



Executive Summary

Strengthening Domestic and Family Violence Responses Across Eight Services in the Northern Territory

Process Evaluation of the RAMF Champions Implementation Project 2023 - 2026

Executive Summary

Introduction

This report presents the findings of a process evaluation (the RAMF Champion evaluation) of the Risk Assessment and Management Framework (RAMF) Champions Implementation Project 2023–2026 (the Project). Coordinated by the Northern Territory Council of Social Service (NTCOSS) and funded by the Northern Territory Government (NTG), the project supported eight services in various locations across the Northern Territory (NT) to implement the RAMF.

The RAMF was introduced in 2020 and provides a consistent and evidence-based approach to identify, assess, respond to and manage domestic and family violence (DFV) risk across the NT. It aims to build a more integrated service system to prevent DFV-related homicides by increasing safety and wellbeing of victim-survivors and accountability of people who use violence. The eight services (the RAMF Champion Organisations) in the Project each appointed or recruited an employee(s) to carry out the RAMF Champion duties (a RAMF Champion). The RAMF Champion's role is to lead the RAMF implementation within their respective organisation. NTCOSS appointed a project coordinator (the Coordinator) to support implementation by working closely with each RAMF Champion to build capacity, provide one-on-one mentoring, and by facilitating a monthly Community of Practice (CoP) for all RAMF Champions. Implementation and support provided by the Coordinator was approached with community development and action research principles that recognised that there is no one-size-fits all approach to implementation.

The evaluation examined how support provided by the Coordinator influenced the RAMF Champions and RAMF implementation in the eight organisations and aimed to understand the facilitators and barriers to RAMF implementation to elicit key learnings and improve future efforts and reform.

The key evaluation questions are:

1. What support did the Coordinator provide to the eight RAMF Champion Organisations for the RAMF implementation?
2. What did the support provided by the Coordinator achieve?
3. What are the facilitators and barriers to implementing the RAMF in the eight services?
4. What are the key learnings from the RAMF Champions Implementation Project?

Figure 1: Map of the Locations of the RAMF Champions at the time of data collection for the evaluation.



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Method

This evaluation was co-designed through a participatory process with RAMF Champions to ensure relevance, cultural safety, and practical value. Guided by the Australian Evaluation Society First Nations Cultural Safety Framework and Lowitja Institute resources, and aligned with the NT Government Project Evaluation Framework, the approach prioritised Indigenous data sovereignty, informed consent, minimised participant burden, and worked to build capacity of the RAMF Champions to evaluate their own performance.

Conducted internally by NTCOSS, the evaluation drew on five data sources: CoP session records, individual mentoring notes (across a 24-month period), semi-structured interviews (n=11), surveys at baseline and follow-up (n=8 and n=9), and organisational focus groups (n=8). The ongoing individual mentoring and CoP sessions helped support a developmental approach which focused on innovation and real time adaptation based on findings, rather than measuring success against pre-determined goals.

Qualitative data were thematically analysed and refined through participatory member checking with RAMF Champions individually and during CoP sessions, while quantitative data was analysed using descriptive statistics with support from ANROWS specialists. Cultural safety and methodological rigour were strengthened through participant feedback, reflective practice using Lowitja Institute tools, and independent peer review by an external evaluator.

Key findings

The evaluation found that a dedicated Coordinator and CoP helped improve the implementation of the RAMF. Results indicated that a dedicated Coordinator and CoP improved the structure of the Project, RAMF Champion capacity, wellbeing, momentum and retention; and therefore, RAMF Champion Organisations' implementation process benefitted. The support provided also helped to increase interagency collaboration between the RAMF Champion Organisations and other relevant services.

Nine facilitators and eight barriers were found to impact the implementation of the RAMF. RAMF Champions highlighted that implementation was strongest when the framework was adapted to the local context, understood as a system-wide practice change rather than a standalone policy, and when a whole-of-organisation approach was adopted. Success was more likely where within RAMF Champion Organisations there was visible leadership endorsement, strong local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership, clear governance structures for making RAMF aligned practice changes, prioritisation of staff wellbeing and deep community engagement; and when internal systems were aligned to the RAMF. Effective implementation also occurred where there was interagency collaboration, and RAMF Champions and RAMF Champion Organisations grounded the work in or connected it to grassroots initiatives that focused on prevention, working with men and boys, accountability for people using violence, and healing. Several RAMF Champion Organisations used the implementation process to develop their own community-led DFV initiatives and secure additional funding, demonstrating a commitment to DFV reform beyond the Project.

13 KEY LEARNINGS

There are 13 key learnings from the Project regarding RAMF implementation in the eight services:

1. A dedicated project coordinator and a CoP are high-value investments
2. RAMF Champions are critical for implementation, however they are under-resourced
3. RAMF Champions need more structured guidance about the RAMF implementation
4. The implementation of the RAMF would benefit from increasing the accessibility of the RAMF and DFV training
5. Tailoring the RAMF to fit context is not only a facilitator but a necessary pre-condition for implementation
6. Whole-of-organisation approaches are the most successful model for the RAMF implementation
7. First Nations leadership and organisational leadership is essential for implementation
8. Clear governance structures for implementation improve implementation efficiency
9. Workforce wellbeing and safety processes and mechanisms are foundational to the RAMF implementation
10. The RAMF implementation requires integration into internal systems within each individual organisation
11. Growing community awareness through community DFV education sessions strengthens the RAMF implementation planning, adaptation and momentum
12. Collaborating with DFV specialists, other RAMF Champions and/or services with a shared footprint greatly improved the efficiency of the RAMF implementation
13. Broader service system development and investment in community-led DFV initiatives is needed to maximise impact of the RAMF implementation



Image of Coordinator and some RAMF Champions at the NTG DFSV Conference in Mparntwe/Alice Springs in 2024 (supplied by Coordinator).

Recommendations

In consideration of the findings and key learnings, 16 recommendations are made by NTCOSS and the RAMF Champions regarding the RAMF Champions Implementation Project, RAMF and RAMF training, and the broader DFV system.

Recommendations regarding the RAMF and RAMF training and the broader DFV system are made in acknowledgment of the structural and systemic factors that directly affect implementation efficiency and effectiveness in the 8 RAMF Champion Organisations.

- Recommendation 1: Continue to fund the RAMF Champions Implementation Project, including a central, independent project coordinator, and introduce 5-year funding agreements for RAMF Champion Organisations to support sustainability.
- Recommendation 2: Develop RAMF implementation phases and a RAMF/DFV maturity model. This will allow organisations to identify where they are on the RAMF implementation journey to becoming a DFV informed organisation. Include self-evaluation tools for organisations to monitor their progress.
- Recommendation 3: Create a RAMF Champions implementation project induction package. Include orientation training to inform boards and leadership, and RAMF Champions about the Project to increase commitment and readiness.
- Recommendation 4: Produce a suite of culturally safe implementation guides and project management resources. These guides should help organisations to recognise existing community and organisational strengths, adapt the framework to their context, take a whole-of-organisation approach and reduce duplication.
- Recommendation 5: Update the RAMF, including training, based on community consultation, to strengthen its application in remote contexts.
- Recommendation 6: Introduce a three-tier, role-based RAMF responsibility framework to replace the current distinction of universal and specialist services.
- Recommendation 7: Invest in strong and visible First Nations leadership across the DFV system, including in Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations, to improve culturally secure and responsive implementation.
- Recommendation 8: Strengthen the NT DFV Workforce and Sector Development Plan to include recommendations that reduce exposure to system level trauma, and role design and supports that improve worker safety. Reference these measures in the section within the RAMF about a supported, safe and capable workforce.
- Recommendation 9: Support the development of tools and grants that strengthen staff wellbeing (personal and professional safety) within organisations, ensure they align with the RAMF and current component 5.
- Recommendation 10: Increase sustainable opportunities for local community members in remote communities to receive culturally secure, trauma informed DFV education, including train the trainer workshops.

Recommendations

- Recommendation 11: Develop a live map of all DFV services and projects across the NT to support local service knowledge, referral pathways and regional service coordination, and funding for ongoing updates of all information to ensure currency, completeness and accuracy. Ensure this map collates and builds upon existing mapping projects and consider incorporating this into the existing [NTCommunity](#) Directory and resource updates to the site appropriately.
- Recommendation 12: Advocate for and continue to invest in best practice, evidence based DFV education and response systems for statutory services and all NTG workers.
- Recommendation 13: Expand local community and organisational capacity to work effectively and safely with adults using violence by providing increased access to training, resources and tools that align with or are part of the RAMF.
- Recommendation 14: Increase funding opportunities for culturally secure spaces and services that work with boys and men, and people using violence.
- Recommendation 15: Evaluate the impact of RAMF implementation and expansion on the Family Safety Framework (FSF) and resource the FSF according to the findings.
- Recommendation 16: Advocate for flexible, community-wide funding grants to support innovative, whole-of-community DFV responses, particularly in remote communities.

5. Conclusion

This process evaluation of the Project across eight organisations found that implementation is a complex, context-dependent systems change, requiring sustained coordination and organisational commitment. The project model included organisational RAMF Champions, a dedicated Coordinator, and a CoP, and was found to improve capability, wellbeing, momentum, and cross-service collaboration. Key facilitators included strong leadership, clear governance, workforce wellbeing, local adaptation, whole-of-organisation approaches, and collaboration with other services; alongside community engagement and investment in grassroots DFV initiatives. Barriers included limited resources, variable readiness, workforce constraints, and fragmented system coordination. Findings highlight the need for improved accessibility to RAMF and sustained investment in workforce capability, wellbeing, and system and community-led supports. This report contributes to the evidence on implementing complex DFV frameworks such as RAMF.



Acknowledgements

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples

The Northern Territory Council of Social Service (NTCOSS) acknowledges the Traditional Owners of Country throughout the Northern Territory (NT) and recognises their continuing connection to land, waters and culture. We pay our respects to their Elders past and present. Aboriginal sovereignty has not been ceded.

Victim-Survivors

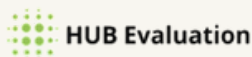
NTCOSS acknowledge and honour the courage, strength, and dignity of all victim-survivors of domestic and family violence (DFV), and of those who speak out, act, and work to improve our community's safety. We remember the people who have lost their lives to DFV in the NT, across Australia, and around the world. We stand in solidarity with victim-survivors, their families, and communities, and recognise the ongoing collective work required to end DFV and create safer, more respectful futures for all.

Authorship

Strengthening Domestic and Family Violence Responses Across Eight Services in the Northern Territory is a publication by the Northern Territory Council of Social Service. The evaluation was conducted and written by Meghan Wright (NTCOSS Coordinator for the Risk Assessment and Management Framework (RAMF) Champions Implementation Project).

Thank you

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NTCOSS and RAMF Champions recognise the significant contributions of the Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Prevention Division at the Northern Territory Government, RAMF trainers, the Northern Territory DFSV sector, and the many activists and community leaders whose ongoing work has supported the implementation of RAMF and specifically this project. We acknowledge the depth of effort and commitment that has laid the foundation for this work and continues to strengthen responses to DFSV.

Positionality Statement

The Northern Territory Council of Social Service (NTCOSS) is a non-government organisation and the peak body for the social and community service sector in the Northern Territory (NT). NTCOSS's membership is comprised of community managed, non-government, not for profit organisations, which work in social and community service delivery, sector development and advocacy. NTCOSS advocates for and with the domestic, family and sexual violence (DFSV) sector (the Sector) in the NT to improve safety, wellbeing, economic and social justice outcomes for impacted individuals and communities. The Sector includes Aboriginal Community Controlled DFSV services, Aboriginal Family Violence Legal Services, remote safe houses, women's shelters, DFSV specialist counselling services, women's legal services and specialist sexual violence services. The Sector and associated peaks are committed to working with the NT Government to support and enable partnership.

The NTCOSS Coordinator Meghan Wright (she/her) is an Australian-born, non-Indigenous person, and has been living in Mparntwe/Alice Springs since 2022. She is an academically trained domestic, family and sexual violence (DFSV) researcher, policy and advocacy worker with lived experience. She recognises that her social location, experiences and perspectives may shape this work and its findings and is committed to ongoing reflection and strengthening her intersectional practice.



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