

CRITERION BASED ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK

What is the Criterion Based Assessment Framework (CBAF)?

The CBAF for NGO modalities, provides a structure for analysing the Australian NGO Cooperation Program (ANCP), other DFAT funded NGO programs and comparable donor NGO modalities.

Effective funding modalities are fit for purpose and aligned to each donor’s context, purpose, and systems. No donor programs will have the same value propositions, building blocks or components and as such it is difficult to assess like for like.

The CBAF helps the Evaluation team to examine and describe different donor and program modalities.

It is not standard and it is not designed to assess the effectiveness or efficiency of individual modalities. Rather it will contribute to a comparative analysis of different program modalities by providing the team with a framework through which it will be able to:

- explore and map the various parts of each comparable modality;
- explore the relationship between the different features of each modality, and

- consider the extent to which these contribute to the effectiveness and efficiency of the modality.

How do we use the CBAF?

We have visualised the CBAF in two ways that shows the two-step process that the team will use to apply the CBAF.

Table 1 provides an indication of the foundational building blocks that we would expect to see in a NGO modality and the various components, characteristics, systems or processes that are associated with each of these.

The column on the left highlights the building blocks and the column on the right highlights examples of the types of component parts we would expect to explore.

These blocks and components emerged from the evaluation Key Issues Paper and Literature Review, which analysed NGO modalities to understand their key characteristics across a range of donor types and contexts

This shows how the team will map out the various components of NGO modalities.

Building Block	Key components and considerations
Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Makeup of a governance group – donor + sector + international development experts + partner country representatives • Management of cohort of partners – how can it be greater than the sum of parts? • Role in providing strategic advice - e.g. emerging trends, sectoral priorities etc.
Relationship between donor and NGOs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnership objectives - shared vision, priorities or donor driven • Is this a partnership on behalf of all of the donor or a sub section - e.g. NGO branch, humanitarian or thematic section • Contract or partnership agreement - level of detail and specificity • Continuity and momentum over time • Breadth of mutual knowledge of each other • Equity and use of power • Mutual accountability and shared purpose • Who holds the relationship - ie there are multiple relationships at the donor and NGO level (e.g. administrative, strategic, policy)

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Due Diligence (accreditation)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there an accreditation process or do partners have to do due diligence per activity • Do requirements e.g. around social inclusion and local capacity building lift the standards of practice in priority policy areas? • Accreditation acts as front-end risk management and due diligence process? • Proportionality of due diligence / accreditation • Eligibility requirements/restrictions
Selection (setting program policy)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Donor engagement in approval of designs/activities • Contracting and management arrangements meet donor risk management requirements • Demonstrates clear objectives for the program <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Development objectives ○ Organisation objectives (ie improve overall effectiveness of an NGO) ○ Partnership objectives ○ Public diplomacy – soft power outcomes • Market distortion & picking winners • Alignment v complementarity with donor funding priorities • Funding rounds based on donor priorities can encourage NGOs to branch out from their core strengths/mandate • Funding organisations who can write a good proposal v those with deep community connections • Setting targets ie X % funding targeting specific location, or specific beneficiaries ie women and girls
Funding allocation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding is used to extend donor bilateral and regional programs and policies? • Annual v multi-year funding • How funding is determined - e.g., RDE • Nature of funding - core/ unrestricted funding v project/ restricted funding, matched funding • Different funding types for different organisations i.e. base v full • Ability to use funds to secure alternate sources of capital ie loans, equity etc
Contract management (contracting)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Output v outcome-based contracting • Flexibility of contractual arrangements to enable NGOs and modality to be responsive
Grants Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there different types of funding for different purposes • Flexible funding is used to pilot innovative approaches, leverage other funds, work in different contexts • Flexibility of funding allows programs to pivot and adapt • Systems and processes for grant and fraud management aligned with donor policies • Is risk transferred to partners and downstream partners? • Distribution of funding (e.g. up front, in arrears, tranches, milestone based, performance based)

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Project Design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are local partnerships required? • Are there systems that support localisation - e.g. local communities are engaged in design process, core funding, measurement of capacity outcomes • Holistic designs v projects targeting single issues • Project funding v's civil society enabling space • Eligibility requirements for activities i.e. no political activity
Activity Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How engaged is the donor in activity approval ? • Demonstrates clear objectives for the activities • Alignment v complementarity with donor funding priorities • Targets i.e. X% funding targeting specific location, or groups
Program management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oversight and management of systems e.g. Smarty Grants • Organisational structure – how the donor team is structured - what do donor staff do and not do • What capabilities do donor staff have to fulfil their role - e.g. contract management or technical leadership? • What resourcing is required within the donor?
Monitoring, Evaluation, Reporting and Learning (MERL)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are data requirements commensurate to the investment? • Is data used? E.g. systems and processes enable donor(s) to aggregate and analyse data across the portfolio; systems and processes enable donor(s) to manage across the program cycle • Requirements to disaggregate beneficiary data by gender and disability status promotes social inclusion • Is there a clear purpose and targets for learning? • Is learning resourced?
Communication and public diplomacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication raises domestic awareness • Communication raises international awareness • Program is seen as a tool for public diplomacy - building touch points
Policy Dialogue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The program links to posts and policy areas • There are clear spaces for NGO engagement in policy dialogue and the role is clear - e.g. providing advice, advocacy on emerging trends, sharing evidence • The donor values the policy engagement of civil society and drives and resources this engagement
Project Closure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Systems and processes enable donor(s) to aggregate and analyse data from the project • Systems and processes enable donor(s) to manage closure of the project including risk management. • Are local communities and partner governments, posts are engaged in closure process - is there a transfer of knowledge? • How is sustainability considered

In order to explore potential efficiencies in the ANCP system, the next step is for the evaluation team to explore how these characteristics relate to each other and support or restrict the modality.

In Figure 1, the CBAF is represented as a tower that shows the building blocks of NGO modalities and illustrates the interlinked nature of these.

It highlights that in testing which of the building blocks and their component parts can be adjusted and/or removed, how these fit together and impact each other. In short it helps us to assess what must be in place or addressed within the modality (its resourcing and management requirements) to hold the program up with maximum strength and efficiency.

What the CBAF will help us to do?

When it comes to reporting, the CBAF will help us to describe to DFAT a range of options where efficiency gains in the modality can be made while concurrently highlighting the series of implications or trade-offs of these changes in order that it can make informed management decisions on the future shape and form of the modality.

Figure 1: CBAF

