

Beyond the Bell's Evaluation Capability Building project aimed to strengthen internal capacity to measure, understand, and improve outcomes across its early intervention initiatives. With support from the Empowerment Fund, the project implemented a shared Measurement, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) Tool, integrated new data systems, and delivered tailored training for staff. The initiative has enabled BtB to embed evaluation as a core organisational function, ensuring continuous learning, strategic alignment, and transparency across its place-based work.

Key Achievements

BtB implemented a shared MEL Tool co-designed with the Centre for Social Impact, integrated SmartSheets and Qualtrics for real-time data collection and reporting, and trained staff in applied evaluation practices. The project has strengthened internal evaluation capacity, supported adaptive delivery, and laid the groundwork for public-facing dashboards. Key methods used included program logic modelling, theory of change mapping, and practical evaluation planning tools. These are now actively used across BtB's work in education, wellbeing, and future pathways.

Insights

The success of this project confirmed that building evaluation capability requires more than systems or training alone – it requires leadership commitment, collaborative development, and integration into everyday practice. Co-designing the MEL Tool with the Centre for Social Impact ensured the framework was not only technically sound, but contextually relevant and understood by the team. This created a shared language around outcomes and value that has already begun to inform strategic decisions.

Embedding evaluation earlier in the program lifecycle has shifted Beyond the Bell's approach from compliance reporting to proactive learning. The ability to use data in real time has helped identify gaps and opportunities faster, improving the responsiveness of programs. Importantly, the combination of tools like Qualtrics and Smartsheets with practical training has empowered staff to take ownership of evaluation in their areas of work, building a culture of reflection, adaptation, and shared accountability.

Looking ahead, evaluation insights will be shared more broadly. The redesigned Beyond the Bell website will feature an embedded data dashboard to communicate our findings in a clear, accessible format. This new platform will support transparent and sector-wide sharing of evaluation outcomes, ensuring learnings extend beyond BtB to inform practice and policy across the education and community sectors.

Learnings for the Organisation

This project has led to a cultural shift within Beyond the Bell. Evaluation is now viewed as a strategic function that supports our mission, not just a reporting requirement. Staff across the organisation have gained confidence in using evaluation tools and language, and see the value of data in informing real decisions.

One of the most significant learnings has been the importance of integrating evaluation into the day-to-day work of teams, not outsourcing it or treating it as an isolated activity. By building internal capability and embedding new systems into regular workflows, we've reduced reliance on external consultants and increased ownership across the team. The co-designed nature of the MEL Tool has meant that evaluation practices now feel relevant, manageable, and meaningful – supporting both accountability and innovation.

Learnings for the Broader Social Services Sector

This project demonstrates that evaluation capability can be built in-house, even within small or regionally based organisations, when the right conditions are in place. Resourcing alone is not enough – what matters is how those resources are directed. In our case, co-design with a credible academic partner, careful integration of accessible platforms, and a strong focus on staff engagement were key to success.

The sector continues to grapple with how to measure the true impact of place-based, collaborative work. Through this project, BtB has shown that with the right mix of practical tools, reflective practice, and shared frameworks, it is possible to embed robust, context-sensitive evaluation practices that improve both service quality and system learning. Our experience may offer a useful model for other collective impact or early intervention initiatives looking to strengthen their evaluation maturity.

Enquiries

For further information about this project and its findings, please contact: info@btb.org.au