



FIRST PERSON
CONSULTING

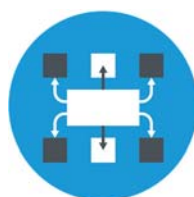
Evaluating the Outcomes of Community Participation in NRM

Final Report

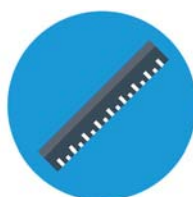
Prepared for
NRM Regions Australia



Roberts Evaluation Pty Ltd



PLANNING



EVALUATION



RESEARCH

www.fpconsulting.com.au

Key contact

Daniel Healy

First Person Consulting Pty Ltd

ABN 98 605 466 797

P: 03 9600 1778

E: dan@fpconsulting.com.au

W: www.fpconsulting.com.au

Document details

| | |
|----------------|---|
| Title: | Evaluating the Outcomes of Community Participation in NRM: Final Report |
| Authors: | Daniel Healy, Kate Roberts, Matt Healey, Robyn Bowden, Rebecca Denniss |
| Version: | 2 |
| Revision date: | 27 July 2016 |
| Client: | NRM Regions Australia |

Executive Summary

Project overview

NRM Regions Australia, the National Landcare Network (NLN) and regional natural resource management (NRM) organisations have recognised the need to more consistently measure, evaluate and report on the effectiveness of community participation in NRM. An important aspect of this involves understanding and demonstrating the contribution of community participation to NRM outcomes. The broader objectives of this project are to:

- collate and review current approaches to the evaluation of community participation outcomes
- explore options for standardising community participation outcomes measurement across NRM regions
- consider how to incorporate these options for measurement into existing systems and processes to enable and encourage collection of standardised data, with the potential for aggregated reporting.

The strategic purpose of this work is to enable a more accurate and holistic demonstration of the value and outcomes of the Australian Government's continued investment in community based NRM programs.

NRM Regions Australia engaged First Person Consulting (FPC) and Roberts Evaluation to undertake this project in conjunction with the NRM Community Participation Steering Committee. The project included the following key components:

- **A series of five background papers** – analysing and presenting previous research, methods and best practice examples of evaluating the outcomes of community participation in NRM, to inform Workshop discussion.
- **Participant consultation survey** – conducted prior to the Workshop, asking participants to provide examples of reports, resources, tools and systems that NRM regions are using to support, measure, evaluate and improve community participation in NRM.
- **Workshop** – held on 12 May 2016 with NRM community participation practitioners, Australian Government officials and NLN representatives, involving facilitated discussion about effectively evaluating community participation outcomes, prioritising outcomes for measurement, and discussion about the ways forward for standardising the measurement of NRM community participation outcomes across regions in Australia.
- **Workshop report** – presents proceedings and outcomes of the Workshop.
- **Draft final report** – including project overview, reporting, analysis and draft findings and recommendations for discussion at the Summit Workshop.
- **Summit Workshop** – on 18 July 2016 with Steering Committee members to discuss and finalise a process for standardising the measurement of some community participation outcomes.

This is the final project report, and includes the following:

- an overview of the scope, methods and key components of this project

- background information and literature review
- key project findings
- recommendations.

Findings

Informing the recommendations listed below, the following findings have been developed through research, consultation and collaboration throughout this project.

Finding 1

A range of methods are used in regions across Australia to effectively plan, evaluate, measure and report on the outcomes of community participation in NRM. Different methods and tools are appropriate for collecting data on a range of levels and scales, and to evaluate outcomes against a range of indicators.

This report presents a range of data collection methods and tools, with guidance on their usefulness and appropriateness for evaluating the outcomes of community participation in different contexts.

Finding 2

There is value in collaboration, learning and development across NRM regions to enable continuous improvement of the planning, evaluation, measurement and reporting of community participation outcomes and programs.

Finding 3

A mandate to pursue improved standardisation and consistency of the measurement of community participation outcomes was established among NRM regional organisations at the NRM Regions Knowledge Forum in Launceston in 2014 and confirmed at the Workshop in May 2016.

Finding 4

A clear set of outcomes were identified by Workshop participants in May 2016 as the most important outcomes of community participation in NRM to focus on evaluating.

The following four themes emerged as priority outcomes for evaluation of community participation in NRM:

- practices, values and norms that lead to NRM environmental outcomes
- community and economic development opportunities and outcomes (community wellbeing)
- reduced costs of investment in NRM and environmental programs
- empowerment and capacity to contribute to NRM outcomes.

At the Steering Committee Summit Workshop in July 2016, these were further distilled into three priority goals (see Figure 1):

- Practices
- Wellbeing
- Capacity.

In this report we present options for the evaluation of these three priority goals, with examples of outcomes that contribute to their overall achievement, the timeframes in which they are likely to be achieved and a range of methods for measurement of outcomes.

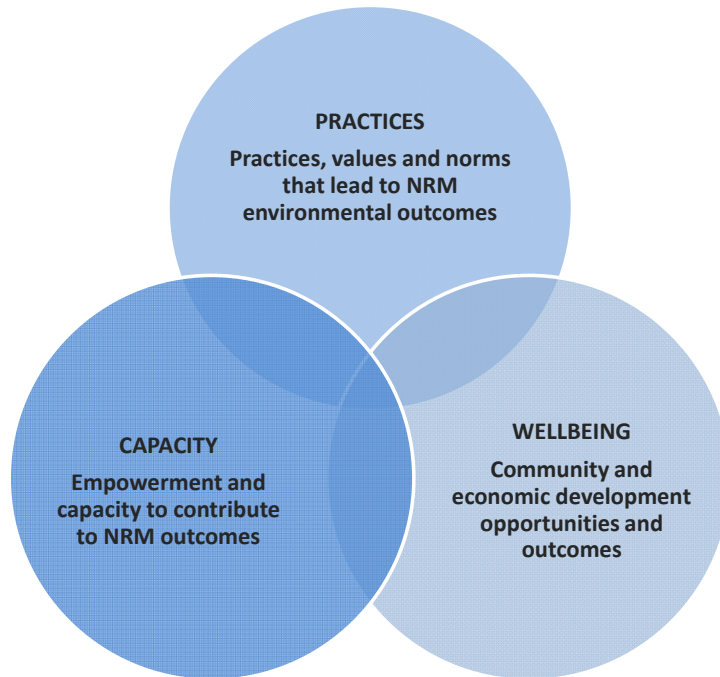


Figure 1. NRM community participation priority goals.

Recommendations

Six key recommendations have emerged through this project. They are described below and presented in Figure 2.

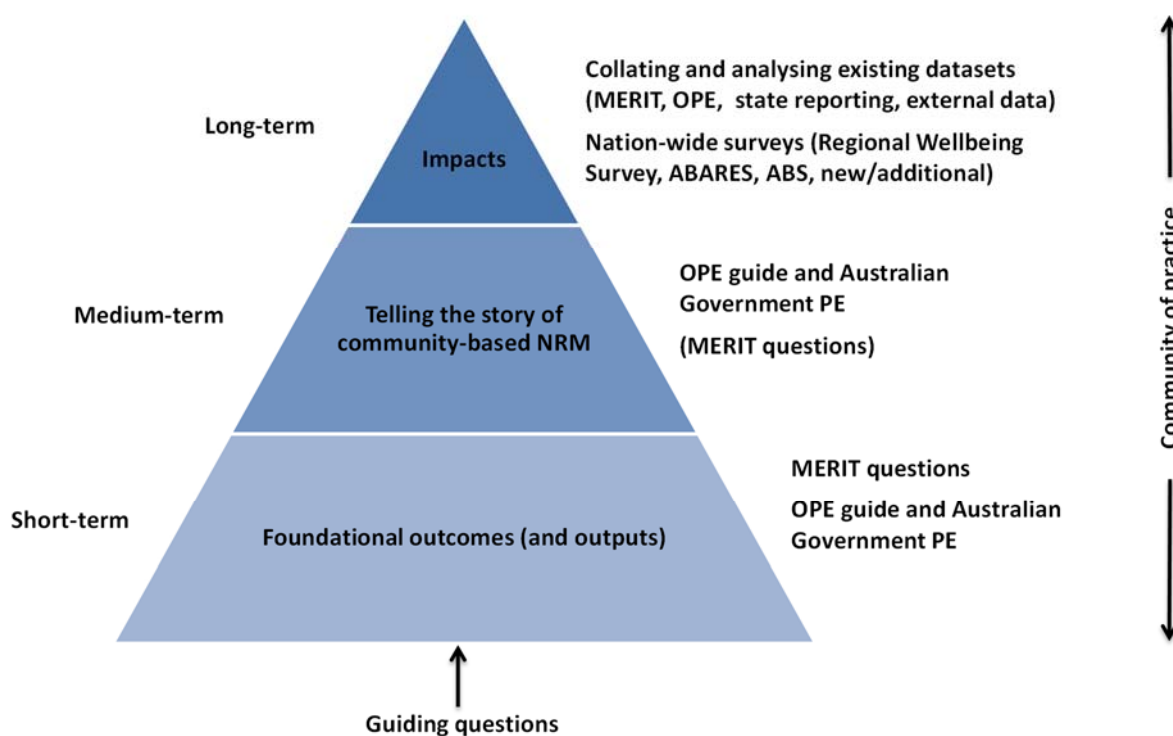


Figure 2. Community participation outcomes measurement options.

Recommendation 1

The Performance Excellence Guide for NRM Organisations (OPE) and the Australian Government Performance Expectations for Regional NRM Organisations (PE) are updated to include:

- indicators for community participation outcomes
- use of the PE framework for continuous improvement
- reporting processes that enable aggregation.

Recommendation 2

A set of additional questions are included in MERIT, the Performance Excellence Guide for NRM Organisations (OPE) and the Australian Government Performance Expectations for Regional NRM Organisations (PE) that ask about short and medium term outcomes of community participation.

Recommendation 3

Where possible, tailor or add questions to existing surveys to measure the outcomes of community participation in NRM in regions across Australia. In particular, explore the option of adding regionally specific questions to the University of Canberra's Regional Wellbeing Survey.

If using existing nation-wide surveys is not possible, develop an additional community participation outcomes survey to be distributed to landholders and community members across all NRM regions in Australia at regular intervals.

Recommendation 4

Greater collation, analysis and use of existing datasets that provide information on the outcomes of community participation in NRM.

Coordinate a pilot project to aggregate the data from investment in the community participation component of the National Landcare Programme over its last year, to test how this collation and analysis can be undertaken and provide the most benefit to NRM regional organisations.

Recommendation 5

A community of practice be established and maintained to facilitate ongoing sharing of resources, experiences, knowledge and skills regarding the evaluation of community participation outcomes.

This may include:

- fostering collaboration between the states or regions that are leaders in their evaluation of community participation outcomes
- working on how to incorporate the findings from this project into regional organisations' activities to be discussed at the Chairs and CEOs Meeting in August 2016
- using the resources from this project as the first topic on the updated NRM Regions Australia website knowledge hub.

Recommendation 6

A set of guiding questions be either formally or informally adopted by NRM regional organisations to improve and standardise design, planning, monitoring, measurement and evaluation of community participation.

Table of Contents

| | |
|---|------------|
| Executive Summary | ii |
| Project overview | ii |
| Findings | iii |
| Recommendations | v |
| Table of Contents..... | vii |
| List of Tables | ix |
| List of Figures..... | ix |
| Acronyms..... | x |
| 1 Introduction and aims | 1 |
| 1.1 Overview | 1 |
| 1.2 Background | 1 |
| 1.3 Aims and scope of this project..... | 2 |
| 1.4 This report..... | 3 |
| 2 Method | 5 |
| 2.1 Project planning and management..... | 5 |
| 2.2 Literature review..... | 5 |
| 2.3 Consultation survey | 5 |
| 2.4 Workshop May 2016..... | 6 |
| 2.5 Summit Workshop July 2016 | 6 |
| 3 Literature review..... | 7 |
| 3.1 Community-based NRM..... | 7 |
| 3.2 Defining community participation | 8 |
| 3.3 Assumptions about the importance of community participation | 9 |
| 3.4 NRM outcomes | 9 |
| 3.5 Context..... | 10 |
| 3.6 Importance of evaluating community participation outcomes | 10 |
| 3.7 Challenges and identified needs | 10 |
| 4 Findings..... | 12 |
| 4.1 Overview | 12 |
| 4.2 Methods and approaches currently used by NRM regions | 12 |
| 4.3 Collaboration, learning and improvement..... | 16 |

| | | |
|----------|--|-----------|
| 4.4 | Standardisation and consistency | 16 |
| 4.4.1 | Strengths and limitations | 16 |
| 4.4.2 | Benefits, needs and expectations | 17 |
| 4.5 | Prioritisation of outcomes | 18 |
| 5 | Recommendations | 20 |
| 5.1 | Overview | 20 |
| 5.2 | Updating NRM governance performance indicators, measures and reporting | 21 |
| 5.3 | Including additional MERIT questions..... | 21 |
| 5.4 | Tailoring or adding questions to existing surveys..... | 25 |
| 5.5 | Collating and analysing existing datasets | 26 |
| 5.6 | Establishing a community of practice | 26 |
| 5.7 | Introducing guiding questions | 27 |

List of Tables

| | |
|--|----|
| Table 1. Key components of the project addressed in this report. | 3 |
| Table 2. Methods and approaches currently used by NRM regions..... | 13 |
| Table 3. Community participation outcomes evaluation data collection tools methods matrix. | 15 |
| Table 4. The benefits and risks of standardisation and consistency in social outcomes evaluation.... | 16 |
| Table 5. Potential measures and methods for evaluating the outcomes of community participation in NRM. | 22 |
| Table 6. Draft guiding questions for planning, monitoring, evaluating and critically reflecting on community participation. | 27 |

List of Figures

| | |
|---|----|
| Figure 1. NRM community participation priority goals. | iv |
| Figure 2. Community participation outcomes measurement options. | v |
| Figure 2. Structure of NRM governance and networks in Australia, sourced from internal NRM Regions Australia document 'Managing Australia's Natural Resources'..... | 8 |
| Figure 3. 'Key messages', sourced from Flatau et al 2015..... | 17 |
| Figure 4. NRM community participation priority goals. | 19 |
| Figure 5. Community participation outcomes measurement options. | 20 |

Acronyms

| | |
|--------|---|
| ABARES | Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics |
| CMA | Catchment Management Authority |
| FPC | First Person Consulting |
| LLS | Local Land Services |
| MERI | Monitoring, evaluation, reporting and improvement |
| MERIT | Monitoring, Evaluation, Reporting and Improvement Tool |
| NLP | National Landcare Programme |
| NLN | National Landcare Network |
| NRM | Natural resource management |
| OPE | Organisational Performance Excellence Standards for NRM organisations |
| PE | Australian Government Performance Expectations |

1 Introduction and aims

1.1 Overview

NRM Regions Australia, the National Landcare Network (NLN) and regional natural resource management (NRM) organisations have recognised the need to more consistently measure, evaluate and report on the effectiveness of community participation in NRM. An important aspect of this involves understanding and demonstrating the contribution of community participation to NRM outcomes. The broader objectives of this project are to:

- collate and review current approaches to the evaluation of community participation outcomes
- explore options for standardising community participation outcomes measurement across NRM regions
- consider how to incorporate these options for measurement into existing systems and processes to enable and encourage collection of standardised data, with the potential for aggregated reporting.

NRM Regions Australia engaged First Person Consulting (FPC) and Roberts Evaluation to undertake this project in conjunction with the NRM Community Participation Steering Committee. This is report is the final project report. Additional project reports are:

- Evaluating Outcomes of Community Participation: Workshop Summary Report
- Workshop Background Paper 1: Recognising the challenges of evaluating the outcomes of community participation in NRM
- Workshop Background Paper 2: Community participation—the importance of evaluating outcomes
- Workshop Background Paper 3: Indicators for monitoring and evaluating community participation outcomes
- Workshop Background Paper 4: Guiding questions—planning, monitoring and evaluating community participation
- Workshop Background Paper 5: Community participation toolbox—resources for planning, monitoring and evaluating the outcomes of community participation in NRM.

1.2 Background

This project is the culmination of previous consultation and research undertaken over the last two years, which emerged from the NRM Regions Knowledge Forum in Launceston in 2014. This work has been driven by NRM Regions Australia, and a collection of NLN and NRM regional representatives with the aim of improving the evaluation, measurement and reporting of the outcomes of community participation in NRM in Australia.

The strategic purpose of this work is to enable a more accurate and holistic demonstration of the value and outcomes of the Australian Government’s continued investment in community based NRM programs.

1.3 Aims and scope of this project

The aims of this project were to explore the following questions:

- What is good practice in measuring effectiveness of community participation in NRM?
- How are we currently measuring methods for enabling community participation and its effectiveness?
- Are the approaches that we are using effective? What thresholds would (or do) we use to determine effectiveness?
- Is this being applied consistently across the 56 NRM Regions? If not, how can we achieve that?
- How do we build a consistent approach into existing M&E systems such as MERIT?
- What are the best mechanisms for communicating the need for change and ensuring adoption of best practice?

The Steering Committee expected that this report would:

- suggest appropriate ways we can measure the effectiveness of community participation processes used by regional NRM organisations and how they can be applied broadly across the sector;
- consider how performance thresholds used to demonstrate best practice can be developed
- provide recommendations regarding the adoption of monitoring and evaluation tools and performance measures;
- processes to refine these as necessary;
- explore ways of collating and combining or aggregating information across regions and the sector;
- assess how MERIT can capture and aggregate this data, including potential for State systems input and sharing of outcomes;
- assess how measures may be incorporated into other processes that may be relevant such as Organisational Performance Excellence and the Performance Framework for Regional Organisations;
- propose how measures can be linked back to improvement (there is no point measuring if we don't 'close the loop' and improve community participation); and
- propose how we can continue to share and build upon what is learnt.

The main components delivered through this consultancy include:

- **A series of five background papers** – analysing and presenting previous research, methods and best practice examples of evaluating the outcomes of community participation in NRM, to inform Workshop discussion.
- **Participant consultation survey** – conducted prior to the Workshop, asking participants to provide examples of reports, resources, tools and systems that NRM regions are using to support, measure, evaluate and improve community participation in NRM.

- **Workshop** – held on 12 May 2016 with NRM community participation practitioners, Australian Government officials and NLN representatives, involving facilitated discussion about effectively evaluating community participation outcomes, prioritising outcomes for measurement, and discussion about the ways forward for standardising the measurement of NRM community participation outcomes across regions in Australia.
- **Workshop report** – presents proceedings and outcomes of the Workshop.
- **Draft final report** – including project overview, reporting, analysis and draft findings and recommendations for discussion at the Summit Workshop.
- **Summit Workshop** – on 18 July 2016 with Steering Committee members to discuss and finalise a process for standardising the measurement of some community participation outcomes.
- **Final report** – this report.

Each component of the project is described in more detail in Section 2 of this report.

1.4 This report

As stated in the project brief, this report is intended to provide a range of recommendations against key project components. These are outlined in Table 1, with an indication of how each component has been addressed through the report findings and recommendations.

Table 1. Key components of the project addressed in this report.

| Project components | Relevant findings and recommendations |
|---|---|
| Suggest appropriate ways we can measure the effectiveness of community participation processes used by regional NRM organisations and how they can be applied broadly across the sector. | 4 – Findings 5 – Recommendations |
| Consider how performance thresholds used to demonstrate best practice can be developed. | The steering committee at the workshop on July 2016 decided that recommendations to do with thresholds were not required from this project. |
| Provide recommendations regarding the adoption of monitoring and evaluation tools and performance measures, and processes to refine these as necessary. | 4 – Findings 5 – Recommendations |
| Explore ways of collating and combining or aggregating information across regions and the sector. | 4 – Findings 5 – Recommendations |

| | |
|---|--|
| <p>Assess how MERIT can capture and aggregate this data, including potential for State systems input and sharing of outcomes.</p> | <p>5.3 – Including additional MERIT questions</p> |
| <p>Assess how measures may be incorporated into other processes that may be relevant such as Organisational Performance Excellence and the Performance Framework for Regional Organisations.</p> | <p>5.2 – Updating NRM governance performance indicators, measures and reporting</p> <p>5.4 – Tailoring or adding question to existing surveys</p> <p>5.5 – Collating and analysing existing datasets</p> |
| <p>Propose how measures can be linked back to improvement (there is no point measuring if we don't 'close the loop' and improve community participation).</p> | <p>4.3 – Collaboration, learning and improvement</p> <p>5.2 – Updating NRM governance performance indicators, measures and reporting</p> <p>5.7 – Introducing guiding questions</p> |
| <p>Propose how we can continue to share and build upon what is learnt.</p> | <p>4.3 – Collaboration, learning and improvement</p> <p>5.6 – Establishing a community of practice</p> <p>5.7 – Introducing guiding questions</p> |

2 Method

2.1 Project planning and management

Planning and management of this consultancy involved a series of meetings to ensure that the development of project delivery continued to meet expectations.

- The initial start-up meeting (15 March 2016) confirmed the suggested approach, timing, and also included some project planning to map out goals for what a 'successful project' looks like. The contract was signed and a guide was provided about where to source key documents.
- The project plan was developed, which included the methodology, purpose, objectives and scope of the project, resourcing and timelines, and the consultation processes. Stakeholders were identified.
- Liaison between FPC, NRM Regions Australia and the Steering Committee was undertaken throughout the consultancy to ensure that the project continued to meet expectations. Some original milestones and deliverables in the initial contract were revised and renegotiated, which included:
 - the development of a series of Workshop background papers instead of delivering a background report
 - extending the timeframes and scope of the project
 - the addition of the Steering Committee Summit Workshop in July 2016.

2.2 Literature review

A literature review was undertaken which informed the development of five background papers for discussion at the Workshop in May 2016 and the background literature for this report. The review included:

- academic peer reviewed literature
- non-peer reviewed research and reports
- case studies and examples of approaches, tools and methods for evaluating community participation outcomes
- community engagement strategies, planning documents and evaluation frameworks
- Commonwealth, state and local government publications.

2.3 Consultation survey

Building on the interviews and consultation undertaken by NRM Regions Australia in 2015, and to assist preparing the Workshop background papers, a consultation survey was conducted among NRM practitioners in April-May 2016. An online survey was distributed to all potential Workshop participants, a total of 27 responded. The survey included a series of questions seeking further examples of evaluation approaches currently being used successfully in measuring the effectiveness and outcomes of community participation across Australia. This resulted in information, case

studies, tools, methods and systems that NRM regions are using for planning, delivery, monitoring, evaluation and improvement.

2.4 Workshop May 2016

There were a number of steps to planning and preparing for the Workshop (previous work was done on this project last year and earlier). These steps included:

- preparing Workshop background papers based on the literature and desktop review of relevant material
- collecting further input from potential participants via the online consultation survey (and requests for additional resources such as strategies and plans)
- identifying other stakeholders and experts.

In total, there were 39 participants, representing: 21 regional groups, 6 National Landcare Programme representatives, 3 state based collectives (Local Land Services NSW, the Australian Government and NRM Regions Australia); and an external expert from CSIRO.

The full list of organisations represented and Workshop activities and outcomes are presented in the Workshop Summary Report.

2.5 Summit Workshop July 2016

A Summit Workshop with Steering Committee members, FPC and Roberts Evaluation was held on 18 July 2016 in Melbourne. A total of 10 people attended, including representatives from NRM Regions Australia, the Australian Government, regional NRM organisations, FPC and Roberts Evaluation.

The Summit Workshop included discussion about the findings and recommendations of the project, and finalising a process for standardising the measurement of community participation outcomes.

3 Literature review

The importance of community participation is emphasised by NRM practitioners in Australia,¹ and it is seen as a core component of achieving NRM outcomes.² However, the evaluation, monitoring and measurement of the outcomes of NRM programs and investment are often seen to be ineffective or incomplete.³ This is especially the case for measuring the outcomes of community participation in NRM.

There are many and varied definitions of ‘community participation’, with different frameworks, theories, and approaches, influenced by a range of disciplines and theories of practice. There are many forms of community participation, involving a range of activities and used within diverse social, economic and environmental contexts. Community participation approaches and activities differ in their appropriateness, depending on demographic, cultural, geographical, political, financial and institutional factors, involving many different stakeholder groups.

It is often difficult to define what ‘successful’ or ‘effective’ community participation is, and there appears to be a lack of understanding about what community participation is expected to achieve in terms of NRM outcomes. It is unsurprising, then, that monitoring, analysing and evaluating the outcomes of community participation in NRM in Australia is an area in need of improvement.

As with community participation itself, there are many different approaches, models and methods for measuring the outcomes of community participation in NRM, and similarly influenced by innumerable contextual factors. There are also factors which make measuring the outcomes of community participation in NRM particularly difficult.

In this section we provide an overview of relevant research on community-based NRM in Australia, and the evaluation of its outcomes.

3.1 Community-based NRM

In Australia since the 1980s, community participation has become more widely recognised as an important component of NRM work and gained a greater share of government investment.⁴ Regional NRM bodies, Landcare networks and other community based NRM groups are seen to be the core elements of community based NRM in Australia.⁵ Community participation in NRM tends to

¹ Broderick, K 2005, ‘Communities in Catchments: Implications for Natural Resource Management’, *Geographical Research*, Vol. 43, No. 3, pp. 286-296; Curtis, A & Mendham, E 2015, ‘The social drivers of natural resource management: North Central Victoria’, North Central CMA; Fenton, M & Rickert, A 2008, ‘A national baseline of the social and institutional foundations of natural resource management programs’, Australian Government National Land and Water Resources Audit.

² National Landcare Program & NRM Regions Australia 2013, ‘Statement of Common Purpose’, p. 1.

³ Hajkowicz, S 2009, ‘The evolution of Australia’s natural resource management programs: Towards improved targeting and evaluation of investments’, *Land Use Policy*, Vol. 26, pp. 471-478. Reid, T, Hazell, D & Gibbons, P 2013, ‘Why monitoring often fails to inform adaptive management: a case study’, *Ecological Management and Restoration*, Vol. 14, No. 3, pp. 224-227.

⁴ A. Curtis, H Ross, GR Marshall, C Baldwin, J Cavaye, C Freeman, A Carr & GJ Syme 2014, ‘The great experiment with devolved NRM governance: lessons from community engagement in Australia and New Zealand since the 1980s’, *Australasian Journal of Environmental Management*, Vol. 21, No. 2, p. 175.

⁵ Curtis et al 2014, p. 176.

focus on “farmer participation in NRM, even though it is clear that there is often a much wider group of stakeholders. These stakeholders can include town residents, Indigenous people, business owners, and those involved in other land uses such as forestry, mining and recreation”.⁶

Figure 3 represents the governance arrangements, institutional relationships and networks involved in NRM in Australia.

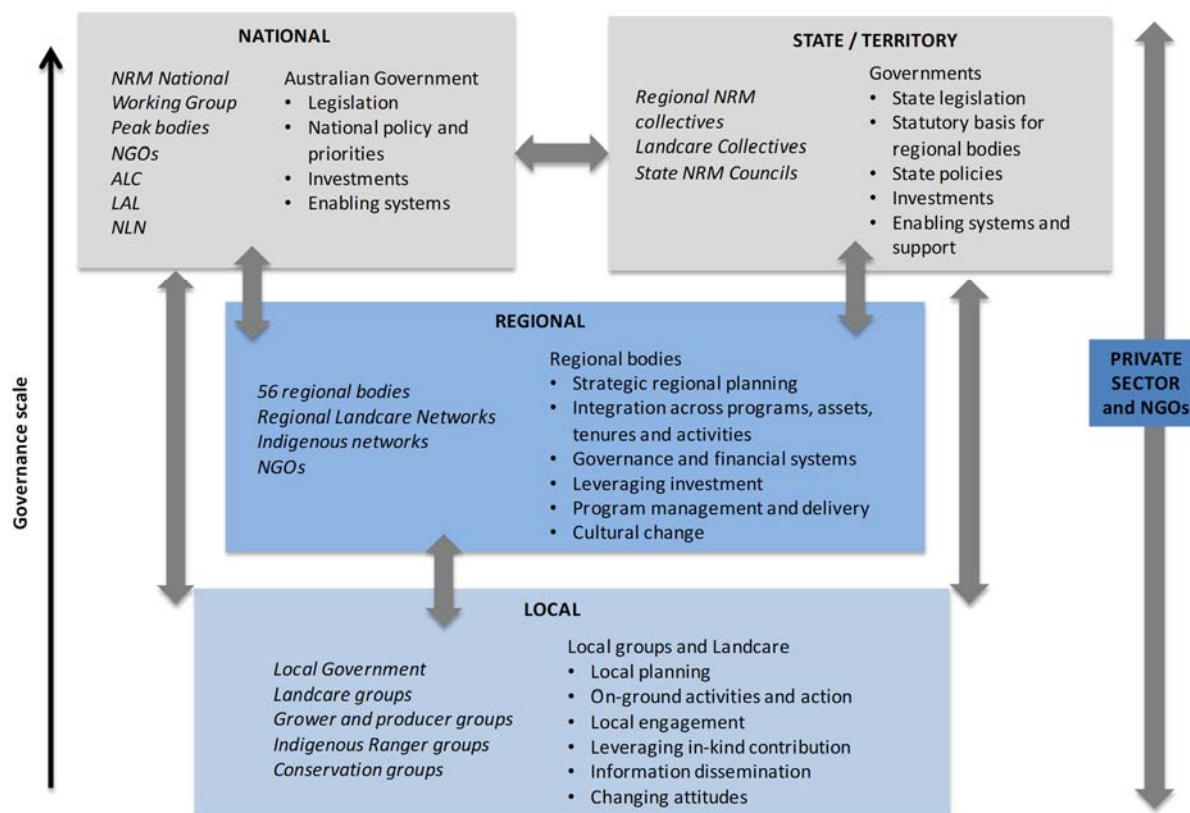


Figure 3. Structure of NRM governance and networks in Australia, sourced from internal NRM Regions Australia document ‘Managing Australia’s Natural Resources’.

3.2 Defining community participation

‘Community participation’ encompasses what is often referred to in the NRM sector as ‘community engagement and capacity building’ (CECB). ‘The community’ is described as a combination of community groups and single individual community members who are involved in NRM. We define community participation in the context of NRM in Australia as encompassing:

- providing information to the community
- stakeholder consultation; requesting input or feedback from the community
- decision-making, delegating decisions and planning
- participation in activities facilitated by regional NRM organisations
- undertaking or coordinating on-ground works
- capacity building, training and agricultural extension.

⁶ Broderick 2005, p. 286.

Examples of the types of community participation activities being delivered in regions around Australia are included in Workshop Background Paper 2.

3.3 Assumptions about the importance of community participation

There are many assumptions that underpin community participation as a component of NRM, such as that:

- communities have the capacity to act and make changes to positively influence NRM outcomes
- there is an obligation to engage stakeholders in NRM decisions because it affects their livelihoods
- local communities are necessary to achieve a range of NRM outcomes because they are better placed to lead activities on-ground and contribute their local knowledge to governance and decision-making processes
- it is important to ensure landholders and other NRM stakeholders have 'ownership' of the management of natural resources in their regions
- it is necessary to continue building the capacity of the community to act and make changes to positively influence NRM outcomes.

3.4 NRM outcomes

Community participation in NRM can achieve different types of outcomes—depending on time, geographic scale and impact:

- environmental, social or economic outcomes
- individual, local, regional or state level outcomes
- short, medium or long term outcomes.

These outcomes can be achieved at different levels such as:

- project, program or organisational/strategic levels.

Workshop Background Paper 2 provides some examples of the ways that NRM organisations identify outcomes at different levels and how links with community participation are made between objectives and outcomes.

While the purpose of community participation is often not articulated, and the link between community participation and the achievement of NRM outcomes is often not supported by strong evidence, some evaluation and research has demonstrated that community participation activities can contribute to a range of NRM outcomes.⁷ Examples from NRM regions in Australia are included in Workshop Background Paper 3.

⁷ Carr, G, Blöschl, G & Loucks, DP 2012, 'Evaluating participation in water resource management: A review', *Water Resources Research*, Vol. 48, pp. 1-17.

3.5 Context

It is recognised by NRM practitioners that community participation and its evaluation are undertaken within diverse regional contexts and governance structures, with differing purposes and approaches, and supported by varying capacity, skills and resources.⁸ Some assumptions around this include that:

- NRM organisations have adequate resources and expertise to undertake evaluation of community outcomes
- monitoring and evaluating the outcomes of community participation is necessarily resource intensive
- the importance of demonstrating the value of community participation outcomes is recognised within all NRM organisations around Australia
- community participation and evaluation knowledge and skills are transferred within and between networks
- approaches, methods and frameworks for evaluation are appropriate for all regions and communities
- evaluation of community participation in NRM in Indigenous communities can be approached in the same way as other communities.⁹

3.6 Importance of evaluating community participation outcomes

Some of the benefits of planning, evaluating, monitoring, measuring and reporting the outcomes of community participation include understanding what works to:

- continuously improve
- prioritise planning and funding (project, program and strategic/organisational)
- meet the needs of communities and landholders
- demonstrate the value of community participation activities
- identify intended and unintended outcomes
- calculate return on investment and accountability, and to ensure that resources are being targeted effectively
- provide evidence to investors
- prove the link between community participation and positive NRM outcomes.

3.7 Challenges and identified needs

Through consultation with practitioners and stakeholders in the NRM sector, a number of challenges and identified needs associated with planning, monitoring, evaluating and measuring community participation and its outcomes have been consistently raised. These include, but are not limited to:

⁸ NRM Regions Australia internal document 'Measuring Community Engagement and Capacity Building in the NRM Sector, 2015, p. 1.

⁹ NRM Regions Australia internal document 'Measuring Community Engagement and Capacity Building in the NRM Sector, 2015, p. 3.

- a lack of collective understanding of community participation and its purpose in relation to NRM outcomes
- a lack of consistency in approach to evaluating community participation
- the need to continue building on past efforts
- varying capacity within regions to plan and evaluate community participation outcomes
- the need for accessible, transferrable tools for planning, monitoring, evaluating and critically reflecting on community participation
- external challenges.

The challenges presented here are drawn from:

- a synopsis of challenges collated through a Community Engagement and Community Capacity Building Workshop at the 2014 NRM Conference held in Launceston
- interviews undertaken with NRM organisation representatives by NRM Regions Australia in early 2015
- responses from NRM organisation representatives through the consultation undertaken in the lead up to the Workshop in May.

Workshop Background Paper 1 provides a more detailed list of the types of challenges and needs associated with evaluating the outcomes of community participation that have been collated from these sources, and the ways they are being addressed through this project.

4 Findings

4.1 Overview

Research, consultation and feedback from NRM stakeholders show that a wide range of tools and methods for planning, data collection, monitoring and evaluation are being used across regions. However, it is clear that there is often a lack of guidance—nationally, at a state level and internally within NRM organisations—about how and when these should be used.¹⁰ Often this is because of time, resource and capacity constraints, but it is also indicative of the lack of a consistent approach to monitoring and evaluating community participation outcomes across NRM regions in Australia.

NRM stakeholders have identified a range of things that they would find useful to help improve the planning, monitoring and evaluation of the outcomes of community participation in NRM such as:

- the sharing of effective approaches, tools and methods
- examples and case studies of how these have been used successfully
- greater consistency of methods and measures across the country
- guidance on how and when these are most appropriate, considering different regional contexts, skill, capacity and resource availability, and relevance for evaluating different outcome scales, and the levels through which outcomes are achieved:
 - environmental, social or economic outcomes
 - individual, local, regional or state level outcomes
 - short, medium or long term outcomes
 - project, program or organisational/strategic levels.

In this section we present our findings on the following:

- the range of approaches and methods currently used for planning, monitoring, measuring and reporting on the outcomes of community participation in NRM (and guidance for when different methods might be useful)
- opportunities for collaboration, resource sharing, learning and improvement
- opportunities for standardisation and consistency
- prioritisation of outcomes for standardised measurement.

4.2 Methods and approaches currently used by NRM regions

Finding 1

A range of methods are used in regions across Australia to effectively plan, evaluate, measure and report on the outcomes of community participation in NRM. These are summarised in Table 2 below, with detailed examples provided in Workshop Background Papers 2, 3 and 5.

¹⁰ The majority of survey respondents stated that their organisations did not specify how and when to use monitoring, evaluation and reporting data collection tools and methods.

Table 2. Methods and approaches currently used by NRM regions.

| Component | Options |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Approaches | IAP2 Spectrum Bennett's Hierarchy Program logic Typology of Participation Systems mapping Alignment with organisational or state strategies |
| Planning | MERI frameworks Program logic |
| Reporting systems | MERIT Geographic and Reporting Information Database (GRID) Integrated Reports and Information System (IRIS) Best management practice self-assessments NRM organisation websites 'Report cards' |
| Online tools | Survey Monkey Fulcrum smart phone application Eventbrite Aboriginal engagement register Bang the Table engagement software and support Turning Point engagement software Facebook and other social media |
| Tailored tools | Capacity assessment tools 'Capital' assessment tools Benchmarking tools Group / network / community 'health' assessment tools Leverage, effort and community participation 'trackers' Relationship and network mapping |
| Other | Mapping (geographic display of engagement activities) Aerial photography |
| Methods for valuing | Social Return on Investment (SROI) Cost Benefit Analysis |
| State based data systems | DELWP Output Standards |
| National | Regional Wellbeing Survey ABARES surveys ABS surveys |

Different methods and tools are appropriate for collecting data on a range of levels and scales, and to evaluate outcomes against a range of indicators.

Table 3 presents a range of data collection methods and tools, with guidance on their usefulness and appropriateness for evaluating the outcomes of community participation in different contexts. Some examples and case studies of the ways that NRM regions have used different methods and tools are included in Workshop Background Papers 3 and 5.

Table 3. Community participation outcomes evaluation data collection tools methods matrix.

| | Method or tool | Type/level of data | Level or scale (individual, local, regional or state) | Resource intensity (time, cost and skill) | Use (what to measure) | Limitations |
|----------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--|---|---|---|
| Records and analysis | Document analysis | Outputs | Project, regional | Low-Med | Compare program outputs (events held etc.) against project targets | Limited depth of information |
| | Records of participation | Outputs (attendance, locations) | Individual Project | Low | Reach Change in attendance | Self-report |
| | Collation of feedback on consultation | Reactions Perceptions | Individual | Low | Satisfaction with consultation processes Opportunity to engage | Biased towards those highly engaged |
| Surveys | Event surveys | Reactions to events | Participants Project | Low | Pre and post surveys (change in knowledge, attitudes, skills, aspirations, etc.) | Self-report |
| | Follow-up surveys | Longer term effects of participation | Participants Project | Med | Assess practice change. Test assumptions | Attrition and self-selection biases. |
| | Regional/benchmarking surveys | Community perceptions | Region | Med-High | Change over time for community: knowledge, practices, group membership, group health, involvement in NRM, planning etc. | Representative samples require greater resources. Self-selection biases. |
| | National surveys | Community perceptions | Region National | High | Comparison across time and regions. May include non-participants: provide comparison group. | Resource intensive |
| Qualitative | Interviews | Descriptive | Individuals: Participants, community, staff, funders Project | Med | Greater depth on reactions, barriers and enablers, satisfaction, community needs | Intensive collection and analysis and/or limits to sample size and representativeness |
| | Focus groups | Community feedback | Participants, community, staff, funders | Med | Satisfaction and priorities | |
| | Most Significant Change/case studies | Evidence of impacts | Participants, community, staff, | Med | Illustrative examples of how a program has had an impact | |
| | Expert panel | Expert opinion | Project | Med | Experts assess the evidence for change due to the interventions | |

4.3 Collaboration, learning and improvement

Finding 2

There is value in collaboration, learning and development across NRM regions to enable continuous improvement of the planning, evaluation, measurement and reporting of community participation outcomes and programs.

The regional context, levels of capacity, skill and resources available vary significantly between regions across Australia—and a significant effort has been invested by organisations in developing useful, effective and transferrable methods and approaches for evaluating the outcomes of community participation in NRM. There is a clear opportunity for greater collaboration between regional organisations to:

- facilitate improvement in capacity of regions to effectively measure the outcomes of community participation
- avoid duplicating efforts
- enable the sharing of existing resources, tools, methods and frameworks
- co-develop new approaches.

Support for the establishment of a community of practice via a web-based forum for resource sharing was established at the Workshop in May 2016.

4.4 Standardisation and consistency

Finding 3

A mandate to pursue improved standardisation and consistency of the measurement of community participation outcomes was established among NRM regional organisations at the NRM Regions Knowledge Forum in Launceston in 2014 and confirmed at the Workshop in May 2016.

4.4.1 Strengths and limitations

The complexity and difficulty inherent in monitoring and evaluating the outcomes of community participation often stimulates discussion about standardisation and consistency in outcomes measurement across multiple organisations. Some of the strengths and limitations of standardisation and consistency from these discussions are presented in Table 4¹¹.

Table 4. The benefits and risks of standardisation and consistency in social outcomes evaluation

| Strengths | Limitations |
|--|--|
| Can be cheaper to apply on an ongoing basis | Cannot capture the subjective nature of social change |
| Allows summation and aggregation of results across organisations | Cannot capture the diversity of organisations and the change they create |
| Easier for reporting and may encourage more regular | Prioritises quantifiable outcomes over qualitative |

¹¹ Flatau et al 2015, 'Measuring Outcomes for Impact in the Community Sector in Western Australia', University of Western Australia, Centre for Social Impact, pp. 13-14.

| | |
|--|---|
| reporting | Top down measures are meaningless and overly bureaucratic |
| Can simplify the landscape of tools and techniques | Can drive perverse incentives, ‘gaming the system’, and undermine innovation |
| Can be integrated into management tools and technology | Not responsive to the nuances of organisations and cannot achieve buy-in from staff |
| Easier and cheaper to verify and assure | Burdensome and rarely fully funded |
| More objective and comparable between organisations | Not relevant or useful for organisations |

Ultimately, this debate centres on the inherent challenge of capturing and evaluating the “complexity and diversity of social and environmental outcomes in a reasonable, efficient and proportionate way”.¹² Lessons learned from experience relevant (but not specific) to the NRM sector in Australia reveals three crucial points of focus, described in Figure 4.

| FOCUS | | Whose role? |
|-------------|--|--|
| CONSISTENCY | of PROCESS in articulating outcomes and choosing measures | Market or ecosystem actors (e.g. Government) |
| FLEXIBILITY | of CHOICE in articulating organisational outcomes, selecting measures | Community Organisation |
| CONSISTENCY | of USE of measures once decided | Community Organisation |

Figure 4. ‘Key messages’, sourced from Flatau et al 2015.

4.4.2 Benefits, needs and expectations

A whole group discussion at the Workshop in May 2016 was dedicated to exploring the value of standardising some aspects of the evaluation of community participation outcomes across all NRM regions. In particular there was discussion about the benefits, needs and expectations of any possible standardisation.

Benefits

The main benefit of standardisation that emerged from workshop discussion was the improved ability to *tell the story* of community-based NRM. This supported the idea that improved and more consistent evaluation of community participation outcomes is crucial for demonstrating the value of the community-based NRM funding and delivery model. This was seen as important at both the national level to justify continued funding, and at a regional level, for example to “improve internal profile and legitimacy of community engagement – what gets measured gets managed.”¹³

¹² Flatau et al 2015, ‘Measuring Outcomes for Impact in the Community Sector in Western Australia’, University of Western Australia, Centre for Social Impact, p. 14.

¹³ Workshop participant quote, see Workshop Summary Report.

The other main benefits of standardisation supported by NRM stakeholders at the workshop were the potential for continued improvement in delivery, and the value in showing differences over time and between regions.

Needs and expectations

The needs and expectations of standardisation identified at the Workshop include:

- shared ownership, mutual understanding and a common language
- flexibility for regions to utilise a range of methods, criteria and approaches suitable to their regional context
- use of existing methods where possible
- consistent units of measurement to enable national aggregation and comparison
- confidence that findings will be used and provide benefit for invested time and resources.

4.5 Prioritisation of outcomes

Finding 4

A clear set of outcomes were identified by Workshop participants in May 2016 as the most important outcomes of community participation in NRM to focus on evaluating.

After two rounds of facilitated discussion about outcomes prioritisation, 18 outcomes emerged under the following four themes:

- practices, values and norms that lead to NRM environmental outcomes
- community and economic development opportunities and outcomes (community wellbeing)
- reduced costs of investment in NRM and environmental programs
- empowerment and capacity to contribute to NRM outcomes.

These are presented in detail in the Workshop Summary Report.

At the Steering Committee Summit Workshop in July 2016, the middle two of the four priority outcomes were combined, and the three priorities were given the labels:

- Practices
- Wellbeing
- Capacity.

The Steering Committee also requested that the term 'goals' instead of 'outcomes' is used. In Table 5 in the following section of this report, we have presented these as three priority goals, with examples of outcomes that contribute to their overall achievement, the timeframe in which they are likely to be achieved and a range of methods for measurement of outcomes.

While the outcomes seem simple and linear, their achievement is complex in reality because the activities that contribute to their achievement are influenced by a range of external influences working at multiple levels across different systems.¹⁴

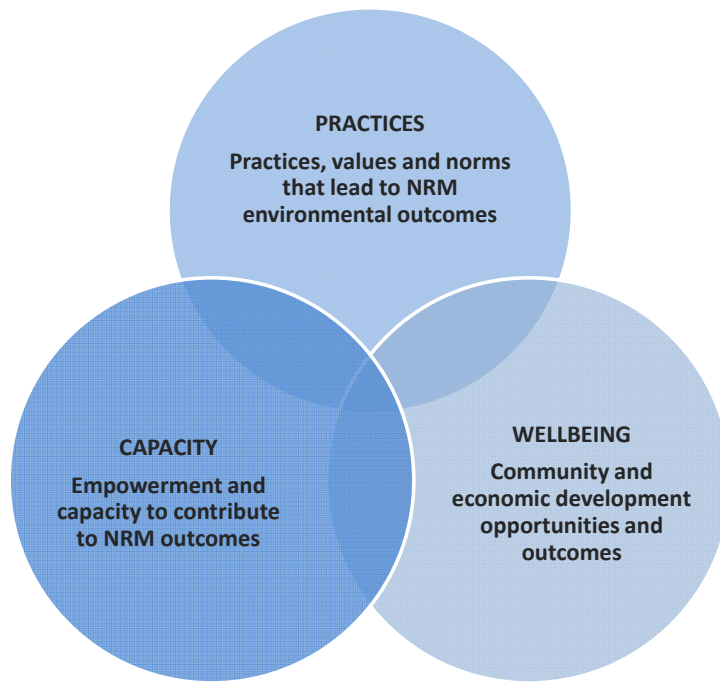


Figure 5. NRM community participation priority goals.

¹⁴ Rogers, P.J 2008, 'Using programme theory to evaluate complicated and complex aspects of interventions', *Evaluation*, Vol. 14, No. 1, pp. 29-48.

5 Recommendations

5.1 Overview

In this section, we discuss options for standardising the measurement of the three priority goals.

We recommend the following six actions to enable more consistent evaluation of community participation:

- updating NRM governance performance indicators, measures and reporting (OPE and Australian Government PE)
- including additional MERIT questions
- tailoring or adding questions to existing surveys (such as the Regional Wellbeing Survey, ABARES or ABS surveys)
- collating and analysing existing datasets (such as state-based or regional reporting, MERIT or OPE)
- establishing a community of practice
- introducing guiding questions to inform NRM regions' approach to planning, monitoring, reporting and evaluation of community participation programs and outcomes.

These recommendations are represented in Figure 6 below, showing the different scale of outcomes they might capture and across what timeframe. Each recommendation is described in more detail in the following sections below.

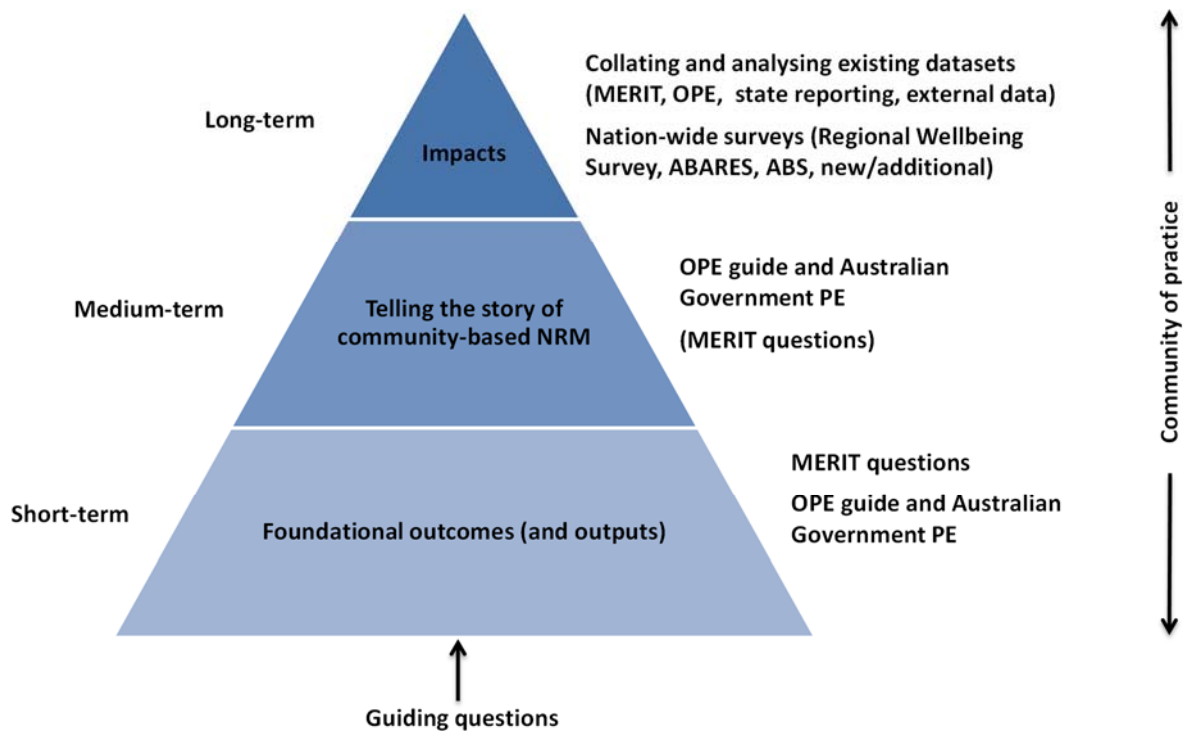


Figure 6. Community participation outcomes measurement options.

5.2 Updating NRM governance performance indicators, measures and reporting

Recommendation 1

The Performance Excellence Guide for NRM Organisations (OPE) and the Australian Government Performance Expectations for Regional NRM Organisations (PE) are updated to include:

- **indicators for community participation outcomes**
- **use of the PE framework for continuous improvement**
- **reporting processes that enable aggregation.**

At the Summit Workshop in July 2016, the Steering Committee suggested it may be useful to report back on progress on standardising the evaluation of community participation outcomes based on findings in this report at the next NRM Knowledge Conference (2018) or the Chairs and CEOs Forum in August 2016.

5.3 Including additional MERIT questions

Recommendation 2

A set of additional questions are included in MERIT, the Performance Excellence Guide for NRM Organisations (OPE) and the Australian Government Performance Expectations for Regional NRM Organisations (PE) that ask about short and medium term outcomes of community participation.

This would include adding a tick box to MERIT outcomes stating, “this contributes to community outcomes”, and continuing discussions between the Australian Government and States about how to input state-level data into the MERIT system.¹⁵

In Table 5 we have drafted a set of potential questions, measures and methods against the three priority goals which could be included in the MERIT, the OPE or PE, relevant to Recommendations 1 and 2.

¹⁵ NSW, Vic and SA are the closest to being able to integrate state-level reporting into MERIT.

Table 5. Potential measures and methods for evaluating the outcomes of community participation in NRM.

| CAPACITY | | |
|---|---|---|
| Outcome (examples only) | Measure | Suggested methods and questions for data collection |
| <p>Examples of outcomes of increased capacity of the community could include:</p> <p>Longer term change (> 5 years)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> community ownership of NRM planning and decision-making community empowerment and capacity for continued delivery of NRM outcomes the delivery of NRM outcomes by the community is self-sustaining <p>Medium term change (1-3 years)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the community has the capacity to contribute to NRM planning, decision making and outcomes the community draws on its NRM networks within and across communities and regions the community acquires the capacity for practice change <p>Immediate change (< 1 year)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the community acquires knowledge of NRM and the environment the community is engaged in NRM activities | <p>1. # of opportunities for community to contribute to NRM outcomes through activities:</p> <p>Type of activity e.g.:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workshop Forum Public meeting Green/White paper process. <p>Level of activity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inform Consult Involve Collaborate Empower. <p>2. # and profile of community members involved in NRM activities. Profile categories such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> gender age background (government/private/ industry) first time participants interest area (issue e.g. biodiversity, waste, energy etc.). <p>3. Impact on the community member of their involvement (depending on purpose of event):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> #felt that they could contribute #felt they learnt something that could be applied. | <p>Project records.</p> <p>Rapid data collection after an event (e.g. PollEverywhere).</p> <p>Community or national surveys on attitudes.</p> <p>Event/activity feedback surveys which include questions such as: "Have you learnt something from this event that you'll be able to apply?" (1 Not at all to 5 Very).</p> <p>Event/activity feedback surveys which include questions such as: "Did you feel that your contribution was valued?"</p> |

| WELLBEING | | |
|--|--|---|
| Outcome (examples only) | Measure | Suggested methods and questions for data collection |
| <p>Examples of outcomes community wellbeing could be:</p> <p>Longer term change (> 5 years)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> improved economic wellbeing (economic and productive outcomes) improved social wellbeing (community development outcomes) <p>Medium term change (1-3 years)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> economic development opportunities resulting from investment and involvement in community based NRM co-investment (benefits from public, private and industry partnerships). a sense of shared responsibility to continue NRM work beyond funded <i>programs</i>. the community has NRM networks within and across communities and regions <p>Immediate change (< 1 year)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a sense of shared responsibility to maintain NRM works from the funded <i>projects</i> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> # farms/enterprises reporting improved productivity (or potential) due to involvement in NRM, for example, cost savings, productivity improvements or new staff members employed # people reporting an increased sense of community connectedness as a result of participation in community NRM activities The value of in-kind contributions from all partners: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> time \$ amount # people # volunteer hours # people reporting that they continue NRM activities beyond a funded program | <p>ABARES, Regional Wellbeing Survey.</p> <p>Follow-up survey, with specific questions on improvement, for example “Has this activity affected your input costs?” (large decrease to large increase).</p> <p>“Has this activity affected your productivity?” (large decrease to large increase).</p> <p>Follow-up surveys, with specific questions on number of connections or relationships formed, trust etc.</p> <p>Regional benchmarking survey every 5-10 years.</p> <p>Grant applications, for example where there is a requirement for farmers to match grant funding with their own investment.</p> <p>Project records.</p> <p>Follow-up surveys, with questions about activities/practices beyond the funded period.</p> <p>Community group meeting records.</p> |

| PRACTICES | | |
|---|---|---|
| Outcome (examples only) | Measure | Suggested methods and questions for data collection |
| <p>Examples of outcomes changed practices of the community could be:</p> <p>Longer term change (> 5 years)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> there are changed social norms, practices and values around land management and NRM in the community. <p>Medium term change (1-3 years)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> community participation in NRM contributes to practice change practice changes contributes to measurable NRM outcomes <p>Immediate change (< 1 year)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> community takes action to improve the natural resource community participation in NRM contributes to NRM outputs | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> # people reporting that they have made practice change/s that lead to NRM outcomes hectares of practice change (rural and urban, public and private) | <p>Project records (# hectares).</p> <p>Follow-up surveys, with specific questions such as: “What practices have you implemented as a result of this activity?”</p> <p>Follow-up site visits.</p> <p>Google Earth photos.</p> |

5.4 Tailoring or adding questions to existing surveys

Recommendation 3

Where possible, tailor or add questions to existing surveys to measure the outcomes of community participation in NRM in regions across Australia. In particular, explore the option of adding regionally specific questions to the University of Canberra’s Regional Wellbeing Survey.

If using existing nation-wide surveys is not possible, develop an additional community participation outcomes survey to be distributed to landholders and community members across all NRM regions in Australia at regular intervals.

Several organisations collect a range of data relevant to community-based NRM across a national scale, including the Australian Bureau of Statistics, Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics (ABARES) and the University of Canberra. There is an opportunity for NRM Regions Australia, or another appropriate group, to work with these organisations to include additional questions or negotiate the timing and distribution of these surveys to capture more data against some key indicators and outcomes of community participation in NRM.

The University of Canberra’s Regional Wellbeing Survey may present a particularly beneficial opportunity for this to occur. An evaluation plan developed for the Murray LLS in NSW demonstrates how the Regional Wellbeing Survey can be used as a vehicle to collect data for MERI processes from community members and landholders that is specific to an NRM region.¹⁶

Evaluating many of the outcomes outlined above requires annual or follow-up surveys, however, there are very few existing opportunities to collect data that is either region or program specific. Established in 2013, the Regional Wellbeing Survey is an annual survey completed by approximately 12,000 rural community members and landholders, with the aim of collecting data “on the relationships between people and the places they live in, including the effects of NRM activities, of changes in agricultural productivity, and [...] the outcomes NRM participants experienced”.¹⁷

There are three types of questions: questions for all survey respondents; questions specific to respondents in certain regions; and questions only for survey respondents who participate in specific NRM activities or programs. This allows for data collection specific to a region’s programs and evaluation framework, for example, as described in the Murray LLS evaluation plan. This approach would provide the following benefits:

- isolation of the outcomes experiences by community members and landholders who participate in certain NRM activities and programs, compared to those who have not participated
- isolation of the broader social, environmental and economic outcomes of NRM activities and programs in a region
- the establishment of regional baselines and ongoing monitoring over time.¹⁸

¹⁶ Houghton, K & Schirmer, J 2014, *Social Resource Condition Monitoring Plan: Economic Sustainability & Social Wellbeing*, Institute for Governance and Policy Analysis, p. 57.

¹⁷ Houghton & Schirmer 2014, p. 57.

¹⁸ Houghton & Schirmer 2014, pp. 57-58.

This approach would allow for measurement of key outcomes, such as the community's satisfaction with their contribution to planning and decision making processes, or increases in capacity and practice change resulting from participation in NRM activities. It may also, allow changes in land management practice and economic development to be monitored over time.

The development of an additional community participation outcomes survey to be distributed to landholders and community members across all NRM regions in Australia would enable the establishment of baseline data and ongoing monitoring. As an example, one approach could be regional benchmarking surveys such as those that have been administered in regions including North Central CMA and Corangamite CMA by Professor Allan Curtis at Charles Sturt University.

5.5 Collating and analysing existing datasets

Recommendation 4

Greater collation, analysis and use of existing datasets that provide information on the outcomes of community participation in NRM.

Coordinate a pilot project to aggregate the data from investment in the community participation component of the National Landcare Programme over its last year, to test how this collation and analysis can be undertaken and provide the most benefit to NRM regional organisations.

There is an opportunity to collate and analyse a range of existing datasets, such as from state or regionally based reporting systems, MERIT and OPE, to begin *telling the story* of community-based NRM at the national level without the need for additional data collection. This possibility emerged from discussion at the Workshop in May 2016. There was also recognition that the results of the aggregation should be shared with others, potentially via the community of practice, as discussed below.

5.6 Establishing a community of practice

Recommendation 5

A community of practice be established and maintained to facilitate ongoing sharing of resources, experiences, knowledge and skills regarding the evaluation of community participation outcomes.

This may include:

- **fostering collaboration between the states or regions that are leaders in their evaluation of community participation outcomes**
- **working on how to incorporate the findings from this project into regional organisations' activities to be discussed at the Chairs and CEOs Meeting in August 2016**
- **using the resources from this project as the first topic on the updated NRM Regions Australia website knowledge hub.**

The outcome of discussion and PollEverywhere voting at the Workshop in May 2016 was that the preferred means of sharing resources and information was an online hub or Dropbox. A community

of practice could be fostered through such a central repository, which could include existing tools, measurement techniques, evaluation systems, resources, questions, survey instruments and summaries of findings to show how evaluation of community participation outcomes has been successful.

Establishment of an additional online forum would need to be supported by an appropriate organisation, such as NRM Regions Australia or another representative group. However, the community of practice may become self-sustaining as interest and interaction would be fuelled by both those looking for information to start using a particular measure, and those sharing their experience and lessons from using the measures. The community of practice may start with sharing systems that are already operating and other groups using and modifying these to suit. Lessons from implementing the systems could then be used to modify measures and monitor usefulness of the approach.

5.7 Introducing guiding questions

Recommendation 6

A set of guiding questions be either formally or informally adopted by NRM regional organisations to improve and standardise design, planning, monitoring, measurement and evaluation of community participation.

A set of proposed guiding questions is presented in Table 6, below, similar to those presented in Workshop Paper 4. The purpose of these guiding questions is to allow NRM organisations to consider the most important aspects of community participation program design and evaluation—without following a formal framework or strictly defined process. They are intended to guide decisions about planning and undertaking evaluation, and are not evaluation questions themselves.

Guiding questions can be addressed in many different ways—accounting for regional context, and varying levels of capacity, skill and resources. Workshop Paper 5 provides a ‘toolbox’ of approaches, methods, frameworks, planning, and monitoring and evaluation tools, which can be seen as a range of options to assist in addressing these guiding questions.

These draft guiding questions are designed to be transferable—depending on timeframes, geographic scale and the type of impact, as well as across the different levels through which community participation outcomes can be achieved.

Table 6. Draft guiding questions for planning, monitoring, evaluating and critically reflecting on community participation.

| Guiding questions | |
|---|---|
| What is the purpose of the community participation activity? | What are we doing? |
| | Why are we doing it? |
| | What is the value of what we are doing? |

| | |
|--|--|
| | Is there a demonstrable need? |
| What are the intended outcomes of the community participation activity? | <p>What are we trying to achieve?</p> <p>At what scale and across what level are outcomes expected to be achieved?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental, social or economic outcomes • Individual, local, regional or state level outcomes • Short, medium or long term outcomes • Project, program or organisational levels. <p>How will we know whether outcomes have been achieved?</p> <p>What does success look like?</p> |
| What are the underlying assumptions? | <p>What is the evidence for assuming that the community participation activity will lead to the stated outcomes?</p> <p>What evidence is there that our chosen activities will lead to our expected outcomes?</p> <p>What is the strength of this evidence?</p> <p>How applicable is this evidence to our context?</p> <p>What are the risks and limitations of the activity?</p> <p>What contextual factors need to be considered for the activity?</p> |
| What exactly do we want to measure, monitor and evaluate? | <p>How can we demonstrate the value of the community participation activity, what was achieved, how well it was achieved and to what extent?</p> <p>How can we demonstrate that the community participation activity has led to the achievement of stated outcomes?</p> <p>What are the criteria that we need to measure against?</p> |
| What methods are most appropriate to evaluate the outcomes of the community participation activity? | <p>What data can be collected?</p> <p>What methods can be used to collect the data?</p> <p>Over what scale is data collection required? (Geography, time, impact, level).</p> <p>Who will collect the data?</p> |
| What is the value of the measurement, monitoring or evaluation methods | How much time will data collection take? |

relative to their resource intensity?

How much will it cost?

What level of skill is required?

What is required of participants?

What will the data actually tell us?

With whom will the results be shared? What is their level of interest or need for this information?