

Background and Terms of reference for anzea’s evaluator competencies and practice standards

PREAMBLE

The current project is of key strategic importance to all evaluators in Aotearoa, to commissioners of evaluation, to teachers and trainers of evaluation, and to those who experience evaluation. The development of Aotearoa specific evaluator competencies and practice standards is an important step in ensuring that evaluation practice in Aotearoa is appropriate, is high quality, is culturally sound and responsive, is ethical and meets the learning, development and accountability needs of our organisations, communities, projects and initiatives.

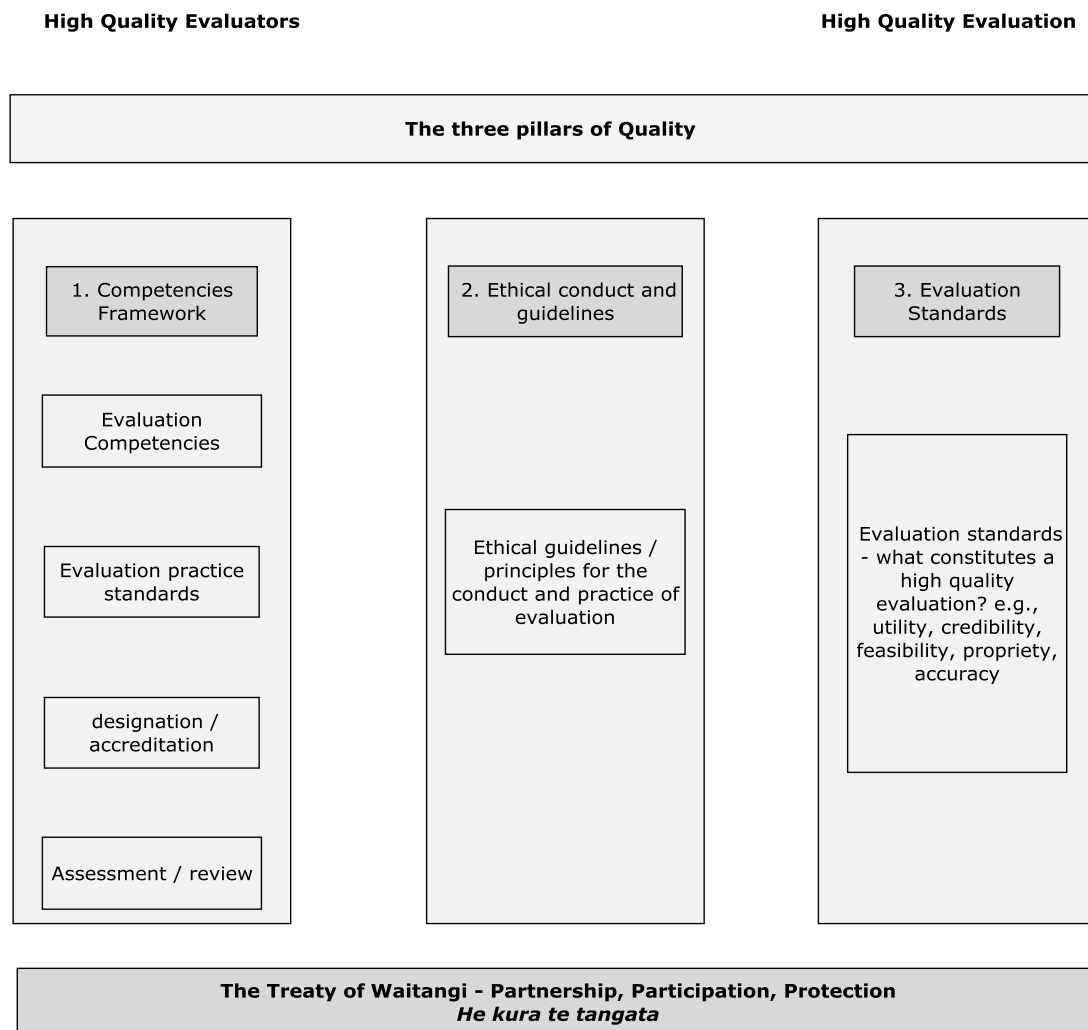
The anzea Board in its strategic plan identifies the development of evaluator competencies and practice standards as a priority. The board recognises that evaluator competencies, practice standards and accreditation and review are a critical part of ensuring evaluation quality and that the other important ‘pillars of quality’¹ are ethical principles and guidelines, and programme evaluation standards.

Distinctive to anzea is our commitment to the Treaty of Waitangi, to our matakite², and to the whakatauki ‘*He kura te tangata*’. Embracing these principles and values as an integral part of the framework, and within this project (its process and outcome) is of vital importance as it establishes our uniqueness as well as our leadership in ensuring the inclusion and participation of indigenous perspectives and worldviews in the development of evaluation standards, competencies and practices, and the integration of these perspectives into the profession.

¹ A term used by the Canadian Evaluation Society, http://www.evaluationcanada.ca/txt/three_pillars.pdf

² *We “look to the maunga”, we strive for excellence. We recognise and value the cultures of all of our peoples. We honour their participation and we seek genuine partnerships. Sharing exceptional skills and insightful knowledge, we seek to support their aims and aspirations for a healthy, prosperous and vibrant future.*

Table 1: The Three Pillars of Quality in Evaluation



These aspects or ‘pillars of quality’ are crosscutting and overlapping. However it is reasonably argued that if someone possesses the requisite evaluation competencies and applies these in practice to a high standard, then it is likely that a quality evaluation product or service is likely to result³. For this reason, **anzea** has decided to pursue the development of a framework of competencies and practice standards, that is intended to support and guide robust, high quality, ethical and culturally responsive evaluation in Aotearoa, New Zealand.

³Evaluation competencies are the *skills, knowledge and abilities* required in a person practicing evaluation. Evaluation standards define for the practitioner the acceptable characteristics of evaluation products and services. Ethics and ethical guidelines provide a sort of moral compass, under which the competencies are applied and products produced.

BACKGROUND TO THE PROJECT

International developments in the identification of evaluator competencies

In the last decade, the international evaluation community has begun engaging in vigorous debate and discussion about the development of competencies for evaluators. Unlike many other professions (such as health care, teaching), agreement has not been forthcoming to date regarding the development of competencies for practitioners. However, two significant international projects on the development of evaluator competencies have proceeded over the past decade. The Essential Competencies for Program Evaluators (ECPE) project, led by Stevahn, Ghere, Minema and King⁴ continues today, as an active research, consultation and professional development process. In Canada, the Canadian Evaluation Society's (CES) professional designations project⁵. The CES is pursuing a system of professional designation for evaluators in Canada, in response to increasing interest in evaluation quality assurance being expressed among members of the Canadian evaluation community.

Cultural competency

Cultural competence in evaluation has been described as *"...a systematic responsive inquiry that is actively cognizant, understanding and appreciative of the cultural context in which evaluation takes place; that frames and articulates the epistemology of evaluative endeavour; that employs culturally and contextually appropriate methodology; and that uses stakeholder-generated, interpretive means to arrive at the results and further use of the findings"* (SenGupta, Hopson, & Thompson-Robinson, 2004). The concept of *values* is a fundamental aspect of evaluation practice and it is now widely accepted that *culture* shapes and is present in all evaluation contexts. As such, there is a strong thread between values and culture. In recent years, discussion, debate, and research have emerged to tackle issues related to cultural competency. Cultural competence as a criterion of evaluator competency is being incorporated into many sets of guidelines (e.g. The American Evaluation Association's Guiding Principles for Evaluators; The CES's Guidelines for Ethical Conduct; and the National Science Foundation's User-Friendly Handbook for Project Evaluation).

Consistent with anzea's values and the context of Aotearoa is our intention to ensure that cultural competency is not treated like a peripheral or marginalised aspect of the framework and project; rather it is a central component of our framework of evaluator competencies and practice standards.

The national and strategic context

In New Zealand, there have been initiatives in the government sector to develop evaluator competencies to guide the recruitment and professional development of

⁴ (King, Stevahn, Ghere, & Minnema, 2001); (Stevahn, King, Ghere, & Minnema, 2005a); (Stevahn, King, Ghere, & Minnema, Evaluator competencies in university-based trainign programs, 2005b); (Ghere, King, Stevahn, & Minnema, 2006)

⁵ All materials related to this project can be found at the following URL http://www.evaluationcanada.ca/site.cgi?s=5&ss=6&_lang=EN

evaluators⁶. More recently there has been work that has focused on good evaluation practice as perceived by indigenous worldviews⁷.

In the process of **anzea**'s establishment as a professional body for evaluation practitioners, participants at an Auckland Evaluation Group Conference 2006 workshop identified a number of priority areas where evaluation in New Zealand needed development. These included: the development of New Zealand-based evaluation practice standards; greater professional accountability structures; a professional accreditation or accountability system; a formal evaluation complaints body and processes; and formal consequences for poor evaluation practice. The initial concept paper for the foundation of **anzea** included, amongst core **anzea** values, excellence in evaluation, biculturalism and multiculturalism, and participation by members. The **anzea** Strategic Plan 2008-2011 highlighted the development of an **anzea** Code of Practice and evaluation practice standards, together with a Voluntary Evaluation Standards Review system, as priority projects for **anzea** in 2008-2010. As a starting point, the **anzea** Board ran a series of workshops around the country, through **anzea** Conference and Branch events, on evaluator competencies for Aotearoa. The current project builds on that early work.

PROJECT GOALS

The project goal is to develop a set of **anzea** evaluator competencies and standards that are relevant and appropriate to the context of Aotearoa New Zealand, in consultation with the **anzea** Board, **anzea** membership and other key stakeholders, for the following (and possibly other) purposes:

- Informing and guiding sound and ethical evaluation practice in Aotearoa, in a range of roles relevant to evaluation practice
- Providing guidance to trainers, teachers of evaluation and tertiary institutions about the minimum or graduating standards for evaluators in New Zealand
- As the basis for a voluntary evaluation standards review process for evaluation practitioners
- Supporting the development of employment criteria or standards for various evaluation positions or roles
- Public education and information about 'good' evaluation practice
- Providing an opportunity for indigenous values and worldviews to inform the development of evaluator competencies and practice standards

PROJECT PRINCIPLES

- Excellence
- Participation
- Cultural inclusiveness

⁶ The Ministry of Social Development conducted a project to determine research and evaluation competencies for researchers and evaluators in 2004, and more recently NZQA has developed a draft set of competencies as part of their work on the new evaluative approach to quality assurance being implemented in the tertiary sector.

⁷ SPEaR Good Practice Guidelines Project, see <http://www.spear.govt.nz/documents/good-practice/spear-bpg-maori-final-report-anzea.pdf>

- Leadership
- Transparency
- Knowledge sharing and mobilisation
- Future-focused
- Rights-based, that is, the full inclusion of indigenous values and world views in this project recognises indigenous rights as Treaty partners

WORKING GROUP COMPOSITION

The Working Group comprises three **anzea** Board members, the co-chairs of the competency caucus and the writer:

- Kate McKegg – Convenor
- Kataraina Pipi – Māori Evaluation Development Portfolio
- Initially Nancy Sheehan, then Pale Sanui – Pacific Evaluation Development Portfolio
- Nan Wehipeihana – Co-chair of competency caucus
- Jane Davidson - Co-chair of competency caucus
- Robyn Bailey - Writer

ACCOUNTABILITY

The Working Group reports to, and is accountable to the **anzea** Board and the Professional Practice Development Portfolio holder (initially Roberta Hill, then Syd King).

Kate McKegg
Convenor **anzea**
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