



DR SAMANTHA ABBATO - CV

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PROFESSIONAL SUMMARY

Sam Abbato is a passionate and creative evaluator, researcher, and trainer with over 25 years of experience working across various evaluation contracts for non-government, government, and universities. With a depth of knowledge of the health and community sectors, working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities, Sam manages teams of evaluators and data sets across various projects. Sam applies participatory and use-focused approaches to organisational monitoring and evaluation (M&E) and evaluation capacity-building (ECB). Effectively working with organisational leadership, service delivery staff, and a range of transdisciplinary collaborators, she embeds evaluation and builds the evaluation capacity of organisations.

Sam uses a 'pictures and stories' approach to address the challenges of communicating, engaging, and implementing M&E with organisational leadership and service delivery teams. She is a passionate and skilled evaluation trainer committed to rigorous methods, data quality, effective communication and reporting, and making evaluation tools accessible to all. Sam provides regular face-to-face and online presentations, individual training, and team training packages with Visual Insights and the Australian Evaluation Society (AES).

OVERVIEW OF ROLES AND EXPERIENCE

- Director, Visual Insights People (2013 — current)
- Consultant, Legal Aid Western Australia (Sep 2024 -Dec 2025)
- Manager, Impact and Evaluation, Mission Australia (Jan-Jun 2024)
- Freelance writer and researcher, Outdoor Australia magazine media and Brisbane Forest Park, Queensland (2001—2005)
- Statistical analysis and interpretation, Deakin University (2000—2001)
- Lecturer and Researcher, Epidemiology and Anthropology, Public Health, University of Queensland (1998—2000)
- PhD research partnership with the Victorian Aboriginal Health Service (VAHS) - "Questionnaire development in epidemiology: A case study —The social epidemiology of diabetes in Melbourne Aborigines." (1994—1997)
- Tutor and teaching assistant, University of California at Berkeley (1993)
- Research assistant, Disease Surveillance, Center for Disease Control, Western Consortium of Public Health, San Francisco and Oakland, California (1990—1993)
- Research officer, Food and Nutrition Program and AIDS/STD Unit, Deakin University and Health and Human Services, Victoria (1989—1990).

PUBLICATION HIGHLIGHTS

Abbato, S. (2023). Digital evaluation stories: A case study of implementation for monitoring and evaluation in an Australian Community not for profit, *American Journal of Evaluation*.

Abbato S. (2015). The case for evaluating process and worth: Evaluation of a programme for carers and people with dementia. In *Case study evaluation: Past, present and future*, Eds. Greenhalgh T, Russell J and Kushner S.

QUALIFICATIONS

- PhD Epidemiology
University of California – Berkeley, 1997
- MPH Epidemiology/Biostatistics,
University of California - Berkeley, 1992
- BSc (Hons) Physiology, Pure
Mathematics, Monash University, 1989

AWARDS

Excellence in Evaluation - The Caulley
Tulloch (Publication) Award AES, 2015

KEY SKILLS

- Transdisciplinary teamwork, coordinating professionals (e.g., psychology, systems thinking)
- Quantitative evaluation/research methods, including surveys, data management and statistical analysis
- Database development, management and problem-solving
- Evaluation and research training, coaching, and mentoring.
- Evaluation capacity-building (ECB) using visual online tools
- Qualitative evaluation/research methods including case study, ethnography, storytelling, interview
- Visual participatory approaches, including digital evaluation story and virtual reality animation storytelling
- Communication for engagement and impact using pictures and stories (e.g., PowerBI, infographics, interactive digital platforms)

MEMBERSHIPS

- Australian Evaluation Society (AES)
- American Evaluation Association (AEA)
- Social Impact Measurement Network Australia (SIMNA)
- Brisbane Business Psychology Book Club (Founder 2016)

CONSULTANCY ACHIEVEMENTS (HIGHLIGHTS OF PAST 10 YEARS ONLY)

University of Tasmania

Virtual Reality Animation Co-creation Storytelling (2023)

Involves coordination of collaborative digital storytelling project for the Planning Inclusive Communities Research Project. Project involves a series of four online storytelling workshops with young people with disabilities to storyboard a series of three virtual reality (VR) animation films and a compilation featuring actual and desired experiences of navigating public spaces. Overseeing the VR film development for presentation to urban planning and design students and decision-makers.

Disability Voices Tasmania

Evaluation Capability Training and Codesign of Organisation and Project Evaluation Models (2022)

1. Evaluation capability-building training with the staff team of four using a physical and online toolkit, online workshops, online collaboration between workshops, and one-to-one coaching.
2. Codesign of three sets of theory of change and pipeline program logic models for project work.
3. Collaborative creation of the organisation's strategic plan and a visual, graphic communicated theory of change of the organisation.

The Healing Foundation and Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS)

WorkUP Queensland Evaluation (2019-2022)

1. Collaborative development of an evaluation framework and plan for the domestic and family violence, sexual violence and women's health and well-being workforce capability and capacity-building project.
2. Digital storytelling evaluation of WorkUP, including project staff capacity-building in digital and qualitative interviewing skills.
3. Audit of quantitative data with a report on recommendations for quantitative data collection, management, and analysis.
4. Evaluation reporting, including a 20-minute film report, an interactive geographical story map incorporating 24 change film vignettes, an interactive theory of change version of film vignettes and a three-page executive summary.

The Healing Foundation - Queensland

Codesigned Evaluation Framework and Evaluation Capability Training (2021-2022)

1. Facilitating the co-design of The Healing Foundation Evaluation Framework incorporating online and face-to-face meetings and workshops with leaders across the organisation.
2. Evaluation capability-building training with two internal facilitators, supporting the face-to-face and online training of a team of nine staff members across the organisation in six sessions of Evaluation Made Easy.

CatholicCare N.T., Northern Territory

Organisational Outcomes Evaluation and Evaluation Capacity-Building (2015-2021)

1. Codesign and implementation of an organisational monitoring and evaluation system in partnership with the organisation's leadership, featuring a digital evaluation story and a participant-centred approach.
2. Database investigation, diagnostics, collaborative problem solving and restructuring of database.
3. Evaluation capacity-building across diverse geographic sites, incorporating a multidisciplinary approach including organisational psychology, systems thinking, graphic communication, videography, and virtual reality.
4. Directed a multidisciplinary team for the codesign of a visual evaluation capacity-building toolkit, including instructional booklets and videos featuring leaders and staff across the organisation.
5. Directed a series of three participatory videos (including virtual reality animation) documenting the organisation's transformation to one with participants and evaluation at the centre.
6. Provision of practical insights for evaluators and organisations considering digital storytelling and other film narrative methods for participant-centred evaluation through a peer-reviewed publication (2022).
7. Workshops in the theory of change, qualitative interviewing, qualitative sampling, survey administration, digital interviews (personal and technical), and editing digital products for staff and leaders across diverse regions of the NT.

CONSULTANCIES *CONT*

Mater Health Services Brisbane, Queensland

Evaluation, Research, and Strategic Planning (2009-2019)

1. CALD consumer engagement/feedback.
2. Database investigation and problem-solving
3. Establish a monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system for Refugee Health Qld.
4. Facilitation of Pastoral Care and ATSI strategic plans.
5. Establish an M&E system for Cultural Diversity Unit and coaching in implementing it.
6. Audit of interpreting provision (2013-4) and research publication.
7. Qualitative study to elicit reasons for low interpreting rates and critical actions for change and research publication.
8. Pilot evaluation of a Music Therapy program for cancer patients.
9. Qualitative action-research study of cultural and interpreting needs and strategies and plan the transition of the Mater Mothers hospitals to improve the interpreting rates throughout the journey from antenatal and birth to postnatal care.

Maranoa Regional Council, Queensland

Evaluation and Partnership Capacity-Building- Healthy Communities (2010-2018)

1. Evaluation of pilot Healthy Community Initiative and evaluation training.
2. Evaluation of Healthy Community Initiative and site capacity-building.
3. Facilitation of strategic and operational plans and support in implementation.
4. Development and implementation of M&E framework and plan with partners.
5. Annual leadership/partnership capacity-building and planning workshops.

EVALUATION TRAINING PROVISION AND CAPACITY BUILDING

Australian Evaluation Society

Professional Learning Workshops - Full-day Equivalent Online and Face-to-Face (2011-2025)

Making it Stick: Increasing the power of evaluation reports using easy-to-apply principles, tools, tips and tricks, Canberra, Sep 2025)

Clearing the way for better evaluation: An introduction to identifying, managing and reducing error (Melbourne, Sep 2024)

Foundations of Evaluation Thinking and Theory (Aug 2024)

Bias in Program Evaluation — A Practical Introduction (Face-to-face, Melbourne, Sep 25, 2023)

Evaluation Ready 1 — Getting the project, plan, and timing right before you evaluate (Nov 2022, Jun 2023, Jul 2024, May 2025)

Making it Stick 1 — Crafting an evaluation report for impact and use (Aug & Nov 2017, Sep 2018, Sep 2020, Feb & Oct 2022, Feb & Aug 2023, Feb & Oct 2024, Feb & Oct 2025)

Making it Stick 2 — Impactful reporting and beyond: Pictures and stories (Aug 2017, Sep 2019, Oct 20, Mar 2022, Mar 2023, Oct 2023, Mar & Nov 2024)

Making it Stick 3 — Visual storytelling with numbers (Jul 2021, May 2022, May 2023, May 2024, Aug 2025)

Making it Digital 1 — A practical introduction to using film for evaluation reporting (May 2021)

Outcome Evaluation Basics — Questions, models, and pathways (Jun 2020, Aug 2020)

Essentials of qualitative and quantitative methods for evaluation (May 2019)

Systems Thinking for Complex Evaluation (Sep 2015)

Learn Conversational Statistics: Making evaluation more influential by learning how to reason, think, and speak the language of statistics (Aug 2011).

University of Melbourne

Guest lecturer for Evaluation subject, Master of Positive Psychology (Oct 2022 - Nov 2024)

Provision of online biannual Introduction to Evaluation lecture.

EVALUATION TRAINING PROVISION AND CAPACITY BUILDING *CONT*

Legal Aid Western Australia

Online facilitator training and staff workshop series for organisational evaluation capacity building (Feb - Jun 2023)

Facilitator training - 1. Evaluation basics, 2. Program modelling basics, 3. Person-centred evaluation.

Staff workshops - 1. Evaluation readiness, 2. Program modelling basics, 3. Visual evaluation reporting, 4. Evaluation methods basics, 5. Qualitative interviewing skills.

Worksafe Victoria

Serious games for evaluation - Facilitator and staff training (Feb- Apr 2026)

1. Thinking Bee - Odyssey and Obstacles, 2. The Change Train game 3. Ready, Set, Evaluate.

Online workshop series for staff evaluation and reporting capability building (Nov - Dec 2022)

1. Evaluation basics, 2. Program modelling basics 3. Evaluation reporting basics.

South Australia Council of Intellectual Disability (SACID) and Inclusion Northern Territory (INT)

Evaluation Capacity Building for evidence of impact for Individual Capacity Building projects

1. Evaluation Planning, 2. Evaluation Implementation guidance, 3. Evaluation reporting, communication and learning.

Visual Insights People

Workshop - Collaborative Face-to-Face with First Person Consulting

Play with Purpose: Building evaluation and systems thinking capacity (Melbourne, Nov 2025)

Facilitator Training - Online and Face-to-Face (2020-2022)

Evaluation Made Easy for Facilitators - Six session evaluation basics course (Nov 2021 - Feb 2022)

Participant Training - Online (2020-2022)

Theory of change - Build your model - Six session program model course (Nov 2020 - Jan 2021)

Evaluation Made Easy for participants - Six session evaluation basics course (Mar- Jun 2022)

Community Service Industry Alliance (CSIA), Queensland

Workshops Provided for Information, Linkages and Capacity-Building Project- Inclusion Readiness (2018-2019)

Stories of Change to Theory of Change - Six two-day workshops in locations across Queensland (Jul-Sep 2018)

Critique and Application of Theory of Change- Five follow-up Alumni workshops (Feb-Mar 2019)

Stories of Change to Theory of Change - Five special cohort workshops (Jun-Aug 2019)

Public Health Dorset, England

Evaluation Workshop Series (2017-2020)

Series 1 - Quantitative Measures for Evaluation, Qualitative Methods for Evaluation, Theory of Change (2017)

Series 2 - Theory of Change, Qualitative Methods, Digital Evaluation Methods (2018)

Series 3 - Making it Stick, Pathways for Evaluation, Qualitative Methods, Advanced Theory of Change (2020)

University of Queensland

Evaluating Social Programs Course (2010)

Using Program Evaluation Tools (Mar, Aug 2010)

Postgraduate Masters' Program, International and Tropic Health (1999 - 2000)

Lecturer, Qualitative Methods (Jul 1999 - Jun 2000)

Postgraduate Masters' Program, School of Population Health (1998-1999)

Lecturer, Epidemiology (Jul 1998 - Jun 1999)

For Faculty of Public Health, Khon Kaen University, Thailand (1999)

Five-day workshop series - Qualitative and Quantitative Research Methods (May 1999)

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS AND SEMINARS (PAST SIX YEARS ONLY)

Abbato, S., Playing the Evaluation Capacity Building Train Game, AES Brisbane, October 2025.

Abbato, S., Beyond blowing bubbles of knowledge and skills training: Extending evaluation capacity building (ECB) thinking using a train-themed model, a framework and a game for embedding organisational evaluation culture and practice, AES25 Canberra, September 2025

Abbato S., Stewart, J., Loreck, H. Looking outside the evaluation methods bubble: A visual digital tool for participatory evaluation with young people with cognitive disabilities

Abbato, S., McKillop, N., Pike, A., Stafford, L., Tye, A new tool for participatory evaluation: Case study of storytelling with virtual reality animation, AES24 Melbourne, September 2024.

Abbato, S. The psychology of evaluation capacity building (ECB): Skill building with the rider, elephant and pathway, AES24 Melbourne, September 2024.

Abbato, S. and Muller, W. Values literacy for evaluators, Ignite presentation, AES24 Melbourne, September 2024.

Abbato, S. and Muller, W. Values literacy for driving and measuring social impact. Seminar presentation for the Social Impact Measurement Network Australia (SIMNA), 17 July 2024.

Abbato, S. Building a team for evaluation success — Attributes of evaluative thinking and more. Skills-building presentation and workshop for the Australian Evaluation Society 2023 International Conference, Brisbane, 27 September 2023.

Abbato, S. Building an evaluative culture, Ignite presentation for the Australian Evaluation Society 2023 International Conference, Brisbane, 27 September 2023.

Abbato, S. Accessible Reporting, Panel presentation for the Social Impact Measurement Network Australia (SIMNA), 17 August 2023.

Abbato, S. Evaluation in 12 pictures and words - A game for all players, 9 to 99. Skills-building presentation and workshop for the Australian Evaluation Society 2022 International Conference, Adelaide, 30 August 2022.

Abbato, S. Giving the participant the driver's seat - Using virtual reality animation for evaluation. Ignite presentation for the Australian Evaluation Society 2022 International Conference, Adelaide, 30 August 2022.

Abbato, S. & Kaleveld, L. Problem-solving ethics - Weaving resources and strategies into navigating ethics in evaluation. Mini-workshop for the Australian Evaluation Society 2022 International Conference, Adelaide, 1 September 2022.

Abbato, S. Using Film Methods – Is Evaluation missing an opportunity? AES Queensland Seminar, Online, 5 May 2022.

Abbato, S. What keeps me awake at night! Navigating ethical dilemmas in evaluation, In Evaluators Navigating Ethics, AES Online Conference FestEVAL, 15 September 2021.

Abbato, S. & MacGregor, M. Digital Evaluation Story: A case-study of its use for monitoring and evaluation by an NT community organisation. NT Regional Seminar, Online, 3 December 2020.

Abbato, S., MacGregor, M., Young, L., Pastor, S., Burns, K. Movies, art and virtual reality: Innovative evaluation story methods. Presentation for the Australian Evaluation Society 2019 International Conference, Sydney, 16 September 2019.

Abbato, S., MacGregor, M., Pastor, S., Young, L., Burns, K. The evaluation toolbox needs pictures: A multidisciplinary approach to ECB. Presentation for the Australian Evaluation Society 2019 International Conference, Sydney, 16 September 2019.

PUBLICATIONS (NEE THOMPSON)

- Abbato, S.** (2023). Digital evaluation stories: A case study of implementation for monitoring and evaluation in an Australian Community not for profit, *American Journal of Evaluation*.
- Abbato, S.**, Greer, R., Ryan, J., Vayne-Bossert, P., Good, P. (2019). The impact of professional language interpretation on length of stay and readmission rates in an acute care hospital setting, *Journal of Immigrant and Minority Health* 21(5): 965-970.
- Abbato, S.**, Ryan, J., Skelly, C., and Good, P. (2018). The other side of “getting by”: A case study of interpreting provision decision-making and consequences for patients. *Cogent Medicine*, 5 (1), 1-17.
- Ryan, J., **Abbato, S.**, Greer, R., Vayne-Bossert, P, Good, P. (2017). Rates and Predictors of Professional Interpreting Provision for Patients With Limited English Proficiency in the Emergency Department and Inpatient Ward. *Inquiry*.
- Abbato S.** (2015). The case for evaluating process and worth: Evaluation of a programme for carers and people with dementia. In *Case study evaluation: Past, present and future*, Eds. Greenhalgh T, Russell J and Kushner S.
- Abbato S.** (2019). Book Review: Foundations of Mixed Methods Research: Integrating Qualitative Approaches in the Social and Behavioural Sciences. Authors: Charles Teddlie and Abbas Tashakkori. *Evaluation Journal of Australia*, 9 (2).
- Thompson S.**, Hartel G, Manderson L, Woelz-Stirling N., & Kelaher M. (2002). The mental health status of Filipinas in Queensland. *The Australian and New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry*, 36:674-680.
- Thompson S.**, Manderson L., Woelz-Stirling N, Cahill A and Kelaher M. (2002) The social and cultural context of the mental health of Filipinas in Queensland. *The Australian and New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry*, 36:681-687.
- Cao, X., Rawalia, K., Thompson, A.J, Hartel, G., **Thompson, S.**, Paterson, J.H., Chusilp, K. (2000). Relationship between feeding practices and weanling diarrhoea in Northeast Thailand. *Journal of Health and Population Nutrition*, 18(2):85-92.
- Thompson S.**, Gifford S., & Thorpe L.(2000). The social and cultural context of risk and prevention: Diabetes in an urban Aboriginal community. *Health Education and Behavior*, 27(6) 725-743.
- Thompson S** and Gifford S.(2000). Trying to keep a balance: The meaning of health and diabetes in an urban Aboriginal community. *Social Science and Medicine*, 51(10) 1457-1472.
- Thompson S.** (2000). Community-based epidemiology: The methods of the Living with Diabetes Project. *International Quarterly of Community Health Education*, 19(1) 3- 18.
- Thompson, S.**, Ringuet, C., Williams, G., Kelaher, M., Baigrie, N., Jenkins, D., & Chapman, B (2000). Getting fit for the community: The Cherbourg Healthy Lifestyles Program. *Aboriginal and Islander Health Worker Journal* 24(2) March/April.
- Thompson S.** & Thorpe L. (1998). The Living with Diabetes Project: A community-based approach to questionnaire development. *Aboriginal and Islander Health Worker Journal*, Jan/Feb.
- Thompson, S.**, Gregory, J.E., Proske, U. (1990) Errors in force estimation can be explained by tendon organ desensitization, *Experimental Brain Research*, 79, 365-372.