

# Monitoring and evaluation methodologies for remote settings: A literature review conducted in 2010

Report to the Office of Indigenous Policy Coordination,  
Department of Families, Housing, Community Services  
and Indigenous Affairs

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## List of shortened forms

AFN	Assembly of First Nations
AFN-CPNP	Assembly of First Nations Canada Prenatal Nutrition Program
AIATSIS	Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies
ANZEA	Aotearoa New Zealand Evaluation Association
APNGIF	Australia Papua New Guinea Incentive Fund
CAT	Centre for Appropriate Technology
CBR	community-based researcher
CCB	community citizen boards
CIET	Community Information and Epidemiological Technologies
CPNP	Canada Prenatal Nutrition Program
CRC-REP	Cooperative Research Centre for Remote Economic Participation
CRG	Critical reference group
CSIRO	Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation
DEEWR	Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations
DKCRC	Desert Knowledge Cooperative Research Centre
FaHCSIA	(Department of) Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs
FRC	Families Responsibilities Commission
GRI	Global Reporting Initiative
IDRC	International Development Research Centre
M&E	monitoring and evaluation
MERI	Monitoring, Evaluation, Reporting and Improvement
MSC	Most Significant Change
NPARSD	National Partnership Agreement on Remote Service Delivery
NRM	Natural Resource Management
PAR	Participatory Action Research
PNG	Papua New Guinea
PY	Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara
RBA	Rights-based approach
RRA	Rapid Rural Appraisal
SAA	Social accounting and auditing
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SLGDFP	Sirajganj Local Governance Development Fund Project
SPeAR	Social Policy Evaluation and Research Committee
SROI	Social Return on Investment
TOC	Theory of Change
WWF Australia	World Wildlife Fund Australia

# 1. Introduction

This report meets the second milestone of the project ‘The provision of services in relation to production of a report, including literature review, analysis of results and recommendations and advice on monitoring and evaluation methodologies’ for which Ninti One has been contracted by FaHCSIA. It builds on the preliminary report and subsequent feedback from FaHCSIA, presenting the key findings of the research and providing recommendations and advice on the subject. To provide focus, some material within the preliminary report has not been carried forward into this version. It can be reviewed in the previous report.

The objectives of the project are:

1. To review policy and practice in monitoring and evaluation methodologies for programs relevant to service delivery, community engagement, and economic participation from sources in Australia and internationally
2. To identify tools and techniques that are applicable to remote settlements and suitable for work with Indigenous people
3. To recommend a practical and workable approach to monitoring and evaluation in remote Indigenous communities.

The analysis and recommendations that follow draw on the experience of Ninti One and the Desert Knowledge Cooperative Research Centre (DKCRC) in the field of community-based research, project design and planning as well as our knowledge of the perspectives of business, government and community members on remote services and programs.

This work was designed to be conducted within a short timeframe, to provide useful material to FaHCSIA staff working on new initiatives in monitoring and evaluation. As such, its contribution is to survey the literature and provide overall analysis and recommendations. A more detailed investigation of particular approaches and methodologies could certainly be undertaken as part of an extended assignment but has not been undertaken here.

## 2. The scope of monitoring and evaluation frameworks for remote settings in Australia

This section draws heavily on the review conducted by Catherine Maughan for Ninti One during 2010 (Maughan 2010). Maughan's report on monitoring and evaluation (M&E) methodologies presents the following menu of techniques that may be used in M&E:

1. Monitoring, Evaluation, Reporting and Improvement (MERI) framework – promotes learning and adaptive management in response to progressive M&E. Used almost exclusively in Australia in Natural Resource Management (NRM) programs.
2. Program logic – graphically depicts the cause-and-effect relationships between program activities, outputs, intermediate outcomes and longer-term desired outcomes.
3. Theory of Change (TOC) – uses backwards mapping, requiring planners to think in backward steps from the long-term goal to the intermediate and then early-term changes that would be required to cause the desired change.
4. Social accounting and auditing (SAA) – involves measuring the impact organisations have on their environment in three ways: social, environmental and financial. SAA does not specify which measurement techniques to use, so has limited capacity for comparability and benchmarking.
5. Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) – sets out the principles and indicators that organisations use to measure and report their economic, environmental and social performance and so can be used for benchmarking. GRI does not provide for accreditation or external evaluation unless combined with other tools.
6. Social Return on Investment (SROI) – uses money as the common unit of analysis to measure the value of something, whether it be economic, social-economic or purely social. SROI calculates cost savings (to governments) in the form of decreased public expenditure and increased revenues via the extra income tax from people who are now employed who were previously unemployed. The kernel of SROI analysis is the SROI ratio. The calculations are only as good as the assumptions made about the economic value of social impacts.
7. Most Significant Change (MSC) – Involves the collection of change stories from people involved in programs and the systematic selection of the most significant of those stories by panels. As MSC does not use pre-defined indicators, especially ones that are counted and measured, it is more suited to monitoring that focuses on learning rather than financial accountability.

(Maughan 2010: 1)

Maughan later clarifies that the first four techniques are best described as '**frameworks**', or ways of thinking, designing, planning, and implementing M&E, while the latter three are better described as '**methods**', or tools and indicators that can be used to assess impact or performance.

Maughan cites a seven-step process developed by Clear Horizons (2008) which is highly instructive to the objectives of this project for FaHCSIA. The approach notes that each framework and method has its benefits and limitations, and it is therefore strategic for an organisation to first focus on clarifying the purpose of the monitoring and evaluation:



1. Scope the M&E framework
2. Clarify the logic
3. Set the measures of success
4. Develop a meaningful monitoring system
5. Develop a strategic evaluation system
6. Ensure effective reporting
7. Incorporate reflection, learning and improvement strategies.

(Maughan 2010: 2)

Having gained an introduction to the subject from the work of Maughan, the first matter to address is the precise purpose that FaHCSIA is aiming to achieve through monitoring and evaluation. We understand that the context of research being conducted by FaHCSIA under programs developed through, for example, the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Service Delivery, is likely to involve small teams of recently trained Aboriginal researchers recruited from the local community and supervised remotely by an experienced researcher. The following extracts from the brief for the research presented in this project provide further guidance:

- The term **‘meaningful comparative data’** suggests techniques that move beyond money-based measurements, such as Social Return on Investment (SROI)
- The **focus on community engagement and participation** seems relevant in weighing up various M&E options
- There is a strong emphasis on taking a **‘practical and workable’ approach**, so it is key that recommended techniques are suitable for field use in remote communities
- **Service effectiveness** is the main factor to be measured – the notion of effectiveness still requires further definition, but is likely to include timeliness, access to it by locals, cost, usability to meet local needs, and so forth.

These points will help to guide the navigation of the literature that follows.

Maughan’s report (2010) cautions against the following potential pitfalls of M&E systems:

- **Service providers may tend to measure their own outcomes rather than outcomes for service users** – it is important to keep M&E focused on the client community
- **Measuring objectives in the far future may skew findings** – when proxy indicators based on subjective social research are too heavily relied upon
- **M&E is too demanding on organisations** – numerical rigorousness must be balanced with time and energy available
- **M&E is under-resourced** – major hurdles will ensue unless appropriate resources are adequately costed and factored into operational budgets.

The four M&E frameworks identified by Maughan are summarised in greater detail as follows:

## 2.1. Monitoring, Evaluation, Reporting & Improvement (MERI)

Key characteristics of the MERI method are:

- Based on a cycle of continuous participation and communication as opposed to one evaluation event – **‘learn by doing’** approach
- Designed to **make change transparent**
- Assesses **performance and change** in terms of planned outcomes (immediate, intermediate, and long-term)
- ‘Provides **opportunities to improve program** and project design and delivery and to **reorient investment** at key decision points’ (Maughan 2010: 4)
- Can help bring about continuous improvement by **reinforcing, reviewing, and refining strategies and practices**
- Should be **streamlined and integrated** into everyday organisational activities
- **Complex capacity building may be necessary** to carry out, requiring adequate time and resources
- **Schedule and responsibilities should be made clear** – particularly with regard to implementing evaluation findings; adequate time must be allotted for this
- **Standardised outputs** in monitoring amounts to **‘good risk management for the State’** with regard to Treasury reporting (Maughan 2010: 5)
- **Strongest model for regular M&E over time** – well-suited to long-term projects
- **Used by:** agriculture and Natural Resource Management (NRM) in Australia

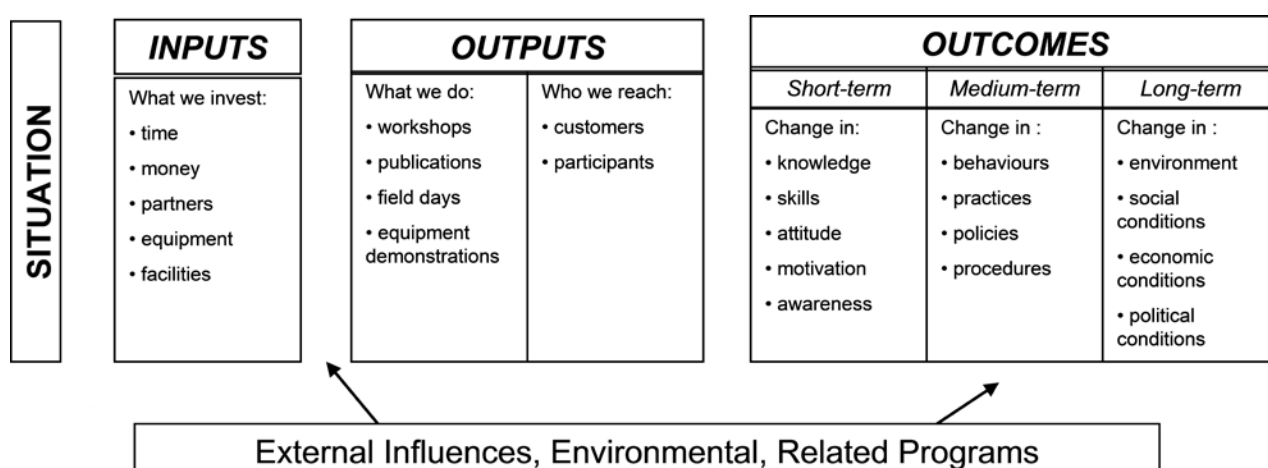
MERI clearly offers potential for FaHCSIA in its emphasis on continuous improvement as opposed to ‘one-off’ M&E, but on the other hand the realities of implementing the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Service Delivery may not provide for long-term resourcing of community researchers to undertake the kind of integrated monitoring work implied above. The complexity of training required may also be an obstacle.

## 2.2. Program Logic

Key characteristics of Program Logic approaches are:

- The use of diagrams to **graphically depict steps of the program** and to **map cause and effect** relationships
- Shows expected consequences rather than just sequence of events, so can be **useful for planning, implementation and evaluation**
- Helps organisations **identify different levels of effect** (output, impact, outcome) over time, **develop outcome measures, determine effective use of resources** for evaluation process, **clarify which strategies have the most impact** and illustrate **why certain activities** make a difference
- Can provide a **‘theory of change’** – describing how certain activities can lead to specific outcomes over time
- **Prepares organisation to develop critical measures of performance**, often in conjunction with other frameworks such as MERI or MSC
- **Diagrammatic approach** – particularly useful for participants with low literacy levels.

Program logic approaches are illustrated by the diagram below.



Maughan 2010: 6

Two **design tools** are derived from Program Logic:

1. **Logical Framework Analysis (LogFrame)** – used by international aid programs including Ausaid; ‘establishes clear measures of success at each level (inputs, outputs, outcomes, and achievement of goals)’ (Maughan 2010: 7).
  2. **Results-based accountability** – measures success relative to projected baseline (situation expected in absence of program); distinguishes between performance accountability (of specific programs) and population accountability (general effects on community); measures for quantity (how much?), quality (how well?) and overall effect (is anyone better off?), ranking the latter as top priority.
- **Key benefits:** illustrates projects in terms of wider organisational context; demonstrates rationale for particular activities; provides project summary useful for communication; and ‘facilitate[s] evaluation as a task performed by all members of a project team or organisation’ (Maughan 2010: 8). This final benefit seems **indicative of the participatory approach desired by FaHCSIA**.
  - **Key limitations:** limited to an interpretation/model of reality; based on linear mode of thinking; makes it difficult to account for unintended consequences of programs; can limit flexibility in choice of performance indicators. All of these limitations pose **potential problems for use in remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities**.
  - **Used by:** Australian Centre for International Agriculture Research, UnitingCare Burnside (Western Sydney), Westpac Foundation, Natural Resource Management (NRM), Mission Australia.

Program logic methods are used widely in development projects and programs, as well as in Australia by organisations as diverse as the Department of Agriculture and Food of the Government of Western Australia, the Aboriginal Mental Health Worker Program of the General Practice Network NT and Bushlight. However, they do require an investment of time by researchers to enable them to become used to the language and terminology. The principles of program logic may therefore be more relevant to FaHCSIA’s aims than the detailed approach, although a question remains as to whether the principles can be applied without losing the rigour that comes from the approach as a whole.

## 2.3. Theory of Change

- **Similar to Program Logic**, it diagrams program steps and maps cause and effect relationships
- **Differs from Program Logic** in that it moves in backwards steps from long-term goals to intermediate and then immediate changes required to meet goals
- **Each outcome is linked to an intervention**, illustrating the complex activity required to achieve change
- **Key benefits:** benefits of program logic + prompts shift in thinking from ‘what are we doing?’ to ‘what is needed to bring about desired change?’ This technique may be useful if FaHCSIA anticipates the need for change in its programs
- **Key limitations:** diagrams reflecting true complexity of situation may become very complicated; specific details about how to achieve goals may not become apparent until implementation.

In short, the value of working through a theory of change is undoubted, but is likely to be more useful at the strategic level of FaHCSIA’s work rather than the implementation of M&E on the ground.

## 2.4. Social Accounting and Auditing (SAA)

- Expands on **financial** reporting to also include **social** and **environmental** impacts
- Provides methods for **social accounting that can be objectively verified** through external, quality-assured auditing processes
- Based on overarching principle of aiming for **continual performance improvement** with regard to social impacts; this should be:
  - Multi-perspective – reflecting views of all stakeholders
  - Comprehensive – reporting all organisation’s issues and impacts
  - Regular – embed into organisational culture
  - Comparative – allows organisation to compare performance to external benchmarks, as well as performance of similar organisations
  - Verified and assured – by qualified people with no vested interests
  - Disclosed – transparent and accountable to all stakeholders.
- **Key benefits:** holistic and regular process, emphasises importance of service-user involvement; allows service-users to read results; flexibility in approaching and reporting processes; emphasises transparency; utilises financial reporting framework that is familiar to many agencies. These benefits **indicate that SAA may provide a good bridge between cultures for FaHCSIA**, allowing for both acceptability in a mainstream government agency and flexibility/tailoring for the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities
- **Key limitations:** sometimes resource-intensive; lack of guidance on measurement techniques; not officially recognised by funders/lenders; non-standard measurement techniques can limit comparability
- **Used by:** Westpac and Melaney Credit Union financial services, NSW State Forests, Department of Family and Community Services, Mission Australia, BP Australia, Newmont, The Body Shop (note: many of these organisations have not followed through with the crucial final step of independent auditing)
- The figure below (from Social Audit Network) **illustrates the SAA process:**

Produce a **Mission Statement** eg. 'Our organisation improves the quality of life for residents by creating local employment and providing services. ... **Values** should underpin all activities and need to be demonstrated. (Values and objectives could be consulted on.) **Stakeholders** should be consulted and could be customers, staff, volunteers, suppliers etc.

OBJECTIVES	Are achieved by	ACTIVITIES	Which are monitored to produce	SOCIAL BOOK-KEEPING RECORDS/INDICATORS These are both quantitative and qualitative
Example: To create jobs for local unemployed people	→	by- Offering jobs in the organisation Offering help and advice	→	QUANTATIVE-Number of people employed, number advised QUALITATIVE-Opinions and views collected from staff
Example: To be a good employer	→	by- Providing training Offering career advice	→	QUANTATIVE- Hours of training, No. of advice sessions QUALITATIVE- Opinions and views collected from staff

**Draft social accounts** are produced at the end of the year by collecting together the social book-keeping. They should explain the performance of the organisation against its objectives and its values.

A **Social Audit Panel**, chaired by an approved social auditor, checks the draft social accounts and verifies the findings from the questionnaires, etc. The **Social Audit Panel** is independent and checks that the **Draft Social Accounts** are a) based on data which has been competently gathered and reasonably interpreted and b) a true reflection of what the organisation has done in the social audit period.

The organisation will take notice of the recommendations of the **Social Audit Panel**, make alterations and present revised social accounts. A **Social Audit Statement** may then be then issued. The audited **Social Accounts (Social Audit Report)** may then be condensed into a **Summary Version** and distributed widely. The report may lead to changes in future objectives and practices ... and the cycle continues.

The published **Social Audit Report** should go alongside the annual accounts to give a true picture of the organisation's activities.

**Hints:** keep methods of recording SIMPLE and don't keep irrelevant information, use a variety of consultation techniques (questionnaires and interviews) and ensure questions are clear and relevant.

Source: Social Audit Network 2009, cited in Maughan 2010: 10

The three methods of social accounting outlined by Maughan are summarised in greater detail below:

### 1. Global Reporting Initiative (GRI)

- Most widely used standardised **sustainability reporting mechanism** – sets out principles and indicators for measuring economic, environmental, and social performance
- **Sustainability Reporting Guidelines** – developed through multi-stakeholder consensus-based approach; enable meaningful, public, and transparent disclosure on organisational performance
- **Enables organisations** – to take a proactive reporting role to manage impacts; practice transparency and accountability; monitor and compare performance year to year and between organisations, based on broad theme (i.e. social performance) or specific issue (i.e. labour conditions).

- **Key benefits:** holistic method; measures broad performance; generally accepted and widely used, allowing for both internal and external comparative analysis; indicators can be useful in helping employees better understand and contribute to better outcomes; sectoral and geographical flexibility; can be used to support other tools such as SAA
- **Key limitations:** can be labour intensive; does not provide for external evaluation; does not necessarily focus on positive outcomes
- **Used by:** University of Southern Queensland, ANZ, NAB, Westpac, FaHCSIA, Landcare Australia, CSIRO, BHP, Rio Tinto, Woolworths, Telstra, Optus

The Global Reporting Initiative is relevant to organisational performance but likely to be less useful when applied to community-based monitoring of remote services.

## 2. Social Return on Investment (SROI)

- Uses **money as a common unit of analysis to estimate social value** of investment – as such, it is the only method that allows for financial measurement of social impacts
- Two **key assumptions**:
  - ‘There is more to value creation than purely economic value’ (p. 15)
  - Social value translates into economic value for governments, both in the form of expenditure savings and increased tax revenues.
- **Analysis based on the SROI ratio** depicted below; a ratio of 5:1 means that \$5 of social value is generated for each \$1 invested.

$$\text{SROI ratio} = \frac{\text{net present value of benefits}}{\text{net present value of inputs (investments)}}$$

- **Key benefits:** process based on stakeholder engagement; language widely understood by investors; can help potential customers develop new ways to define what they want from contracts; can be useful in strategic management, particularly to determine whether resources can be better utilised; availability of external auditing bodies; enables comparison across organisations.
- **Key limitations:** resource intensive; depends on quality of assumptions with regard to outcomes, time to accomplish outcomes, and monetary values assigned to outcomes; danger of overemphasising the ratio, which is ‘only meaningful within the wider narrative about the organisation’ (Maughan 2010:16); outcome evaluation that yields little to no insight into specific processes.
- **Used by:** Social Ventures Australia, Indigenous Business Australia (to be implemented in 2009/10), Beacon Foundation, the GPT Group (property group).

Although SROI offers real value in its emphasis on comparing and measuring a range of non-financial results (which are likely to be important to service users, for example), alone it would be largely inadequate to evaluate FaHCSIA programs because it under-emphasises the processes that lead to results. It is these processes, including communication between service users and providers, decision-making and so on, that have repeatedly been demonstrated by our work to be critical to achieving improved services (see Fisher et al. 2010).



### 3. Most Significant Change (MSC)

- Collection of stories and **systematic selection** of the most significant cases of change
- **Participatory evaluation** – stakeholders are involved in collecting, selecting, and analysing data; first searching for impact stories then **holding in-depth panel discussions about the value of reported changes**
- **Suited to M&E that is:** focused on learning rather than **pure accountability**; **interested** in effectiveness of intervention; keen to include non-professional voices; wishing to help stakeholder teams focus on program impact. **This indicates good suitability to FaHCSIA's objective of deriving a participatory M&E process**, although the method appears inadequate on its own since services imply rigorous quantitative measures too
- **Key benefits** apply to projects that are complex, producing diverse outcomes; large and multi-layered; social-change focused; based on principles of participation; designed with high levels of contact between staff and participants; have trouble using conventional monitoring methods
- **Key limitations:** yield no quantitative outcomes, but can be used along with other measurements such as SROI
- **Used by:** WWF Australia, Victorian Department of Primary Industries, Stronger Smarter Institute, National Disability Services, DEEWR.

While it is clear that stories (or 'yarning') are important to many Aboriginal people as a way of discussing a subject, we caution against jumping into MSC methods as the obvious answer to the particular needs of FaHCSIA in remote services and other programs. It is more likely that MSC will provide useful approaches to discuss a subject with individuals and groups rather than the more rigorous overall qualitative and quantitative assessment required by FaHCSIA, which focuses on achievement against pre-determined and agreed indicators.

## 2.5. The application of monitoring and evaluation frameworks in remote Australia

Moving on to analyse current use in Australia, Maughan notes that, in its recent report on the contribution of the not-for-profit sector, the Productivity Commission has recently derived a reporting mechanism to prompt development of common indicators for four categories of activity (Productivity Commission 2010):

- Service delivery
- Exerting influence and promoting change
- Connecting the community
- Enhancing the community endowment.

This process uses a framework as a reporting mechanism, but this is not intended for measurement or diagnostic purposes.

The Commission decided that **a number of measurement techniques are suitable** for use with the above framework, and stated that they have no preference for which technique is used, as all have both benefits and drawbacks. Measurement approaches cited by the Commission included cost-benefit analysis; program logic (both LogFrame and Rights-based approach); SAA; and SROI.

The Cooperative Research Centre for Remote Economic Participation (CRC-REP) projects its **outputs/outcomes indicators**, utilising the Productivity Commission's model, as follows:

- Service delivery
  - Outputs – major users of research, i.e. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, mining companies, government agencies
  - Outcomes – improvements in employment due to job creation
- Connecting the community
  - Outputs – participation in events and activities
  - Outcomes – community engagement with government and mining companies
- Influence and change
  - Outputs – models and case studies produced
  - Outcomes – how research is used in policy, i.e. social and education interventions
- Enhancing community endowments
  - Outputs – i.e. number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people trained as field researchers
  - Outcomes – maintaining Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge and biodiversity.

Maughan cites the following impacts flowing from these outputs and outcomes, stipulating that impacts (as opposed to activities or outputs) are both most important and most difficult to measure. They include high self-esteem, cohesion, sense of purpose, safety from harm, social and emotional wellbeing, and increased ability to exert influence.

The research by CRC-REP that commenced in 2011 across a wide program of education, training, employment and enterprise topics includes research on the relationships between health, wellbeing, employment and education in remote Australian communities. It aims to generate improvement in the measuring of impacts. Maughan notes that the study has the potential to 'refine and improve the assigned monetary value of social outcomes as used in calculating the ... SROI' (Maughan 2010: 22).

In her work for Ninti One, Maughan **recommends that CRC-REP adopts a comprehensive M&E strategy** that includes use of the following elements:

- MERI framework is suggested as the strongest for ensuring regular M&E over a long-term research project
- Program logic is suggested to allow people with low English literacy to participate 'on equal footing'
- SROI is suggested for financial measurements
- MSC is suggested as a qualitative form of measurement, necessary for better understanding how research will be utilised by end-users.

The approach of combining methods is one that we also consider offers potential to FaHCSIA to both spread and reduce risk as well as maintain the right balance of M&E rigour with techniques suitable for newly trained researchers to use. However, the high-level complexity that is implied by combining methods would not be appropriate for community-based research on remote services. Instead, we should aim to bring together



principles and basic techniques that will achieve the desired results, recognising that some research rigour will need to be sacrificed.

Reinforcing the point, Maughan suggests that whatever methods are employed, adequate time and resources must be allocated in planning and budgeting for proper implementation, including training of staff in chosen M&E methods. This aim is more achievable in remote communities if the complexity of chosen methods is kept within sensible limits.

The research of the Desert Knowledge CRC on demand-responsive approaches to desert services also notes the following as a potential weakness of the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Service Delivery (NPARSD):

... government capacity to support the elements of monitoring, evaluation, baseline mapping and improved community engagement that require specialised skills are not sustainable in the longer-term.

(Fisher et al. 2010: 22).

These comments indicate the importance of proposing an M&E system that can be **readily integrated** into program models for the long-term. It also indicates the importance of making sure that M&E resources are **appropriately budgeted** and planned for, including **training** in any specialised skills needed to carry out M&E processes.

## 2.6 Towards an approach for use in remote settings

In conclusion, using the Clear Horizons process we can begin to determine the following initial points of guidance for the project:

**Step 1 – Scope of M&E:** FaHCSIA is looking to measure the effectiveness of service delivery. Effectiveness might be measured in terms of access, cost and useability by community members.

**Step 2 – Clarify logic:** Desired goals of the NPARSD include delivering services that are more accessible and culturally and geographically suitable, a greater range of services, higher levels of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership, better coordination of services, and greater social and economic participation by community members (drawn from summary in Fisher et al. 2010: 20–21).

**Step 3 – Measures of success:** Possibilities here include standard of service, clarity of roles and responsibilities across levels of government, function and accountability of community organisations, how ‘user friendly’ services are, level of connection and communication between government services, whether skills and capacity are being developed in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, and stability of local workforce (Fisher et al. 2010: 21). Obviously these would need to be further specified to include details and timelines. This aspect of M&E is the one that will require the closest attention. We return to the subject later in the report.

Additional points to note are that Sullivan suggests **involving NGOs** in the monitoring process (cited in Fisher et al. 2010: 31). It should also be noted that the DKCRC report expresses the following caution about M&E processes:

When evaluation practice emphasises compliance with supply-side requirements alone, a whole piece of the picture is overlooked. There is **little assessment of achievements by and for users of services** and the voices of service users are rarely heard. Effective service evaluation would enable the full picture to be painted, with pointers for improvement and lessons for future practice identified. And yet evaluation is too often seen as a mystical art that is threatening at best and disruptive at worst. It is something that funders do to us and a reason to put up defences. **Standardised and simplified** approaches to service evaluation that are established as **part of ongoing monitoring and evaluation practice** would open **opportunities for replication** that are currently stifled (Fisher et al. 2010: 79).

It also points out that:

An important emphasis is on ‘evaluating programs and services from **multiple perspectives** including from the client, Aboriginal communities and government perspectives and incorporating lessons into future program and services design’, a focus of new programs being implemented in selected communities in 2010 ... Of course, the quality of these processes will depend on the **quality of the engagement** achieved with Aboriginal people (Fisher et al. 2010: 80).

The importance of including high-level goals in M&E is emphasised in the following passage:

A successful shift of emphasis towards longer-term social and economic objectives can only take place if strategic matters are giving proper emphasis in remote service planning, design and delivery ... It means breaking through the strategy ceiling in services so that **higher-level goals can be properly addressed and therefore measured in the monitoring and evaluation** of service outcomes (Fisher et al. 2010: 95).

To close the first part of this report and drawing from these passages and the Maughan report, the chart below summarises the points to aim for and to avoid in developing an M&E process:

AIM TO:	AVOID:
Include M&E as part of ongoing practice	M&E as one-time event
Standardise and simplify	Being disruptive to service delivery
Open opportunities for replication; recognise good practice	Audit-style processes that emphasise assessment alone
Achieve participation from service users	Objective approaches that under-value relationships and in which the researcher is a detached observer
Focus on demand-side requirements; aim for quality engagement in M&E process and obtain multiple perspectives	Focusing on supply-side requirements
Seek out lessons for improved practice	Playing the ‘blame game’
Budget and plan for adequate time and resources – including training where necessary	Rushing the process at the expense of implementing evaluation findings
Include high-level (long-term) goals	Micro-level snapshots of progress that are disconnected from policy and strategy
Involve NGOs as independent auditors?	Limited engagement with intermediary organisations

### 3. Experience of international development agencies in monitoring and evaluation frameworks

In this section we review a sample of the approaches to monitoring and evaluation of programs designed and implemented by agencies working in international development.

#### 3.1. World Bank

World Bank literature distinguishes between traditional ‘**implementation-focused**’ M&E systems, which are designed to assess compliance, and ‘**results-based**’ M&E, which seeks better understanding of the success or failures of policies, programs or projects. ‘A results-based system provides feedback on the actual outcomes and goals of government actions’ and is ‘a continuous process of collecting and analysing information to compare how well a project, program, or policy is being implemented against expected results’ (Kusek & Rist 2004: 15–16).

Kusek & Rist (2004: 17) provide the following comparison between the two types of M&E in the box below. Australia is identified by the World Bank as a country with comparatively strong M&E systems.

#### *Key features of Implementation Monitoring versus Results Monitoring*

##### *Elements of Implementation Monitoring (traditionally used for projects)*

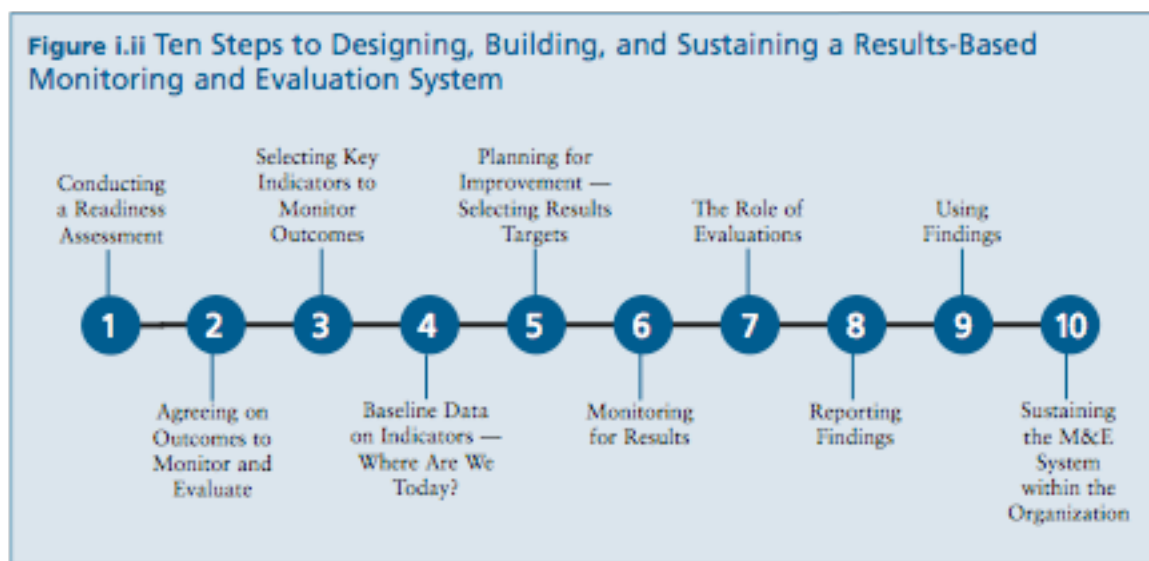
- Description of the problem or situation before the intervention
- Benchmarks for activities and immediate outputs
- Data collection on inputs, activities, and immediate outputs
- Systematic reporting on provision of inputs
- Systematic reporting on production of outputs
- Directly linked to a discrete intervention (or series of interventions)
- Designed to provide information on administrative, implementation and management issues as opposed to broader development effectiveness issues.

##### *Elements of Results Monitoring (used for a range of interventions and strategies)*

- Baseline data to describe the problem or situation before the intervention
- Indicators for outcomes
- Data collection on outputs and how and whether they contribute towards achievement of outcomes
- More focus on perceptions of change among stakeholders
- Systemic reporting with more qualitative and quantitative information on the progress towards outcomes
- Done in conjunction with strategic partners
- Captures information on success or failure of partnership strategy in achieving desired outcomes.

Source: Adapted from Fukuda-Parr, Lopes, and Malk 2002, p.11

The World Bank report also provides the following diagram of the stages of designing, implementing and sustaining an effective M&E system:



(Kusek & Rist 2004: 25)

With regard to Step Ten, Kusek and Rist outline six critical **steps for sustaining M&E** systems and stimulating positive cultural change in governments and organisations, which we have summarised in the report that preceded this one.

The World Bank is an authority in monitoring and evaluation of large and complex programs and therefore its advice is important, if not always transferable to remote Australia. For the purposes of our research and the needs of FaHCSIA, key points to note are in steps 1 to 3 of the above diagram. Assessing readiness for M&E, deciding on the desired outcomes of remote services and then identifying indicators associated with those outcomes are critically important.

### 3.2. AusAID

Following on from our comments in the previous paragraph, logical framework (or logframe) methods do encourage the rigour required in selecting outcomes and then deciding on the indicators to be measured. AusAID's guidance on activity-level M&E includes an example logframe matrix, provided below:

Design Logic	Indicators	Means of verification	Assumptions
Goal	Impact Indicators	Source/method	Development assumptions
Objective (& Components, if appropriate)	Objective Indicators	Source/method	Intervention assumptions
Outputs	Progress Indicators	Source/method	Management assumptions

From AusAID (n.d)

The left-hand column is designed to explain a theory of change, expressing anticipated cause and effect relationships. The right-hand column describes factors that may inhibit change, which are generally beyond the organisation's control, and require monitoring. The middle two columns provide a measurement framework. The model presents responses to four questions:

1. What are we trying to achieve?
2. How will we know if we're successful?
3. Where is the information coming from to demonstrate success?
4. What factors might inhibit success?

AusAID indicates that logframes are **useful for achieving agreement on program logic** from a wide range of stakeholders, and that it is 'less good' when: (1) the problem programs intend to influence are unclear; (2) where the outputs of activities are not fixed in advance; (3) where open-ended inquiry is more important; (4) where high level objectives are being sought out through diffused action. They specify that 'presentation of the design logic should match the nature of the activity' (AusAID n.d.: 8).

On the principle we have espoused earlier in this report, namely that one single method alone will not provide all that is required to effectively monitor and evaluate services in remote settings, AusAID's analysis does reinforce the case for logical framework methods being a part of the mix considered by FaHCSIA. The four areas of potential weakness in the application of logframes described in the previous paragraph are relevant to remote settings but are not major issues. They are worth taking into account in the M&E model that is developed.

Examples and explanations of several AusAID framework tables, including examples of 'M&E Framework', 'Schedule of Reports', 'Implementation Schedule' and 'Risk Matrix' are provided in the previous report.

### 3.3. USAID

USAID recommends the use of **Rapid Appraisal Methods** in conducting participatory evaluation methods. Rapid Appraisal Methods are relatively quick and cost-effective, but suffer from a lack of reliability and validity if not conducted properly. A list of Rapid Appraisal Methods is in the box to the right (USAID 1996: 4).

In USAID's 2010 Tips on Rapid Appraisal, two additional methods were added:

1. **Transect walks** – a local resident, generally a key informant, walks an evaluator through the centre of town, pointing out key sites, neighborhoods, and businesses relevant to the evaluation.
2. **Collecting secondary data** – on-site collection of relevant data conducted by other organisations, such as health statistics, loan info, etc.

**Triangulation**, comparison of data collected through more than one method, is recommended to **increase validity and reliability and decrease bias**. When data collected from different methods is consistent, this indicates a high level of reliability, whereas inconsistent data can reveal biases. A Summary (from USAID) detailing the methods in this report indicates how various methods can be used to cross-check others.

Our assessment is that Rapid Rural Appraisal (a subset of Rapid Appraisal Methods, appropriate in rural contexts) offers some valuable techniques to use within a framework that provides an overall method for monitoring and evaluating remote services.

#### Rapid Appraisal Methods

**Key informant interviews.** This involves interviewing 15–35 individuals selected for their knowledge and experience in a topic of interest. Interviews are qualitative, in-depth, and semi-structured. They rely on interview guides that list topics or open-ended questions. The interviewer subtly probes the informant to elicit information, opinions and experiences.

**Focus group interviews.** In these, 8–12 carefully selected participants freely discuss issues, ideas and experiences among themselves. A moderator introduces the subject, keeps the discussion going, and tries to prevent domination of the discussion by a few participants. Focus groups should be homogeneous, with participants of similar backgrounds as much as possible.

**Community group interviews.** These take place at public meetings open to all community members. The primary interaction is between the participants and the interviewer, who presides over the meeting and asks questions, following a carefully prepared questionnaire.

**Direct Observation.** Using a detailed observation form, observers record what they see and hear at a program site. The information may be about physical surroundings or about ongoing activities, processes, or discussions.

**Minisurveys.** These are usually based on a structured questionnaire with a limited number of mostly close-ended questions. They are usually administered to 25–50 people. Respondents may be selected through probability or non-probability sampling techniques, or through 'convenience' sampling (interviewing stakeholders at locations where they're likely to be, such as a clinic for a survey on health care programs). The major advantage of mini-surveys is that the data can be collected and analysed within a few days. It is the only rapid appraisal method that generates quantitative data.

**Case studies.** Case studies record anecdotes that illustrate the shortcomings of a program or its accomplishments. They tell about incidents or concrete events, often from one person's experience.

**Village imaging.** This involves groups of villagers drawing maps or diagrams to identify and visualise problems and solutions.

### 3.4. Community Information and Epidemiological Technologies (CIET)

Community Information and Epidemiological Technologies (CIET) are an interdisciplinary group of professionals who bring **scientific methods of information gathering and analysis** to developing communities with the aim of helping them better participate in decisions that impact them, develop local and regional information systems, and **'build indigenous capacities for evidence-based planning and action'** (Sinker & Cosic 2007: 39). CIET's website states that it 'favours forward-looking evaluation that involves the community and facilitates change rather than reviews of completed projects aimed simply at determining success or failure from the viewpoint of external agencies'.

#### Social audits

CIET's methods of social auditing seem highly relevant to FaHCSIA's aims. CIET explain on their website that 'Social audits make organisations more accountable for the social objectives they declare. Calling an audit "social" does not mean that costs and finance are not examined – the **central concern of a social audit is how resources are used for social objectives**, including **how resources can be better mobilised** to meet those objectives ... A social audit **must include the experience** of the people the organisation is intended to serve' (CIET 2010a).

In an article for the Capacity.org newsletter (2002), CIET presents a summary of the Social Audit process that they use, which has three phases:

Phase One: Design and data collection, including clarifying the strategic focus, designing survey instruments and collecting information from sample and key respondents

Phase Two: Evidence-based dialogue and analysis, including linking of household data with information from public services, analysing findings and taking them back to the community for further discussion

Phase Three: 'Socialisation' of evidence for public accountability, including workshopping, communication strategy, training of planners and service providers.

The overall approach is thoughtful and practical, being based on the kind of solid trust and relationship-building that is essential in remote Australia. The three phases above are particularly relevant as they provide for cycles of discussion and integration of information back to the service and its users in the community, countering a common complaint in remote communities that researchers take knowledge away but locals rarely see the benefit (a point made strongly by the research unit of Tangentyere Council, a partner of Ninti One).

We consider CIET's approach to be worthy of serious consideration by FaHCSIA. However, we believe that the use of a different term than 'audit' would be more appropriate as it is important that M&E practice is perceived as being distinct in scope and nature from auditing, which tends to be seen within community organisations, government agencies and service providers as a particular function in financial and administrative management.

CIET publishes **examples** of social audits, which include the following (a full list is available in our previous report):

- Bangladesh: Over 125,000 people, mostly women, from 250 communities gave evidence on their use and perceptions of health and family planning services as part of the evaluation of the country's Health and Population Sector Programme.
- Mali: An enquiry into how people view availability and quality of public services identified corruption affecting women and men.
- Nigeria: In 2006 CIET began a demonstration community-based social audit of health services in the states of Bauchi and Cross River.
- Pakistan: An audit of the gender gap in primary education revealed teachers demanding unofficial charges from students. A social audit on abuse against women sought to identify ways in which local action could improve the situation of women. A social audit on people's responses to the devolution of public services is tracking devolution's impact at local levels over a five-year period. (Note that this example is presented in more detail in the case studies section below.)
- South Africa, Eastern Cape: A demonstration social audit of public services in health, welfare, education, sports, arts and culture was conducted in 2001 in the Amatole district of this province.

(CIET 2010b)

Many of the above examples are relevant to the aims of this study, but the overall message is about the versatility of the method in different settings and conditions.

## Knowledge synthesis

Another method that CIET uses that may be relevant to M&E in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities is called 'knowledge synthesis'. It is unclear from the published material exactly how this method works, but there is a good range of literature on the topic that can be pursued if required. CIET (2010c) writes:

Good knowledge syntheses seek to include not only studies published formally but also those that can be found in the 'grey literature' that circulates via the Internet, scientific conferences, academic courses, etc. But there is a great deal of knowledge that is not written. Most knowledge related to indigenous medicine, for example, is not available in written, much less in accessible published form. Among other contributions to knowledge synthesis, CIET is engaged in developing tools, such as cognitive mapping, for systematic documentation of traditional, local and unwritten knowledge that might otherwise escape scientific review and analysis.

**Examples** of CIET's work in the field of knowledge synthesis include:

- A systematic review of available literature estimating the impact of demand-side interventions on uptake of routine childhood vaccination in Pakistan, published in 2009
- A decision tool for the SADC countries on HIV/AIDS prevention
- Risk factors associated with recent transmission of tuberculosis: a systematic review and meta-analysis, 1994–2005
- A policy-oriented synthesis of evidence for AIDS prevention, South Africa, 2006



- Fleming J, Ledogar RJ. 2008. Resilience, an Evolving Concept: A Review of Literature Relevant to Aboriginal Research. *Pimatisiwin: A Journal of Indigenous and Aboriginal Health*. 6(2). Available at <http://www.pimatisiwin.com/journals.php>.
  - Ledogar RJ, Fleming J. 2008. Social Capital and Resilience: A Review of Concepts and Selected Literature Relevant to Aboriginal Youth Resilience Research. *Pimatisiwin: A Journal of Indigenous and Aboriginal Health*. 6(2). Available at <http://www.pimatisiwin.com/journals.php>.
  - Fleming J, Ledogar R. 2008. Resilience and Indigenous Spirituality: A Literature Review. *Pimatisiwin: A Journal of Indigenous and Aboriginal Health*. 6(2). Available at <http://www.pimatisiwin.com/journals.php>.
- (CIET 2010c)

CIET is also currently testing software they call ‘**CIETmap**’, which will enable users to ‘model and visually compare the possible impact of different actions based on that information, that is, how we can reduce the amount of people with a given disease in each place on the map’ (CIET 2010a). This software will be made freely available to communities and researchers once testing is completed.

It seems that establishing contact with this organisation may be worthwhile as they show a keen interest in improving M&E in isolated communities:

Some of the most disadvantaged people in the world live in geographically or socially isolated small groups with little access to services or opportunities of any kind. Such is the case of indigenous rural populations relegated by society to the most remote and least accessible locations in their countries ... CIET has been working to develop epidemiological methods particularly suited to this challenge. (CIET 2010d)

There is little detail available from CIET about how they have been meeting these challenges, but review of the case study of CIET’s evaluation of Prenatal Nutrition Program in First Nation Communities in Canada provides some further insight on tools and techniques.

Overall, our assessment of CIET’s work is that it offers a range of knowledge and experience relevant to FaHCSIA’s aims for remote settings in Australia. However, the apparent solid track record of the organisation and the sophisticated methods it uses clearly cannot simply be picked up and applied to remote settings in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in Australia. We will return to this subject later, making the point that CIET is another body of knowledge that can inform aspects of practice in Australia rather than becoming a method that can be entirely adopted.

### 3.5. International Development Research Centre (IDRC)

#### Outcome mapping

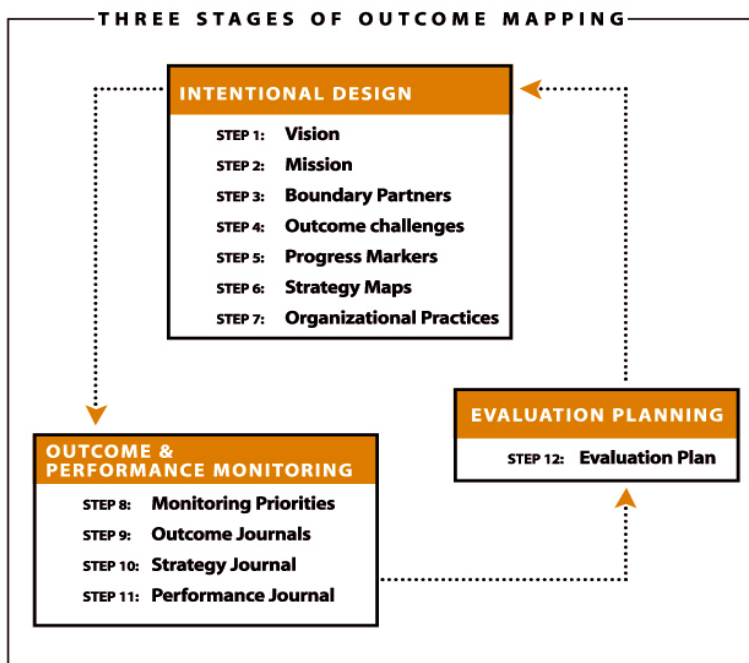
The International Development Research Centre (IDRC) has developed and tested a relatively new approach to developing M&E strategies called outcome mapping. Earl et al. (2001a; 2001b) argue that traditional M&E strategies that focus on impacts in terms of ‘products’ can be problematic, as they account for a series of events and influences that actually reach beyond the influence of the organisation alone. Outcome mapping, in contrast,

**defines program outcomes in terms of behavioural changes, shifts in relationships, and facilitation of actions.** In doing so, outcome mapping produces a ‘**learning-based, use-driven** view of evaluation guided by principles of **participation and iterative learning, encouraging evaluative thinking throughout the program cycle** by all program team members’ (Earl et al. 2001a).

The outcome mapping approach was originally tested by IDRC in conjunction with the Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation with evaluation of the Nagaland Empowerment of People through Economic Development project (India) and the International Model Forest Network Secretariat. The approach has since been adopted by IDRC as central to its approach to M&E, although it is still described as a ‘work in progress’ (IDRC 2010).

**Key features** of outcome mapping include:

- Defines outcomes in terms of **behavioural change**, measured by established ‘progress markers’
- Emphasises **facilitating change**, instead of controlling results
- Appreciates the **complexity of development** contexts and processes
- **Seeks logical links** between interventions and outcomes
- Understands **program goals in the context of larger development goals** that are beyond the reach of the program itself
- **Involves all program staff** and partners in planning, monitoring, and evaluation



(Earl et al. 2001a)

Illustrated in the above diagram, Outcome Mapping approaches M&E planning through **three key stages**:

1. **Intentional Design** –
  - *Why & How*: Clarify and reach consensus on **changes that the program intends** to support (at the macro-level) and **strategies** it will pursue to aim for those goals
  - *What*: **Establish ‘progress markers’** – graduated indicators signalling changes in behaviour; and identify challenges to intended goals
  - *Who*: **Define ‘boundary partners’** – parties directly affected by interventions
2. **Outcome and Performance Monitoring** – monitor progress markers and priorities by collecting a broad range of information, including:
  - Outcome Journal – recording project outcomes
  - Performance Journal – recording organisational practices
  - Strategy Journal – recording activities and strategies
3. **Evaluation Planning** – set priorities to target in evaluation process in order to utilise evaluation resources and activities most effectively to examine particular strategies, issues, or relationships in more depth.

This approach highlights the **distinction between monitoring and evaluation**. Monitoring, in this approach, is seen as a process that is embedded in day-to-day staff practice, obtaining a broad level of information that may be useful for reflection and learning. Evaluation, on the other hand, targets more specific information about particular aspects of the program to examine them in further depth. Outcome mapping utilises the information gained during the monitoring process to define what is needed in terms of evaluation.

The IDRC website provides a wealth of **resources** for organisations wishing to utilise the outcome mapping approach, including **worksheets; training materials; and well-detailed instructions** on how to undertake each step in the process diagrammed above, even including estimated times for each discussion activity (Earl et al. 2001b; IDRC 2010).

## Temporal logic models

Another key M&E strategy employed by IDRC includes the use of temporal logic models. A report by the evaluations unit of IDRC argues that traditional ‘logic models cannot capture the fluid motion of a program as it adapts to a chaotic environment and stakeholders who are constantly learning’, thus limiting the amount that can be learned from M&E (den Heyer 2001: 1). To address this problem, IDRC has adapted the logic model to include ‘open system’ and ‘soft systems’ approaches, which allow for assessment of program responsiveness and a better understanding of organisational learning processes.

The ‘**open systems**’ perspective understands program participants as constantly engaged in a process of learning. As participants learn through self-dialogue and dialogue with other workers about past experience, program design and activities can go through a series of changes over time. These program fluctuations amount to a form of program responsiveness that is worthwhile to monitor, assess and learn from. This responsiveness and its results can be visually depicted along a timeline of program implementation, along with adjustments made in

order to cope with program restraints, and unexpected positive consequences of the program that prompt further adaptation of program activities (see 'Diagram B' in den Heyer 2001: 3). The **temporal logic model incorporates open systems thinking by including multiple phases of monitoring subsequent to the program planning stage**. This allows reflection and feedback on program responsiveness and adjustment of program planning to capitalise on the learning process.

'Soft systems' thinking also plays a role in the theoretical basis of the temporal logic model. Soft systems approaches understand organisational systems as subjective; each stakeholder may hold **different perceptions** of various aspects of program implementation. Each stage of learning in an open system, from a soft systems perspective, involves understanding different interpretations by people who are part of the system. The **temporal logic model 'was designed as a soft system that could assist stakeholders to understand the program as an open system**, essentially, expanding the model to reflect an increasing understanding of our reality' (den Heyer 2001: 4).

It is worth noting that the **value of soft systems approaches gained increasingly widespread recognition** in industry as well as the non-profit sector. In a report addressing shortcomings in health policy in the UK, Chapman (2002) argues that a soft systems approach is **particularly successful in generating the types of learning required to make government agencies and services more robust**.

Key benefits of the temporal logic model include:

- **Encourages social learning** processes – by recording program context changes and reflecting on past and present activities
- Allows for **long-term** vision – unlike standard logic models, which do not move beyond the time-frame of the initial intervention
- **Responsive** to changing program contexts – dynamic model that can incorporate changes in program as well as external influences
- Emphasises **importance of periodic monitoring** – to adjust to intermittent changes and correct small problems before they become larger
- Useful in **strategic decision-making** – provides a model to prompt discussion of key issues
- **Includes unintended consequences** – unforeseen results can be captured, reflected upon, and integrated into program strategy
- **Documents program history** – building institutional memory
- **Facilitates stakeholder dialogue** – by demonstrating a flexible framework that still demands accountability, the model can promote a more informed dialogue
- Can be applied at **different program stages** – including planning, implementation, and summative review
- Illustrates program as **ongoing process** – emphasising the need for regular reflection and planning updates
- Design can be **kept simple** – model is intended to read 'like a newspaper' (den Heyer 2001: 7).
- Reports on '**sustainable strategies**' – to emphasise long-term planning, including post-program plans.

Diagrammatic illustrations of the Temporal Logic Model are provided as Diagrams C and G in den Heyer (2001: 4, 10).

We have presented a comprehensive summary of IDRC's work above because we consider that both outcome mapping and temporal logic are highly relevant to the aims of this study and the interests of FaHCSIA.

Outcome mapping can be used as a visual tool, connects operational work with strategic goals (an aspect we feel is often a weakness in remote service development) and embraces behaviours as important factors in M&E, which we consider important in remote community settings.

Temporal logic is a way of addressing the apparent rigidity of conventional approaches to logical framework planning. It acknowledges the sometimes 'chaotic' nature of programming and the dynamic process of learning involved, as well as incorporating the kind of systems thinking that Ninti One has long advocated, especially in the development of the CRC for Remote Economic Participation.

Of course, the challenge in both these cases is to take those elements of these complex tools and methods and apply them as workable approaches that FaHCSIA can use in the unique circumstances that apply to remote settings in Australia. We will address that subject later in the report.

## 4. Examples of monitoring and evaluation in international development practice

The effectiveness of competing and complementary approaches to monitoring and evaluation are best illustrated through practical examples. This section provides a series of short case studies and examples, summarised to bring out key points and with a continuation of the commentary we have offered throughout the report on how they contribute to the objectives of this research.

### 4.1. Citizen Report Cards (India and others)

The use of Citizen Report Cards (CRCs) is becoming increasingly widespread. CRCs were first used in Bangalore, India, in 1994 to **collect citizens' feedback on public services and apply it** to government reform, with a good measure of success (Wagle et al. 2004). To date, CRCs have been used in a number of **different sectoral and geographical contexts** across the world, including the Philippines, Bangladesh, Uganda and the Ukraine, to name a few. One of the most interesting uses of the CRCs is a survey administered by children each year in Bangalore to foster civic and environmental awareness and engage children in taking action on civic issues (Sirker & Cosic 2007).

A World Bank report notes that CRCs are generally used in situations where '**demand side data**, such as user perceptions on quality and satisfaction with public services, is absent' (Wagle et al. 2004: 1). The **main objectives** of such surveys usually include to:

1. Collect 'consumer data in a comparative manner to **demand responsiveness**'
2. Foster cross-state comparisons on access, use, reliability and satisfaction with **public services**
3. Inform **government reform** projects.

CRC initiatives require 6 **key stages**, and an additional stage is also encouraged:

1. **Identification of scope, actors and purpose** – clarify which sector/industry/unit of service provision is being assessed; identify credible actors to undertake the study
2. **Design of questionnaires** – focus groups with service providers and service users to help design questionnaire (respondents are generally asked to rate or give information about various services using a numerical scale)
3. **Sampling** – determine sample size to provide greatest possible representation; determine frame of sample (often based on geographical regions); choose respondents (different genders and ages as different household members use different services)
4. **Execution of survey** – select and train survey personnel (training includes purpose of the survey and building courteous questioning skills); conduct random spot-monitoring of interviews and go over collected information to identify inconsistencies
5. **Data analysis** – aggregate, average, and express satisfaction scores in the form of percentages
6. **Dissemination** – express findings in a constructively critical manner; share findings with service provider first to allow them to respond or account for criticisms; develop a post-survey publicity strategy; provide an interface between service providers and users to engage in a constructive dialogue about findings

7. **Institutionalisation** – integrate CRCs into long-term institutional practice in order to sustainably (1) link public opinion with public spending (e.g. Department of Budget, Philippines); (2) link findings with internal management and incentive systems (e.g. Bangalore Agenda Task Force and Karnataka Electricity Board).

Our observations in the previous sections were that some methods that could be applied to remote settings in Australia are hampered by their apparent complexity. To use them in our setting will require training, support and the benefit of experience over time that may not be feasible. A major obstacle to improving outcomes from remote services, as repeatedly illustrated through research carried out by DKCRC (see Fisher et al. 2010 for a summary, plus associated research reports) is a lack of consistent and credible knowledge on the views of service users. In addition, the knowledge that is available is not properly understood or interpreted and so often does not contribute to improved services.

Citizen report cards offer the distinct advantage of being a single consistent tool that can be understood and used relatively easily in a range of settings to provide comparable data. They are worthy of consideration in this research and will inform the advice and recommendations provided later in the report.

## 4.2. Pakistan: Community Monitoring of Public Services and Human Rights

This project, funded by the United Nations Development Programme and the Canadian International Development Agency, was driven by CIET (see Section 3.5) and intended to gauge the effectiveness of political reforms centered around the creation and official recognition of ‘**community citizen boards**’ (CCBs). The project began in 2002 with a pilot phase encompassing ten districts, and the success of the pilot phase led to further funding that enabled expansion of the program for a nationwide audit in 2004–2009. The study sought to investigate a variety of data, including citizen participation, citizen perceptions and satisfaction levels with government actors and citizen satisfaction with public services (Sirker & Cosic 2007).

The **objectives** of the audit were to:

1. Improve social services
2. Build capacity of communities and governments to undertake research
3. Increase citizen participation in planning and monitoring.

The first step in the auditing process was the **generation of a baseline**, which included collection of a variety of qualitative and quantitative data. The baseline studies including the following:

- **Household questionnaire** – asked about demographics (including education level and occupations); perceptions, use, and experience with public services
- **Community profile questionnaire** – to map features of the community relevant to service provision (including health and education facilities, waste disposal, availability of various media, community-based organisations); conducted in conjunction with a community leader

- **Key informant interviews of service providers** – conducted with school principals and health facility heads; focused on issues relevant to level of use by community (e.g. class size, staff: pupil ratios, and infrastructure)
- **Key informant interviews of union councillors** – including questions on priority problems, methods of seeking citizen viewpoints, financial issues, and views on CCBs
- **Focus group guides** – these topic guides were generated to keep discussions focused on key issues (including priority problems with public services; CCB potential; suggestions for how CCBs might work effectively; satisfaction with individual services)

The auditing process itself, together with the results of an assessment of that process, is described in the review report that preceded this one.

Tangible **outputs** of the social auditing project included:

- **Established credible benchmarks** – revealed important information about various community sectors' satisfaction with and access to government services
- **Building local capacity** – CIET conducted a series of intensive courses on evidence-based planning to enable local governments to utilise data for planning purposes
- **Engaging the media** – relationships with local and international media were developed, and information was 'packaged' to provide newsworthy soundbites in order to change public perception and action.

In the context of the objectives of this report, we have already commented that the notion of an audit is not one that is useful for remote Australia as it fails to distinguish monitoring and evaluation from administrative and management audits. However, this example is useful in describing a process that appears, at least on the surface, to be manageable and not overly complex. A number of techniques are used and the approach emphasises benchmarking, capacity building and service improvement, all of which are relevant to the aims of FaHCSIA in remote services.

### 4.3. Canada: Evaluation of a Prenatal Nutrition Program in First Nation Communities

Another project involving CIET is the evaluation of the Canada Prenatal Nutrition Program (CPNP) in First Nation Communities. This evaluation, guided by the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) generated a report known as the AFN-CPNP (Andersson et al. 2003).

Andersson et al. (2003) **distinguish between service-based and community-based evaluations**. Service-based evaluations rely on before/after comparisons, or study of a control group. Such evaluations are relatively limited, as they focus primarily on how well services work from the point of view of the people who use the services. Community-based evaluations, on the other hand, engage the entire community in identifying problems and solutions to service delivery. The program is, therefore, able to be viewed as simply one of many influences on community members, and other factors of cultural and community life can be factored into analysis.



The community-based approach used to evaluate CPNP included the views of mothers who did not use the program. Benefits of this approach include:

- Ability to examine reasons why some people chose not to use services
- Ability to separate impact of CPNP from other influences
- Better lends itself to community-led solutions.

See Andersson (2003: 5) for a **diagram of the community-based evaluation framework** used in the AFN-CPNP. A sample was generated for the evaluation by randomly selecting one hundred Bands (First Nation communities, including remote communities in the Yukon and Northwest Territories) and contacting and interviewing every woman who had given birth within the three years prior to the evaluation.

Key to the success of the AFN-CPNP were:

- **Community pre-approval of instrument designs** – this process gained large approval by communities that had been ‘researched to death’; only three sample communities declined to participate, and one community requested that certain questions were omitted. Chiefs, and sometimes also Band Councils were responsible for giving approval
- **Focus on the positive** – research tends to focus on what Aboriginal communities are doing wrong, but the AFN-CPNP aimed to identify and build upon positive elements of community life
- **Getting behind the indicators** – more than numbers were needed to sufficiently examine reasons behind program successes and failures
- **Community interpretation of evidence** – a distinction was made between ‘analysis’ (computer processing of data) and ‘interpretation’ (First Nations understandings of results); ‘After preliminary analysis, we return the evidence to the communities for discussion and to enrich the preliminary findings from the community perspective and to generate community-led solutions based on evidence. This extra layer gets incorporated into the final results as qualitative evidence, complementing and completing the findings of other layers of evidence’ (Andersson 2003: 6).

AFN-CPNP included the **training** of 135 **community-based researchers** (CBRs) selected by their communities to conduct the initial data collection. Since mothers were the focus of the initial interviews, only women were selected as CBRs. Training manuals, offering guidelines on each question, as well as on ethics and conduct (e.g. confidentiality), helped with training sessions (of up to 14 CBRs) and served as a field reference. A toll-free helpline was also set up for CBRs if they needed help in the field. Those CBRs that showed particular potential were recruited to design and conduct focus groups. Training was focused on the purpose of focus groups, the facilitator’s role, the monitor’s role, techniques, and how to train a monitor. It also involved a number of ‘mock focus groups’ to allow each trainee to practice facilitating and recording. One intern was also selected to join the evaluation team, and given relatively extensive training in fieldwork logistics and data management.

Survey instruments used by the AFN-CPNP are summarised in our previous review report.

Our assessment of this example is that it certainly represents a rounded approach to M&E that includes many of the elements that could be considered by FaHCSIA: a community-based framework requiring local ‘ownership’ of the methods and process, training of community researchers and in-depth analysis and interpretation of data. Arguably, this is the closest approximation to an approach that could be adapted to remote settings that we have identified through the research we have conducted.

#### 4.4. Papua New Guinea – Logic Model

Averill et al. (2009) examine the use of a program logic model in working with the Australia Papua New Guinea Incentive Fund (APNGIF). They describe program logic modeling as ‘an **effective visual tool** to provide feedback during the evaluation’ and ‘**[promote] the use of the logic model components and merit criteria** in the analysis of evidence’ (2009: 1). Their discussion of the logic model includes commentary from three perspectives: the PNG evaluator, the international client, and the independent evaluator. The endorsement of the logic model approach by PNG stakeholders (including those conducting fieldwork) ‘demonstrates the relevance and effectiveness of using logic models’ (2009: 1).

Averill et al. (2009) expand on the traditional logframe model to create what they refer to as a ‘**world-centric model**’. They claim that the benefit of this approach is that it ‘considers the results that the program may not impact directly’ and ‘allows evaluators firstly to examine the results achieved, and secondly to assess the contribution of the specific program in a wider setting’ (p. 1). The first point **alleviates the concern that program logic can make it difficult to account for unintended program impacts**, which was raised as a limitation of this framework in Maughan’s report (2010). In fact, a key point of praise for the APNGIF method of M&E is that it provided evidence that ‘it was possible to identify unintended outcomes such as capacity building’ (2009: 5).

At the recommendation of a World Bank commissioned report (Kusek & Rist 2004, discussed in the ‘World Bank’ section of this report), Averill et al. opted to explicitly **identify the assumptions** underpinning the logic model, in order to ‘clarify the results chain and then examine them as part of the evaluation’ (p. 3). Examples included ‘organisations can self-develop’ and ‘organisations will ask for assistance [from APNGIF]’. The value of undertaking this process was confirmed in the field, where it was determined that some of the identified assumptions did not, in fact, hold true (p. 5).

**Merit criteria** were also determined as part of the M&E process. This part of the process helps determine what to evaluate, what standards evaluation will be based on, and how to use those values to produce an evaluative judgment. More information on this subject is provided in our review report, along with a summary of the data analysis involved.

Feedback through an evaluation of the process was that ‘The **stakeholders said they liked the logic model** as it “tied the program together,” and they could see it “in its entirety” and where they fitted in’ (p. 5).

Given our endorsement for at least aspects of logic models earlier in this report, we have included this case study to illustrate some of the strengths and weaknesses as seen from different perspectives, although that of communities was not addressed in the literature. It could be that the use of the model as a working framework is the most effective way for FaHCSIA to approach logic models, incorporating other tools and techniques to strengthen their value in remote community settings.

#### 4.5. Bangladesh: Sirajganj Local Governance Development Fund Project (SLGDFP)

SLGDFP was a **government-initiated project** undertaken with the aim of reducing poverty by bolstering local governance initiatives in one of Bangladesh's largest and poorest regions. With a **literacy rate of only 27%**, local councils were largely ineffective, suffering from problems with community accountability, transparency, limited authority, excessive bureaucracy and poor financial resources. The project focused heavily on encouraging participation and representation of women and the poor. The success of the SLGDFP pilot project has led to a plan to replicate the program in five more districts.

SLGDFP used a **scorecard** system to determine continuation of funding to councils. This scorecard was intended to improve **public accountability**, and includes criteria such as the involvement of women in council activities, control of tax collection, community participation and budget transparency.

One element that really stands out about this is the **flexibility** with which researchers implemented this scorecard, evident in the following:

Initially, the scorecard was developed by the project team based on the roles and functions of local councils. However, over time, the stakeholders changed most of the issues the project team addressed, including the method of project implementation. The participatory **performance assessments were undertaken at public meetings** attended by 80 to 120 people, facilitated by the local council coordinator. The scorecards were hung on a board and attendees were asked to assess the effectiveness of the local council (Sirker & Cosic 2007: 28).

This indicates that the grants allocation system included **reflective processes** that allowed the community to influence the very criteria on which council performance was evaluated. Sirker and Cosic also provide evidence that '**revenue mobilization** and **collection efficiency** have increased as community members have a better understanding of how the money is used' (2007: 29).

The table below is an example of the scorecards used by SLGDFP.

Activity	Performance Indicator	Score to be obtained	Actual score
Involvement of women in the local council's activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All women local council representatives are present during all regular meetings of the local council and during meetings of standing communities</li> <li>Women members attend 50–80% percent of meetings</li> <li>Women participate in fewer than 50 percent of meetings</li> </ul>		
Control of tax defaulters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A list of tax defaulters is prepared and updated every year</li> <li>A list of tax defaulters is not prepared</li> </ul>		
Community participation in the budget process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The budget is prepared with the involvement of community groups at open meetings and inputs are obtained from the wards</li> <li>The budget is prepared without any significant contribution from the community</li> </ul>		
Project implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Schemes have been implemented in line with their timetables</li> <li>Schemes have not been implemented in line with their timetables</li> </ul>		
Budget transparency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Information on the final budget is provided to citizens through notice boards and other means</li> <li>No information on the final budget is provided</li> </ul>		

Source: SLGDFP Cited in Sirker & Cosic 2007

Key elements of SLGDFP include:

- **Performance-based funding** – block grants, scorecards discussed above
- **Open budget sessions** – with draft budget first displayed on noticeboard so that community could review and prepare for the public meeting
- **Noticeboards and complaint books** – the first for council to communicate project information to community, the second to allow for community feedback
- **Social mobilisation and inclusion** –
  - active measures were taken to engage the community in **public meetings**
  - meetings were held in the beginning and end of health, agriculture and education projects to ensure **quality** and community **ownership**
  - citizens were also urged to participate in **project committees**, were selected by fellow citizens at open meetings and were given appropriate **training** to fill their roles
  - ‘The community was mainly mobilised through an **information campaign** conducted by local councils using various media, such as drum beating, leaflets, invitation letters, microphone announcements, and personal contacts, all of which are inexpensive and sustainable’ (2007: 30).

- ‘Various process-based mechanisms reflected **participation by women**, such as the use of colored cards to show women’s needs, special planning groups for women, and screening to ensure that women’s interests were met during the final selection’ (2007: 30).

SLDGFP employed a ‘**learning by doing**’ approach, the results of which we have summarised in the previous review report.

The Sirajganj Local Governance Development Fund Project (SLGDFP) has proved to be interesting and useful to Ninti One on previous occasions. Its inclusion in this report illustrates an approach that includes elements we believe FaHCSIA should consider. Most obvious is the application of a scorecard in a flexible manner but within a framework that most people involved appeared able to understand and use. But the emphasis on approaches that seem transferable to Aboriginal communities, such as public meetings and mobilisation of local resources, are also highly relevant.

## 4.6. Cape York Welfare Reform Trial

A report for FaHCSIA prepared by Courage Partners (2009) details the M&E strategy that will be used to account for the program. The **program evaluation strategy** includes the use of both quantitative and qualitative methods (including Program Logic, Theory of Change, and Most Significant Change techniques) to produce a series of progress and implementation reports in addition to ongoing ‘intelligence gathering’ and a final evaluation of outcomes.

The main **intentions** of the M&E are to promote continuous learning, and foster future change programs. The report stipulates that many of the long-term goals of the Cape York Welfare Reform will take longer than the life of the program to achieve. While the evaluation strategy focuses on assessing short- and medium-term outcomes, it also provides **indicators that will be useful for long-term monitoring** beyond the reach of the current program.

**Key elements** of the M&E strategy include:

1. **Ongoing intelligence gathering** – focused on early correction of problems and assessing progress against theory of change; designed to minimise administrative burden; utilising mixed methods (qualitative and quantitative). Key questions include:
  - How is the program affecting individuals and communities?
  - Are program strategies effective in reaching established benchmarks?
  - Are target populations being reached?
  - How can implementation be improved?
  - Are there important differences between program sites?
2. **Implementation Review of the Families Responsibilities Commission (FRC)** – intended to reflect on the successes and challenges of the FRC. Key areas of study include:
  - Progress against established indicators
  - In-depth studies of peoples’ patterns of interaction with the FRC

- Interviews with key informants as well as people who have appeared before the FRC
3. **Progress Review** – of early progress; assesses acceptance by communities; seeks ideas for improvement; provides recommendations for future practice. Key questions include:
    - Is implementation proceeding according to plan? Are there any unintended consequences? What barriers have been encountered?
    - How is the program affecting individuals and communities?
    - Has there been progress toward goals? Have peoples' needs been served? Whose needs have been best served?
    - Are there contextual factors affecting program outcomes?
  4. **Outcomes Evaluation** – assesses whether progress has been made towards stated goals; assesses outcomes against program logic; provides evidence-based accountability reporting; informs program replication. Key questions include:
    - Has implementation been carried out as planned?
    - Which intended outcomes have been achieved and what factors influenced success?
    - How well have community needs been served?
    - Have there been any unintended effects?

**Methods** utilised to collect data are summarised in our previous report.

As this example is very well known by FaHCSIA, we will refrain from further analysis other than to say that the knowledge gained by the Department of the methods used (MSC, Program Logic and Theory of Change) will be important in influencing the eventual design of M&E for remote settings.

#### 4.7. New Zealand – Social Policy Evaluation and Research Committee (SPEaR)

SPEaR presents an overview of good practice guidelines in working with Māori based on the principles of Respect, Integrity, Responsiveness, Competency and Reciprocity. The principle of responsiveness seems particularly relevant to the NPARSD due to the emphasis on demand-responsiveness in previous literature (Fisher et al. 2010). Advice concerning the principle of **responsiveness** includes the following excerpts:

1. Talk with participants about how they want to be researched rather than assuming knowledge of what is best for participants. **Get feedback about how they want to participate in the research and be responsive to their suggestions.**
2. **Involve Māori participants in the design** of the project - including the design of the research question(s), the methodology, the methods, analytical framework and mechanisms for disseminating results.
3. Develop **processes that enable Māori participants to maintain contact** with the project team throughout the life of the initial research project, or future unspecified projects, and which enables the project team to **keep participants informed** of the progress of the project(s).
4. Recognise that research should value and **utilise current and historical relationships**. For example, Māori organisations have typically been the subject of more than one research or evaluation project and have often told their stories many times over. Contracting with the same group of researchers or evaluators, where trust

and confidence exists, facilitates engagement because of the established relationships and saves time because organisational history and profile information is already known and documented.

SPEaR cites the following example to illustrate:

A General Manager of a Māori Health organisation said of evaluators, ‘Well, it’s like they’re going to live in your whare for the next three years, sit at the table and eat of your kai. You wouldn’t want just anyone to live with you over the next three years. I realised then that organisations should have a say in who evaluates them; they should be able to select evaluators whom they’ve worked with in the past, and they should be able to do all of this – have a say at the table – at the time the evaluation is being contracted. *Being responsive means looking to build on past research relationships and not assuming that an ‘independent’ tender process is the best way to select researchers.* (Aotearoa New Zealand Evaluation Association Hui August 2007, cited in SPEaR 2008)

The ‘**Hui**’ referred to in the reference was a process commissioned by SPEaR to further develop their best practice principles: ‘to develop a set of rich practice “vignettes” that illustrate the application of the SPEaR BPGM [Best Practice Guidelines Māori] principles in a number of real world settings’ (SPEaR 2008). A closer look at how SPEaR carried out this ‘hui’ **may be helpful guiding possibilities of how to conduct the MSC method of M&E**. The following excerpt describes the ‘hui’ approach:

Key to the design of this approach was the need to ensure that:

- the hui **provided an environment for the successful sharing/generation of stories**
- the process **supported and facilitated** the sharing/generation of stories/vignettes
- the process allowed for the capture of each of the individual stories/vignettes to **facilitate the selection and write-up** of vignettes.

Briefly, the process was as follows:

1. Participants were **invited to reflect on an experience** they have had where the principle has been prominent or apparent. They were then asked to write a short story about that experience (two to three minutes’ writing time), write a whakatauki (proverb) that supports the principle or draw a picture that captures the essence of the principle
2. Individuals then **shared their stories** with other group members
3. Each group **shared with the wider group** a minimum of three stories and the overall learnings and insights the group identified/had gained of the principle as a result of the shared stories and discussion
4. Participants **gave their story/writing/picture to the hui recorder**
5. At the end of the small group exercise, the hui recorder had a minimum of ten stories on each principle.

This **process was repeated twice** (with participants choosing another principle and a different set of people to work with). Throughout the process, participants had the benefit of listening to the stories generated by participants (which both **acted as a prompt** for participants, but also **minimised duplication** of the ‘same’ story

or lesson learnt). The process also facilitated the process of 'becoming whanau', and getting to know one another (ANZEA 2007).

The SPEaR process gives us little insight, however, on another important step to the MSC process: determining which stories are most significant. However, it is interesting to note that this 'hui' evaluation process was undertaken by the Aotearoa New Zealand Evaluation Association (ANZEA). Both ANZEA and SPEaR are linked to the Australasian Evaluation Society, which has identified Indigenous evaluation as a strategic objective. As such, they conduct an online Indigenous Strategy Special Interest Discussion Group (available at [www.aes.asn.au/SIG](http://www.aes.asn.au/SIG)).

Communication with this group may be helpful in guiding evaluation methods for FaHCSIA when it comes time to design specific studies. We consider this example to be attractive because of its apparent fit with the way people in Aboriginal communities in Australia like to work with researchers. In our own work on service delivery, especially in the PY Ku Program in South Australia, with Martu people in Western Australia and in Dajarra and Camooweal in Western Queensland, we have seen the value of spending time discussing services with people in a semi-structured fashion, working with a small number of key questions but not a formal questionnaire.

Ultimately, as described earlier we have reservations about the use of Most Significant Change methods as a single approach to monitoring and evaluation for remote settings, but the simplicity and groundedness of the SPEaR approach cannot be denied. It may be that the style of this work, rather than the method, may be most relevant to the needs of FaHCSIA.



## 5. The practice of monitoring and evaluation in Aboriginal communities in Australia

It seems likely that much of the work of monitoring and evaluation in Aboriginal communities remains unpublished and therefore inaccessible to this study. However, we have been able to identify some examples that help build a picture of lessons and practice from this field and that can contribute to meeting our objectives.

A subject discussed in the international literature in greater depth and detail is social capital. Social capital is relevant to monitoring and evaluation in remote Australia because of the value of relationships, networks, trust and mutual respect to the process of conducting business with Aboriginal people living in remote settlements. Services themselves influence social capital. However, in remote Australia key aspects of social (such as cognitive and structural social capital) remain undescribed. In a relatively short research assignment such as this, we have not addressed the subject.

### 5.1. Tangentyere Council

Tangentyere Council has taken a strong stance on the importance of utilising **Aboriginal-controlled research** in policy making. Ninti One, especially through the Desert Knowledge CRC, has worked closely with the Research Unit of Tangentyere Council and shares its philosophy.

In 2002, the Council ran a survey to gather information about how their service population (of around 3000 people in 18 Town Camps in Alice Springs) viewed the trial of liquor licensing restrictions, or ‘grog trials’, in Alice Springs. This project involved the **training of Aboriginal researchers**, and led to the **creation of a permanent ‘Research Hub’** within the Council, which is ‘aimed to develop a research process that ensures Aboriginal direction, ownership, participation and accountability’ (Foster et al. 2006: 214).

Some important lessons can be drawn from the methodology used in the ‘grog trial’ study and that apply directly to the aims of FaHCSIA in remote settings:

#### *Training:*

- *Two-way learning* – the week-long training session included information sharing from both outsider ‘trainers’ and insider ‘trainees’; Foster et al. write ‘They taught us how to conduct good research, how many people are needed to provide good results, and how to ensure that other researchers would respect our work. We taught them about how to work in Town Camps and how to make sure that the researchers were safe and confident’ (2006: 214).
- *Developing survey approach* – training included group discussions on the most appropriate wording to use for explaining the purpose of the survey and for asking the survey questions to Town Camp residents. Discussions also dealt with how people would interpret the questions, and whether certain questions should be eliminated to avoid shaming Town Camp residents.
- *Survey practice* – trainees practiced asking questions in different ways, both with other trainees and with other Aboriginal people, until they were confident that Town Camp residents would understand survey questions.

### *Culturally appropriate research tools (survey questions)*

- *Adaptation of existing survey* – a mainstream survey on the ‘grog trials’ was used as a starting point, and adapted to the Town Camp context
- *Elimination of ‘shaming’ questions* – discussions in training sessions informed this process
- *Short and simple* – questions designed for easy use in the field
- *Reducing writing in the field* – effort was made to do as little writing as possible in front of people being surveyed.

### *Survey sample*

- *Mapping of camps* – careful planning aimed to collect a large random sample providing good representation: ‘outside experts worked out the numbers and inside experts knew where to find the people, how to ask the questions and record the answers’ (Foster et al. 2006: 215).
- *Diversity* – efforts made to include people of different ages, genders, camps, and drinking habits.

### *Careful preparation*

- *Surveyor working groups* – research teams, surveyor pairs, and team leaders were established; each team consisted of both men and women and had at least one member with family connections in the Camp where they worked; each surveyor pair included at least one Aboriginal language speaker
- *Logistics* – vehicles, photocopying, staff needs (social security arrangements, pick-ups, food and water), and name badges were organised
- *Safety* – there was some concern over the safety of researchers, so efforts were made to steer away from potentially threatening situations
- *Publicising the survey* – strong effort was made to let Camp residents know when and why the survey would take place in order to gain maximum participation; methods included word of mouth by Council staff, distribution of fliers, and the holding of town meetings in each camp by surveyors prior to the survey.

### *Respecting culture and context*

- *Verbal and non-verbal cues* – Aboriginal researchers know appropriate behaviour, including how to dress, to avoid camps engaged in ‘sorry business’ (funerals and mourning), to show respect to elders, to notify and gain permission from Town Camp ‘bosses’ before entering camps, and to wait quietly to be seen and invited before entering individual houses
- *Availability of participants* – ‘insider’ researchers also know better about town rhythms and accessibility, including the best days and times to visit houses and when there is the most accessibility and least pressure to participants.

### *Redefining ‘Informed Consent’*

- *Explanations* – care was taken to explain the survey’s purpose and procedures clearly and fully; this was practised during training sessions
- *Signatures* – researchers (not participants) were responsible for giving informed consent, and so signed consent form (rather than participants)
- *‘No Survey Without Service’* – researchers listened to participants if they voiced any problems, which were noted and communicated to Council if they could not be solved straight away.

### Reporting back

- *Report to Licensing Commission* – with permission of the Council, a report was generated to express citizen views on the ‘grog trials’, including support for trial restrictions and suggestions for further action
- *Report to Community* – a second report was created in language that could be understood by Town Camp residents, and meetings were held to share results and give citizens an opportunity to respond and to contribute further information or suggestions.

The research methods detailed above led to a **high level of validity** in the survey. Foster et al. write: ‘We achieved much **more discussion and information** from Town Campers because they felt comfortable with us, and could talk and not feel embarrassed or “shamed”... We believe that our process of research is one that can be applied by other Aboriginal organisations ... We also hope that knowledge of this process informs non-Aboriginal researchers about ways of working with Aboriginal community organisations to address the problems we face’ (2006: 216–17).

Other than support for the approaches taken by Tangentyere Council in this field, the results of which indicate their effectiveness, our interpretation is that this example starts to build a new component to a model of M&E for remote settings: the need to include a set of principles, protocols and practices to guide effective community research. Although used in town camps, which are different from remote communities, our own experience of conducting research on services in more than 25 locations tells us that the Tangentyere methods are transferable, or at least easily adaptable, to other places and should inform the work of FaHCSIA.

## 5.2. Aboriginal Research Practitioners Network (ARPnet)

ARPnet is ‘a loosely coordinated regional network of Aboriginal people in the top end who are interested, committed and have capacity to participate in a broad range of research projects using participative approaches’ (Sithole et al. 2009: 65). The group consists of twenty Aboriginal men and women research practitioners, and two non-Aboriginal adjunct research fellows who facilitate training and mentoring. ARPnet is conceived as a model for increasing Aboriginal participation in research activities. The network is acknowledged to be in ‘its infancy’ with little comparison to other models as yet, but outside recognition of the model seems to be growing (Sithole et al. 2009: 70).

**Research practitioners** are trained in participatory research methods, possess a range of skills in different areas of research, and are experienced as research assistants, translators, or liaison officers. Each practitioner’s involvement in the group is flexible, voluntary, and varies over time according to other responsibilities, commitments and circumstances. ARPnet members are sometimes contracted for work on a casual basis through Charles Darwin University; the uncertain and short-term nature of these contracts requires special attention to livelihoods to ensure that welfare payments are not disrupted by short-term employment.

This **potential disincentive** to working as a researcher was also mentioned in the Tangentyere case, where arrangements were organised to ensure that welfare payments continued despite the brief period of employment provided by the project. A **firm distinction** was drawn by the practitioners themselves between what they do (as research *practitioners*), and what conventional researchers do. Most importantly, practitioners aim to make their work both **applied and meaningful** to the people being studied. This redefines both the target of the research and the process, approach and outcome of the work.

The specialist **competencies** developed by research practitioners include:

- The use of participatory or community-driven **evaluation** methods
- Facilitating participatory community **planning and visioning** projects
- Collaborating on **remote area research** projects
- The ARPnet model recognises the importance of both providing a stable flow of support for research practitioners, and the need for practitioners to cultivate solid relationships with other stakeholders in research projects; as Sithole et al. write: ‘... ongoing engagement before, during and at the increased willingness of Aboriginal people to participate in research activities’.

The experience of ARPnet provides valuable guidance to the training of community researchers to contribute to the monitoring and evaluation of remote services.

### 5.3. Belyuen Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA)

A rapid rural appraisal method was used by ARPnet and the School of Environmental Research at Charles Darwin University to help government address recent conflicts in the Belyuen Community (Sithole et al. 2007). This method is generally used for community visioning and planning activities. Each research project prepares ARPnet members with focused pre-project training.

Our previous review report summarises lessons that can be drawn from ARPnet’s process of training research practitioners. From an institutional perspective, **outcomes of the training** program included:

- Recognition of Aboriginal research capabilities
- Creation of a new avenue for Aboriginal engagement in research
- Skill-building
- Demystification of research as a ‘lofty activity by educated scientists and researchers’ (Sithole et al. 2009: 14)
- Increased appreciation of research as important to decision-making
- Increased employment opportunities
- Initiated relationships and networks among participants.

The RRA approach used in the Belyuen case is depicted in the figure below:

**Figure 1. Process of visioning and planning followed in the Belyuen Project**

(Sithole et al. 2007)

A good representative sample of Belyuen community included consultation with nearly 100 of the community's residents, both displaced and current. Three **key outcomes** were achieved:

1. Creation of new neutral avenues for communication between government and community members
2. Prioritisation of areas for government and other stakeholder action
3. Identification of critical community issues applicable beyond Belyuen.

Methods used for **data collection** included:

- Individual interviews – 25 were conducted; key informants tended to prefer this method
- Group discussions – 8 discussions including a total of 39 people; the majority of community members preferred this method to individual interviewing; discussions were lengthy, lasting 1–2 hours
- Workshops – 2 workshops including a total of 48 people; very popular with displaced residents, but a third workshop in Belyuen was not attended by any current residents (despite adequate and repeat notice of the event, plus efforts to transport people there); lasted a full day; were highly interactive; proved valuable in getting people living in different locations to identify and discuss key issues, priorities, and suggestions for resolution
- Fishing trips – 1 trip including 4 people; with older and long-term residents of Belyuen; a second trip was planned for Belyuen men but this was changed to a group discussion
- Brief contact – with 20 people; mostly young and elderly who were briefed on the project objectives but declined to participate.

**Key statements** from these discussions were selected, classified, and presented according to **major themes**, such as 'leadership vacuum', 'displacement', 'overlapping jurisdictions', and 'poor service delivery' (Sithole et al. 2007: 25). Additionally, key statements were included at length in the final report to demonstrate more

**specific issues** and detailed explanations under each major theme, as well as proposals for rehabilitation and reform (for example, Sithole 2007: 30–31). Discussions were also analysed according to group distinctions (in this case, according to current place of residence) to identify the main issues emphasised by each group. The final report also notes how the major themes are interlinked in reality, providing a list of examples of the linkages. No detailed methodology is given for how this process of analysis was conducted, or how quotes were selected as key statements.

Having previously commented in this report that RRA can offer innovative and practical techniques, so the example from Belyuen proves the point, with some flexible approaches to collecting data being employed. However, we are sceptical that the creation of new and neutral avenues for communication claimed in the example were truly neutral. A potential weakness for the proposed FaHCSIA research is that it will be challenging for researchers to maintain objectivity when they live in the community and will know all the respondents personally, often as family members.

#### 5.4. Participatory Action Research (PAR)

A report by Kildea et al. (2009: 3) describes the research methodology used in a project that aimed to strengthen maternity services in a remote Australian community by incorporating Aboriginal traditional knowledge into an internet-based education tool. The research method combined participatory action research with ‘Aboriginal research methodology’. Kildea et al. write that initial community consultations in the research planning phase produced recommendations that ‘fitted very closely with the PAR approach, which is increasingly being recommended for research in the Australian Aboriginal context’. They cite the VicHealth Koori Health Research and Community Development Unit (2002), among others, as **advocating the use of PAR in Aboriginal communities**.

The community being researched has a population of 2500, lies an hour’s flight from the regional centre, and is thought to be one of the most linguistically diverse communities in the world, with around 51 languages spoken. The initial **objectives of the research** were to find out what Aboriginal women considered as important cultural information for maternity practitioners to improve care for Aboriginal expectant mothers and to incorporate Aboriginal research methods into the process. A further objective, to preserve Aboriginal stories and knowledge for future generations, was later added after being voiced by community members because, as Kildea et al. explain, ‘a **key tenet of Indigenous research** is that the research is important to members of the community’ (2009: 6).

Using an established PAR method (Wadsworth 1998) four ‘conceptual parties’ were defined:

- **PAR team** – including community health workers, well-respected (women) leaders from the community, research authors, and some key ‘outsider’ health professionals that the research is intended to inform – this group determined data gathering methods.
- **Critical reference group (CRG)** – ‘insider’ experts with experience working in remote health and maternity service delivery (many as Aboriginal Health Workers), serving as cultural advisors; ‘Feedback from the CRG was incorporated into the resources before they were circulated for comment and further development by members of the other two groups: the Researched Group and the Stakeholders. This process of ‘cycling’ drafts of materials through each group occurred at each stage of their development’ (Kildea et al. 2009: 7).
- **The ‘researched’** – a group of 52 women from the region who shared their stories, plus another group of 13 health practitioners who reviewed the resources and were interviewed. Representatives from all language groups were sought.
- **Stakeholders’ group** – nine professionals who play roles in the delivery of remote maternity care services.

Additionally, women who were well-known and respected for their cultural knowledge in childbirth issues were identified as **key informants**.

Data collection required nine weeks of field work, during which time constant phone and e-mail contact was maintained between the lead research author and co-researchers in the field. (The lead research author also made eight trips to the field.) The methods of data collection, analysis and presentation used in the research are summarised in our previous research report. A diagram of the Research Cycle used for this project is provided in Kildea et al. 2009 (p. 31).

One excerpt from the publication (2009: 13) describes the advantages of prioritising community interests in research:

A recommended research strategy is to combine data collection with goals that are important to the community (Tjikalyi & Garrow 1996). Many of the older women were resident on outstations and these trips, though difficult logistically because they were dependant on the vehicle we hired being available, they were invaluable, enjoyable, productive days. They often resulted from requests by the women to incorporate other activities like hunting and collection of materials for art and crafts. Leaving the data collection until after women’s own priorities were met enabled time for researchers and women to develop a rapport and build relationships.

The authors also remark on the importance of keeping **flexibility in timelines** in order to allow enough time for relationships to be built, unexpected challenges to be met, and information to be gathered ‘in the right way’. In this project, timeline extensions granted by project funders were key to the project’s success. Realistically, research activities must often take lower priority than family and other obligations, funerals, health needs and other extenuating circumstances.

Regarding **cultural security**, it is also important to note that the researchers designed the project in a way that would acknowledge and respect Aboriginal Law, cultural protocols, and the guarding of sacred knowledge and

intellectual property rights. Safeguards were built into the process to ensure that informed consent was requested, checked and double-checked when circumstances changed.

As with the ARPnet experience with training, the work described here offers some valuable guidance to us on approaches to participatory research.

## 5.5. Dubbo: Annual survey of water supply and sewerage customers

Although not an Aboriginal community, Dubbo has an Aboriginal population much higher than most country towns and provides an interesting example of an approach to the monitoring of services based on scorecards. Dubbo City Council has been conducting an Annual Survey of Water Supply and Sewerage Customers utilising a ‘service scorecard’ method since 1996. The survey aims to gather information about community expectations of water services in order to better meet those expectations. The council has had substantial success in doing so, evident by rising rates of satisfaction with water quality and overall high rates of service satisfaction in recent years (Dubbo City Council 2008). The surveys also ask questions in order to gauge customer priorities, for example, whether customers would rather pay higher water service rates or follow through with water restrictions.

Little information is available about the design process involved with developing the annual survey, but the report on the 2008 survey, carried out by Census Applications (2008) specifies that interviews were conducted over the phone. Most phone calls were made during business hours, with some carried out in the early evening. The survey notes that complementing this method, mail-out surveys plus more interviews conducted outside business hours would increase representativeness of people between the ages of 18–39 years, who were underrepresented in that year’s data.

Although this example is a useful example of the application of a citizen report card style of monitoring and evaluation to an Australian setting, it is unlikely that telephone interviews would be an effective method in remote communities due to limited fixed-line telephone access and the high levels of mobility and absence of people from their localities. However, further research could be conducted to find out more about the experience of service providers and users of this method in Dubbo.

## 5.6. Research by the DKCRC on demand-responsive desert services

The Desert Knowledge Cooperative Research Centre (DKCRC) conducted research under the project ‘Desert Services that Work: demand-responsive approaches to desert services’ during the period 2007–2010. Research projects were conducted through field work at particular locations or as overall contributions to the research outcomes through desk-based work.

According to DKCRC, a service is the process by which individuals, households and communities gain access to goods and facilities that they require to live and work. As such, services address a wide range of needs from



water and power to law and justice programs, education, road maintenance and almost any provision requiring specialist skills and work to meet the needs of users of services.

We summarise the research undertaken as follows, with the research agency in each case identified in brackets.

The Centre for Appropriate Technology (CAT) was overall lead agency for Desert Services that Work:

- Local government and housing reform in the NT: the implementation of new NT Government models of housing tenancy and asset management and their interface with tenant demand (CAT)
- The Community Phones Project (NT): an analysis of lessons learned and insights from the community phones project that are relevant to demand-responsive services (CAT)
- Myuma Pty. Ltd., Western Queensland: a study of the Myuma initiative, the conditions that contribute to its effectiveness and the potential for replication (University of Queensland)
- Water in Dajarra, Western Queensland (University of Queensland): the management of demand and supply of water with particular focus on addressing historical problems with quality and quantity of water
- Energy and water use assessment in dwellings in Dajarra (University of Queensland)
- The boundaries of Martu representation in service in the East Pilbara and Western Desert areas of Western Australia (Murdoch University)
- Evaluation of PY Ku Rural Transaction Centres program (University of South Australia)
- Evaluation of the Regional Partnership Agreement in the Ngaanyatjarra Lands and related Shared Responsibility Agreements (AIATSIS)
- System modelling for services in health and housing (CSIRO)
- Aboriginal engagement in the context of services to remote outstations in central Australia (Southern Cross University PhD)
- Representing Others: Aboriginal senior officials in the self-governing Northern Territory (Australian National University PhD)
- Delivering healthy housing to Aboriginal communities in remote north-west Queensland (University of Queensland PhD).

The research methods we used for the Desert Services that Work project were determined by a field manual for the project and drew on participatory, qualitative and social science approaches to research. We categorise the methods in three groups:

1. Observation, by researchers being present in a location and noting for themselves how elements of the service system or model function in practice. This includes observation of conversations and discussions between service users and providers, information provided on service policy and delivery, being present at council or other governance meetings and noting the ways in which people gain access to services, use and adapt them locally.
2. Interaction with people through face-to-face interviews, questionnaires, focus groups, workshops or a combination of these methods. To gain the most value from the interaction, researchers sometimes used techniques designed to focus the conversation or enable respondents to describe their experience. These included use of matrices or tables, drawing of flow charts, mapping, problem trees and other visual methods.
3. Use of documents such as minutes of meetings, correspondence and historical records and quantitative data.

Desert Knowledge CRC held a workshop on methodologies for research leaders on 2 June 2008. This workshop reviewed the methodologies used in DKCRC projects. Many principles of research methods are universal. However, the workshop attempted to consider the way these principles play out in desert regions in terms of the relative priority placed on some principles (e.g. engagement) over others, and the specific methods applied given factors such as large travel distances, small sample sizes and cross-cultural communications needs.

The workshop noted that engagement is critical to the effectiveness of the research, particularly to ensure:

1. the research is correctly focused toward the question at hand (i.e. scoping)
2. the data collection is conducted in a culturally and statistically appropriate manner
3. the analysis is focused and interpreted appropriately
4. the research outcomes have impact.

There are also cases where the engagement is trivial. For example, engagement may be as simple as liaising with a statistical bureau to obtain the appropriate data set. But for work with communities, the level of engagement that DKCRC sought and achieved in Desert Services that Work was critical.

The workshop also observed that research design in remote or desert settings in Australia needs to be adaptive. This implies:

- A need to test methods at the start of the process, especially the best ways to engage and communicate with people and to ensure that learning is taken on in future work
- That research is designed with the people who will use it
- Reciprocity, with the researcher needing to offer tangible assistance to people he or she is working with (as described in the earlier section of this report on our work with communities)
- The importance of building relationships
- Flexibility, adaptive and iterative approaches
- Working with methodological guidelines for the research rather than strict rules

It is not possible to generalise across the research conducted within Desert Services that Work since some activities were mainly desk-based (the service modelling project, for example). However, for the field work associated with research in desert settlements, the observations on methodology above applied consistently across the work that the organisation conducted and we consider them highly relevant to FaHCSIA's interests.

## 5.7. Ali Curung Law and Justice Program

The DKCRC research team, through the Centre for Appropriate Technology, has examined aspects of policy stability in its work at Ali Curung, where the reform of local government and the effects of the Northern Territory Emergency Response have led to a rapidly changing policy environment (Fisher et al. 2010). The closure of the Law and Justice Program, which was widely perceived to be an effective service with strong community commitment behind it, is a good example of central policy change undermining confidence in services locally. Conversely, the presence of mature local organisations and a low turnover of staff in key

positions have enabled transitions from one policy to another to be managed effectively, a signal of policy uncertainty being overcome through clear local responses.

The Ali Curung Law and Justice Program is an example where key factors in its effectiveness were identified both by the community and by external commentators. Allen's (2001) review of Aboriginal community justice initiatives stated that the approach to addressing:

... community violence at Ali Curung has occurred both at an institutional and a community level. At the institutional level, the Ali Curung Law and Order Plan have been endorsed by ten government agencies. At the community level, the plan has facilitated an appropriate representation of different language groups in the community to negotiate and liaise with agencies on a holistic approach to addressing community violence. The coordination for the various agencies has also increased interagency communication and effectiveness in reducing community violence at Ali Curung.

The program benefited from the work of Northern Territory Government employees with a strong understanding of community development principles and applied these to working with Ali Curung people. In addition, Ryan (2003) has suggested that the effectiveness of the program was supported by a participatory planning process, a formalised agreement, coordination of agencies and service delivery at the local level, an adaptive policy environment, individual development of Aboriginal people and in-depth field work time.

According to community members, the key factors in the success of the Ali Curung Law and Justice Program were:

1. Control, participation and ownership of the program at the community level
2. Two-way (cultural system and Australian-recognised system) or intercultural process
3. Clearly articulated coordination of government agencies and their roles
4. Outside support and assistance from a male and a female field officer
5. Peer modelling and interaction with other communities
6. Recognition of traditional decision-making processes.

This information was collected through interviews and workshops facilitated by CAT through the DKCRC. In essence, they provide a glimpse of the kinds of valuable feedback from the demand side of the service equation that ought to contribute to planning in the future (Fisher et al. 2010).

A problem in this case was that the aspects of the program valued locally did not align with the measures of effectiveness employed by the government, specifically on the reduction of crime. The closure of the program stemmed from a basic difference in indicators of effectiveness between providers and users. While the community valued the presence of the program as a place in which disputes could be settled and a contributor to community harmony, government had a different view. The Department of Justice of the Northern Territory Government considered there to be a lack of measureable outputs from the program (in fact, crime increased in 2002–03, according to statistics, and this was considered critical to government policy). They judged that the cost was high for the results achieved.

In the context of the research presented for FaHCSIA in this report, this example brings us back to the matter of indicators. The choice of indicators used to monitor and evaluate service delivery is an early step in the design of a system and one that is easy to treat with insufficient rigour in the desire to move on to the data collection itself. This is where program logic methods can bring discipline to the process as they encourage proper focus on selecting indicators and for those indicators to be tested before the monitoring framework is finalised.

## 6. Conclusion: towards a method for the monitoring and evaluation in remote settings

Having surveyed the literature and compared the options available, it is apparent that there are three components of a model for monitoring and evaluation of remote services that could apply to the work of FaHCSIA in this field. To bring together and summarise the findings of this research, we present two diagrams below:

1. A conceptual outline of the three levels of a potential monitoring and evaluation framework for remote services to meet the aims of FaHCSIA's work in this field. The diagram is annotated with brief explanatory notes and references to the content of the report.
2. A summary table that focuses on the application of the various research methods, tools and techniques described in the report (that is, focusing on the content of the third level of the first diagram and not including M&E frameworks and principles).

By their nature, summaries of this kind involve compromises. In the interests of presenting a usable guide to the research and its findings, we have sought to identify them without going into lengthy explanations.



## Approach

Modified program logic approach, drawing on **temporal logic** and **systems models**, but avoiding over-complex approaches

Strong emphasis on:

- linking with FaHCSIA strategic goals for RSD
- reflecting desired 'service outcomes' from community perspective
- choosing appropriate 'measures of success' and indicators

## Examples and sources

Program logic (eg AusAID pp.18-19) but using the steps of defining the scope, clarifying logic and establishing measures of success (pp.14-15) and informed by:

- Outcome mapping, systems approaches (IDRC, pp.23-27)
- Aspects of social auditing (CIET, pp.21-23)
- Community-based evaluation framework (CPNP pp.30-32)

We recommend that work follows **practice guidelines** developed for M&E for remote services. This can be built on the work of others and learning from the first research conducted under Local Implementation Plans rather than creating a potentially lengthy process that has to be completed before M&E can proceed. The guidelines need to be basic and useable rather than complex.

- Examples include:
- The Aboriginal Research Protocol (DKCRC, pp.46-48),
- Principles underlying the work of Tangentyere Council (pp.39-41)
- Development framework for Aboriginal research practitioners (ARPnet, pp.41-42)
- Social mobilisation (SLGDFP p.34)
- Responsiveness principle (SPEaR, pp. 36-38).

Data collection through proven tools and techniques that emphasise participation of local people in the process and operate at a pace and with a focus that is appropriate to local conditions.

Most importantly, the methods used should achieve the right balance being practical and manageable for recently-trained community researchers while sophisticated enough to provide meaningful data for analysis and interpretation.

Examples include:

- Stories (informed by Most Significant Change)
- Focus groups
- Individual interviews
- Scorecards (adapted from existing models such as Citizen Report Cards (pp.28-29), Dubbo (p.46) and SLGDFP (p.34).

Use of RRA techniques such as transect walks (USAID, p.20) and guidance on training of community researchers from Tangentyere, DKCRC and CPNP

## Summary of key research methods cited in this report

Method	Examples	Useful for	Key features	Page ref.
Rapid Appraisal Methods	USAID Belyuen	Participatory evaluation of services	Offers a range of techniques that are applicable for community-based work and can be adapted to suit local circumstances	16 38–40
Outcome Mapping	IDRC	Partnership mapping, community engagement, community-based program and project evaluations	Defines program outcomes in terms of behavioural changes, shifts in relationships and facilitation of actions	19–21
Temporal Logic Models	IDRC	Partnerships and community engagement, community-based program and project evaluations	Includes 'open system' approaches that allow for assessment of <i>participants'</i> responsiveness to programs and 'soft systems' for better understanding of <i>organisational</i> learning processes	21–23
Citizen Report Cards	Various, esp. India, SLGDFP/ Bangladesh and Dubbo, NSW	Collecting consistent information on user perceptions of services	Useful in situations where demand-side data, such as user perceptions on quality and satisfaction with public services is absent	24 29–31 42
Community-based evaluation framework	CPNP/Canada CIET/Pakistan	Participatory research on community perceptions on services	Brings together key principles and a suite of tools into an overall model of evaluation	17–19 26–28
Training community based-researchers	CIET/Canada, ARPNet/ NT CPNP/Canada	Situations where cross-cultural understanding may be limited e.g. between service users and providers	Builds local capacity in data collection and analysis through training of local people to be employed as community researchers for the direction of the project or program, usually supervised by an external, academically trained researcher	17–19 26–28 38–41
Social auditing	CIET	Measurement of progress against social objectives of projects and programs	Relevant to situations where entities external to a program or project (such as a funding agency) are seeking to measure results and reinforce accountability	17–18
Knowledge synthesis	CIET	Systematic documentation of knowledge, including unwritten traditional and local knowledge	Holistic approach to understanding a range of knowledge and information that is relevant to addressing particular research questions; uses various tools, including new approaches	18–19
Participatory Action Research	VicHealth and others	Achieving a high level of local participation in research	Acknowledges and integrates local understandings of research, cultural considerations and emphasises research outputs that are valued locally	40–42

In this section we have chosen to outline an approach to the subject rather than provide definitive advice and recommendations. As stated earlier in this report, we consider that combining methods would offer potential to FaHCSIA to both spread and reduce risk as well as maintain a suitable balance of M&E rigour with techniques suitable for newly trained researchers to use. However, the high level of complexity that is implied by combining methods would not be appropriate for community-based research on remote services. The ideas presented in the first diagram above set out to achieve the right balance.

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