Measuring the Outcomes of Community Organisations

Australian Research Alliance
for Children & Youth

Measuring the Outcomes of Community Organisations

Contact us:

If you have any queries about this report please email ARACY
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Have your say

The Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth is seeking input in response to this paper. We welcome views from community sector organisations as well as those in the public and philanthropic sectors, researchers and others with an interest in this subject. In particular suggestions are sought on applied strategies to improve the evidence base for measuring outcomes of community organisations, the community sector generally and related issues.

Please email your comments to leanne.drewitte@aracy.org.au

The Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (ARACY)

ARACY is a national non-profit organisation working to create better futures for all Australia's children and young people.

Despite Australia being a wealthy, developed country, many aspects of the health and wellbeing of our young people have been declining. ARACY was formed to reverse these trends, by preventing and addressing the major problems affecting our children and young people.

ARACY tackles these complex issues through building collaborations with researchers, policy makers and practitioners from a broad range of disciplines. We share knowledge and foster evidence-based solutions.

Our partnership with KPMG

ARACY commissioned KPMG's Health and Human Services Practice to prepare this paper. The practice works with governments and not-for-profit organisations to help them improve the value and quality of health and human services delivery.

KPMG believes that contributing to the communities in which we live and work is inseparable from our business vision. KPMG's community investment is inspired by the engagement of our people in a broad range of activities with a diverse number of non-profit community organisations.

In keeping with this vision, KPMG has provided significant pro bono assistance toward this work, which we gratefully acknowledge.

KPMG

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Executive summary

In June 2009 ARACY developed a background paper about the aims, purpose and issues surrounding outcome measurement for community organisations (COs). This paper builds on the ARACY background paper and presents a summary of research into the use and effectiveness of outcomes' measurement frameworks for COs. The intended audience is CO representatives and others concerned with the issue of whether and how best to measure outcomes of COs in Australia.

Community organisations and motives for measuring outcomes

Recently the community sector has experienced increased pressure to measure its operations, activities (outputs) and their outcomes, and provide interested parties with the results of this measurement. Motives for measuring performance are numerous and include accountability to funders, members or donors and interest from other stakeholders including researchers, peak bodies and the community. Organisations also want to understand the effect they are having on their clients and the community.

The case for measuring outcomes

Outcomes are the effects of a program or service on a participant or participants during or after their involvement in that program or service. Measuring outcomes has multiple benefits and provides information that measurement of input (what was invested) and output (what was produced) cannot. Importantly output measurement can provide information about the effectiveness of a program or service (how well something was done). Outcome measurement supports evaluation of program effectiveness which can provide the basis for organisational change and improvement. It may also help COs attract support and funding: programs that are able to measure and demonstrate the link between outcomes and community level impacts are of more interest to funders including government.

The 2009 Productivity Commission Contribution of the Not-for-Profit Sector Study

In 2009 the Productivity Commission (the Commission) produced an Issues Paper and Draft Report for its inquiry into Measuring the Contribution of the Not-for-Profit Sector. Within these documents the Commission proposed a framework for measurement and made recommendations for improvement in measuring the contribution of the sector.

The Commission's framework proposes measurement of inputs, outputs, outcomes and impacts, with a focus on understanding outcomes and impacts at a whole of sector level. The Commission's recommendations focus on:

- smarter regulation of the not-for-profit sector

- building knowledge systems

- sector development

- removing impediments to better value government funded services

- stimulating social investment

- improving the effectiveness of direct government funding

- building stronger, more effective relationships for the future.

This paper discusses current approaches to measurement in the context of the Commission's framework and considers how improvements in outcome measurement may occur.

What frameworks are in use in Australia and overseas?

The outcome frameworks uncovered through the research for this paper tended to fall into groups based on different approaches.

"Input and Output focused" frameworks consider the relationship between inputs, outputs and outcomes. These frameworks assume that certain inputs and outputs will lead to desired outcomes. They often have a financial focus and consider efficiency rather than effectiveness, however they are relatively easy to apply and are therefore favoured by many COs.

"Objective focused" frameworks look at the link between organisational or program outcomes and the achievement of objectives. They also consider the processes required to achieve objectives. Objectives are often identified with

the aim of 'doing good' and therefore measurement approaches focusing on objectives may be favoured in the community sector.

Social Return on Investment (SROI) assigns values to non-financial outcomes and then compares them with financial cost to calculate a 'cost-benefit'. SROI allows non-financial factors to be compared alongside financial costs. It is often used to measure social value, however it does not provide information about how benefits have been achieved.

Results based accountability (RBA) 'involves starting with a result [desired goal or outcome] … and working backwards to understand what we need to do to achieve this goal'[1]. RBA involves clearly stating the desired result, identifying an indicator that represents progress on that result (and the performance measures used to assess progress) and outlining the strategy or actions required to achieve the result. RBA can be used to make organisational change and improvement.

Logic models consider the factors that influence achievement of outcomes and emphasise the need to consider these in designing and implementing outcomes frameworks.

Program logic approaches develop a full 'program logic' for a program or intervention prior to implementing a program, which is based on:

- the intended outcomes to be achieved at different levels

- the potential unintended outcomes

- factors that affect outcome achievement and influencers for these

- activities required to achieve outcomes

- the type of information to measure outcomes

- what "success" would look like for a program or intervention.

There are many variants on program logic models including the results framework and logical framework approaches.

Realist evaluation approaches build on logic models by asking not only what factors contribute to outcome achievement, but what works for whom and in which circumstances? This takes into account the variation in client groups, organisations and programs within the community sector.

What evidence is there about the effectiveness of using such frameworks?

There are a number of common features of effective performance measurement frameworks, in terms of their development, implementation and operation.

Organisational alignment. Effective performance measurement frameworks are aligned to the context, environment, goals, systems and purpose of the organisation. They also align with the outcomes sought by funders and stakeholders.

Organisational and stakeholder acceptance. Performance measurement frameworks need to be understood and accepted by key stakeholders, including management, staff and funders. They should be credible, have management 'buy in' and be tested and understood by those who will be using them.

Organisational integration. Appropriate and effective performance measurement frameworks are integrated with the structure of the organisation, compatible to organisational data collection, recording and reporting processes and are relevant to the way practitioners operate 'on the ground'.

Outcomes focus. Effective performance measurement frameworks should have an outcomes focus, and enable a practical approach to outcome measurement which considers resource availability and management.

A complex systems perspective

The Australian community sector is a complex system in which contextual, environmental and client needs and circumstances are continuously changing. Additional requirements exist when considering outcome measurement approaches in a complex system, for example consideration should be given to how the effects of individual COs interact and contribute to outcomes in the wider system, and key factors that influence outcome achievement should be a focus.

Of the approaches above, program logic approaches support many of the elements of effective frameworks. Additionally there are clear links between the requirements of measurement in a complex system and program logic approaches, suggesting this may be an effective approach to take to measurement in a complex system.

The ideas of 'realist evaluation', a variant on program logic, and 'open systems' evaluation provide useful adjuncts to program logic as these approaches emphasise the importance of considering context in measurement.   Combining these approaches and the program logic approach enable COs to consider:

- their immediate organisational needs for outcome measurement

- how achieving outcomes contributes to achieving community level impacts.

How does this relate to the Productivity Commission's proposed framework?

The Commission's proposed framework is similar to a program logic approach, however it considers high-level measurement at the whole of sector level rather than measurement of specific outcomes for individual COs; it does not address the need to collect specific information or link its broad ideas to practice at the CO level. Due to this high-level focus, the value of the Commission's proposed framework for individual COs will vary. This will depend on factors such as:

- the range of activities undertaken by the CO and their desired outcomes

- the level of complexity of the issues (if any) they are addressing.

For individual COs a more specific approach is required.

Current approaches to outcome measurement

Inputs and outputs

Measurement of inputs and outputs is currently undertaken by many COs. Output measurement in particular is familiar to COs and is seemingly easier than outcome measurement. Output measurement often aligns with organisational measurement processes, provides measurement results in the short term, and enables comparison to be undertaken between organisations. In addition many government departments require input or output reporting from COs as a condition of their funding.

Input and output measurement information usually relates to efficiency rather than effectiveness and thus provides little insight into 'how well [COs] are helping their clients'[2]. Nor does it provide insight beyond the program level of measurement. The exception here is measurement of inputs and outputs by participant based member organisations who often have neither the motives nor the imperatives to measure outcomes; as evidence based links can be drawn between inputs and outputs and positive outcomes in areas such as the arts and recreation.

Outcomes

Conversely, there are signs of a shift of measurement focus in the community sector, from efficiency alone to efficiency and effectiveness. Measuring outcomes is now being pursued by a number of COs and is being widely encouraged by the government and private sector. However outcome measurement is more often being undertaken by larger, well-resourced COs working in social services, health or welfare arenas. The reasons for this may include increased expectations from government or corporate sponsors, the capacity for measurement of such COs and their business-like focus.

In spite of these examples, working models of outcome measurement are not common across the community sector as a whole and 'Put simply, Australia should be much further down the track than we are today'[3]. There is evidence of COs undertaking 'narrow outcome measurement', that is measurement and evaluation approaches that measure outcomes alone, without considering factors affecting their achievement. Additionally there is evidence of:

• a lack of focus on issues of context and implementation

• inadequately defined outcomes

• a focus on organisational outcomes

• outcome assessment being undertaken too early before sufficient time has elapsed for change to be observable.

Importantly there is a lack of high quality, available evidence about outcome and impact measurement in the Australian community sector, and a culture of 'non-measurement' exists for many COs, for whom measurement is not embedded in day to day practice.

Impacts

Impact measurement in Australia is primarily undertaken by larger, often government-funded COs, industry groups, lobby groups, peak bodies, government departments and official national agencies. Impact measurement seems to be undertaken periodically or on a 'project style' basis rather than data being systematically collected across the sector at the organisational level. This may be because in the community sector, impacts are difficult to measure and a strong evidence base is required to link observed outcomes to observed impacts.

What quantitative and qualitative methods are applied to measure outcomes?

A varied range of qualitative and quantitative measures are applied to measure outcomes in the community and public sectors. Various specific measurement instruments and approaches have been developed, both qualitative and quantitative.

In a community services setting, quantitative methods are seen as 'surface analysis' whereas qualitative methods are primary, and can provide information regarding the way organisational systems and context influence a program, and facilitate deeper understanding. Thus a combined approach to measurement involving the right mix of qualitative and quantitative methodologies, which are relevant and can be flexibly tailored to meet the needs of the diverse range of organisations, is an appropriate approach to take.

What is not clear and deserves further thought is what specific measures are relevant and useful for (many) COs at their organisational level and can be combined to provide useful and relevant information at the system (national) level. Identifying such measures is a key requirement for any framework that seeks to be useful and used widely, such as the Commission's Framework.

Improving outcome measurement in the community sector

Barriers to outcome measurement in the community sector

The complex system that is the Australian community sector poses a number of barriers to measuring outcomes. The following are primary barriers to outcome measurement:

- There are a varied range of clients, programs and services influencing outcome measurement and achievement.

- A range of complex social issues is being addressed.

- The system is in a constant state of change.

- There is a culture of non-measurement within many COs, which reduces their motivation and capacity to measure outcomes and other organisation issues such as size and specificity of focus.

- The evidence base about 'what works' for the Australian community sector is lacking.

- Many outcomes are evidenced only in the long term.

- The links between intervention and outcome and impact are not always straightforward or definitive.

Drivers for outcome measurement in the community sector

Drivers are the internal and external factors acting as motivators for the community sector to measure their outcomes. Drivers for measurement include:

- external and internal motivators to measure, including measurement as a requirement or expectation of funders

- increasing desire from COs to understand 'what works' in service delivery and measurement approaches.

- measuring in a complex system; if complex social problems are to be adequately addressed an in depth understanding of the complex system and evidence-based interventions and measurements are required

- the need to demonstrate the contribution of the community sector, a driver that is applicable across the board—to government, the private sector and the community sector itself

- government directions in performance and outcome measurement and the need to align measurement at the organisational and sector level to current government (ie COAG) directions in performance measurement.

Levers for outcome measurement in the community sector

Levers are the structures and processes that may support outcome measurement, and encourage and enable change. Levers for outcome measurement in the community sector include:

- provision of support for COs to measure outcomes, both through the governance and support structures proposed by the Commission in its Draft Report and support from large COs and peak organisations within the community sector

- benefits of outcome measurement in the community sector, the most important of which is the ability to demonstrate effectiveness

- the development of a research base, to support an understanding of 'what works' and enable COs to provide services with the knowledge that certain activities may lead to certain outcomes

- standard approaches to measurement, which may involve development of standard and agreed, specific outcomes and standard measurement tools

- sector wide collaboration and innovation, to enable consistent and coordinated approaches to measurement and evaluation, support the enhancement of a research base and activities such as meta analysis and provide a forum for innovation and creativity to occur.

How might improvements occur?

The following summarises the areas suggested as key to achieving improvements, by directly addressing some of the barriers discussed above. These are presented here to stimulate thinking and discussion about how they might best be addressed and further consideration of directions proposed in the Productivity Commission's recent Draft Report.

- To support COs in measuring their contribution at the sector level a common approach to measurement which can provide specific measurement related detail is required. This will enable COs to understand how, relative to other COs, they are contributing to community wide impacts.

- A program logic approach to outcome measurement, incorporating realist and open systems evaluation approaches, should be adopted and implemented at the individual CO level in line with the Commission's overarching framework. Such an approach offers the potential for COs to identify what outcomes they are aiming to achieve and how achieving these contributes towards impacts at the community level and supports an understanding of what works for whom and when.

- Standard and agreed outcomes (or broad outcome areas) should be identified for the different parts of the sector and in line with this the development and use of standard measurement tools should be supported, to guide and streamline the efforts of COs towards achieving wellbeing in the community.

- The research-evidence base should be enhanced for the community sector, linking certain activities with outcomes at the individual CO level, and linking the range of organisational level outcomes to system wide outcomes and impacts. Research evidence facilitates understanding of risk and protective factors for children and young people, and their link to wellbeing, which should be used in the development of appropriate programs and interventions.

- Systematic promotion and dissemination of evidence of the effectiveness of activities, interventions and programs is required, and may be a role for a range of non service delivery focused COs, including ARACY.

- The measurement and evaluation capability of the sector should be enhanced by reshaping the role of current governance and supporting bodies and the sector itself in providing support for measurement and evaluation to COs. In line with this government should build the requirement and associated cost of measurement and evaluation into its allocations of funding.

- A shift towards a 'culture of measurement' in the community sector should occur; the sector may have a role in supporting culture change, primarily through large COs and peak bodies providing specific support services and/or leading by example in focusing on outcome measurement and evaluation.

- Support for COs for whom measuring their outcomes is unnecessary or unfeasible should be provided in the form of national data collections and in particular national collection of outcome related information.

- National data collection efforts should be relevant, and align with national priorities for measurement and measurement efforts at the organisational and sector level. An open question in the matter of linking data collection at these different levels in the system is who should exercise leadership and take responsibility.

The above suggestions require culture change within the sector and coordination of effort by COs, governments, and peak and governing bodies to elicit sector wide change.

Background

Community organisations (COs) share a number of common characteristics, distinguishing them from government entities and private sector agencies. They operate for social or community purposes, are self governing, do not distribute profit to members, and often engage or rely upon voluntary member participation. Importantly, they aim to provide benefits to members and the community[4].

Further, there is a distinction between COs that receive government funding to provide services in line with government initiatives (government-funded COs), and those that rely on members, individuals, private organisations and other stakeholders for funding (community-funded COs)[5].

Community organisations and motives for measuring outcomes

Recently the community sector (the sector in which COs operate) has experienced increased pressure to provide interested parties with information about their operations, activities (outputs) and importantly, their outcomes[6]. Performance measurement makes COs accountable to their members, funders and the community and enables self-improvement through analysis of operations.

Motivations for measuring performance are numerous. For government-funded organisations, particularly those in purchaser–provider arrangements[7], accountability to government is a primary motivator, particularly when funding is based upon meeting pre-determined performance criteria[8]. In Australia many COs receive government funding to deliver specific programs or interventions[9] and this number is growing[10]. Many of these are small to medium sized COs providing services in social services, education, research or in relation to the environment[11].

Community-funded COs, including not-for-profit or philanthropic entities, are also motivated by accountability: to members, donors, partners and sponsors. Interest from other stakeholders may also motivate performance measurement, including academics and researchers, partner organisations and peak bodies[12].

Performance measurement also can be undertaken voluntarily by COs who are interested in understanding the way they operate and the impact this has on specific target groups or the broader community[13]. The rationale is that such understanding can lead to opportunities for growth and improvement.

Accountability to clients, and the ability to provide clients with information about effectiveness and progress can also be a motivator[14].

These motives for performance measurement are not universal. For a significant number of COs outcome measurement has little relevance. Some lack the pressures of accountability to government or other funders (for example organisations primarily reliant on small-scale fundraising activity), while for many membership based organisations, participation in a common activity is their overriding objective (for example sporting clubs and COs). Often for these groups the link between participation (inputs and outputs) and community, social and economic benefits (outcomes) are well established in research evidence and community norms. As such, outcome measurement may provide little value, and its pursuit would reduce the (usually limited) resources available for the organisations' primary activity.

Measuring the outcomes of community organisations —ARACY background paper

In June 2009 ARACY developed a background paper to provide information about the aims, purpose and issues surrounding outcome measurement for COs. The paper described a project that aimed to '…review evidence, practice and policy concerning the measurement of the outcomes of community organisations, in particular the contribution to the wellbeing of children and young people'.[15]

That paper provides contextual information about the community sector in Australia and introduces issues relating to outcome measurement for COs. It advocates the development of an agreed outcome measurement framework for the community sector, to enable understanding of the contribution of COs to the wellbeing of children and young people, and which considers the evidence-based methods required to improve these outcomes over time.

About this paper

This paper builds on the ARACY background paper and presents a summary of research into the use and effectiveness of outcomes measurement frameworks for COs. Its intended audience is CO representatives and others concerned with the issue of whether and how best to measure outcomes of COs in Australia. The intent of this paper is to stimulate thinking among COs and other readers on how best to approach outcomes' measurement for two purposes—

assessment of the contribution of COs to community wellbeing across Australia and improvement of individual COs' performance in delivering their outcomes.

This paper addresses the following:

What does the evidence say?

What international and Australian outcome frameworks are used to measure community organisations' impact on the wellbeing of children and young people? What evidence is there about the effectiveness of using such frameworks?

What are current practices?

Using the outcome framework proposed by the Productivity Commission through its work on the Contribution of the Not for Profit Sector for analysis, this paper summarises existing outcome measures currently used by community organisations, government and philanthropic entities. What quantitative and qualitative methods are applied to measure outcomes? What are the key lessons from such practice?

How might improvements occur?

This paper summarises existing systemic and organisational barriers, levers or drivers for change for community organisations, government and philanthropic entities utilising an outcomes framework for improving the wellbeing of children and young people.

The case for measuring community outcomes

The argument for measuring performance generally is supported by evaluation theory and has recently been recognised by the shift in government thinking to 'what matters is what works'[16]. Frequently governments are using monitoring and evaluation to assess achievement of their goals and objectives[17], provide information to improve their initiatives[18] and ensure they are funding programs and services that are achieving results[19].

Measuring outcomes as a way of measuring performance has multiple benefits and provides valuable information that measurement of input (what was invested)and output (what was produced) cannot[20].

Outcome measurement in the community sector:

- enables COs to understand the effects of their services on the community (effectiveness), not just how well they are using resources, or how fast they are providing services (efficiency)[21] [22,23,24,25]

- enables evaluation based on understanding of whether outcomes were achieved, whether they were desired outcomes or undesired outcomes, and whether any unexpected outcomes occurred[26]

- increases the ability of COs to attract support from governments, donors and volunteers. Programs that are able to measure and demonstrate the link between outcomes and community level impacts are of more interest to funders including government[27]

- can lead to understanding of 'what works': COs can consider the context and circumstances in which their outcomes were achieved and provide information about why a program was or wasn't effective[28,29]. Therefore COs have improved capacity to make informed decisions, foster improvement and provide more effective services[30].

'Measurement matters where it feeds into decisions that can improve the allocation of resources, stimulate efficiency and effectiveness, monitor the effects of policy changes and aid in maintaining the trust and support of the general public.'

Source: Productivity Commission, *Contribution of the Not-for-Profit Sector Productivity Commission Draft Research Report, Overview*, Productivity Commission, Canberra, 2009, pp XXVIII.

Through outcome measurement the contribution of the community sector can be captured. As pointed out by the Productivity Commission: 'measures of inputs, and even service delivery outputs, fail to adequately capture the contribution of the sector'.[31]

There is a strong rationale for wanting to measure the impact of COs on the wellbeing of children and youth, based on the theory of early intervention. Early intervention theory proposes that 'getting it right' early (in the early years, or in the early stages) will lead to improved outcomes in the future and is supported by some evidence to that effect[32,33,34]. Thus measuring outcomes and impacts to 'get it right' now is a means to improve individual, family and community futures.

Productivity Commission overarching framework for measuring the contribution of the not-for-profit sector

In its 2009 Issues Paper and Draft Report on *Measuring the Contribution of the Not-for-Profit Sector*, the Productivity Commission (the Commission) proposed an overarching framework for measuring the collective contribution of the not-for-profit sector.

Broadly speaking the Commission proposed a framework that focuses on measurement at the national or sector level[35].This framework has a high-level focus rather than considering specific outcome related detail. Nonetheless, in the areas it does cover, the Commission's framework provides a basis for relating measurement at the CO level to measurement at a national level.

The Commission's framework focuses on four levels of measurement:

• inputs—what was invested; any physical or intellectual resource used to achieve the objectives of an activity or intervention

• outputs—what was produced; the product of an activity or intervention

• outcomes—the effects on a participant or the effects of a program or service on a group of participants during or after their involvement in an activity or intervention

• impacts—the broader effects of an activity, taking into account all its benefits and costs to the community[36].

Figure 1 presents an overview of the Framework.
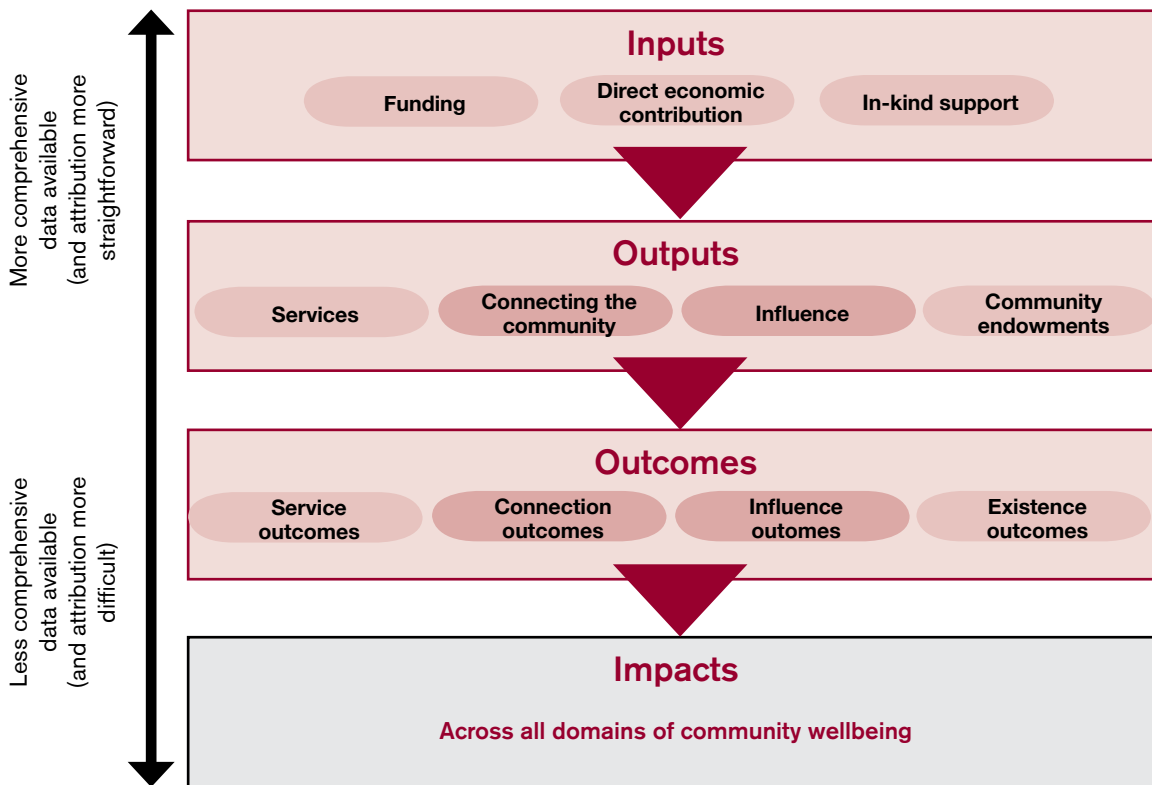
Figure 1: Productivity Commission Draft overarching framework for measuring the contribution of the not for profit sector

Adapted by KPMG, 2009, from: Productivity Commission, Contribution of the Not for Profit Sector: Issues Paper, 2009.

Additionally the Commission set out recommendations for improved measurement of the contribution of the sector. Broadly these focus on:

- smarter regulation of the not-for-profit sector

- building knowledge systems

- sector development

- removing impediments to better value government funded services

- stimulating social investment

- improving the effectiveness of direct government funding

- building stronger, more effective relationships for the future.

This paper discusses current approaches to measurement in line with the Commission's proposed framework and considers the Commission's recommendations in discussing how improvements may occur.

What does the evidence say?

'While many frameworks for measuring the outcomes of non-profits have been put forward through international research and evaluation, most have struggled with this consistent challenge of quantifying the high-level, long-term 'social' (or non financial) value generated by non-profits as opposed to the more tangible, short-term, low-level program outputs.'

Source: The Smith Family, *Submission to the Productivity Commission Inquiry: Contribution of the Not for Profit Sector*, The Smith Family, 2009, p. 13, retrieved September 2009, http://www.pc.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0011/89552/sub059.pdf

What frameworks are used to measure community organisations' impacts on the wellbeing of children and young people?

There are many performance measurement frameworks in Australia and overseas, which vary in focus, approach, and purpose. Generally these frameworks attempt to measure inputs, outputs[37], outcomes themselves[38], or a combination of these[39]. Outcome frameworks are used in community, government and private sectors.

Of these there are a range of frameworks that are used in the community sector and specifically for measuring outcomes related to child and youth wellbeing. This section will discuss current outcome frameworks and the appropriateness and effectiveness of these for the community sector.

What frameworks are in use in Australia and overseas?

In researching this paper, a large number of outcome frameworks were uncovered and it is impracticable to discuss all of them. However the frameworks tended to fall in groups, based on different approaches. A summary discussion of the key attributes of these broad approaches follows. A more detailed discussion is included as Attachment B.

Many frameworks consider the relationship between inputs, outputs and outcomes, based on assumptions that certain inputs and outputs will lead to desired outcomes.

'*Input and output focused*' frameworks often consider non-financial outputs, such as the number of clients treated in a program and focus on efficiency rather than effectiveness.

The *Victorian Government's Departmental Funding Model* is an example of this approach, in which government agencies are responsible for ensuring the delivery of goods and services (outputs) within the government's required parameters, and the achievement of previously stated outcomes is assumed.

Source: Allen Consulting Group, 2008

The Commission has developed its framework to include elements of this approach, as it considers inputs and outputs. However, it also includes an element of impact measurement which differentiates it from more narrow 'input and output focused' frameworks.

The 'input–output' approach may be favoured in the community sector because of the ease with which inputs and outputs can be measured, and the timeliness of the measurement results. Figure 2 illustrates this approach to outcome measurement.

Performance assessed here

Inputs

Physical and intellectual services

Performance assessed here

Outputs

The production of goods and services

Outcomes

Impacts

Assumption that inputs and outputs lead to outcome achievement
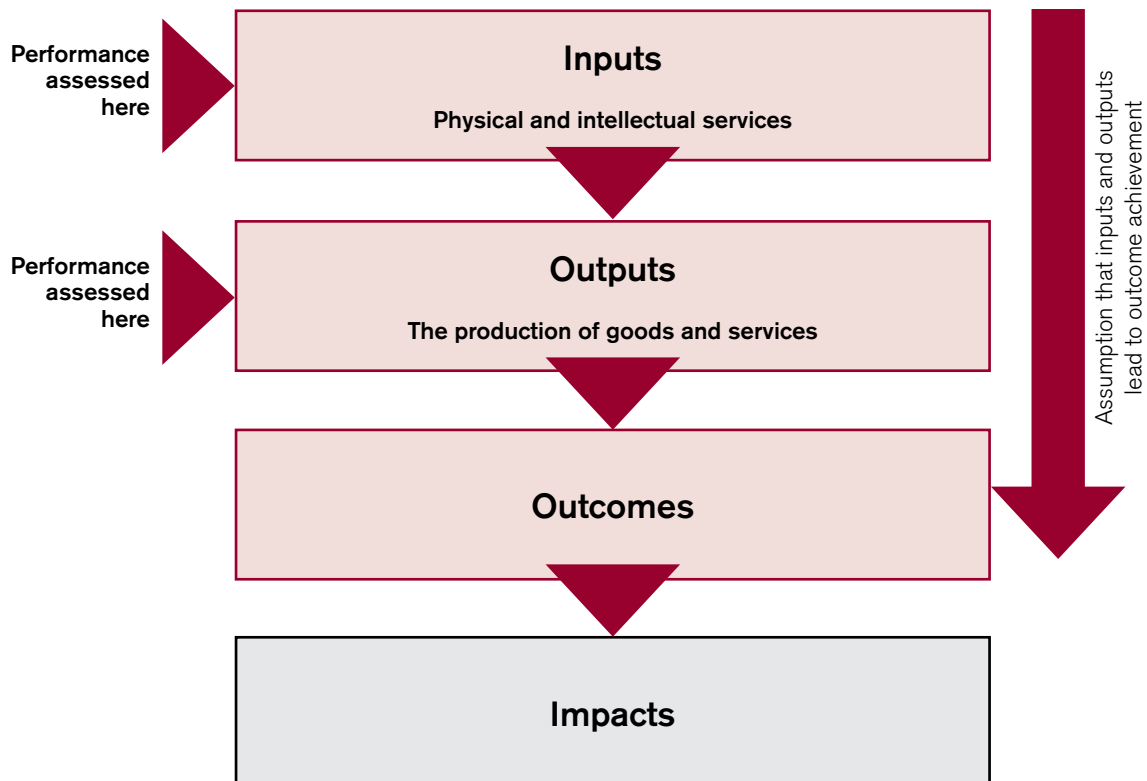
Figure 2: 'Input and output' focused framework approach

KPMG, 2009.

'Objective-focused' frameworks focus on the link between organisational or program level outcomes and the achievement of objectives. They tend to focus on achieving objectives as well as the processes required to do so.

Objectives can be simple and limited to the organisation or (more often) wide reaching and applicable to an entire sector. As shown in Figure 3 outcomes and objectives are often organised into two or more levels.
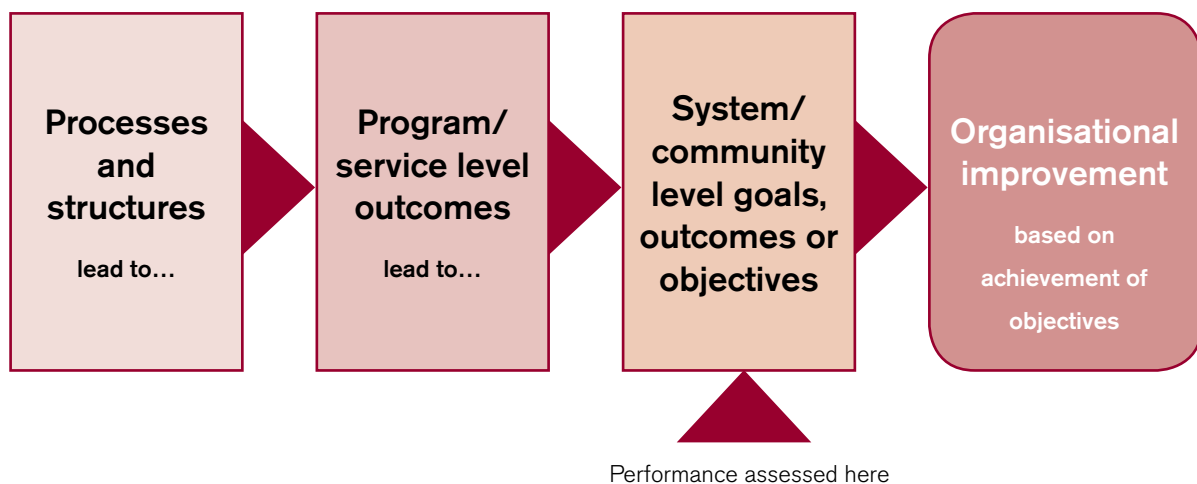

Figure 3: 'Objective focused' framework approach

KPMG, 2009.

This 'objective-focused' approach may be favoured in the community sector due to its focus on 'achieving good'. This is based on the rationale that undertaking activities with the objective to 'do good' will lead to achievement of desirable social and community outcomes.

Some framework approaches have attempted to address the issue of measuring social value. 'Social Return on Investment' (SROI) is an approach that assigns values to non-financial outcomes and then compares them with financial costs (to calculate a 'cost-benefit')[40]. SROI allows non-financial factors to be considered alongside financial costs[41]. Although SROI aims to measures benefits to the community, it provides little information about how these benefits have been achieved[42].

A common feature about the approaches discussed above is that they take a backwards-looking (retrospective) approach, involving measurement after activities have been undertaken and outcomes achieved. However some approaches take a forward-looking approach, looking at the outcomes to be achieved and the factors that may influence these, emphasising that these must be considered in framework design and implementation[43].

Results based accountability (RBA) is one such approach. RBA frameworks assist users in planning interventions, designing realistic and achievable goals and outcomes to be achieved, implementing clear strategies in line with these, and setting indicators or benchmarks against which to measure success.

'Put simply, RBA involves starting with the result that we are working towards (eg family wellbeing, literacy and numeracy skills) and working backwards to understand what we need to do to achieve this goal.'

Source: The Smith Family, *Innovation Relationships Connecting different people, in different ways, for different outcomes*, The Smith Family, 2008, retrieved November 2009, http://www.thesmithfamily.com.au/webdata/resources/files/85th_birthday_Innovation_Relationships.pdf

Specifically, RBA involves:

- identifying a desired result (goal or outcome) which is stated plainly and clearly

- identifying an indicator that represents progress on the result, and the performance measures used to assess progress against this indicator

- outlining the strategy or actions that are likely to lead to achieving the result(s), which should be based on evidence linking specific activities/ interventions with desired goals and outcomes.

RBA supports measurement at the sector wide or community level as well as at the organisational level, by looking at population and performance accountability[44].

Organisations can then use their measurement results to make changes and improve the appropriateness and effectiveness of their programs. Using indicators to measure success provides clear data and may enable a range of programs or interventions to take a common approach to measurement[45].

'Logic models' are founded in evaluation theory and can be described as 'a logical series of statements linking the conditions a social service program is intended to address, the activities that will be employed to address [these] and the expected outcomes of activities'[46]. Logic models take a forward-looking approach to measurement and evaluation.

They consider other factors that influence achievement of outcomes and emphasise the need to consider these other factors in framework design and implementation[47].

Program logic approaches[48] set out a hierarchy of outcomes at different levels, as well as related pre-conditions and actions (a theory of action) to explain how the outcomes will be achieved. These approaches recognise that both intended and unintended outcomes can be achieved. A full program logic is developed based on the understanding of:

• the intended outcomes to be achieved

• the potential unintended outcomes

• factors that affect outcome achievement and what influences these factors

• activities that are intended to contribute to outcome achievement

• the type of information that is needed to measure outcomes

• what 'success' would look like for a program[49].

Evidence-based links between actions and outputs to outcomes should be the basis for developing the program logic. This program logic should be established prior to implementing a program[50].

Program logic can be applied in different ways to deliver a variety of logic models, depending upon the nature of the program or intervention and the objectives of the measurement role (eg research, evaluation, monitoring). This approach is now used across a range of sectors, including the community sector, in Australia[51] and internationally[52], in the health sector[53] and by Australian Government departments[54,55], and is seen favourably by many government treasuries[56,57,58].

In the 1980s, Averis Donabedian broke what was then new ground with his publication of *Framework for measuring quality in health care*[1]. That framework took what is now seen as a 'logic model' approach to measurement, as it:

• considered the link between structures (systems and inputs), processes (activities and outputs) and outcomes

• proposed that the three factors are interrelated and the relationships between them are probable rather than definitive

• considered the nature of outcomes (whether durable or short term)

• recognised that valuable outcomes may be observable only in the long-term

- recognised that information and data on outcome must be available

- considered the consequences of not taking action on achieving outcomes

- recognised that all of these factors should be considered from the outset.

Source: A Donabedian. *An Introduction to Quality Assurance in Health Care*, Oxford University Press, London, 2001

Over the years the program logic approach has been enhanced and extended, with many variants of logic models emerging, such as the 'logical framework' and the 'results framework'. One key development in the past 10 years has been the 'realist evaluation' approach.

The results framework approach takes a big picture perspective by considering the contribution of a specific program in association with the contribution of partners (such as other COs) to broad sector or community goals. Performance indicators are developed for both objectives and program outcomes. These approaches are suitable for and applied in a range of environments.

Source: AusAID, 'Using the Results Framework Approach', *AusGuideline*, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra, 2005, ch. 2.2.

The logical framework and results framework approaches are variants of program logic approaches. The logical framework ('logframe') uses systematic analysis to develop a description of what a program will do and what it will produce. It develops a hierarchy of objectives and planned results and describes indicators that progress towards outcomes or results will be measured against.

Source: AusAID, 'The Logical Framework Approach', *AusGuideline*, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra, 2005, ch. 3.3.

Realist evaluation approaches[59] are based on a theory of behaviour and individual decision making that informs the thinking around how outcomes are achieved at a program level. These outcomes are seen as collective consequences of individual decisions leading to actions and behaviour changes. These behavioural changes are thus affected by a range of factors at both individual and environmental or program levels.

As such, realist evaluations usually involve asking not only what outcomes were achieved but also whether outcomes were different for different groups of clients and how circumstances affected achievement of outcomes? This takes into account the variation in client groups, organisations and programs within the community sector. Additionally, like the results framework approach, realist evaluation enables the contribution of an organisation or program to be seen as a component of contribution at the broader community level.

Realist evaluation approaches build on 'logic models' by asking not only what factors contribute to outcome achievement, but what works for whom and in which circumstances? This takes into account the variation in client groups, organisations and programs within the community sector. Additionally, like the results framework approach, realist evaluation enables the contribution of an organisation or program to be seen as a sub-element of contribution at the community level.

Source: Pawson, R & Tilley, N, *Realistic Evaluation*, Sage Publications, London, 1997

What is common across the different approaches?

For most of the approaches described above, outcomes are an element of measuring performance but they are often not the focus. Some frameworks set out objectives but focus on measuring outputs, quality standards or intermediate outcomes (which are similar to outputs, and provide little information relating to impacts).

Most of the frameworks that seek to measure outcomes do so across a range of levels (ie program-level outcomes, community-level outcomes).

In most cases, the evidence base for the framework approach is not provided. This was less the case with the program logic frameworks, as they require description of the underlying program logic, which must be built using evidence-based links.

What evidence is there about the effectiveness of using such frameworks?

Performance measurement frameworks focusing on outcome measurement are applied widely across sectors in Australia and internationally. Anecdotal and research evidence confirms their uses[60], effectiveness, appropriateness and applicability[61,62].

This paper considered the common features of frameworks that have been shown to be effective in the literature (in terms of their development, implementation and operation) and frameworks that anecdotally have been shown to be effective when implemented and used by community organisations.

The common features of effective frameworks are organisational alignment, stakeholder acceptance, organisational integration and an outcomes' focus.

Organisational alignment

Effective performance measurement frameworks are aligned with the organisation using them. Such frameworks:

- are based on and work within the context of the organisation, including organisational goals, clients, resource availability and importantly culture

- are based on an understanding of outcomes sought by funders and stakeholders

- align with organisational systems that support implementation and operation of the framework, such as communication and data systems

- are compatible to the organisation's purpose for performance measurement and the nature of its business.

Frameworks must also be relevant and appropriate to their context. When considering a framework or approach to performance measurement, COs should ask 'Does this framework measure the needs of our target group; the needs of our community?'[63].

Organisational and stakeholder acceptance

To be able to be implemented and operate effectively, performance frameworks need to be understood and accepted by key stakeholders, including management, staff and funders. These frameworks should:

- be credible and supported by staff and stakeholders

- be tested by those who will use them and accepted by stakeholders prior to implementation

- have managerial support and 'buy in' and consistent and positive adoption of frameworks during implementation

- have staff with adequate understanding of the framework and their requirements within it.

Organisational integration

Findings suggest that appropriate and effective outcome frameworks are:

- integrated with the overall structure of the organisation[64]. This is based on research about the effectiveness and appropriateness of outcome frameworks for not-for-profit organisations

- compatible to the manner in which organisations (and the sector in which they operate) currently collect, record and report data

- relevant to the way practitioners operate and to 'what works', ie focus on processes that have been shown to work in the past.

Research has also identified that these frameworks should be comprehensive and have a logical approach[65].

Outcomes focus

In terms of implementation and application of outcome frameworks, successful organisations:

- take a practical approach to outcome measurement, accounting for resource availability and management

- demonstrate a shift of focus from considering outputs to outcomes, and focusing on 'people dimensions' rather than other measures such as financial

- aim to balance resource limitations and a focus on outcomes[66].

Based on this evidence, effective frameworks for use in the community sector should:

- be implemented with consideration of the sub sector in which the CO operates (eg education and research, health and hospitals, culture and recreation, social services, environment, unions) and their client group(s), the organisation's available resources, goals and aims, and their culture

- be approved by and collect information that is of interest to funders and stakeholders

- focus on achieving specific or broad, qualitative outcomes; describe what data should be collected and how (understanding that data availability, and the capacity for organisations to collect data may vary); and be flexible to account for the varied nature of business of COs, both within and across organisations.

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), *Australian National Accounts: Non-profit Institutions Satellite Account 2006–07* cat. no. 5256.0, ABS Ausstats, Canberra, 2009.

Of the approaches discussed above, program logic approaches support many of the elements of effective frameworks as they:

- set out program conditions, activities and desired outcomes in a way that can be clearly communicated to stakeholders

- emphasise the importance of providing relevant information to stakeholders (including staff and funders)

- consider the context and environment of the organisation (and the broader sector) in defining program activities, outcomes, and data sources

- help COs understand their context and environment by emphasising that other factors may contribute to outcome achievement, and that both intended and unintended outcomes can occur

- provide clarity about what success looks like by identifying success criteria for each outcome. This facilitates realistic and clear expectations for COs and stakeholders about what is to be achieved and how

- help when addressing issues commonly experienced by COs, including lack of clarity around goals, vaguely defined outcomes, and limited understanding of contextual and environmental influences on achieving outcomes[67,68].

A complex systems perspective

Having clear understanding of context and environment is particularly relevant for the community sector, which is a complex system attempting to address complex social issues[69]. So, when considering the issue of outcomes' measurement for COs, taking a 'complex systems perspective' is useful.

Complex systems like the Australian community sector are influenced by the interaction and interrelationships between the elements within them, and this interaction is in a state of flux, changing continuously.

In a complex system, contextual, environmental and client needs and circumstances are continuously changing. A single element of the system, or the system as a whole, can change rapidly or conversely can remain unchanged for lengthy periods of time[70].

The actions taken in a complex system produce different effects which interact, and the collective impacts from this interaction over time leads to whole of system outcomes and impacts. In particular, this complexity means that actions taken in one part of the sector may depend on complementary actions in another part of the sector, for overall community outcomes to be achieved, and vice-versa.

'Notions of complexity have substantial ramifications for the way in which we approach policy [and program] evaluation.'

Source: Sanderson, 2000, p.433.

Although complex systems are just that, complex, these systems can be understood. However, cause and effect relationships often cannot be viewed as linear and changing environmental influences must be taken into account when attempting to understand complex systems.

Recognising that the community sector is a complex system, additional requirements exist when considering approaches to outcomes measurement for COs. Specifically:

- Approaches to outcomes measurement should be flexible and consider information about the CO's environment.

- Key factors influencing outcome achievement should be a focus.

- Measurement and evaluation should consider these key factors, which may be organisational or system wide.

- It is likely that whole-of-community impacts will be seen in the long term.

- To account for the continual change in the system a focus on the bigger picture is required.

- How the individual effects of COs' actions interact with each other and contribute to outcomes in the wider system need to be considered.

- A focus on 'explaining how', rather than 'identifying what', in measuring and evaluating is needed to support practical outcomes measurement. This focus provides better understanding of how particular outcomes were achieved or why they were not.

- Descriptive measurement within measurement frameworks may be useful, to aid understanding of how effects have occurred.

- The link between outcomes and impacts is not always certain. A strong evidence base is needed, to understand how different outcomes and other factors interact to deliver longer term impacts. The role of research and evaluation is critical to building this evidence base and keeping it up to date[71].

There are clear links between the requirements of measurement in a complex system and program logic approaches[72]. However, the ideas of 'realist evaluation', a variant on program logic, and 'open systems' evaluation provide useful adjuncts to program logic as these approaches emphasise the importance of considering context in measurement.

Realist evaluation

Understanding how and why an outcome was achieved makes it easier to work out how outcomes are best achieved or how to improve outcomes

Realist evaluation considers why outcomes were achieved and recognises that the same action or intervention may produce different outcomes in different settings[73]. It considers the link between outcomes and impacts with the understanding that impacts are caused via the achievement of multiple, interdependent outcomes across the complex system[74].

The early intervention *Early Head Start program* in the Unites States was designed to improve outcomes in terms of child, family, staff and community development through provision of centre based early intervention services to children aged 0–3 years.

An impact evaluation of this initiative found that the impacts of this program varied for different populations of people and in particular that children and families with five or four risk factors (as defined by the initiative) had unfavourable outcomes compared to both children receiving Early Head Start services who had less risk factors, and a high risk control group (receiving no Early Head Start services).

Source: Mathematica Policy Research Inc, 2002.

Open systems evaluation

The open systems approach proposes that, when addressing complex social issues, the purpose of measurement and evaluation should be to ensure outcomes are achieved and are linked to community development[75].

This approach emphasises the timing and environment in which a program is implemented and the effect they have on outcomes. Elements of this approach that are particularly useful for COs are:

• a focus on achieving objectives and organisational improvement, rather than simply establishing cause and effect

• a focus on using outcome information for service planning and delivery.

Both of these approaches are useful to build on program logic as a way to design outcomes measurement frameworks for COs and for the CO sector.

Together they enable COs to consider:

• their immediate organisational needs for outcomes' measurement

• how achieving outcomes contributes to achieving larger community (system) level outcomes and impacts.

This allows policy makers and funders to take a system-wide perspective to understand the link between outcomes and impacts.

How does this relate to the Productivity Commission's proposed framework?

The Commission's proposed framework is similar to a program logic approach, however it considers high-level measurement at the whole of sector level rather than measurement of specific outcomes for individual COs.

The value of this framework for individual COs in measuring outcomes and their relative contribution to impacts will vary. It will depend upon the range of activities undertaken by the CO and particularly on the extent to which their client level outcomes depend on complementary outcomes beyond their direct influences to lead to the higher level community outcomes implied in the framework. This means that effective application of the framework for many COs will require a good understanding of the causal and contributory linkages between their organisational outcomes and broader community outcomes. Such understanding will depend on a suitable evidence base being available and accessible to COs.

The Productivity Commission framework also lacks specificity around factors relating to measurement and factors influencing outcome achievement[76]. The framework does not support consideration of contextual and environmental factors that may impact on outcome achievement. As such, the Commission's framework does not address the need to collect information about what works (and what does not work) in which circumstances.

Additionally this framework does not provide information linking the proposed broad ideas to practice at the CO level. Rather it provides non-specific measurement guidance and is most appropriate for application at the sector and national level.

Nonetheless the Productivity Commission acknowledges the value of considering specific activities of individual COs, pointing out that evaluation of specific not-for-profit activities best informs improvements in effectiveness and resource allocation[77].

In order for COs to acquire an understanding of the outcomes they are achieving at an organisational level, and how these are contributing to outcomes and impacts at the whole of sector level, a more specific approach to measurement is required.

What are current practices?

Existing outcome measures currently being used by community organisations, government and philanthropic entities

Current approaches to outcome measurement in the Australian community sector are varied. While some COs consistently and systematically measure outcomes and use this information for development or to secure funding, others have limited capacity for measurement and evaluation or see little need to measure their outcomes.

This section discusses current outcome measurement in the context of the proposed Commission approach to measuring the contribution of the not-for-profit sector, and attempts to provide explanation for the recent trends in outcome measurement observed in Australia.

Current approaches to outcome measurement

Inputs and outputs

Measurement of inputs and outputs is currently undertaken by a significant number of COs, both in Australia[78,79,80] and overseas[81,82]. Output measurement in particular is both familiar to COs and seemingly easier than measuring outcomes for a range of reasons[83]:

- Input and output measurement often aligns with current organisational measurement processes, as information regarding resources, spending, clients and programs is frequently routinely collected, and if not, several potential sources of output data are available publicly[84].

- Output data is often easier to measure than outcome data[85] and is easier to aggregate[86].

- Input and output data provides information about results that are visible in the short term, whereas outcome related results may not be evidenced for a number of years.

- Input and output data enable comparative analysis between organisations[87].

There is evidence of a lack of understanding by COs of outcome measurement, further encouraging the measurement of inputs and outputs[88].

Besides the ease of measurement, many government departments providing funding to COs require input or output reporting as a condition of funding[89]. This both reflects the timeliness with which such information can be produced and also 'the decline in commitment to rigorous performance measurement and evaluation across the Commonwealth as a whole, and the accompanying decline in analytical and evaluative capability'[90].

Although output measurement in particular may provide some valuable information to COs this information usually relates to efficiency rather than effectiveness and thus provides little insight into 'how well [COs] are helping their clients'[91]. Nor does it provide insight beyond the program level of measurement[92,93].

The exception here is measurement of inputs and outputs by participant based member organisations, primarily community-funded COs, such as sporting clubs and community arts organisations. A strong body of evidence demonstrates the benefits of such COs in terms of community benefits (such as social cohesion), social benefits (such as development of social networks) and economic benefits (such as increased employment and social enterprise) [94], and clear opportunity exists for individual skill development[95]. The provision of sporting infrastructure (an output) for example, is likely to lead to community benefits due to the high use of sporting facilities in Australia and the evidence based link between increased physical activity and increased wellbeing (ie health benefits, socialisation)[96].

Straightforward links can thus be inferred between the provision of a broad range of inputs and outputs, and outcomes and community impacts such as social connectedness and community development[97]. Additionally the consequences of not providing such services may be less than in the health or welfare arenas, as the primary focus is on building social capital rather than harm minimisation, meaning the imperatives to measure may be lessened. As the Productivity Commission points out:

'Does it matter how a tennis club, gardening club or local self-help group performs, beyond the expectations of its members?'

Source: Productivity Commission, *Contribution of the Not-for-Profit Sector Productivity Commission Draft Research Report, Overview*, 2009, p. XXX

It is often therefore unnecessary for participant based COs to measure beyond the level of what they invest (inputs) and produce (outputs) in providing services.

The CERM *Performance Indicators* is an applied research project undertaken by the University of South Australia. CERM PI provides reviews for over 200 sports and leisure facilities in Australia and New Zealand. Robust operational benchmarks for sports and leisure facilities have been developed, which has lead to the development of a self-assessment framework and a focus on building a culture of continuous improvement for sports and leisure focused organisations.

Practically applied, the *CERM PI* attempts to measure across two broad categories:

1) Quality indicators

- Customer demographics
- Service or centre usage
- Client service quality: how client expectations compare with their perceptions of the service ie value for money
- Problem identification and resolution
- Overall service user satisfaction
- Service user willingness to recommend the service to other prospective customers and their intention to revisit the centre
- Customer benefits, to identify the motivations or personal reasons that influence a customer's use of services or centres[1].

2) Operational Benchmarks

- Financial eg percentage of cost recovery
- Services eg total visits per year
- Marketing eg promotion cost share percentage
- Organisation eg labour cost share percentage[2].

Sources: 1University of South Australia (Uni SA), *Australian National Customer Service Quality (CSQ) Benchmarks for Public Aquatic Centres & Leisure Centres*, Centre for Tourism Management, Uni SA, no date.
2University of South Australia (Uni SA), *CERM PI National Operational Benchmarks for Public Aquatic Centres & Leisure Centres*, Centre for Tourism Management, Uni SA, no date.

These organisations may benefit from sourcing input and output information from national data collections (such as CERM or the ABS) either solely, or to supplement their own data collection efforts.

Outcomes

Conversely, there are signs of a shift of measurement focus in the community sector, from efficiency alone to efficiency and effectiveness. As this paper shows, the interest in outcome measurement is now evident. This comes at a time when outcome measurement is being widely encouraged and espoused more broadly by government and the private sector[98].

Measuring outcomes is now being pursued by a number of COs. Many of these are larger well-resourced COs, working in social services, health or welfare arenas. There are a number of reasons for this. For many COs, their funders (primarily government and corporate sponsors) value the provision of outcome information. Some large COs operate in a business-like manner and have significant resources—staff and systems—giving them the capacity to invest in outcomes measurement without compromising their capacity to deliver services.

There are examples that such COs are undertaking monitoring and evaluation to demonstrate the achievement of their outcomes[99]. Outcome based frameworks have been developed or existing outcome frameworks implemented by COs[100] and in some cases systems to support these are operating[101].

New and innovative models of outcome measurement also are being tried. For example, the 'distance travelled' model, originally developed in Scotland[102] is being considered for the education and welfare sectors[103].

'Distance travelled' is an approach involving measuring the distance a client has travelled from where they would otherwise have been. It is a client service level tool to measure progress relative to the level of disadvantage or difficulty they would have experienced without the program or service[1].

This approach enables client progress to be demonstrated even when it is slow or uneven. 'Distance travelled' has been applied in the United States[2] and United Kingdom[3] and is also being used by some Australian COs.

Sources:
1 Consultation with G Giuliani, Jobs Australia, 25 August 2009.
2 Performance Hub, 2007.
3 GHK, 2002.

Finally some COs are shifting to evidence based practice approaches in designing[104] and rolling out their programs and initiatives[105].

In spite of these examples, working models of outcome measurement are not common across the community sector as a whole and 'Put simply, Australia should be much further down the track than we are today'[106]. Anecdotal evidence, research and observation indicate the following features of the outcome measurement landscape for COs across the community sector:

- **Narrow outcome measurement**—measurement and evaluation approaches that measure outcomes alone, without considering factors affecting their achievement; approaches that consider only the obvious links between interventions and outcomes[107,108].

- **Lack of focus on issues of context and implementation**—there is a lack of understanding or acknowledgement of how and why programs and services lead to outcomes, and of the fact that both intended and unintended outcomes can occur[109].

- **Inadequately defined outcomes and a focus on organisational outcomes**—outcomes are often ill-defined or not defined at all, and tend to focus on organisational gains/achievements rather than on clients and the community[110].

- **Early outcome assessment**—attempts to measure outcomes too early (before sufficient time has elapsed for change to be observable). This may lead to the unintentional measurement of outputs instead of outcomes and can occur due to an absence of inadequately described program logic.

- **Lack of available evidence about outcomes, outcome measurement and impacts**—this project uncovered limited, high quality research into effectiveness of social and community programs. In addition, there is a more general lack of systematic reviews of such programs and interventions[111].

- **A 'retrospective' approach**—as noted, many studies and approaches to measurement do not take a forward-looking approach and instead rely on retrospective measurement and data collection[112]. This generally limits what can be measured to data available from existing management information systems.

- **A 'non-measurement' culture**—for many COs measurement generally is not embedded in their day-to-day practice and management, let alone outcome measurement.

- **Varied approaches to measurement**—as demonstrated, outcome measurement approaches vary substantially, making it difficult to combine or compare information from different COs either to gain insights into comparative effectiveness of different service models or to build an aggregate picture of the sector's outcomes.

Impacts

Impact measurement in Australia is primarily undertaken by larger, often government-funded COs, industry groups, lobby groups, peak bodies[113], government departments[114] and official national agencies[115]. Impact measurement seems to be undertaken periodically or on a 'project style' basis rather than being systematically collected across the sector at the organisational level[116].

In the community sector, impacts are difficult to measure. Recalling the earlier discussion of complex systems, this is particularly when the elements contributing to impact achievement are in constant flux and subject to myriad environmental influences.

Impacts can only be comprehensively assessed in the long term[117] and a strong evidence base is required to link observed outcomes to observed impacts. Some scholars have even concluded that systematically measuring the impact of the community sector is impossible[118]. Internationally and in Australia specific approaches to measuring impact have been developed which may be useful. However these are primarily used when concrete impact related data is unavailable, and are not consistently or systematically applied. Examples are 'intended impact' and 'theory of change'[119].

'Intended impact' involves the development of a statement of intended impact for an organisation or program, which is explicit and identifies targets for change and the impact the intervention, program or service is intended to have.

'Theory of change' sets out and explains the actions and processes aimed at enabling the organisation to achieve its intended impact. This process highlights the gaps between what is currently occurring and what needs to occur in order to elicit change[1]. Recently there is evidence of the application of such approaches in the Australian community sector[2,3].

Sources
1 JL Brandach, TJ Tierney & N Stone, 'Delivering on the Promise of Nonprofits', *Harvard Business Review*, December, 2008.
2 For example: Teach for Australia Foundation, *Our theory of change, 2009*, retrieved September 2009, http://www.teachforaustralia.org/what-we-do/our-theory-of-change
3 For example: L Robinson, *The Enabling Change Approach*, Social Change Media, 2004, retrieved September 2009, http://www.media.socialchange.net.au/workshops/about_enabling_change.html

Additionally a range of broad frameworks have been developed to measure impacts in the public sector[120], the health sector[121] and the community sector[122]. Although there appear to be fewer for measuring the impact of COs and more for measuring the impact of government initiatives, the broad principles of these may be useful for considering how the impact of the community sector could be measured. Some relevant and potentially useful work has been done in the following:

- Australian Bureau of Statistics' Framework for Measuring Social Capital. This framework describes how social capital interacts with and relates to other types of capital (natural capital, produced economic capital and human capital), and the positive or negative impacts this has on areas of individual and community wellbeing such as health, housing, social cohesion and education and training[123].

The ABS defines social capital as 'the resources available within communities on networks of mutual support, reciprocity and trust. It is a contributor to community strength'. To measure social capital a range of indicators were developed under a set of broad components of social capital, for example:

Economic participation
Indicator: Labour force participation rate

Trust in work colleagues
Indicator: The proportion of the population with a high level of trust in their work colleagues

Social participation
Indicator: The proportion of people who participated in social activities at least once in the last three months

Friendship
Indicator: Number of close friendships

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2004.

- The Stronger Families and Communities Strategy, Communities for Children Initiative has developed a national framework which articulates high-level policy outcomes (impacts), but allows communities to implement the framework flexibly and innovatively in order to achieve them. It recognises the varied contribution of communities towards wider outcomes and impacts[124].

- The Victorian Community Indicators Project aimed to establish a statewide approach to measuring community level impacts in terms of community wellbeing. Specifically indicators were developed to understand social, economic, environmental, democratic and cultural wellbeing in the Victorian community; Community Indicators Victoria was established to support the collection and dissemination of data[125].

The Victorian Community Indicators Project aims to measure community wellbeing and strength in five broad areas for measurement. Under each of these, a range of indicators have been developed. The five broad areas for measurement and examples of indicators under each of these are:

'Healthy, safe and inclusive communities'
Personal health and wellbeing (eg life expectancy)

'Dynamic resilient local economies'
Employment (eg employment rate)

'Sustainable built and natural environments'
Water (eg water consumption)

'Culturally Rich and Vibrant Communities'
Leisure and recreation (eg opportunities to participate in sporting and recreation activities)

'Democratic and Engaged Communities'
Citizen engagement (eg membership of local community organisations and decision making bodies).

Source: Heine et. al., 2006

- *The State of Victoria's Children: Reporting on how children and young people in Victoria are faring* has developed the Victorian Child and Adolescent Outcomes Framework, which sets out 35 outcomes of children's health, learning, development, wellbeing and safety—in terms of the child directly and other factors influencing wellbeing such as family factors—and common indicators to measure progress towards these outcomes[126].

What quantitative and qualitative methods are applied to measure outcomes?

A varied range of qualitative and quantitative measures is applied to measure outcomes in the community and public sectors. In a community services setting, quantitative methods are seen as 'surface analysis' whereas qualitative methods are primary, and can provide information regarding the way organisational systems and context influence a program, and facilitate deeper understanding[127].

Qualitative participant related measures, including surveys, interviews and case studies are commonly used in the community sector and can enable participant outcomes to be assessed across a range of domains. Similarly, measures of client satisfaction are commonly undertaken, and are primarily assessed using survey based methodologies, however participant-based measures often struggle to provide little, if any, valuable outcome related information.

Various specific instruments have been developed for application for these purposes, including client assessment tools and questionnaires. Often, these instruments are developed and applied de novo for each separate measurement situation, rather than adopting or adapting (questions from) an existing instrument used elsewhere.

Case studies are particularly useful for illustrating good practice in organisations and programs, and may be used to provide contextual information to complement quantitative data analysis[128]. However they are of little or no value for measuring organisational outcomes and impacts.

Action research is a participant related methodology[129], involving the pursuit of action or change and research simultaneously. Often a cyclic or spiral process is used which alternates between action and critical reflection, and methods are continuously refined as the cycle progresses. Data is interpreted and analysed in the later stages of the action research process[130]. This method is frequently employed in the community sector, particularly in evaluations and specific research projects. It is a relatively resource intensive process, thereby limiting its use to these time limited projects or evaluations, rather than to ongoing outcomes measurement.

QUALITATIVE MEASURE	USE
Survey	Self rated assessment of • participant satisfaction • participant outcomes (ie progress).
Questionnaires	Usually self-rated assessment of • participant satisfaction • participant outcomes.
Client assessment tools	• Assessing participant outcomes from the perspective of a practitioner/staff member.
Case studies	• Providing context. • Illustrating good practice. • May compliment quantitative data analysis.
Action research	• Provides information about participant related outcomes as a 'snapshot'— ongoing data collection (eg at monthly intervals showing progress over time) is not usually undertaken.

Table 1: Summary of some of the qualitative measures used in the community sector

There are countless quantitative methods and measures in use. More commonly used methods involve measuring population coverage (numerical or statistical measurements of client populations), economic or population modelling to forecast future needs or outcomes, financial information for economic assessment of organisations' or programs' outputs to be estimated and measures of financial accountability, such as cost per output or, sometimes, outcome. Financial accountability measures, often involving the measurement of inputs and outputs are a focus for COs[131] however, they usually provide limited information about outcomes and, where they do, these outcomes are in the short term.

QUANTITATIVE MEASURE/ INFORMATION	USE
Population coverage	• Numerical or statistical measures of client populations.
	• May be useful to provide context to other outcome related data.
Economic/population modelling	• Forecast future needs or outcomes.
	• Based on understanding of population characteristics.
Financial/cost information	• Economic assessment of organisation's contribution.
Measures of financial accountability	• Cost per outcome.
	• Cost per intervention.
Surveys	• Surveys can also be used to collect quantitative information for example participant self-rated improvement or progress on a five point scale.
Client assessment tools	• Client assessment tools may also be used to collect quantitative information as above.
	• However both self-rated and practitioner rated measures of client improvement or progress usually involve making a subjective judgement.

Table 2: Summary of some of the quantitative measures used in the community sector

The use of quantitative statistical indicators is one way in which quantitative data can be applied to measure social outcomes and impacts[132]. Measuring and linking the results of an analysis of quantitative indicators can provide a picture of broad community level impacts, as a comparison of programs or services is enabled (due to similar statistical measures being used by multiple organisations)[133].

Appropriate measurement for COs

The available evidence points to a combined approach to measurement in the community sector, involving the right mix of qualitative and quantitative methodologies[134], which are relevant and can be flexibly tailored to meet the needs of the diverse range of organisations. Such an approach would support measurement in a complex system[135].

A range of measures is required for the different levels in the complex system. Measurement at different levels is needed to enable a holistic view of the contribution of the community sector, both at program/organisational and whole of community levels[136].

What is not clear and deserves further thought is what specific measures are relevant and useful for (many) COs at their organisational level and can be combined to provide useful and relevant information at the system (national) level. Identifying such measures is a key requirement for any framework that seeks to be useful and used widely, such as the Commission's Framework.

Additionally the iterative process required in developing organisationally specific measurement approaches must be acknowledged. An agreed national framework provides guidance for COs broadly about what to measure and at which level, however successfully identifying specific program/organisational level outcome measures takes time and requires an adaptive, evolutionary approach. Application of an agreed framework, and the data collection and measurement approaches within it, will differ between organisations.

How might improvements occur?

This section provides a discussion of the barriers, levers and drivers of change for measuring outcomes and impacts relating to the wellbeing of children and young people. It summarises the key lessons identified through the research undertaken for this paper and with consideration to the Commission's recommendations in their Draft Report, presents suggestions for improvements in the future.

Barriers

The complex system that is the Australian community sector poses a number of barriers to measuring outcomes, most of which have been discussed throughout the paper. In a complex system:

- there are a varied range of clients, programs and services influencing outcome measurement and achievement.

- a range of complex social issues is being addressed.

- the system is in a constant state of change.

In the community sector the contribution of COs to the wellbeing of children and young people is varied; there are many programs and services aiming specifically at one or more aspects of wellbeing for children and young people, and different outcomes may be achieved for different populations within the system. The notion of 'narrow outcome measurement' demonstrates that it is problematic to measure only seemingly direct contributors, and the need to comprehensively measure all contributors to wellbeing is apparent.

The impact of services alone will differ to the impact of a range of services an individual may be accessing at any one time[137], therefore an understanding that the cumulative impact of services is likely to differ from the impact of a single service is also essential. The effects resulting from the combined effort of a number of COs is likely to be greater than the effects produced through the operation of one service alone.

In the community sector there are organisational barriers to measurement including:

- a culture of non-measurement within many COs which reduces their motivation and capacity to measure outcomes[138]

- organisation issues such as size and specificity of focus. Small COs may be reluctant or unable to measure outcomes due to limited resources and measurement may be seen by some to be detracting from service delivery[139,140]. COs practising a specific focus will have different motivations and different barriers to measurement to COs providing multiple or a range of services. For example, due to their specificity, these COs will require more tailored measurement approaches than COs providing varied services.

The lack of an evidence base about 'what works' for the Australian community sector is a significant barrier. An evidence base for designing approaches to practice and measurement that are likely to be effective, and providing the link between outcomes and likely impacts, does not exist. Without this, impacts are only evidenced in the long-term if at all, and interventions are primarily designed based upon custom or patterns of past practice, or upon the premise that 'doing good' will produce good outcomes.

A number of additional barriers to outcome measurement in the community sector are summarised in the table overleaf.

BARRIER	EXPLANATION
Qualitative outcomes are sought	Qualitative measures of wellbeing are most relevant in the community sector. It is unclear how these should best be measured.
Many outcomes evidenced only in the long term	In many cases longitudinal studies are needed. Evidence is required to link short term outputs and outcomes to long term outcomes and impacts.
Complex outcome measurement is required	Measuring outcomes at different levels is required.
Organisational limitations	These include capacity and resource/ limited funding issues. Funding and resource barriers are the most often cited barriers to measurement.
An iterative approach	An iterative approach to 'getting it right' is required for COs in developing and applying program/organisational level outcome measurement approaches—involving time and resources.
Population diversity	Population diversity has an impact on outcome measurement ie varied outcomes are required and differing patterns of outcome achievement are evident for different groups of people.
Understanding the link between intervention and outcome	This is not always straightforward—a range of internal and external factors may influence outcome achievement.
Understanding the link between outcome and impact	Links are not definitive and evidence is needed to understand the different links in different contexts and environments.

Table 3: Additional barriers to outcome measurement in the community sector

KPMG, 2009.

Drivers

Drivers are the internal and external factors acting as motivators for the community sector to measure their outcomes. Many of the drivers for measurement have been discussed throughout this paper and include:

- external and internal motivators to measure, such as measurement as a requirement of funding, and the increasing interest in outcomes from stakeholders

- the increasing desire from COs to understand 'what works'

- measuring in a complex system

- the need to demonstrate the contribution of the community sector

- government directions in performance and outcome measurement.

Motives to measure are numerous and were discussed earlier in this paper. In considering how motivations differ across the sector, it is important to note the differences between government-funded and community funded COs. In particular, government-funded COs are often under obligation to measure, whereas community-funded COs are more likely to measure due to pressure from stakeholders[141].

The need for an understanding of what works, for whom and when, is also a driver. Such understanding can enable appropriate and effective interventions and avoid the achievement of negative outcomes for certain groups of clients. The evidence supporting theories of early intervention is a related driver.

The complex system, a barrier to measurement, is also a driver to measure. If complex social problems are to be adequately addressed, an in-depth understanding of the complex system and evidence-based interventions and measurements are required.

The need and desire to demonstrate the contribution of the community sector is a driver that is applicable across the board—to government, the private sector and the community sector itself.

It is worth noting that cooperative federalism has emerged as a driver at the national level. Through the Council of Australian Governments (COAG), six National Agreements have been established, each of which specifies 'mutually agreed outcomes and performance benchmarks'[142]. Within each of these agreements, there are a range of National Partnerships that further specify desired outcomes and associated indicators by which to measure their achievement.

Each Partnership specifies a high level set of outcomes and some of these outcomes are specifically relevant to children and youth, as achieving them will often involve COs and the not-for-profit sector to deliver some or all of the components required. For example, the *Closing The Gap: National Partnership Agreement on Indigenous Early Childhood Development* aspires to deliver the specific outcome of an 'increased proportion of Indigenous children participating in quality early childhood education and development and child care services'[143]. While this outcome will be delivered through states and territories, its achievement will require involvement from the community and not-for-profit sector, both directly and indirectly. To measure the achievement will require measurement of performance against different aspects of this outcome—such as quality of education and associated participation by indigenous children.

Through this COAG agenda, performance measurement in a number of key areas of importance to COs will be driven at national, state and territory levels. The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) is a key agent in the further development of COAG performance indicators[144] and remains the primary agency for collection and dissemination of national statistics. As such, the ABS has a role to play in establishing a link between data collection and reporting at the national level and the data collected and reported by COs at the organisational level within the community sector.

However, there are other public sector or peak bodies—such as the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare or ARACY—that also do or may have roles to play. An open question in the matter of linking data collection at different levels in the system is who should exercise leadership and take responsibility. While the ABS appears the natural leader in this regard, there may be other candidates or collaborative models. If the ABS is the preferred agent for fostering consistency and connection between national and organisational level data collection, then there needs to be consideration of the suitability of the current and future social statistics work program for the ABS.

Levers

Levers are the structures and processes that may support outcome measurement, and encourage and enable change. In line with the research presented in this paper, and the barriers and suggestions for improvement above, levers for outcome measurement in the community sector include:

- provision of support for COs to measure outcomes

- benefits of outcome measurement in the community sector

- development of a research base

- standard approaches to measurement

- sector wide collaboration and innovation.

Providing support for outcome measurement to COs, who would often otherwise have limited capacity and capability to measure, is essential. The Commission has proposed a number of governance and support structures (see above) and their establishment is beneficial.

Examples exist of successful governance structures that have been put in place to support the research and evaluation effort, for example the *Social Inclusion Board*, established through the Social Inclusion Initiative in South Australia, or *Community Indicators Victoria*, established to support the collection and dissemination of data from the Victorian Community Indicators Project[145,146]. A governance body could support COs in measuring their outcomes and provide advice relating to barriers and success factors. Additionally governance structures could act to support implementation of system wide measurement processes for measuring the impact of the sector.

For government, an understanding of what works through outcome measurement (and available research) may be a lever to fund COs that are likely to make an impact on wellbeing in the future.

The development of a research base would also support an understanding of 'what works' and enable COs to provide services with the knowledge that certain activities may lead to certain outcomes. In regards to measurement a research base is a lever, as it would support COs in:

- identifying relevant and realistic outcomes and designing outcome measurement methods that would increase the probability of success

- understanding which measurement approaches work in which circumstances

- overcoming barriers to measurement (particularly for smaller COs) such as limited capability and resources, by providing a sound basis on which to base measurement and thus lessening the effort required.

A common approach to measurement is required. This may involve development of standard and agreed specific outcomes and standard measurement tools. In particular the use of standard measurement tools would support effective measurement using a system wide approach, by enabling consistency of measurement across individual COs.

Collaboration across the sector and indeed between the sector and the community is another lever. Collaboration between COs will enable consistent and coordinated approaches to measurement and evaluation supporting activities such as meta analysis. Collaboration between the sector and other parts of the community will support the development of a research base and provide a forum for innovation and creativity (eg collaboration between the sector and academia/researches). The desire for innovation is supported through measurement, as COs may be encouraged to make innovative change based on measurement results, or discover new, innovative ways of working throughout the change process[147]. Large COs and peak bodies such as ARACY will have roles in advocating for and supporting collaboration.

The 'social incubator' model is a new, proposed model for convergence and collaboration. It '*seeks to foster collaboration between individuals with different skill sets and backgrounds, from a range of sectors, to drive towards innovative solutions to existing problems*'.

It does this by encouraging co-location and collaboration of individuals in a 'hot house' environment, and encouraging skills transfer between individuals from the public, business and not-for-profit sectors, and academia. In the community sector the 'social incubator' model could enable the development of an evidence base and support skills transfer between those conducting the research and those putting it into practice through service delivery (practitioners, COs) and policy development (government).

Source: Henry, E. (2009). *'The Not-for-profit Sector Comes of Age'* presented at the Public Sector Leadership Conference The Smith Family: Sydney, p. 11–13.

Finally the capacity to directly benefit from the results of measurement is a lever. For COs this capacity derives from an increased understanding of their operations, visibility of results and good outcomes, and the opportunities to implement positive changes.

Addressing the barriers to outcome measurement

Complex problems 'require multi-dimensional solutions with contributions from a range of government agencies as well as community level engagement and support'.[148]

To address the barriers presented above consideration needs to be given to the complexity of the community services system. This includes considering how to measure the complex social problems within it, the varied contributions of COs to addressing these problems and the wide range of clients to whom services are provided.

The Commission has endorsed a common framework for measuring the contribution of the complex community services in its 2009 Draft Report, and recommends a range of mechanisms to support the use of this framework, including adopting common principles for measurement and evaluation across the sector, and support from government to collect and report the right information in a consistent manner. However further to this is the requirement for specificity in what to measure and how to measure it (what measurement approach to adopt) for individual COs within this framework. To support COs in measuring their contribution at the sector level a common approach to measurement which can provide specific measurement related detail is required. This would enable COs to understand how, relative to other COs, they are contributing to community wide impacts.

Based on the research presented in this paper a program logic approach to measurement, which incorporates elements of realist and open systems evaluation, is valuable for COs in considering their individual outcomes and the broader impact these have in the community. Consistently adopting and applying such an approach within the broad guidelines of the Commission's overarching framework would enable:

- the cumulative impact of the sector to be measured consistently and comparably, as well as the individual outcomes of COs to be understood

- complex social problems to be appropriately measured at a range of levels (ie intermediate/short-term outcomes and long-term outcomes), taking into account the range of activities and services aiming to address them, and the shifting effects of programs and services on different populations and at different points in time

- COs to tailor measurement to the needs of their organisation

- the opportunity to identify systemic gaps and shortcomings, or environmental constraints at the individual CO level, that are preventing or slowing the achievement of higher level impacts.

An element of a common approach to measurement is the development of standard and agreed outcomes (or broad outcome areas) for the different parts of the sector. This would be beneficial for guiding and streamlining the efforts

of COs towards achieving wellbeing in the community. The use of standard measurement tools based on these outcomes would enable further consistency in measurement, and a clearer understanding of the cumulative outcomes and sector wide impacts of individual COs.

To support understanding of the impact of the sector, enhancement of the research base for the community sector is required. Research has an important role in understanding risk and protective factors for children and young people and how these relate to wellbeing. Additionally an enhanced research base enables evidence-based links to be drawn between the range of organisational level outcomes of individual COs and system wide outcomes and impacts.

A research base should foster understanding of how certain risk and protective factors relate to the wellbeing of children and young people. Based on this understanding, appropriate services and interventions can be developed. A research base can also demonstrate strong links between certain interventions and outcomes and the achievement of wider impacts. These levels of understanding combined would enable COs to know, or reasonably expect, that effectively delivering certain activities and services will lead to positive outcomes and impacts for the community. A research base would facilitate understanding about the relative contribution of individual COs and more broadly, the contribution of the sector as a whole.

Meta analysis should be an important element of the research effort. Meta analyses are comprehensive systematic reviews of a large (or full) population of relevant studies. Meta analysis involves, through a range of methods, collecting and collating data from a large number of studies in order to compare them and observe trends or patterns in results. Meta analysis enables:

- studies using varied methods of analysis to be compared; study outcomes are transformed to a common metric

- the impact of external factors or measurement error to be minimised, by focusing on trends and patterns of a range of outcomes/result rather than a single set of outcomes/results

- large amounts of information to be presented in a succinct and accessible format[149].

Currently there are few research bodies conducting regular meta analysis and systematic review of community sector research, and none exist in Australia. Internationally the Campbell Collaboration[150] and the National Registry of Evidence-based Programs and Practices (NREPP)[151] conduct and disseminate systematic reviews of social research, for example in areas such as education,

crime and justice, social welfare, mental health and substance abuse. In the health sector the Cochrane Collaboration is an example of a well established not-for-profit organisation that conducts and disseminates research about the effects of health care worldwide[152].

In the health sector in particular, categories of evidence used in meta analysis and systematic review have been established, distinguishing high quality, valid and reliable research methods from others that are less so. The quality, validity or reliability of a meta analysis is thus partly judged on the quality of the studies it considers. At present the use of randomised controlled trials (RCTs) is considered 'gold standard' for establishing evidence about effectiveness of interventions in the health sector[153,154]. RCTs are generally suited for evaluative research, where the aim is to establish evidence of causal links between interventions and outcomes.

However, RCTs are not a tool for ongoing performance or outcome measurement. Moreover, their application in the community sector will often be problematic, due to the difficulties of controlling for contextual factors and environmental influences. Given these and other considerations, other forms of outcome measurement will be more appropriate in many situations.

Nonetheless, in the community sector the use of RCTs is likely to be beneficial in selected circumstances, for example:

• as a research tool, to consider whether predictions or hypotheses about a new program or intervention have been supported

• to compare suitability and effectiveness of models of service delivery

• to establish causal evidence where externalities and other factors relating to a program or intervention can be controlled.

RCTs involve the random allocation of different treatments, conditions or interventions to subjects. Using standard methods to do so, subjects have an equal chance of receiving each treatment. Thus statistical differences between two or more interventions can be observed; provided large numbers of subjects participate in the trial, a RCT can balance confounding factors between treatment groups.

Source: J K Wathen & JD Cook, *Power and Bias in Adaptively Randomized Clinical Trials*, Technical Report UTMDABTR-002-06, Department of Biostatistics, University of Texas, Houston, 2006, retrieved November 2009, http://www.mdanderson.org/education-and-research/departments-programs-and-labs/departments-and-divisions/division-of-quantitative-sciences/research/biostats-utmdabtr-002-06.pdf

In its recommendation, *Building knowledge systems*, the Commission highlights the need to support meta-analysis as an element of enhancing evaluation within the sector[155]. Additionally the Commission recommends systematic 'promotion and dissemination of evidence of the effectiveness of social programs' through an Australian Government funded Centre for Community Service Effectiveness and through making Governments responsible for consolidating and reporting back to the sector on key data and evaluative information. This may also be a role for a range of non service delivery focused COs, including ARACY. The establishment of a community sector body to conduct and disseminate systematic reviews and meta-analyses would be invaluable in supporting the research effort in the community sector.

Linked to these requirements is the need to build measurement and evaluation capability and support a shift towards a 'culture of measurement' in the community sector. Many of the barriers to measurement in the community sector revolve around or relate to the limited capacity of COs to measure. This includes lack of evaluation capability, resource constraints and organisational and cultural limitations.

Research into homelessness focused COs identified three organisational cultures affecting the adoption and use of outcome measurement:

- Acceptance culture. These organisations are often unwilling or unable to measure outcomes due to lack of capacity, resources, internal motivation (measurement is not seen as important) or external motivation (these organisations are often self-funded).

- Rehabilitation and change culture. These organisations are usually able to measure and evaluate outcomes within the standard approach required of them (as many are involved in contract based funding arrangements) and are often willing to adapt existing monitoring and measurement systems as required.

- Empowerment and resource culture. These organisations are likely to require a significant amount of support to design and implement outcome measurement processes due to the diverse work they undertake.

Source: Performance Hub, 2007.

Effective outcome measurement requires resources, as well as understanding of the most effective and efficient measurement approaches to take. The use of effective and efficient approaches can limit the resource requirements for measurement and produce consistent results in a more timely manner.

The benefits of enhancing measurement and evaluation capability within the sector are recognised by the Commission through its *Building Knowledge Systems* and *Sector Development* recommendations. The Commission proposes that enhancing capability would involve:

- building a better evidence base for social policy, through:

  - encouraging greater evaluation within the sector including meta evaluation

  - standardisation of reporting requirements.

- building sector capabilities in evaluation and governance, through:

  - state and territory government programs aimed at building the capacity of not-for-profit organisations (NFPs)

  - specific training and guidance on undertaking evaluations for NFPs.

Additionally, culture change within the sector is required; shifting from a focus on the relatively straightforward measurement of inputs and outputs, to a focus on outcomes. This will require:

- COs to be able to see the value in measurement and evaluation of outcomes

- COs to have access to support for measurement and evaluation.

To understand culture change and in particular how culture change is either limited or supported, the 'Integral Framework' approach may be valuable.

The Integral Framework approach is a comprehensive and holistic approach to considering 'everything', from science and religion to organisational culture. In relation to organisational culture this approach proposes that culture change must account for all barriers and drivers to change, and these barriers and drivers are viewed through four perspectives or quadrants through which the world is viewed:

1. the individual's interior perspective: values, meanings, feelings, states of mind.

2. cultural worldviews and customs of the individual which are shared by many individuals.

3. behavioural perspectives – the measurable and visible aspects of individual and collective behaviour

4. the external systems of society and nature.

Cultural change must consider change in terms of all perspectives or quadrants, as change is either supported or constrained through these quadrants.

Sources: 'What is the Integral Approach?' A summary of the ideas within: K Wilber, *A Theory of Everything—An Integral Vision for Business, Politics, Science and Spirituality*, Shambhala; First Edition, 2000, retrieved October 2009, http://www.integralstrategies.org/whatisintegral.html
Integral Naked, *Introduction to Integral Theory and Practice IOS Basic and the AQAL Map*, 2003–2004, retrieved October 2009, http://holons-news.com/free/whatisintegral.pdf

The Commission recognises this need for support through its recommendations to establish various governance and supporting bodies for the sector, including the Centre for Community Service Effectiveness and an Office for NFP Sector Engagement. In addition the sector itself have a role in supporting culture change, primarily through large COs and peak bodies which can provide specific support services and/or lead by example in focusing on outcome measurement and evaluation.

There is also a need to provide support for COs for whom measuring their outcomes is unnecessary or infeasible. The Commission proposes a number of suggestions to address this need through its recommendation *Promoting national data systems on the NFP sector*, including:

- Develop an information plan to assess the desirable frequency of satellite accounts for the sector.

- Build databases for assessing the contribution of the sector over time.

Currently much of the available national data relates to community sector inputs and outputs but provides little information about outcomes. National collection of outcome related information is required, and would be supported by the development of standard and agreed outcomes for the sector.

As noted, government and peak organisations have a role in linking national priorities for measurement (such as COAG's NPAs) to measurement efforts at the national, sector and organisational level. For the community sector, the relevant ABS and other national statistical collections should align with the Commission's framework as well as broader directions in 'what to measure', and provide relevant and accessible detailed data. This would enable COs to understand how their activities and outcomes link in with the Commission's, and other, national priorities.

As indicated, all of the above suggestions require culture change within the sector. A shift towards a 'culture of measurement' requires consideration of the barriers and supporting factors to change at all levels.

Coordination of effort by COs, governments, peak and governing bodies is also required to elicit sector wide change.

Key lessons for measuring outcomes in the community sector

The challenges for measuring outcomes are great[156]. However, there are a number of lessons evident from the research undertaken for this paper.

> **When identifying and defining outcomes to be measured, consider the appropriateness and relevance of the outcomes, the context in which they are to be achieved and how this is likely to influence their achievement:**

Consider and attempt to understand the context in which outcomes are to be achieved. In the community sector this includes organisational context and environment of operation, client context and the context of a complex system.

Consider factors related to successful implementation of frameworks and outcome measurement approaches. These will include feasibility of collecting the data, effort involved in collating and analysing the data and how the reports will be produced and used.

Consulting with stakeholders and using information from a range of sources may enable outcomes to be identified that are relevant and appropriate to the nature of the organisation. Expectations of all parties should be clear.

> **Thinking about data, in terms of collection, analysis, availability and required data sources, is an essential consideration in an approach to outcome measurement:**

Consider at which level measurement should occur, and what types of data should be collected.

Capitalising on existing information (publicly held and available or already collected by the organisation of other purposes) can make data collection easier. Smaller or less resourced COs should especially consider these options.

Identifying data that can adequately demonstrate outcome achievement is essential.

Data approaches and systems to support data collection and analysis should be tried prior to implementation.

Both qualitative and quantitative approaches are useful in outcome measurement.

> **Considering the link between outcomes and impacts and the ability to look at the big picture, in which multiple outcomes contribute to the achievement of impacts, is essential in understanding the concept of 'contribution' and thinking about how contribution can be measured:**

There is a requirement to measure at a range of levels (program level, community level) to demonstrate achievement of impact

Research may assist understanding of the link between outcomes and impacts, particularly for measurement in a complex system

Summary of suggested improvements

The following table summarises the areas suggested as key to achieving improvements, through directly addressing some of the barriers discussed above. These are presented here to stimulate thinking and discussion about how they might best be addressed and further consideration of directions proposed in the Productivity Commission's recent Draft Report.

To support COs in measuring their contribution at the sector level, **a common approach to measurement** which can provide specific measurement related detail is required, to enable COs to understand how, relative to other COs, they are contributing to community wide impacts.

A program logic approach to outcome measurement, incorporating realist and open systems evaluation approaches, should be adopted and implemented at the individual CO level in line with the Commission's overarching framework. Such an approach offers the potential for COs to identify what outcomes they are aiming to achieve and how achieving these fits into impacts at the community level and supports an understanding of what works for whom and when.

Standard and agreed outcomes (or broad outcome areas) should be identified for the different parts of the sector and in line with this the development and use of **standard measurement** tools should be supported, to guide and streamline the efforts of COs towards achieving wellbeing in the community.

The **research–evidence base** should be enhanced for the community sector, linking certain activities with outcomes at the individual CO level, and linking the range of organisational level outcomes to system wide outcomes and impacts. Research evidence facilitates understanding of risk and protective factors for children and young people and their link to wellbeing, which should be used in the development of appropriate programs and interventions.

Systematic **promotion and dissemination of evidence** on the effectiveness of activities, interventions and programs is required, and may be a role for a range of non service delivery focused COs, including ARACY.

The **measurement and evaluation capability of the sector** should be enhanced via reshaping the role of current governance and supporting bodies and the sector itself in providing support for measurement and evaluation to COs. In line with this government should build the requirement and associated cost of measurement and evaluation into its allocations of funding.

A shift towards a **'culture of measurement'** in the community sector should occur; the sector may have a role in supporting culture change, primarily through large COs and peak bodies providing specific support services and/ or leading by example in focusing on outcome measurement and evaluation.

Support for COs for whom measuring their outcomes is unnecessary or unfeasible should be provided in the form of national data collections and in particular national collection of outcome related information.

National data collection efforts should be relevant, and align with national priorities for measurement and measurement efforts at the organisational and sector level. An open question in the matter of linking data collection at these different levels in the system is who should exercise leadership and take responsibility.

The above suggestions require **culture change** within the sector and **coordination of effort** by COs, governments and peak and governing bodies to elicit sector wide change.

Attachment A

Summary of framework approaches discussed in Section 1

APPROACH	KEY ELEMENTS	DETAILS/FOCUS	APPLICATION	EXAMPLE REFERENCES
Input and output focused approaches	Consider the relationship between inputs, outputs and outcomes. Process focused frameworks. Discuss outcomes but focus on the efficiency of inputs and outputs and provide little information about outcomes themselves.	Assumption that performing outputs will lead to outcome achievement. Often do not describe/specify the evidence base. Often focus on financial or numerical factors.	Commonly used in the community sector. Often followed as a requirement ie in 'purchaser–provider' relationships. May be a favoured approach due to relative ease of measuring inputs and outputs rather than outcomes.	The *'value for money approach'* assumes the delivery of specific outputs, related to quality, quantity and price, will lead to the achievement of specific outcomes.[157] The *Victorian Government's Departmental Funding Model* involves agencies being responsible for ensuring the delivery of agreed services (outputs) within the government's required parameters.[158]
'Objective-focused' Frameworks	Align performance measurement with organisational objectives, values or principles. Relate outcomes to, or develop outcomes in line with, achievement of objectives. Focus is on outcomes and processes for achieving them. 'Objectives' is often another way of describing system level outcomes.	Achievement of objectives is the focus. Achieving outcomes or 'goals' is one way in which objectives can be met. Objectives are usually 'qualitative'. Outcomes may be organised into levels (ie program level, community level). Often no apparent evidence base links outcomes to objectives.	Currently widely used in the community sector and related sectors ie health. Achieving 'good' may lead to a focus on broad objectives (as opposed to a focus on outcomes). Aims: organisational improvement and community wide impact.	The *Strategic Management Model* involves the development of goals which are based on client needs. Ability to meet goals is basis for performance measurement. *Proposed Conceptual Framework for Performance Assessment in Health Care* links intermediate patient health outcomes to objectives for the primary health care system as a whole[159].

APPROACH	KEY ELEMENTS	DETAILS/FOCUS	APPLICATION	EXAMPLE REFERENCES
Social Return on Investment (SROI) Frameworks	A method for measuring and giving value to non-financial factors, to enable a comparison with financial costs or investments. A ratio of benefits (non-financial factors) and costs (financial investment) is calculated.	The cost of achieving benefits (outcomes and impacts) is the focus. A financial proxy value is assigned to outcomes and impacts (such as improvement and change). Aim—to enable measurement and comparison of social or 'qualitative' factors, to 'quantitative' factors.	Used by COs internationally. Use in Australia is limited. Limited value for facilitating individual and community wide improvements—rather, SROI focuses attention on cost savings and better resource management.	SROI is used in the UK by their Office for the Third Sector[160] and in a range of sectors in Australia[161].
'Structure–Processes–Outcomes' Approach	Considers the relationships between structures (inputs), processes (outputs) and outcomes. Recognises the interrelation of these factors, and their combined impact. Similar to input output approaches but focused on process and outcomes. Considers environmental factors, context and the interrelation of factors in outcome achievement. Not a 'black box thinking' approach.	The focus is on outcomes, but the effect of structures and processes on outcome achievement is recognised. Recognises the nature of the outcome (ie short term versus long term), the relevance of the outcome, whether the outcome can be measured, factors influencing outcome achievement and the consequences of not taking action on achieving outcomes.	Developed by Donabedian for measuring the quality of health care, this framework has been widely adopted in health care, community and other organisational settings. Recently similar thinking can be seen in program logic approaches to performance measurement.	Donabedian's *Framework for measuring quality in health care*[162]. The *Proposed Conceptual Framework for Performance Assessment in Health Care* is based on Donabedian's model.

APPROACH	KEY ELEMENTS	DETAILS/FOCUS	APPLICATION	EXAMPLE REFERENCES
Results Based Accountability Approach	Assists users in planning interventions, designing realistic and achievable goals and outcomes to be achieved, implementing clear strategies in line with these, and setting indicators or benchmarks against which to measure success. Takes a forward looking approach to measurement and evaluation. Process involves: • Identifying a desired result (goal or outcome) which is stated plainly and clearly. • Identifying an indicator that represents progress on the result, and the performance measures used to assess progress against this indicator. • Outlining the strategy or actions that are likely to lead to achieving the result(s), which should be based on evidence linking specific activities/ interventions with desired goals and outcomes.	Goals and outcomes—both of which are considered in deciding 'results' to be achieved. Indicators or benchmarks against which success is measured. Measurement at the population or community level and the performance or program level.	Applied in the government sector. Applied in the community sector by both large and small COs.	NSW Department of Community Services[163] NSW FamS[164] NSW Local Community Services Association (LCSA)[165] The Smith Family[166]

APPROACH	KEY ELEMENTS	DETAILS/FOCUS	APPLICATION	EXAMPLE REFERENCES
'Logic Models': "a logical series of statements linking the conditions a social service program is intended to address, the activities that will be employed to address [these] and the expected outcomes of activities"[167].				
Program logic approaches	Development of a program logic involves (for each outcome) identifying: • what success would look like • factors that influence outcome achievement and the extent to which these can be influenced • activities (current and potential) intended to contribute to outcome achievement • the type of information that is needed (and currently available) to measure outcomes. Takes a forward looking approach to measurement and evaluation.	Focus is on the factors that lead to the achievement of outcomes. Often an evidence based approach to outcome measurement ie research shows a specific activity is likely to lead to achievement of outcomes. Recognition that outcomes can be intended and unintended, and that a range of factors influence outcome achievement. Outcomes organised into a hierarchy of levels, and the nature of outcomes is recognised.	Australian and international COs use program logic approaches widely across their organisations[168]. Also used by government, health and private sectors. May be used to varying degrees of robustness depending on the program or issue of focus and the organisation.	The Productivity Commission's *Framework For Reporting on Indigenous Disadvantage* is a program logic framework used to address the complex social issue of Indigenous disadvantage[169].
Logical Framework Approach	Variation on program logic.	Focus on outcome achievement and achievement of community level objectives. Research evidence links are used. Program/project activities are designed to achieve outcomes. Identifies a 'means to an end' for outcome achievement.	Suitable for use by COs and in a range of environments.	Used by AusAID to design, implement and evaluate Australian aid activities and programs[170]. Used by Australian COs to ensure the effectiveness and appropriateness of their programs prior to wide program rollout[171].

APPROACH	KEY ELEMENTS	DETAILS/FOCUS	APPLICATION	EXAMPLE REFERENCES
Results Framework Approach	Similar to the 'logframe' approach, but additionally considers the contribution of a program in associating with the contribution of other partners (COs, the government)—the 'big picture' approach. Similar to the 'logframe' approach, but additionally considers the contribution of a program in associating with the contribution of other partners (COs, the government)—the 'big picture' approach.	Again, focus on measuring outcome achievement and achievement of broad objectives. Evidence based links are used. Identifies a 'means to an end' for outcome and objective achievement in the context of the 'big picture'.	As above—but applicable to social issues impacting across a range of portfolios, due to its 'big picture' perspective.	Used by AusAID to design, implement and evaluate Australian aid activities and programs[172].
Realist Evaluation Approach	Describes the logical evidence based relationship between activities, outcomes and objectives in the context of 'what works for who and when, and in which circumstances?'.	Focuses on measuring outcome achievement, while giving consideration to the contextual factors that may influence this. Recognises that the achievement of outcomes, and therefore outcome measurement, should account for variation in environment, context and individual factors.	Realist evaluation approaches are being adopted by the community and other sectors (including by researchers)[173]. Suitable for use by COs because this approach can account for variation in clients, target groups of clients, organisations and programs.	Information on realist evaluation approaches sourced from: Ray Pawson and Nick Tilley (1997). *Realistic Evaluation*, Sage Publications.

Attachment B

What frameworks are used to measure community organisations' impact on the wellbeing of children and young people?

'Input and output focused' approaches

Many frameworks consider the relationship between organisational inputs (physical and intellectual resources), outputs (the production of goods and services)[174] and outcomes. These work on the assumption that applying certain inputs to produce certain outputs will lead to the desired outcomes.

'Input and output focused' frameworks often focus on non-financial outputs, such as the number of clients treated in a program. The *'value for money'* approach[175]—adopted primarily by Australian governments—assumes the delivery of specific outputs of a given quality, in the right quantity and for the right price, will lead to specified outcomes. Funding and performance requirements are then set in terms of delivery of a mixture of the given outputs and associated measures of quality (variably) and costs. The *Victorian Government's Departmental Funding Model*[176] is an example of this approach, in which government agencies are responsible for ensuring the delivery of goods and services (outputs) within the government's required parameters, and the achievement of previously stated outcomes is assumed.

The Productivity Commission (the Commission) has developed its *Overarching Framework for Measuring the Contribution of the Not for Profit Sector*[177] to include elements of this approach, insofar as it considers the contribution of inputs and outputs to outcomes. However, it also includes an element of impact measurement that differentiates it from more simplistic 'input and output focused' frameworks. Rather than measuring numerical outputs, this framework considers outputs relevant to the community sector (many of which are 'qualitative' in nature) such as research, service capacity and advocacy.

While these frameworks generally consider outcomes, they focus on the efficiency of inputs and outputs, and do not provide specific information about the outcomes themselves. This reflects the relative ease with which inputs and outputs can be measured, and the timeliness of the results this produces. They do not usually assign a value to outcomes, and rarely describe or specify the evidence base for the relationships between inputs, outputs and outcomes.

The focus for measurement tends to be financial or otherwise quantitative rather than social or otherwise qualitative. Figure 2 illustrates this approach to outcome measurement.
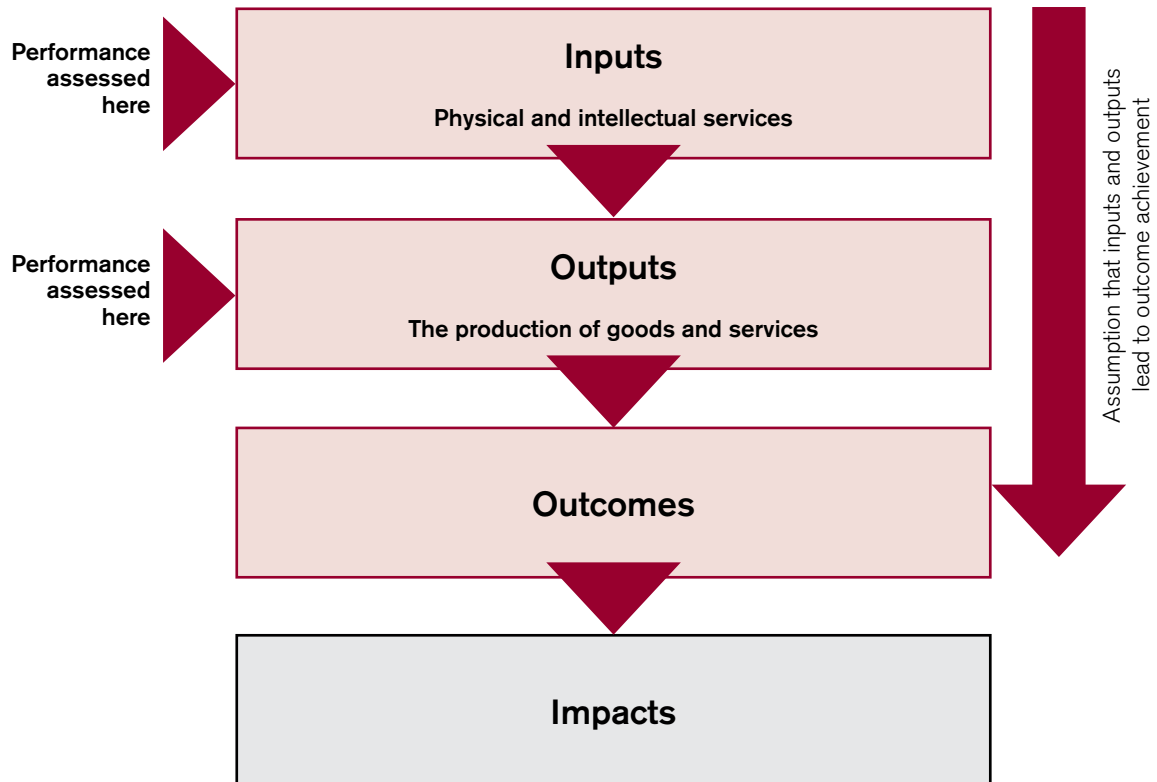
Performance assessed here →

Inputs

Physical and intellectual services

Performance assessed here →

Outputs

The production of goods and services

Outcomes

Assumption that inputs and outputs lead to outcome achievement

Impacts

Figure 2: 'Input and output' focused framework approach

KPMG, 2009.

'Objective-focused' approaches

'Objective-focused' frameworks align performance measurement with key organisational objectives, values or principles, usually with the aim of organisational or program improvement. These frameworks focus on achieving organisational or program level outcomes in order to contribute to the achievement of broader objectives (similar to high-level outcomes or impacts). The focus is thus not only on achieving objectives, but on the processes required to achieve them.

The *Strategic Management model*[178] is one example of this approach that involves the development of goals based on client needs. The ability of the organisation to meet these goals and thus improve practice is the basis for performance measurement

Practically applied, 'objective-focused' frameworks develop and measure outcomes in line with strategic objectives. Objectives can be simple and limited to the organisation or (more often) wide reaching and applicable to an entire sector. As shown in Figure 3 outcomes and objectives are organised into two or more levels.
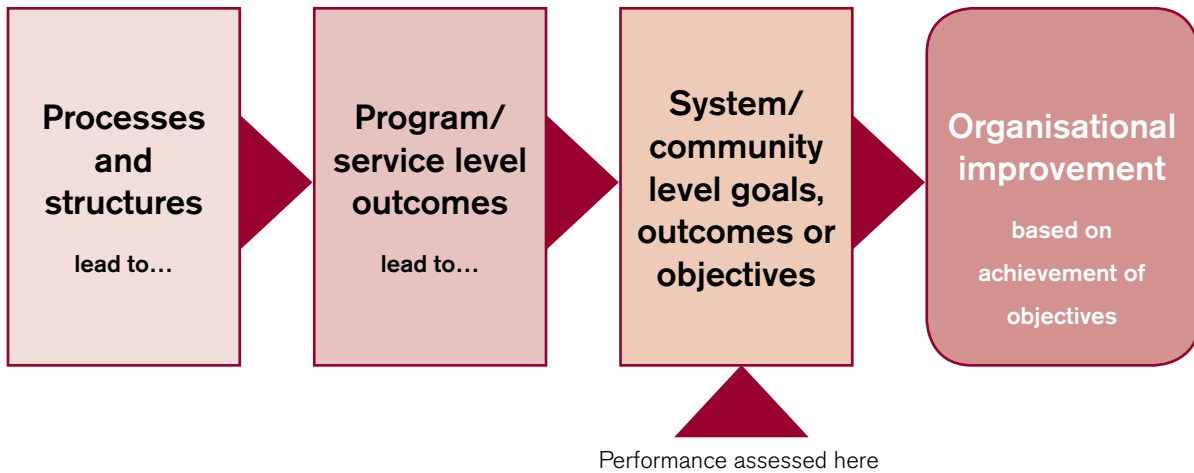

Figure 4: 'Objective focused' framework approach

KPMG, 2009.

This 'objective-focused' approach may be favoured in the community sector due to its focus on 'achieving good'. The focus on objectives is based on the rationale that undertaking activities with the aim of 'doing good' will lead to achievement of desirable social and community outcomes.

Social Return on Investment

Some framework approaches have attempted to address the issue of measuring social value, as opposed to focusing on inputs and numerical measures of performance based on counting outputs. 'Social Return on Investment' (SROI) is an approach that assigns values to non-financial outcomes and then compares them with financial costs. This allows a ratio of benefits (aggregated value of non-financial outputs or outcomes) to costs (financial and other resources invested) to be calculated[179]. In this way, SROI allows non-financial factors to be considered alongside financial costs[180]. However, this approach does not focus on whether outcomes have been achieved, instead it focuses on assigning values to outcomes. Neither does it measure the processes undertaken for outcomes to be achieved. Evidence suggests SROI focuses more attention on saving costs than on the improvements to people's lives[181].

A common feature of the approaches discussed above is that they take a backwards-looking (retrospective) approach, involving measurement after activities have been undertaken and outcomes achieved. However some approaches take a forward-looking approach, looking at the outcomes to be achieved and the factors that may influence these, emphasising that these must be considered in framework design and implementation[182].

Results based accountability

Results based accountability (RBA) is one such approach. RBA frameworks assist users in planning interventions, designing realistic and achievable goals and outcomes to be achieved, implementing clear strategies in line with these, and setting indicators or benchmarks against which to measure success.

http://www.thesmithfamily.com.au/webdata/resources/files/85th_birthday_Innovation_Relationships.pdf

Specifically RBA involves:

* identifying a desired result (goal or outcome) which is stated plainly and clearly

* identifying an Indicator that represents progress on the result, and the performance measures used to assess progress against this indicator

* outlining the strategy or actions that are likely to lead to achieving the result(s), which should be based on evidence linking specific activities/interventions with desired goals and outcomes.

RBA supports measurement at the sector wide or community level as well as at the organisational level, by looking at population and performance accountability[183].

Organisations can then use their measurement results to make changes and improve the appropriateness and effectiveness of their programs. Using indicators to measure success provides clear data and may enable a range of programs or interventions to take a common approach to measurement[184].

This approach to measurement is currently in use in the government and community sectors in Australia. The NSW Government currently supports the use of RBA by the community organisations it funds. For example the NSW department of Community Services, in partnership with NSW family Services Inc. (FamS) and Local Community Services Association (LCSA), endorses a RBA approach for accountability measuring and reporting[185]. RBA is also used by some community organisations, for example The Smith Family uses RBA as a tool for performance measurement in relation to programs and interventions[186].

Logic Models

'Logic models' are founded in evaluation theory and can be described as 'a logical series of statements linking the conditions a social service program is intended to address, the activities that will be employed to address [these] and the expected outcomes of activities'[187].

Program logic approaches

Program logic approaches[188] set out a sequential hierarchy of preconditions, actions, intermediate outcomes and ultimate outcomes—a theory of action that explicates how organisational activities and sometimes other factors will contribute to delivering desired outcomes. Outcomes can be either intended or unintended. From this a full program logic is developed. For each outcome, the program logic identifies what success would look like, factors that influence outcome achievement and the extent to which these can be influenced, activities intended to contribute to outcome achievement, and the type of information that is needed to measure outcomes[189]. This program logic should be established prior to implementing the program itself[190].

As stated earlier, this approach is now used across a range of sectors, including the community sector, in Australia[191] and internationally[192], in the health sector[193] and by the Australian Government[194]. Program logic underlies the 'investment logic' approach adopted by the Government of Victoria in its approach to improving value for money that Government achieves from its investments[195] and has long been a feature of the audit methodology adopted by the Australian Government[196,197].

The Productivity Commission's *Framework for Reporting on Indigenous Disadvantage*[198] is one example of a program logic (framework) used when addressing a complex social issue. It identifies a set of interrelated, national outcomes to be achieved with headline indicators to measure progress towards those outcomes. Also, it describes strategic areas for action (specific program or community level interventions) that are linked to the headline indicators. This framework is useful in the way it identifies whole of community and specific outcomes with associated indicators while recognising the dependence of the outcomes on other influential factors[199].
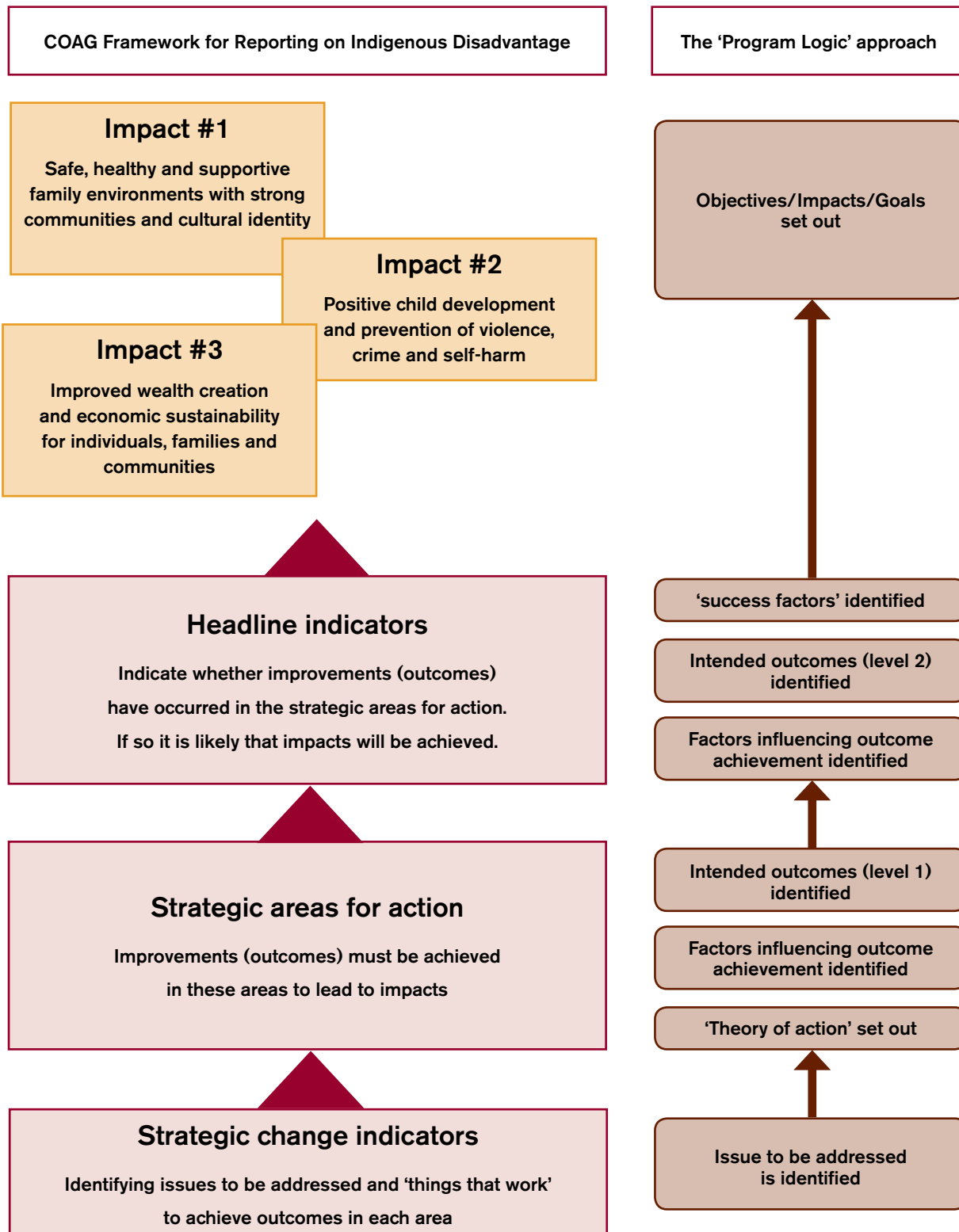
COAG Framework for Reporting on Indigenous Disadvantage

The 'Program Logic' approach

Impact #1

Safe, healthy and supportive family environments with strong communities and cultural identity

Impact #2

Positive child development and prevention of violence, crime and self-harm

Impact #3

Improved wealth creation and economic sustainability for individuals, families and communities

Headline indicators

Indicate whether improvements (outcomes) have occurred in the strategic areas for action.

If so it is likely that impacts will be achieved.

Strategic areas for action

Improvements (outcomes) must be achieved in these areas to lead to impacts

Strategic change indicators

Identifying issues to be addressed and 'things that work' to achieve outcomes in each area

Objectives/Impacts/Goals set out

'success factors' identified

Intended outcomes (level 2) identified

Factors influencing outcome achievement identified

Intended outcomes (level 1) identified

Factors influencing outcome achievement identified

'Theory of action' set out

Issue to be addressed is identified

Figure 5: The Framework for Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage– a program logic approach

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Related to program logic are the logical framework[200] and results framework approaches[201]. The logical framework ('logframe') uses systematic analysis to develop a description of what a program will do and what it will produce. It involves developing a hierarchy of objectives and planned results and describes indicators against which progress towards outcomes or results will be measured.

The results framework approach is similar to the logframe in that it identifies the means to which an end can be achieved. However, this approach takes a big picture perspective by considering the contribution of a specific program in association with the contribution of partners (such as other COs) to broad sector or community goals. A specific program is linked to a broad community level goal via 'cause and effect logic'—a set of strategic objectives provide the link between program outcomes and the goal. Performance indicators are developed for both objectives and program outcomes. These approaches are suitable for and applied in a range of environments[202].

Realist evaluation

'Realist evaluation' approaches[203] build on 'logic models' by asking not only what factors contribute to outcome achievement, but what works for whom and in which circumstances? This takes into account the variation in client groups, organisations and programs within the community sector. Additionally, like the results framework approach, realist evaluation enables the contribution of an organisation or program to be seen as a sub-element of contribution at the community level.

Glossary and acronyms

	Activity	**What an organisation does to fulfil its purposes (for example, the services it delivers). Activities produce outputs[204].**
ARACY	Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth	
AusAID	Australian Agency for International Development	
CO	Community organisation	Non government organisations that: • operate for social or community purposes • are self governing • do not distribute profit to members • often engage or rely upon voluntary member participation • aim to provide benefits to members and the community[205].
	Effectiveness	Extent of achievement of the stated objectives[206].
	Efficiency	Production or technical efficiency is achieving the greatest output for a given level of inputs[207].
	Governance	The process of decision-making and the process by which decision are implemented (or not implemented)[208].
	Impact	The broader effects of an activity, taking into account all its benefits and costs to the community[209].
	Input	Any resource used to achieve the objectives of an activity or intervention[210].

	Logic models	A logical series of statements linking the conditions a social service program is intended to address, the activities that will be employed to address [these] and the expected outcomes of activities[211].
	Open systems evaluation	An approach that proposes:
		• the purpose of measurement and evaluation should be to ensure outcomes are achieved and are linked to community development
		• emphasis should be on the timing and environment in which a program is implemented and the effect they have on outcomes.
		This approach may be useful for evaluation relating to a complex social issue[212].
	Outcome	The effects on a participant or the effects of a program or service on a group of participants during or after their involvement in an activity or intervention[213].
	Output	The product of an activity or intervention[214].
	Program logic	A series of linked logical statements identifying how the outcomes and objectives of a program will be achieved. It involves:
		• the development of a hierarchy of objectives
		• a set of pre-conditions
		• a theory of action to explain how the outcomes will be achieved.
NFP	Not-for-profit organisation	An organisation that imposes the non distribution of profits to the members of the organisation[215].

RCTs	Randomised controlled trials	RCTs involve the random allocation of different treatments, conditions or interventions to subjects. Using standard methods to do so, subjects have an equal chance of receiving each treatment. RCTs enable statistical differences between two or more interventions to be observed and balance confounding factors between treatment groups[216].
	Realist evaluation	A variant of a 'logic model' which is valuable for considering why outcomes were achieved and recognises that the same action or intervention may produce different outcomes in different settings. Realist evaluation approaches consider not only what factors contribute to outcome achievement, but also what works for whom and in which circumstances[217].
SROI	Social Return On Investment	A measurement framework that assigns values to non-financial outcomes and then compares them with financial costs to calculate a 'cost–benefit'. SROI allows non-financial factors to be considered alongside financial costs[218].

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