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The University also acknowledges and is grateful to the Traditional Owners, Elders and Knowledge Holders of all Indigenous nations and clans who have been instrumental in our reconciliation journey.

We recognise the unique place held by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the original owners and custodians of the lands and waterways across the Australian continent, with histories of continuous connection dating back more than 60,000 years. We also acknowledge their enduring cultural practices of caring for Country.

We pay respect to Elders past, present and future, and acknowledge the importance of Indigenous knowledge in the Academy. As a community of researchers, teachers, professional staff and students we are privileged to work and learn every day with Indigenous colleagues and partners.



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Navigating complex government reforms: a tool to examine policy package theory

Nerida Rixon, Master of Evaluation (Research)

Acknowledgement of Country



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Acknowledgements



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Associate Professor Amy Gullickson

Committee Chair: Professor Kylie Smith

Supporters

My views presented today are drawn from my Master of Evaluation by Research at The University of Melbourne not as an APS employee

Icons used



Findings

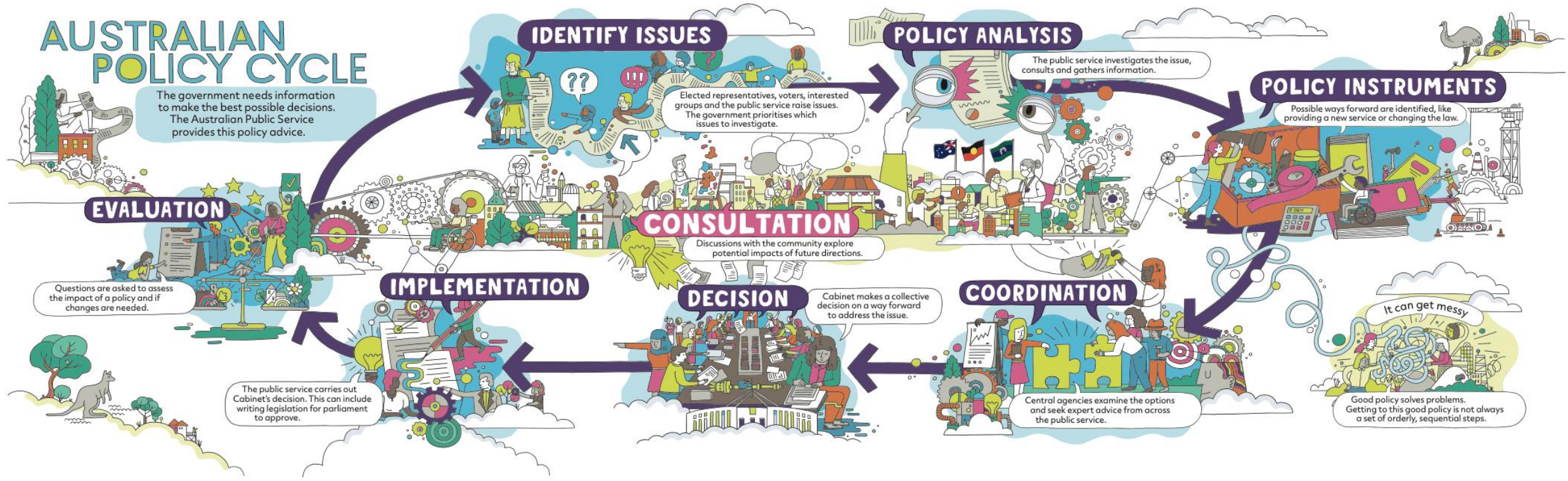


Methods



Checklist

Why is this important?



So what's the problem?

Australian governments fund high value policy packages...

However, evidence shows Australian governments are not effectively measuring performance in service delivery, including of policy packages

Better theory makes for better policy

Objectives of this research

The research questions are:

RQ1. What are the defining characteristics of policy package theories?

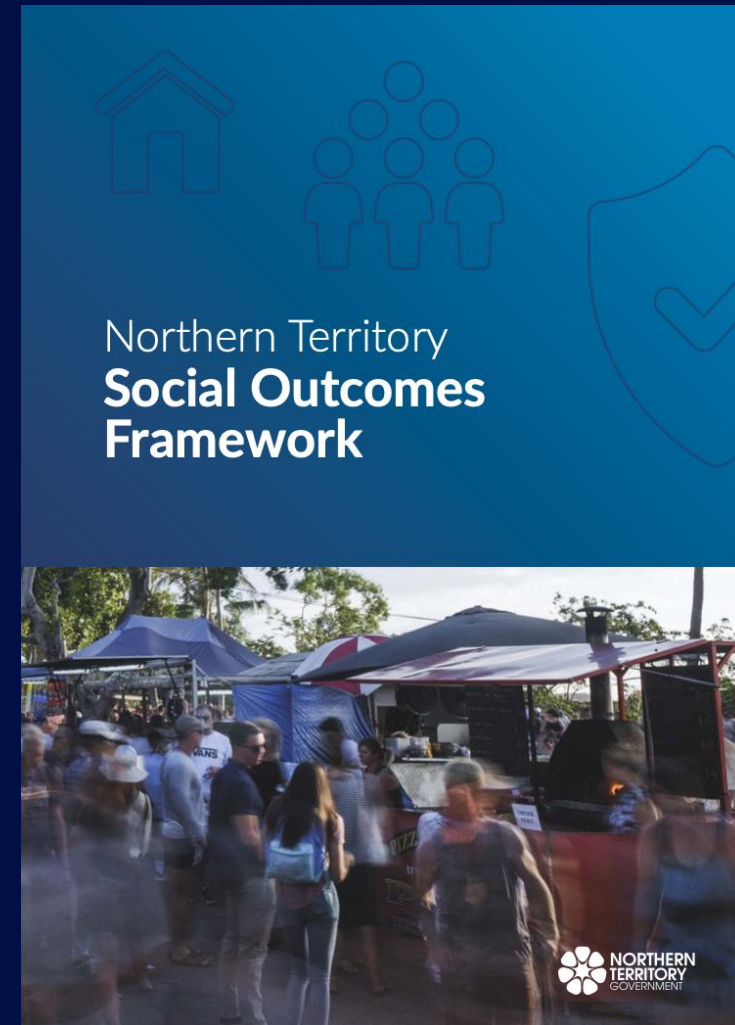
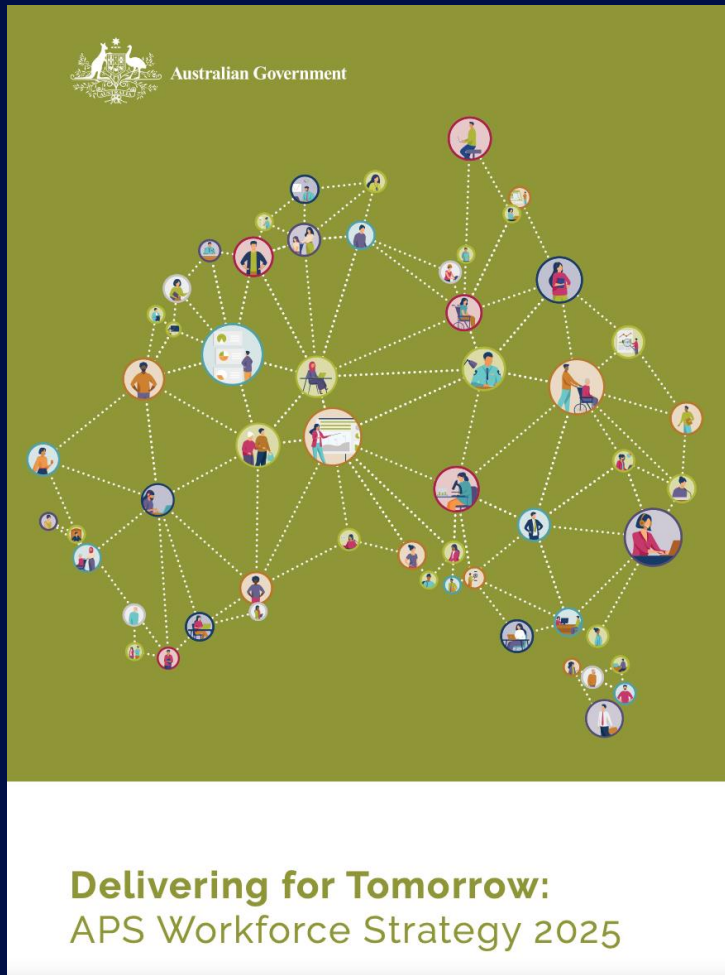
RQ2. What are the criteria of good policy package theories?

RQ3. Do publicly available outcomes frameworks and reform strategies have explicit policy package theories? Are they complete and relevant theories?

Key definitions

- Policy package
- Policy package theory

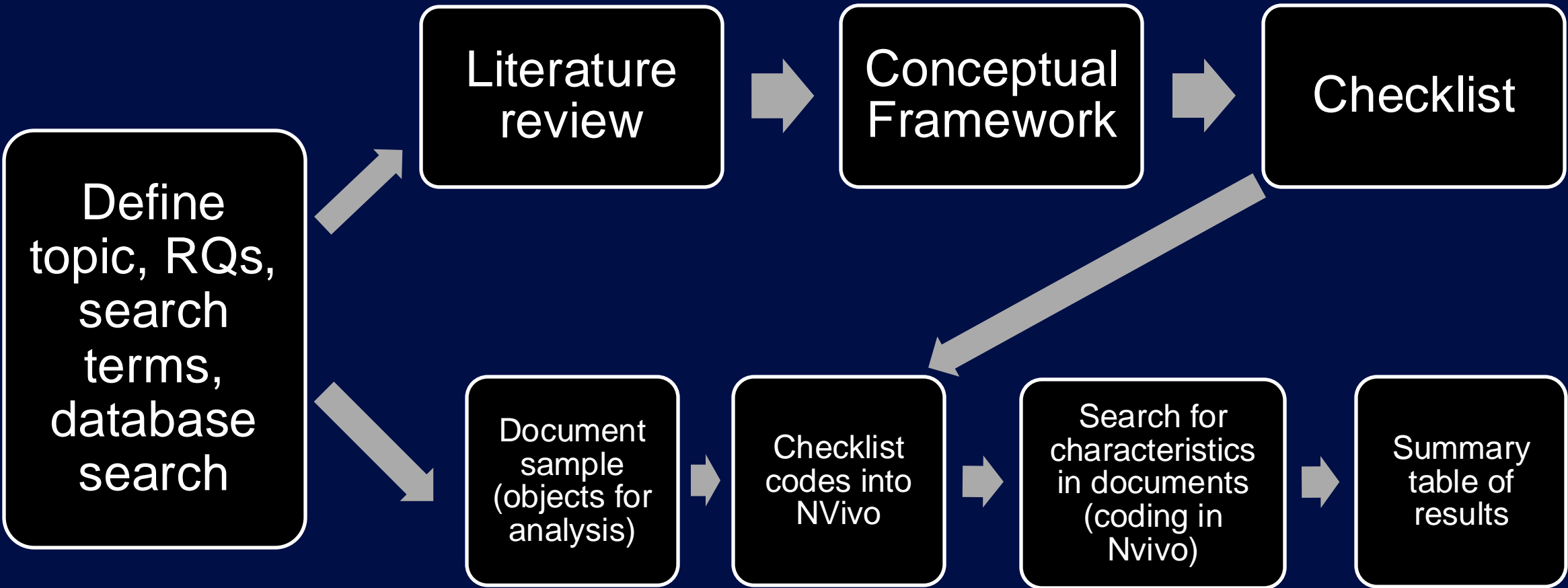
Types of documents: Outcomes Frameworks and Reform Strategies





Systematic process

Pilot and revise



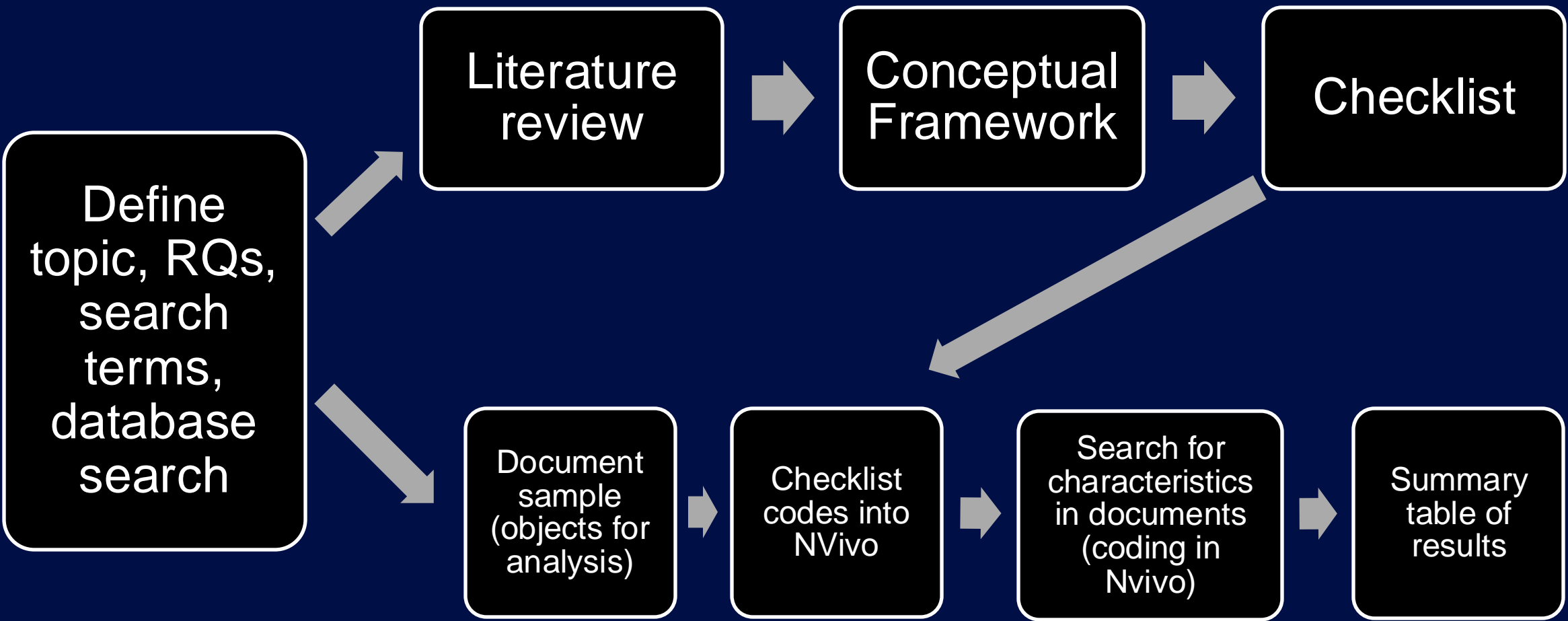
Pilot and revise



RQ1. What are the defining characteristics of policy package theories?

RQ2. What are the criteria of good policy package theories?

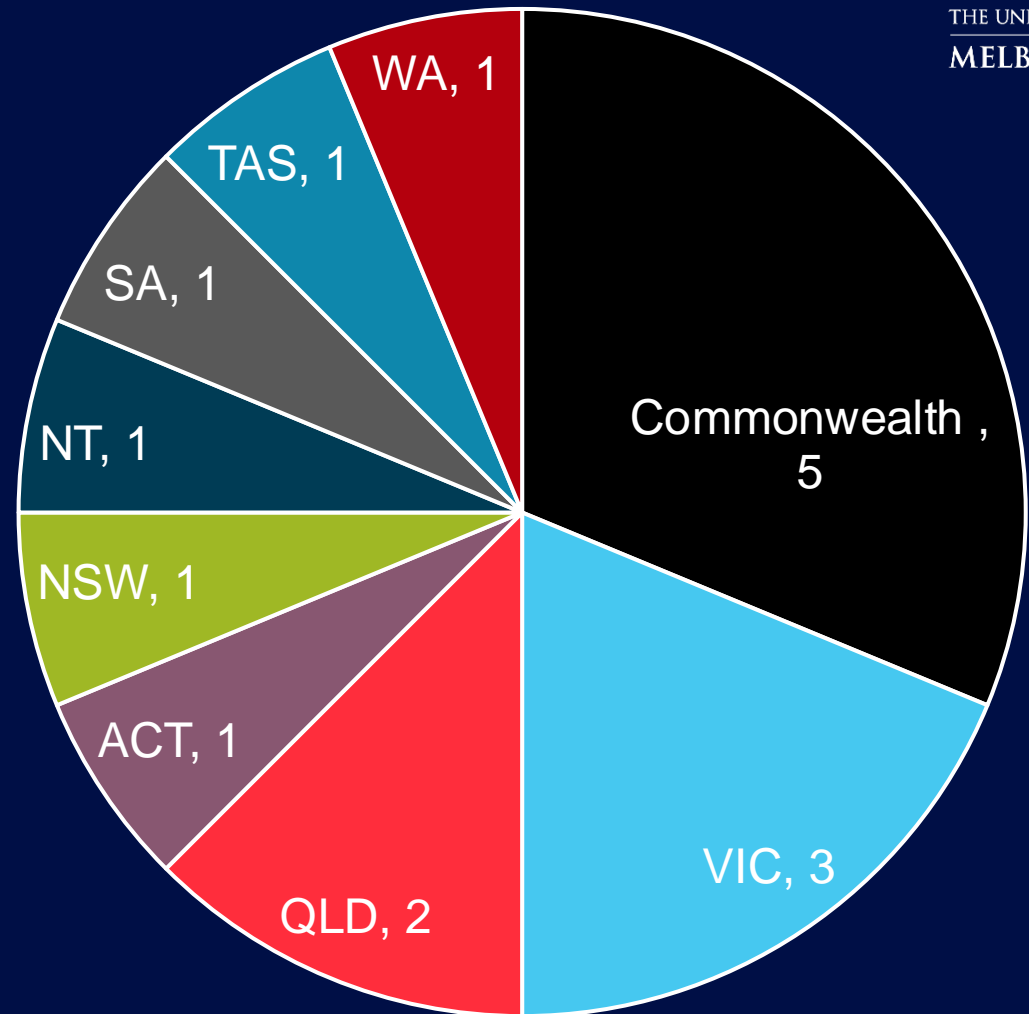
RQ3. Do publicly available outcomes frameworks/reform strategies have explicit policy package theories? Are they complete and relevant theories?





Document sample

- Purposeful group sampling (Patton, 2015) (RQ3)
 - Sixteen government reform strategies and outcomes frameworks across all jurisdictions for coverage





Conceptual framework

Characteristics for completeness:

- Boundaries (C1)
- Variables (C2)
 - *intended outcomes*
- Causal path with relationships (C3)
 - *conditions for the causal links to work*

Characteristics for relevance to public administration:

- Link to the social policy opportunity (R1)
- Purpose of the policy package theory (R2)
- Unintended outcomes (R3)



Conceptual framework with virtues – an example



Sub-characteristic	Inclusions	Virtues (goodness)
C2.1 Intended outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Outcomes to explain what success looks like (intended outcomes)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Parsimony: Few and clear definitions of outcomes, simple and comprehensible selection of outcome variables- Comprehensiveness: inclusion of all relevant factors



Checklist



Explicit theory	Completeness characteristics			Relevance characteristics		
	C1 - Boundaries	C2 - Variables	C3 - Causal path	R1 - Link to opportunity	R2 - Purpose	R3 - Potential outcomes

Characteristic/ Sub-characteristic	What to look for (including detailed observations)	References
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Explicit policy package theory

	<p>The document references policy package theory.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>The document might reference 'theory', 'program theory', 'logic model' or include a diagram which is 'logic model-like'.</i> 	
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Explicit theory example



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Delivering for Tomorrow: APS Workforce Strategy 2025



Australian Government

Change is impacting the context in which the APS delivers services to all Australians and the skills it needs across its workforce. These changes include:

Changing community demographics, different expectations of responsive and digital government services and changing trust in public institutions

Digital transformation is driving policy and service delivery responses, and the demand for rapid development and implementation of solutions tailored to business and community needs

Increasing demand for emerging and specialist skills and talent in an increasingly dynamic labour market

Changing workforce profiles, altering work structures and employee expectations of work and workplaces

Geopolitical challenges, requiring collaborative, adaptive and rapid responses by government, industry and citizens

The objective of the APS Workforce Strategy

For the APS to operate as one enterprise, with a high-performing workforce to deliver effectively and efficiently for the Government, the Parliament and the Australian public.

Our workforce will operate in accordance with the APS Values and Code of Conduct:



Impartial



Committed to Service



Accountable



Respectful



Ethical

To be positioned for the future we need our workforce to be:



Agile, collaborative, responsive and able to navigate complexity



Skilled, knowledgeable and committed to life-long learning



Maximising data and technology, and digital engagement



Professional, engaged and committed to integrity



Citizen-centred in approach, inclusive and representative of our diverse communities

Our Action Plan – To build towards our vision for the APS workforce we are committed to three areas of action:



Attract, build and retain skills, expertise and talent

We will recruit and develop the capabilities and skills needed to be a diverse, high-performing workforce that facilitates career pathways across an outcomes-focused enterprise



Embrace data, technology and flexible and responsive workforce models

We will lead digital transformation and deploy skills, expertise and talent to where it is needed to deliver the outcomes that the Government and Australians expect



Strengthen integrity and purposeful leadership

We will ensure that our leadership continues to shape our behaviour, our purpose and our delivery of outcomes, and that the APS is highly regarded for our integrity and citizen-centric focus

Diversity and inclusion underpins all actions we undertake through implementation of the Commonwealth Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Workforce Strategy, the APS Disability Employment Strategy and the Gender Equality Strategy

Development for whole-of-enterprise capabilities through Professional Streams and the APS Academy



Workforce insights and planning

To support our objectives and actions, agencies will have modern, data-driven workforce management practices integrated as a key component of business planning



Short-term measures of success

- A workforce focused on developing strong capabilities aligned to current and emerging enterprise-wide requirements
- A strong learning culture and growth mindset, and commitment to continuous development
- Compelling EVP that is well positioned to attract top Australian talent to choose a career with the APS
- One APS workforce that is seamlessly mobilised to respond to shifts in government priorities
- A high-performing workforce, actively seeking out and embracing technology development to work more innovatively and efficiently in a digital world
- Strong and capable leadership pipelines for APS leadership roles, and a commitment to succession planning and development
- An APS workforce that models and promotes a pro-integrity culture

Longer-term measures of success

- A workforce demonstrating our defined future-ready characteristics
- A highly skilled, high-performing, effective and efficient workforce evidenced through the delivery and quality of government services
- A workforce that delivers high-quality outcomes and trustworthy experiences for the community
- A workforce that maximises data and technology for decision making, policy and service design and delivery
- Flexible and responsive workforce models that are able to be deployed quickly to adapt to changes in our operating environment

Commonwealth of Australia. (2021a).

Delivering for Tomorrow: APS Workforce Strategy 2025.

https://www.apsc.gov.au/sites/default/files/2021-03/APS_Workforce_strategy.pdf



Completeness

Characteristic/ <i>Sub characteristic</i>	What to look for in the document
Boundaries (C1)	<input type="checkbox"/> What the scope of the policy package theory is <input type="checkbox"/> Whom the theory applies to and where it applies <input type="checkbox"/> When the theory applies
Variables (C2)	<input type="checkbox"/> Variables in the causal path from treatment to outcomes
- Intended outcomes (C2.1)	<input type="checkbox"/> Outcomes to explain what success looks like (intended outcomes)
Causal path with relationships (C3)	<input type="checkbox"/> Relationships between variables
- Conditions for the causal links to work (C3.1)	<input type="checkbox"/> Contextual assumptions behind the causal path



C1 boundaries example

- ACT human services system (what)
- Community members (whom)
- ACT (where)
- 2030 human services system outcomes (when)





Relevance

Characteristic/ Sub characteristic	What to look for in the document
R1 Link to the social policy opportunity	<input type="checkbox"/> Social policy opportunity <input type="checkbox"/> Intended outcomes are linked to the social policy opportunity
R2 Purpose of the policy package theory	<input type="checkbox"/> Intended use of the theory
R3 Unintended outcomes	<input type="checkbox"/> Unintended outcomes

Document analysis – summary table

	Explicit theory	Completeness characteristics			Relevance characteristics		
		C1 - Boundaries	C2 - Variables	C3 - Causal path	R1 – Link to opportunity	R2 – Purpose	R3 - Unintended outcomes
Number of documents which include	4	7	16	6	12	0	0
% of documents which include	25%	44%	100%	37.5%	75%	0%	0%
% documents which include all completeness or relevance characteristics		37.5%			0%		

Implications



Contributions

A conceptual framework with the characteristics for complete, relevant and good policy package theory

A practical checklist to assess the explicitness, completeness and relevance of policy package theory

Data!

- A description of the existing state of policy package theory in a limited sample of reform strategies and outcomes frameworks

Next steps

- Share work
- Build in First Nations perspectives
- Replicate in a larger, more diverse document sample
- Develop examples of policy package theory and using it to inform monitoring
- Explore rapid methods to build and analyse policy package theory

References: theory/program theory



Funnell, Sue & Rogers, Patricia. (2011). *Purposeful Program Theory: Effective Use of Theories of Change and Logic Models*. Jossey-Bass.

Sandberg, J. & Alvesson, M. (2021). Meanings of Theory: Clarifying Theory through Typification, *Journal of Management Studies*, 58(2), 487–516.

Wacker, J.G. (1998) A definition of theory: research guidelines for different theory-building research methods in operations management, *Journal of Operations Management*, 16 (4), 361-385.

Whetten, D. A. (1989). What Constitutes a Theoretical Contribution? *The Academy of Management Review*, 14(4), 490.

Contact, feedback and comments



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https://q.surveys.unimelb.edu.au/jfe/form/SV_e58w9fIYgCwoizA





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Thank you!
Discussion



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