



Evaluation Strategy

Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements

2024—2027

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Message from the CEO



As the state's lead agency for disaster recovery and resilience policy, the Queensland Reconstruction Authority (QRA) has a vital role in designing and implementing event-specific funding packages to support communities impacted by severe weather and disaster events.

QRA is committed to ensuring appropriate and effective support is provided to communities in a timely manner.

Communities recover better when assistance is locally-led, informed by evidence and considers the unique recovery needs arising from the event.

QRA's evaluation strategy was developed to support contemporary evaluation practice within the context of Queensland's recovery and resilience priorities.

Strong monitoring and evaluation practices support QRA to understand:

- how every dollar spent makes a difference
- if packages are working for impacted communities as intended
- if packages are achieving their recovery and resilience objectives
- how packages can be improved for future disaster events.

Overview

This strategy is maintained by the Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) function in the Recovery and Resilience Division of QRA. It is reviewed periodically to ensure continuous improvement and responds to structural or functional changes to QRA or the DRFA.

Purpose

The Evaluation Strategy 2024-2027 outlines how the Queensland Reconstruction Authority (QRA) intends to approach monitoring and evaluation (M&E) activities for Category C and D exceptional circumstances packages under Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements (DRFA).

The strategy aims to:

- provide guiding principles for monitoring and evaluation activities of in-scope packages
- clarify expectations for evaluation practice and reporting
- define M&E roles and responsibilities within QRA
- build M&E capability across the organisation
- embed a culture of evaluative thinking into package design and development
- create a commitment to evaluation wise-practice.

Background and context

As part of DRFA, every Australian state and territory is required to:

- monitor the progress of Category C and D packages and report to the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA)
- evaluate community recovery fund Category C exceptional circumstance packages.

QRA’s remit for evaluation extends beyond mandatory DRFA requirements and includes all Category C and D packages.

Monitoring and evaluation activities include regular performance reporting and final evaluations (upon package completion). Interim evaluations are considered only when there is a strong evidence or decision-making need, and if budget and resourcing allow.

Legislative frameworks

The *Financial Accountability Act 2009* (which was enacted to govern public sector financial administration in Queensland) requires that “accountable officers and statutory bodies achieve reasonable value for money by ensuring the operations of the department or statutory body are carried out efficiently, effectively and economically.”

A function of QRA (under the *Queensland Reconstruction Authority Act 2011*) is to ensure recovery and resilience efforts for affected communities are:

- effectively and efficiently carried out
- appropriate, having regard to the nature of the disaster.

Resources

All monitoring and evaluation activities should be informed by current QRA strategies, logics, plans, frameworks and guidelines (including this one). Where practicable, they should also complement the following documents:

| Document | Agency |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| Monitoring and Evaluation Framework for Disaster Recovery Programs | NEMA |
| Evaluating DRFA Programs – Methodology | NEMA |
| Queensland Government Program Evaluation Guidelines | Queensland Treasury |
| Performance Management Framework | Department of the Premier and Cabinet |
| Project Assessment Framework | Queensland Treasury |

A list of **Appendix A – Common evaluation terms** has been included to support this strategy (see **Appendix A**).

Application

While this strategy is intended to inform monitoring and evaluation practice for all Category C and D packages, a tailored approach may be undertaken for specific packages, programs or events to respond to information and reporting needs.

Monitoring and evaluation frameworks designed for each event outline specific requirements or deviations from this strategy.

Why evaluation matters

The role of M&E

What is evaluation?

Evaluation is the structured, evidence-informed processes undertaken to assess package appropriateness, efficiency and effectiveness and/or value for money. It plays a vital role in the development, implementation and measurement of disaster recovery and resilience packages in Queensland.

What is monitoring?

Monitoring is the routine collection of qualitative and quantitative information during program implementation about progress and performance. Quality monitoring processes can identify where service delivery improvements can be made and whether a program or package is tracking well towards its goals. It can also make complementary evaluation activities more targeted and less resource intensive.

Why is M&E important?

At its broadest level, Government business is about responding to individual, business and community needs with evidence-informed public policy. In responding to Queensland's natural disasters, policy outcomes can be achieved by designing and implementing event-specific programs and packages.

A 'package' refers to a Category C or D exceptional circumstances package, consisting of a program or group of programs aligned to one of the five functional lines of recovery and resilience (i.e. human and social, economic, environment, building or roads and transport).

M&E is a thorough way for QRA to demonstrate how the programs and packages it invests in are making a difference and represent value for money. M&E is intended to support continuous learning, performance improvement, evidence informed decision-making and accountability across delivery partners.

Evaluation principles

Guiding principles

To ensure evaluations produce credible and useful evidence to inform decision-making, they need to be integrated, fit-for-purpose, learning-based and meet standards for wise-practice.

Integrated

Foster collaboration, gather multiple perspectives and share information.



Fit-for-purpose

Consider the context, reporting requirements, intended outcomes and stakeholder needs.



Learning-based

Encourage critical thinking and reflection to identify strengths and opportunities.



Wise-practice

Be resourceful, transparent, evidence-informed and ethical.



What to evaluate

Types of questions

An evaluation's design should produce quality evidence to answer its key evaluation questions. Evaluation questions should seek to measure the appropriateness, efficiency and effectiveness of each package implemented in response to a disaster event/season. Example questions are included below.

Appropriateness questions

Whether package addressed the needs of people it was designed to help.

- To what extent was the package designed to meet the needs of stakeholders? Were there any barriers to awareness or access?
- To what extent was package implementation responsive to the needs of stakeholders?

Efficiency questions

Whether package resources were utilised well.

- To what extent was the package delivered in a timely, economical, and consistent manner?
- Could resources have been better allocated to meet the needs of stakeholders?

Effectiveness questions

Whether package was responsible for outcomes achieved.

- To what extent:
 - were stakeholders aware of the package?
 - was the package implemented as intended?
 - did the package meet its intended objectives?
 - did the package result in unintended (positive or negative) outcomes?
- What aspects of the package could be improved to better meet its objectives?

Where possible, evaluation should focus on the design, implementation and outcomes of each package (with consideration given to governance, stakeholder engagement and community awareness). Where there is evidence of package effectiveness, evaluation may also ask questions about sustainability of outcomes and value for money.

The evaluation's scope should be informed by uptake of the programs within the package, insights gained from monthly reporting, identified evidence gaps, the type of evaluation, the package's line of recovery and resilience and the nature of the package.

An evaluation does not need to evaluate all aspects of a package at once. When time and resourcing constraints exist, it is wise to design an evaluation to answer fewer, more targeted questions in detail, than have a broad scope of inquiry and be spread too thinly.

When to evaluate

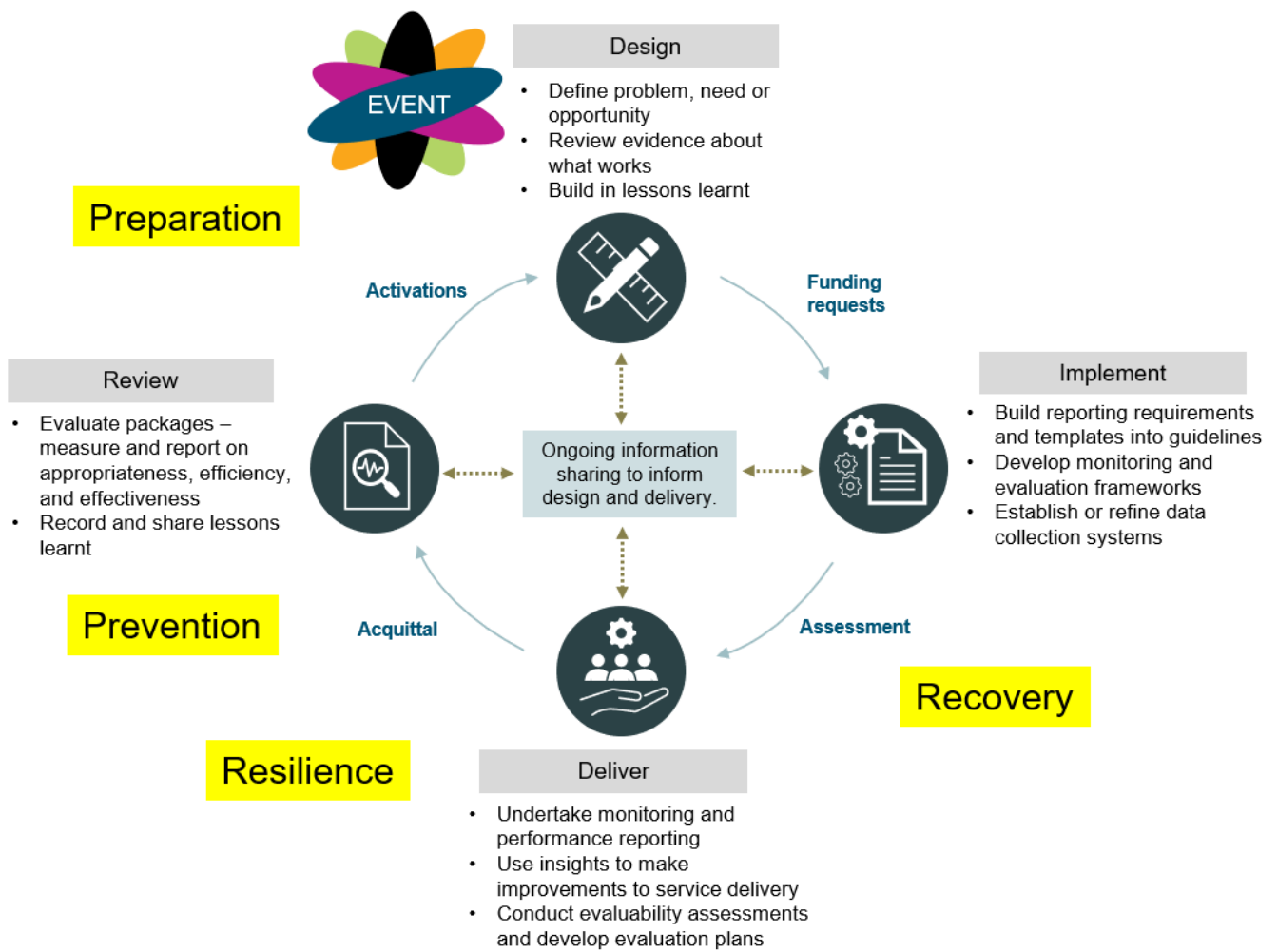
Evaluation should be considered when a package is being designed and is particularly useful for packages:

- with large government investment
- that are regularly implemented following a disaster event
- that respond to community needs associated with mental or physical health, wellbeing or safety
- with implications for a broad range of stakeholders (e.g. multiple agencies, communities or industries)
- that have not been evaluated adequately, recently or at all
- where evaluation findings are likely to affect future policy decisions.

The earlier evaluative thinking starts in the DRFA funding lifecycle, the broader the range of questions that can be answered by M&E (see [Figure 1](#)).

Early preparation for evaluation means:

- data collection systems can be built into package design, reporting and delivery
- seasonal effects and events that may affect measurement can be better planned for
- evaluability (readiness) assessments may be completed before each evaluation
- multiple perspectives and expectations can be considered and managed alongside M&E activities.

Figure 1: Evaluative thinking throughout the DRFA package funding cycle

Source: Queensland Reconstruction Authority 2024

Adapted from the Queensland Government Program Evaluation Guidelines, Queensland Treasury

Evaluation standards and requirements

What does a quality evaluation look like?

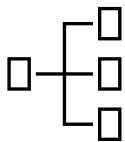
A quality evaluation has the following key components:

Appropriate evaluation questions



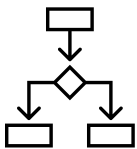
Questions should be realistic, measurable and linked to a package's key objectives. Scope and focus should reflect the timing of the evaluation.

Logic models



Logics should be adaptive, non-linear depictions of intended pathways from package inputs and activities to outputs and outcomes (see [Appendix B](#)).

Indicators, metrics or measures



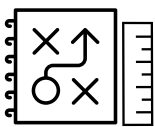
A framework can be used to identify what data are collected, or could be collected, through M&E activities.

Stated evaluation design



Design should be fit-for-purpose and clearly link the questions evaluation seeks to answer with data required to answer those questions.

Clear methodology



Where practicable, evaluation should use mixed methods to collect data from multiple primary and secondary sources.

Data and evidence



A package's place of implementation, data collection systems in place and the context of its implementation, should inform what constitutes evidence for a package and its evaluation.

Evaluation practice

M&E will assist QRA to understand whether a Category C or D package:

- is working as intended (for whom, why, how and at what cost)
- is achieving its stated recovery and resilience objectives
- is experiencing any barriers to access, awareness or implementation
- can be improved to better meet the needs of stakeholders (now or in the future).

M&E activities

Operational activities

Operational activities for M&E in QRA are centred around **performance management** wise-practice. They include:

- routine monitoring of programs and packages
- data management activities
- regular reporting
- identifying strengths, opportunities and barriers
- service and funding improvements during package delivery.

Strategic activities

Strategic activities for M&E in QRA are centred around **evaluation** wise-practice. They include:

- developing strategies, frameworks and plans
- point-in-time assessments of packages
- sharing and publishing findings
- evaluation capability building
- improvements to future programs and packages.

Lessons learnt from M&E activities can be used to improve QRA's capabilities and practice over time.

Evidence gathered also contributes to the existing knowledge base of disaster recovery and resilience in Queensland (and Australia more broadly).

Roles and responsibilities

Recovery and Resilience

The M&E team is responsible for ensuring that Category C and D packages:

- undergo performance measurement and evaluation
- are informed by evidence and lessons learnt from previous evaluations
- continuously improve M&E practices.

Activities include the development of event-specific evaluation frameworks (and supporting documentation) to inform performance reporting and evaluation throughout the lifecycle of a package (see [Figure 2](#) and [Figure 3](#)).

Data requests and primary research may be undertaken to fill gaps in existing monitoring and reporting mechanisms to answer key evaluation questions.

Operations

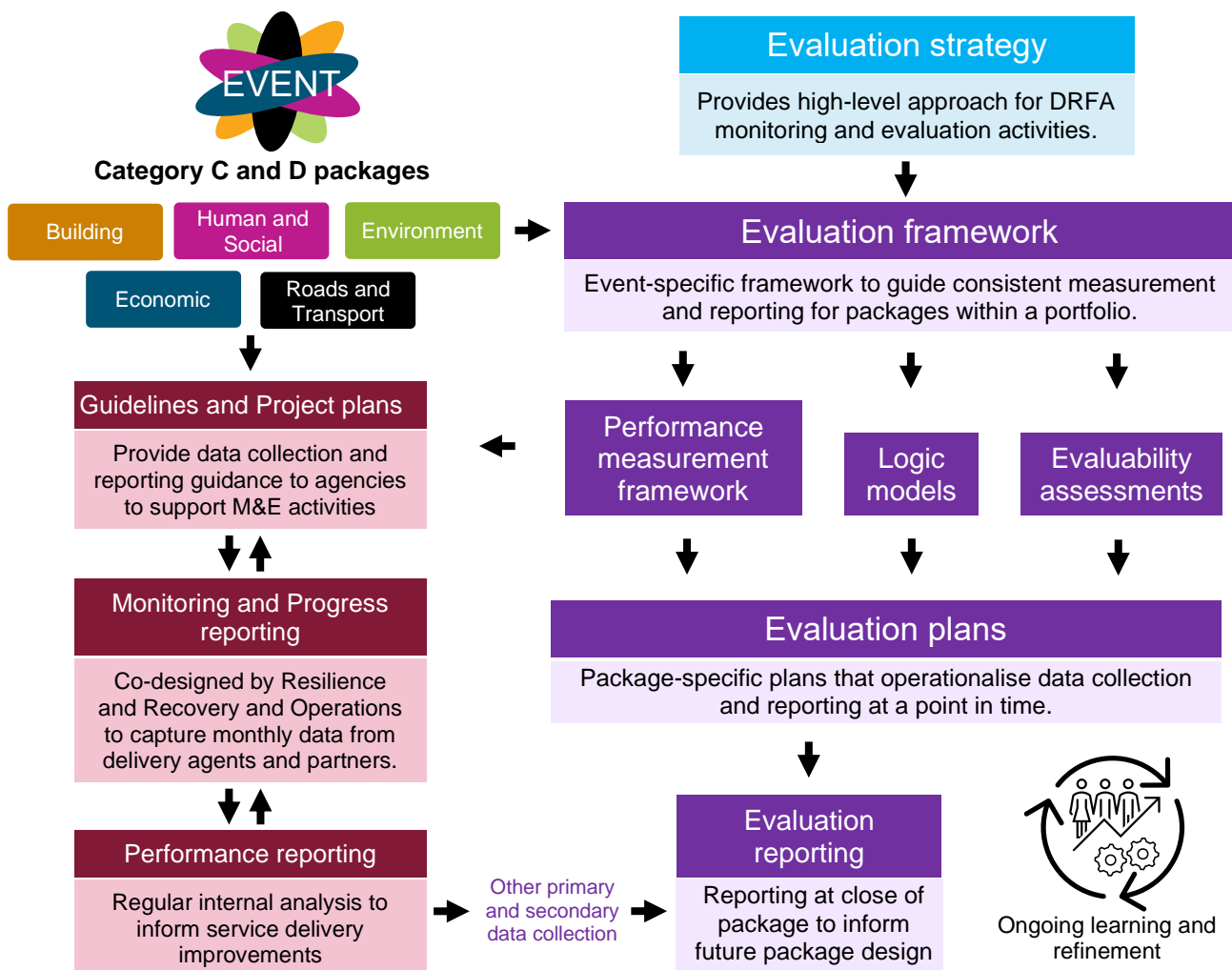
Within Operations:

- the Initiations team is responsible for developing and maintaining internal and external guidelines (including the governance arrangements) for delivery agents implementing Category C and D packages
- the Program Delivery Office is responsible for facilitating operational data collection, monitoring and reporting
- the Portfolio team is responsible for using data insights captured during delivery to manage resources, respond to risks and issues, establish efficiencies and implement service improvements in real-time.

Other resourcing

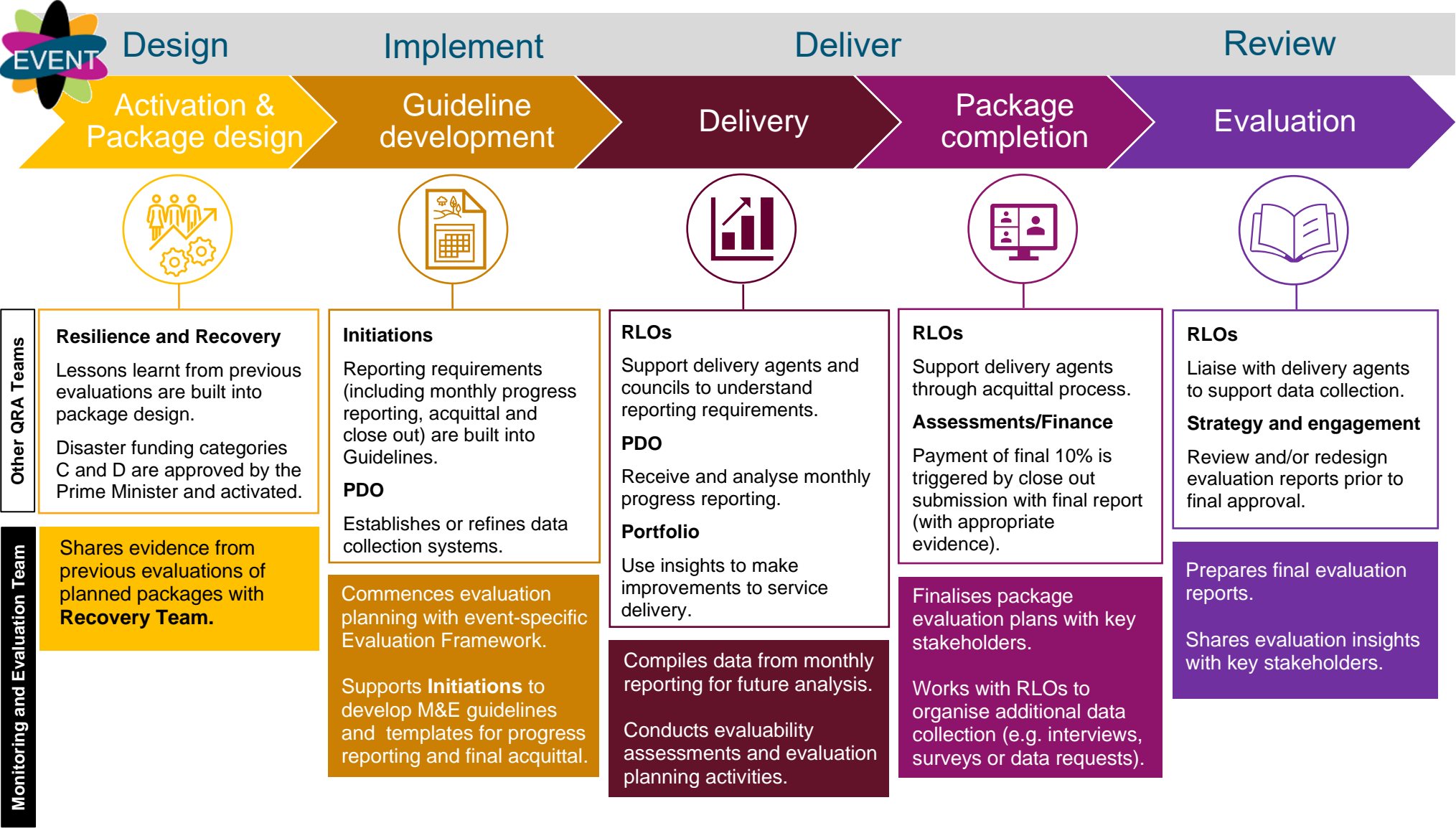
As required, QRA may recruit or procure additional internal or external resources and capability to fulfil its roles and responsibilities. Funding for these resources may be attached to event-specific packages.

Figure 2: QRA M&E tools and activities



Source: Queensland Reconstruction Authority 2024

Figure 3: M&E roles and responsibilities



Source: Queensland Reconstruction Authority 2024

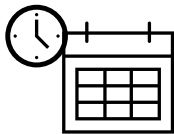
Data standards

The ABS Data Quality Framework is a useful tool for assessing data for inclusion in evaluation. Data quality standards from the framework include:



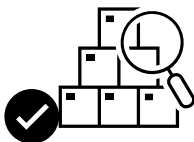
Relevance

How well data meet user needs in terms of the concept measured and the population represented.



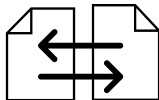
Timeliness

The delay between the reference period and the date data become available.



Accuracy

The degree to which data correctly describe what they were designed to measure.



Coherence

Whether data can be compared with other sources (i.e. consistency of collection)



Interpretability

How data are presented and the availability of explanatory statements.



Accessibility

How easy data are to source (in terms of cost, format and content).

Communicating data quality

Evaluation is reliant upon stakeholders (including delivery agents and community members) supplying accurate and up-to-date information to QRA.

Administrative data can pose a few challenges when used for research purposes. Data may be captured and recorded inconsistently or incompletely over time and may not be reported in a way that is useful for evaluation activities. In planning and reporting for evaluation, it is important to highlight where limitations exist to:

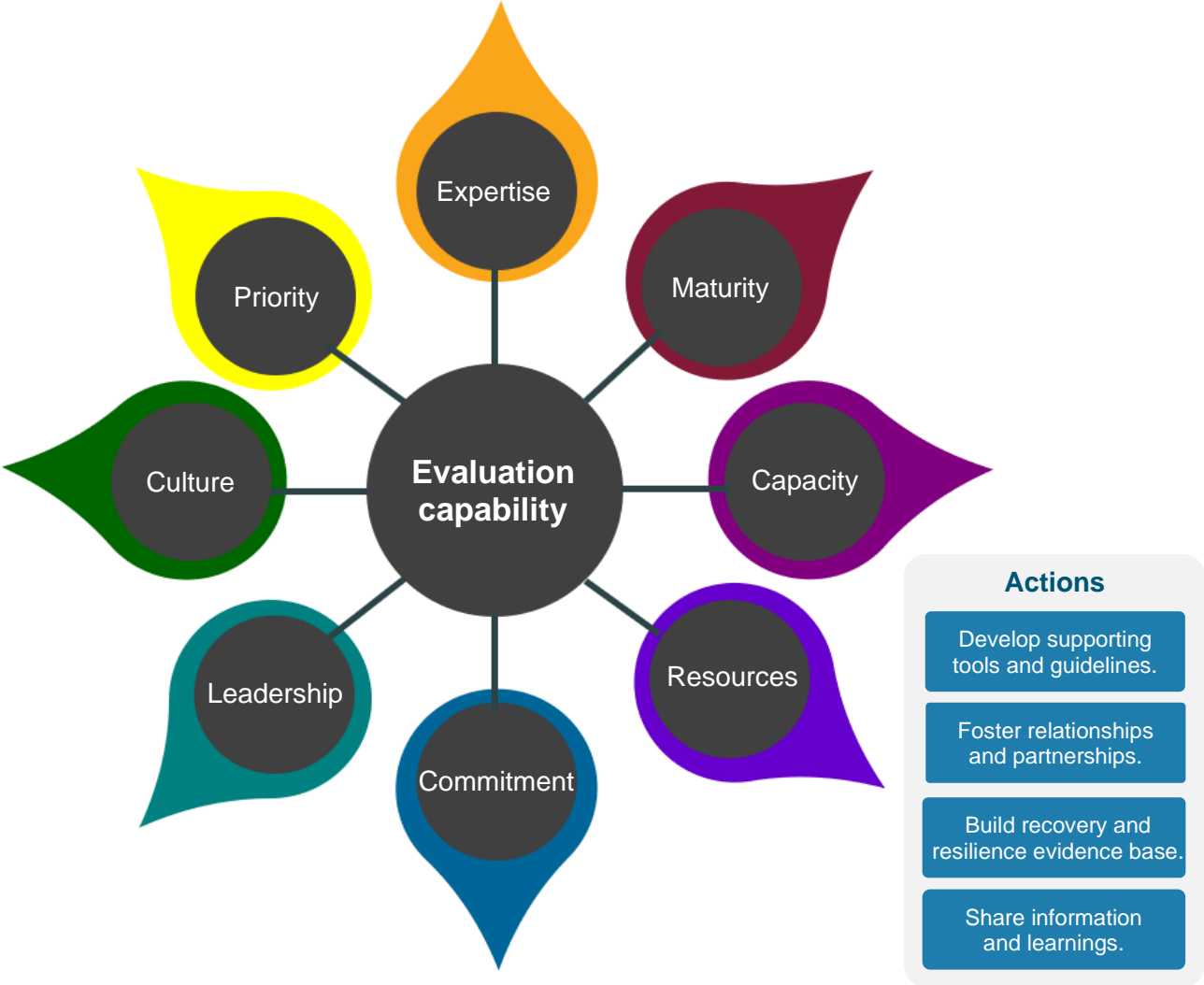
- identify gaps in knowledge or data collection practices
- manage expectations around reliability, validity and representativeness of available data
- clearly and confidently communicate strength of evidence in reporting
- support measured and considered decision-making for service improvements and future package or program design.

Ethics

A number of moral and ethical challenges need to be considered when planning for, and conducting, evaluation. QRA's evaluations will:

- include governance and risk mitigation strategies that prevent, monitor and manage concerns as they are identified
- respect the rights, beliefs, culture and perspectives of those contributing to the evaluation
- be undertaken in accordance with the *Guidelines for the Ethical Conduct of Evaluations*
- uphold obligations under the *Information Privacy Act 2009* and the *Human Rights Act 2019*
- use data collected or provided for evaluation purposes only.

Evaluation capability building



Source: Queensland Reconstruction Authority 2024

Evaluation competencies

Building capability

A key feature of evaluation is to facilitate ongoing learning and continuous improvement – before, during and after evaluation.

QRA will seek to develop a shared understanding of the benefits of evaluation and create a culture of evaluation wise-practice in policy design and measurement activities.

Choosing a suitable evaluator for a program, package or portfolio will likely depend on a variety of factors such as resourcing, priority, need for independence and in-house evaluation capacity and capabilities.

There are benefits and challenges associated with commissioning evaluation using external expertise or managing evaluation using internal resources (see [Table 1](#)).

Table 1: Qualities of internal and external evaluators

| Evaluator | Qualities |
|-----------|--|
| Internal | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Specialist knowledge• Capability building• Less expensive• Existing relationships• Data access |
| External | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Objectivity• Perceived independence• Specialist expertise• Efficiency• New insights |

For each event or disaster season, QRA will assess the packages within the disaster funding portfolio and use a hybrid model of internal and external resources to undertake evaluations. This will ensure QRA builds internal evaluation capabilities while leveraging expertise and additional capacity as required.

Evaluation maturity

QRA has assessed its current capabilities against four criteria, which will be developed over the next three years (see [Table 2](#)).

Table 2: QRA's M&E maturity matrix

| | Where we are | Where we want to be | |
|--|--|--|--|
| | 2024-2025 Developing | 2025-2026 Established | 2026-2027 Mature |
| Evaluation templates, tools and practices | Developing in-house capabilities and designing templates tools and practices for current and future use. | Established in-house capabilities with templates, tools and practices in place for current and future events. | Embedded planning and reporting practices with continuous improvement. |
| Data and information sharing | Improving data collection practices and sharing learnings with internal and external stakeholders. | Improved data capture, reporting guidance and mechanisms to share learnings with key stakeholders. | Routine practices for data collection and reporting, with regular review. |
| Relationships and partnerships | Fostering relationships and partnerships to improve knowledge and information sharing about evaluation practice. | Increased communication with key stakeholders to improve understanding of requirements to support evaluation activities. | Stakeholders buy into the evaluation process, with clear understanding of evaluation timeframes, requirements, and expectations. |
| Queensland recovery and resilience evidence-base | Developing new ways to measure and capture information across events and over time. | Improved evidence-base for package design and implementation with planned activities to fill knowledge gaps | Identification and regular collection of data to fulfil evidence requirements is standard practice. |

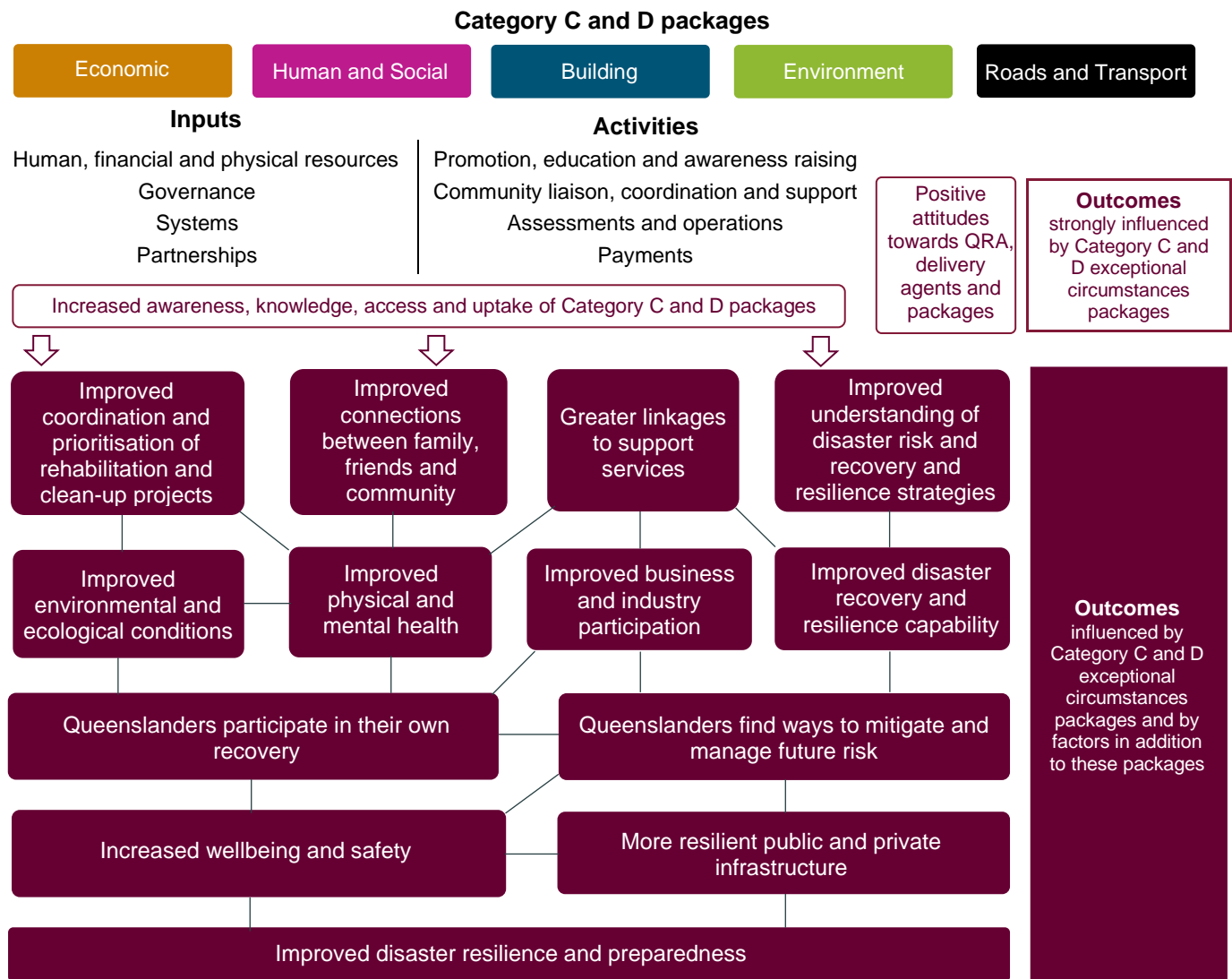
Appendix A – Common evaluation terms

| Term | Definition |
|--|--|
| Appropriateness | The extent to which a package's design and delivery respond to an identified need, in a given context. |
| Effectiveness | The extent to which a package is responsible for achieving its objectives. |
| Efficiency | The extent to which a package delivers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • at the lowest possible cost • to areas of greatest need • in better or lower cost ways over time (i.e. continuously improves) |
| Evaluability assessment | A pre-evaluation or early evaluation assessment of a package's readiness for evaluation. It considers the extent to which a package can be evaluated in a credible and reliable way. |
| Evaluation | Structured, evidence-informed processes undertaken to assess a package's appropriateness, efficiency, effectiveness or value for money. |
| Evaluation framework | A planning document that outlines how a disaster funding portfolio will be measured over time. It may include evaluation objectives, principles, key evaluation questions, planned measurement activities, timelines, engagement and communication strategies, a data management plan and governance arrangements. |
| Evaluation plan | The key planning document for the evaluation of a package, at a specific point in time. It may include evaluation objectives, a logic model, a performance measurement framework, evaluation questions, design, methodology and planned data collection, analysis and reporting. |
| Evidence | Fit-for-purpose information used to support an assertion or position. Evaluation can be a thorough way to synthesise evidence from multiple sources to inform decision-making. |
| Line of recovery and resilience | There are five lines of recovery and resilience – human and social, economic, environment, building and roads and transport. Each package within a portfolio is aligned to the objectives of one line of recovery and resilience. |
| Logic model | A visual representation of how a program, package, line of recovery and resilience or portfolio operates to produce change. It usually includes inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes, theory of change, assumptions and threats to validity. |
| Monitoring | Regular collection of information about a package's progress and performance. |
| Objectives | Clear, measurable statements of what a package or evaluation intends to achieve. |
| Outcomes | Intended or unintended positive or negative results that are directly or indirectly related to a package's activities. They are often described in terms of timeframes (e.g. short, medium or long term) or the type or level of change they produce (e.g. attitudinal and behavioural change for individuals or social change for communities). |
| Outputs | A set of quantifiable products or services that result from package delivery. |
| Package | A Category C or D exceptional circumstances package, consisting of a program or group of programs aligned to one of the five functional lines of recovery and resilience (i.e. human and social, economic, environment, building or roads and transport). |

| Term | Definition |
|--|--|
| Performance measurement framework | A planning document or spreadsheet outlining the output and outcome data to be collected over time for an event-specific portfolio. |
| Portfolio | A disaster funding portfolio. A collection of Category C and D exceptional circumstances packages developed to support response, recovery and resilience for communities affected by one or more disasters/weather events. |
| Principles | A set of values that underpin how evaluation activities should be approached. |
| Program | A set of time-based, coordinated activities designed to respond to an identified need or policy position (for example, in response to an event, such as a cyclone, bushfire or flood). |
| Stakeholders | Individuals, groups or communities who can affect or be affected by a package (or its evaluation) over time. |
| Threats to validity | Factors that may affect an evaluation's ability to demonstrate that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a relationship exists between package activities and measured outcomes (internal validity) • measured outcomes could apply to other package users in different contexts or conditions (external validity). |
| Value for money | An effective package can be judged to represent value for money when desired outcomes are reached or exceeded using the resources made available. |
| Wise-practice | Evidence-informed activities that consider context, complexity and multiple perspectives. |

Appendix B – Recovery and resilience logic model

Figure 4: QRA's recovery and resilience logic model



The theory of change is informed by continuous monitoring and review.

Assumptions

Package information is accessible; delivery agents have appropriate knowledge, skills and expertise; resourcing is sufficient to support affected residents; eligibility criteria are appropriate; packages can be delivered within critical periods of need; community feedback systems are embedded in operations; access to support will increase program uptake; uptake of programs will assist with recovery and resilience.

Possible unintended outcomes

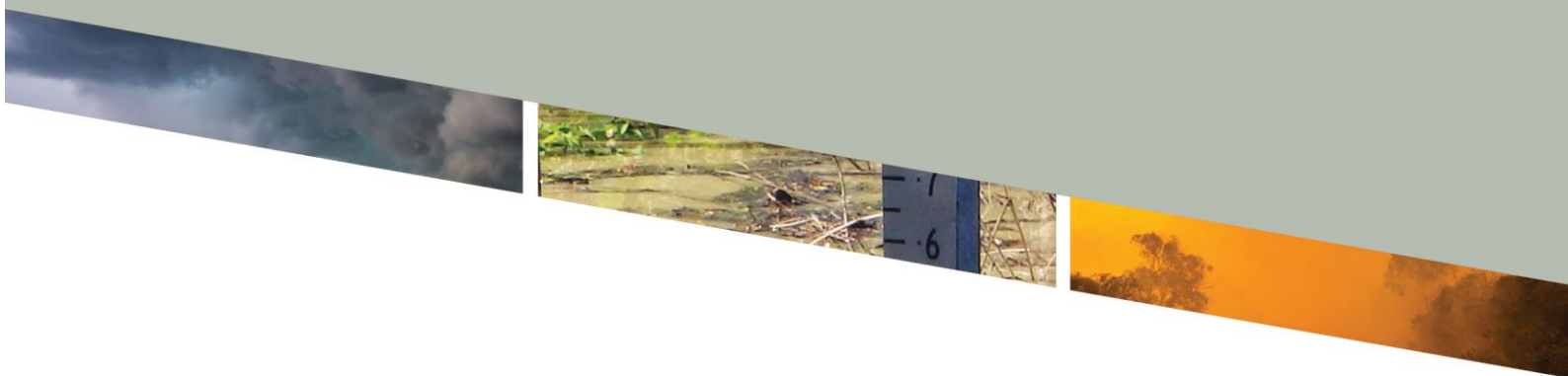
Positive: Greater trust and confidence in delivery agents (and local, state and commonwealth governments more broadly); social, environmental and economic benefits for adjacent communities; referral and access to broader system of supports outside DRFA funding; improvement/upgrades to local amenities, upskilling of local suppliers and third parties; greater community connection, social cohesion and business networking; improved information sharing among delivery agents.

Negative: Value for money is reduced due to limited competition in regional areas; ongoing or increased risk for future events; redistribution of fiscal resources to impacted areas; negative perceptions of the packages; illegal activities; loss of property values; issues obtaining insurance; disaster affected residents recommence business, work, school and social activities in a new area; reduced housing stock; residents are displaced; council up-keep costs for resumed/repurposed land.

Threats to validity

Internal validity: Availability of other government and non-government programs and services; changing recovery needs and behaviours over time.

External validity: Variation in contextual setting; social and economic conditions (e.g. local issues, demographic diversity); political, legislative and government factors (e.g. changes to funding, extensions of time) implementation challenges; market factors; natural disasters.



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