

Monitoring and Evaluation Principles and Guidance for Commonwealth Government Drought Programs

The National Drought and North Queensland Flood Response and Recovery Agency's (the Agency) published the '**Review of Australian Government Drought Response**' in October 2020. The Review found that there has been limited and inconsistent evaluation of drought support programs, leading to a lack of meaningful information on drought program performance and continuous improvement on Government's response to drought. The 'Review of Australian Government Drought Response' can be found in full [here](#).

This document sets out **monitoring and evaluation principles and guidance** to support Commonwealth Government agencies to consistently assess the performance (effectiveness, efficiency and appropriateness). The principles and guidance bring together Commonwealth Government best practices on monitoring and evaluation, and the **National Drought Agreement (NDA)** objectives.

Principles

1. All drought support programs will consider and apply monitoring, evaluation and learning activities, scaled and tailored as appropriate to their program.
2. All drought support programs will contribute to regular government reporting on drought support, including but not limited to annual reports against the **NDA** and the *National Drought Response Resilience and Preparedness Plan*, and any evaluation activities.
3. All drought support programs will directly contribute to one or more of the agreed **NDA** outcomes.

The **NDA** is a framework agreed by the Commonwealth and state and territory governments in December 2018, to prioritise objectives and outcomes that enhance long-term preparedness, sustainability, resilience and risk management for farming businesses and farming communities in Australia. The NDA can be found in full [here](#). To support the Commonwealth Government's annual reporting obligations under the **NDA**, any drought support program should be informed by at least one of the below **NDA outcomes**.

National Drought Agreement Outcomes (Clause 7)

- A) *Farming businesses have an improved capability to manage business risks and the tools to implement sustainable and resilient risk management practices.*
- B) *Farming businesses, industry service providers, agri-finance, community organisations and local government are partners of government and support rural communities to prepare for, and respond to, drought.*
- C) *Farming businesses, farming families and farming communities are supported in times of hardship and have an increased understanding of, and access to, available support.*
- D) *Roles and responsibilities of jurisdictions in responding to drought: (i) are clear; (ii) promote consistency of drought policy and reform objectives; (iii) complement drought preparedness, response and recovery programs; and (iv) reduce gaps and unnecessary duplication.*
- E) *Improved sharing, and quality, of common sources of data and information across jurisdictions to strengthen policy and business decision making.*
- F) *Future programs related to the objectives of this agreement are consistent with the principles for reform at Attachment A of the NDA.*
- G) *Future programs providing temporary in-drought support are consistent with the principles and processes at Attachment B of the NDA.*

Guidance

The following high-level guidance can be adapted to suit the scale and range of drought support programs. The guidance recommends establishing a Program Logic model, Performance Measures and Monitoring & Evaluation Strategy for Government **drought support programs**. This will support robust reporting and advice to Government on the performance (**effectiveness, efficiency and appropriateness**) of its drought support programs. The accompanying self-assessment questions will help to ensure that monitoring and evaluation considerations are applied consistently throughout the life of a program (beginning, middle and end).

Program Logic



The drought support program should directly contribute to one or more of the agreed outcomes from the **NDA**. Developing an overarching **outcome statement** will set out the purpose of the drought support program and ensure linkage with the **NDA**. Setting out a **hierarchy of outcomes** will also provide a clear connection between desired outcomes established for the short term, medium term and long term, in order to achieve the overarching outcome.

Outputs are efforts within an entity's direct control that lead to the outcome/s. **Inputs** are the entity's resources required to achieve the outputs. Identifying inputs and outputs set out the entity's assumptions on the sequence of activities required to achieve the desired outcome/s of drought support programs. The outputs of drought support programs should include a **communications approach** to ensure awareness and accessibility among its target group.

Performance measures provide a basis for assessment of an entity's performance over time; and need to be directly linked with the outputs and outcomes of the program. Identifying **data sources** for the measures will ensure that data collection is achievable and there is a strong evidence base for performance. Performance measures should set targets to measure effectiveness and efficiency; and follow the **SMART** (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Time-bound) principle.

Performance **monitoring** is the routine collection and initial assessment of performance data at fixed timeframes (e.g. monthly, quarterly). **Evaluation** makes judgements on the **efficiency, effectiveness and appropriateness** of the program; and should consider industry and community consultation. A strategy will set out the planning for monitoring and evaluation arrangements to allow for **robust reporting** throughout the life of the program. Program reporting should also align with Commonwealth reporting on the **NDA**.

Identifying lessons learnt in **final reporting and reflections** will ensure the relevance of future drought support programs. Lessons learnt would be drawn from **qualitative data** and may include case studies, feedback from support recipients, regional communities and program administrators, and interviews.

1. Outcome/s

2. Outputs & Inputs

3. Performance Measures

4. Monitoring & Evaluation Strategy

5. Lessons Learnt

Beginning

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are the program outcome/s addressing at least one outcome identified in the NDA? Are the outcome/s consistent with the Commonwealth's role and responsibilities as set by the NDA? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are the inputs suitable for the outputs? Are the inputs realistic and achievable for the entity? Are the outputs linked to the outcome/s? Do the outputs include a strategic communications approach? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are all data sources for the performance measures reliable and verifiable? Do all measures align with program outcomes and outputs? Do the performance measures set SMART targets for program effectiveness and efficiency? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are there set timeframes for data collection for routine monitoring? Have the purpose, timeframes, methodologies and resources been identified for monitoring and evaluation arrangements? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What lessons from previous drought support programs can be incorporated to ensure this program's effectiveness?
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Middle

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is the program on track in addressing the outcome/s targeted from the NDA? Is the program benefiting its intended target group? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do inputs need to be adjusted to ensure outputs are achieved? Do outputs need to be adjusted to ensure outcome/s are achieved? Is the program reaching its intended target group? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are the performance measures meeting the needs of the entity or do they need to change? If performance measures are not being met within stipulated timeframes, what needs to change or improve? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are the monitoring and evaluation arrangements meeting the needs of the entity? Are recommendations from evaluations being implemented to improve program performance? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have there been any lessons learnt that can increase the effectiveness for the remainder of the program? What engagement can take place for the remainder of the program so that lessons can be drawn at the program's conclusion?
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End

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has the program successfully met an outcome/s from the NDA? Have the outcome/s contributed to Commonwealth's role and responsibilities under the NDA? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Were the inputs and outputs effective in achieving the outcome/s? Have all outputs been achieved? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have the performance measures been met? How can the differences between actual performance and set targets contribute to lessons learnt? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can evaluation findings contribute to lessons learnt and continuous improvement? Can evaluation findings be included in NDA annual reporting? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What lessons can be drawn from the program to inform future drought support programs? What is the most effective way of sharing these lessons?
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