

EXTERNAL EVALUATION BRIEF

EVALUATION TITLE	Evaluation of the Australian Red Cross Community-led Resilience Team project, funded by the Australian Government under the Northern Rivers Recovery and Resilience Program (NRRRP).
COMMISSIONING AGENCY	Australian Red Cross (Emergency Services)
TIMELINE OF EVALUATION	Mid-project evaluation report due: 31 October 2024; End of project evaluation report due: 31 December 2025.
REASON FOR EVALUATION	Effectiveness and impact testing, learning and improvement; accountability
KEY CONTACTS	Cate Martinez (Lead – Emergency Services, Northern NSW) and Dr Leanne Kelly (National Evaluation Advisor)
PROPOSAL SUBMISSION	Please send proposals that address the selection criteria, proposed evaluation design, timeline, and budget to Leanne: lkelly@redcross.org.au by Fri 22 nd Dec 2023

1. Background and Context

1.1 Program Summary

Australian Red Cross' (Red Cross) community disaster resilience projects are guided by an overarching program that combines research findings from disaster resilience and recovery, psychology and community development as well as Red Cross' domestic and international experience. Interventions are informed by the *National Strategy for Disaster Resilience*.

In response to the damaging floods caused by Tropical Cyclone Debbie in 2017, Red Cross Community-led Resilience Teams¹ (CRTs) were initiated in Northern NSW to support communities to prepare for and recover from disasters. Through these CRTs, Red Cross staff and volunteers support communities to develop local preparedness and recovery plans, and work with community leaders to link them with local councils and emergency services, as appropriate. This community-led "all hazards" model has been applied to various disasters, including fires, floods and pandemic. Red Cross has recently been funded for two years by the Australian Government to deliver CRT activities in 70 communities at risk of flood across the 7 Northern NSW LGAs (Clarence to Tweed). This evaluation aims to assess the effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability of this approach to community disaster resilience.

1.2 Program Goal

The overarching goals and expected outcomes are captured in the Red Cross Emergency Services Theory of Change (ToC). As part of this evaluation, we wish to evaluate communities' resilience to flood and assess the contribution of Red Cross to that resilience. We wish the evaluation to draw from the ToC and the Red Cross *Emergency Services Monitoring and Evaluation Framework* as a foundational document. The **intended outcomes** relevant to this evaluation are:

- People can cope with the psychosocial impacts of disasters and changing climate.
- People have increased resilience to disasters.
- Communities are taking localised, community-driven action to build resilience and recover from disaster.

¹ <https://www.redcross.org.au/globalassets/cms-assets/documents/emergency-services/red-cross-community-led-resilience-teams.pdf>

- People collaborate to share information, strengthen community connection, and support resilience and recovery.
- People feel empowered and in control of decision making.
- People understand the psychosocial impacts of disaster.
- People have the information needed to make decisions.

2. Terms of Reference

2.1 Purpose of the Evaluation

Red Cross is undertaking this evaluation to check the effectiveness of community disaster resilience activities delivered as part of the NRRRP CRT Project. We want to understand what works in preparing and supporting communities impacted by disasters such as floods; and what could be improved to strengthen the evidence base for Red Cross's work in communities impacted by a changing climate. The **key evaluation questions** ask:

- 1) Were the CRTs well designed and delivered/supported?
- 2) Were the activities relevant and appropriate?
- 3) To what extent were intended outcomes achieved and what was Red Cross' contribution?
- 4) Will the practices endure beyond Red Cross' involvement?
- 5) What are the lessons learned (including unintended effects)?

2.2 Evaluation scope and approach

We would like the evaluator to detail a methodology and design they deem suitable for this study as part of the tender process. Realist evaluation could be a potentially interesting methodology as we are interested in what works for whom, in which circumstances, and why. CRTs are highly adaptable to context and so are implemented differently in each community. While we are flexible on evaluation design, we do anticipate the evaluation will focus on the experiences and perceptions of community members to assess their changing levels of resilience and confidence to cope with disasters. We anticipate that this evaluation will include extensive fieldwork including site visits and discussions with community members and other stakeholders in a minimum of two communities per LGA plus at least two First Nations communities (e.g., minimum 14 communities – at least 2 of these must be First Nations). In your proposal, please detail the proposed methods and minimum number of respondents.

2.3 Evaluation conditions and guiding principles

Our *community disaster resilience framework* links resilience to four *adaptive capacities*: knowledge, connection, security, and wellbeing. This framework posits that strengthening each of these adaptive capacities will result in resilience. All of Red Cross' emergency services work is underpinned by psychosocial principles, which highlight the importance of supporting people to feel safe, calm, connected, hopeful, able to help themselves and others, and able to access the services and support they need following a disaster or other significant event.²

² <https://knowledge.aidr.org.au/resources/ajem-july-2023-australian-red-cross-psychosocial-approach-to-disaster-preparedness/> This paper provides an overview of our approach to preparedness/resilience.

Australian Red Cross uses the International Federation of Red Cross (IFRC) Framework for Evaluation (2011)³ to guide the design of evaluations. Red Cross requires that the evaluation be conducted in accordance with professional and ethical standards such as the AES Guidelines for the Ethical Conduct of Evaluations (2013) and with respect to Red Cross's duty of care to community members, staff and volunteers. This evaluation will involve fieldwork with community members, including First Nations communities, who may have been flood affected and who may be suffering from traumatic responses. Deep consideration of ethics and careful adherence to the guidance of Red Cross field staff is vital throughout this evaluation process.

2.4 Required skills, knowledge and experience (selection criteria)

- Postgraduate qualifications in evaluation, community development, social sciences or a relevant field.
- Demonstrated experience in conducting and managing evaluations (please provide examples).
- Demonstrated experience of community development and/or disaster resilience/recovery.
- Strong knowledge of ethical and trauma-informed research.

3. Deliverables and Activities

The outputs of this evaluation centre on a mid-project report, a draft final report (which will include a presentation to Red Cross to test draft findings for comment) and an end of project report bringing together the data, analysis and findings against the specified evaluation questions. Alongside the final report, the evaluators may also be asked to present the findings back to Red Cross and other stakeholders in up to three short (c.1hr) online meetings.

Additionally, we would like a visually appealing concise version of the final report to be presented as a 1-2 page infographic or similar as agreed that we could share with community members and other stakeholders. The reports will clearly address the KEQs and outcomes in a format agreed at the planning stage. We expect to meet online with the evaluator/s regularly (perhaps fortnightly or monthly) to discuss and support progress. While not part of this proposal or the evaluation budget, we would be keen to collaborate with the evaluators to publish the results in a peer reviewed academic outlet, to be discussed after the evaluation is completed.

#	Task	Timeframe
1.	Receive evaluation proposals	22 December 2023
2.	Recruit evaluation consultant and organise contract	February 2024
3.	Finalise evaluation design and methodology	March 2024
4.	Fieldwork and analysis for mid-project report	March 2024 – October 2024
5.	Deliver mid-project report	31 October 2024
6.	Fieldwork and analysis for end of project report	October 2024 – June 2025
7.	Deliver draft final report and 1-2 page infographic	30 June 2025
8.	Present findings and recommendations in online session (up to 3x) for participant and stakeholder feedback	July 2025 - September 2025
9.	Deliver final report incorporating stakeholder feedback	31 December 2025

³ <https://www.ifrc.org/sites/default/files/2021-09/IFRC-Framework-for-Evaluation.pdf>

4. Key Risks and Limitations

Potential Risk	Mitigation strategy
Budget issues	Confirm budget before commencement of evaluation.
Stakeholders concern about confidentiality	Provide potential participants with privacy and confidentiality agreements, inclusive of the option to be involved anonymously.
Stakeholder lack of engagement	Clear, concise and timely communications before and during evaluation. Barriers known to be addressed prior to evaluation and any identified throughout to be discussed and addressed with Red Cross key contacts.
Stakeholders too busy to attend	Ask stakeholders how they prefer to be engaged at the start of the evaluation and where possible find flexible ways of working with them, e.g. Over the phone, online surveys, face to face, email correspondence.
Stakeholder trauma	Ensure fieldwork is designed to minimise harm and discomfort. Conduct trauma-informed research and mitigate risks (e.g. careful research questions, easy opt outs, gentle methods). This includes awareness and consideration of impact on First Nations and recently disaster affected communities.
Appropriate data collected	Plan developed at start of evaluation and any changes required be discussed, and decisions made, by Red Cross key contacts.
Accuracy of data	Ensure data and interpretations sense-checked and signed off by key contacts Cate Martinez and Leanne Kelly before submission.
Default on timeframes	Set timeframes at the start of the evaluation and regularly review to ensure timeliness.