

# Thematic Working Group 8 “Systems approaches in evaluation”

## Work plan 2025-2026

status: March 2025

Work plan duration: February 2025 - December 2026

### 1) Regular bi-monthly online community meetings

#### Meeting Calendar 2025 (last **Tuesday of every second month** - from April 2025)

(in a member poll conducted in February 2025, Tuesday came up as the most convenient day for the majority of members participating in the survey).

**Meeting time:** confirmed time of **16:00-17:30 CET/CEST** (most convenient time for the majority of survey respondents, and suitable for transatlantic collaboration)

2025 meeting dates
<i>Monday, 24 February 2025 (completed)</i>
<i>No meeting in March</i>
<b><u>Tuesday, 29 April 2025</u></b> ( with 1st systemic inquiry input: structured conversation)
<i>No meeting in May</i>
<b><u>Tuesday, 24 June 2025</u></b> (with 2nd systemic inquiry input: structured conversation)
<i>No meeting in July</i>
<i>No meeting in August</i>
<b><u>Tuesday, 30 September 2025</u></b>
<i>Virtual conference: 1st half-day (pm) in <b>October</b> (date to be confirmed)</i>
<i>Virtual conference: 2nd half-day (pm) <b>end of November 2025</b> (date to be confirmed)</i>
<i>No meeting in December (annual reporting to EES AGM - preparing 2026 activities)</i>

Unless otherwise agreed, recordings of TWG8 bi-monthly meetings will be made available (only for TWG8 members) on the [TWG8 Forum](#).

## Scheduled activities in 2025:

During 2025 - the EES 'non-conference year', TWG8's work will be focused on these main activities throughout the year which are expected to also spill over into 2026 and the EES biennial conference, as appropriate.

- 1) Collaboration between EES TWG8 and AEA SETIG (Systems in Evaluation Topical Interest Group) - 2025 'trial'
  - 2) EES TWG8 2025 Virtual Event "*Systems-Informed Evaluation – A Collaborative Learning Journey*" for Evaluation Practitioners, Commissioners, and Users"
  - 3) Contributing to the EES 'Learning Hubs' with topics in the scope of TWG8
  - 4) Ongoing activities.
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- 1) Collaboration between TWG8 and SETIG - trial
    - The more formal collaboration between TWG8 and AEA SETIG has been agreed in February 2025, as an agreed activity within the EES / AEA Memorandum of Understanding between the two evaluation societies concluded in February 2025.
    - The Presidents respectively Boards of EES and AEA have agreed to conduct this collaboration between these two groups dedicated to systems approaches in evaluation on a *trial basis for one year*, after which it will be assessed and reviewed.
    - The trial provides the opportunity to experiment with different ways of collaborating on activities of mutual interest and value, and on a reciprocal basis.
    - To operationalize the trial, the leadership teams of EES TWG8 and AEA SETIG hold regular meetings amongst each other and participate in each others' member meetings and activities as appropriate whilst maintaining their respective own structures, cultures, goals, and priorities.
    - Shared priorities for joint activities are being determined through joint meetings and consultations with the respective membership groups (which already took place during February with both groups).
    - Representatives from the AEA SETIG leadership team participate in the task force for the TWG8/AEA SETIG Autumn Virtual Event and contribute to its conceptualization, planning, and implementation.
    - A short MoU concerning the modalities for cooperation will be drawn up between the two leadership teams which will capture the details of the cooperation for the trial period and facilitate the evaluation of the trial.

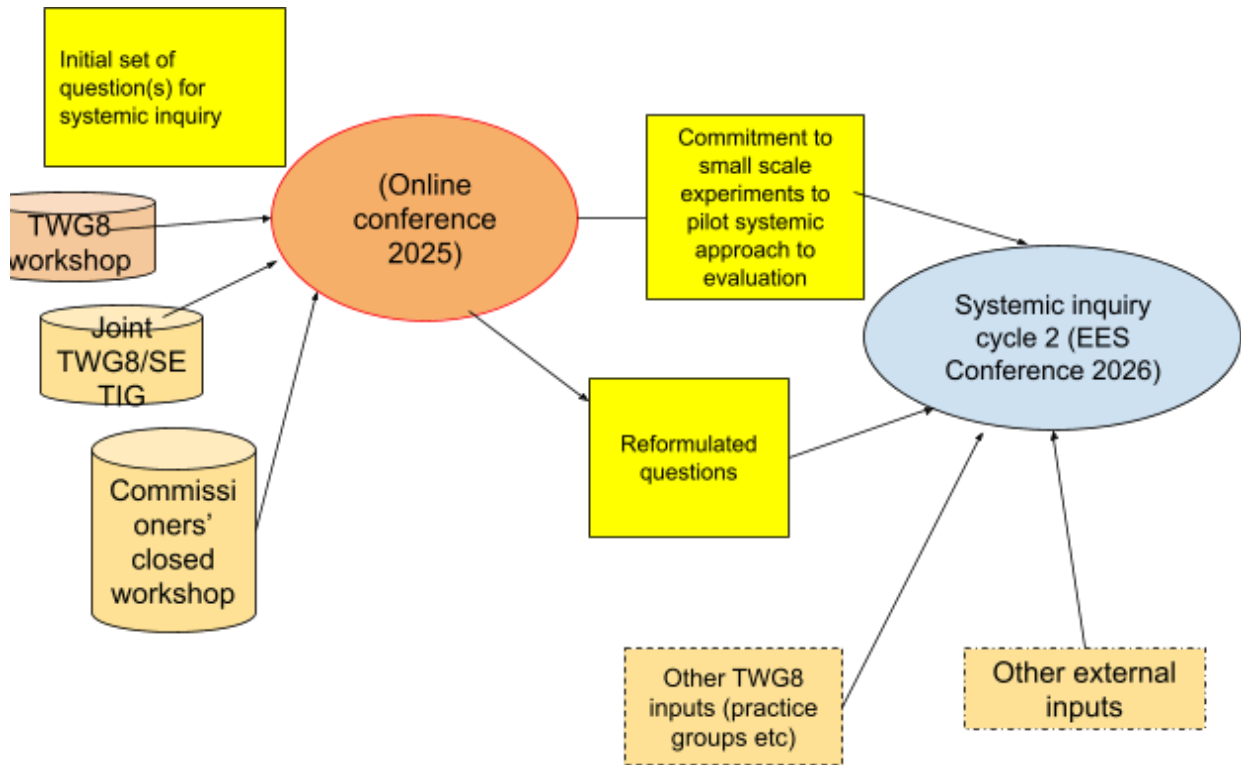
## 2) TWG8 systemic inquiry<sup>1</sup> and Online event EES TWG8 2025: “Systems-Informed Evaluation – A Collaborative Learning Journey” for Evaluation Practitioners, Commissioners, and Users”

- A ‘systemic inquiry’ culminating in an online event is the main scheduled event taking place in Autumn 2025.
- This is being prepared by a task force consisting of members of TWG8 and joined by members from the AEA SETIG leadership team.
- A concept note for this project has been developed by a dedicated task force which started its work in January 2025. (Documents available [here](#)).
- The structured bimonthly TWG8 meetings in advance of the planned conference in autumn 2025 (see schedule above) will be used for structured conversations that form part of the ‘systemic inquiry’ to further explore systemic evaluation.

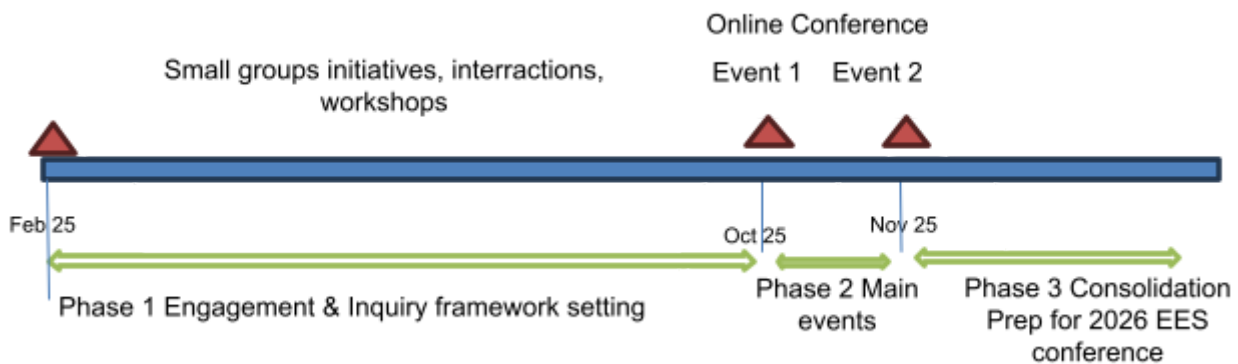
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<sup>1</sup> ‘Systemic inquiry’ is understood as a process designed for engaging with uncertainty and complexity (unlike a project or programme). Inquiry is a form of practice as well as a disposition and it is enhanced by acknowledging uncertainty from the start. Systemic inquiry begins by being open to situations and acknowledging uncertainty, thereby enabling participants to begin in a different emotional space to that which accompanies the emotion of certainty associated with programs and projects. As systemic inquiry progresses it involves the enactment of a process of learning amongst those who already have, or through participation build, a stake in an issue of concern (Ison 2002; SLIM 2004). (Source: [https://www.open.ac.uk/blogs/govan/?page\\_id=23#:~:text='Systemic%20inquiry'%20is%20understood%20as,acknowl edging%20uncertainty%20from%20the%20start.](https://www.open.ac.uk/blogs/govan/?page_id=23#:~:text='Systemic%20inquiry'%20is%20understood%20as,acknowl edging%20uncertainty%20from%20the%20start.))

**Envisaged draft structure:**



**Envisaged process and timeline:**



### 3) Contribution to EES 'Learning Hubs' activities:

- TWG8 has been approached by the Learning Hub team to contribute to the development of planned 2025 LH activities, notably in the area of systems- and complexity-informed approaches applied to Theory of Change where TWG8 is already active with a practice group on this topic.
- Speakers for LH events ('sparking discussion' panel discussions, and deep-dive webinars) should be identified with the help of TWG8 members / within its ranks.
- Details are to be elaborated in conjunction with the EES Learning Hub team.

### 4) Ongoing activities:

In addition to these main activities, the following will continue throughout the year:

- **Community discussions:** building TWG8 community engagement, including through the established online Forum and other channels, etc, where informal discussions can take place in addition to the monthly meetings. -
- **Work in practice groups on chosen topics**, which can be presented to TWG8 during bi-monthly meetings or on other occasions.
- **Curation, collection, generation, and sharing** of various writings and resources related to systemic evaluation (e.g. blogs, articles, literature reviews, etc)
- **Providing thematic inputs to EES conferences** and other future occasions for TWG8 involvement.

### Themes/Topics

As an overarching principle, we aim to ensure cohesion and complementarity between the different topics.

The following topics were generated by the TWG8 member community in a co-creation process in early 2023 and included in the 2023/2024 work plan, as priorities of interest to the community at that time, and continue to be implemented if and when volunteers take specific activities forward:

1. Various approaches to evaluation from systemic perspectives (e.g. SETIG principles; culturally responsive evaluation, indigenous evaluation;...)
2. Methodologies to evaluation from systemic perspectives (e.g. CSH, CSP;...);
3. Complexity science for evaluation;
4. Systems- and complexity-informed approaches applied to Theory of Change and other intervention designs;
5. Research on systemic evaluation;



6. Commissioning and managing systemic evaluations in practice: how to make it happen (e.g. integration into requests for proposals for evaluation assignments; how to build capacity across the spectrum (on supply and demand side) etc.
7. Capacity building in systems thinking for evaluation professionals

Other topics may emerge over time.

Implementation of work on topics will primarily take place in practice groups formed within the TWG8 community of practice at times and modes of members in the practice groups' own choosing.

Learning from practice groups can be shared with the wider TWG8 community through the above workstream activities and meetings.