



Australian Government
National Indigenous
Australians Agency



NIAA

Weaving evaluation capability through public sector practice: a reflexive conversation



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Working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples



Acknowledgement of Country



Evaluators Professional Learning Competency Framework (2003)

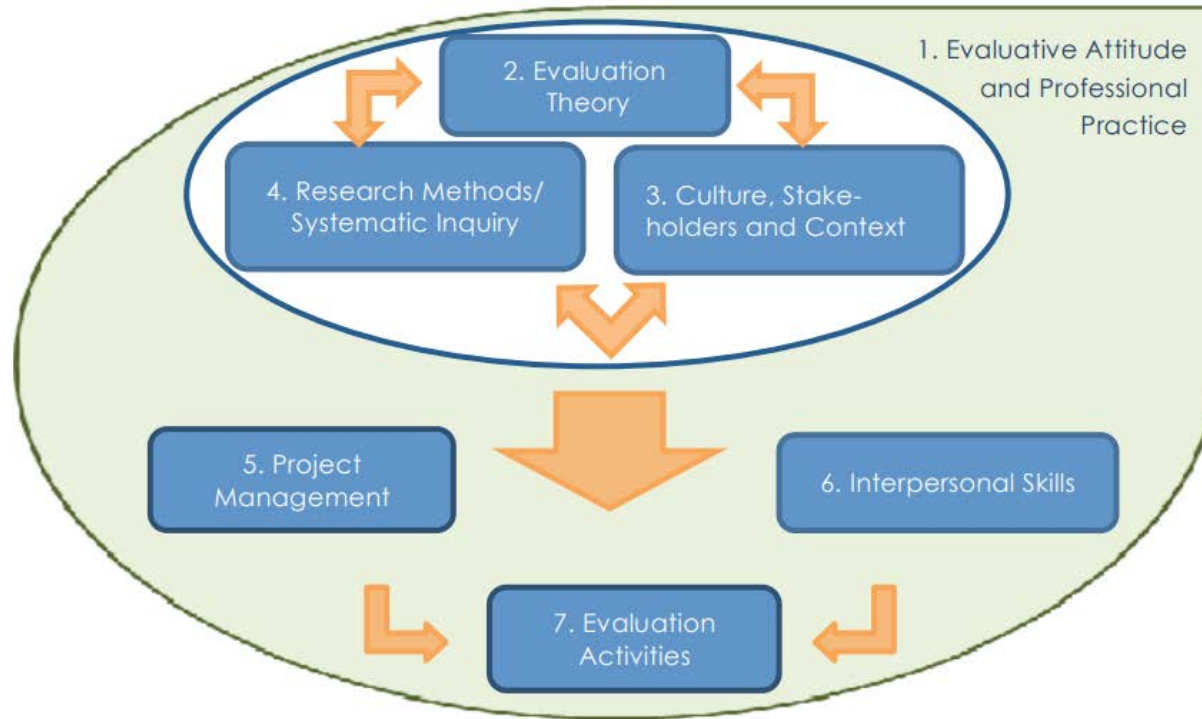


Figure 1 *Inter-relationship of the Evaluators' Professional Learning Competency Framework domains*

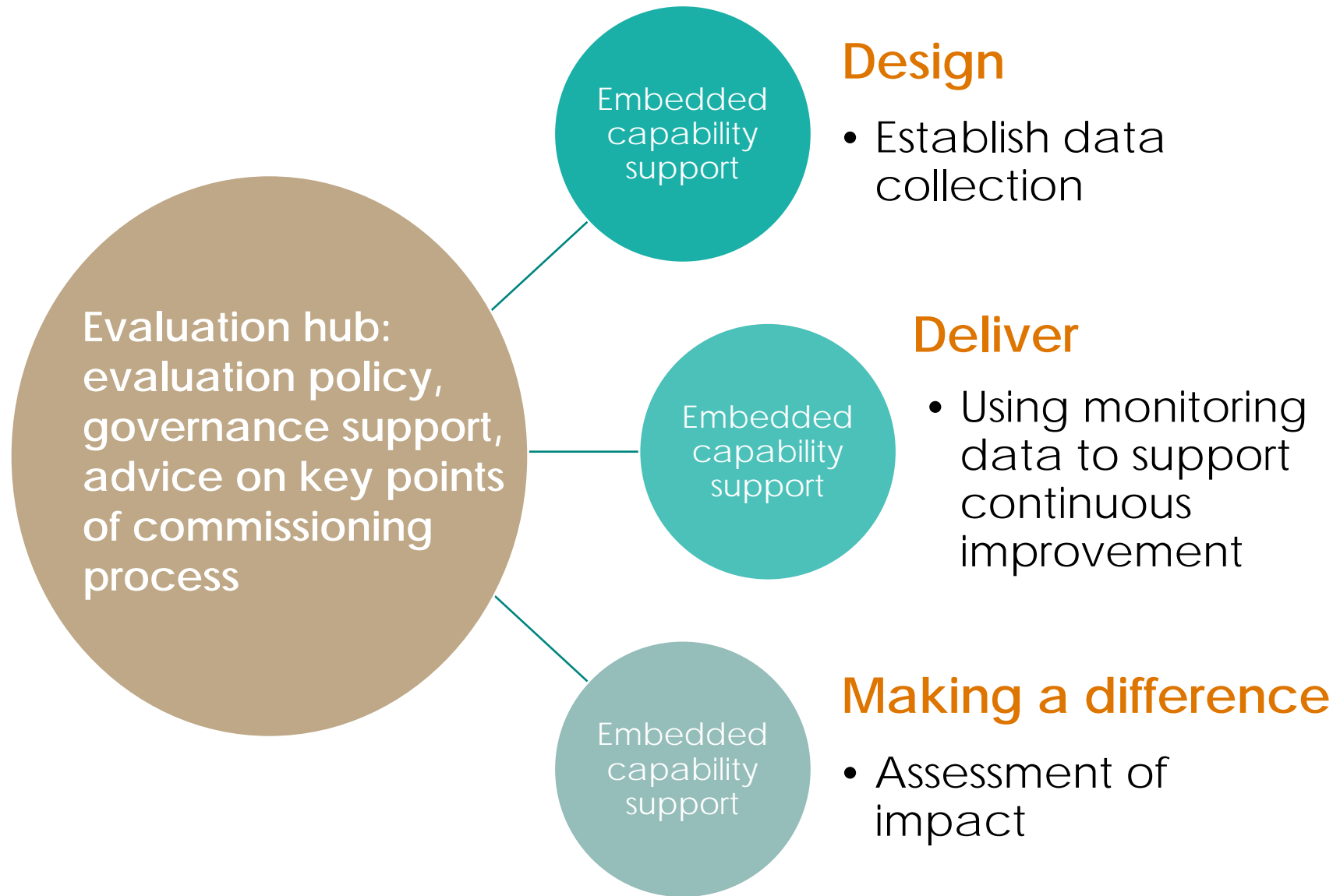
What do we mean by evaluation capability?

Our applied focus is evaluation commissioning capability. Helping colleagues be “informed customers”:

- what to ask for, what’s possible and appropriate given the purpose of the evaluation and the nature of the policy or program
- what’s good quality
- how to get the best use out evaluation findings to make a difference



Capability hub and spoke model – advisory & embedded roles

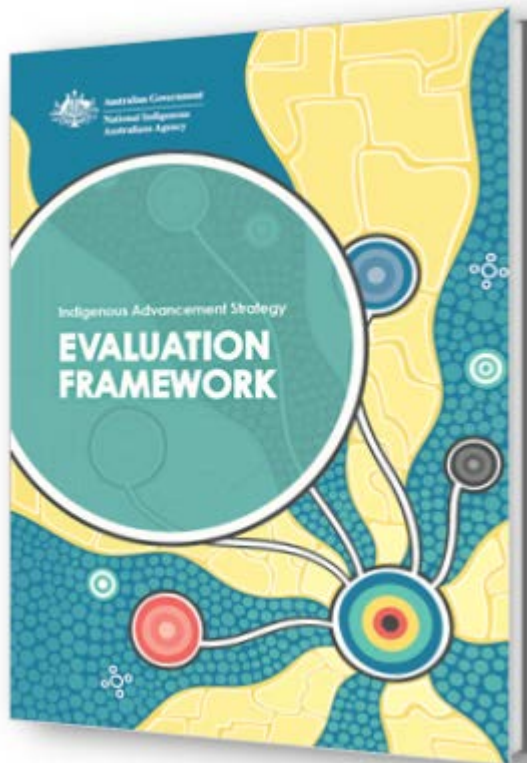


What do we mean by reflexivity?



“It is an ability to locate yourself in the picture, to understand, and factor in, how what you see is influenced by your own way of seeing, and how your very presence and act of research influences the situation in which you are researching”
Fook 1999, p.12

Why is reflexivity relevant?



Respectful

Collaborative approaches are strengths-based, build partnerships and demonstrate cultural respect towards Indigenous Australians

Evaluation integrates diverse Indigenous perspectives with the core values to ensure findings are meaningful, relevant and useful to Indigenous communities and government

Being reflexive is recognising the need for 'intercultural' knowledge generation

“by intercultural I mean the ‘meeting of two distinct cultures through processes and interactions which retain the distinctive integrity and differences of both cultures and which may involve a blending of elements of both cultures but never the domination of one over another” Taylor, R. (2003, p.45)

Effective evaluation commissioning at NIAA requires consideration of 'intercultural' knowledge generation:

- How evaluations incorporate measures of success reflecting different world-views and perspectives;
- Consideration of cultural settings;
- Evaluation approaches and methods support this.

The Importance of Social Values.

- **Values** are expressed by individuals, groups, communities and society.
- **Social values** are values expressing a common good and can be developed through collaborative process.
- There is no correct way of conceptualising social values - a number of perspective are required for democratic decision-making.
- To achieve the **intercultural** - we need to create processes where different values can be incorporated and merged.

Reflexivity enables attention to be paid to power-relations in evaluation processes

“Certain **values** of particular groups will be favoured in policy and decision-making through exercise of power, for example through privileging of economic value above all else. In contrast values, associated with Indigenous and local knowledge systems are often ignored in decision making”.

Kenter *et. al.* (2019, p.1455)

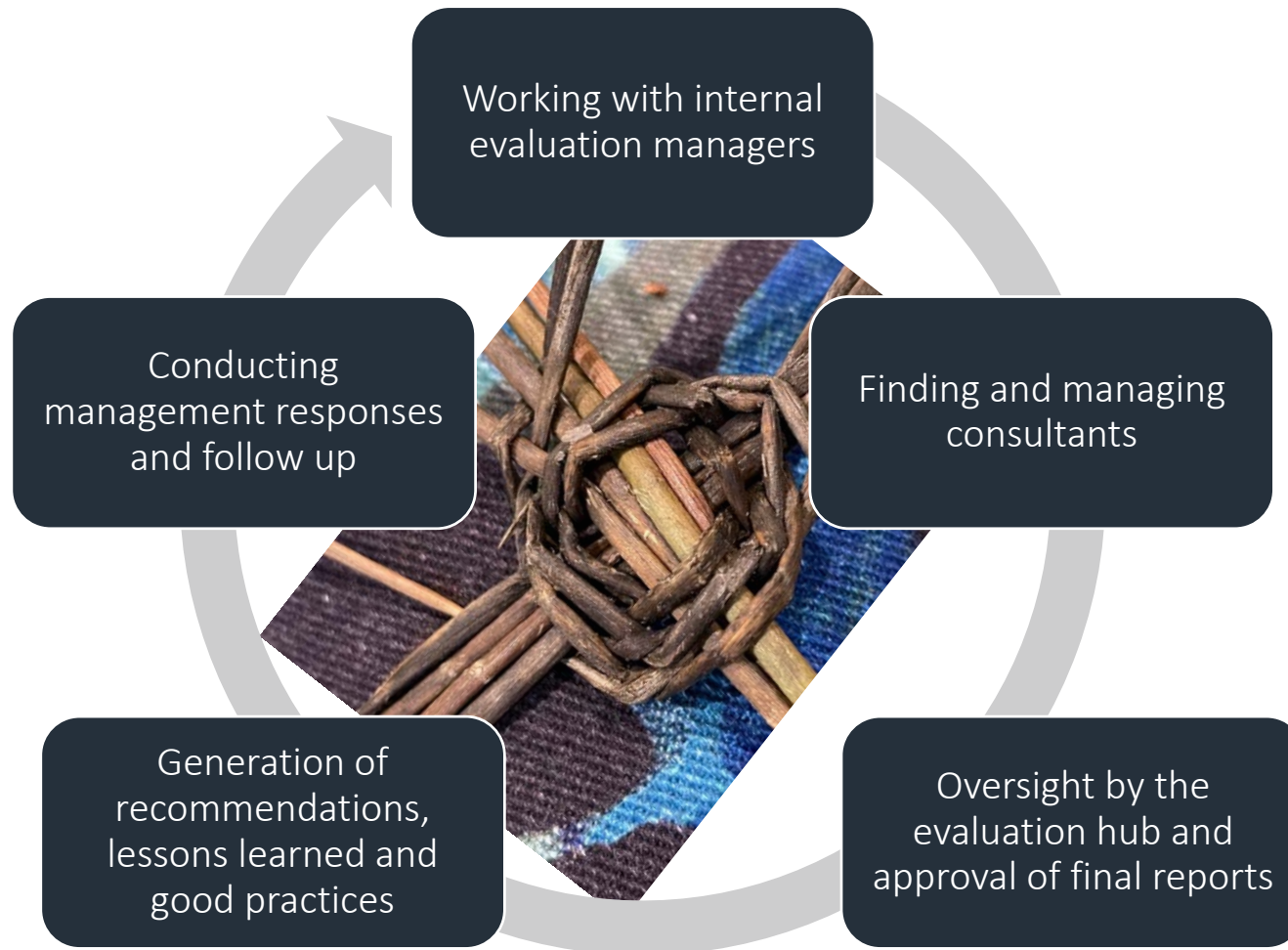
- Ensure that Indigenous framings and understandings are given equal weighting and primacy in some situations.
- Recognise that through reflexivity – group value formation and transfer of values through the evaluation can lead to important insights. The ideal is for transformative practice to improve lives.
- When Indigenous world views inform the evaluation, the data collection and the outcomes, you get a richer much more useful evaluation.

Reflexivity can be applied in three ways:

- **Self-reflexivity:** Testing my own world-views and biases, reflect whether actions align with IAS Evaluation Framework values and principles.
- **Interpersonal reflexivity:** Working with program areas and supporting them to build evaluation capability and work through issues.
- **Collective reflexivity:** Working collaboratively with stakeholders to enhance evaluation use.

Nicholls (2009)

Weaving work occurs through 'evaluation management cycles' and the evaluation commissioning process



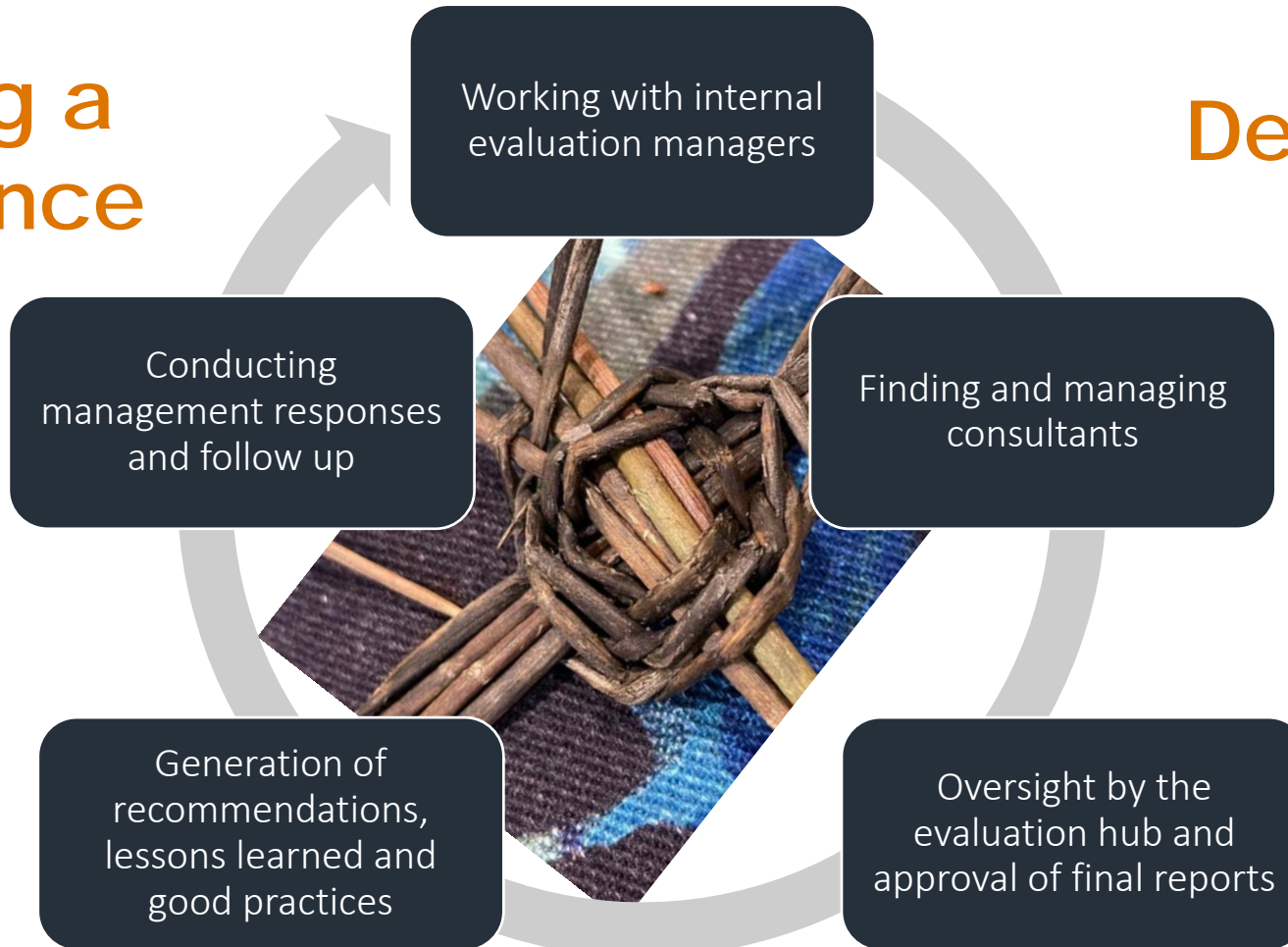
Source: [Loud & Mayne 2014 p. 216](#)

Weaving work occurs through 'evaluation management cycles' and the evaluation commissioning process

Making a difference

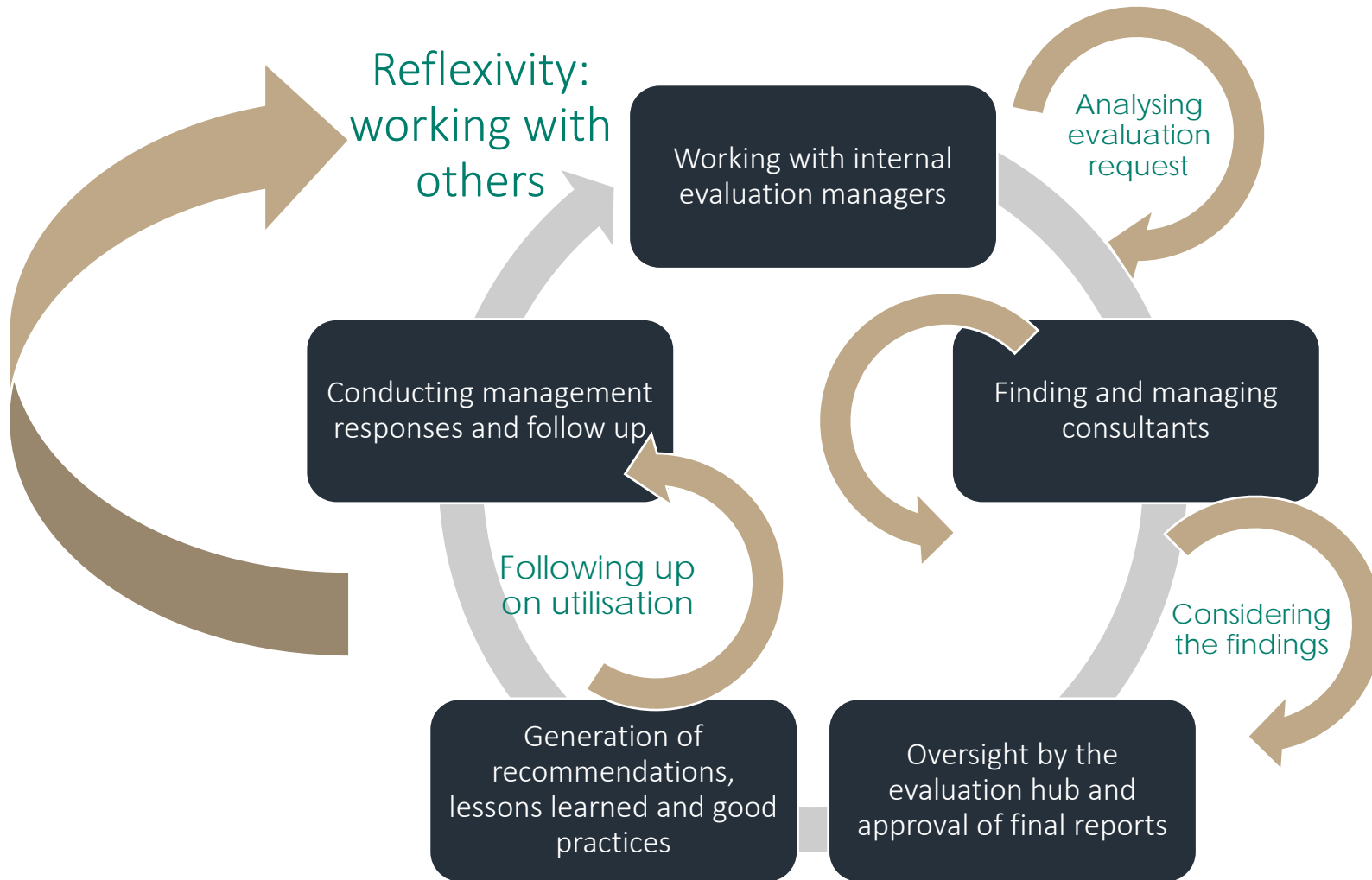
Design

Deliver

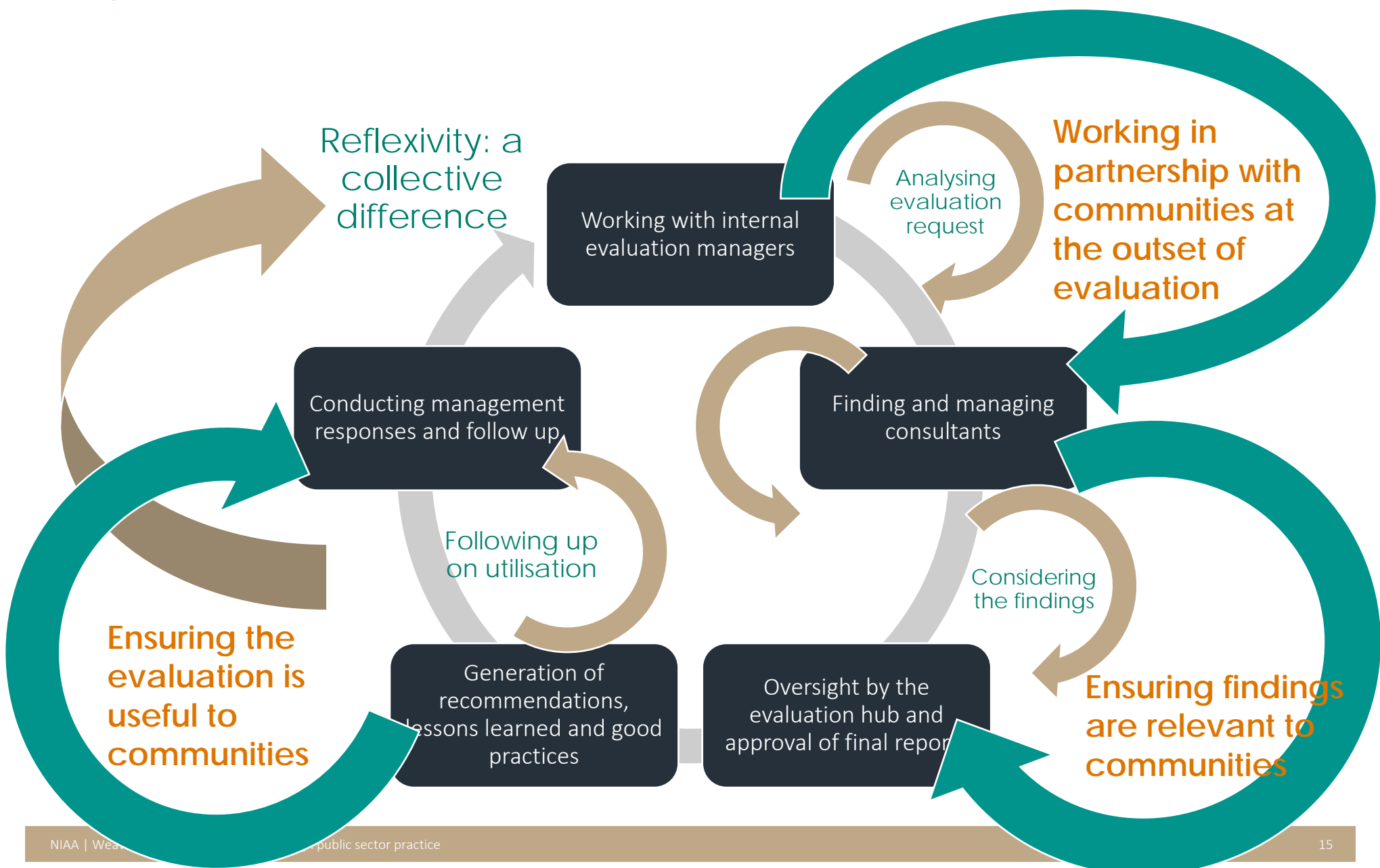


Source: [Loud & Mayne 2014 p. 216](#)

Weaving work occurs through 'evaluation management cycles' and the evaluation commissioning process



Weaving becomes more complex as we work in partnership with First Nation communities



Example 1: Program Evaluation

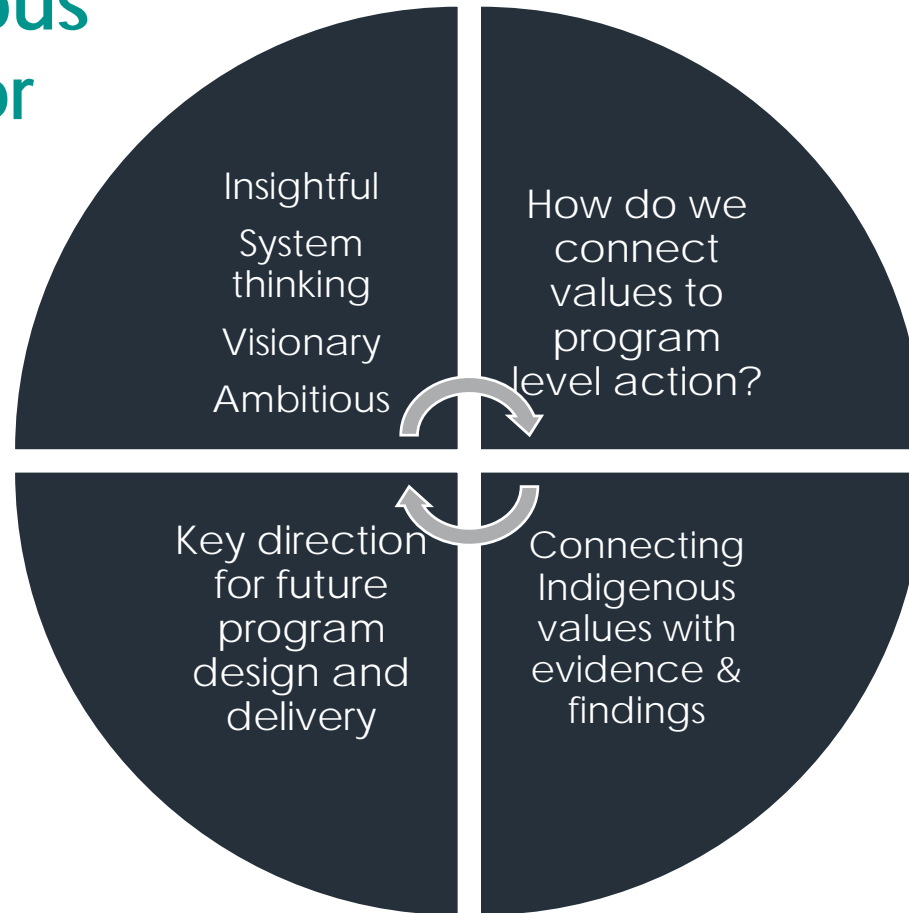
Indigenous evaluator's leadership and vision worked in collaboration with a Indigenous consultative group.

The challenge: How to embed Indigenous values meaningfully into the program evaluation?

Key learning: Indigenous leadership influences the evaluation to draw upon Indigenous values which makes a difference to the quality of evidence for future program design.

Example 1 Program evaluation

Indigenous
evaluator
vision's



Example 2: Testing a new policy approach

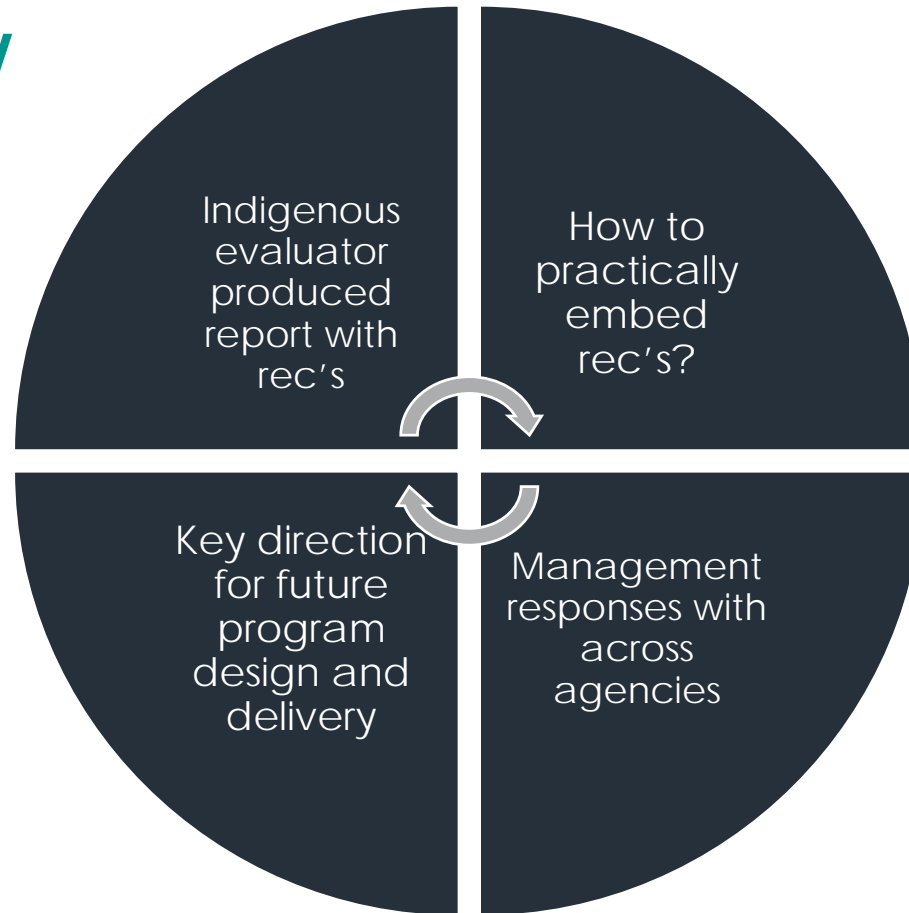
Evaluating/trialling new processes whereby Indigenous communities test out approaches.

The problem: How to ensure the community values developed and insights could contribute to broader understanding of ways forward that would integrate with government directions?

Key Lesson: Innovation can get lost in broader program approaches need to ensure that lessons are capture, learnt and there is flexibility.

Example 2 Testing a new policy approach

First Nations
community
feedback



In summary:

- Reflexivity is a tool for evaluation capability; its relevance highlighted when working in cross-cultural and inter-cultural contexts such as Closing the Gap.
- Reflexivity is not just about yourself; it's about systematic attention to inter-personal and collective processes. It enables attention be paid to power and values in evaluation.

Questions / discussion / and thank you

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