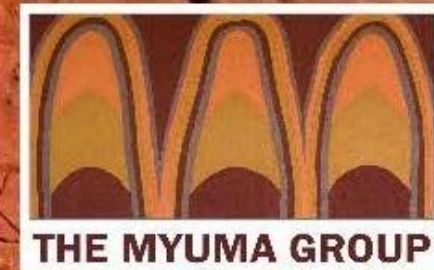


APPRECIATING FIRST NATIONS VOICES:

USING APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY AND PARTICIPATION IN THE
EVALUATION OF COMMUNITY JUSTICE GROUPS

AES Conference

18 September 2024



Acknowledgement of country

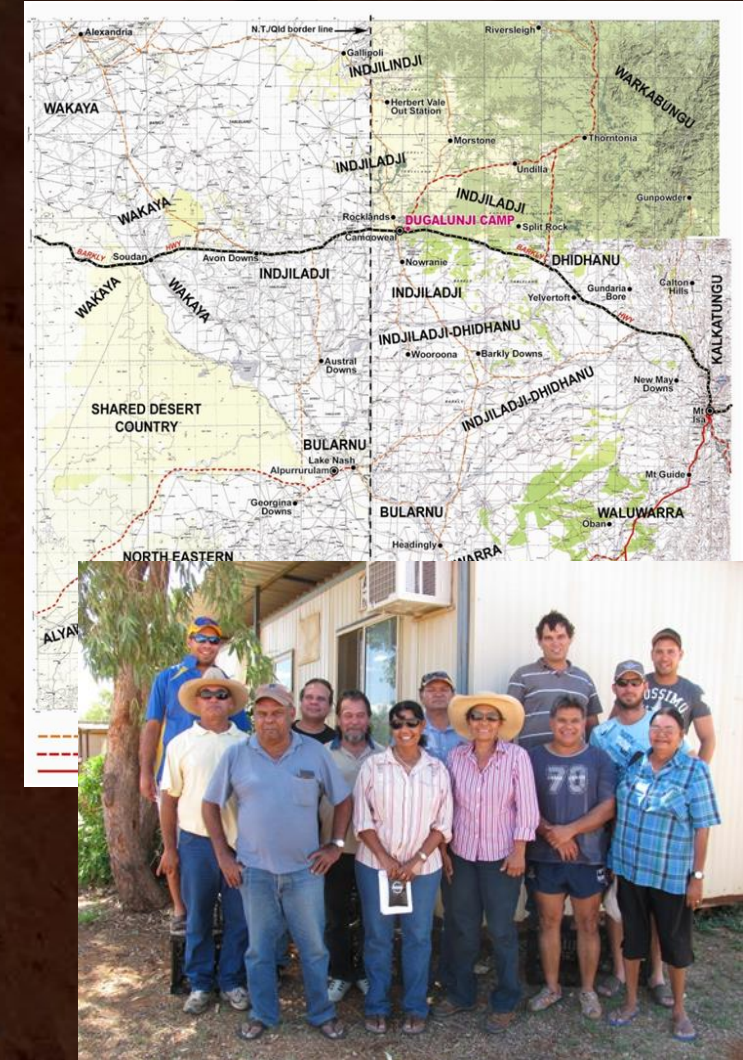
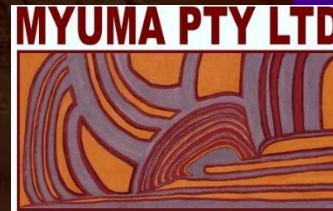
Outline

1. About Myuma
2. The story of the Community Justice Group evaluation
3. Lessons learned: Implementing best practice principles in a First Nations program evaluation

1. About Myuma

About Myuma Pty Ltd

- Part of the Myuma Group
- Four social enterprises
- Owned by the Indjalandji-Dhidhanu traditional owners
- “Myuma” = “do good” in Indjalandji-Dhidhanu



Myuma research and evaluation

- Research and evaluation consulting arm established 2017
- Vision:
 - Increase community participation in evaluations that affect them
 - Develop First Nations capability for program evaluation

MYUMA EVALUATION TEAM



2. Story of the Community Justice Group evaluation

What are Community Justice Groups?

- First established in Qld in 1993 in response to Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody
- Groups of volunteer Elders and 'respected persons' supported by staff to develop local responses to justice issues
- More than 40 across Queensland
- Funded by Department of Justice & Attorney General (DJAG)
- Support Elders to sit on 'Murri Courts' in some locations



AREAS OF COMMUNITY JUSTICE GROUP IMPACT



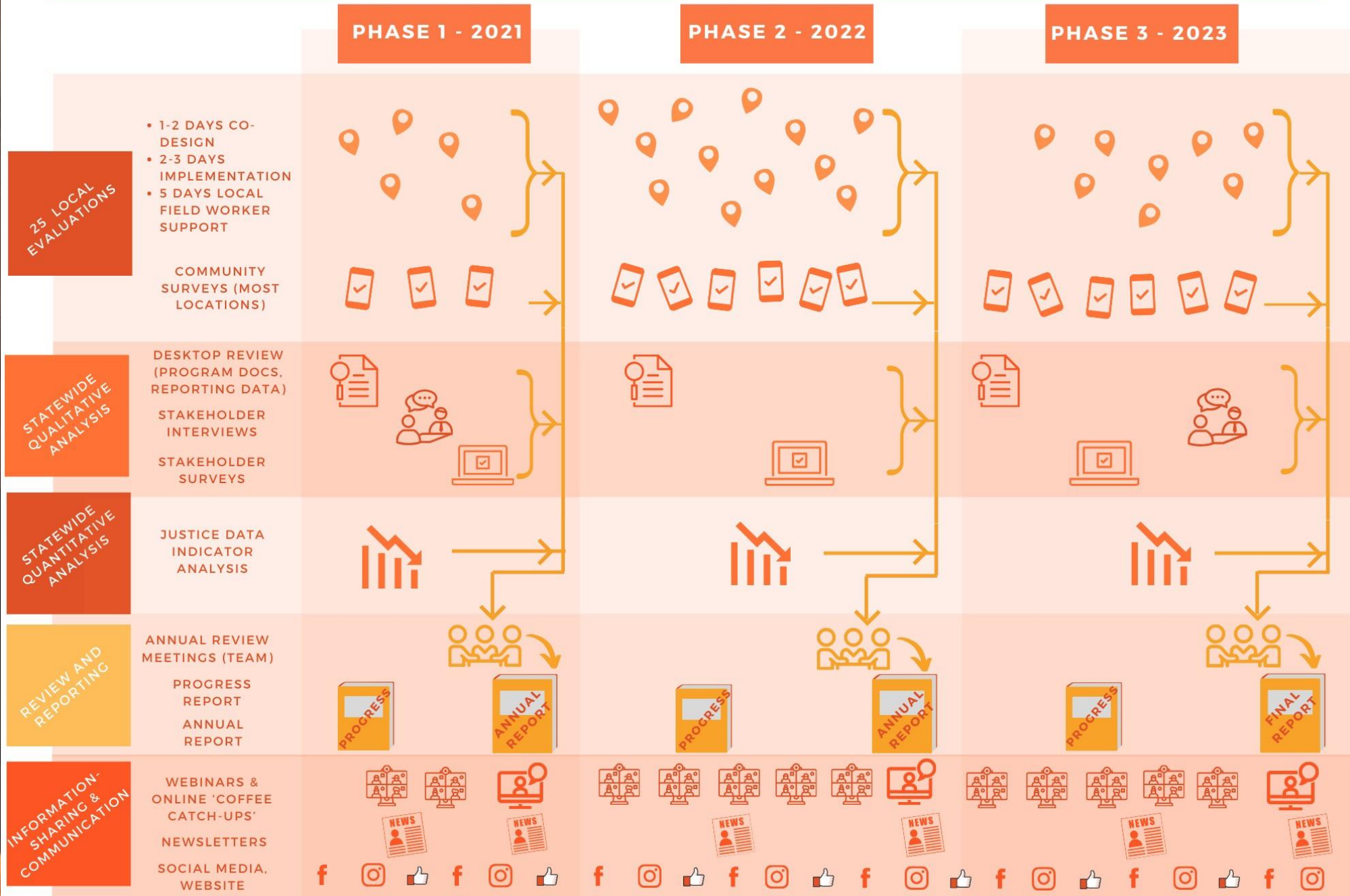
CJG Evaluation Framework

- Increase in funding for CJGs since 2019
- 2020 DJAG Evaluation Framework for 3-year evaluation 2021-2023
- Framework (and RFT) required that the approach be participatory and inclusive
- Approach should reflect the 6 principles in the *Protocol for ethical evaluation practice in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Settings* (Better Evaluation)

Evaluation Phases 1 to 3

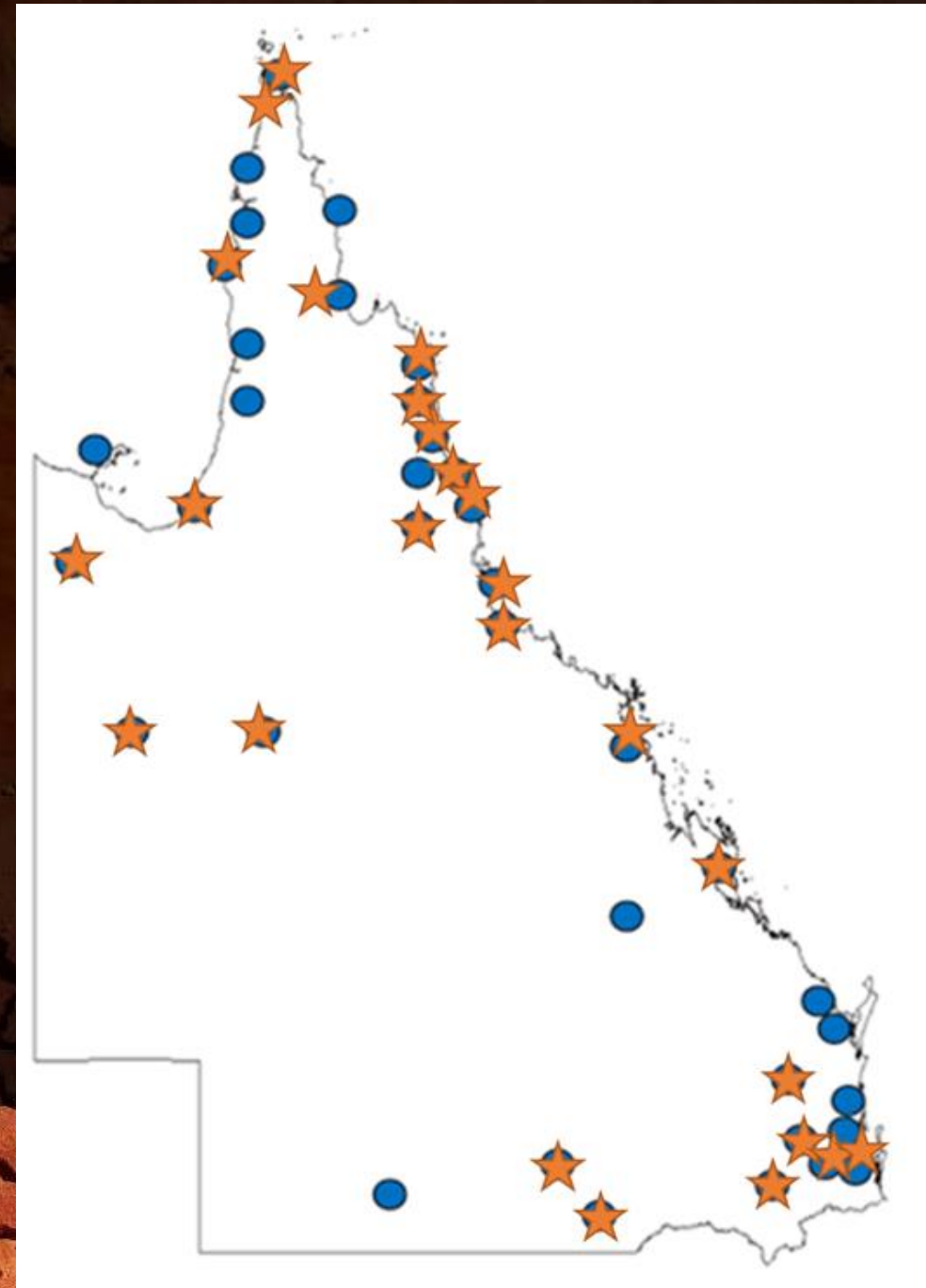


CJG PROGRAM EVALUATION METHOD



Local Evaluations

- Goondiwindi
- Rockhampton
- Doomadgee
- Normanton
- Mackay
- Thursday Is
- Mossman
- Mount Isa
- Coen
- Tablelands
- Wujal Wujal
- Bayside
- Hope Vale
- Cherbourg
- Palm Island
- NPA
- Cloncurry
- Townsville
- Aurukun
- Richlands
- Ipswich
- Toowoomba
- St George
- Yarrabah
- Cairns



Local Evaluations Data Collection

- 25 CJGs
- 99 days in the field for 12 Myuma team members
- 235 interviews and focus groups with CJG staff, members, agencies service providers, community
- 185 hours of interview audio analysed using Nvivo
- Activity mapping with 12 CJGs
- Community surveys at 16 sites (453 surveys collected)



Appreciative Inquiry approach

- In the Appreciative Inquiry method, interviews focus on drawing out the following three core responses:
 - (a) *Peak experiences*: stories about high points for the participant during their involvement in the program
 - (b) *Values*: what the participant values most about themselves and their work in the program
 - (c) *Wishes*: what the participant wishes for, to make more of the peak experiences possible.

(Preskill, T and Catsambas, H, 2006, *Reframing Evaluation Through Appreciative Inquiry*, p.16.)

Appreciative Inquiry question

- For example:

Thinking back to the work your Community Justice Group has been doing in the courts, tell me about a time when you felt that the Community Justice Group was really performing well, when you thought "this is working!", when it showed how the Group could really make a difference for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the courts.

Tell the whole story about this highpoint for you – for example:

- *What were the circumstances?*
- *What were you doing that was really working? What were others doing?*
- *Why did it work well?*
- *What difference did it make?*
- *How did you feel?*

Qualitative data analysis

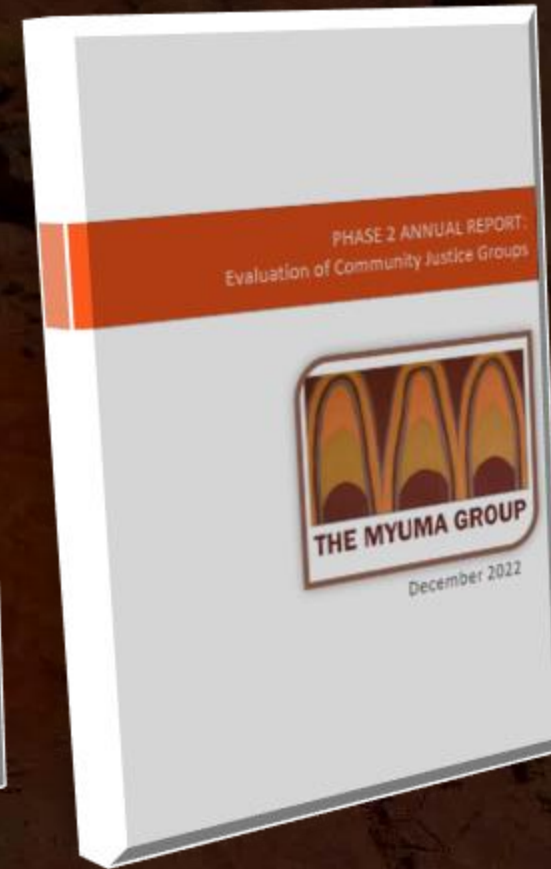
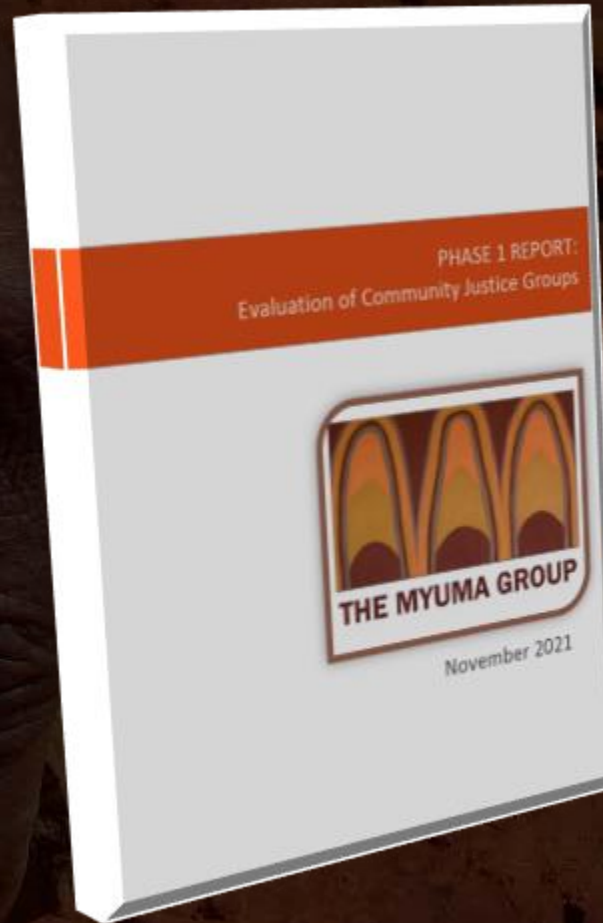
- Interviews transcribed or notes are typed up and entered into Nvivo 12 database
- Coding of transcripts and notes to identify emerging themes

The screenshot displays the Nvivo 12 software interface. The main window shows a transcript with several lines of text highlighted in yellow. The transcript includes timestamps and speaker names, such as "Jenny Pryor [00:08:07] And where do they come from? The support services?". The left sidebar shows a navigation pane with categories like "Quick Access", "Data", "Codes", "Cases", "Notes", "Search", "Maps", and "Output". A "Files" table is visible, listing files and their associated codes and references. The right sidebar shows a "Coding Density" chart with vertical bars of different colors representing different codes. The bottom status bar indicates "ML 369 Items Codes: 23 References: 40 Editable Line: 1 Column: 0".

Name	Codes	Referen
Coen_G	16	28
Coen_UJ	8	10
Coen_L	2	2
Coen_L	2	2
Coen_L	23	40
Coen_L	18	29
Coen_	9	14
Coen_S	5	5
Coen_T	22	37
Coen_Ti	11	16
College	4	9
Commu	13	19
DATSIP_	27	54
Dawes2	16	20
DJAG S	12	21
Dooma	25	34
Dooma	7	11
Dooma	6	28
Dooma	20	34
Dooma	5	5
Dooma	12	21
Dooma	5	5
Dooma	4	4
Dooma	3	3
Dooma	11	31

Reports

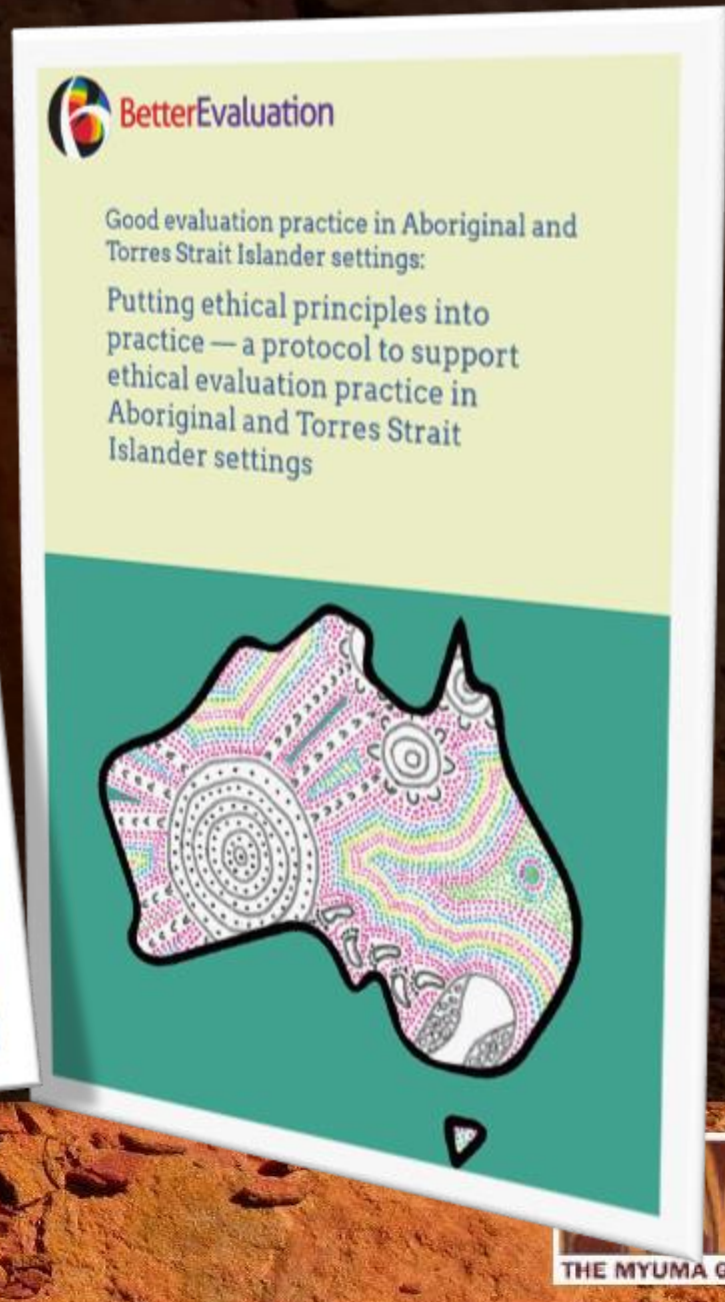
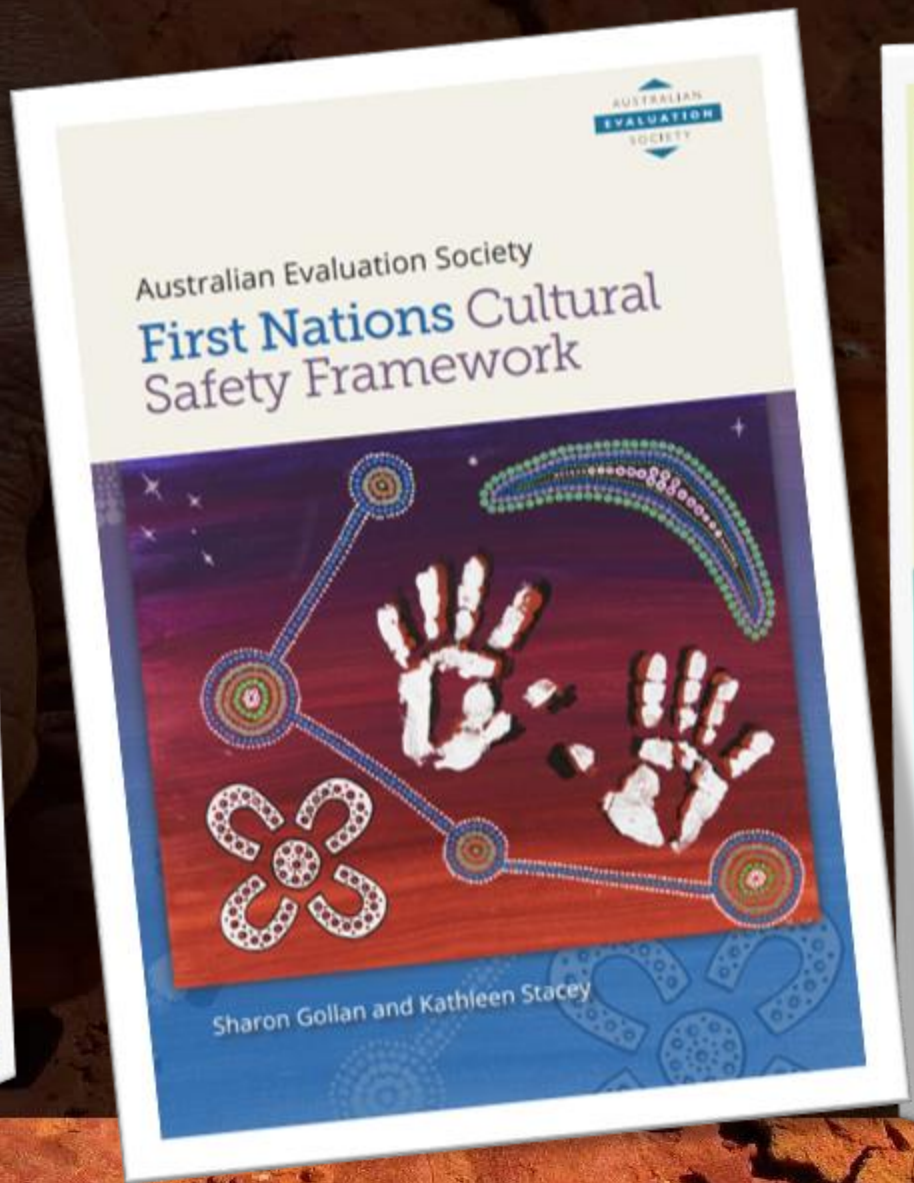
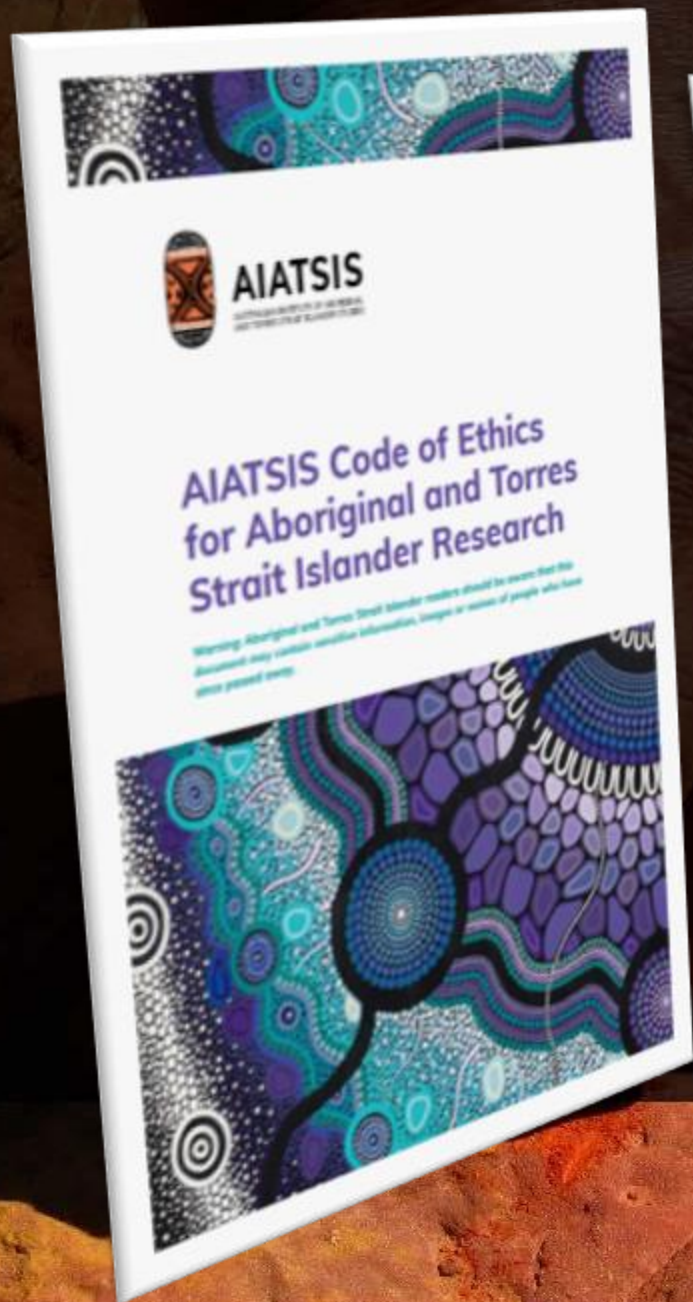
- Three annual phase reports – inputs, outputs and outcomes
- Two community reports
- Final report not yet released by Queensland Government



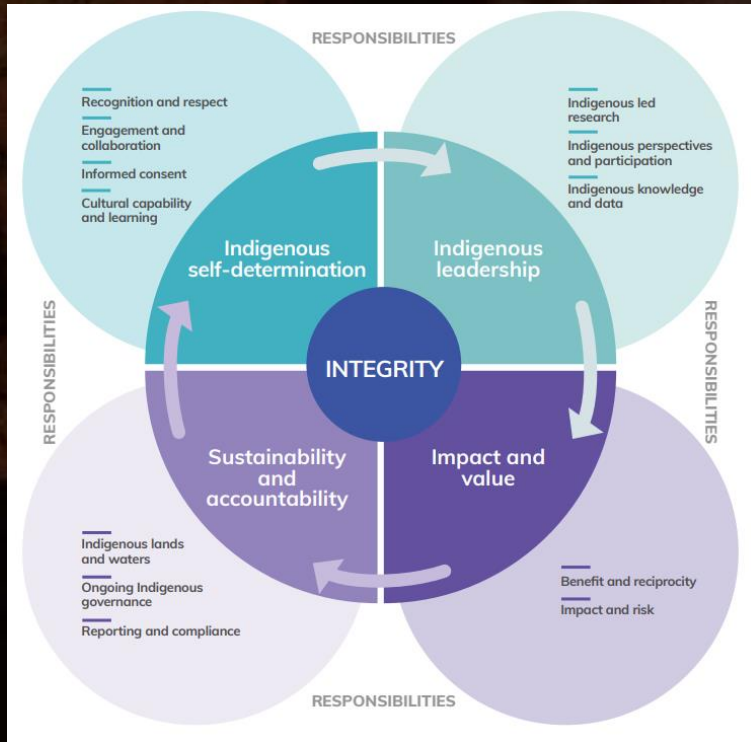
www.courts.qld.gov.au/services/court-programs/community-justice-group-program



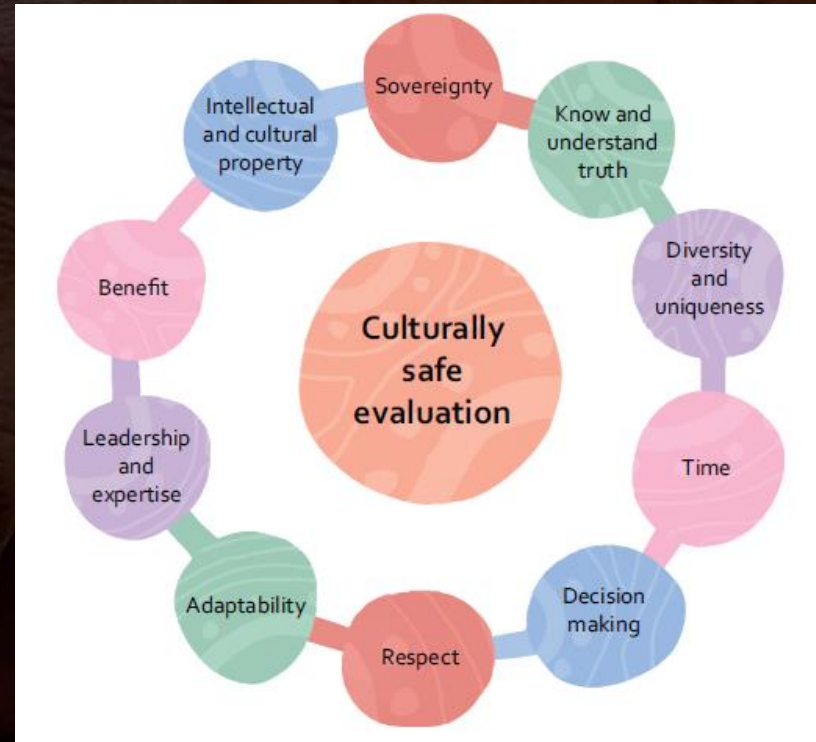
3. Implementing best practice principles in Indigenous evaluation



AIATSIS



AES

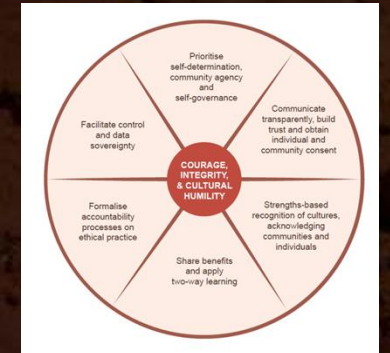


BETTER EVALUATION



Ethics Framework for CJG Evaluation, 2021

- Approved by Evaluation Management Committee
- Covered: data collection, evaluation benefits, informed consent, confidentiality, risks, data storage, publication of results, ownership of data, culturally restricted information, conflicts of interest
- Set out how we intended to comply with ethical evaluation principles for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander settings (from Better Evaluation)



1. Prioritise self-determination, community agency and self-governance

Prioritise self-determination, community agency and self-governance

Empowerment principle

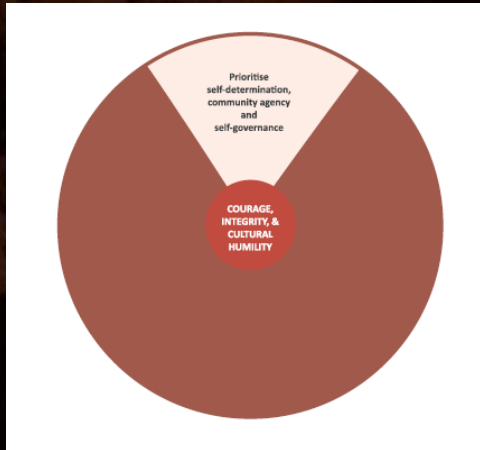
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have the right to self-determination and to be encouraged and empowered in decision-making processes. Evaluators must listen and advise to the benefit of communities above all else.

Diversity principle

Recognise the diversity and uniqueness of First Nations Cultures, Peoples and Individuals.

Inclusion principle

Involve Aboriginal and or Torres Strait Islander people in all levels of the evaluation, from design phase right through to analysis and communicating findings.




How did we go putting the principles into practice?

- Demonstrated as a core principle of Myuma Pty Ltd
- Evidenced in the selection, preparation, and support of community evaluators
- Reinforced through shared decision-making within evaluation team



- Continued by local evaluators as a core principle of engagement with CJGs and stakeholders
- Underpinned local level relationships between community evaluators and CJGs and stakeholders
- Strengthened through the design as a non-negotiable principle ie. Input and decisions by CJGs were required for progression between stages of the evaluation

MYUMA PTY LTD


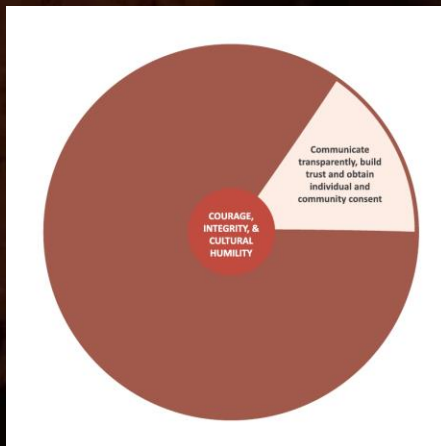
Local Evaluation Plan and Agreement

PURPOSE	This template is to be used by the Myuma evaluation team member to co-design, with staff and members of a Community Justice Groups, the plan for conducting the Local Evaluation at a particular CJG site. The Plan also represents an agreement between Myuma and the CJG about how the Local Evaluation will be conducted and how it will benefit the CJG and the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community at the same time as providing data for Myuma's Statewide evaluation of the CJG Program.	
MYUMA TEAM MEMBER		
COMMUNITY JUSTICE GROUP DETAILS	Location:	CJG Name:
CJG STAFF INVOLVED IN CO-DESIGN		
CJG MEMBERS INVOLVED IN CO-DESIGN		

Contents

- Objectives of Local Evaluations
- Working well together agreement
- Scope of the Local Evaluation
- A. Capturing what the CJG does (mapping everyday outputs/ activities)
- B. Finding out how the CJG functions at its best and makes a difference (interviews and/or workshops)
- C. Finding out what the community thinks (community survey)
- D. Key things that the CJG wants to learn or capture (CJG learning)
- Ethics protocols to be followed
- How Myuma can use CJG records and data shared by the CJG
- How evaluation data and findings will be shared with the CJG
- Agreed process for Myuma to share the CJG's positive stories
- ATTACHMENT: Questions for interviews

2. Communicate transparently, build trust and obtain individual and community consent



Communicate transparently, build trust and obtain individual and community consent

Consent principle

Obtain the free prior informed consent of Aboriginal and or Torres Strait Islander people before commencing the evaluation.

Equity principle

Evaluation must be transparent, equitable and respect the integrity of the community.

How did we go putting the principles into practice?

- Required continuous collective and individual consent
- Ensured consent for transparency and vice versa
- Relied on sound decision-making to protect and strengthen community integrity

CONSENT FORM
Evaluation of CJG Program by Myuma Pty Ltd

Declaration by participant

By signing below, I confirm that I have read (or someone has read to me) the information Sheet, which explains what this evaluation project is about, and I understand the information – in particular:

- I understand that my involvement in this evaluation will include an interview or focus group discussion with a Myuma team member;
- I consent to the interview or focus group being audio taped; *(cross this out if not agreed)*
- I have had a chance to ask questions about the evaluation, and I am comfortable with the answers that I have been given;
- I understand the risks involved;
- I understand that there will be no direct benefit to me from participating in this evaluation;
- I understand that my participation in this evaluation is voluntary;
- I understand that the results of this evaluation may be published in a public forum;
- I understand that if I have any additional questions I can contact Myuma's team or the Department; be no penalty;
- I understand that I can contact one of the people listed on the information Sheet if I have any uncertainties or concerns about the evaluation.

I agree to participate in the evaluation

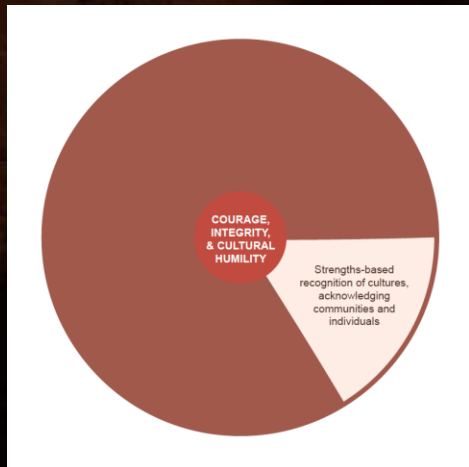
Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: 13/06/23

- Created communication channels specifically for the project
- Developed a process for communicating with community prior to commencement
- Committed to methodology of Appreciative Inquiry to protect and strengthen community integrity

3. Strengths-based recognition of cultures, acknowledging communities and individuals



Strengths-based recognition of cultures, acknowledging communities and individuals

Attribution principle

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities have the right to choose to be acknowledged and attributed for their contributions to an evaluation.

Strengths-based principle

Affirm and celebrate culture. Take a based approach and build from cultural strengths.

Strengthening of culture principle

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures are not static and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have the right to protect, maintain, revitalise and strengthen their cultures.

Participation principle

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are evaluators and should be regarded as equal partners.

How did we go putting the principles into practice?

Community Evaluators

- Recruited and co-collaborated with community evaluators
- Built project with community evaluators
- Drew on the expertise of community evaluators for specific locations

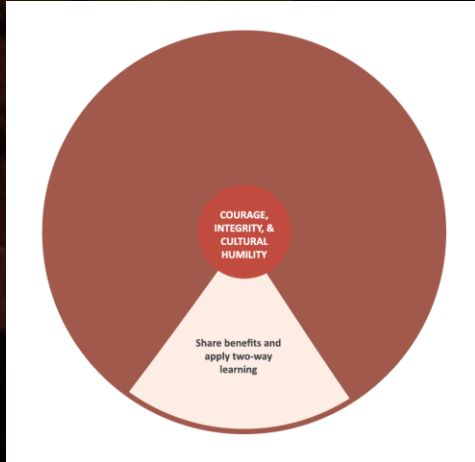


Within the Local Evaluations

- Listened and learned to understand
- Relied on CJG to identify stakeholders they valued
- Enabled flexibility to go where community wanted to show evidence
- Spoke with language of strength



4. Share benefits and apply two-way learning



Share benefits and apply two-way learning

Community transformation principle

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples involved in, or affected by, evaluation should benefit from the evaluation project and not be disadvantaged by it.

Community priorities principle

Evaluation must reflect the priorities of the community.

Strengthen capacity principle

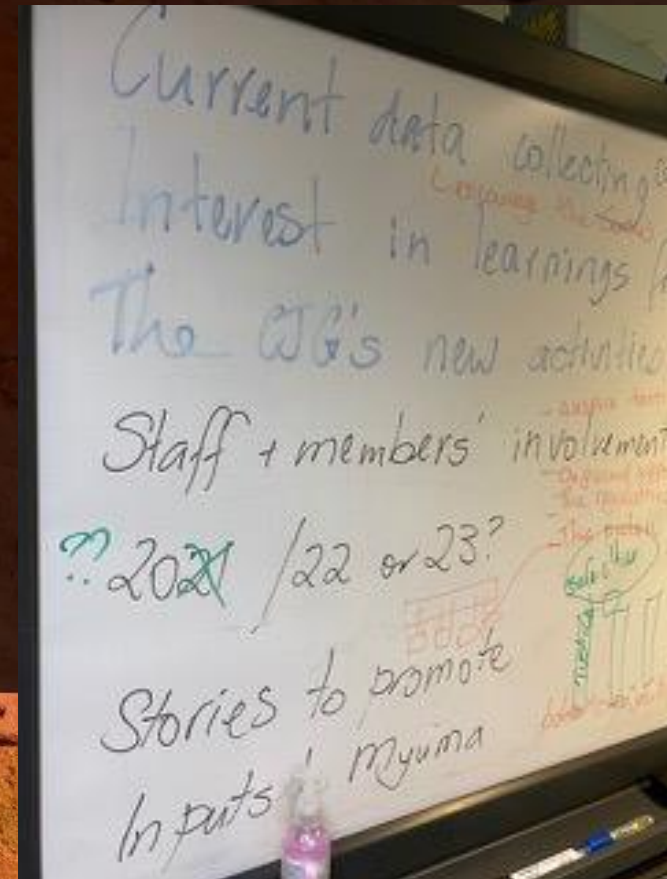
Evaluation must strengthen capacity and capability for decision making and voluntary actions of participants and the communities in which they live.

Share results principle

Evaluation results must be presented and available to communities in a form that is translatable to community needs.

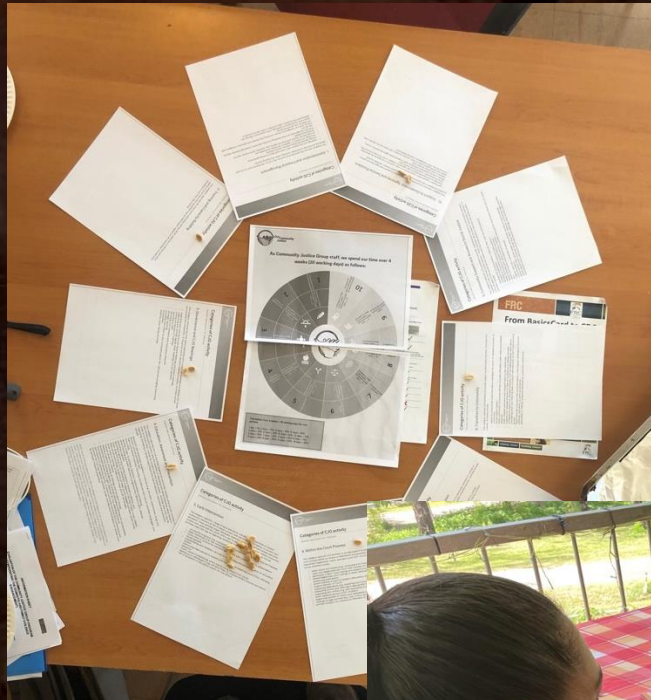
How did we go putting the principles into practice?

- **Community benefit** – strengths-based, not an audit of your funding, an opportunity to suggest changes and demonstrate your impact
- **Community priorities** – in co-design of Local Evaluations with each CJG we asked:
 - What do you want to learn from the data we collect?
 - How do you want to be involved in the fieldwork?
 - How can you use the outcomes in your domain?



- **Strengthening capacity of CJGs:**

- CJGs found activity mapping useful for reflection and planning
- CJG staff and Elders got involved in data collection
- Myuma engaged local casual researchers (for surveys & interviews)



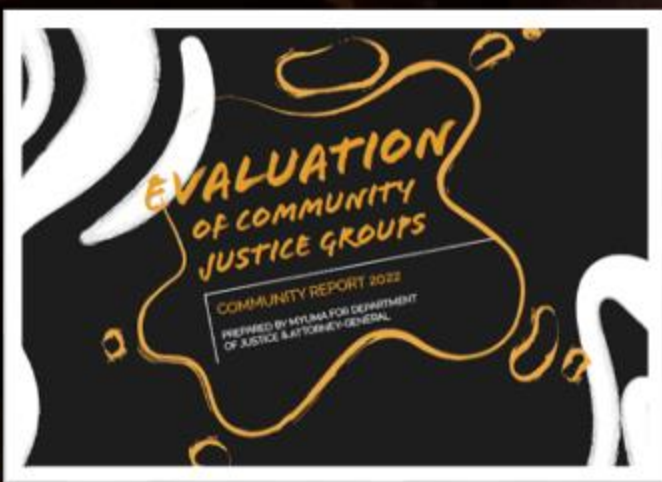
- **Sharing results:**

- Real-time feedback – report back to CJG at end of fieldtrip
- Separate report for each CJG – but challenges:
 - resource-intensive
 - delays in Department’s approval to release



- **Sharing results:**

- Community reports
- Webpage and social media
- Online 'coffee catch-ups'
- Online report-back seminars / yarning circles

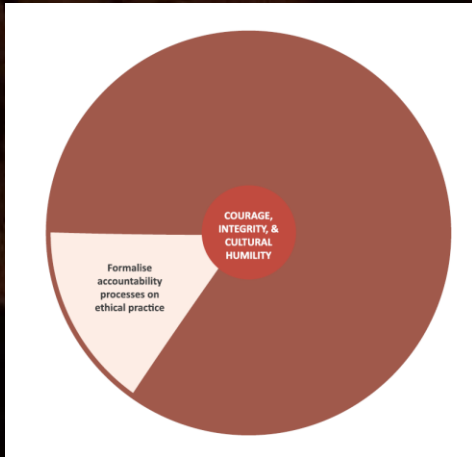


5. Formalise accountability processes on ethical practice

Formalise accountability processes on ethical practice

Accountability principle

Include appropriate mechanisms and procedures for reporting on ethical aspects of the research and complying with this ethical protocol.

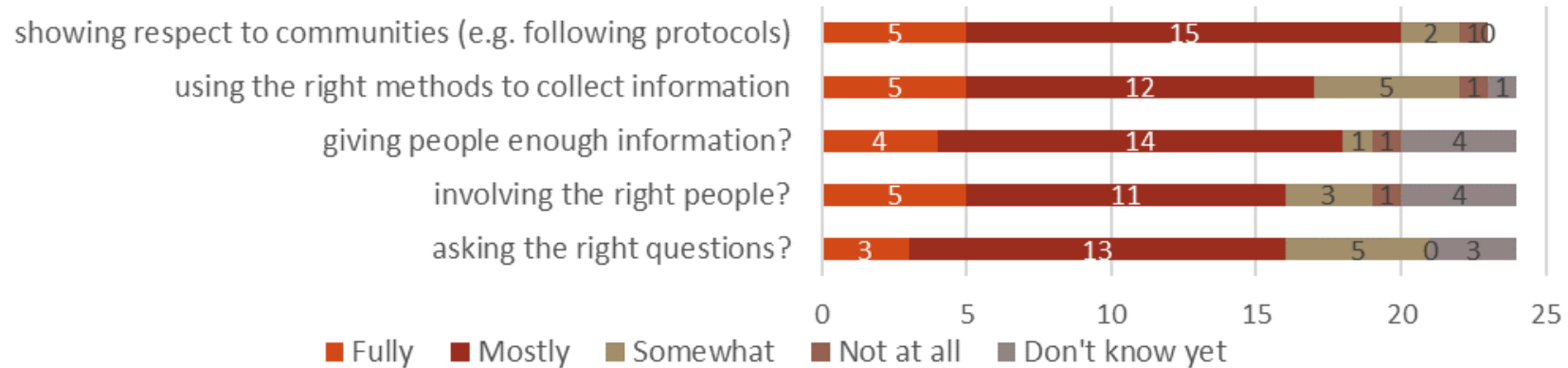


How did we go putting the principles into practice?

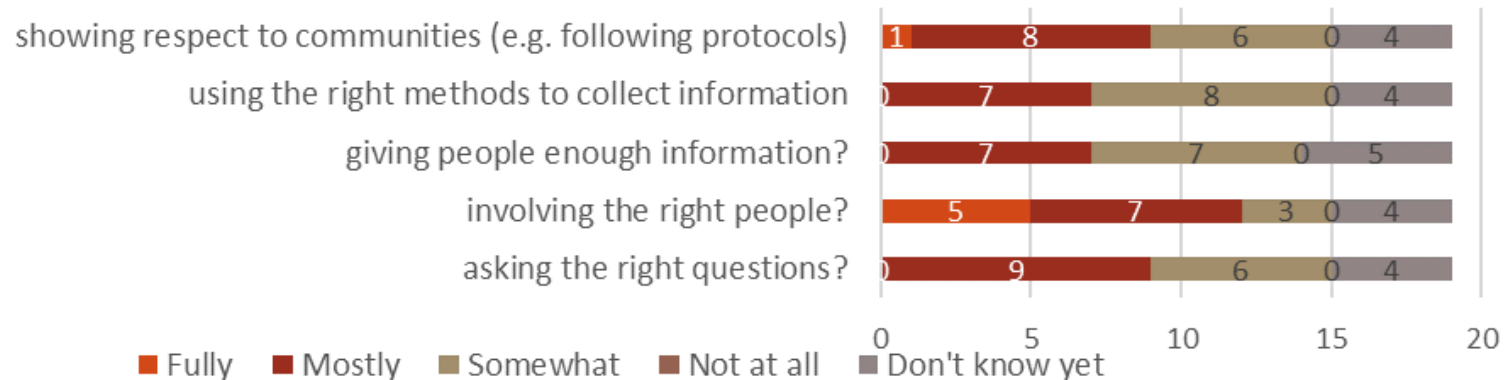
- CJG Evaluation Ethics Framework approved by Evaluation Management Committee (govt, non-govt and CJG members)
- Twice yearly presentations and workshops with the EMC
- Department's annual surveys of CJGs and stakeholders included questions about how the evaluation is going

Feedback on the evaluation method

Questions re Myuma Evaluation: CJGs



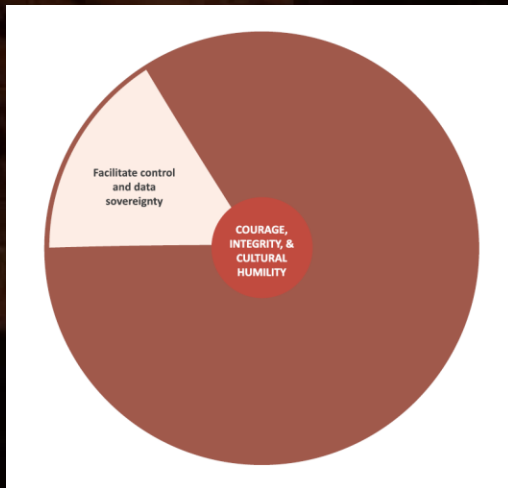
Questions re Myuma Evaluation: Non-CJG stakeholders



Source:
DJAG State-
wide CJG
stakeholder
survey, 2022



6. Facilitate control and data sovereignty



Facilitate control and data sovereignty

Community ownership principle

Evaluation, and the knowledge created through evaluation, is owned by the community.

Respect principle

Respect the custodianship of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and cultures, their ongoing and unbroken connection to their land and water and the right to protect, maintain, control and benefit from their Aboriginal and or Torres Strait Islander Cultural Intellectual Property (ICIP).

Interpretation of culture principle

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have the right to determine and approve the interpretation of their culture as the primary guardians and interpreters of their cultural heritage.

Integrity and authenticity of culture and knowledge principle

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have the right to maintain the integrity of their ICIP.

Secrecy and confidentiality principle

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have the right to keep secret their sacred and ritual knowledge in accordance with their customary laws.

How did we go putting the principles into practice?

- Respect for **Indigenous data sovereignty** – people own the stories they share
- Engaged Indigenous evaluators and research assistants
- Provided survey data and data summaries back to CJGs
- Facilitated opportunities for CJGs themselves to share their stories (through online 'coffee catchups', seminars, community reports)

• Interpretation of culture

- Big challenge when much report-writing done by non-Indigenous team members
- Regular 'sense-making' sessions with our team – harness their cultural expertise
- Online report-back seminars – are we reading things correctly?
- Reports foreground people's own words and reproduce full stories – amplifying 'voice'
- Held a workshop with team and key CJG Elders & staff before submitting final report
- Peer review by Indigenous expert (Professor Boni Robertson)



What footprints were left behind?

- Our goal was to walk *alongside* Community Justice Groups for a short while
- We hoped to give them time and space to reflect on the good parts of their journey and where they want to go
- Shared benefit is the most important thing to leave behind



Final reflections

- No process is perfect
- Evaluation budgets unlikely to permit full fidelity to these principles
- BUT, bigger evaluation budget can be justified by capacity-building outcomes for the subjects of the evaluation
- Risk of exploitation of Indigenous evaluators if budgets do not accommodate best practice

Questions and discussion

