

**Phase 1: Implementation of the Student Equity in Higher Education
Evaluation Framework: Sector Consultation Report**



Title:	Phase 1 - Implementation of the Student Equity in Higher Education Evaluation Framework: Sector Consultation Report
Prepared for:	Australian Centre for Student Equity and Success (ACSES) (formerly National Student Centre for Equity in Higher Education)
Prepared by:	The Institute for Social Science Research
Date:	31 January 2024
Revision:	1

The Institute for Social Science Research at the University of Queensland (UQ) acknowledges the Traditional Owners and their custodianship of the lands on which UQ operates. We pay our respects to their Ancestors and their descendants, who continue cultural and spiritual connections to Country.



The work described in this report was funded by a grant from the National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education (NCSEHE) in 2023, which became the Australian Centre for Student Equity and Success (ACSES) in February 2024.

Contents

Acknowledgements	5
Acronyms and abbreviations	6
Executive Summary.....	8
Background.....	8
Approach	8
Key Findings	9
2022 HEPPP reporting template	9
General SEHEEF preparedness and familiarity with tools	9
CQI preparedness	10
Impact Evaluation Preparedness.....	10
Training and support needs	11
1. Introduction	12
1.1 The Student Equity in Higher Education Evaluation Framework (SEHEEF)	12
1.2 Phase 1 Implementation of the Student Equity in Higher Education Evaluation Framework	12
1.3 Conduct of the focus groups and interviews	13
1.4 Conduct of the survey	14
1.5 Presentation of data and scope of the report.....	15
Part A - Focus groups and interviews findings	16
2. Understanding of purpose & expectations.....	17
2.1 Clarity around implementation: Need for clarification on timeframes, reporting expectations and definitions	17
2.2 Impact Evaluation: Need for guidance to support Impact Evaluation	19
3. Sector planning and resourcing	20
3.1 Program Design: Ongoing support needed for utilisation of best practice methods.....	20
4. Evaluation planning and capacity	21
4.1 Program selection: Ongoing guidance needed to support practice	21
4.2 Evaluation expertise and personnel: Guidance/training required to build evaluation capability	21
4.3 Implementation vs evaluation: guidance required to support the sector to balance evaluation against implementation.	22
5. Sector internal financial and administration/reporting challenges	23
5.1 Disconnect between planning and data analytics: need to promote the inclusion of business/data analytics personnel in the planning stages.	23
5.2 Rudimentary data collection and recording methods: need to move towards sophisticated data collection and recording methods	23
5.3 Investment and resourcing: Need for guidance and planning around workload management to ensure data can be accessed.	24
5.4 Data linkage: further support needed for data linkage	25
5.5 Variation in approaches to funding reporting: Some support may achieve consistency	25
6. Broader university planning and scheduling	26
6.1 Condensed planning time: earlier notification of funding allocation and/or longer funding models would improve programs.	26
6.2 University planning, resourcing and allocation of workloads to support evaluation: more involvement from senior leadership needed within institutions and attention to resources	27
7. Supporting Equity Students.....	28

7.1	Centring equity student experience in program design.....	28
7.2	Expanding programs to other students	28
8.	Data Collection and Reporting systems	28
8.1	Sector Feedback	28
8.2	ISSR Feedback	29
9.	Online portal, training and communities of practice.....	30
9.1	Communities of practice (CoPs)	30
9.2	Training modules and an online portal	30
Part B: Survey findings		33
10.	Characteristics of the surveyed sample	34
11.	The 2022 HEPPP reporting template	36
12.	The current capacity and preparedness	39
12.1	General preparedness.....	39
12.2	Use of tools for SEHEEF implementation	39
13.	CQI	40
13.1	Legacy Programs	40
13.2	New Programs.....	43
13.3	Compare Legacy and New Programs	44
14.	Impact Evaluation.....	45
15.	The challenges affecting implementation	46
16.	The training and support needs	48
16.1	Training Modules.....	48
16.2	Online Portal.....	49
16.3	Communities of practice.....	50
17.	Other feedback	50
18.	Synthesis and Conclusion	53
18.1	Preparedness	53
18.2	Training, Portal and Communities of Practice.....	54
References		55
Appendix		56
Part A participant demographics		56
Part B: Survey.....		58

Tables

Table 1. Summary of participants, by position and type of institution.	14
Table 2. Number of institutions, by state and location.....	34
Table 3. Summary of participants, by position.	34
Table 4. Number of people in HEPPP-funded equity program management or coordination at respondent institution.	35
Table 5. Number of people in program design, development and implementation at respondent institution.	35
Table 6. Agreement to responses regarding the 2022 HEPPP reporting template.	36

Table 7. Ratings of 'mostly' or 'completely' to items asking how prepared they felt to implement aspects of the SEHEEF.....	39
Table 8. Agreement to responses regarding the systems and resources in place to implement QIE and TBIE.	45
Table 9. Agreement to responses regarding the needed institutional support and investment.	47
Table 10. The extent to which institutional factors have affected implementation readiness.	47
Table 11. Ratings of 'high priority' or 'essential' as to which training and resources are necessary to support the implementation of the SEHEEF.	48
Table 12. Ratings of 'high priority' or 'essential' regarding the perceived necessity of specific training and resources in relation to implementing the CQI of the SEHEEF.	48
Table 13. Ratings of 'high priority' or 'essential' regarding the perceived necessity of specific training and resources in relation to implementing the QIE and TBIE of the SEHEEF.	49
Table 14. Ratings of 'high priority' or 'essential' to the desirable features of an online portal.	49
Table 15. Ratings of 'high priority' or 'essential' to potential members of a Community of Practice.	50
Table 16. Breakdown of participants, by position and type of institution.....	56

Figures

Figure 1. Ratings to items asking the extent to which they have used the SEHEEF Tools.	40
Figure 2. The extent to which CQI practices and tools have been applied to existing programs.	41
Figure 3. The extent to which CQI practices and tools have been applied to new programs.	43
Figure 4. Extent to which participants used a program logic model for new vs existing programs.	44
Figure 5. Extent to which have planned for QIE and TBIE.....	46

Authors

Melissa Johnstone, Denise Clague, Mark Robinson, Matthias Kubler and Wojtek Tomaszewski

Acknowledgements

A sincere thanks to the National Student Centre for Equity in Higher Education for the opportunity to work on this project, with particular thanks to Dr Paul Koshy for feedback and input throughout the project. We would also like to thank the Department of Education for their investment into this work, to Gina Nuttall for her graphic design work and to Dr Ning Xiang for her assistance with Part A of the project.

Thank you to the respondents who participated in this project. We sincerely appreciate your time and honesty when responding, and we hope the output from this project serves to support the sector in their future equity-oriented work.

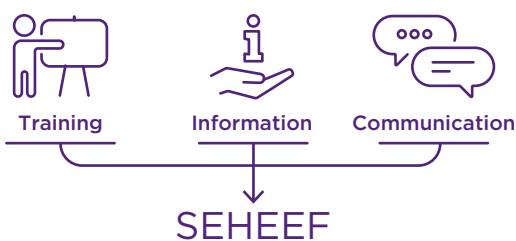
Acronyms and abbreviations

Acronym	Full name
CQI	Continuous Quality Improvement
The Department	The Australian Government Department of Education
HEPPP	Higher Education Participation and Partnerships Program
NCSEHE	National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education
Phase 1 project	Phase 1 of the Implementation of the Student Equity in Higher Education Evaluation Framework project
QIE	Quantitative Impact Evaluation
SEHEEF	Student Equity in Higher Education Evaluation Framework
TBIE	Theory-based Impact Evaluation



OBJECTIVE

To inform NCSEHE of the training, information and communication needs of the sector, in order to support the sector with the implementation of the Student Equity in Higher Education Evaluation Framework (SEHEEF).



The project aims were to:

- Determine the **current capacity and preparedness** of the higher education sector to implement the SEHEEF;
- Understand the **training and support needs** of the sector for SEHEEF implementation, and
- Obtain feedback from the sector on the latest **2022 HEPPP reporting template**.



APPROACH

The project was conducted across two rounds of consultation:

PART A



19 Consultations (focus groups and interviews)

were undertaken with **32 participants** in various roles: Equity Program Officers, Managers/Directors of Equity and Diversity, Data and Business Analysts, Strategic Planners and Higher Education Equity Experts.

PART B



36 Stakeholders

working in the planning and design, implementation and evaluation of HEPPP-funded programs completed an **online survey**.



KEY FINDINGS



HEPPP REPORTING TEMPLATE

Overall, the latest HEPPP data reporting template was seen as:

- More user-friendly and streamlined, but
- Potentially omitting useful data capture.



SEHEEF PREPAREDNESS

The sector:

- Seeks certainty on the SEHEEF and clarity around expectations and timeframes;
- Varies in implementation preparedness for the SEHEEF;
- Sees a lack of staff and a lack of evaluation expertise as impacting upon their readiness;
- Has varying levels of data sophistication and capability to link and analyse data;
- Does not yet feel prepared for Impact Evaluation (31% feel ready for QIE and 11% for TBIE);
- Feels somewhat ready for CQI (nearly 66% reported feeling ready to implement CQI), and
- Is not yet overly familiar with any of the SEHEEF tools.



TRAINING AND SUPPORT NEEDS

It is recommended that training and resources:

- Are scaffolded - covering all aspects of evaluation, from the basics to more advanced aspects of evaluation;
- Are straight-forward and digestible;
- Offer simple explanatory guidance on the use of SEHEEF tools spanning planning, collecting data or completing tools, or reporting of data;
- Include examples of program logics;
- Include real-life worked case examples;
- Include step-by-step tutorials, and
- Provide guidance on balancing time and money for implementation against evaluation.

The Communities of Practice (CoP) concept was unanimously supported, as were chat functions and other channels of communication with the sector wanting to learn from each other and gain advice on implementation and evaluation.

Executive Summary

Background

This report summarises findings from the two rounds of consultation of the project, *Phase 1: Implementation of the Student Equity in Higher Education Evaluation Framework (SEHEEF)*, referred to here as the “Phase 1 project” (or the “project”). The National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education (NCSEHE) commissioned the Institute for Social Science Research (ISSR) to undertake the Phase 1 project.

The aim of the Phase 1 project was to understand the extent to which approaches to evaluation in the sector utilise the findings and templates of the SEHEEF Report prepared by the ISSR for the Australian Government Department of Education (“Department of Education” or “the Department”) in 2021 (Robinson et al., 2021). The SEHEEF was developed as part of the Department’s strategy to embed evaluation in planned interventions funded through its Higher Education Participation and Partnerships Program (HEPPP) and future iterations of this program.

The main objectives of this project were to:

- Determine the **current capacity and preparedness** of the higher education sector to implement the SEHEEF;
- Understand the **training and support needs** of the sector, and
- Obtain feedback from the sector on the latest **2022 HEPPP reporting template**.

Approach

Part A

- In the first round of consultation, focus groups and interviews were conducted with key representatives across the higher education sector.
- In total 66 email invitations were sent to potential participants from the 12th of May 2023.
- This resulted in 19 consultations that were undertaken with 32 participants between the 23rd of May and the 27th of June 2023. The same interviewer conducted all focus groups and interviews.
- The participants were in various roles, such as Equity Program Officers, Managers/Directors of Equity and Diversity, Data and Business Analysts, Strategic Planners and Higher Education Equity Experts.

Part B

- In the second round of consultation, an online survey was disseminated to those working in the planning and design, implementation and evaluation of HEPPP-funded programs.
- On the 28th of August 2023, the first email invitation was sent. It was sent from the Department to their entire equity contact list (n = 140). This contact list included individuals responsible for HEPPP reporting for all Table A universities. The email invitation included the survey link and participant information sheet with ethics clearance number. The email asked that the recipients also forward the email to their team members who were involved in the planning, design, implementation and evaluation of HEPPP-funded programs.
- On the 12th of September 2023, the first reminder email was sent by the Department to their contact list. The reminder email again asked that the recipients also forward the email to their team members who were involved in the planning, design, implementation and evaluation of HEPPP-funded programs.

- On the 22nd of September 2023, a final reminder was sent by the Department to the equity contact list, with an extension of timeframe to complete the survey. Recipients were again encouraged to forward the email to their team members who were involved in the planning, design, implementation and evaluation of HEPPP-funded programs.
- In addition to the above, the project lead forwarded the Department invitation to the ISSR contact list (including those who had participated in earlier consultations as well as those who had expressed an interest in participating in the project). A total of 9 people were contacted in this way.
- An additional 12 email invitations were sent on the 5th of October (by forwarding the Department's original email) to individuals across 12 institutions who had not responded to initial calls. We obtained the contact detail from university websites. A final reminder email was sent on the 11th of October to the same individuals.
- The survey was open in the field from the 28th of August 2023 to the 12th of October 2023.
- In total 36 participants completed at least two-thirds of the survey's questions.

Key Findings

2022 HEPPP reporting template

- Overall, the sector saw the latest HEPPP data reporting template as improved, more user-friendly and streamlined, but it was also seen as potentially omitting useful data capture through its simplification, in particular, by not capturing detail on effectiveness of the programs or outcomes on what was done.

General SEHEEF preparedness and familiarity with tools

- Consistently, respondents called for greater clarity around timeframes for SEHEEF implementation and expectations on what to report and what to evaluate. The perceived lack of clarity was impacting upon preparedness and planning.
- There was considerable variation across the sector in terms of implementation preparedness for the SEHEEF. While the sector was largely committed to the decision to implement the SEHEEF, the extent of preparedness varied depending on institutional investment into data infrastructure and resourcing.
- When specifically asked about the institutional factors which affect their implementation readiness, stakeholders saw that their readiness would be impacted unless there was investment for additional staff and evaluation expertise.
- Further, the sector consistently raised issues around yearly funding cycles which restrict planning and implementation of programs, and the need for improving student data to report on HEPPP programs easily and accurately.
- While some institutions had implemented, to varying extents, the principles and processes of Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI), including the utilisation of the SEHEEF templates and application of program logic models, very few institutions had considered or planned for the requirements of Impact Evaluation. Specifically, nearly 66% reported feeling ready to implement CQI, compared with 31% for Quantitative Impact Evaluation (QIE) and 11% for Theory-Based Impact Evaluation (TBIE).
- A relatively small proportion reported having used the SEHEEF tools to a moderate or great extent (i.e., no more than 37% for any tool). However, when also including the occasional use of tools, the sector appeared to be more familiar with the CQI Planning Tool, than the other tools (nearly 70% vs approximately 50%).

CQI preparedness

- Some interview and focus group participants described embedding evaluation frameworks into their planning, although these were not always based upon the SEHEEF. Commonly, respondents highlighted similarities with their existing evaluation of programs as being similar to CQI.
- The survey findings indicated that most of the CQI practices and tools had been applied in both existing and new programs. For the most part these practices and tools had been applied to existing HEPPP-funded programs to the same extent as new programs. This included specifying the activities, consulting the relevant evidence, assessing the feasibility of reaching the target population, and refining the program after reflection of successes and challenges. The most pronounced difference between new and legacy programs was the extent to which they applied a program logic model, with this being more apparent for new programs.
- Notably, the stakeholders still desired further training on CQI, rating all items – spanning planning, collecting data or completing tools, or reporting of data - as high priority or essential.

Impact Evaluation Preparedness

- The survey findings indicated that the majority of participants had not undertaken, or known to have undertaken, Impact Evaluation. During interviews and focus groups, many stated that they would think about Impact Evaluation 'later' highlighting minimal progress towards preparation.
- Further, survey participants reported minimal planning for QIE or TBIE. When asked about the extent to which they had planned for QIE and TBIE, very few had engaged in planning in terms of applying a prioritisation tool or process, planned for control groups for QIE, engaged with ethics committees or mapped or planned for causal pathways as part of TBIE. Planning for TBIE seemed to particularly lag behind, with only 15%-20% having given some thought to planning or mapping causal pathways.
- Further, the majority perceived their institution was not prepared to undertake QIE or TBIE. They perceived that at an institutional level, they lacked the right systems, data collection methods, had limitations with accessing and/or linking data and highlighted that they didn't have sufficient staffing or evaluation expertise. For instance:
 - Many institutions relied on rudimentary data collection methods, which were seen by data analysts from the interviews as enabling inaccuracies, as well as creating challenges and inefficiencies in linking to other datasets.
 - A lack of staff and lack of evaluation expertise were the main institutional factors identified from survey findings which were seen as impacting upon implementation readiness for Impact Evaluation.
 - The discussion often indicated there were gaps in understanding in terms of data requirements, how to select programs for Impact Evaluation, and how to balance program delivery against evaluation, as well as analysis and interpretation.
 - The sector highlighted a need for investment and resourcing in data elements and data systems to support evaluation activities. Even when there was the expertise within institutions to build the infrastructure, this needed investment and resourcing, as well as staff with the capacity to access and analyse data.
 - Some spoke about challenges in linking data across different datasets in universities' information systems. Data linkage at the pre-access stage was raised across both rounds of consultation as an issue that would impact evaluation capability.

Training and support needs

- The findings from the consultations identified a need for a scaffolding of training for the sector. Training that covers the basics of evaluation needs to be provided, but training should also be available on more advanced aspects of evaluation to address the needs of a diversified audience.
- There is a preference for training materials to be straight-forward and digestible. Staff are busy, and do not want to read lengthy materials. Case studies, and real-life worked examples are preferred. Channels of communication with others in the space are also desired to engage in learning collaboratively and improve practices.
- Stakeholders expressed desire or indicated the need for training and resources across most aspects of evaluation. They:
 - expressed desire for simple explanatory guidance on the use of SEHEEF tools spanning planning, collecting data or completing tools, or reporting of data;
 - sought training and resources on the evaluation basics through to more advanced analysis;
 - desired examples of program logics;
 - sought guidance on managing time to balance implementation against evaluation, and
 - frequently mentioned the desire for real-life worked case examples, as well as step-by-step tutorials.
- As very few institutions had considered or planned for the requirements of Impact Evaluation, there is a need for further support and guidance well in advance of the SEHEEF rollout to prepare the sector and support them with Impact Evaluation.
- In addition to practical training and resources to guide evaluation, the sector desires clarity on implementation timeframes and certainty from the department on the SEHEEF rollout, as well as guidance on additional time/personnel to undertake evaluation.
- The Communities of Practice (CoP) concept was unanimously supported (to come together to exchange experiences, learn from each other and gain advice on implementation and evaluation according to SEHEEF).
- The majority of participants saw that it was a high priority or essential for program managers to be involved in a CoP, but there were also requests from others to be involved in the CoPs to ensure a holistic and considered approach to planning programs and supporting evaluation. This included the involvement of data and business analysts, those with evaluation expertise, and universities leaders and planners. Given the diversity of expertise and specialities in program design and evaluation, participants voiced the opinion that a wide net needs to be cast, such as CoPs that are focused on 'supporting equity programs'. The sector is highly supportive, and it is recommended that a co-design approach is taken with the sector in relation to CoPs.
- Throughout the final opportunity for open-ended feedback, participants reiterated:
 - The importance of training, resources and communities of practice to upskill staff;
 - The need for clarity and certainty on the rollout, and the expectations associated with it, and
 - The need for structural changes to be fully ready for implementation, including the introduction of Unique Student Identifier, investment into staffing and capability building, and continuity of funding to reduce turnover.

1. Introduction

1.1 The Student Equity in Higher Education Evaluation Framework (SEHEEF)

The aim of the SEHEEF (Robinson et al., 2021), developed in 2021, is to structure and guide evaluation of the HEPPP.

The purpose of the HEPPP is to promote equality of opportunity in higher education (Department of Education, 2023). Funded by the Australian Government Department of Education (the Department), the HEPPP allocates funding to Table A universities to implement strategies that improve access to undergraduate courses for people from regional and remote Australia, low socio-economic status backgrounds, and Indigenous persons. It is intended that this funding can also be used to support the retention and completion rates of those students.

An evaluation of the HEPPP was conducted in 2017 by ACIL Allen (ACIL Allen Consulting, 2017). A key finding from this ACIL Allen review was that the sector supports the HEPPP and believes it should be continued, but a recommendation of the review was for the development of an embedded evaluation framework with which to collect data to better measure and monitor impact and inform future improvements. As a response, the Department engaged the ISSR to design the SEHEEF.

The SEHEEF was co-designed with universities to effectively structure and guide three levels of evaluation:

1. A national program evaluation of the HEPPP,
2. Quality improvement evaluations of individual HEPPP-funded university programs and activities, and
3. Evaluations of the effectiveness, and impact of individual HEPPP-funded university programs and activities.

The SEHEEF is designed to provide program managers with the infrastructure to use data to better design, manage and monitor programs. In addition, it has been designed to be a robust framework to accommodate changes in funding programs, to provide ongoing evaluation of university funding programs and activities.

1.2 Phase 1 Implementation of the Student Equity in Higher Education Evaluation Framework

The NCSEHE engaged ISSR to undertake consultation with the sector to understand the preparedness of the sector for the implementation of the SEHEEF, and to gain an understanding of the information and training needs of the sector to develop the appropriate support for the sector moving forward. The purpose has been to assist NCSEHE to develop a national response to the reporting and practice requirements of the SEHEEF.

The objectives of the Phase 1 project were to:

- Determine the **current capacity and preparedness** of the higher education sector to implement the SEHEEF,
- Understand the **training and support needs** of the sector, and
- Obtain feedback from the sector on the latest **2022 HEPPP reporting template**.

In order to fulfil these objectives two rounds of extensive consultation was undertaken. The first round of consultation involved focus groups and interviews with key representatives across the higher education sector. The second round of consultation involved an online survey disseminated to the wider sector.

1.3 Conduct of the focus groups and interviews

The ISSR project team approached a number of stakeholders from the higher education sector who were involved in higher education equity and/or HEPPP programs. This included university leaders, strategic planners, financial administrators and HEPPP program managers, as well as equity group peak bodies.

We commenced the project initially offering focus groups and/or interviews. However, after conducting focus groups, it quickly became apparent that interviews were the better format to enable a 'deep dive' into institutional preparedness. At times, some participants requested that a fellow colleague join the interview, and this approach (known as 'snowball sampling') also proved to be suitable and was accommodated as part of the research design.

A total of 66 invitations were sent to potential participants from the 12 May 2023. Consultations were undertaken between the 23 May and 27 June 2023.

Prior to inviting stakeholders to participate in the project, a stakeholder mapping activity was undertaken, drawing upon a number of existing contacts from ISSR that had participated in the consultations as part of the SEHEEF development. The draft mapping was reviewed by NCSEHE and additional contacts were added. The Department was also sent the mapping and provided additional contacts.

Further, the research lead joined a Community of Practice (CoP) workshop on the SEHEEF, organised by the Equity Practitioners in Higher Education Australasia (EPHEA) on 31 May 2023, and used that forum to advertise the project and invite participation. In addition, equity practitioners who spoke at the workshop about their institution's experience were issued with a direct invitation to participate in the project. The research lead also attended the Widening Tertiary Participation Practitioner Seminar on the 15 June and advertised the project after a presentation on the SEHEEF. Two presenters at the Seminar were invited to participate in the project.

As noted above, some of those invited to participate in a consultation had requested that their colleagues join or get in touch, while the research lead also asked for suggestions for further stakeholders to participate in some cases. For instance, early in the project, it was challenging to find those who specialised in data/business analytics and reporting to support HEPPP, and a snowballing method was used to reach these stakeholders. By the conclusion of consultations we had spoken to a number from the sector in these roles.

A total of 19 consultations were undertaken with 32 participants. The summary of participants, by position and type of institution, is provided in Table 1 below. The full list of stakeholders, by position and institution type, is provided in Appendix A.

While there is a diversity in titles in use across the sector, the breakdown in Table 1 demonstrates that our consultations reached a broad diversity of stakeholders, including: Equity Program Officers, Managers/Directors of Equity and Diversity, Data and Business Analysts, Strategic Planners and Higher Education Equity Experts. Many of those within the role of Manager/Director of Equity had the responsibility for HEPPP reporting. University leaders were also invited, but the invitation was often forwarded to the division of the university with responsibility for equity.

Table 1. Summary of participants, by position and type of institution.

Position	Type of Institution				Total
	National institutions	Regional	Major city (non-Go8)	Major city (Go8)	
Strategic Planner	2				2
Equity Expert	3	2			5
Executive Manager, Student Access and Equity			1		1
Director, Planning and Business Intelligence				1	1
Director, Student Engagement	2				2
Associate Director, Student Success				2	2
Senior Strategic Leader			1		1
Senior Data Analysts			1	1	2
Business Manager	1			1	2
Manager, Reporting and Governance			2		2
Manager, Outreach, Careers and Wellbeing	2				2
Senior Coordinator	1	1			2
Evaluation and Policy Officer			1		1
Project Coordinator			1		1
Equity Program Officer	4			1	5
Pro Vice-Chancellor (Students)	1				1
Total	5	12	8	6	32

1.4 Conduct of the survey

The online survey (see appendix) was disseminated via email. The invitation email included the purpose of the project, the participation information sheet, the survey link as well as expected time to complete the survey (approximately 20 minutes). The email asked that the recipients also forward the email to their team

members who were involved in the planning, design, implementation and evaluation of HEPPP-funded programs.

The survey sample was selected in various stages. Emails were originally distributed by the Department, on behalf of ISSR. This was to ensure that all individuals who were involved in HEPPP reporting were reached, and to ensure a quick dissemination without the need to go back to ethics (i.e., thus, we did not request contact details from the Department).

On the 28th of August 2023, the first email invitation was sent. It was sent via the Department to their entire contact list ($n = 140$). This contact list included individuals responsible for HEPPP reporting for all Table A universities.

On the 12th of September 2023, the first reminder email was sent by the Department to their equity contacts. The reminder email again asked that the recipients also forward the email to their team members who were involved in the planning, design, implementation and evaluation of HEPPP-funded programs.

On the 22nd of September 2023, a final reminder was sent by the Department to their equity contacts, with an extension of timeframe to complete the survey. Recipients were again encouraged to forward the email to their team members who were involved in the planning, design, implementation and evaluation of HEPPP-funded programs.

In addition to the above, the project lead forwarded the Department invitation to the ISSR contact list (including those who had participated in earlier consultations as well as those who had expressed an interest in participating in the project). A total of 9 people were contacted in this way.

An additional 12 email invitations were sent on the 5th of October (by forwarding the Department's original email) to individuals across 12 institutions to which we knew had not responded. We obtained the contact detail from the university website. A final reminder email was sent on the 11th of October.

The survey was open in the field from the 28th of August 2023 to the 12th of October 2023.

1.5 Presentation of data and scope of the report

This report provides the main summary results from the two rounds of consultation. Since we chose a mixed methods approach using focus groups and interviews to first identify the key issues and then distributing a survey to determine the relevance of issues across the wider sector, the data have been processed, analysed and presented as follows:

- The qualitative data were collated from the focus groups and interviews with stakeholders. The first part of the report is structured under the broad themes of the questioning that was used for the consultations and highlights the key issues throughout, with a particular focus on issues relating to the preparedness of the higher education sector to implement the SEHEEF. However, it should be noted that, despite the issues being brought to the foreground, there was variation across the sector in terms of preparedness and attempts have been made to highlight this as well.
- The quantitative data collected from the online survey are presented in the second part of the report.
- Data from both rounds of consultation are then integrated in a discussion section, where we draw out the key findings.

Part A - Focus groups and interviews findings

A key aim of the focus groups and interviews was to identify the issues around preparedness.

A number of stakeholders from relevant areas, such as university leaders, strategic planners, financial administrators and HEPPP program managers, as well as equity group organisations were asked to answer a number of questions covering seven areas. This included a small number of questions regarding the current HEPPP data collection and reporting system.

Areas explored in the focus groups and interviews included:

- Understanding of purpose (of SEHEEF) and expectations.
- Sector planning, resourcing and evaluation capability and capacity.
- Sector internal financial and administration/reporting challenges.
- Broader university planning and scheduling.
- Supporting equity students.
- Online portal, training and communities of practice.
- Feedback on data collection and reporting system.

Responses from stakeholders provided the information necessary to write questions for the survey.

2. Understanding of purpose & expectations

2.1 Clarity around implementation: Need for clarification on timeframes, reporting expectations and definitions

A clear issue for the sector was the lack of clarity about timeframes, how much will be required from the sector, and operational definitions.

Clarity of timeframes: Hesitation to proceed

A clear consensus from the sector was the need to establish a timeframe for the full implementation of the SEHEEF. This was raised during the majority of, if not all, consultations, and was often posed as a question back to the ISSR team to try to obtain some further clarity of timeframes.

Some admitted that while they familiarised themselves with the SEHEEF initially upon the report release, they had since let it slip from their planning and minds, as they were unclear as to if, and when, it would roll-out:

we kind of we got everyone in our area to fill them in at the beginning of last year. But then, you know, when everything stalled, we haven't used them. Participant 14

Many participants stated that they had already started to apply CQI to planning their programs. However, while they had initially commenced incorporating the CQI planning, they had now paused because of a lack of clarity and concern that this would not proceed and that they were wasting their time.

Others were clearly hesitant to proceed at all, without certainty about its implementation.

It's my sense that this document (i.e., the SEHEEF guidance manual) is critical to strategic planning. But I don't want to be doing this work feeling like they might be a little bit more to trickle down the pipe line. Participant 3

This varied sense of hesitation and familiarity with the SEHEEF has potentially created some imbalance across the sector in terms of their understanding of the SEHEEF and the extent of planning around it.

Clarity of reporting expectations

Further, the sector expressed a desire for clarity on what to report. The unclear reporting requirements at the time of funding announcements and during planning were perceived as having a negative impact upon planning and design. When asked about their expectations of the Department, the sector did express that they saw the government would oversee and facilitate the collation and synthesis of national level data to understand the effectiveness of the HEPPP at a national level. The sector also expressed their need for further communication, training and guidance to support them in providing the information needed to achieve this. The sector had a clear understanding that this would only be achieved through clear communication about what is required and when.

The Government needs to provide me with a clear understanding of what information is going to be required at the stage of program design essentially, and some clear definitions around those things. Participant 10

I just want some certainty about the final templates, expectations the number of activities to be evaluated each year. Participant 14

Clarity of equity group operational definitions: Low-SES and RRR students

Consistently, participants raised issues with operationalisations of equity groups themselves. They spoke about it in terms of their own reporting purposes and as a barrier to be able to enhance their systems. One institution had a senior data/ analytics position that was dedicated to supporting the data analytics side of HEPPP analysis and reporting. This participant spoke about the challenges in creating a dashboard with ambiguities around the definitions of low SES as well as regional/remote students. Others across the sector raised similar concerns in terms of being able to identify and target students. Specifically, they talked about wanting to provide clearer instructions for students when completing details of their address, e.g., using first address or current address so they could reach these students and ensure their HEPPP money was being directed to the intended students. They also discussed challenges when different definitions were adopted across different data systems at the university, or through the receipt of other datasets, such as admissions data.

The definition of equity group (e.g., low SES) may vary across systems. Participant 10

The definition of equity group – RRR and low-SES remains unclear. Participant 19 & 20

The sector spoke about the need for clear communication and clarification from the Department on this issue.

Some spoke about the challenges in reaching equity students for their programs as a result of on the seeming ambiguity of current equity group definitions. For instance, without clear operationalisation of consistent definitions of low SES and regional/remote status, it is challenging for institutions to accurately target these groups. In addition, there were challenges in identifying and attracting targeted students, due to the potential stigma that is attached to these labels. Some recommended that targeting 'first-in-family' would be a better approach and would reach the same cohort.

Difficult to identify low-SES students because they don't see themselves as a group. Participant 14

Clarity of key program logic components: primary and supporting outcomes

The sector expressed a desire for additional support, particularly in relation to clarification of the concepts of 'primary' and 'supporting' outcomes. Some requested additional resources to support the sector in determining outcomes and the appropriate measures, such as through a data dictionary with clear definitions and examples.

Has been confusion within the team about primary and secondary outcomes. Participant 15

(The project program logic) has been really useful, it is just nailing evidence for the primary outcomes that has been challenging. Participant 1, 15, and 18

Many discussed the difficulties in measuring the outcomes of outreach projects, and this relates to the challenges of data collection in the pre-access space and tracking students to assess meaningful outcomes (see Section on 5.4 on challenges with data linkage in the pre-access stage). Others expressed the difficulties in measuring longer-term outcomes from programs.

"How do we put value on the impact that you might actually not realize that impact for another year or so particularly things like, you know, some of the transition programs where we're working with First Nations students that are, you know, live out in the homelands, in out of land, you know, they may actually only realize that sort of trajectory into higher education three years later." Participant 16

Similarly, others requested the inclusion of a wider set of outcomes as part of the evaluation, debating the conclusiveness of the predetermined set of outcomes:

is it worth expanding the definition of participation to include having aspirations, building conversations with students, so other positive outcomes for the wider economy (that don't factor in higher education) in and of itself? Participant 28

A common theme was that further clarity could be provided here to support the development of data sources, including the definition and collection of data on program outcomes.

2.2 Impact Evaluation: Need for guidance to support Impact Evaluation

Many expressed an understanding of what was expected of them in relation to the SEHEEF. However, a deeper delve into this issue identified that the participant strengths lay in the understanding around the CQI component, rather than Impact Evaluation (including QIE and TBIE). For instance, some participants expressed that CQI was already being applied to their programs, and was seen as a natural extension of their in-house review processes that were undertaken to improve their programs on a year-on-year basis. They noted that the tools that had been provided as part of the guidance manual from the 2021 SEHEEF project provided further instruction on how to do this. Other participants reported that they had explicit direction from project leads to utilise the CQI templates as part of all program planning.

(we have) been trying to use the template in the Guidance manual for (our) own internal reporting tools. Participant 8

Many expressed that their thoughts of Impact Evaluation would come 'later'.

Focusing on CQI, and Impact Evaluation won't come into the picture for a couple of years. Participant 18

Others were more explicit that they needed more guidance here to avoid ambiguities.

Well, I think that the similarity is just that the Continuous Quality Improvement stuff is what we're good at. Yeah. the impact assessment Impact Evaluation is not something that we would say we've done before. And I think for me that's probably the part of the SEHEEF that I look at and go. There's not enough guidance here. There's not enough information about what kind of impact assessment are they off to if they're expecting all sorts of different universities to do this on their programming? Are they going to get all sorts of different impact evaluations done? because we could just give you anything? Right? We'll give the government anything. Participant 15

practitioner led evaluation is really strong, but it's the Theory-Based Impact Evaluation where that's a specialisation and that's an area where we all need some guidance about. e.g. where does that come from? Is that within each university or is that external to each university? Not sure it is something that we could do to be honest. Participant 1

At the end of this comment, Participant 1 asked the interviewer what ISSR had in mind regarding Impact Evaluation, further indicating the ambiguity around this.

Other comments, which did not clearly call for more training on Impact Evaluation, still conveyed that there was more guidance needed to understand and conduct Impact Evaluation, and also on interpretation.

What is tricky is to link the program/intervention to the outcomes (for example, how to link a particular program with retention). Participants 10, 23 and 24

The consequences of negative results of an evaluation – what if the evaluation shows no impact? there would be impact evaluation that wouldn't demonstrate significant impact. (e.g., nothing wrong with the program, but because there are so many complex factors affecting students' life or time-lagged effect such as how you capture the impact of an outreach program in Year 10). Participants 14, 16, and 26

Challenge lies more with the impact evaluation. One more challenge for us, because we deal with very fewer numbers of students from equity cohorts is to have that suggested distribution within the different equity cohorts. Dealing with very small numbers. Also, unclear how that longer term impact evaluation would make sense of participation of years 5,6,7 students and then looking at participation in higher education (8 plus years of student life). How to set up that evaluation or how will be executed? Participant 28

The latter comments also relate to the sector's desire for more assistance in identifying students in the pre-access stage, which is discussed in Section 5.4. Overall, the sector saw that the Department was responsible for providing further clarification and guidance to support the sector here.

3. Sector planning and resourcing

3.1 Program Design: Ongoing support needed for utilisation of best practice methods

There were vastly different approaches to the planning and design of programs. There was also evidence that institutions tried to adopt best practice methods, although there was variation in terms of the types of practices and the extent to which they were relied upon. For instance, the use of program logics was identified by some as occurring, while some explicitly said this had been adopted since the release of the SEHEEF report and manual. However, this was not consistently implemented across institutions. Similarly, others referred to drawing upon research on program design and planning, and others talked about including equity students in these activities, but this was not consistently mentioned across institutions.

Some institutions referred to 'legacy' programs – those programs which had been running for a considerable time and were continually implemented. It was indicated by a few that this occurred on the basis of internal evaluations of such programs that showed they worked. However, participants were often vague about the rigor of such evaluations. Other institutions had talked about dropping some of their 'legacy' programs, and this occurred once a set of evaluative criteria had been established. One participant noted that all members of their team were required to now use CQI as part of their program planning, and that this allowed a closer scrutiny of these legacy programs, and whether they should be continued or not.

Across the sector, there was variation in terms of how new programs were developed. Some spoke of being 'allocated' a portion of money and told to focus on an aspect of supporting students (e.g., retention) where they had the autonomy to develop programs around this objective. They often spoke about drawing upon research, but also largely drawing upon lessons learned from previous programs that they had implemented. Across some institutions, the adoption of CQI had assisted such internal reviews, as had some form of feedback from students involved in the programs.

A novel approach was to call for expressions of interest (EOIs) from researchers within the university to lead programs as research projects, where a number of such EOIs were led by units with a focus on equity students, notably Indigenous units within institutions. Such applications were reviewed by a panel constituting senior executive leaders, and part of the assessment criteria was the extent to which they align with the university's objectives of supporting equity students.

Other institutions had a more collaborative/team approach to program design. For instance, they spoke about meeting as a group, which included equity officers as well as senior leaders, to evaluate the alignment of programs with broader equity strategies. While infrequent across the sector, some included a governance group involving equity students in this planning, as well as business data and analytics teams to establish performance indicators that could be successfully collected and accessed through current reporting systems.

A larger institution, with a commensurately larger proportion of HEPPP funding and an increased variety of HEPPP programs, had a dedicated staff member in an oversight position. They had a clear application process by which HEPPP program leads sought internal approval and funding for their programs prior to implementation. This process included evaluative criteria, including criteria to demonstrate the alignment with HEPPP and the university equity objectives, as well as the submission of completed tools and templates provided with the SEHEEF (e.g., there was an expectation for all programs to apply program logics and alignment with the outcomes). Additionally, these programs had quarterly check-ins on data collection and spending. There was an advanced internal portal in which programs were listed, data/findings could be uploaded to a central system, and information could be shared between program leads.

Clearly, there were some more sophisticated approaches and strengths in designing programs. However, these were not consistently utilised across institutions and often only a small number of best practice principles were utilised. To some extent, this was a function of the size of an institution and the amount of funding allocated. However, there is an opportunity for greater overall utilisation of such tools through ongoing training and CoPs.

4. Evaluation planning and capacity

4.1 Program selection: Ongoing guidance needed to support practice

There was variation across the sector in terms of their evaluation practice, ranging from a lack of evaluation planning to applying CQI across all HEPPP programs. When asked about processes in place to select programs for evaluation, it was observed that all programs would be evaluated. However, this activity was largely confined to CQI processes – where SEHEEF preparation has received a concentrated focus – and not Impact Evaluation. Comments from participants reiterated that the sector was largely focused on CQI and in-house review and evaluation of their programs was relied upon to improve their future delivery.

We've actually been evaluating all of our programs in terms of continuous quality improvement, which created a lot of data entry and analysis work. Participant 14

There had been limited planning (if any) for how programs would be prioritised for Impact Evaluation, be it QIE or TBIE, once the SEHEEF was fully implemented. Some participants mentioned that their selection of programs for evaluation would depend upon resourcing and/or other university priorities. Overall, there did not yet appear to be much active planning around Impact Evaluation and largely, the sector had not established systems of program selection for evaluation.

The impact stuff is where at a loss. Would have to be a long-standing program where there's longitudinal data. And, would be because it's strategically important as well. Participant 15

The following comments reflect the variation across the sector in terms of their evaluation readiness and advancement. Even when templates have been implemented, there has not always been follow-through with putting processes in place to collect and report data.

Have implemented SEHEEF templates for all HEPPP programs from the start of last year. Participant 30

what we've tried to do is set a sort of evaluation framework for each of the projects. But what we haven't done is really followed through with measuring. Participant 16

Others recognised that evaluation has not progressed due to a lack of evaluation expertise, problems of high staff turnover, and the prioritisation of small HEPPP funding allocations for program delivery, as well as other competing university priorities.

4.2 Evaluation expertise and personnel: Guidance/training required to build evaluation capability

Correspondingly, evaluation expertise and internal capacity also varied markedly across the sector. For instance, some institutions had evaluation specialists, others identified the need for external bodies, and others spoke about wanting further training to keep evaluation in-house.

Those who spoke about drawing upon external evaluators highlighted: a) the need for independence from the institution to ensure that the evaluation findings were not biased; and b) having insufficient evaluation capacity to do it well. It is notable that one of the participants who had had the most evaluation expertise of all participants – based on their prior work experience – was the one that felt an external body would be needed to do Impact Evaluation well.

Others were reluctant to employ external bodies to provide evaluation support, as these were expensive and see as cutting into HEPPP budgets. One institution had obtained a quote from an external body which they viewed as expensive. However, they saw they were in a fortunate position in that their institution had a research centre which could do the evaluation at a much more competitive rate, equating to 1.9-2.2% of their HEPPP funding. Smaller institutions may not have this opportunity while even larger institutions require 'buy-in' at the institutional level to support this.

Other participants expressed a desire to keep the evaluation in-house, and to 'train up' existing staff who were involved in the planning and design of programs, to ensure consistency across design, implementation, evaluation and reporting. However, it was recognised that evaluation upskilling was required to achieve this.

Notably, some other equity practitioners, who had little evaluation expertise, saw themselves as likely doing the evaluation themselves. However, it was generally acknowledged that this was sufficient for CQI but may not suffice for Impact Evaluation. In the latter case, they felt that they would not have the capacity or capability but, as discussed, planning for Impact Evaluation had not progressed with any clarity and definition.

Don't have a team who specifically evaluate, would have to put in resource to set up and do analytic work. Participant 13

Others recognised that they had the evaluation expertise.

We've got the expertise to do the evaluation – the Evaluation officers work with program leaders to design surveys, employ ambassadors to do the data entry, and then the Evaluation officers analysed the data Participants 14, 26, and 30

However, it was also indicated that they may not be easily drawn upon. There had not been any forward planning from their institution to reallocate workloads so that there could be dedicated time to evaluate programs by drawing upon the available expertise.

4.3 Implementation vs evaluation: guidance required to support the sector to balance evaluation against implementation.

The feedback clearly indicated ambiguity about balancing program delivery against evaluation. Some stakeholders volunteered this as an issue they were themselves grappling with, and the same feeling was conveyed when participants were specifically prompted about how they would allocate their time and resources across the two aspects. The consensus was that the sector saw evaluation as important and needed to better understand what was effective – both internally and more broadly across the sector. However, they also expressed some concern that the time and resources that would ordinarily be allocated to delivery would be redirected to evaluation. There was concern that this would impact on program delivery, such as either reducing the reach of, or needing to scale back on, programs that could potentially support students. There was no clear plan about how these competing demands would be balanced. Some asked the interviewer what percentage of funding should be set aside for evaluation while others asked whether the government would provide more funding for evaluation.

The perceived proportions for evaluation varied from 2.2 to 20%, while some stakeholders indicated that it would depend on how much detail they would be required to report (refer to Section 2.1 on expectations) or the type and scale of the evaluation they would need to conduct.

Proper program evaluation might need to cost 20% of the budget – however, traditionally this money has been allocated to frontline services, and will be devote to frontline services unless SEHEEF explicitly indicate a proportion. Participants 21-22,

We've always been told that around 10% of the time and resources should go into evaluation, and that certainly didn't happen hasn't happened. It's always been a challenge for the manager and I to get people to realise that there is value in pre-planning and post-evaluation. Participant 14

"We don't want to spend a huge amount of the HEPPP money on the evaluation. The money should go to the practitioners and the projects themselves – or how do we utilise other mechanisms to do that evaluation?" Participant 16.

Further direction and clarification are needed here on expectations.

Only one institution had really progressed with Impact Evaluation. They described having a unit within their university who had the capability to undertake this task. They also had university buy-in to support this, as it meant that they could employ the in-house unit at an affordable rate compared with an external provider, as described above. This reiterated concerns, particularly by smaller institutions, as to how the perceived expense of Impact Evaluation would constrain their resources.

"that's probably the biggest concern, particularly in a small university where you are wearing so many hats. And there isn't a team that looks after the HEPPP money, it's one person". Participant 16

5. Sector internal financial and administration/reporting challenges

5.1 Disconnect between planning and data analytics: need to promote the inclusion of business/data analytics personnel in the planning stages.

Consistently, those involved in the data and business analytics divisions across the university expressed a desire to be involved in the early planning of evaluation, to advise on feasible data collections, linking to other datasets and ensuring consistency in outcome measures. Some saw that the introduction of the SEHEEF as providing an opportunity and impetus for different sections to work together.

For instance, at one institution, participants described the importance of working with HEPPP program officers to understand requirements for a SEHEEF dashboard so as to efficiently support data collection.

"We template it as much as possible, and work with each of the programs to make sure that they know their obligations and were very comfortable in uploading the data. Then the data could be easily linked to students' academic record. Participants 1, 19-20, and 30

From the perspective of data and business analysts, there was a need for more of this consultation and collaboration. An issue identified by analysts was that they felt they were often included too late into the planning process and could have supported the more sophisticated collection of data and operationalisation of outcomes if this had occurred earlier. This included potentially trouble-shooting key challenges around data linkage with other university datasets.

Thus, direction as to how to achieve this level of integration, including at which points data teams and program planners meet and about to discuss and plan evaluation is a key issue.

5.2 Rudimentary data collection and recording methods: need to move towards sophisticated data collection and recording methods

Data and business analysts expressed concerns with the use of rudimentary data collection and recording methods, such as paper and pencil surveys, with data then manually inputted into excel spreadsheets. The use of excel spreadsheets seemed common across institutions, which are then sometimes linked to other records, although not consistently. This method was problematic due to the risk of losing information, the difficulties in linking to other data systems that existed within the university and the inaccuracies that could be created from a rudimentary system. For instance, one university spoke about the timing of data collection and reporting which exacerbated these problems.

"whatever intervention it is. you know. Is there someone recording it with a pen and paper to input later into excel. And if that's the case, you get issues with when the data is uploaded e.g., sometimes the date doesn't match. Participants 19 and 20

We have centralised data warehouses and the system has the capacity to build whatever we need. But the hard part is data collection, which comes down to the local units delivering services and issues of workload management. Participants 1, 19-20 and 21

Data and business analysts expressed the need for improved, “real-time” interfaces to collect data. For instance, these were preferable to overcome a number of problems relating to accurate data collection and reporting:

Now the data is kind of all over the place in different word documents and things like that. ... We have built a HEPPP dashboard, which is a high level of summarisation of HEPPP student footprint. But it doesn't capture the intervention outcomes yet ... because data doesn't exist yet. "So the best solution is to have an interface that the data gets input and get stored - but it is not currently happening." Participant 20

It was noted that universities need to invest in such data collection and recording methods.

5.3 Investment and resourcing: Need for guidance and planning around workload management to ensure data can be accessed.

Many of the above issues were underpinned by insufficient resourcing. For instance, the participants spoke about needing investment into data systems, collection and reporting methods, as well as staffing so the team had adequate time to implement efficiencies into their workings.

Further, while some institutions discussed having quite advanced data systems enabling the linkage of data from different systems within the university, it did not appear to be the case that equity practitioners and those involved in the evaluation of equity programs could necessarily always access this data. Often, it was described that these data systems had a ‘gatekeeper’, coupled with a sense the ‘over guarding’ of data was taking place. This raises the potential issue that, with an anticipated increase in data requirements with the implementation of SEHEEF, coupled with a lack of planning around the distribution of current workloads and unclear expectations as to who is supporting the evaluation, personnel may be too stretched to meaningfully assist with evaluation.

The system is very basic at the moment. We have a planning and performance team and a data warehouse, but not easy to track individual student and also need a lot of manual work to clean data. Participant 16

They don't really use the unique student identifier. "that probably would be one of our biggest challenges in order to get the level of analysis that might be needed, and we'll be relying on other people to do that for us who are already stretched with other things" Participant 16

In contrast, two institutions had quite advanced data dashboards to link to the university systems. However, notably, these institutions had broader university support into equity programs (e.g., the Senior Equity Manager was funded via the university and not by HEPPP funding). The internal portal of this institution was discussed above (Section 3.1), where the Senior Equity Manager described the internal portal in which data/findings from program leads were uploaded and shared with all program leads. The other institution with an advanced dashboard system also recognised that a better data warehouse and linkage system required further resourcing from the institution. For instance, this team had created a dashboard as a first step to support the SEHEEF. The dashboard specified a minimum set of data elements required for HEPPP projects, and also provided project staff with a spreadsheet template to collect a basic and consistent amount of activity data, which could then be easily uploaded into a data warehouse. The data appear on the dashboard as soon as the data were uploaded and the senior leader group could view overall progress of the projects from the dashboard. However, the investment involved to build this system, it was described as ultimately requiring additional resourcing for users to be able to access and model the data:

"the way we have it (data systems) set up is a dedicated database oracle database currently, and data feeds in from several different systems into that database it gets modelled and formed into neat data mark for us to work with. And then we access that data from there. And we build the analysis or dashboards, or, you know, investigation into it. And that's a different team that manages that data resource that got away house. and they will need resourcing for us. If there's any new data that needs to come in on more data modeling that needs to happen. They'll need resources as well to do that." Participants 19 and 20

5.4 Data linkage: further support needed for data linkage

Pre-access stage/national data

Participants, ranging from senior equity manager, program officers, and those in the business/data analytics, saw that the creation of evaluative data sets in the pre-access stage was not yet feasible. It was mentioned consistently across the sector in response to a range of different questions, and there was a strong call for the Department to provide assistance on this issue.

Some participants spoke about the limitations in reporting on the outcomes of activities in the pre-access stage, noting they were often only able to report on the number of students who attended events, without being able to link such data to outcome measures such as university applications and acceptances.

Others, from the data administration side, when speaking about even the sophistication of their systems noted that there would be no progress on this unless the Unique Student Identifier (USI) was either extended or linked to an indicator in the secondary and primary education systems in Australia.

The sector sought further clarification on this issue, and a way forward, from the Department. At the same time, the sector may need additional guidance and clarification regarding any potential privacy issues and how they can be managed, as some participants saw some ethical issues and perceived there would be some reluctance among equity students to being tracked.

Some equity group students don't want to be identified and tracked Participant 26

Data sets within university

In addition to that, some institutions, with less advanced data warehouses acknowledged that there were again challenges in linking to their different data sets. For instance, one institution talked about different discrete data sets that they work with, including: (1) a direct application data set owned by student recruitment team; (2) a Universities Admissions Centre (UAC) data set accessed by scholarships and student recruitment teams; and (3) a post-acceptance and enrolment data set that tracked students through the university's administration system. They described various challenges, including data linkage without the USI, and using these data sets for recruitment as the data is anonymised and which makes it challenging to invite and recruit students to events. There were also internal access issues, that require internal resourcing (as discussed earlier).

Data linkages is definitely challenging because all of our programs sit across different systems, which don't always talk to each other. Manual work would be needed Participant 10

Still working on the data linkages to other initiatives and other policy areas which will take a bit of time Participant 12

5.5 Variation in approaches to funding reporting: Some support may achieve consistency

Generally, reporting on the funding allocation to different programs and expenditure was not discussed as a major challenge for the sector, although there was variation across the sector in how this was approached. For instance, some discussed strategies within their institution so that each program lead was given a unique code from their internal administration team and expected to bill all expenses for the program to that code.

However, participants noted that there were challenges with this where program leads would not necessarily consistently apply these codes.

Other institutions did not plan as carefully to such an extent, indicating that they receive a large pool of money from other resources and the university has a broad suite of equity programs. When reporting on funding, they attempted to retrofit some information by drawing upon their equity programs which align onto the funding amounts and report on these.

Stakeholders discussed unclear expectations around HEPPP expenditure, including what fell within HEPPP expenditure (or not) and how much could be spent. Drawing upon counselling support services to deliver a program, but in which staff were already appointed by the university for the broader student population, required determining an approximate amount of time that these staff would dedicate to students eligible for HEPPP funding allocation and then allocating a portion of HEPPP money to that division of the university. They discussed using their best estimates for determining this allocation. Other variations, which also impact upon the allocation of resources, included whether personnel were appointed by other university funding or HEPPP funding. The level of university investment impacts how much HEPPP funding remains for the programs, and this was sometimes unclear in reporting as even within teams there was variation in from which pool of money staff were paid.

Some stakeholders described their plans for allocating and monitoring funding expenditure. For instance, some had quarterly check-ins with program leads on data collection and expenditure. Others had internal portals for staff to easily upload information to the Equity Manager, while also allowing the internal sharing of information with other program leads. However, examples of this sort of centralised system were rare, but offers ways for how the sector, if supported, could move towards a consistent approach.

6. Broader university planning and scheduling

6.1 Condensed planning time: earlier notification of funding allocation and/or longer funding models would improve programs.

The sector spoke about an insufficient amount of time between the release of funding and the planning and implementation of programs. They felt that the late notification of funding amounts, which was needed for planning, significantly constrained their time to plan and design, particularly for new programs. Clarity and certainty were viewed as key issues here. Some spoke about drawing up plans around their legacy programs and continuing with those 'as they were', as the restrictions around timing limited the development and design of new programs or changes to continuing/existing programs.

In addition, they spoke about the constraints arising from the one-year funding model under HEPPP. It was seen that the one-year funding model prevented the development or implementation of longer-term programs that could enact meaningful change. Participants also discussed how equity practitioners were often on one-year rolling contracts as a result of this model. A major consequence of this job insecurity was high turnover within the sector, disrupting the consistency of planning and improvements to existing programs. The issue was seen as being exacerbated within a sector that had lost resourcing as a result of COVID-19.

"We've got some fairly tight constraints on hiring continuing staff on non-continuing money."
Participants S21, 22, and 31

High staff turnover caused by the short-term funding makes it a challenge to have a shared narrative and a shared understanding around HEPPP work and HEPPP reporting and to de-silo practice.
Participant 2

As an alternative, they spoke about the potential for three-year programs that commence with students' first accessing university and tracking and supporting them through to completion.

In addition, there seemed to be ambiguity across the sector as to whether unspent HEPPP funds could be rolled over into the following year. Most did not think this was the case. However, of those that did believe HEPPP funds could be rolled over, there was a reluctance to show much under expenditure (which sometimes occurred with staff turnover and lags in appointments), for concern that future funding allocations would be reduced if they were seen as unneeded.

6.2 University planning, resourcing and allocation of workloads to support evaluation: more involvement from senior leadership needed within institutions and attention to resources

Connection with broader university strategic planning. While some stakeholders who worked in equity planning and implementation reported investment from senior leadership, other stakeholders expressed some disconnect with the broader university planning and strategic leadership. This was not always expressed as an issue, as some spoke about the autonomy they had in developing programs. However, others expressed that a stronger alignment with their institutional objectives and direction would facilitate a better coordination and integration of programs.

Some expressed that the HEPPP was a small component of their overall funding, and their institutions currently had other priorities.

"It's a x million dollar bucket of money in a billion dollar university" Participant 21-22, and 30

Others highlighted how a strong connection with university planning would allow for the development of programs which would more meaningfully embed equity within broader institution programs, such as student safety and wellbeing programs. Thus, it was seen that when universities embedded equity within their objectives and strategic direction, this could facilitate the intersectionality of programs, by consistently linking equity programs within the broader student experience.

Allocation of resources for evaluation. Some participants believed senior leadership needed to be more 'on-board' and up to date with the changes to HEPPP, particularly with the requirements for evaluation, to ensure there was sufficient allocation of resources to support the equity programs and their evaluation. Some universities, particularly larger institutions receiving higher amounts of HEPPP funding and strong alignment with institutional strategic plans, had dedicated equity staff tasked with HEPPP programs and supporting evaluation. For example, one institution had a data specialist who was appointed to build dashboards and support the linkage of HEPPP program and student outcomes data. Other institutions had appointed equity managers – in one instance, as a consequence of the announcement of the SEHEEF – to coordinate HEPPP programs, allocation of funding, and reporting. At times, these roles were linked to the broader university objectives and these positions were not dependent on HEPPP allocation but paid through other university income streams. This enabled longer-term appointments in roles which had oversight and enabled continuation of planning. However, the appointment of university-funded dedicated personnel seemed rare.

There is a perceived need for more planning to ensure there is adequate resources or reallocation of workloads to support the additional requirements with evaluation. Data analysts need university leaders to be on board to support the investment and building of data infrastructure that could support data linkage and hence, consistent evaluations. Equity program officers need institutional involvement to support staff retention and resources for program design. Others highlighted that those with data access and evaluation expertise were already at capacity and there had been no planning to reallocate the workloads to accommodate the additional requirements. Some spoke about the need for more evaluation training to be provided or paid for by their institution. As discussed above, others desired university buy-in for intersectionality across other institutional programs for an integrated approach to designing equity programs.

7. Supporting Equity Students

7.1 Centring equity student experience in program design

Some institutions involved equity students in the process of program design, although to varying degrees. Some institutions indicated they had adopted a co-design process for all their equity programs. Others spoke about wanting to achieve this but acknowledged they faced logistical challenges and ethical issues in doing this. For instance, some thought equity students should be paid as part of the consultation process, and this required further stretching of HEPPP funding that may be taken away from implementation. There were also some time restrictions that created challenges in centring equity students as a part of their program design. For instance, they spoke about the short timeframes between funding allocation and program implementation and that the time restriction created challenges in achieving a meaningful co-design process.

However, other universities adopted different models to include equity students in HEPPP program planning. Two institutions discussed including equity students as part of a governance group, along with university leaders, who oversaw the proposed equity programs. Others spoke about always seeking feedback from equity students on programs and using this as part of the CQI process in improving their programs.

Some saw opportunities with the SEHEEF to centre equity students or equity students' representatives to a greater extent. However, they also saw that there needed to be systemic changes for this to happen, such as having broader university support to embed this approach into programs and planning. Further, it was recognised by strategic planners that the sector overall experienced underrepresentation of Indigenous staff and students, and this was a challenge and/or would require connections with the broader community to support planning.

7.2 Expanding programs to other students

Other participants shared the experience of having developed good programs, that students responded positively to, only to have to decline participation requests from non-HEPPP equity students due to funding constraints. One equity program officer spoke of the ethical issue they faced in having to turn away students, who they also saw as needing and potentially benefiting from the programs, but not being able to extend it to them due to funding limitations. Generally, participants viewed this as an issue of sufficient importance to draw attention to it, particularly in relation to students with disability:

With the potential universities Accord reform agenda, how is SEHEEF going to be applied to other groups, such as disability? Participant 9, and30

Call for institutions to have better strategic planning which includes people with disability. Participant 9

It would be really great if SEHEEF could add disability as a cohort. Participant 30

8. Data Collection and Reporting systems

8.1 Sector Feedback

Streamlined reporting.

Largely, the feedback from the sector was that the latest HEPPP reporting template was more user-friendly than previous years and significantly less time-consuming. It was useful at the user end to collate the high-level strategic information.

"I think it's probably actually improved since last year, when we saw last year had a lot more qualitative stuff where we're having to pull numbers from specific programs. And a lot more information was required. So I actually think it's an improvement. From last year, it's more streamlined." Participant 22

There was also a view that the information could be better used by the Department, rather than previous reports, and thus, the sector saw the purpose of the reporting and to some extent, informed their own planning.

When they gave us feedback on the report, which was great, thank you, you've met the requirements. They did an analysis and said you're spending majority of your funding within, you know, participation or access, which was quite useful. Some of that information for that sort of analysis and where we're benchmarking against the sector would be great. Participant 31

The supply of case studies was supported by the sector and considered an improvement on reporting a large amount of qualitative information.

Suggested improvements.

Outcomes and demonstrations of achievements. However, while recognising the simplicity of the form, others suggested modifying the template to enable more data to be captured. In particular, some participants would have liked an opportunity to provide the data collected from activities or programs around outcomes. This was to demonstrate how their programs were successful (rather than just a 'yes' or 'no'), while also providing data that could be compared across the sector for benchmarking purposes.

Some of the outcomes like it just asked were outcomes achieved, but it like didn't really ask any reasons why they weren't or what was successful. Participant 31

Other examples included listing all the equity cohorts an activity is aimed at, and making it possible to provide open-ended responses regarding the extent to which outcomes were met. Overall, suggestions pointed to opportunities to better demonstrate what was done and what worked (with a balance between quantitative and qualitative information required).

Timing. As indicated above, the sector desired that the reporting templates be circulated closer to the timing of the funding allocation, so that this information about what to capture be included in their planning. There were some concerns across the sector that they would be expected to report on aspects that they had not fully prepared for and could have done so with earlier notice.

Ongoing technical challenges. Despite the improved user-friendliness of the reporting system, it was acknowledged that reporting on multi-focus activities was challenging. Further modifications by the Department or instructions around this issue would be supported.

8.2 ISSR Feedback

As part of this component, an ISSR Expert Advisory Group reviewed the templates. Broadly, the group thought there had been some good measures undertaken to make the template clearer in terms of the Department's expectations of what is required in terms of reporting and to also align aspects of the reporting with the SEHEEF. However, the group expressed that the new template will not enable a good understanding of the reach of HEPPEP activities or what difference they were making. They also thought there is now less detail submitted on the actual nature of programs and activities because of the decision by the Department to no longer request Access and Participation Plans from universities.

Further feedback was as follows:

- The detailed guidance for the completion of the new templates was seen as positive and helpful for the sector;
- The visual examples were seen as useful;

- The primary and secondary activity type categories may be confusing, especially given the typology of activity types was purposefully designed to ensure that activity types were mutually exclusive (with different activity types being bundled into a ‘program’);
- The CQI and Impact Evaluation fields request closed option responses (Yes/No/NA) so the usefulness of the information would be limited and revision recommended to obtain detail on the nature of those processes;
- Further detail on what methods were used for CQI and what those methods found in terms of activity reach, student satisfaction, changes pre- and post-activity, etc, would be useful, and
- The Impact Evaluation field suggests a response is possible at the activity level and the visual example reinforces this. However, the SEHEEF proposes that Impact Evaluation is conducted at the program level, so this could be confusing.

9. Online portal, training and communities of practice

9.1 Communities of practice (CoPs)

There was such a strong desire for CoPs across the sector to facilitate the information sharing around what works, that it was often raised before we had reached the targeted question about this.

Equity practitioners, in particular, indicated strong support for CoPs as a mechanism for the sharing of evaluation findings, to better understand what works, and to facilitate the smooth implementation of the SEHEEF. There was also a desire to include those with evaluation expertise within these communities. Overall, the sector saw the main objective of HEPPE was to support equity students and this would be better achieved through information sharing. As NCSEHE is already aware, equity practitioners have commenced an information-sharing CoP through EPHEA. However, it should be noted that, those who are a part of this process may be more advanced in their planning and incorporation of the SEHEEF, and to attempt to reach out across the sector more broadly.

Further, there was an expressed desire by equity practitioners for involvement from universities leaders. This, in particular, was expressed by those whose leaders were perhaps not as involved in the planning, or governance or other aspects of equity program implementation. From their perspective, this would be useful to have senior leaders’ understanding of what is happening in the space and what is required for evaluation to encourage buy-in from leaders. This has been covered in above sections of this report. For instance, one participant who was advanced in their evaluation planning talked about their institution having an “institutional equity target”, and thus, their equity programming becoming a core element of their university priorities. University buy-in would also support the investment in infrastructure, personnel and resources at an institutional level (a whole-institute approach).

Those in data and business analytics were very keen to be involved in CoPs. They expressed a desire to speak with others in similar roles to exchange ideas and solutions regarding challenges in building data dashboards, the desired interfaces and operational definitions that created challenges. In addition, and already discussed above, there was a desire to be more involved in the information sharing with those in the planning and implementation side to provide guidance and input early in the design regarding what is feasible, but also to have a clear idea of what practitioners are hoping to measure in the future to commence planning for this.

9.2 Training modules and an online portal

The training needs identified by participants can be broadly summarised as wanting **more detail on all aspects of evaluation**. While many consulted were positive about the existing templates in the guidance manual, most expressed a desire to see more examples of these, such as real-life or worked examples of program logics to actual programs.

Step-by-step guides – the consultations alluded to the sector benefiting from step-by-step guides. Further, short, bite-size training videos/clips would be more palatable and more useful to train up staff quickly, particularly for junior or new members of the team. Those that were more advanced in their evaluation journey spoke about strengthening the expertise of their team members, and how modules or documentation which are lengthy and arduous would be less effective. Language should be simplified and easy for people with no evaluation backgrounds.

Others spoke about the use of training videos to go through, step-by-step, the various components of the SEHEEF, particularly the steps for how to conduct evaluation. It was again noted that there is a high turnover in the sector, and newly appointed staff need to be trained up quickly.

Tiered training. Building on the above points about the need for step-by-step guides, was the idea of providing tiered levels of training.

- *Evaluation Basics.* There was a strong desire for training and resources which covered the **'evaluation basics'** – including program logics, and program design, data collection and basic analyses. This included training on what to measure, and why. Again, this was to support those newly appointed in the space and a prerequisite to support those without evaluation expertise. Even those who were more advanced in their evaluation preparation desired training on the basics.
- *Advanced Training/Impact Evaluation.* In addition, some expressed the need for **advanced training for Impact Evaluation**, including **advanced statistical training**. Many highlighted that the steps, including the management of ethics around the use of a **control group** for equity students who would benefit from these programs, should be included in the training modules. The advanced training should also include how to **interpret analyses**.
- *Training for university leaders.* As discussed above, the sector saw the need for training for university leaders, to ensure they understand what is happening in the space and what is required for evaluation. Program offices and equity managers identified that leaders needed to be up-to-date to support buy-in and alignment with the broader university objectives. Discussions with the sector identified that those who were more prepared with SEHEEF had university buy-in. There was alignment with university objectives, university leaders were involved, to some extent, in equity programs, there was investment in resources and infrastructure and there was planning to allocate workloads to support the additional requirements needed for evaluation.

Information sharing. There was a clear desire for a portal to support information sharing across the sector. There was a strong desire to share and understand what works and why, and how to support best practice and processes. Equity practitioners were very keen to learn from what others were doing. Strategic Planners recommended having guidelines around information sharing for universities, anticipating some leaders would have privacy concerns. It was also suggested that guidance around managing the privacy of institutional data against outcomes on effective evaluation, may help to promote 'buy-in'.

Case studies. Case studies were repeatedly requested as a resource to support the sector. This was mentioned repeatedly and aligned with the sector's request to understand what works and how to do it, what was effective and why. One participant even suggested providing a set of core interventions that worked, with a set of supplementary case studies. Consistently, the sector said that real-life case studies would be helpful. Additionally, suggestions for case studies included examples of how to successfully balance implementation with evaluation. Specifically, there were suggestions to have successful examples of how to genuinely measure the impact without spending too much time and money.

Examples of data systems. Without university buy-in, the sector faces major challenges in establishing the infrastructure needed for evaluation. There are two aspects to supporting the sector with data systems. Firstly, an online portal and training modules, coupled with the formation of related CoPs, can provide information and examples of best practice and how to implement these. There are some institutions with dedicated personnel in data and business analytics who are very willing to be part of these conversations to

support NCSEHE in providing these resources. However, the investment from university leaders is clearly needed to have the resources to build this infrastructure.

Interactive features. Aligned with the desire for information sharing across the sector, there was strong support for a portal that had interactive features that would enable information sharing, such as chats and other open channels of communication. There was some concern that attempts to standardise and achieve consistency across the sector with the introduction of the SEHEEF, could lose potential for innovation and diversity of programs, and that maintaining open channels of communication would provide a way for information sharing, as well as a way for the sector to be heard and reflect on how the SEHEEF was impacting programming. However, broadly the interactive features were described to support information sharing, learning what others are doing, obtaining further support for their programming. Some nuanced suggestions included:

- Organising the chats/communication channels into **streams** – e.g., program planning (outreach, retention, program logics); CQI; Impact Evaluation; data dashboard/data linkage, and reporting. For instance, one equity program lead highlighted that when undertaking outreach programs, there were continual learnings as how to best engage with high schools students as technologies and trends changes (e.g., replacing Likert scales in surveys with emojis).
- **Pivot tables** to compare to the sector more broadly, and other tools which would provide an overview of institutional equity data (as much as is shareable).

Operational definitions. There was some desire for further clarity of operational definitions, particularly primary and supporting outcomes. People spoke about the desire for a data dictionary. There was also a need for examples of how these worked, such as by linking with the real-life case studies and the outcomes used in these. As above, there was a need for more support around clarity of equity group definitions. However, it sounded that this clarity was needed from the Department to ensure there was a consistent, agreed upon definition being employed across the sector.

Part B: Survey findings

A key aim of the online survey was to understand the extent of the issues impacting SEHEEF preparedness in the wider sector.

Individuals involved in the design, planning and implementation of HEPPP funded programs were asked to complete the survey. The survey had seven modules, took approximately 20 minutes to complete, and was completed by 36 of the selected participants.

Participants were asked questions in the following modules:

- Demographics.
- HEPPP reporting for 2022.
- General preparedness with the SEHEEF.
- Influence of the 2021 SEHEEF.
- QIE and TBIE.
- Institutional challenges in implementing the SEHEEF.
- Expectations of SEHEEF going forward.

10. Characteristics of the surveyed sample

A total of 36 participants completed at least two-thirds of the survey questions. Participants came from 28 of the 38 Table A universities eligible for the HEPPEP (74% of Table A universities). Table 2 shows the number of universities in each state and territory from where participants were located.

Table 2. Number of institutions, by state and location.

State/Territory	Location			Total
	Capital city (Go8)	Capital city (non-Go8)	Non-capital	
Australian Capital Territory	1	1	0	2
New South Wales	1	2	4	7
Northern Territory	0	1	0	1
Queensland	1	2	3	6
South Australia	1	1	0	2
Tasmania	0	0	0	0
Victoria	2	5	0	7
Western Australia	1	2	0	3
Total	7	14	7	28

A summary of participants positions is provided in Table 3 below. There was a spread of how long participants had been working in their current position: 9% reported working for 10 years or more in their current position; 20% reported working for 5 to 9 years; 17% reported working for 3 to 4 years; 31% reported working for 1 to 2 years while 23% reported working for less than 1 year.

Table 3. Summary of participants, by position.

Position	Total
Director	5
Associate Director	4
Coordinator	3
Senior Manager	5
Executive Manager	1
Manager	6
Program Officer	1
Project Manager	3
Project Officer	2
Senior Advisor	2
Senior Lecturer	1
Curriculum Designer	1
Data Analyst	1
Total	35

Overall, 46% of participants reported that their institution had 4 people or more working in the management or coordination of HEPPP-funded equity programs (see Table 4), 40% reported 2 or 3 people and 14% reported one person in the management or coordination of HEPPP-funded equity programs.

Table 4. Number of people in HEPPP-funded equity program management or coordination at respondent institution.

Number of people in management or coordination	Location			Total
	Capital city (Go8)	Capital city (non-Go8)	Non-capital	
1 person	1	2	2	5
2 to 3 people	3	8	3	14
4 people or more	4	5	7	16
Total	8	15	12	35

As can be seen in Table 5, 42.9% of participants reported 16 people or more working in the area of program design, development and implementation of HEPPP-funded equity programs at their institution, 23% reported 11 to 15 staff, 23% also reported 6 to 10 staff, and 12% reported 2 to 5 staff.

Table 5. Number of people in program design, development and implementation at respondent institution.

Number of people in program design, development and implementation	Location			Total
	Capital city (Go8)	Capital city (non-Go8)	Non-capital	
2 to 5 people	2	1	1	4
6 to 10 people	2	2	4	8
11 to 15 people	1	5	2	8
16 people or more	3	7	5	15
Total	8	15	12	35

11. The 2022 HEPPP reporting template

The majority of participants (33, or 92% of the sample) reported having some involvement in the reporting of HEPPP to the Department of Education. There was a spread of how long participants had been involved: 39% reported being involved for five years or more, 17% reported being involved for 3 to 4 years; 14% reported being involved for 1 to 2 years while 22% reported being involved for less than 1 year.

Of all participants, 29 had responsibility for completing and submitting the 2022 HEPPP report to the Department of Education, of which 13 participants were primarily responsible and 16 were partly responsible.

Table 6 presents agreement to items regarding the 2022 HEPPP reporting template, from participants who had had some involvement in 2022 HEPPP reporting. Overall, these participants:

- Perceived it was quick to complete, an improvement on the previous reporting templates and user-friendly.
- Also perceived it did not capture the detail of effectiveness of programs or the outcomes of what was done.

Table 6. Agreement to responses regarding the 2022 HEPPP reporting template.

	Agree or strongly agree	
	N	%
It is useful in shaping thinking about the design and delivery of programs	12	43%
It is user-friendly	21	72%
It is quick to complete	23	79%
It is an improvement on the previous reporting templates	17	61%
I am satisfied with it	16	57%
It captures the right amount of detail to show how we spend our money	17	61%
It captures the right amount of detail to show the effectiveness of what we do	6	21%
There is enough opportunity to report on the outcomes of what we do	7	25%

The open-ended feedback reiterated some of the quantitative findings in terms of acknowledgement of the more streamlined reporting, and ease of completion. However, the feedback similarly communicated that there was a perceived loss of detail in regard to providing evidence of effectiveness and the outcomes of what was done.

The template was straightforward and easy to complete. It did not include very extensive detail on either program outputs or program outcomes, however.

The template was straight forward, it would be useful to be able to provide more qualitative information to demonstrate the effectiveness of programs

It would be great to include a bit more free text or detailed drop down box options on the progress of outcomes and supporting outcomes of the programs. These are more tangible updates for this style of report as identifying impact is longer term, and may not be realized in the lifecycle of the yearly update. I would suggest a separate report at a longer interval, 2-3 years to focus on impact progress while the yearly update focuses on outcomes and supporting outcomes detailed in our logic models. What I do like about the template is that it is quick to complete and not too onerous for our already busy teams. We have internal interim and end of year reports to record more detail so in addition to these a more detailed external report may add to the workload burden of the leads. Saying that, a bit more room to describe qualitative information would be great. Currently there is the room to do a case study which could offer this. Perhaps you could provide a template for this so we can be sure of what it is you are looking to see in these and to allow for consistency across universities.

Further description of what the activities entailed, the impact, where they were delivered.

The reporting template does not respond well to the ways in which HEPPP funding is carefully allocated and used. The rudimentary structure and tickbox method of reporting is an impoverished style of collecting information regarding a set of complex social programs operating in a variety of distinct institutional and community settings. The 'quick' and 'user-friendly' template does not do enough to allow for a rich picture of HEPPP activity to emerge from the reporting. The assumption that this will emerge via the SEHEEF is flawed. There have been times in the past where HEPPP reporting was more elaborate and we find it confusing that this has been substituted for 'quick' and 'user-friendly' forms instead. These shifts arguably signal a de-valuing of the effort and responsibility universities bring to program design and delivery, that is related to but different from evaluation. We would happily report in more intensive and creative ways.

There has been limited opportunity to feed into or understand the changes in HEPPP reporting through time. For example, the arrival and then disappearance of targets has an effect at institutions and needs to be more carefully considered, including consultation with HEPPP recipients, including beyond senior leaders.

Link it to SEHEEF reporting - questions re effectiveness and outcomes (yes/no/partially) fail to capture anything meaningful..... There is currently no request for qualitative data.

Other main comments were in regard to more structural issues to do with HEPPP administration and reporting, including the deadlines/timeframes, being notified well in advance, and capturing or embedding context around the limitations of yearly funding cycles.

Finally, if there are any changes to the template please ensure these are sent out well in advance (several months) of the deadline to completion. Our current internal documents have been aligned to ensure we are capturing the same information needed for the external report so to avoid asking the teams for lots of information about the programs repeatedly, any new requirements will need to be captured in our internal processes as well.

The effectiveness or the reporting process is limited by the lack of data available to practitioners about school leavers, yearly funding cycles and the flow on from that is staff employed on yearly contracts.

Despite sentiments that the reporting had become more user-friendly, there were also views that this could be further improved, by moving away from excel formats and locked cells, in addition to capturing more detail about programs.

Excel spreadsheets can be unwieldy to complete and navigate. Consider a more user-friendly way to capture the data. Recognise ways to support data that is difficult to capture - especially when focusing on initiatives that build social and cultural capital, or have a long-term impact that may be effective, but could be hampered by other events/factors outside the control of the program.

Formatting and locked cells made it difficult to copy and paste data across quickly and efficiently considering the amount of rows of data. Flexibility regarding this would be appreciated. The type of information required was succinct and mostly quantitative which was refined and meaningful. If case studies weren't available however, there wasn't opportunity to succinctly show qualitative information. Overall, the report template was easier, more meaningful and less onerous.

Make the template user-friendly e.g. make it possible to insert rows and remove requirement to select 'no' from equity group options when a primary target group has already been selected.

In addition, as well as feedback regarding the loss of detail in reporting, there was again feedback regarding the challenges of reporting on multi-focus activities.

Much less outcome driven information required in the new template- ie. no current requirements to show participation numbers or evaluation outcomes. Our team is still capturing this information (as we are continuing with much of our reporting practice as per the pre- 2021 very detailed HEPPP reporting). I do like the less detailed excel format (vs. the old very extensive word template), but I wonder if to ensure continuity of capturing participation data and outcomes, these fields could be included in the new template. However, I think teams can only report on instances of participation, rather than individual student participation in multiple activities, like the old template. This involved a bit of guess work as historically we did not capture unique participants who may have participated in multiple activities and programs.

Others urged for the reporting process be refined to ensure institutions were more accountable in aligning their work with the HEPPP guidelines.

The HEPPP reporting process plays a pivotal role in improving transparency, accountability, and the overall efficiency of every program funded under HEPPP. What I liked most about the template was its clarity, user-friendliness, and straightforward approach. However, there were a couple of aspects of improvement. Firstly, there was an error in one cell which meant no data could be entered (although it was later rectified). Secondly, it was concerning that the drop-down list displayed the 2021 rollover amounts for all institutions, potentially compromising privacy. Lastly, it seems the template was only concerned about overall expenditure of activities, not so much focus on outputs/impact.

There is a need to ensure that the HEPPP funds are expended on programs that reflect the guidelines. We do that here but am aware of some other practices at other institutions. More details on programs and outcomes are a way for this to be reported.

There should be a requirement on universities to more specifically report on their planned outcomes and what was achieved. Whilst the new report format was a welcomed change from the onerous reporting that was previously required, the new reporting format does not require any accountability for institutions to report to the Federal Government on what was delivered, what were the goals and how they were met. I would struggle to see how the current report could provide any demonstratable national impact of programs.

The removal of the section for disclosing institutional equity outcomes for priority groups means there was no opportunity in this year's form to declare progress against the equity targets we developed in response to the 2021 form. While that section of the report was quite messy and needs refinement it is an essential part of HEPPP reporting.

While one comment provided concerns around issues of privacy through comparisons to other universities, another specifically mentioned the benefits of benchmarking to other institutions.

The feedback loop is very helpful - reporting back to the institutions about the split of funding across lifecycle stages compared to other institutions - this could be expanded out to include other areas for feedback/comparison (what % of activities have CQI in place or impact evaluations), sharing back of any case study evaluations or CQI data.

12. The current capacity and preparedness

12.1 General preparedness

The sector reported feeling relatively prepared to implement CQI, but not QIE or TBIE. Table 7 presents the percentage of participants who gave ratings of 'mostly' or 'completely' to the items asking how prepared they felt to implement each of the components of the SEHEEF. As can be seen, two-thirds reported feeling mostly or completely ready to implement CQI. Close to one-third felt ready for QIE while 11% reported feeling prepared for TBIE.

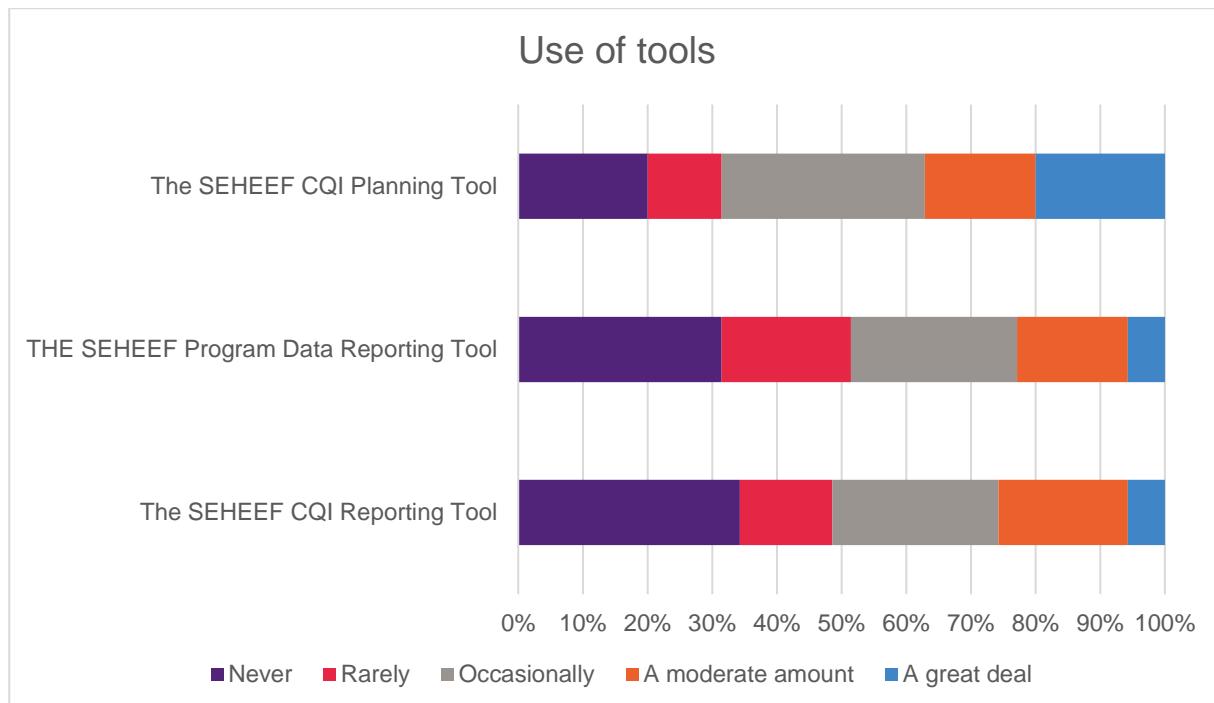
Table 7. Ratings of 'mostly' or 'completely' to items asking how prepared they felt to implement aspects of the SEHEEF.

	Capital Go8	Capital non-Go8	Non-capital	Total
	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)
CQI	5 (63)	12 (80)	6 (50)	23 (66)
QIE	3 (38)	6 (40)	2 (17)	11 (31)
TBIE	0 (0)	2 (13)	2 (17)	4 (11)

12.2 Use of tools for SEHEEF implementation

The sector was also asked about their extent of use of the relevant tools to undertake CQI planning, data collection and reporting, which are outlined in the 2021 SEHEEF Guidance Manual. As seen in Figure 1, a relatively small proportion reported having used the tools at a 'moderate amount' or 'a great deal' (37% for CQI Planning Tool, 23% for the CQI Program Data Reporting Tool and 26% for the CQI Reporting Tool). However, between 26% to 31% reported using the tools 'occasionally' indicating some level of familiarity. The sector appeared to be more familiar with the CQI Planning Tool, than the other tools.

Figure 1. Ratings to items asking the extent to which they have used the SEHEEF Tools.



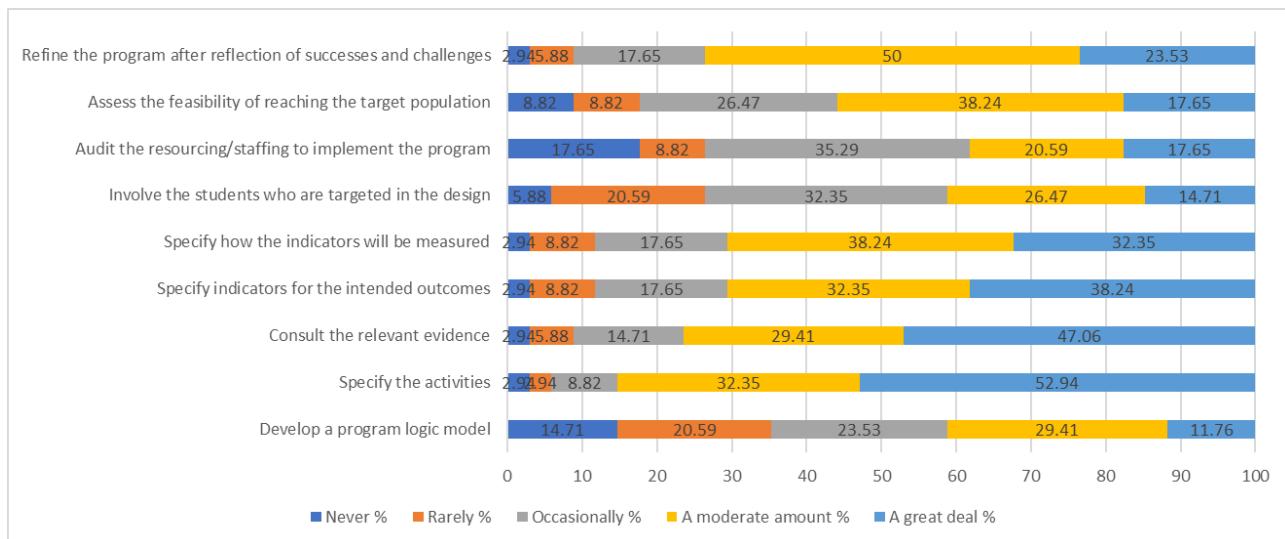
13. CQI

13.1 Legacy Programs

The sector was asked about the influence of the 2021 SEHEEF on the operational management of HEPPP-funded programs that existed prior to the 2021 SEHEEF. This was to investigate whether evaluative plans or practices, as outlined in the SEHEEF, were now being applied to existing programs. Figure 2 shows the extent to which the CQI practices and tools have been applied to existing programs since 2021. Overall, these participants have been:

- Largely specifying the activities, consulting the relevant evidence, specifying indicators for the intended outcomes, and specifying how the indicators will be measured;
- Occasionally assessing the feasibility of reaching the target population, auditing the resourcing/staffing to implement the program, involving the students who are targeted in the design, and
- Minimally developing a program logic model.

Figure 2. The extent to which CQI practices and tools have been applied to existing programs.



An open-ended question was used to encourage participants to share one or two examples of how the SEHEEF has been used with existing programs since 2021. Many of the examples illustrated how and what they have started working on for existing programs to align with the SEHEEF. The feedback reiterated some of the quantitative findings in terms of focusing on the identification of activities, outcomes, and measures and indicators that can be used for the outcomes. Also, as part of this review of programs they have been mapping existing programs to the SEHEEF lifecycle stages.

We have undertaken a thorough internal review of programs and mapped existing program initiatives to the SEHEEF lifecycle stages, activity types and outcomes.

The program logic was used to underpin a review and refresh of our outreach programs, to map and plan where our activities had impact.

While the quantitative findings indicated that a program logic model had not been applied to existing programs to the same extent as other elements, the use of a program logic was mentioned quite a lot in the open-ended feedback.

Used the Program Logic to ensure alignment of activities and supporting outcomes of HEPPEP-funded programs across all lifecycle stages and program activities.

We have retrofitted all existing programs using the SEHEEF to fit into the program logic and to help with the CQI implementation.

Program Logic Models and some elements of the CQI process.

Development of program logics and evaluation plans at an activity level, and implementing CQI as part of the design and evaluation process.

The open-ended feedback indicated variation in the extent to which tools and practices were applied, with some having done a lot to align their existing programs to the SEHEEF and provide support to staff.

All programs existing program logics, evaluation plans, data collection and reporting tools mapped to SEHEEF to identify any areas of refinements.

We have just developed an Evaluation Plan and a CQI Plan for teams working on HEPPEP programs to use as a starting point to evaluate and use CQI in their programs. Part of this includes working up our own logic model template to ensure that existing programs are aligned with SEHEEF, and this template will be developed with each team and myself using a workshop style approach. Alongside

this we are developing a suite of education materials to upskill our teams in Evaluation and CQI which will sit alongside our Evaluation Framework when developed next year.

HEPPP funding applications require declaration of all 'activities' contained within their 'program' or 'project' and in-depth detail provided for each one to develop a thorough understanding of what actually occurs in a project and how it is evaluated.

Some noted how the templates have been utilised to assist in the process of aligning existing programs to the SEHEEF.

Reorganised the pre-access activities into broader program categories. Required each program coordinator to complete the CQI Planning Template (pre-access and participation stages).

Program planning templates, CQI Planning, Data reporting tool, Program logic

Only a few comments mentioned the target population and collecting data and how this has required support from data analysts.

We have worked with our Data Analytics and Insights team to discuss how programs can identify targeted students and then evaluate outcomes and impacts not only for the previous year but also over a number of years.

During the application stage a plan is required from all (uni) HEPPP Program applicants which closely follows CQI Planning, Reporting and Data Collection. It is also support by (uni) Data Analytics with processes and systems (Dashboards, Automated Data Collection Tools/Reports) to support data collection. Internal Program Final Reports also capture CQI Planning, Reporting and Data Collection.

Some thought also gone into preparation of evaluation plans:

This year we have asked for success indicators, how they will be measure, what impact evaluation processes will be undertaken and for an outline of all activities.

Used SEHEEF methodology and theory based evaluation to prepare case study examples and analysis for HEPPP reporting.

Explanations as to why they have yet to use SEHEEF with their existing programs included:

1. New responsibility within their division.
2. No programs prior to commencement of the SEHEEF.
3. Awaiting further clarification as to when the tools will be finalised and adoption required.

However, even when disclosing that they had not adopted the SEHEEF to their existing programs, at times, there was indication that some of the practices had been loosely applied to their work.

The tools in the guideline state they are not final, so our team have not referred to these a great deal. However, we have adopted practice for all activities that align with the SEHEEF principles and tools-for example, each activity is required to have a standard brief with a description of the activity, the target audience, aims and outcomes, measures of success, how the intended audience will be reached. A 'outcome bank' with corresponding questions has been developed for use in evaluation surveys and a evaluation report template has been developed for use for each HEPPP program. Participant evaluation data is reviewed and a staff debrief is conducted for each activity with consideration of if the activity has met it's desired outcomes and recommendations made for the following year.

Some explained that they had not adopted the SEHEEF as they had already engaged in these, or what they saw as superior, types of evaluation practices.

No. We were already implementing state-of-the-art evaluation practices that are appropriate for equity-oriented initiatives. SEHEEF is limited in its usefulness in this context. Ideally, this sort of existing

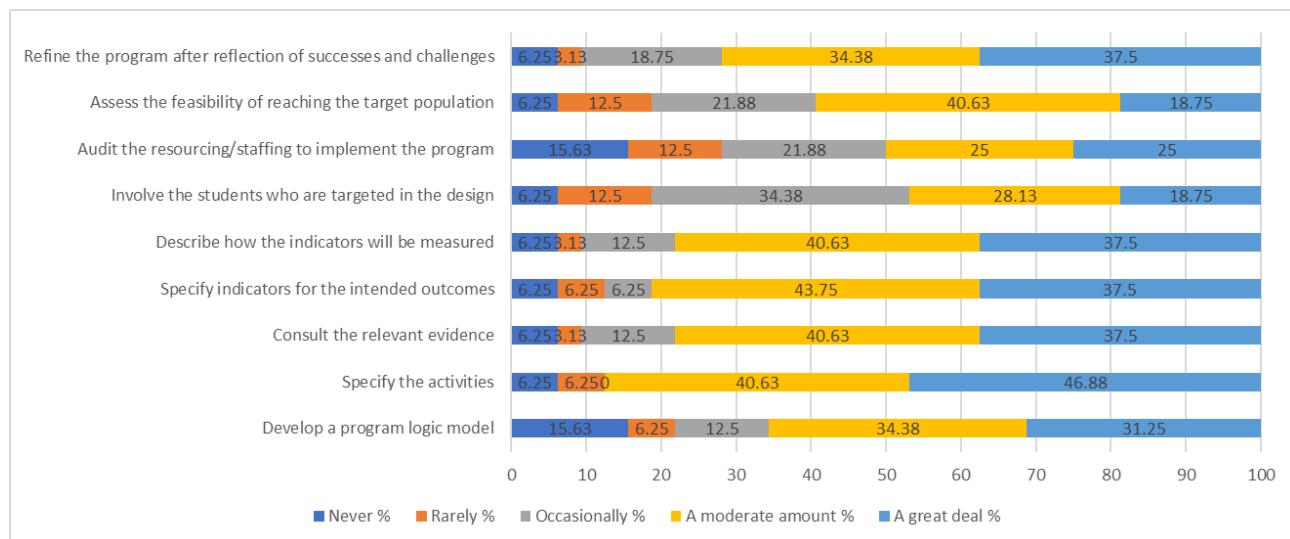
practice and expertise in each institution might be recognised in the ongoing implementation of HEP PPP-related evaluation efforts at the national level.

13.2 New Programs

The sector was asked the same questions concerning the planning of new programs since the 2021 SEHEEF. This was to investigate the extent to which evaluative plans and practices were incorporated into the development of new programs. Figure 3 shows the extent to which these practices and tools have been followed and used for new programs since the 2021 SEHEEF. Overall, these participants have been:

- Largely specifying the activities, consulting the relevant evidence, specifying indicators for the intended outcomes, and specifying how the indicators would be measured.
- Occasionally to moderately developing a program logic model and refining the program after reflection of successes and challenges.
- Minimally assessing the feasibility of reaching the target population, auditing the resourcing/staffing to implement the program, and involving the students who are targeted in the design.

Figure 3. The extent to which CQI practices and tools have been applied to new programs.



An open-ended question asked for instances of introducing SEHEEF-listed practices and tools as part of the planning of new programs since 2021. The open-ended feedback reiterated the quantitative findings that these practices and tools are being followed and used. It was mentioned that these practices are now part of HEP PPP funding applications.

Identifying primary and supporting outcomes and the ways these can be measured.

We implement program logics across all programs. Students are involved in the design of new outreach initiatives.

All HEP PPP-funded projects were required to comply with SEHEEF practices as much as possible - there is no difference between existing and new projects.

Introduced as part of the application process for 2024 HEP PPP funds. Revised Project Evaluation Measures against each activity with outcome indicators and data source(s)/method(s) required in the application.

Required staff to complete the CQI Planning Template when requesting HEP PPP funding.

There was again mention of the development of evaluation plans.

Evaluation Framework developed at a program level for the suite of activity.

Evaluating the transition and retention interventions of a program.

As part of our revised internal programs annual reporting, we have asked questions regarding impact and outcomes and how the program has been evaluated at the local level. At a higher level we have commenced considering how we will evaluate all programs and strategies for continuous improvement.

Explanations as to why they have yet to use SEHEEF with their new programs centred around delays in developing new programs.

We are in the process of transitioning to a new program design and reporting model, currently recruiting staff.

We were already engaged in these types of evaluation practice. This question implies SEHEEF has caused us to shift in these directions which is not the case.

We have not introduced any new programs since 2021.

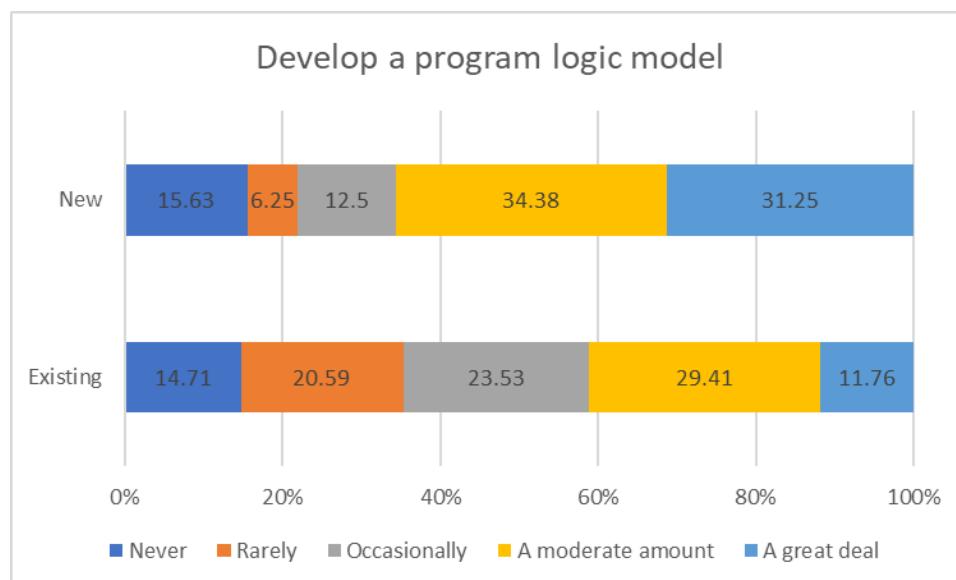
No new programs since 2021, focus has been on ensuring the robust support of current programs.

13.3 Compare Legacy and New Programs

Most of the practices and tools had been applied in both existing and new programs. For the most part these practices and tools had been applied to existing HEPPP-funded programs to the same extent as new programs. This includes specifying the activities, consulting the relevant evidence, assessing the feasibility of reaching the target population, and refining the program after reflection of successes and challenges.

The most pronounced difference between new and legacy programs was the extent to which they applied a program logic model (see Figure 4).

Figure 4. Extent to which participants used a program logic model for new vs existing programs.



14. Impact Evaluation

Approximately half (48.6%) of participants indicated they had not yet undergone an Impact Evaluation of any of their programs, and an additional 25.7% said that they didn't know if an Impact Evaluation had ever been done. Among those programs that had undergone an Impact Evaluation, the majority performed in-house (75% for internal compared to 25% relying on an external evaluator). However, when participants reported that they undertook the evaluation internally this referred to engaging a unit within their institution and not the HEPPP-program team.

Participants were asked about the capacity within their institution to be able to implement QIE and TBIE (see Table 8). The majority perceived that systems and resources were not in place to support the introduction of QIE and TBIE. One third (34.3%) of the participants agreed or strongly agreed on four or more of these statements and only 20% of the participants agreed or strongly agreed on at least five of these statements. When respondents only 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' on a few items, then agreement was around getting senior management on board, contemplating seeking an external evaluator, and having participation data that can be easily linked to other student data sources.

When respondents 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' on at least four items, then these participants were also reporting they had the relevant people to do the job, who could access the data, and the right systems were in place to collect and store data.

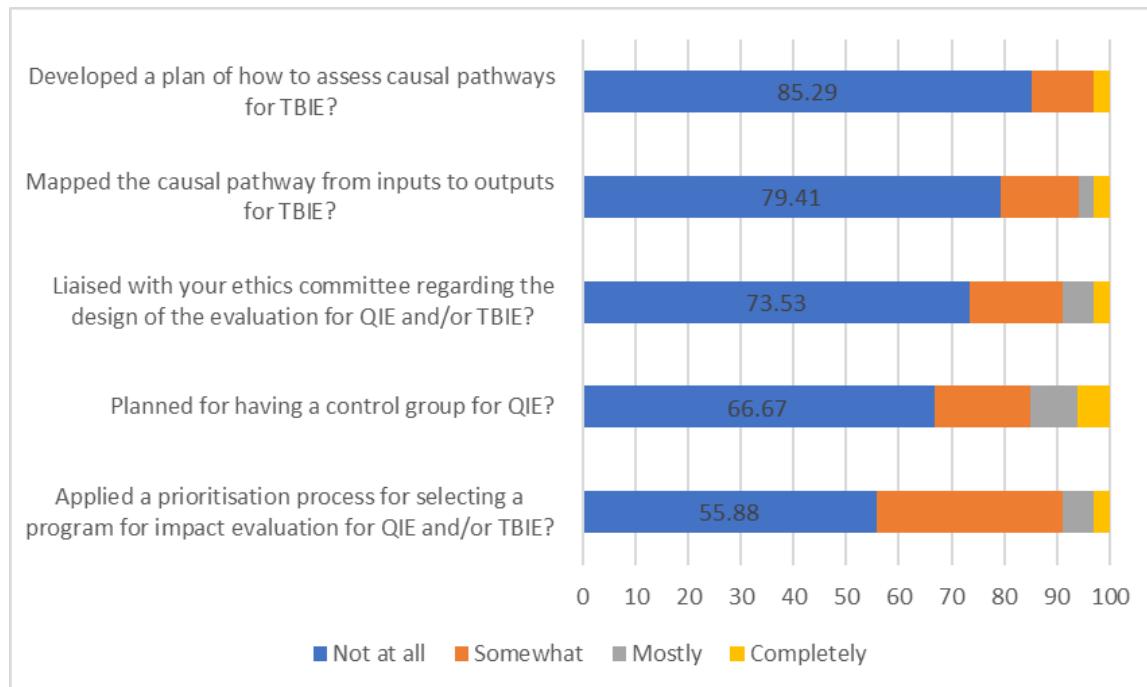
Table 8. Agreement to responses regarding the systems and resources in place to implement QIE and TBIE.

	Agree or strongly agree	
	N	%
The right systems are in place to collect and store data	9	25.72%
Our data on student participation in HEPPP-funded programs can be easily linked to other student data sources	13	37.14%
Students taking part in our HEPPP-funded programs can be easily tracked over multiple years	8	22.86%
The relevant people can easily access the data	12	34.28%
The senior management team is on board to support any evaluation	20	58.83%
We are clear on the amount of money to set aside for evaluation	7	20%
We have the relevant people to analyse and interpret data for QIE	12	35.29%
We have the relevant people who can employ a range of methods to understand the contribution of the program for TBIE	9	25.72%
It will be necessary to seek an external evaluator to do the evaluation well	16	45.71%

Further, participants reported minimal planning for QIE or TBIE. As shown in Figure 5, when asked about the extent to which they had planned for QIE and TBIE, very few had engaged in planning in terms of applying a prioritisation tool or process, planned for control groups for QIE, engaged with ethics committees or mapped or planned for casual pathways as part of TBIE. Rather, between 55% and 85% reported having not

undertaken in any of these to any extent. Approximately 45% had started to think about applying a prioritisation process for Impact Evaluation, and nearly 35% reported having given some thought to having a control group for QIE. However, planning for TBIE seemed to particularly lag behind, with only 15%-20% having given some thought to planning or mapping causal pathways.

Figure 5. Extent to which have planned for QIE and TBIE.



15. The challenges affecting implementation

There was some indication that participants perceived further institutional support or investment was necessary to be prepared for the implementation of the SEHEEF, particularly in regard to certainty and clarity of the implementation of the SEHEEF, as well as practical guidance, additional time or personnel for evaluation. Table 9 presents agreement by participants (agree or strongly agree) to items regarding the perceived need for institutional support or investment to support implementation of the SEHEEF. As shown in the table, the majority of participants agreed that there needed to be practical training and resources, clarity on implementation timeframes, certainty regarding timeframes and additional time or personnel to undertake evaluation. To a lesser extent, there was high agreement to items regarding clarity of operational definitions as well as guidance for budgeting money for evaluation.

There was some agreement regarding investment or support for data dashboards as well as warehouse infrastructure. However, items around data warehouse/data infrastructure received less endorsement from the sector than other aspects, and this was somewhat unexpected given the strong emphasis on data infrastructure that emerged from the first summary report. However, it is of note that data analysts were not largely a part of the participant sample in the second round of consultations. These views may be more concentrated amongst those with responsibility for data storage, linkage and reporting.

Table 9. Agreement to responses regarding the needed institutional support and investment.

	Agree or strongly agree	
	N	%
Practical training and resources to guide evaluation	33	91.67
Clarity on implementation timeframes	31	88.89
Time or additional personnel to undertake evaluation	31	86.12
Certainty from the Department of Education on the SEHEEF rollout	31	86.11
Clarity on operational definitions of supporting and primary outcomes	30	83.33
Clear guidance on how much money to allocate for evaluation	29	80.55
Real-time interfaces, software or other tools/equipment and materials	26	72.23
Resourcing to support the building of data dashboards	25	69.44
Data dashboards	24	66.67
More sophisticated data warehouse infrastructure	22	61.11

When asked about the institutional factors which had affected their implementation readiness, more participants agreed (by either rating as 'moderately' or 'extremely') that a lack of staff and a lack of evaluation expertise impacted upon their readiness (see Table 10). There was little agreement with items around a lack of alignment with university objectives or buy-in from senior leadership (as was found from the qualitative component/Part A). Inaccurate data was also not seen as a factor impacting upon implementation readiness.

Table 10. The extent to which institutional factors have affected implementation readiness.

	Moderately or extremely	
	N	%
A lack of staff	27	77.15
A lack of evaluation expertise	22	62.85
A lack of planning time	20	57.15
A lack of capability to collect data	17	48.58
Unsophisticated technology/data systems	16	45.71
A lack of funding	14	41.18
A lack of capability to analyse data	14	40.00
Inaccurate data	9	26.47
Insufficient buy-in from leadership	7	21.21
Weak alignment with broader university objectives	5	14.70

16. The training and support needs

16.1 Training Modules

In terms of the desired training and resources to support implementation of the SEHEEF, more of the participants rated simple explanatory guidance on the use of SEHEEF tools, program-specific logics for program's activities as well as managing time to balance implementation against evaluation as high priority or essential (see Table 11).

Table 11. Ratings of 'high priority' or 'essential' as to which training and resources are necessary to support the implementation of the SEHEEF.

	High priority or essential	
	N	%
Simple explanatory guidance on the use of SEHEEF tools	31	89%
Defining a program logic for our own HEPPP-funded programs	29	83%
Managing time to balance program implementation and evaluation	28	80%
Introduction modules on program evaluation	25	71%
Managing funds to ensure there is money to evaluate	21	60%
Training for university strategic leaders on SEHEEF purpose and requirements	18	51%

When asked about the specific training and resources that were seen as necessary to implement SEHEEF in relation to CQI, between 71%-77% rated all items as high priority or essential (see Table 12). There was little differentiation between items around planning, collecting data or completing tools, or reporting of data, with approximately three-quarters of the participants who answered these items, perceiving these as important.

Interestingly, even those who indicated they had used these tools (from questions in Section 12.2) would like to see CQI training and resources.

Table 12. Ratings of 'high priority' or 'essential' regarding the perceived necessity of specific training and resources in relation to implementing the CQI of the SEHEEF.

	High priority or essential	
	N	%
Planning of project features and parameters for CQI	27	77%
Completing CQI Planning Tool	27	77%
Completing CQI Program Data Reporting Tool	27	77%
Collecting of data for CQI	25	71%
Reporting of data for CQI	25	71%

Similarly, ratings were given for items asking about the perceived necessity of training and resources specific to Impact Evaluation. Table 13 shows that, between 74% - 79% of the participants, rated the various aspects of training and resources for QIE and TBIE (from selecting programs for evaluation, control groups, design, analysis and interpretation) as 'high priority' or 'essential'.

Table 13. Ratings of 'high priority' or 'essential' regarding the perceived necessity of specific training and resources in relation to implementing the QIE and TBIE of the SEHEEF.

	High priority or essential	
	N	%
Selecting programs for impact assessment	26	76%
QIE - selecting control groups and ethical considerations	26	76%
QIE - ensuring a robust design	27	79%
QIE - advanced statistical analysis to understand impact	25	74%
QIE - interpreting data	26	76%
TBIE - Understanding analyses to explain the causal link from program to outcomes	27	79%
Utilising data to understand why the outcomes were obtained	26	76%

16.2 Online Portal

When asked about the features they would like to see on an online portal, participants gave high ratings (indicated by rating as a 'high priority' or 'essential') to guidance for standard data collection methods, step-by-step instructions for the planning and reporting tools and case studies, including worked examples. See Table 14 for responses to items about the desirable features of an online portal.

Table 14. Ratings of 'high priority' or 'essential' to the desirable features of an online portal.

	High priority or essential	
	N	%
Guidance for standard data collection methods	30	86%
Step-by-step instructions for the planning tools and the reporting tools	29	83%
Case studies, worked examples and research findings in the equity space	28	80%
Connections to a community of practice for information sharing	25	71%
Survey instruments for similar activities	23	66%
Glossaries and definitions (e.g., for equity groups and outcomes)	21	60%
Pivot tables for benchmarking	21	60%

16.3 Communities of practice

Participants were asked about the establishment of a CoP for equity program development and evaluation, and asked who they saw as needing to come together to exchange experiences and advice on implementation and evaluation according to SEHEEF. The majority saw it as a high priority or essential for program managers to be involved, followed by high ratings for both practitioners and data analysts. There was less endorsement for the involvement of senior university leaders or teaching staff. See Table 15.

Table 15. Ratings of 'high priority' or 'essential' to potential members of a Community of Practice.

	High priority or essential	
	N	%
Program managers	34	97%
Practitioners	31	89%
Data analysts	28	80%
Data managers	20	57%
University teaching staff	4	13%
Senior university leaders	10	30%

17. Other feedback

We provided participants with the opportunity to provide feedback on anything regarding their readiness and/or their institutional readiness to implement the SEHEEF, as well as invited feedback on how the SEHEEF may be impacting upon equity planning at institutions more broadly.

Participants raised the importance of broader, structural changes to be fully ready for implementation, including the Unique Student Identifier (USI) to evaluate their outreach or other work in the pre-access stage, the confirmation of timeframes and tools, as well as staffing, appointments and continuity of funding to reduce turnover.

- *We need the government to introduce the Unique student identifier and for the data to be available.*
- *I think the key is having access to the final SEHEEF templates and confirmation of the timeframes and confirmed rollout of SEHEEF before we are asked to report on activities as per SEHEEF. For example, if we could have the report templates now to integrate into our planning for 2024, so we can ensure the final best practices and tools are implemented before activities begin and therefore be in a strong position to report as per the templates on 2024 activities in 2025. There has been some hesitation in taking more complete steps to implement the SEHEEF due to the lack of direction / guidance of final templates and rollout resulting in a lack of certainty if indeed it would be implemented. I have been somewhat vague with my responses to readiness for impact based evaluation as for us many of the responses around resources, staffing and data will be dependent on the required frequency and extent of this type of evaluation and I think more guidance on this will be required for us to assess if we will need more funding and staffing and if this will need to be ongoing or for example on a contract basis. We have two positions in the team focuses on reporting and evaluation, but these roles are approximately 50% dedicated to HEPPP projects, so I would need to assess the extent of the requirements to see if this can be integrated into our BAU.*
- *It's early days for us, but I think some clear appointments need to be made internally to drive this and give this priority. Having said that, perhaps others in the organisation know more than I do.*

- *Small institutions are not ready or equipped to manage the expectations of SEHEEF as it currently reads. I don't think this has been taken into consideration so far.*
- *Sufficient and realistic timelines for implementation (including institutions readiness) is important.*
- *Resourcing is a significant barrier to SEHEEF Progression. The more training and support we can get the better we can execute it.*

Others commented on issues around the difficulties with evaluation, as outlined in the SEHEEF particularly in relation to the use of control groups in the context of higher education:

- *Causality and control group evaluation is not used for higher education programs nor national data collection, so this is completely outside both the sector and institutional norms and approaches. Eg. participation and success in degrees are not evaluated using such methods, but student experience and quantitative data that does not look for causality. Note that no other groups, incl. non equity groups are subject to casual and controlled studies. It is likely to be very difficult to resource and enable for only HEPPP, given this approach is so outside the HE sector realm.*

Another respondent critiqued the SEHEEF as its evaluation focus was tied to HEPPP and they saw it did not respond to broader social inequalities that go beyond HEPPP. In addition, they critiqued the focus of the SEHEEF on impact.

- *Three colleagues sat with a member of the research team offering extended thoughts, concerns, and ideas in relation to evaluation of HEPPP-funded initiatives. Instead of rehearsing these points here, it might be more appropriate to return to this extended data which engages with these questions in more depth. A central point worth rehearsing is that there is an enduring absence in the SEHEEF implementation to do with recognising and responding to how social inequalities operate beyond HEPPP and that a crude focus on impact (ignorant of the voices, perspectives and knowledge of intended beneficiaries) ensures the risk of flawed and ineffective evidence.*

While others provided an update on their evaluation planning, others highlighted challenges and directly called for more training and guidance and CoP. There were some resonances with the Part A findings on training needs, particularly the need for training to cover evaluation basics and CoP.

- *It seems like a lot of effort is going into the data collection but not much effort into the socialisation of activities that have produced good outcomes. I think we could do with establishing a community of practice now to give examples of best practice rather than wait until data is collected over the next few years. The SEHEEF adds a layer of administrative load for all staff involved in the running of activities. The quicker we have visibility of 'good' practice the better the adoption will be.*
- *I am 6 weeks into this role having managed HEPPP in 2013 - 2015 at (my institution). I am not ready to implement the SEHEEF without training and understanding. The institution is not ready in that unless our templates provide guidance, they are unaware of SEHEEF in general. My concern is the academic emphasis on language and requirements which may not be embraced by some project managers working in non-academic areas, rather student supports, pre-access etc. HEPPP is not directly connected to the equity area of the university. HEPPP is involved with planning of retention and participation.*
- *We will need support and guidance to do this properly*
- *We will soon be starting the process of more formally embedding SEHEEF into our programs, and have also recently started liaising with our data team to more accurately capture impact.*
- *(Our institution) has conducted capability building workshops in evaluation , program design and on widening participation for new practitioners to enable student equity program officers to confidently engage with SEHEEF. (Our institution) developed a short course for internal staff focussed on Overall course objectives: o Gain a deeper understanding of inclusion, equity, and diversity. o Apply reflexivity to their inclusive practice. o Connect, share, and support others in developing*

inclusive practices. · Learning objectives: o Reflect critically and creatively. o Apply foundational knowledge of Indigenous Australian cultures and histories. o Identify opportunities to be an ally for social change. Apply a critical analysis of complex issues related to discrimination, equity and social justice.

- *I am new to my institution but have worked previously in Evaluation. One thing I have noticed is that the leads/ practitioners of these programs need a lot of upskilling in Evaluation and CQI. I am talking about the basics here not just further developing their skills. In-house we have been trying to develop ways to upskill the teams and while its early days It would also be good for the teams delivering these programs to have something from SEHEEF to explain the importance of the processes required for SEHEEF as well as simple training on what they are expected to understand and do. It feels repetitive if the evaluation managers are then rephrasing the SEHEEF to upskill their teams.*
- *The SEHEEF has positively impacted on equity planning at (institution), influencing improvements to reporting, evaluation and strategy/design.*

18. Synthesis and Conclusion

- There was variation across the higher education sector in preparedness for implementing the SEHEEF. While the sector expressed support for the SEHEEF, the extent to which the sector was prepared varied according to factors such as institutional investment, staffing, data systems, evaluation capability, familiarity with evaluation frameworks, and the alignment of HEPPP with other university priorities and objectives.
- Across both components of the project, the sector consistently expressed desire for clarity from the Department about the implementation of the SEHEEF, including the associated expectations (what to evaluate, how much to evaluate and when), and timeframes for rollout. There was hesitation to progress with SEHEEF planning and preparation without this, for concern it is wasted effort.

18.1 Preparedness

- There was variation across the sector in the sophistication of their data systems and data linkage capability, impacting preparedness. In the qualitative component of the project, data analysts identified challenges around:
 - o the types of data collection methods being employed (paper and pencil surveys/excel files vs real-time interfaces impacting upon data accuracy);
 - o the ability to link different administrative datasets and administrative datasets with university records, and
 - o the ambiguity on operational definitions regarding equity groups.
- Both analysts and program officers raised the issue of the lack of a Unique Student Identifier, impacting capacity to properly evaluate outreach and other pre-access work. Another challenge identified is that program officers don't necessarily have access to data stored in data warehouses and without institutional planning, including the reallocation of workloads as a result of the additional workload with the SEHEEF requirements, there may be issues in easily accessing the relevant data.. The sector will need support with these issues.
- In addition, the sector would benefit from better communication between those developing and implementing programs and data/business analysts to improve data collection methods, the capacity for data linkage and to ensure consistency in outcome measures.
- Further, there was variation across the sector in terms of resourcing and staffing which depended upon additional institutional investment. For instance, many stakeholders spoke about the impacts of the one-year funding allocations of HEPPP. The discussed that, without institutional buy-in to support the continuation of roles, there was a high turnover impacting upon planning and implementation. Turnover would also impact upon evaluation.
- In terms of staff preparedness, there was some familiarity with CQI, with the sector incorporating aspects of CQI into their planning to varying extents. In terms of CQI, the sector reported that:
 - o They were, to some extent, specifying the activities, consulting the relevant evidence, specifying indicators for the intended outcomes, specifying how the indicators would be measured, as part of their planning.
 - o They were not overly familiar with or regularly using any of the tools and templates.
- Some participants would like further clarity on operational definitions, a bank of standardised measures, and training on evaluation basics to get new personnel upskilled. From the lack of familiarity with tools and templates, training on the tools and templates should be included as well,

drawing the link between existing activities related to CQI and the implementation of the tools and templates.

- Generally, the sector has not progressed with Impact Evaluation. The sector expressed they felt unclear as to what and when to evaluate, how much to spend on evaluation and who should conduct the evaluation. Some identified that external evaluators would be needed. Overall, there is a clear need for guidance for the sector on what to expect, how skills and expertise are needed and an allocation of time and money.
- The discussion from interviews also indicated there were gaps in preparedness for Impact Evaluation, in terms of data requirements such as unsophisticated data collection methods, inconsistencies or inaccuracies in measurement, limitations in accessing data and gaps in data linkage capabilities. Planning, in terms of workload allocations, resourcing and the investment into data infrastructure is varied and will impact capacity.
- In addition, when asked about the institutional factors which had affected their implementation readiness, survey respondents gave high ratings to a lack of staff and a lack of evaluation expertise as impacting upon their readiness.
- It was frequently raised that Impact Evaluation in the pre-access stage really needed the creation of Unique Student Identifier.

18.2 Training, Portal and Communities of Practice

- In response to questions about desired training in the focus groups and interviews, stakeholders expressed that they desired simple explanatory guidance on the use of SEHEEF tools, training on the evaluation basics through to more advanced analysis, examples of program logics as well as guidance on managing time to balance implementation against evaluation. They frequently mentioned the desire for real-life worked case examples, as well as step-by-step tutorials.
- When asked about the specific training and resources that were seen as necessary to implement the CQI and Impact Evaluation of the SEHEEF, between 70%-79% of survey respondents rated all items – spanning planning, collecting data or completing tools, or reporting of data - as high priority or essential. There was little differentiation across items.
- It is recommended that training and further resources for the sector be scaffolded. Basic training in relation to evaluation needs to be provided, and there is also a need for training for more advanced aspects of evaluation to address the needs of a diversified audience. Training materials also need to be straight forward and digestible. Staff are busy, and do not want to read lengthy materials. Case studies, and real-life worked examples are preferred. Channels of communication with others in the space are desired, including chat functions and CoPs.
- Many of the resources and modules are desired to exist in an online portal. In addition, stakeholders expressed desire for guidance on standard data collection methods, step-by-step guides on planning and tools, as well as case studies which include real examples of equity programs and evaluation findings from the equity in higher education space.
- There was a desire for a CoP for information sharing, particularly amongst Equity Practitioners and Program personnel, and it was often expressed that the sector would need channels of communication to share and learn about 'what works'.
- Overall, there was a strong desire in the sector to share findings to design better programs, and learn from each other. This points towards establishing a portal which can also provide monitoring and information sharing for the sector to learn from and direct their programming.

References

ACIL Allen Consulting. (2017). *Evaluation of the Higher Education Participation and Partnerships Program, A Report to the Australian Department of Education and Training*.
<https://docs.education.gov.au/node/43911>

Department of Education. (2023). *Higher Education Participation and Partnerships Program (HEPPP)*.
<https://www.education.gov.au/heppp>

Robinson, M., Tomaszewski, W., Kubler, M., Johnstone, M., Clague, D., Zajac, T., Povey, J., & Salom, C. (2021). The Student Equity in Higher Education Evaluation Framework. In.

Appendix

Part A participant demographics

Table 16. Breakdown of participants, by position and type of institution.

Stakeholder number	Stakeholder position	Type of Institutions
1	Senior Coordinator, Student Access and Equity	Regional
2	Reporting and Governance Manager	Major City (G08)
3	Manager, Outreach, Careers and Wellbeing	Regional
4	Executive Manager, Student Access and Equity, Centre for Social Justice and Inclusion	Major City (non- Go8)
5	Associate Director, Student Success	Major City (G08)
6	Equity Expert	National
7	Equity Expert	National
8	Project Coordinator, Office of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education)	Major City (non- Go8)
9	Equity Expert	National
10	Equity Program Officer	Regional
11	Strategic Planner	National
12	Strategic Planner	National
13	Director, Planning and Business Intelligence	Major City (G08)
14	Evaluation and Policy officer	Major City (non- Go8)
15	Manager, Student Equity Evaluation & Reporting	Major City (non- Go8)
16	Director, Student Engagement	Regional
17	Equity Program Officer	Regional
18	Manager, Student Equity	Regional
19	Senior Data Analyst (funded by HEPPP)	Major City (non- Go8)
20	Senior Strategic Leader	Major City (non- Go8)
21	Chief Data & Analytics Officer, Planning and Analytics	Major City (Go8)

Stakeholder number	Stakeholder position	Type of Institutions
22	Business Manager, Office of Academic and Student Engagement	Major City (GO8)
23	Equity Program Officer	Regional
24	Business Intelligence Manager	Regional
25	Equity Expert	Regional
26	Practice Officer	Regional
27	Equity Expert	National
28	Deputy Manager, Student Equity and Outreach	Major City (GO8)
29	Equity Program Officer	Major City (GO8)
30	Senior Manager, Programs and Partnerships	Regional
31	Senior Advisor, Equity and Inclusion	Regional
32	Pro Vice-Chancellor (Students)	Regional

Part B: Survey

Phase 1 Implementation of the SEHEEF

Start of Block: Block 1

Phase 1 Implementation of the Student Equity in Higher Education Evaluation Framework

Part 2: Sector Survey

This survey is being conducted by the Institute for Social Science Research (ISSR) on behalf of the Department of Education through the National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education (NCSEHE).

What is the purpose of the survey?

It is intended to collect information about the current capacity and preparedness of the higher education sector to implement the Student Equity in Higher Education Evaluation Framework (SEHEEF).

Results will be used to better understand the training and information needs of the sector, which will be used by NCSEHE to develop an online portal, establish Communities of Practice, and prepare training modules to assist the sector with the uptake of the SEHEEF. The results will also inform the Department of Education's requirements on implementation of the SEHEEF within universities.

In particular, the survey focuses on university-level components of the SEHEEF (see visual below), segmented by:

Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI); and	Impact Evaluation (IE), comprising: Theory-Based Impact Evaluation (TBIE).
Quantitative Impact Evaluation (QIE) and	

Who should complete the survey?

Survey participants are those who are involved in the design, planning and implementation of Higher Education Participation and Partnerships Program (HEPPP) funded programs. We ask that this survey is forwarded to others in your team or institution who are involved in the development and/or implementation of HEPPP-funded programs.

The survey should take approximately 20 minutes to complete. Your participation is voluntary.

Page Break

Q9 Demographic information

Q1 What is the name of your institution?

▼ Australian Catholic University (1) ... Other (39)

Q2 What is your current position?

Q3 How long have you been working in this position?

- Less than 1 year (1)
- 1 to 2 years (2)
- 3 to 4 years (3)
- 5 to 9 years (4)
- 10 years or more (5)

Q4 More generally, how long have you been involved in HEPPP-funded equity initiatives?

- Less than 1 year (1)
- 1 to 2 years (2)
- 3 to 4 years (3)
- 5 to 9 years (4)
- 10 years or more (5)

Q5 How long have you been involved in the reporting of HEPPP to the Department of Education?

- I haven't been involved yet (1)
- Less than 1 year (2)
- 1 to 2 years (3)
- 3 to 4 years (4)
- 5 years or more (5)

Q6 How many people work in the management or coordination of HEPPP-funded equity programs at your institution?

- 1 person (1)
- 2 to 3 people (2)
- 4 people or more (3)

Q28 How many staff at your institution work in the area of program design, development and implementation of HEPPP-funded equity programs at your institution?

- 1 person (1)
- 2 to 5 people (2)
- 6 to 10 people (3)
- 11 to 15 people (4)
- 16 people or more (5)

End of Block: Block 1

Start of Block: Block 2

Q10 HEPPP reporting for 2022

Each university submits an annual HEPPP report to the Department of Education. From 2021, the reporting process was streamlined.

Q7 Were you responsible for completing and submitting the 2022 HEPPP report to the Department of Education?

- Yes, primarily responsible (1)
- Yes, partly responsible (2)
- No (3)

Skip To: End of Block If Were you responsible for completing and submitting the 2022 HEPPP report to the Department of Edu... = No

Q8 Regarding the **2022 HEPPP reporting template**, how strongly do you agree or disagree with these statements?

	1 Strongly disagree (1)	2 Disagree (2)	3 Neither agree nor disagree (2)	4 Agree (3)	5 Strongly agree (4)
It is useful in shaping thinking about the design and delivery of programs (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
It is user-friendly (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
It is quick to complete (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
It is an improvement on the previous reporting templates (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am satisfied with it (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
It captures the right amount of detail to show how we spend our money (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
It captures the right amount of detail to show the effectiveness of what we do (7)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
There is enough opportunity to report on the outcomes of what we do (8)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q11 How can the HEPPP reporting process be improved? *In your response you may want to consider: What you liked best / disliked about the template? What worked / did not work? The amount of quantitative versus qualitative information. What would help to make it work better?*

End of Block: Block 2

Start of Block: Block 3

Q13 General preparedness with the SEHEEF

Q12 Overall, how **prepared do you feel** to implement each of the following components of the SEHEEF?

	1 Not at all (1)	2 Somewhat (2)	3 Mostly (3)	4 Completely (4)
Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Quantitative Impact Evaluation (QIE) (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Theory-Based Impact Evaluation (TBIE) (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q14 There are a number of **tools for SEHEEF implementation** outlined in the 2021 SEHEEF Guidance Manual. To what extent have you used the following tools?

	1 Never (1)	2 Rarely (2)	3 Occasionally (3)	4 A moderate amount (4)	5 A great deal (5)
The SEHEEF CQI Planning Tool (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
THE SEHEEF Program Data Reporting Tool (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The SEHEEF CQI Reporting Tool (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

End of Block: Block 3

Start of Block: Block 4

Q15 Influence of the 2021 SEHEEF

Please answer this series of questions regarding your operational management of **existing HEPPP-funded programs**.

Q16 For programs that **existed prior** to the 2021 SEHEEF, to what extent have you applied the following practices and tools to these programs?

	1 Never (1)	2 Rarely (2)	3 Occasionally (3)	4 A moderate amount (4)	5 A great deal (5)
Develop a program logic model (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Specify the activities (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Consult the relevant evidence (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Specify indicators for the intended outcomes (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Specify how the indicators will be measured (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Involve the students who are targeted in the design (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Audit the resourcing/staffing to implement the program (7)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Assess the feasibility of reaching the target population (8)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Refine the program after reflection of successes and challenges (9)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q17 Can you cite one or two examples of how you have used SEHEEF with your **existing programs** since 2021?

End of Block: Block 4

Start of Block: Block 4

Q18 Please answer this series of questions regarding your planning of **new programs** since the 2021 SEHEEF.

Q19 To what extent has your planning for **new programs** since the 2021 SEHEEF followed and used these practices and tools?

	1 Never (1)	2 Rarely (2)	3 Occasionally (3)	4 A moderate amount (4)	5 A great deal (5)
Develop a program logic (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Specify the activities (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Consult the relevant evidence (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Specify indicators for the intended outcomes (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Describe how the indicators will be measured (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Involve the students who are targeted in the design (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Audit the resourcing/staffing to implement the program (7)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Assess the feasibility of reaching the target population (8)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Refine the program after refection of successes and challenges (9)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q20 Can you cite one or two instances of introducing SEHEEF listed practices and tools as part of the planning of **new programs** since 2021?

End of Block: Block 4

Start of Block: Block 5

Q21 Quantitative Impact Evaluation (QIE) and Theory-Based Impact Evaluation (TBIE)

Q22 We understand that many institutions have not yet started planning for QIE and TBIE in their assessments of programs. Have any of your programs undergone an impact evaluation?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)
- Don't know (3)

Skip To: Q24 If We understand that many institutions have not yet started planning for QIE and TBIE in their asse... = No

Skip To: Q24 If We understand that many institutions have not yet started planning for QIE and TBIE in their asse... = Don't know

Q23 Briefly describe who undertook this impact evaluation, what was evaluated and how it was evaluated. *If more than one program has undergone an impact evaluation, please answer thinking of your most recent.*

Q24 Based on your understanding of the capacity of your institution to be able to implement QIE and TBIE, how strongly do you agree or disagree with these statements about the **systems and resources** in place to support their introduction?

	1 Strongly disagree (1)	2 Disagree (2)	3 Neither agree nor disagree (3)	4 Agree (4)	5 Strongly agree (5)
The right systems are in place to collect and store data (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Our data on student participation in HEPPEP-funded programs can be easily linked to other student data sources (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Students taking part in our HEPPEP-funded programs can be easily tracked over multiple years (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The relevant people can easily access the data (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The senior management team is on board to support any evaluation (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
We are clear on the amount of money to set aside for evaluation (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
We have the relevant people to analyse and interpret data for QIE (7)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
We have the relevant people who can employ a range of methods to understand the contribution of the program for TBIE (8)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
It will be necessary to seek an external evaluator to do the evaluation well (9)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q25 To understand the needs of the sector in the **planning for QIE and TBIE**, can you indicate the extent to which you (or your evaluation services) have...

	1 Not at all (1)	2 Somewhat (2)	3 Mostly (3)	4 Completely (4)
Applied a prioritisation process for selecting a program for impact evaluation for QIE and/or TBIE? (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Planned for having a control group for QIE? (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Liaised with your ethics committee regarding the design of the evaluation for QIE and/or TBIE? (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Mapped the causal pathway from inputs to outputs for TBIE? (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Developed a plan of how to assess causal pathways for TBIE? (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

End of Block: Block 5

Start of Block: Block 6

Q26 **Institutional challenges in implementing the SEHEEF**

Q27 Have any **institutional factors** affected your implementation readiness?

	1 Not at all (1)	2 Somewhat (2)	3 Moderately (3)	4 Extremely (4)
A lack of funding (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
A lack of staff (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
A lack of evaluation expertise (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
A lack of capability to collect data (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
A lack of capability to analyse data (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
A lack of planning time (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Insufficient buy-in from leadership (7)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Inaccurate data (8)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Unsophisticated technology/data systems (9)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Weak alignment with broader university objectives (10)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Something else (please specify) (11)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Page Break

Q29 How strongly do you agree or disagree that the following things **are needed to help** you with implementing the SEHEEF?

	1 Strongly disagree (1)	2 Disagree (2)	3 Neither agree nor disagree (3)	4 Agree (4)	5 Strongly agree (5)
Certainty from the Department of Education on the SEHEEF rollout (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Clarity on implementation timeframes (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Clarity on operational definitions of supporting and primary outcomes (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Real-time interfaces, software or other tools/equipment and materials (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Data dashboards (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Resourcing to support the building of data dashboards (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
More sophisticated data warehouse infrastructure (7)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Time or additional personnel to undertake evaluation (8)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Clear guidance on how much money to allocate for evaluation (9)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Practical training and resources to guide evaluation (10)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



Q30 Of these, which are the **top 3** that you see as most needed for you to successfully implement the SEHEEF? Type in your top 3 for the provided options.

- Certainty from the Department on the SEHEEF rollout (1)
- Clarity on implementation timeframes (2)
- Clarity on operational definitions of supporting and primary outcomes (3)
- Real-time interfaces, software or other tools/equipment and materials (4)
- Data dashboards (5)
- Resourcing to support the building of data dashboards (6)
- More sophisticated data warehouse infrastructure (7)
- Time or additional personnel to undertake evaluation (8)
- Clear guidance on how much money to allocate for evaluation (9)
- Practical training and resources to guide evaluation (10)

End of Block: Block 6

Start of Block: Block 7

Q31 Expectations of SEHEEF going forward

The following questions aim to help the NCSEHE understand the needs of the sector, in terms of training, online information portals and Communities of Practice, to implement the SEHEEF.

Q32 NCSEHE is planning to develop an **online portal** to inform and to share information on evaluation activities and outcomes. What features would you like to see on an online portal?

	1 Not a priority (1)	2 Low priority (2)	3 Medium (3)	4 High (4)	5 Essential (5)
Glossaries and definitions (e.g., for equity groups and outcomes) (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Step-by-step instructions for the planning tools and the reporting tools (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Connections to a community of practice for information sharing (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Case studies, worked examples and research findings in the equity space (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Guidance for standard data collection methods (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Pivot tables for benchmarking (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Survey instruments for similar activities (8)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Something else (please specify) (7)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q33 To establish a **Community of Practice** in the equity space, who can you see as needing to come together to exchange experiences and advice on implementation and evaluation according to SEHEEF?

	1 Not a priority (1)	2 Low priority (2)	3 Medium (3)	4 High (4)	5 Essential (5)
Program managers (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Practitioners (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Data analyst (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Data managers (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
University teaching staff (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Senior university leaders (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Someone else (please specify) (7)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Page Break

Q34 What **training and resources** should be offered to support the implementation of the SEHEEF? What training and resources do you see as necessary to implement SEHEEF?

	1 Not a priority (1)	2 Low priority (2)	3 Medium (3)	4 High (4)	5 Essential (5)
Simple explanatory guidance on the use of SEHEEF tools (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Defining a program logic for our own HEPPE-funded programs (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Introduction modules on program evaluation (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Training for university strategic leaders on SEHEEF purpose and requirements (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Managing funds to ensure there is money to evaluate (17)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Managing time to balance program implementation and evaluation (18)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q36 What **training and resources do you see as necessary to implement SEHEEF in relation to **CQI**?**

	1 Not a priority (1)	2 Low priority (2)	3 Medium (3)	4 High (4)	5 Essential (5)
Planning of project features and parameters for CQI (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Completing CQI Planning tool (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Completing CQI Program Data reporting tool (7)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Collecting of data for CQI (8)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Reporting of data for CQI (9)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q37 What **training and resources do you see as necessary to implement SEHEEF in relation to **Impact Evaluation**?**

	1 Not a priority (1)	2 Low priority (2)	3 Medium (3)	4 High (4)	5 Essential (5)
Selecting programs for impact assessment (10)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
QIE - selecting control groups and ethical considerations (11)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
QIE - ensuring a robust design (12)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
QIE - advanced statistical analysis to understand impact (13)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
QIE - interpreting data (14)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
TBIE - Understanding analyses to explain the causal link from program to outcomes (15)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Utilising data to understand why the outcomes were obtained (16)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Something else (please specify) (19)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

End of Block: Block 7

Start of Block: Block 8

Q35 Is there anything else you would like to tell us? e.g., *Do you have any other comments regarding your readiness and/or your institutions readiness to implement the SEHEEF? Do you have any feedback on how the SEHEEF may be impacting upon equity planning at your institution more broadly?*

End of Block: Block 8





CRICOS Provider Number 00025B

Contact details

Melissa Johnstone

T +61 7 3365 1343
M +61 0411 777 952
E m.johnstone@uq.edu.au
W uq.edu.au