



## 7. Monitoring the success of stakeholder engagement: Literature review

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## Shortened forms

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|               |  |
|---------------|--|
| ABS           | Australian Bureau of Statistics                              |
| CSC           | Community Score Card   |
| CSIRO         | Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation |
| DKCRC         | Desert Knowledge Cooperative Research Centre                 |
| DCQ           | Desert Channels Queensland Inc                               |
| ERI           | Edelman Relationship Index                                   |
| GAB           | Great Artesian Basin   |
| GRI           | Global Reporting Index                                       |
| ICT           | Information and Communications Technology                    |
| LEB           | Lake Eyre Basin  |
| LFA/LOG frame | Logical Frameworks Approach                                  |
| NAP           | National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality          |
| NHT           | Natural Heritage Trust                                       |
| NLWRA         | National Land and Water Resources Audit                      |
| NRM           | Natural Resources Management                                 |
| NRMB (NT)     | Natural Resource Management Board (Northern Territory)       |
| NRMMC         | Natural Resource Management Ministerial Council              |
| M&E           | Monitoring and evaluation                                    |
| MEE           | Monitoring and Evaluation of Engagement                      |
| MERI          | Monitoring, Evaluation, Reporting and Improvement system     |
| MSC           | Most Significant Change                                      |
| PM&E          | Participatory monitoring and evaluation                      |
| Qld           | Queensland   |
| SA            | South Australia  |
| SAAL NRM      | South Australian Arid Lands NRM Board                        |
| SEIFA         | Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas                             |
| SENCC         | Social and Economic National Coordinating Committee          |
| UNDP          | United Nations Development Programme                         |
| WCMA          | Western Catchment Management Authority (NSW)                 |
| YHYCYS        | Your Health, Your Care, Your Say                             |



# Introduction

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This is Chapter 7 in the Desert Knowledge CRC's (DKCRC) 'People, communities and economies of the Lake Eyre Basin' project report.

The project examines the role of natural resources management (NRM) organisations that operate as an 'interface' between governments and community in the Lake Eyre Basin (LEB). It aims to identify the factors that support successful engagement in remote regions and develop a framework to help NRM bodies monitor and improve their engagement processes.

This project has been conducted in four stages described briefly below. All chapters are available from the DKCRC website, with brief overviews presented in sections below.

Stage 1 developed a broad profile of the LEB by drawing together existing bio-physical and socioeconomic data in a series of maps (Herr et al. 2009).

Stage 2 produced two reports. The first examined the different institutional arrangements that NRM organisations operate under across the LEB (Larson 2009). The second examined the characteristics of successful engagement in desert environments through a series of interviews with community residents and government liaison officers (Measham et al. 2009a).

Stages 3 consisted of two case studies. One focused specifically on the roles of Aboriginal NRM facilitators or 'brokers' and the constraints and opportunities they face in performing their roles (Robinson et al. 2009). The second case study examined the changing demographic and economic trends visible in the LEB and how NRM organisations are able to respond and adapt to these changes over the medium term (Measham et al. 2009b).

The key question resulting from these stages is how can NRM organisations, or indeed, any institution that works in the community–government interface, keep track of the processes that have been identified as essential to engagement, particularly in the context of remote regions in Australia?

Stage 4 of the project is developing a framework for the monitoring of engagement processes. This literature review, in conjunction with the chapters discussed above, forms the groundwork of this final stage (cite the specific reports from this stage).

Sections 1.1 to 1.3 present key findings of the project to date. Section 1.4 provides an overview of the structure of this chapter.

## 1.2 Lake Eyre Basin (LEB) Atlas

The LEB Atlas, compiled by Herr et al. in 2007 (Herr et al. 2009), provides an overview of the human, social, natural and built capital of the region.

Most areas in the LEB are classified as remote, and people living in the LEB have to travel large distances to the major health and service centres. The prevailing land use in the LEB is grazing, followed by conservation, with most land under leasehold tenure. Aboriginal tenures and native title determination cover approximately 2% of area and there is further Aboriginal involvement in NRM through Indigenous Land Use Agreements.

Conservation planning in the LEB has identified large areas that support healthy ecosystems and maintain important biodiversity. The major water supply for people and industries comes from the Great Artesian Basin (GAB) and periodic flooding. There are concerns for the sustainability of the ground water extraction, though the management of this is continually improving.

There are few urban locations in the LEB and population density is generally less than one person per 1000 square kilometres. For most of the area Aboriginal proportions are low, although there are 59 Aboriginal language groups recorded in the region. However, there are some settlements where Aboriginal people are the majority of residents.

Major employment sectors in the LEB are agriculture followed by government, retail, health, education and personal services and construction. The LEB scores low in all four socioeconomic indices (SEIFA indices) that the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) developed to describe the wellbeing of the nation.

Tourism and mining are two locally important industries in the LEB. Tourism relies heavily on infrastructure, services and access to nature-based destinations, including waterholes and wetlands associated with GAB springs. Mining is a localised activity, and with the current commodity price boom, exploration and mining activity continues to increase in the LEB.

The LEB is unique globally as an inland catchment of unregulated, variable, arid zone rivers supporting a sparse and diverse human population. The report by Herr et al. (2009) clearly indicates that both the environment and, as a consequence, human endeavours in the LEB operate under drivers that are fundamentally different to other, more populated areas.

## 1.2 Natural resources management arrangements in the LEB

The LEB natural resources management institutions are organised into four state-based bodies:

- South Australian Arid Lands Natural Resources Management Board (SAAL NRM)
- Western Catchment Management Authority in NSW (WCMA)
- Desert Channels Qld Inc. in Queensland (DCQ)
- Northern Territory Natural Resources Management Board (NRMBNT).

Larson (2009) provides an overview of the NRM arrangements in each State/Territory that has an interest in the LEB region, as well as an overview of arrangements directly relevant to the LEB (current at March 2007). The chapter also discusses potential key challenges for NRM in the LEB.

## 1.3 Tools for successful NRM engagement in the LEB

The report by Measham et al. (2009) summarises the findings from literature on successful engagement, as well as several learnings from the on-ground research. Generic factors for achieving successful engagement were identified in the report, based on both on-ground research and the literature (Measham et al. 2009a, p. 53–54). These factors characterise successful engagement in a wide variety of contexts:

- developing trust
- adequate resourcing
- effective communication
- being inclusive
- being strategic
- promoting community ownership
- defining the appropriate scale for interaction.

In addition to these, important success factors were identified from a government perspective as:

- being transparent
- being determined to achieve NRM initiatives

- adapting as required to achieve outcomes
- aligning on-ground works with government priorities.

Finally, success factors from a community perspective focus on:

- being independent
- respecting the landscape
- getting on with the job
- avoiding burnout.

The notion of desert drivers (Stafford Smith 2008) was also considered in the report. It seems that even general factors play out differently in remote areas and that NRM governance in these areas requires innovative and creative responses. The key drivers as identified by Stafford Smith (2008) and their potential impacts and responses to the key engagement principles have been mapped in Table 1 below (based on Measham et al. 2009a). This report will specifically try to answer the question of how to monitor for engagement in remote regions.

*Table 1: Specific considerations of engagement in desert regions*

| Desert driver   | Relevance to engagement   |
|---|---|
| Climate variability at various scales in space and time (climate variability)               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be very aware of the effects of drought (and floods) on engagement processes: drought can increase engagement fatigue</li> <li>• The longevity of projects and detecting their success is also often dependent on climatic cycles</li> </ul>   |
| Widespread low and patchy primary productivity (scarce resources)                           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ability of people to find time to engage might be limited</li> <li>• Realistic funding and support are needed</li> </ul>   |
| Sparse, mobile and patchy human population (sparse population)                              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be creative about partnership with stakeholders who are not very involved (but are possibly better resourced) to increase critical mass</li> <li>• Use the small community size to get strong agreements quickly</li> <li>• Allow for lots of travel in budgets and staff expectations</li> <li>• Have local on-ground facilitators</li> </ul> |
| Distant markets and decision-making (distant voice)   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain some independence from government but respect the balance on both sides</li> <li>• Be prepared to think through and articulate why the region may need different approaches to elsewhere</li> <li>• Be aware of the potential for community distrust, but engage locally to overcome this</li> </ul>                                  |
| Perceived unpredictability in markets, labour and policy (social variability)               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be imaginative and flexible in creating longer-term contracts and attractiveness in regional NRM jobs</li> <li>• Value and train people for multiple roles</li> </ul>  |
| Limited research knowledge and persistent traditional and local knowledge (local knowledge) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure representative engagement with the community to gain true community ownership that allows access to locally relevant knowledge</li> </ul>   |
| Particular types of people, culture and institutions (cultural differences)                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be flexible in how you operate (both within the organisation and with the communities)</li> </ul>  |

Source: Based on Measham et al. 2007 and Stafford Smith 2008

## 1.4 Overview of the structure of this report

This literature review was performed in order to provide background information for the development of the monitoring and engagement framework for the remote regions. The question that the framework aims to address is how can NRM community–government interface organisations best keep track of the processes that have been identified as essential to engagement in the context of remote regions in Australia.

Section 2 of this chapter provides an overview of the considerations relevant to monitoring and engagement in general. Examples of frameworks/guidelines and the examples of tools used for monitoring and evaluation of engagement from the national and international literature are presented in sections 3 and 4, respectively. National and international experiences with engagement monitoring are presented in section 5, followed by a discussion and conclusions in sections 6. The chapter closes with the list of references used in this literature review and useful links.

## 2. General considerations on engagement and monitoring

Engagement as addressed in this report is understood as a pro-active approach for creating an enhanced understanding of objectives, problems and their solution (Appelstrand 2002). Engagement, as a philosophical and pragmatic framework, seeks to overcome alienation, foster communication and stimulate reform (Taylor et al. 2003). Successful community engagement in the Australian NRM context has been conceptualised as processes and practices in which different people work together to achieve shared goals (Measham et al. 2009a). Therefore, engagement does not only represent means, but also a model for involving those concerned. Optimally, engagement processes help to create more informed operative decisions, and thus provide a more solid base for policy outputs.

This section builds on ‘success factors’ summarised in the previous section (1.3) and provides an overview of several ‘best practice’ recommendations related to either monitoring or engagement. The section starts with discussions relevant to monitoring in general. Monitoring as an integral part of the adaptive management cycle is discussed in section 2.1, followed by general consideration (2.2) and approaches to monitoring (2.3). General approaches to engagement are then presented in section 2.4, with potential levels of engagement discussed in section 2.5.

### 2.1 Adaptive management and a whole-of-system approach

Monitoring is an essential part of the adaptive management cycle. Monitoring involves gathering information on the impacts of actions and progress towards objectives as a basis for future action (Jiggins & Roling 2002). Processes of learning and applying lessons are therefore essential for the improved management of natural resources in the future (Mahanty et al. 2007, Smith & Smith 2006). Thus, Mee (2005) describes adaptive management as a process of ‘learning by doing’.

Natural resources management is based on the management of the ecological, physical, social, cultural and other aspects of the environment; that is, on the whole-of-system approach. The complexity of the social, economic and ecological systems being assessed, and their interactions, should not be underestimated (Smajgl & Larson 2007). In order to have a chance to overcome the patterns leading to environmental degradation, all dimensions of change need to be understood in an integrated way (Keen et al. 2005). This requires integration across disciplines, especially in baseline and monitoring activities, as well as integration across value systems.

Creating opportunities to adapt to changing conditions requires not only continual involvement and monitoring, but also explicit incorporation of changing public values and priorities. The importance of public engagement in the modern, forward-thinking management system is therefore increasingly acknowledged (O’Riordan 2005). The focus of engagement monitoring is increasingly shifting towards design of processes that facilitate learning and joint action to determine agreed outcomes, rather than designing for a particular outcome (Mahanty et al. 2007).

## 2.2 Considerations for monitoring

Advice on basic requirements for meaningful monitoring is plentiful (e.g. Abbot & Guijt 1998, Brunner 2004, Estrella & Gaventa 1998, Krick et al. 2005, Mahanty et al. 2007, McAllister 1999, Pasteur & Blauert 2000). Like any other type of monitoring, monitoring of engagement needs to comply with basic requirements such as goals and objectives need to be established, targets and trajectories need to be set, financial contributions need to be committed, personnel need to be trained and made responsible for their duties. It is also important to remember that monitoring is a process. Therefore, monitoring can and should occur at different time-steps. For example:

- Monitoring of the engagement **process** itself: this type of monitoring can be initiated over the short term. The effectiveness of the engagement process can be monitored, and the process can be adjusted for improvement.
- Monitoring of **outputs**: this type of monitoring can be initiated at the end of the engagement process itself, as a tool for evaluation of the process completed.
- Monitoring of **outcomes** of the engagement process: monitoring of outcomes requires longer time lines as well as evaluation of a wider set of drivers and conditions. Longer time lines and increased complexity also mean increased funding requirements. However, this type of monitoring does allow us to track the actual effectiveness of the engagement process as an agent of change.
- Monitoring of **trends ('reach')**: this type of monitoring is even more complex in nature. It also requires long time lines, but places greater emphasis on evaluation of wider sets of drivers and conditions and their impact on resource condition.
- Monitoring of **unintended consequences**: the monitoring system needs to be sufficiently flexible as to allow for and accommodate changes in context. The learning will be greatly enhanced if the system allows for monitoring of unintended consequences, as well as the expected ones.

The monitoring system should follow generic standards such as utility (that evaluation serves the information needs of users), feasibility (evaluation should be realistic and prudent) and accuracy (evaluation will reveal and convey technically adequate information about the features that determine worth or merit of the program(s) being evaluated) (MED 2004). A more comprehensive set of principles for informing the monitoring framework, as proposed by Mahanty et al. (2007), is presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Principles informing a monitoring framework

| Principle  | Description   |
|--|---|
| Social learning  | Monitoring processes need to contribute to collective learning and action by stakeholders   |
| Adaptive management  | Monitoring processes should provide relevant feedback to inform decisions about future actions  |
| Assess processes as well as outcomes                         | Document and share lessons on the process of monitoring plan development  |
| Analyse change through dialogue and contextual understanding | Recognise it may not be possible to trace observed changes to project actions, but deal with this by collaboratively interpreting findings with project partners who have a rich understanding of the social and ecological context |
| Phasing of change processes                                  | Focus early monitoring efforts more on process indicators, with outcome indicators becoming more significant during project implementation. Changes in environmental status are longer term   |
| Fostering collaboration                                      | Collaboration between stakeholders is important during design, implementation and interpretation of monitoring findings, and involves careful facilitation and negotiation  |
| Integration  | Monitoring plans should span the different aspects of projects (ecological, social, institutional and so forth), incorporate the knowledge held by different groups and address different scales of action and outcome              |
| Workable   | Plan is simple to grasp, 'light' to implement, produces useful information and meets reporting requirements   |

Source: from Mahanty et al. 2007, p. 399

With each step of the monitoring scale, the indicators can focus on either the completion of the stage and achievement of the milestone, or they can look into the quality or level of engagement. For example, the indicator might report on the number of public meetings being held, or attempt to assess the quality of participation and engagement at those meetings.

Monitoring, as referred to in this report, is understood as a process that allows observing of the progress and checking of this progress against pre-set parameters or objectives. Evaluation is understood as an activity that is performed by either the project team or groups of end users or by persons outside of the project team, where these groups come together and take snapshots of progress achieved to date and evaluate the extent to which objectives are met.

## 2.3 Is your approach to monitoring SMART or SPICED?

Two potential frameworks for designing sets of monitoring parameters are presented here. The SMART approach summarises the standard procedures that are to be used in any monitoring, while the SPICED approach is more participatory.

The SMART approach recommends that targets be set on what is going to happen, who is going to do it, when it is going to be done by, and how achievement will be measured (Krick et al. 2005). It advises that sets of monitoring parameters should be:

- S Specific: state what exactly is to be achieved
- M Measurable: make sure it is possible to determine whether or how far it has been achieved
- A Achievable: realistic given the circumstances and resources
- R Relevant: of relevance to the overall objective/strategy, to the stakeholders, and to the people responsible for achieving them
- T Time-specific: set realistic time-frames for achievement

The key characteristic of this approach is that it is set as a part of the planning process, and to large extent is centred on monitoring the process itself and its outputs and outcomes. Therefore, monitoring under this framework is often designed by the organisation initiating and driving the planning and the engagement processes. This framework does invite input from the stakeholders, but the extent of involvement can be varied and not entirely transparent.

Addressing some of the criticism towards the SMART framework is a SPICED approach (Roche 1999, Queensland Government 2007) which argues that targets or indicators should be:

- S Subjective: A special view-point, unique insight or experience expressed by a stakeholder might have a high value for the organisation. What might be seen by some as 'anecdotal' becomes critical data because of its source
- P Participatory: Indicators are developed collaboratively between the organisation and its stakeholders
- I Interpretable: Indicators need to be set as proxies for tracking of the achievements related to the specific objectives. Interpretation and translation of an indicator into a measure of progress towards the objective or goal needs to be pre-determined
- C Communicable and comparable: Indicators set need to be easy to communicate and relevant. They also need to be comparable over time and space, and between different groups of stakeholders
- E Empowering: Stakeholders are actively involved in the process of setting monitoring goals and assessing progress. This involvement and learnings from the process contribute to their empowering
- D Disaggregated: Different groups of stakeholders might be interested in different types of indicators. Therefore, sets of indicators might need to be disaggregated to allow for this pluralism.

The acronym SPICED reflects a shift towards placing greater emphasis on developing indicators that stakeholders can define and use directly for their own purposes of interpreting and learning about change. Furthermore, it challenges the traditional assumptions that the only valid and ‘rigorous’ indicators are those that are ‘objective’, ‘independent’ and deal with ‘facts’ rather than ‘perceptions’ of the facts (Esterella 2000).

The advantage of participatory approaches is that they can provide qualitative information that is locally meaningful, readily useful and context specific. Ideally, the SMART indicators can be used to assess the suitability of the indicators, while SPICED guidelines can ensure that the users get the most value out of the set (Queensland Government 2007).

The key difference between conventional and participatory approaches to monitoring and evaluation (M&E) are summarised in Table 3 (based on Guijt & Gaventa 1998). Although this table was originally developed in relation to ecological monitoring, the learnings are applicable and transferable to the monitoring of engagement.

Table 3: Conventional and participatory monitoring and evaluation approaches

|   | Conventional M&E                                   | Participatory M&E  |
|---|--|--|
| Who plans and manages the process                           | Senior managers, or outside experts                | Local people, project staff, managers and other stakeholders, often helped by a facilitator        |
| Role of ‘primary stakeholders’ (the intended beneficiaries) | Provide information only                           | Design and adapt the methodology, collect and analyse data, share findings and link them to action |
| How success is measured                                     | Externally-defined, mainly quantitative indicators | Internally-defined indicators, including more qualitative judgments                                |
| Approach  | Predetermined                                      | Adaptive   |

Source: Based on Guijt & Gaventa 1998

Emphasis in monitoring in general, as well as engagement monitoring, is therefore shifting from externally controlled, ‘objective’ data-seeking evaluations, towards locally-relevant or stakeholder-based processes for gathering, analysing, using and learning from different types of information. According to Estrella (2000), participatory monitoring and evaluation:

*... strives to be an internal learning process which enables people to reflect on past experience, examine present realities, revisit objectives, and define future strategies, by recognising different needs of stakeholders and negotiating their diverse claims and interests. The process is flexible and adaptive to local contexts and constantly changing circumstances and concerns of stakeholders. By encouraging stakeholder participation beyond data gathering, participatory monitoring and evaluation is about promoting self-reliance in decision making and problem solving, therefore strengthening people’s capacities to take action and promote change. (Estrella 2000, p. 4)*

## 2.4 Approaches to engagement

Emerging themes in both theory and practice of engagement can be largely amalgamated within two bodies of knowledge (Buchy & Hoverman 2000):

1. Engagement as a method, a set of guidelines and practices of involving communities or the general public in specific planning or other activities
2. Engagement as an approach, an ideology, a specific ethos for community development.

Engagement can therefore be approached as either a method or as a guiding principle. The two approaches to engagement are also, to some extent, guided by the object of engagement.

In the cases where engagement is initiated for a specific issue, such as a specific planning processes or specific infrastructure development, it is typically treated as a method for involvement of stakeholders: method for elicitation of local values and knowledge; method of conflict resolution and trust building; method for increased public acceptance of the project or a plan. Conducting and monitoring issue-related engagement is relatively easy: the process is short-term and usually local in scale; the goals and objective are obvious or easy to set; and stakeholders are motivated to participate.

The other type of engagement is typically employed as a day-to-day guiding principle for interactions between organisations and their stakeholders. This type of engagement is more difficult to conduct and monitor: engagement times are long and often unspecified ('forever'); scale of the engagement effort is regional to national; objectives of the engagement might not be obvious ('because we should') or they might be perceived as of little relevance by those approached; the outcomes are not necessarily quantifiable ('better future' or 'better resource condition'). As a result of all these factors, motivation of stakeholders to participate might be, or might become over time, low or non-existent.

Creation of the ownership of the process and outcomes of the process ('buy-in') are very often key motivations for project or policy proponents to engage with the stakeholders. The approach to engagement employed will, however, play a significant role in determining objectives and indicators of its success.

## 2.5 Levels of engagement

Types and levels of engagement are many, varied and multifaceted. Stakeholder engagement in natural resources management has been increasingly seen as a basic human right: both as a result of the human right to a certain level of environmental quality, as well as a result of the human right to free political participation (Appelstrand 2002, Ebbesson 1997). However, levels to which stakeholders are engaged, as well as types and methods of engagement, are many. Warburton (1997) lists about 150 different techniques and approaches that can be applied depending on what the organisation is aiming for.

Several hierarchies of engagement types and levels have also been developed. They range from low level of engagement ('passive participation', 'tokenism', 'manipulation'), to a mid-range where participants are involved in decision making about largely predetermined questions; to higher end of the scale where stakeholders undertake their own initiatives or are enabled to develop strong leadership roles ('partnerships'; 'empowerment', 'citizen control'), (Buchy & Hoverman 2000, Stalker Prokopy 2005). This report deals with engagement practices at any level and does not necessarily differentiate between the types and levels of engagement.

Having clearly defined and communicated ideas on the level of engagement desired by the organisation is, however, an important step in later evaluation and monitoring (Krick et al. 2005). It can be suggested that, ideally, organisations would find and map themselves somewhere along the continuum of the engagement scales, and then, over a number of years and adaptive management cycles, aim at pushing their organisation towards the right-hand side, that is, towards the improved engagement practices (Figure 1, based on levels of engagement classification proposed by (a) Krick et al. 2005, and, (b) International Association of Public Participation (<http://www.iap2.org/>) as reported in Warburton et al. 2007, p. 7).

a)

LOW

HIGH

Remain passive → Monitor → Inform → Transact → Consult → Involve → Collaborate → Empower

b)

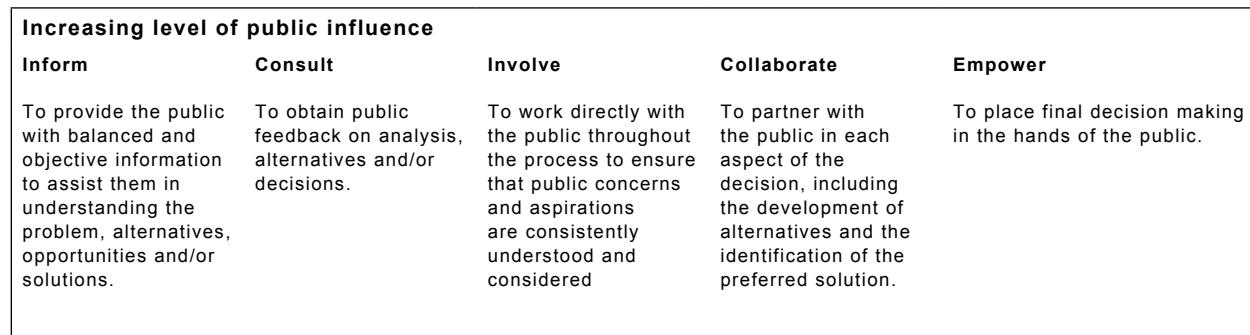


Figure 1: Progression of organisational levels of engagement

### 3. Examples of frameworks and guidelines for monitoring and evaluation of engagement

This section provides an overview of some of the frameworks and guidelines recommended for the monitoring of the stakeholder engagement processes. Monitoring and evaluation of engagement refers to efforts to monitor the development of people's participation within the project's activities; as well as to evaluate the outcomes and effect of engagement in terms of both the project's progress and the development of people's knowledge, skills and understanding (UNDP Guidebook nd.).

The section starts by presenting examples of frameworks and guidelines developed by international agencies, such as United Nations Development and Environment Programmes and the World Bank in section 3.1. Section 3.2 provides examples developed by national-level agencies from Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom. Section 3 concludes by presenting guides, frameworks and recommendations from network organisations and from academic literature in section 3.3.

There are several networks and organisations, both in Australia and internationally, that can provide advice on various aspects of engagement. A list of potentially useful links to their websites is provided at the end of this report, in section 8.

#### 3.1 International agencies

Participatory monitoring and evaluation (PM&E) was developed by the World Bank as a process that would provide regular feedback from stakeholders to decision makers and service providers, as well as provide institutional mechanisms to learn from feedback and act on it. The process is designed to be results-focused and to increase the accountability and transparency in decision making (World Bank 2008). In many cases, PM&E is applied to monitoring and evaluation of ecological and physical impacts and changes and in the area of project management. However, PM&E is increasingly applied in the new contexts of social changes, organisational strengthening, social learning and participatory processes (Estrella 2000).<sup>1</sup> As well as being used by funding and government agencies as a way of holding beneficiaries and other project participants accountable, PM&E can be used as a process that enables

<sup>1</sup> Although participatory monitoring and evaluation (PM&E) can be used as an approach to monitoring and evaluation of participation, the two terms should not be confused. PM&E is a process that allows stakeholder participation in any monitoring and evaluation activities (this can, for example, be collection of samples for water quality testing by local residents). On the other hand monitoring and evaluation of participation refers to efforts to monitor the development of people's participation project; and to efforts to evaluate the outcomes and effect both in terms of the project's progress and also in relation to the development of people's knowledge, skills and understanding (UNDP Guidebook nd.).

local stakeholders to measure the performance of these institutions. By creating space for engagement, PM&E has the potential to improve trust, negotiation and dialogue between the various stakeholders across power and other differences. Last but not least, PM&E also has the potential to build broader ownership of the process and therefore the commitment from all involved (Estrella 2000).

The UNDP (United Nations Development Programme) Guidebook on Monitoring and Evaluation of Participation presents key elements of and proposes indicators for the monitoring and evaluation of participation. The importance of monitoring and interpretation of the results are also discussed in the guide.

Several principles of 'good practice' are proposed in the guide (UNDP Guidebook nd, p. 3):

- Both qualitative as well as quantitative methods must be included in the evaluation in order for the outcome to be fully understood.
- Evaluating participation demands that the entire process be evaluated, over a period of time. The approach needs to be dynamic as opposed to static; conventional *ex post facto* evaluations, performed as limited snap-shots, will therefore not be adequate.
- Evaluating a process of participation is impossible without relevant and continual monitoring. Indeed, monitoring is of central importance to the whole exercise and the only means by which the qualitative descriptions can be obtained to explain the process which has occurred.
- The people involved in the project have a part to play in the entire evaluation process. It is not a question of an external evaluator solely determining the project outcome; the evaluation needs to be participatory, with people themselves – both organisational staff and stakeholders – having a voice.

It is also proposed that indicators selected for the M&E of a particular project need to be valid, relevant, specific, timely, reliable, sensitive and cost-effective. The selection of indicators is seen as a critical issue, ensuring that indicators selected are not over-complex, do not demand enormous amounts of staff time and are related to the objectives of the project. Furthermore, the guide argues that indicators of participation need to be both quantitative and qualitative. The quantitative indicators can be used to measure the extent and the magnitude of the results, while qualitative indicators can describe and explain the nature and quality of the participation. An exemplary list of possible indicators of a process of participation is summarised in Table 4 (based on the UNDP Guidebook p. 5). The list is by no means meant as a model list of indicators to be used, but rather, as an example of what has worked in various project settings.

Table 4: A list of possible indicators of a process of participation

| Quantitative indicators of participation                                      | Qualitative indicators of participation  |
|---|--|
| · Improved and more effective service delivery                                | · Organisational growth at the community level   |
| · Numbers of project level meetings and attendance levels                     | · Growing solidarity and mutual support  |
| · Percentages of different groups attending meetings (e.g. women, Aboriginal) | · Interest to be involved in decision making at different stages                       |
| · Numbers of direct project beneficiaries                                     | · Increasing ability of stakeholders to propose and undertake actions                  |
| · Take-up rates of project recommendations                                    | · Representation in other government or political bodies with relation to the project  |
| · Numbers of local leaders assuming positions of responsibility               | · Emergence of people willing to take on leadership                                    |
| · Numbers of local people who acquire positions in formal organisations       | · Interaction and the building of contacts with other groups and organisations         |
| · Numbers of local people who are involved in different stages of the project | · People begin to have a say in and to influence local politics and policy formulation |

Source: Based on UNDP Guidebook nd

The guide stresses that there are no generic indicators for the M&E of participation. The two issues seen as critical for the selection of the indicators are (i) to work with the minimum number of indicators that could give a realistic understanding of the evolving process of participation, and (ii) to determine the indicators on the basis of the characteristics and purpose of the project (UNDP Guidebook nd).

Another relevant discussion in the guide is concerned with the questions of:

- Who determines the indicators?
- Do they have to be determined externally?
- Do they have to be objective?

The guide acknowledges that local people should also be involved in determining how their increasing participation could best be monitored. Also, it is suggested that 'indicators' as a term may need to be translated in a different way in the local context.

The guide also suggests that tools other than indicators might be more suitable for the participatory monitoring of participation processes. Methods using open-ended questions, allowing for evaluation of change in a qualitative way, are discussed (please refer to section 4.3 for further details on one of those tools, the Most Significant Change approach).

As a result of this discussion, the key features of a monitoring system at the local level are summarised as (UNDP Guidebook nd, p. 6–7):

- **Participation of local people:** the monitoring system should be participatory and fully involve project participants and staff.
- **Integrated not separate:** the system should be an integral part of project staff's work. It should not be seen as a tedious addition but as important as other project activities.
- **Developed not imposed:** the monitoring system should not be designed beforehand and given to project staff to implement. Where possible an appropriate system should be designed and managed by staff and project participants.
- **Continuous and regular:** the monitoring of participation must be maintained at a steady and continuous pace in order to ensure continuity in the data and information collected.
- **Recorded not remembered:** qualitative observations and descriptions must be recorded in written form and stored appropriately; it is good practice to record as quickly as possible and rather than to remember at a later date.

The monitoring of participation must be supported by a number of standard forms upon which recording can be made over a period of time, preferably at least monthly. In the report to the United Nations Environment Programme, Twyford and Baldwin (2006) suggest that where stakeholder participation is not being documented, it is an indication that evaluation of participation is not being undertaken, which in turn indicates that engagement with stakeholders is not of a high priority. Lack of M&E minimises the opportunity to learn from successes and mistakes, and to build skills and improve for the next time. Under these circumstances, Twyford and Baldwin (2006) suggest, stakeholder engagement is likely to be reactive and unlikely to generate significant benefits and learnings.

## 3.2 National government agencies

### 3.2.1 Examples from Australia

#### **Engaging Queenslanders**

Since the election of Premier Peter Beattie in 1998, the State Government approach to planning and governance has centred on community engagement and participation (Smyth et al. 2004). Programs such as the Community Cabinet and Community Renewal Program highlighted efforts to expand and encourage public participation in decision making, particularly as it related to local issues (Reddel & Woolcock 2004).

There appears to have been a strong emphasis on the evaluation (by government) of community engagement efforts. Published government handbooks provide guidance on how to design frameworks, identify data sources, report on results and monitor for long-term change (Johnson 2004). Describing indicators in terms of inputs, outputs, process and outcomes, emphasises accountability and easily quantifiable measures.

Johnson (2004 p. 7–8) outlines five key principles for developing evaluation frameworks:

1. Evaluation should be integral to planning and management of community engagement activities
2. Evaluation should be structured and planned (rather than ad hoc or informal)
3. The scale and scope of evaluation should be appropriate for the purpose, audience, scale and significance of the engagement project
4. Evaluation should be participatory where possible
5. Opportunities and risk assessment should be undertaken for all evaluation decisions.

In addition, Johnson (2004) outlines four steps to developing an engagement evaluation framework:

#### **Step 1. Articulate community engagement program to be evaluated**

- Identifying goals, objectives, processes and outcomes
- Understanding social, political, cultural and economic context of the program
- Developing program logic model or theory of change; that is, understanding and recording how the program is meant to function. It considers external influences, critical success factors, short-term, medium-term and long-term outcomes, activities and critical success factors.

#### **Step 2. Establish the purpose of the evaluation and who to involve**

- Is the evaluation aiming to meet accountability requirements, to ensure effectiveness, or to share experiences and improve practices across an agency or department?
- Who is the audience for the evaluation, and what information are they interested in?
- Who will be involved in the evaluation? That is, who will be conducting it, and who will participate in it?

#### **Step 3. Identifying evaluation questions and information requirements**

- Using the core questions of: what happened? What could be done better? Was the activity successful? and What lessons were learnt?, develop a set of more specific questions relevant to the program or project being evaluated
- Consider what information is needed to answer these questions
- Establish performance criteria, that is, standards by which to judge the practice and outcomes of engagement and then identify relevant indicators (inputs, outputs, process and outcomes)
- Agree on targets and milestones.

#### **Step 4. Identify data sources and methods to be used**

- Consider existing sources of information or data, relevant gaps, methods for collecting new data, timing and intervals of data collection, privacy and ethics considerations – is this all achievable and realistic?

#### **Community capacity assessment tool: South Australia**

The South Australian Department of Water, Land and Biodiversity Conservation developed a tool to help assess community, organisational and institutional capacity for NRM at the regional scale (Raymond et al. 2006). The framework of indicators used to conceptualise capacity are largely the same as those used by Fenton and Rickert (2008); however, the methodology and aims are distinctly different.

First, the tool is focused at the regional level and aims to assist with regional planning rather than national-level reporting. Second, it seeks to build capacity through the process of assessing it. Similar to Fenton and Rickert, workshop participants are asked to respond on a Likert scale to statements for each indicator. However, the process used by Raymond et al. requires a consensus response from participants. It can therefore be viewed as a dialogical process which seeks to allow learning and promote understanding between participants.

Third, the tool is used to assess capacity across three tiers: institutional (NRM body), organisational (non-statutory NRM-oriented groups) and individual. Participants are asked not only to assess their own capacity but the capacity of the other tiers. To complement this, they are also asked to indicate how important they perceive each aspect of capacity is for successful NRM and their level of confidence in assessing it.

The results are aggregated to provide a regional picture of capacity. This approach provides a relatively detailed picture, highlighting perceptions across groups and also indicating priorities for action.

Monitoring capacity at the regional level under this tool allows for a large amount of contextual information and exploration of process. However, the aim of this framework is to assess capacity; it does not directly attempt to evaluate or track the processes of engagement. While the assessment of capacity may inform our understanding of engagement processes, the focus remains on providing a quantification of capacity.

#### **3.2.2 Ministry of Economic Development, New Zealand**

The guidelines developed by the New Zealand Ministry of Economic Development (MED 2004) deal mainly with engagement of government agencies with the various sectors of economy. The MED Cabinet Paper (MED 2004) proposes that there is no generic ‘one size fits all’ approach to engagement monitoring and evaluation, but rather that there is a set of guiding principles that should be considered when developing any engagement framework:

##### **1. Aspect of program/policy performance being evaluated:**

The guidelines proposed that monitoring and evaluation can concentrate on implementation (has the program/policy been implemented as specified?), effectiveness (is the program/policy meeting its objectives?) or impact (broader outcomes); or can be devised as a combination of the above.

##### **2. Stability and maturity of the government’s policy framework and time lags:**

Evaluation milestones must recognise the longer-term view. In the short term, evaluation activity is likely to focus on monitoring the achievement of engagement activities per se. In the longer term, evaluation, in conjunction with relevant research, is more likely to assess progress made towards policy objectives and broader outcomes.

**3. Attributability of the outcomes to the specific process:**

Attribution of the success (or lack thereof) to a specific program or activity will be difficult given that multiple factors and multiple activities affect the performance and outcomes.

**4. Quantification and qualification of activities:**

Evaluation activity does not need to be seen as an arbitrary quantification of 'outcomes'. *Why* something is working might be more important and informative than *whether* something is working or to what extent; such as, for example, when we want to improve the instruments used in the engagement process.

**5. Wider context and clear strategic direction:**

Wider context of other government policies, the strategic direction of the organisation and natural resources management arrangements overall, as well as the wider context of external drivers such as drought and commodity prices need to be considered.

**6. Use of appropriate existing sources of information versus new pieces of research and evaluation activities:**

Ensure that synergies with information being collected by organisation for other purposes (i.e. by various projects and for all departments within the organisation) or by outside agencies and organisations (i.e. ABS, State agencies) are maximised, and new data collection exercises are undertaken only when appropriate.

**7. Balance of costs versus value added:**

The approach used for evaluation of the engagement processes will need to balance any value added through evaluation and monitoring with the cost of doing so.

The Cabinet Paper (MED 2004) does not specify an evaluation methodology, as it is assumed that a specific evaluation and research plan needs to be initiated at the start of each planning process. It is suggested that this specific plan should consider, among other issues (MED 2004):

- the evaluation purpose, questions to be answered, and how the evaluation results will be used
- statement of outcomes to be assessed for the policy's objectives, and related effectiveness measures
- statement of any aspects of delivery to be assessed, and related measures
- an indicative evaluation methodology (to show how added value from the policy will be evaluated)
- an indicative data collection and analysis strategy
- what reports are to be produced, who are responsible for these, and when they will be produced
- that the evaluation and research plan reflects good practice principles for evaluation planning and design.

### 3.2.3 Department of Constitutional Affairs, UK

In 2007, Diane Warburton and her colleagues developed a document titled *Making a difference: A guide to evaluating public participation in central government*. The guide was commissioned by the UK Department of Constitutional Affairs and mainly considers **how the public are engaged in policy making**. The guide provides specific ideas for using evaluation to set objectives for engagement, monitor progress and measure achievements and to identify lessons and help improve practice. The guide acknowledges that evaluation is a relatively new element of public engagement, but that it is seen as increasingly important as engagement becomes more widespread and larger in scale. Therefore, the need to assess the effectiveness of different approaches, to increase accountability and to learn from experience becomes more important. However, Warburton et al. (2007) maintain that evaluation does not have to involve a major research exercise, as long as it helps us answer three simple questions:

1. Has the initiative succeeded? (e.g. met targets, met objectives, resulted in other achievements)
2. Has the process worked? (e.g. what happened, what worked well and less well, and lessons for future participatory activities)
3. What impact has the process had? (e.g. on participants, on the quality of policy, on policy makers or on others involved).

The difference between evaluation as a simple audit tool and a learning tool is also discussed in the guide. Warburton et al. (2007) stress that the value of evaluation will be greatly improved if it goes beyond the simple audit questions, such as: have we done what we said we were going to do? have we met our targets?; to a much deeper examination that considers what happened and why, and what can be learnt for the future. They also stress that the content of each evaluation will be different, however, do provide a 'basic checklist' of aspects that need to be covered in most cases (Warburton et al. 2007, p. 13 & 14). The 'basic checklist' is organised around what they propose are four basic reasons why government might want to get the public engaged in a particular policy process (Warburton et al. 2007):

1. **Improved governance:** to do with democratic legitimacy, accountability, trust, citizens' rights, empowerment, etc
2. **Social capital and social justice:** to do with tackling exclusion and increasing equity, and building relationships, networks and ownership
3. **Improved quality of services, projects and programs:** more efficient and better services that meet needs and reflect broad social values
4. **Capacity building and learning:** to build confidence, skills, understanding, awareness and knowledge.

Any single engagement exercise can achieve more than one of these purposes. However, in order to be able to measure the success, exact objectives of the particular exercise should be set. In cases where the engagement process is likely to run for a significant amount of time, the guide recommends staging the process with different objectives and exercises set for different stages and evaluating each stage separately.

The way objectives for the exercise are formulated, and thus the method to be used during the process, will depend most on the level of engagement that the policy-maker is willing to commit to (for levels of engagement, please refer to section 2.5). In Annex II of the guide, Warburton et al. (2007) provide a list of potential indicators for engagement. A good summary is presented in Table 5 (from Warburton et al. 2007, p.10; based on a healthcare policy example). As stressed before, the list is by no means meant as a model list of indicators to be used, but rather is an example of what has worked in a specific project setting.

Table 5: Assessing the benefits and achievements of engagement

| Goals/purpose                                  | Possible indicators (examples)  | How to get data (examples)   | Important assumptions (examples)   |
|--|---|--|--|
| Improved governance                            | Increased trust in government   | Surveys before and after the engagement process  | Trust may be affected by a wide range of influences; this process may only be one among many   |
| Social capital and social justice              | Increased equality of access to decision-making   | Demographic analysis of participants + feedback from them on the difference made by the exercise | Social capital can be a difficult concept and is not always understood to operate beyond the local level, but the importance of increasing access to different people and new networks does work at national level |
|  | Developed new contacts/given access to new networks   | Questionnaires after engagement events, interviews later   |  |
| Improved quality of services/projects/programs | Costs saved by people taking more responsibility for service outcomes and making less demands (e.g. healthy living) | Feedback from doctors and patients through surveys, polls, etc.                                  | It is difficult to separate the impacts of engagement from other elements of service improvement   |
|  | Quicker decisions by avoiding conflict  | Collecting costs of dealing with conflict (e.g. complaints, objections, campaigns, etc)          |  |
| Capacity building and learning                 | Greater awareness and understanding of the issues   | Questionnaires with participants after the process and follow-up interviews later                | These are relatively straightforward issues to test with participants before, during and after the process   |
|  | More confidence and willingness to get involved in future   | Questionnaires with participants before and after the process and follow-up interviews later     |  |

Source: from Warburton et al. 2007, p. 10; based on a healthcare policy example.

### 3.3 Learnings from the academic literature and networks

#### 3.3.1 Australian literature

Parkins and Mitchell (2005) compare deliberative democratic theory and NRM approaches to participation. They suggest that, since NRM circles have focused on participation as a mechanism to improve decision making, evaluations have been pre-occupied with decision making as an outcome, rather than examining the procedures and processes surrounding the decisions. Deliberative democracy on the other hand, is 'interested in deliberative spaces': the process of interaction rather than achieving pre-determined goals (Parkins & Mitchell 2005, p. 533).

Syme and Sadler (1994) argue monitoring and evaluation should be embedded within processes of participation with results used to continually improve the approach and methods used. They have defined principles to improve and guide evaluation of participation in NRM planning. The principles attempt to accommodate the needs of different actors interested in the process<sup>2</sup> and therefore rely heavily on strong collaborative relationships between decision makers, community and researchers (Syme & Sadler 1994).

Proposed principles include:

- Objectives of participation should be agreed at the outset by planners and public
- Criteria to demonstrate if objectives were met should be agreed at the outset by planners and public (acknowledging there may be different criteria focused on process, others on outcomes, etc, to suit different needs)
- Evaluation should be planned to allow for changes in process if needed

<sup>2</sup> For example, government officials who may be primarily focused on reporting for accountability, regional bodies concerned with effectiveness of a new approach, etc.

- Responsibility for evaluation should be established when objectives are decided
- Resources for evaluation are established at the outset
- Methodology for evaluation should be agreed, and generally should be as simple as possible.

These principles are then tested using an irrigation planning process in Western Australia. A combination of consultative committees, public forums (which sought immediate feedback), debriefings with agency staff and other principles ‘inbuilt in the system’ were used to ensure refinement of the process (Syme & Sadler 1994, p. 357). This framework is designed to be iterative, collaborative and meet the needs of several different stakeholders.

Focusing on government agency engagement with the public in forestry management, Buchy and Race (2001) suggest the following four ‘principles of good practice’ as a framework to evaluate community participation:

- **Commitment and clarity:** defining and communicating the level of participation and resources available at the beginning of the process to avoid misleading community members;
- **Time and group dynamics:** time allocated is appropriate to the level of participation sought and reasonable considering the participatory context(s);
- **Representativity:** processes for identifying and determining participants is open and transparent and has considered power relationships and issues of equity
- **Transfer of skills:** the importance of transferring skills to the community is valued.

By having only these broadly defined principles, Buchy and Race (2001 p. 298) suggest the focus is on the ‘quality of the participatory process (rather than the nature of participation promoted)’. While allowing for the diverse needs, objectives and levels of participation from program to program, this approach provides no mechanism to assess whether the nature of participation is appropriate or satisfactory to those involved. Unlike Syme and Sadler, who also argue for clarity around the objectives and extent of community participation, Buchy and Race focus on government perspectives rather than acknowledging public perspectives.

The other end of this spectrum, which focuses principally on the perspectives of participants is explored by Lane et al. (2005) in the evaluation of youth engagement programs. The evaluation interviewed participants before, during and after the youth engagement program and focused on:

- the relevance of the messages for youth participants
- motivations for involvement
- aspects of the program participants felt were most engaging
- longer term and ongoing commitment to environmental issues
- students’ capacity for active involvement.

This aligns with Cuthill (2003, p. 385), who argues for a participatory evaluation framework where:

*Rather than a traditional focus on the end product of an initiative ... evaluation incorporates front end (at the beginning), formative (during) and summative (at the end) stages. It is people centred with stakeholders as the key actors in the evaluation process and not the mere objects of the evaluation.*

### 3.3.2 Integrated coastal management literature

The integrated coastal management (ICM) approaches have, over a number of years, provided literature related to engagement in general. An interesting related concept is Olsen's (2003) four orders of governance outcomes for evaluating the performance of integrated coastal management initiatives:

1. creation of enabling conditions (process indicators)
2. achievement of changes in behaviour (change indicators)
3. achievement of change in resource use regimes (stress reduction indicators)
4. achievement of sustainable management involving improvements in social and environmental conditions (status indicators).

Olsen (2003) argued that these changes occurred in a phased way, where the initial program/action outcomes would relate to the first order, followed by the combination of the other three orders.

Another issue relevant to this review and discussed in the integrated coastal management literature is the issue of 'causality gap'. This concept proposes that it might be very difficult to establish with confidence that changes, particularly delayed ones, result directly from a specific intervention or action; in other words, it might be difficult to establish or clarify the cause and effect relationships (Mahanty et al. 2007).

The time scales of the monitoring exercises greatly influence the potential for learning and adaptive management (Mee 2005, O'Riordan 2005). With longer project time frames, changes in stress reduction or status indicators are more likely to occur. In shorter projects, the information might be limited to the process level issues (Mahanty et al. 2007). Therefore, it is important to devise and implement a range of indicators that assess both shorter- and longer-term change processes, rather than focusing only on outcomes that may occur beyond the life of the project.

### 3.3.3 Institute for Food Research, UK

Nine evaluation criteria were proposed by Frewer et al (2001) as a basis to develop methodologies to assess the effectiveness of different public participation exercises. The criteria are grouped as:

- acceptance criteria (representativeness, independence, early involvement, influence, and transparency)
- process criteria (resource use, task definition, structure, decision making and cost effectiveness).

Frewer et al (2001) used these criteria to develop a toolkit for evaluation of engagement success, using a 5-levels scoring system from '++', indicating that the exercise scored very well to a '--' for a very poor rating.

### 3.3.4 Stakeholder Engagement Manual

The Institute of Social and Ethical AccountAbility was launched in 1996 as a network of businesses, academics and practitioners engaged in promoting accountability for sustainable development and in devising measures for reporting on the social and ethical performance of organisations. In 2005, AccountAbility, in collaboration with the United Nations Environment Programme and Canadian Stakeholder Research Associates, developed the *Stakeholder Engagement Manual*, a comprehensive set of guidelines for companies and organisations on planning for and assessing their stakeholder engagement. The *Stakeholder Engagement Manual* (Krick et al. 2005) arguably represents current best practice in the areas of engagement planning and monitoring.

Krick et al. (2005) advise that a decision on how to measure or monitor the success of the engagement exercise becomes part of the planning process. They term their targets 'Signals of success' and suggest that they should be set for various stages of the process, from inputs (i.e. Has the expected funding been

made available?) to outputs (Has the set number of public meetings been held? Have the numbers of participants been satisfactory?) to outcomes (Has the reaction/behaviour of stakeholders changed as a result of the engagement process? Was the media coverage generated? Was the consensus reached?).

*The Stakeholder Engagement Manual* (Krick et al. 2005) guides the reader through five distinct stages of the engagement process. The approach is based on the principles of adaptive management, and therefore monitoring is intrinsically linked to all stages of the process. The manual discusses key learnings expected from each stage and proposes guiding questions for evaluations. The relevance of each stage to the monitoring is discussed in the paragraphs below.

### **Stage 1: Set strategic objectives for engagement**

The aim of this stage of the process is to identify and set the strategic priorities for stakeholder engagement in the organisation. Is the organisation planning stakeholder engagement as a result of the regulatory requirements, or are they seeking to improve their image? Krick et al. (2005) propose to develop a discussion around these objectives, using guiding questions such as: What are we trying to accomplish through stakeholder engagement? What would success look like?

The Manual proposes the use of the SMART framework when setting targets to engagement. The SMART approach targets set out what is going to happen, who is going to do it, when it is going to be done by, and how achievement will be measured (see section 2.3 for discussion on the SMART approach). As a result of the discussion, the Strategic Engagement Objectives should be specified and captured as brief declarations that link stakeholder engagement to strategic business objectives, for example: 'To develop a new approach to ...' or 'To learn more about ...'

### **Stage 2: Analyse and plan**

The aim of this stage is to build up a basis of knowledge about both the organisation itself and its stakeholders. This knowledge would allow the organisation to prioritise further, and develop a more specific rather than generic plan for engagement. Several ways of analysing and planning are discussed in the manual.

The organisation is also expected to decide at this stage on the level of engagement they are trying to achieve for each issue. The engagement levels can range from no engagement, where no active communication and no relationship occur; to empowerment, where stakeholders are integrated into governance structures on an equal footing (see discussion in section 2.5 and Figure 1 (a) based on Krick et al. 2005).

An interesting exercise proposed for this stage, and useable in the future for monitoring purposes, is mapping of the 'Possible Outcomes of Engagement'. The best case scenario and the worst case scenario are developed as possible outcomes of engaging for each objective proposed in the engagement strategy. In addition to outcomes, the best and worst case scenarios also describe actions, abilities and resources available during the engagement.

### **Stage 3: Strengthen capacities for engagement**

The main aim of this step is to develop the individual skills as well as organisational systems needed to engage effectively with stakeholders. An exemplary table of potential obstacles to effective participation, and the potential 'enablers' of engagement, both internal and external to the organisation, is presented in Table 6 (based on Krick et al. 2005, p. 91). An 'enabler' is defined as helping achievement of an action or goal by providing the means, knowledge or opportunity (AccountAbility 2005). Enablers are interesting not only as a planning tool, but also as a potential base for the future monitoring framework. For example, if the enabler is to 'provide timely information', that monitoring point can be 'timely information (i.e. one month before the event) has been provided to stakeholders': yes/no.

Krick et al. (2005) point out that some of the key enablers for stakeholders to engage revolve either around knowledge, access to information, finances or time (Table 6). They also point that some individuals and groups may find it difficult to take up the invitation to engage, or that circumstances may hinder their ability to fully contribute to the engagement processes due to, for example, language, literacy or cultural barriers; problems of distance; lack of time; or gaps in their knowledge about a specific issue. Therefore, the capacity gaps of stakeholders need to be seriously and carefully considered and addressed.

Table 6: Examples of potential obstacles and 'enablers' of participation

| Areas                                     | Potential issues   | Potential solutions/enablers   |
|---|--|--|
| Knowledge/<br>Education/<br>Communication | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Issue-specific knowledge</li> <li>Ability to use Information and Communications Technology (ICT)</li> <li>Literacy</li> <li>Communication styles</li> <li>Language</li> <li>Limited reach of press and media</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide timely information</li> <li>Use different communication channels in parallel (e.g. print, online media, community radio, community functions, etc)</li> <li>Provide training</li> <li>Provide information in various languages</li> <li>Hold 'Open-house' days</li> </ul> |
| Infrastructure                            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Availability of ICT</li> <li>Means of transport</li> <li>Unreliable infrastructure (i.e. roads closed in wet season)</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Choose accessible locations</li> <li>Provide assistance with transportation</li> <li>Provide equipment and training for ICT if necessary</li> <li>Choose the right time (e.g. avoid wet season if possible)</li> </ul>  |
| Social and Cultural Context               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Social hierarchies (e.g. cultural background, gender, wealth)</li> <li>Local conflicts</li> <li>Lack of shared understanding of culture-specific customs and communication styles</li> <li>Religion</li> <li>Family and other responsibilities (e.g. mustering times, childcare)</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure anonymity if required</li> <li>Be aware of potential conflicts between stakeholder groups</li> <li>Ensure that timing and location of engagement processes takes into account stakeholder's needs</li> </ul>   |
| Location and Finances                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do stakeholders feel comfortable?</li> <li>Can there, if required, be adequate privacy or anonymity?</li> <li>Costs of travel and accommodation</li> <li>Lost working time</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Be sensitive to stakeholder requirements regarding meeting locations</li> <li>Compensate for lost working time</li> <li>Compensate for travel and accommodation costs</li> </ul>  |

Source: modified from Krick et al. 2005

#### Stage 4: Design the process and engage with stakeholders

At this stage of the process, the planning is completed and the engagement activities with stakeholders are carried out. The plan contains details of the most suitable level for engagement (i.e. consultation, partnership, etc); engagement approaches and methods (surveys; interviews, advisory panels, etc); as well as practical issues of funding, space, timings, etc.

The ways in which stakeholders themselves can be involved in evaluating the process will largely depend on the feedback methods set in the engagement plans, but can range from anonymous surveys to conversations with each participant about their perceptions of the process, for example, What worked and what did not? What can be done better next time? Was there a gap between the issues identified as relevant by organisation prior to the engagement process and what emerged during the process that was deemed relevant by the participant? How big was this gap and what are the consequences?

## Stage 5: Act, review, report

This step of the process aims to translate new learning, insights and agreements into action. The main purpose of reviewing the engagement process is to understand how it could be better performed and developed in the future. The review can be undertaken by the internal team, or it might involve stakeholders themselves, either as part of the engagement process or after the process is completed. The internal team might revisit the best case and worst case scenarios developed in Stage 2 of the process and evaluate what really happened, place the real engagement on a spectrum between best and worst cases and record the learnings. Or the team might revisit the ‘signals of success’ identified in the stakeholder engagement plan. Did it happen? Was it better or worse than expected? Why? Were targets realistic? Did unexpected incidents/problems happen?

The most important thing to consider in evaluation of engagement processes is that it sometimes can take a long time before the ‘signals of success’, particularly those related to the outcomes, appear. Changes in the views and behaviours of both organisation and stakeholders, resulting from the successful engagement, might be slow, dependent on external, unrelated drivers, or occurring in increments over a long period of time. Therefore, the conclusions about the success of the particular engagement exercise need to be revisited periodically and reassessed as appropriate.

At the end of the cycle, Krick et al. (2005) stress the critical importance of reporting back to stakeholders the decisions taken as a result of the engagement. Demonstrating that due consideration was given to the outputs of the engagement process is important for the stakeholders who were engaged in the process, and it can also influence future decisions of stakeholders who were not involved in the initial engagement process. The reporting back to stakeholders can take various forms, from one-on-one or telephone conversations to formal regular reporting initiatives such as annual reports.

The most internationally recognised and the most comprehensive reporting guidelines are arguably those developed by the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI). An interesting concept with the GRI is the incremental approach to reporting which expands over time (GRI 2003). This approach allows for the reports to be submitted at three different levels of application. For example, the “beginners” are required to submit some information on their profiles, no information on their management approach, and to report on any 10 indicators from the list, as long as there is at least one from each social, economic and environmental area. At the second level, companies provide all this information, plus additional information on the profiles, some information on management approach, and report on a total of 20 indicators (at least one from each economic, environment, human rights, labour, society and product responsibility area). At the third and the highest level of reporting, companies have to report on all the aspects of the GRI framework (GRI 2003). It is acknowledged that it might take an organisation a number of years to move from its first report to full reporting status.

AccountAbility has also put forward the AA1000 series of standards that address various aspects of improving accountability and performance and learning through stakeholder engagement (Sigma Project 1999, AccountAbility 2005).

However, the organisation needs to bear in mind that any type of structured reporting is a time- and money-intensive exercise. Benefits of reporting need to be evaluated against costs before the commitments to reporting are made.

## 4. Examples of tools used in engagement monitoring

This section presents an overview of some of the tools used in the monitoring and/or reporting of the engagement activities. Most of the tools presented here have been originally devised as project monitoring tools, but have since been successfully used as engagement monitoring tools. The examples presented here are by no means an exhaustive list of tools available, nor do they represent ‘the best’ or ‘the most suitable’ tools.<sup>3</sup> Rather, the objective of this section is to provide an idea of the breadth of the methods available both internationally and in Australia.

Logical Frameworks are presented in section 4.1, followed by an overview of Report and Score Cards in section 4.2. Sections 4.3 and 4.4 present two qualitative approaches: the Most Significant Change and Outcome Mapping. Section 4.5 gives an overview of the Relationship Index.

### 4.1 LOG frames

The Logical Framework Approach (LFA or LOG frame) is the ‘classic’, most widely used tool for project planning, design, implementation and M&E. The LOG frame discussion presented here is based on the process as described in Bond et al. (2006).

LOG frames are usually developed at the planning phase of a project, and can help to clarify the following important aspects (Bond et al. 2006, p. 66):

- what you are trying to achieve and how it will be achieved
- how you will know if you are achieving your objectives
- what are relevant conditions outside of the project – beyond your control – that are needed for the project to succeed, or that may pose a threat or a risk.

The LFA, as its name suggests, is the basic logical way of assessing and monitoring the activities. It therefore most often follows the typical planning stages of establishing scope, agreeing on the planning framework, etc. The resulting LOG frame is often presented as a matrix or a table consisting of summaries of what is to be achieved at each stage of the project (the objective hierarchy), the measures and indicators that will be used to monitor progress (measures of achievements), how the measures will be monitored (means of verification), and the assumptions behind the logic of how activities will eventually contribute to the overall goal (assumptions and risks). LOG frames are, however, not suitable tools for evaluation of the projects.

A LOG frame may cover a number of years and be linked to the annual work plans. It is important that the work plan covers in detail all the activities planned. That is, the work plan provides specific information on what is to be done, who is responsible, who will check it is done, when should it be done (start and finish) and resources needed (people, materials and finances) (Bond et al. 2006).

LOG frames are typically the planning and monitoring tool that most government agencies are familiar and comfortable with. However, its value and relevance as a tool for M&E, versus the costs of implementing such a comprehensive and time- and money-intensive method, needs to be individually assessed for each project or activity. The assessment of costs versus benefits should not include only funding agency representatives, but also representatives of the implementing agencies and communities in question. An example of experience with use of the LOG frame is presented in section 5.

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<sup>3</sup> Comprehensive lists of potential tools for engagement monitoring can be found in several references (e.g. see Rietbergen-McCracken & Narayan 1998, or Involve 2005) and on the web site of most relevant organisations (as listed in section 8).

## 4.2 Report and Score Cards

Citizen Report Cards and Community Score Cards are proposed by the World Bank as potentially useful modes of data collection. Both methods are briefly presented here, based on the manual developed by Singh and Shah (2004). Historically, they were promoted as methods for assessing of public services (such as health provision), but have more recently been adapted for use in assessing public engagement itself.

Citizen Report Cards are participatory surveys that provide quantitative feedback on user perceptions of the quality, adequacy and efficiency of services or process under evaluation (World Bank 2004). The unit of analysis is the household or an individual, and the information is collected via a survey questionnaire (Singh & Shah 2004).

Community Score Cards, on the other hand, are qualitative monitoring tools that are used for local-level monitoring and performance evaluation of services, projects and/or processes. The Community Score Card (CSC) process is a hybrid of the techniques of social audit, community monitoring and Citizen Report Cards. The unit of analysis is the community, and the information is collected via focus group interactions. This method aims not only to collect information, but also to create grass-roots mobilisation and awareness. The method is very suitable for micro- to local-level (village or cluster of villages) and for rural settings (World Bank 2004). The feedback is provided via an interface meeting held between the community and the organisation at the end of the process.

## 4.3 Most Significant Change approach

The Most Significant Change (MSC) approach was developed in the mid-1990s by Rick Davies as a monitoring tool for a development program in Bangladesh. The method was based on monthly recording of the experiences of participants themselves, and included changes in people's lives, in people's participation and in sustainability of institutions and their activities (Abbot & Guijt 1998).

Simplistically, the technique involves the regular collection of stories to record what participants in a program perceive to be the most significant change as a result of their involvement. Stories are presented and discussed at regional meetings and those that are determined as the most significant are sent to funding bodies who are also asked to provide feedback on the stories (refer to Figure 2, from Dart & Davies 2003, p. 139). As well as capturing program impacts from participants, the process of discussion and debate for selecting the most significant stories is said to promote clarity of program vision and highlight unanticipated program outcomes (Davies & Dart 2005).

The technique is useful in capturing extraordinary events resulting from an intervention or program, but cannot be used alone to evaluate its overall impact (Willets & Crawford 2007). The rich data collected aims to strengthen, rather than replace, more traditional, quantitative measures of program efficiency and effectiveness (Dart & Davies 2003).

Concerns over the use of MSC include:

- The representativeness of people approached to provide stories
- Inadequate skills of field staff in eliciting and recording stories
- Trust between program staff and participants, and how this influences stories
- Transparency of data collection (informed consent of story tellers)
- Significant time commitment for staff (both those collecting and those discussing and ranking at regional meetings)
- the over-interpretation of MSC data (Willets & Crawford 2007).

The MSC approach is being applied in a range of contexts to bolster traditional forms of evaluation and monitoring, including education and NRM. MSC is being applied as a monitoring tool of performance and outputs of the engagement process, as well as a tool for evaluation of outcomes and impact (Davies & Dart 2005).

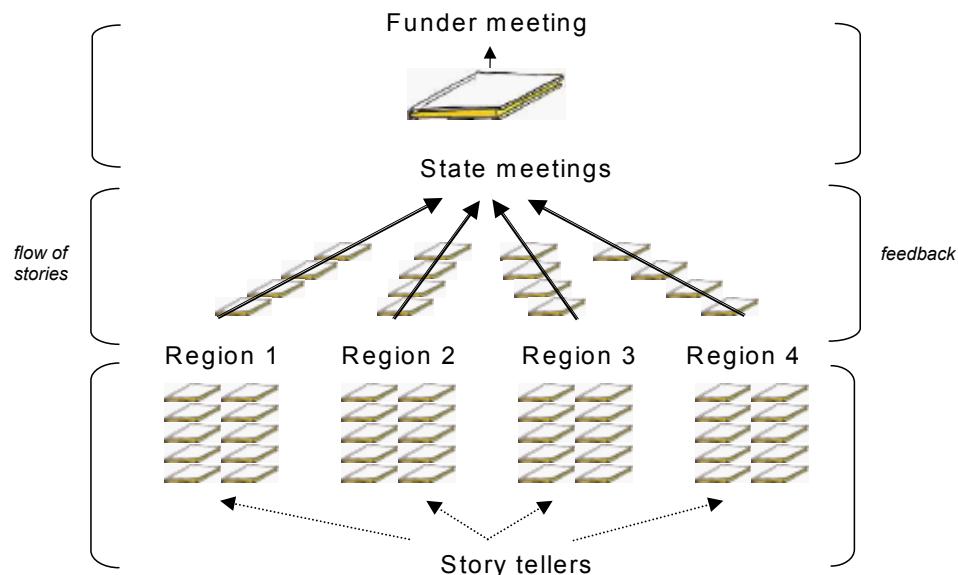


Figure 2: Flow of stories and feedback in MSC

Source: Dart & Davies 2003, p. 139

## 4.4 Outcome mapping

Outcome Mapping methodology focuses on one specific type of outcome: behavioural change. Outcomes are defined as changes in the behaviour, relationships, activities or actions of the people, groups and organisations with which a program works directly (Earl et al. 2001). The methodology was developed as a monitoring tool for international development programs. In this context, focusing on outcomes instead of impacts was seen as justified for two main reasons: (i) it is difficult to attribute an impact to a specific intervention; and (ii) long time frames (usually beyond project life) would be required for accurate assessment of impacts (see discussion in section 3 that addresses these and other issues with monitoring engagement). Therefore, the Outcome Mapping focuses on assessing how a program facilitates change rather than on how it causes change (Earl et al. 2001).

Outcome Mapping is divided into three stages. The first stage, Intentional Design, helps the organisation establish consensus on the macro-level changes it will help to bring about and plan the strategies it will use. It helps answer four questions:

1. **Why?** (Why is the program/action needed? What is the vision it contributes to?)
2. **Who?** (Who are the program's partners?)
3. **What?** (What are the changes that are being sought?)
4. **How?** (How will the program contribute to the change process?).

The second stage, Outcome and Performance Monitoring, provides a framework for the ongoing monitoring of the program's actions and stakeholders' progress toward the achievement of outcomes. The third stage, Evaluation Planning, helps the program identify evaluation priorities and develop an evaluation plan.

This method is based largely on systematised self-assessment. The main tool used for monitoring and evaluation are journals. For example, in an ‘Outcome Journal’, the evidence of changes in the behaviours, actions, activities and relationships of stakeholders are recorded. The ‘Strategy Journal’ records the strategies that a program uses to encourage change, as well as changes and improvements of the strategy enacted as a result of the ongoing learning. Organisational practices are recorded in the ‘Performance Journal’, as well as learnings that the organisation is making from the engagement experience.

Earl et al. (2001) also discuss the issues of time, resources and the level of effort required to put into monitoring. They suggest that requirements be minimised by the incorporation of these activities into the overall monitoring system, where the information tracking and reporting already exists. They also stress that Outcome Mapping was designed primarily as a learning tool for an organisation to conduct its own monitoring. Although an external expert can be used to collect data, valuable learnings and feedbacks will be lost.

## 4.5 Edelman Relationship Index

A ‘Relationship Index’, developed by two commercial companies, Edelman and Strategy One, is a monitoring approach that tracks four key dimensions deemed to be determinants of the quality of relationships. Data for the collation of the Edelman Relationship Index (ERI) is typically collected via short in-person or phone interviews and uses a nine-point scale to evaluate the dimensions and their elements (from Morley 2003):

**Trust** – The trust is defined in ERI as ‘One party’s level of confidence in, and willingness to open oneself up to, the other party’. There are three elements of trust:

- **Integrity:** the belief that an organisation is fair and just
- **Dependability:** the belief that an organisation will do what it says it will do
- **Competence:** the belief that an organisation has the ability to do what it says it will do.

**Mutuality of control** – ‘The degree to which parties agree on who has the rightful power to influence one another’. Although some imbalance is natural, stable relationships require that organisations and the public each have some control over the other.

**Commitment** – ‘The extent to which each party believes and feels that the relationship is worth spending energy to maintain and promote’. Two dimensions of commitment are continuance commitment, which refers to a certain line of action, and affective commitment, which is an emotional orientation.

**Satisfaction** – ‘The extent to which each party feels favourably toward the other because positive expectations about the relationship are reinforced’. A satisfying relationship is one in which the benefits outweigh the costs.

The ERI can be used at the outset of a program to diagnose and benchmark the quality of the existing relationships between the organisation and its key stakeholders, and in the course of a program, to measure changes in the quality of key relationships so that program adjustments can be made.

Several large Australian corporations, such as the National Bank of Australia, use annual ERI surveys to measure and evaluate their engagement performance.

## 5. Experiences with engagement monitoring

Although public participation is largely acknowledged as central to planning theory, significant challenges remain regarding how success of such efforts is evaluated (Lane 2005). Little published information on actual evaluations appears to be available, both in Australia (Reddel & Woolcock 2004) and internationally (Abbot & Guijt 1998, Buchy & Hoverman 2000). Interestingly, a significant percentage of the international literature reporting on experiences with engagement processes used in the NRM sector seems to be from developing countries (Buchy & Hoverman 2000).

The majority of the literature found during the literature searches did not deal with the monitoring of engagement per se. Rather, the experiences reported dealt with engagement in the process of monitoring and environmental management (extensive literature review by Estrella & Gaventa 1998, O'Faircheallaigh 2007, Pasteur & Blauert 2000), engagement in the setting of sustainable development goals (e.g. Fraser et al. 2006, Jollands & Harmsworth 2007, Rosenstrom & Kyllonen 2007, Parissi 2007), or engagement for evaluation of programs (Coupal & Simoneau 1998, Mahanty et al. 2007, Stalker Prokopy 2005). Examples of monitoring of engagement itself were rare and tended to discuss general aspects and provide rather general reinforcements of the importance of adhering with the principles of good practice. A few of the references providing more specific lessons are summarised in this section.

### 5.1 Australian NRM Context

The shift to regionalised environmental management in Australia has seen a broad recognition of the importance of social processes in NRM (Higgins & Lockie 2002). It is therefore unsurprising that the importance of community engagement and the consideration of social processes are strong themes in NRM literature (see e.g. Carr 2002, Aslin & Brown 2004, Nelson & Pettit 2004, Lane & McDonald 2005, Measham et al. 2009a).

Although community participation in NRM is strongly supported, and in some circumstances required to access government funding, until recently there has been a general lack of attention paid to the formal evaluation of these processes (Buchy & Race 2001). Where evaluation has occurred, it has often been empirical and focused on answering broader questions about the suitability of community-based or regional NRM arrangements in Australia (see e.g. Curtis & Lockwood 2000, Farrelly & Conacher 2007) rather than monitoring the effectiveness of engagement. Syme and Sadler (1994, p. 525–6) suggest this hesitation to deal with monitoring and evaluation of participation results from the complexity of values and absence of agreed criteria for determining success, evaluation methods or tools for measurement.

Instead, monitoring and evaluation of NRM programs in Australia has largely focused on biophysical measurements of on-ground change and efficiency of funding (Carr 2002, Wallington & Lawrence 2008) and struggled to influence program development (Bellamy et al. 2001). The traditional (and ongoing) focus on achievement of outcomes to evaluate programs is an uncomfortable fit for social processes due to the difficulty in meaningfully quantifying outcomes and the long time frames for seeing results (Bellamy et al. 1999) (see also discussion in section 2).

The adoption by the Natural Resource Management Ministerial Council (NRMMC) of a national framework for monitoring and evaluation of the NHT and NAP programs (NRMMC 2002) has seen a formalised, government-funded effort to monitor, evaluate and report on social aspects of NRM. This framework has since been reviewed and revised. The Australian Government has recently adopted the new NRM Monitoring, Evaluation, Reporting and Improvement Framework (MERI Framework), which includes social and sustainable industry outcomes. The national coordination of indicators has been delegated to the National Land and Water Resources Audit (NLWRA), which established the Social and Economic National Coordinating Committee (SENCC) in 2004 to provide advice and develop indicators for social and economic processes relevant to NRM.

## National level: benchmarking social and institutional capacity

One aspect of social indicators targeted by the NLWRA is the capacity of NRM groups to make decisions relating to NRM. Fenton and Rickert (2008) have developed a national framework to evaluate this capacity by focusing on four core indicators: the capacity of regional bodies, engagement in NRM, partnerships in NRM, and recognition of the social foundations for NRM.

For each of these areas a ‘component tree’ articulating success statements and measures was developed. Telephone surveys were conducted addressing all indicators with four staff from each regional NRM body (including the CEO, Chair of the Board and two other staff). Regional stakeholders (nominated by the NRM body<sup>4</sup>) were surveyed regarding engagement capacity, and federal, state and territory government representatives were surveyed regarding partnership capacity.

Interviewees were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed with a series of statements relating to the measures outlined in the component tree. Figure 3 shows the component tree relating to engagement (indicator E: Engagement – shared NRM vision and ownership at the NRM level). To explore each of the measures further, several questions are asked of respondents regarding issues such as: the influence of engagement activities in decision making, trust, transparency, inclusiveness, and the leadership of the regional bodies. In this manner the framework provides a snapshot of the perceptions of some stakeholders, and a self assessment from staff; however, its scope is necessarily focused on analysis of the capacity of the NRM body.

The aims of this framework are to benchmark, and, over time, monitor the capacity of regional NRM bodies. While it does provide an indication of perceived success and appropriateness of engagement (as well as of broader factors contributing to successful engagement such as staffing levels and access to funding) this framework does not, and was never intended to understand the processes behind results. While it is argued that reliance on indicators distracts from trying to understand the processes they are used to evaluate (Wallington & Lawrence 2008), it is hard to imagine, and perhaps inappropriate at this stage, for a national framework to delve into further detail on social processes.

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<sup>4</sup> Eight nominations were sought from each NRM body in the areas of local government, agricultural industry, non-agricultural industry, conservation or environment groups, Aboriginal groups, state agencies, and two other stakeholder organisations, which may include those that have not been well engaged (Fenton & Rickert 2008, p. 7).

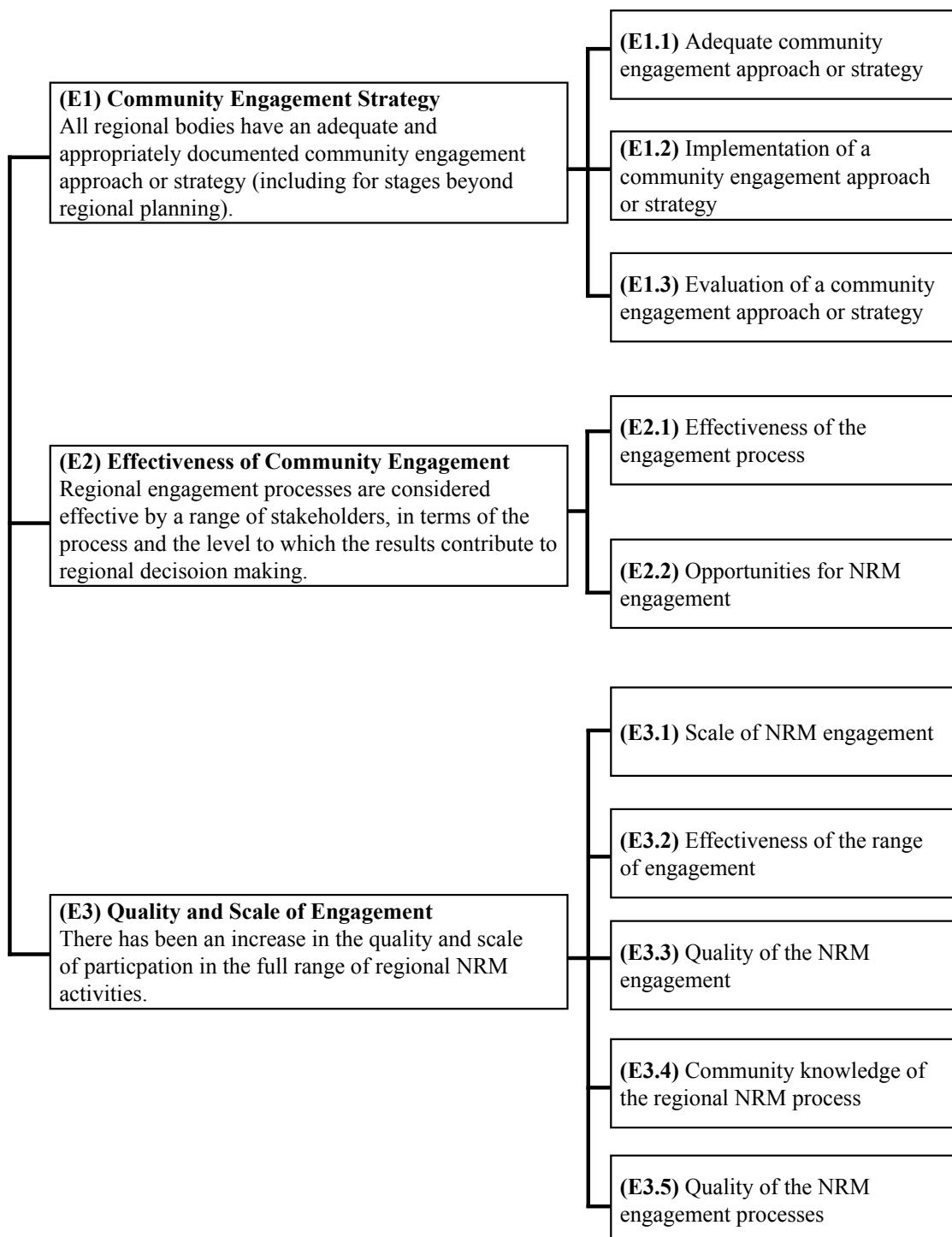


Figure 3: Component tree: Engagement in NRM

Source: Fenton & Rickert 2008 p. 69

### Regional level: Benchmarking NRM planning in Qld, the NT and WA

During the period 2002–2006, the Tropical Savanna CRC and CSIRO developed and applied an evaluation framework to assess the contribution of regional plans in tropical savannas to sustainable and healthy landscapes (McDonald et al. 2004). The framework necessarily takes a holistic approach, considering social, economic and ecological outcomes and involved interviews, participant observation in regional planning processes and review of regional planning documents.

Criteria developed as part of the framework are presented in Table 7. Importantly, the criteria cover *context, structure, process* and *outcomes* of the regional plan (McDonald et al. 2005). While evaluation of engagement structures constitutes only one piece of a much larger picture in this evaluation framework, many of the criteria reflect ‘success principles’ as described in section 1.3 (adequate resourcing, recognising diversity, being adaptive, alignment and scale, etc).

Table 7: Criteria for evaluation of regional NRM planning arrangements

| Criteria  | Explanation  |
|---|--|
| <b>Context criteria</b>   | <b>Recognises that implementation of regional NRM is affected by a wide range of environmental economic, social, policy/institutional and technological factors</b>  |
| C1 Thinking ‘regionally’  | Regional stakeholders have a clear identification with the NRM region, an acceptance of its NRM issues and are generally thinking ‘regionally’.  |
| C2 Stakeholder culture and commitment                             | Regional stakeholders recognise, practice and support participation and collaboration that generates willingness for learning and change. Political commitment is present among key regional stakeholders.           |
| C3 Understanding NRM  | Recognition by regional stakeholders of the ‘multi-dimensional nature’ of NRM, i.e. social, economic, environmental and institutional/political dimensions.  |
| C4 Recognising regional diversity and complexity                  | Diversity and complexity of the social, economic, ecological and institutional characteristics of the region are recognised and widely understood.   |
| <b>Structure criteria</b>   | <b>Addresses the rules and institutional arrangements relating to regional NRM</b>   |
| S1 Coherent policy and governance structures                      | The degree to which policy, program, governance (and legislative) structures agree in intent, are consistent and logically connected.  |
| S2 Aligned institutions   | Institutions have a high degree of integration and adaptiveness to support regional priorities.  |
| S3 Roles and responsibilities                                     | Roles and responsibilities in regional NRM arrangements are clearly defined and understood.  |
| S4 Participation and engagement structures                        | Integrity and inclusiveness of participation and engagement structures is apparent.  |
| S5 Adequate regional resourcing                                   | Resources are adequate to support regional NRM planning and long-term certainty exists regarding future funding.   |
| S6 Monitoring return on investment                                | Mechanisms are in place to monitor and assess returns on investment.   |
| S7 Structures for integrating knowledge                           | Structures that support data and information sharing and integration in planning. Effective information and knowledge management arrangements including access to external expertise, science and science providers. |
| <b>Process criteria</b>   | <b>Addresses the activities, strategies, operations and relationships that define and influence regional NRM</b>   |
| P1 Processes for integrating knowledge and values                 | Regional processes and tools that support the integration of different types of information, knowledge and values including target setting, priority setting and engagement processes.                               |
| P2 Capacity to participate  | Capacity exists for all players to participate in regional planning, management or implementation processes.   |
| P3 Procedural fairness  | Processes that support regional NRM are widely perceived as fair.  |
| P4 Responsive and adaptive regions                                | Processes are adaptable and responsive to changes in understanding, values, priorities and external pressures. Strategies and approaches used to facilitate change.  |
| P5 Linking scales and activities                                  | Processes support and exhibit connectivity within and between scales.  |
| <b>Outcomes criteria</b>  | <b>Reflects the outputs or deliverables produced and impacts from regional NRM to date</b>   |
| O1 Improved social capital of planners, managers and participants | Outcomes associated with enhanced individual capabilities, credibility, ongoing learning, networks for management and planning and ownership.  |
| O2 Effective and connected institutions                           | Connectivity between state, regional, sub-regional and local activities; and effective and connected processes and structures at the regional scale.   |
| O3 Improved resource condition                                    | Condition of priority natural, social and cultural and economic resources in regions.  |

Source: McDonald et al. 2005 p. 16.

## 5.2 Case study from Finland: response to Aarhus convention requirements

A study conducted by Rosenstrom and Kyllonen (2007) sets out to evaluate the extent to which the Finnish process of setting and monitoring the indicators of sustainable development fulfils the requirements of the Aarhus Convention of being a ‘transparent and fair framework’ for participatory decisions.

One interesting point Rosenstrom and Kyllonen (2007) raise in their study is that of assessing what happens inside the participation process versus the learning taking place outside the process. Not every member of the community affected by the decision can be expected to participate, they argue, and thus the non-participating (outside) population can learn about what happened inside the process through, for example, press coverage or directly from participants. This link from inside the process to outside is seen as important for the success of the final implementation and take-up, which is seen as dependent on legitimacy in the eyes of people both inside and outside the process. Thus, it is not only important to evaluate who participated in the process and how, but also how the information was disseminated outside the process.

Rosenstrom and Kyllonen (2007) also argue that the success of a participatory decision-making process depends on the type of effect one primarily wants to achieve through participation, and they propose the following potential overall goal of engagement exercise: more fair and democratic representation of the existing interests of a society (fairness), citizen empowerment (social learning), the improvement of decision outcomes (competence), and/or more efficient implementation of outcomes.

## 5.3 Your Health, Your Care, Your Say – Department of Health, UK

Your Health, Your Care, Your Say (YHYCYS) initiative of the Department of Health was one of the largest and most ambitious public engagement exercises ever mounted in the UK. Designed to ensure public engagement in the development of a government White Paper on health and social care services, the initiative has received over 41 000 responses, with more than 1200 people attending deliberative events throughout the UK. The initiative is described in detail in Annex 3 of Warburton et al. (2007).

The main learning that came from the review of this process was related to the need to clearly set the objectives of the exercise and to clearly articulate how they are to be evaluated in the future. For example, although one of the objectives of the exercise was to enhance public trust in government, it was clearly recognised from the start of the process that it would be very difficult to find appropriate indicators, and therefore appropriately evaluate, this issue. The main reason for this difficulty was cited as an inability to identify clear cause and effect links between a particular exercise and such a broad, complex and long-term change in relationships. For other, ‘more measurable’ objectives, criteria on how to evaluate them was set in detail. First, aspects of each objective to be assessed were set, and then for each aspect several criteria for evaluation were established.

Setting of such clear goals and measures of achievement has allowed for the process to be evaluated by both the YHYCYS project team and an independent evaluator commissioned by the Department of Health later in the process. Thinking through the practical implications of evaluating specific goals had a large influence on the choice of methods as well as the overall design, timing and resourcing of the process (Warburton et al. 2007).

## 5.4 Canadian Policy Research Network (CPRN)

The Canadian Policy Research Network (CPRN 2003) has over years published a number of guides and frameworks for public participation.

A conceptual map of public participation evaluation, as developed by Abelson and Gauvin (2006) is presented in Figure 4 below. The map consists of three main spheres at which the engagement can occur: context, process and outcomes. Abelson and Gauvin (2006) reiterate that despite decades of documenting public participation experiences, the practice of public participation evaluation is still in its infancy. The progress is being made in the form of evaluation frameworks and criteria; however, they argue that more work is needed to reach agreement about a common set of evaluation criteria. In particular, they argue that balance is needed between generic and specific frameworks.

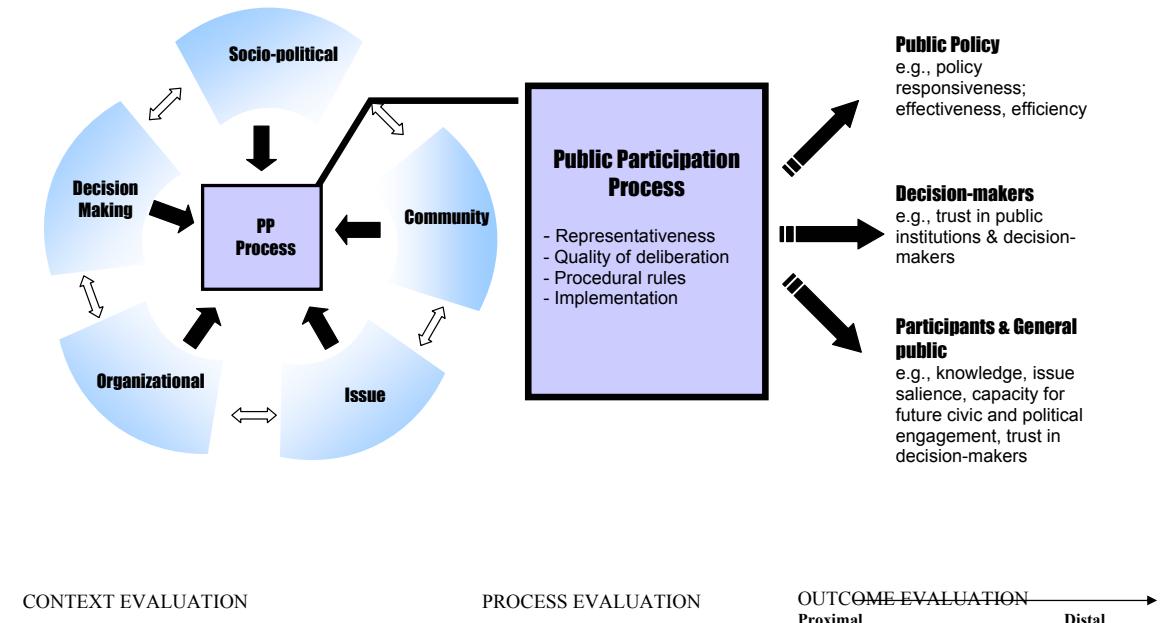


Figure 4: A conceptual map of public participation evaluation

Source: Abelson & Gauvin 2006, p. 18.

Poorly conceived public engagement initiatives and a lack of credible evaluation were identified as key reasons for diminishing value of the engagement activities (CPRN 2003). The importance of stakeholder mapping and engagement of all levels of society, in a cultural appropriate manner, are also stressed (CPRN 2003).

## 5.5 Evaluation of the engagement in development projects

A large body of literature deals with various aspects of engagement in development projects. It covers areas of engagement in implementing the projects, monitoring of engagement related to achieving project outcomes, as well as participatory monitoring. Some learnings from those experiences, deemed relevant to the context of this report, are reported here.

Throughout Central America, changes in legislative and international funding arrangements have opened opportunities for the communities to play a greater role in defining their own future and development processes. Four main impacts on the communities have been highlighted (Espinoza Alzate 2000):

- strengthening community participation
- increasing public accountability
- becoming better decision makers and managers
- changing power relationships and creating horizontal relationships.

Gaventa and Blauert (2000) argue that any process of learning and knowledge creation is deeply social and political, as it will eminently involve the questions of voice and power. Thus they argue that the success for the process lies in resolving sensitivities related to responsibility, accountability and performance in positive and learning rather than threatening ways.

The building block conceptualisation developed by Symes and Jasser (2000) is presented in Figure 5. The blocks sit on the foundation of the ‘culture of participation’ and build up, starting from the development of the appropriate methods, skills and team work. At the next level, the opportunities are identified and the framework is developed.

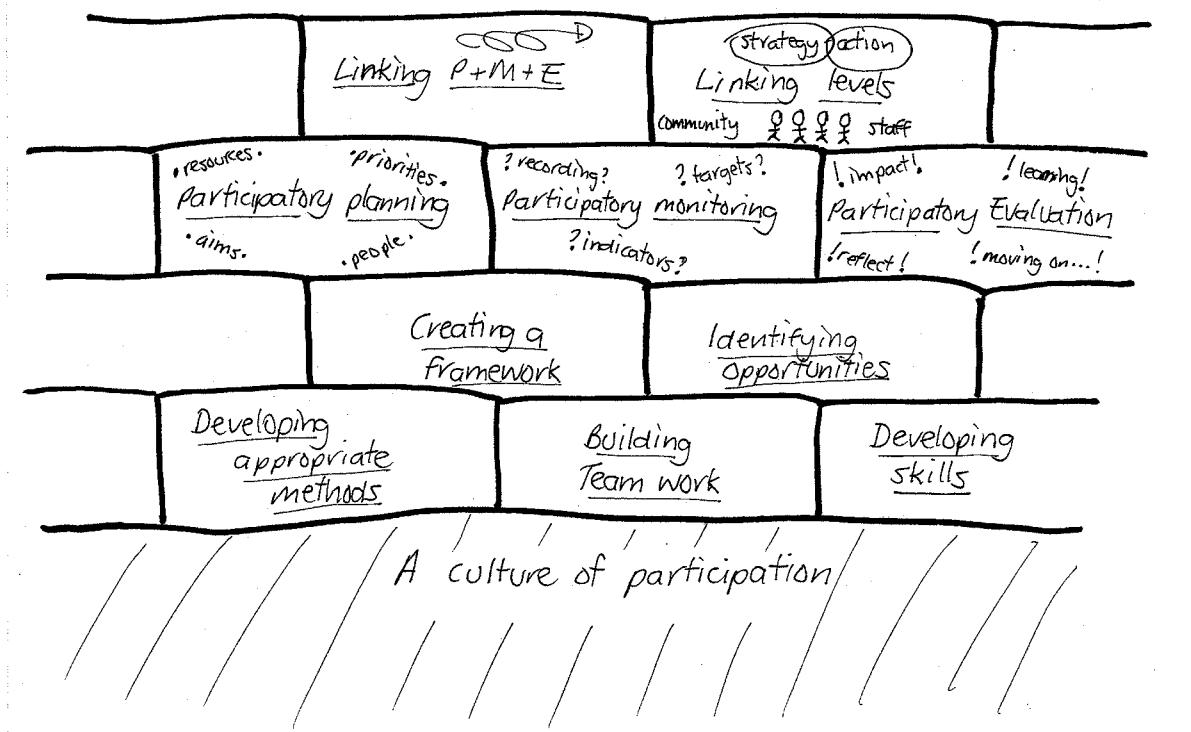


Figure 5: The building blocks of the participatory planning, monitoring and evaluation

Source: adapted from Symes & Jasser 2000, p. 140.

The elements of planning, monitoring and evaluation are then strengthened, leading to the ‘linking’ level. The linking level addresses both links within organisational operations and links between planning, monitoring and evaluation. This framework was developed in response to the frustration staff were experiencing on the ground using the LOG frames. The points identified as the main reasons for breaking away with the LOG frame were (Symes & Jasser 2000):

- LOG frames were found to be not very logical in practical situations: the way of thinking and looking into the issues required to successfully set up the LOG frames was often found to be alien to the communities. In addition, goals, outputs, etc, were often difficult to pre-define in the detail required for successful use of LOG frame approach.
- LOG frames promote M&E as a checking and auditing mechanism, rather than as a process of learning from the experiences. Change and adaptation are discouraged. Review of the projects implemented exactly as planned revealed that this ‘success’ had more to do with lack of monitoring than with reality.

Oakley (1991), in his comprehensive discussion of participation in rural development projects, stresses the importance of qualitative methods for evaluating participation. He argues that evaluating participation needs to be concerned with the analysis of a dynamic, qualitative process and not merely to measure static physical outcomes. He does, however, acknowledge the difficulty of achieving this, and thus proposes two broad outcomes of participation that could serve as foci for evaluation (Oakley 1991, p. 241):

- the quantitative and more tangible or physical outcomes which will be readily visible and are susceptible to statistical measurements, (the dimension of participation that can be easily evaluated by existing techniques)
- outcomes more related to participation as a qualitative process of change. These outcomes might be less visible, will be less tangible and will demand particular techniques for their evaluation.

Thus he argues that both the tangible changes (such as change in resource condition) and intangible changes (such as increased level of awareness) need to be monitored if we are to obtain a fuller indication of the success.

In addition to capturing both qualitative and quantitative dimensions, Oakley (1991) concludes that evaluation also needs to be dynamic rather than static; that it has central importance and assumes good monitoring; and that it should be participatory itself. He also proposes two sets of indicators that could be monitored:

- Quantitative indicators: economic, in terms of benefits from the projects; organisational, in terms of involvement in the organisational issues; and development momentum, in terms of involvement in and awareness of project activities.
- Quantitative indicators: organisational growth, in terms of emerging leadership structure, allocation of roles, etc; group behaviour, in terms of changing nature of involvement, emerging sense of collective, etc; and group self-reliance, in terms of knowledge and understanding of policies and programs, formalisation of identity, etc.

The evaluation of participation is presented as spidergrams with a 5- or 7-point scale on each leg, consisting of the various indicators recorded.

## 6. Discussion and conclusions

Key learnings from the literature discussed in section 6.1. The conceptual framework for monitoring and evaluation of engagement (MEE) in the remote regions is then proposed in section 6.2. This framework is based on the literature findings only. The proposed conceptual framework should be tested against on-ground findings of this project as a next research step.

### 6.1 Learnings from the literature for the LEB context

The very absence of monitoring in most participatory projects in the past has been identified as potentially the largest gap in the methodological knowledge about the engagement processes (Abbot & Guijt 1998, Guijt 1998, Buchy & Hoverman 2000, Lane 2005, Reddel & Woolcock 2004).

Four broad reasons why government might want to get the public engaged in a particular process can be summarised as follows (Lane 2005, Rosenstrom & Kyllonen 2007, Warburton et al. 2006): (1) fairness and improved governance; (2) social learning and improved social capital; (3) improved quality of delivery or service; and (4) improved competence and capacity building.

What we monitor in engagement will therefore fundamentally depend on core reasons for the engagement. In recent years, there is a notable shift towards monitoring of learning, in both communities and within organisations; applying of lessons; capacity or competence building; and joint actions to determine agreed outcomes (Mahanty et al. 2007). Reasons for engagement will play a large role in what is monitored, as well as in determining the level of engagement (Buchy & Hoverman 2000, Stalker Prokopy 2005).

It is also important to acknowledge that there are two general reasons for monitoring: monitoring for auditing purposes, where the funding body requires that the implementing body and/or stakeholders monitor the engagement process and output in order to ensure compliance with the finding contracts; and monitoring for evaluation and learning, where the implementing body and stakeholders are interested in monitoring the quality of their actions and deliverables in order to learn and improve in the future.

Monitoring is a process and not a single action, and therefore should occur at different stages of the engagement process. Stages in monitoring can be summarised as monitoring of inputs, process, outputs, outcomes, trends and monitoring of unexpected consequences (Bond et al. 2006, Cuthill 2003, Johnson 2004, MED 2004). Several cautionary notes have been raised on this subject. Most notably, there is a need to consider time frames, that is, separate between the shorter- and longer-term changes. Also, several authors have cautioned about the 'causality gap', that is, the potential difficulty of establishing with confidence that changes, particularly delayed ones, result directly from a specific intervention or action (Bellamy et al. 1999, Earl et al. 2001, Mahanty et al. 2007, MED 2004, Mee 2005, O'Riordan 2005, UNDP nd.).

However, there is a general agreement that any monitoring system, engagement monitoring included, needs to be valid, relevant, specific, timely, reliable, sensitive, feasible and cost-effective (MED 2004, UNDP nd.). Several 'features of the system' or 'principles of good practice' are proposed (Bond et al. 2006, Krick et al. 2005, MED 2004, Syme and Sadler 1994, UNDP nd., Warburton et al. 2006), such as:

- The monitoring and evaluation system itself should be participatory and should fully involve different project stakeholder groups and staff throughout the system stages. The system should be user friendly and culturally sensitive.
- Criteria to demonstrate if objectives were met should be agreed at the outset by all stakeholder groups concerned. The criteria should be well thought through: they should focus on both short-term and long-term views; should be both qualitative and quantitative; should consider wider context of external drivers, etc.
- The system should be planned for all stages of engagement and should allow for changes in process and methods if needed. Monitoring should be treated as an integral part of the projects, and evaluations should occur over the period of time as a continuous effort.
- Plans should include the purpose, process, responsibilities, resources, methodologies, etc.
- Findings should be recorded, communicated and used as a basis for future improvements. Principles of adaptive management should be followed.
- Efforts should be balanced in terms of costs versus benefits, and should concentrate on provision of useful information. The key achievement is to collect and analyse a minimum but sufficient amount of data and information.

The NRM bodies are likely to be familiar with and adhere to the principles of best practice as part of their overall monitoring, evaluation, reporting and improvement (MERI) system.

Several references stress that there is no 'one size fits all' generic approach to monitoring and evaluation of engagement processes, nor is there a generic set of indicators (MED 2004, Warburton 2007, Krick 2005, UNDP nd., Buchy & Race 2001). Rather, the above principles of good practice

should be used in development of the project-specific engagement process and monitoring and evaluation plan. Specific priorities for the monitoring need to be well thought about and set. The plan needs to target specific interests at the specific scale, and needs to monitor the specific stages of the activities. In addition, the specific circumstances of the organisation related to the human, financial and other capitals are crucial for creation of feasible plans.

## 6.2 Conceptual framework for monitoring engagement in remote regions

Generic principles of good practice for monitoring and evaluation of engagement (MEE) have been summarised in the previous section. However, several other aspects of planning should be taken into account when planning for engagement in NRM in remote regions. Figure 5 provides a conceptual framework developed to guide the planning process. The framework proposes to follow the principles of 'good practice', but also to take into account the variety of interests of different stakeholders and the specificities of desert conditions (desert drivers). The principles of good practice, stakeholder interests and desert drivers need to be viewed in the context of the three-dimensional system they reside within: the time scale, the geographic scale and the societal/institutional scale. Only by taking all of those into account can a tailor-made, efficient and effective engagement monitoring plan be created.

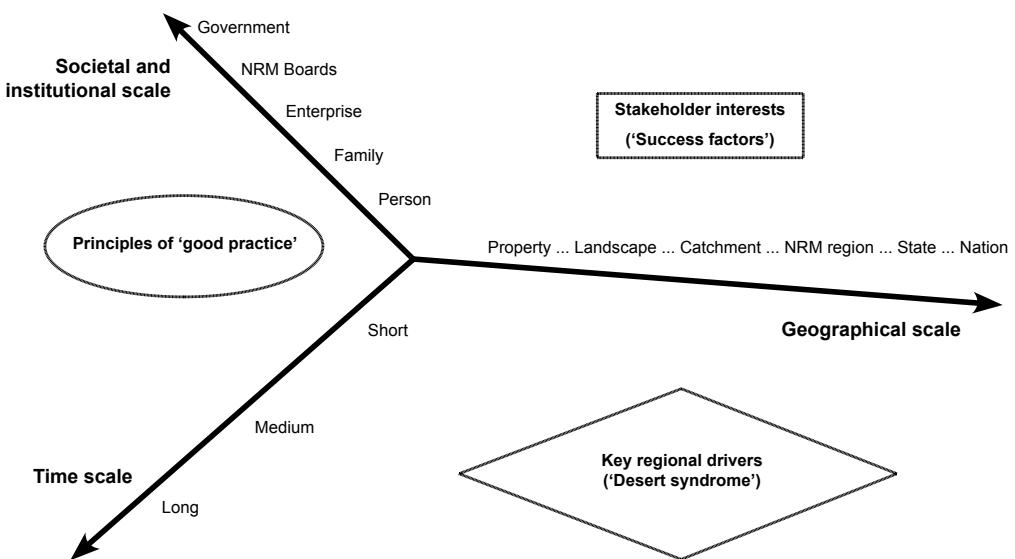


Figure 6: Conceptual framework for monitoring of engagement

Note: Successful monitoring of engagement needs to take into account principles of good monitoring practice, the variety of stakeholder interests and desert drivers, and needs to address them at the right geographic, institutional and time scale

Ways in which organisations can address their monitoring needs are many. The conceptual framework presented in Figure 6 provides a reminder of the issues that should be thought about and taken into account when devising a plan for monitoring of engagement.

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## 8. Useful links

Further details and links to the international organisations/networks cited in this report or relevant to the subject of stakeholder engagement:

### **AccountAbility/Institute of Social and Ethical Accountability**

<http://www.accountability.org.uk/default.asp>

AccountAbility is an international, not-for-profit, professional institute dedicated to the promotion of social, ethical and overall organisational accountability, a precondition for achieving sustainable development and the AA1000 Series of standards. Their AA1000 standards include specific criteria for stakeholder engagement.

### **Business for Social Responsibility**

<http://www.bsr.org>

Business for Social Responsibility (BSR) is a global non-profit organisation that helps member companies achieve commercial success in ways that respect ethical values, people, communities and the environment. The site contains references on stakeholder engagement.

### **The Stakeholder Alliance**

<http://www.stakeholderalliance.org>

The Stakeholder Alliance is an association of organisations and individuals that promote the interests of corporate stakeholders: the employees, customers, communities, stockholders, suppliers and the greater society. The alliance promulgates the Sunshine Standards for corporate reporting to stakeholders.

### **Eldis**

<http://www.eldis.org/>

The aim of Eldis is to share the best in development policy, practice and research. The site contains a selection of publications related to all aspects of participation.

### **The International Association of Public Participation**

<http://www.iap2.org>

The official website of the International Association of Public Participation provides a collection of useful links and references related to public participation, including international conferences, training opportunities and meetings. There is also an Australasian chapter of the organisation.

### **Canadian Policy Research Network - CPRN**

A list of publications developed by the CPRN is available from their website, at:

<http://www.cprn.org/theme.cfm?theme=109&l=en>

## **Citizen Report Cards**

Learning Course: <http://www.citizenreportcard.com>

or a print version of the manual (targeting public services provision):

<http://www.citizenreportcard.com/crc/pdf/manual.pdf>

## **Most Significant Change**

Yahoo Group: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/MostSignificantChanges/>

The Most Significant Change (MSC) Technique: A guide to its use. [www.mande.co.uk/docs/MSCGuide.htm](http://www.mande.co.uk/docs/MSCGuide.htm)