Local Government Association of the Northern Territory

LGANT Submission to: **INDIGENOUS EVALUATION STRATEGY**

Submitted online via: www.pc.gov.au/Indigenous-Evaluation

23 August 2019

I write in response to the Productivity Commission's ('the Commission') call for submissions in response to the issues paper on the Indigenous Evaluation Strategy.

In answer to questions raised in the issues paper only a couple have responses here in this submission.

Question: ***How can the challenges and complexities associated with undertaking evaluation be overcome – both generally, and in Indigenous policy specifically?***

There is much that can be done to improve the challenges and complexities of undertaking evaluations. These days, much attention is given to the need for strong evidence to support them and the methodologies employed in the cultural sectors of local government by the Cultural Development Network (CDN) in Victoria https://culturaldevelopment.net.au/planning/planning-framework/ is an approach that should be investigated.

It has the principles and methodologies that seem to go further than most strategic planning offerings.

Table 1
Eight key steps in the methodology

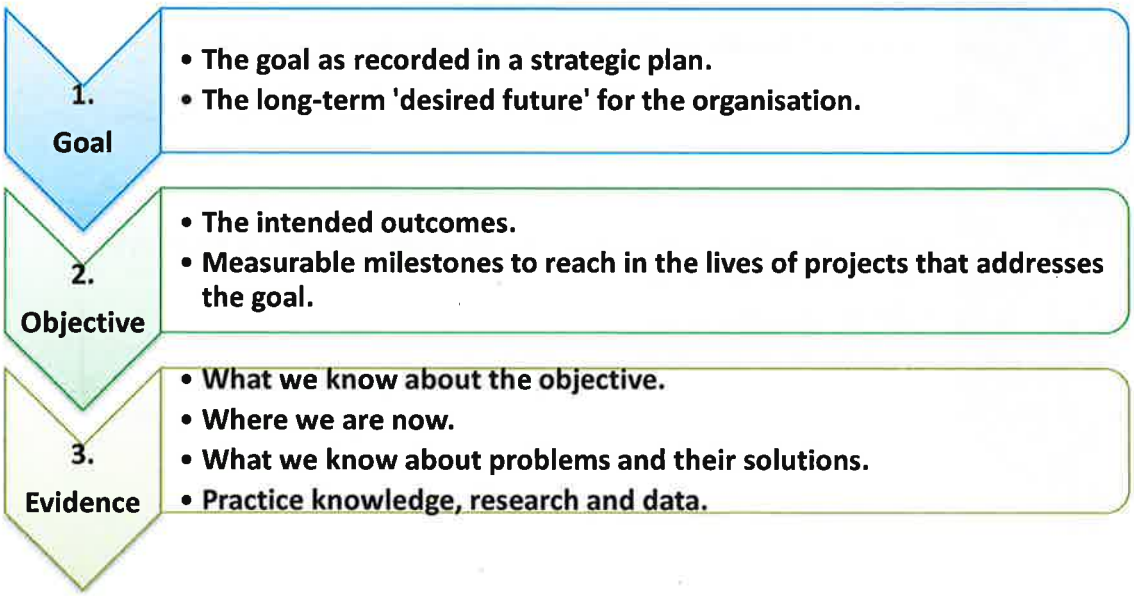
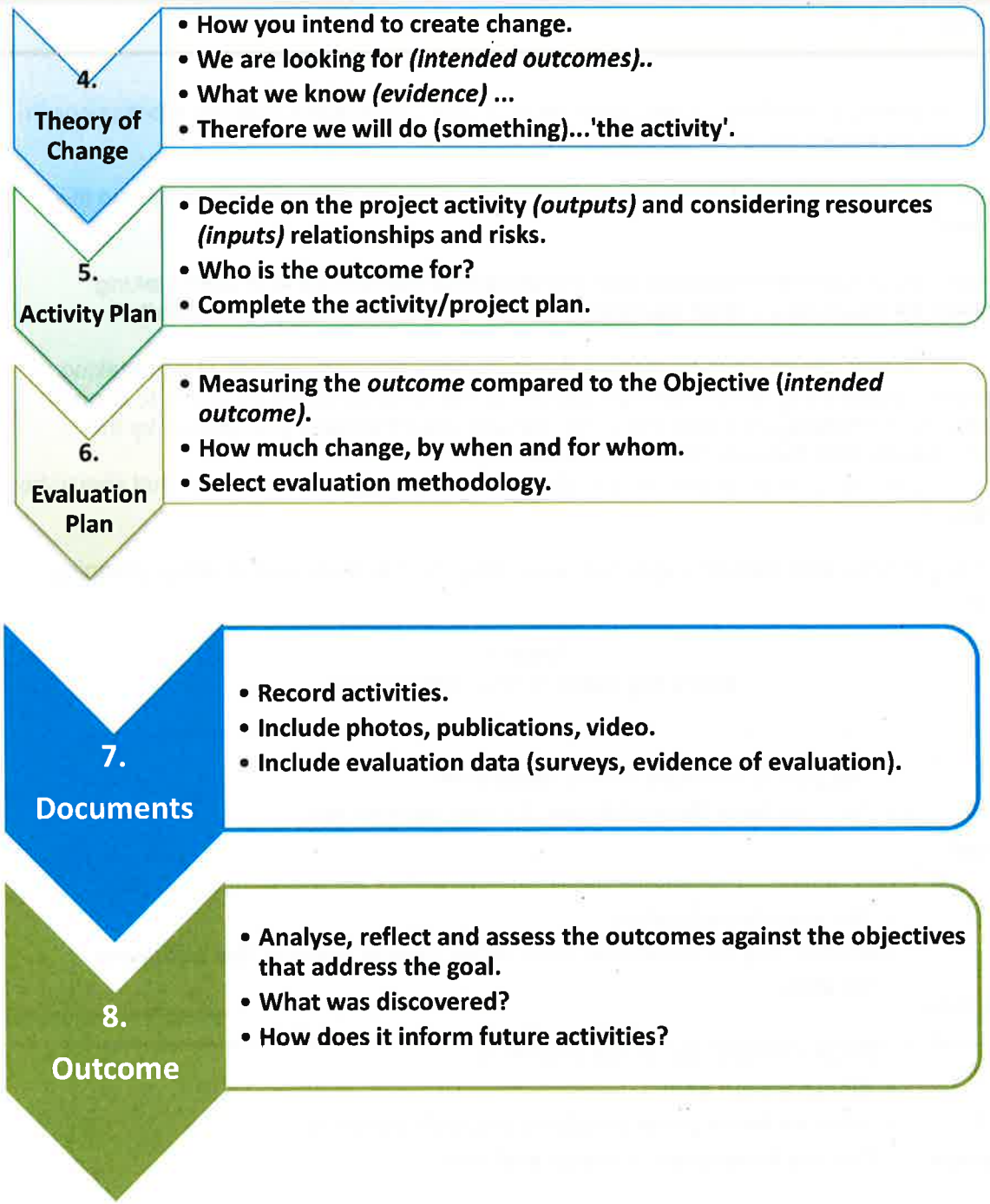
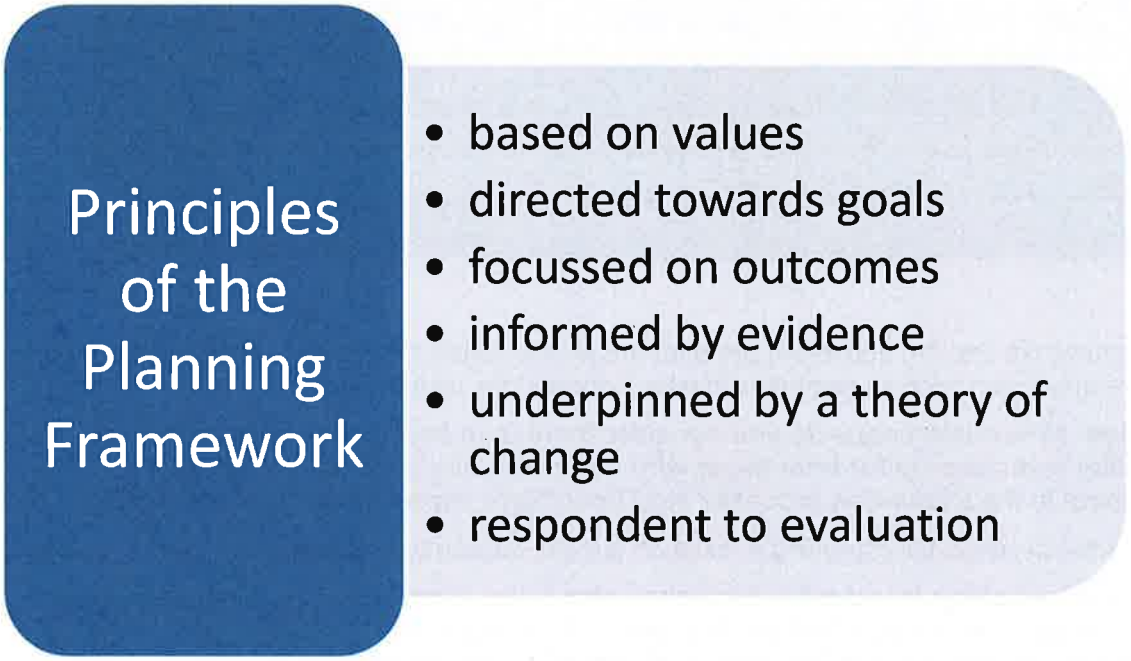


Table 1
Eight key steps in the methodology (continued)



CDN's planning framework is based on the following six principles and which is listed and explained on the above website.



While the methodologies are very sound for almost any activity or project (and fundamentally asks the question *Why should the project be done?)* there are still issues with aligning business systems with the planning software; an integration problem that often exists with software applications.

The CDN planning framework:

- seems to meet the requirement for '*planning early for evaluation*' as mentioned on page 29 of the Commission's issues paper. It could also be used for designing and developing policies and programs affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The good part about the framework is that it was born out of need; the need for the cultural sector to better demonstrate its worth largely through its disciplined framework in order to attract more investment either from government or philanthropic sources for cultural works or activities. The approach seems to have worked with other entities also making similar offerings (eg., *Culture Counts* https://culturecounts.cc/features/).

The frameworks that the above entities offer are ideally suited for dealing with evaluations and they are only given here as examples of what can be done with them.

Question: ***How much scope do you consider there is to improve evaluation culture, capability and capacity for both those who undertake evaluations, and those who participate in the evaluation process? And how might improvements be achieved?***

There is much scope for improving evaluation culture, capability and capacity.

If the logic for projects is laid out in the manner that follow frameworks like those above then there is ample room for organisations to improve. This is particularly so if they are backed up with robust business systems that people are trained in and the systems have most of the qualities below:

- easy to use, is flexible and reliable and can generate reports quickly
- facilitates confidentiality and information security
- can support different programs, data collection requirements and ways of managing both programs and projects
- information is held once and is accessible by those who need it
- has well-defined business processes.

A great deal of work would have to go into helping people understand the need for such concepts and why they are so helpful to all parties.

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