



NORTHERN
LAND COUNCIL
Our Land, Our Sea, Our Life

Learning on Country

Monitoring and Evaluation Framework 2024-2028



The Learning on Country Program (LoCP) is a highly successful 'two-way' education Program. It is co-designed, planned and operated by Indigenous communities and Program partners; and includes strong Indigenous Governance and best-practice monitoring, evaluation, reporting and adaptive management.

This document provides an overview of the two-way Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) Framework that has been purpose-built for the LoCP.



Department of
Education and Training



Acronyms and Key Documents	Description
LoCP	Learning on Country Program
LLoCC	LoCP Local Committee – at each LoCP Site
LoCPSC	LoCP Indigenous Steering Committee; & LoCPSCM – Steering Committee Members
LoC PMT	LoC Program Management Team, Darwin
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
LoCP Values	LoCP Values - 10 high priority Values identified by the LLoCCs and the LoCP SC
LoCP M&E Framework	A M&E framework and supporting guidelines, purpose built for the LoCP, to allow M&E of the 10 Values to occur
LoCP Values Indicators	Performance indicators that are used in the M&E assessment process to assess the “health” of LoCP Values.

Figure 1: LLoCC Milingimbi & LoC M&E Team



Figure 2: LoCP Sites



LoCP Key Elements

The Learning on Country Program (LoCP) has been designed, developed and implemented at 14 Sites (Figure 2), guided by the following Aims, Objectives and Principles. At the centre of LoCP are 10 Indigenous Values identified by local communities (Figure 4).

Aims

1. Increase intergenerational transmission of Indigenous knowledge and customary practice
2. Develop strong partnerships between ranger groups, schools and local community to deliver a culturally responsive secondary school curriculum
3. Increase school attendance
4. Improve student learning

Key Principles

- * The primacy of Indigenous ownership and authority
- * The importance of intergenerational knowledge and culture transfer
- * Indigenous and Western knowledge systems are combined to deliver two-way teaching and learning
- * The importance of a Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) process, capable of measuring educational, social, environmental, economic and cultural outcomes.

Figure 3: LoCP All-Aboriginal Steering Committee



Figure 4: LoCP Values

Program Values



Strong Culture



Passing on Traditional Knowledge



Two-Way Education



Being on Country



Local Community Control



Looking After Country



Collaboration and Partnerships



Young people Engaged with School



Pathways and Employment



Strengths Based Teaching and Celebration

LoCP M&E Key Elements

The LoCP M&E Framework is designed to allow assessing, reporting and facilitating adaptive management of all parts of the Program. To enable this we use the following process.

M&E process

- * Monitoring – collecting data
- * Evaluation – analysing data
- * Reporting – telling the story
- * Improvement – what we do next

Indigenous Values

- * 10 Values that we monitor to see if LoCP is working for communities (Figure 4)

Indicators

- * Something about the Values that we 'measure' to detect change
For each of the 10 LoCP Values, graphics, like the one shown in Figure 4, have been developed (Figure 5).



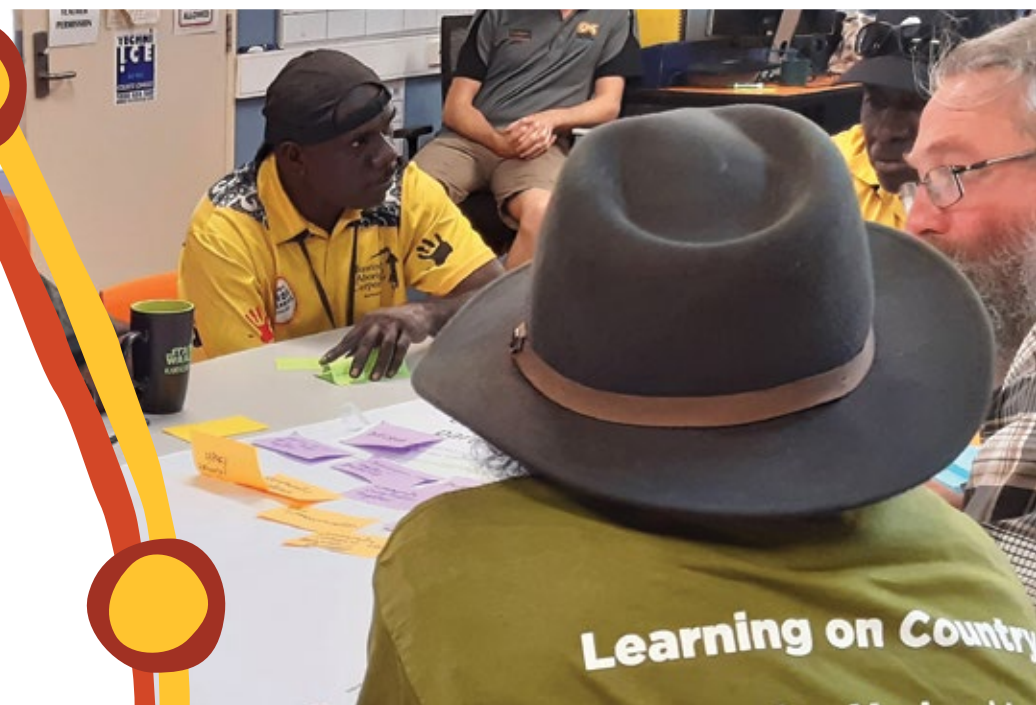
Figure 5: Value 4 – Being on Country

The LoCP M&E challenge

The LoCP has had a strong M&E process in operation since its creation in 2010. But, the type of M&E that was possible related to Aims #2, #3 and only student learning outcomes related to the standard school curriculum. This resulted in three challenges of the LoCP:

1. There was no available (“off-the-shelf”) M&E models, tools and process for planning and measuring outcomes related to Aim #1 – *inter generational transfer of Traditional knowledge*.
2. In the absence of a two-way planning process and related M&E; the key guiding principles could be applied, but the related outcomes could not be assessed and reported.
3. Finding a solution to these challenges needed to be consistent with the Aims and Principles of the LoCP.

Figure 6: Large group discussions to identify M&E elements



Building a fit-for purpose two-way M&E process

A bottom-up & collaborative approach

Between 2022 and 2024 the LoCP Project Management Team worked with 4 of the Program Sites (Maningrida, Milingimbi, Galiwin'ku, Laynhapuy Homelands) (Figure 2), ANU, and Conservation Management Consultants (the LoCP M&E Team), to develop a M&E Framework for the LoCP. Specifically, it aimed to develop an evidence-based M&E process, capable of assessing what progress was being made in achieving outcomes related to the 10 Indigenous Values (Figure 4).

Overcoming standard M&E model short-falls

As noted, “off-the-shelf” M&E models and frameworks that could include key elements like the 10 Indigenous Values ('Values'; explained below), where not available for the LoCP. Similarly, no key performance indicators (KPIs) that could be applied to the Values existed.

In response to these challenges the LoCP M&E Team, used internationally and nationally recognised planning and M&E Framework commonly used in both National Parks Planning and Indigenous Healthy Country Planning as templates.

These frameworks we selected because most people involved in the LoCP, Indigenous Rangers, teachers, NLC staff were familiar with these planning and reporting methods and related tools.

We then worked with LoCP communities and program partners to adapt these well recognise “tools” for what the LoCP was doing; and importantly the existing LoCP M&E planning and reporting process.

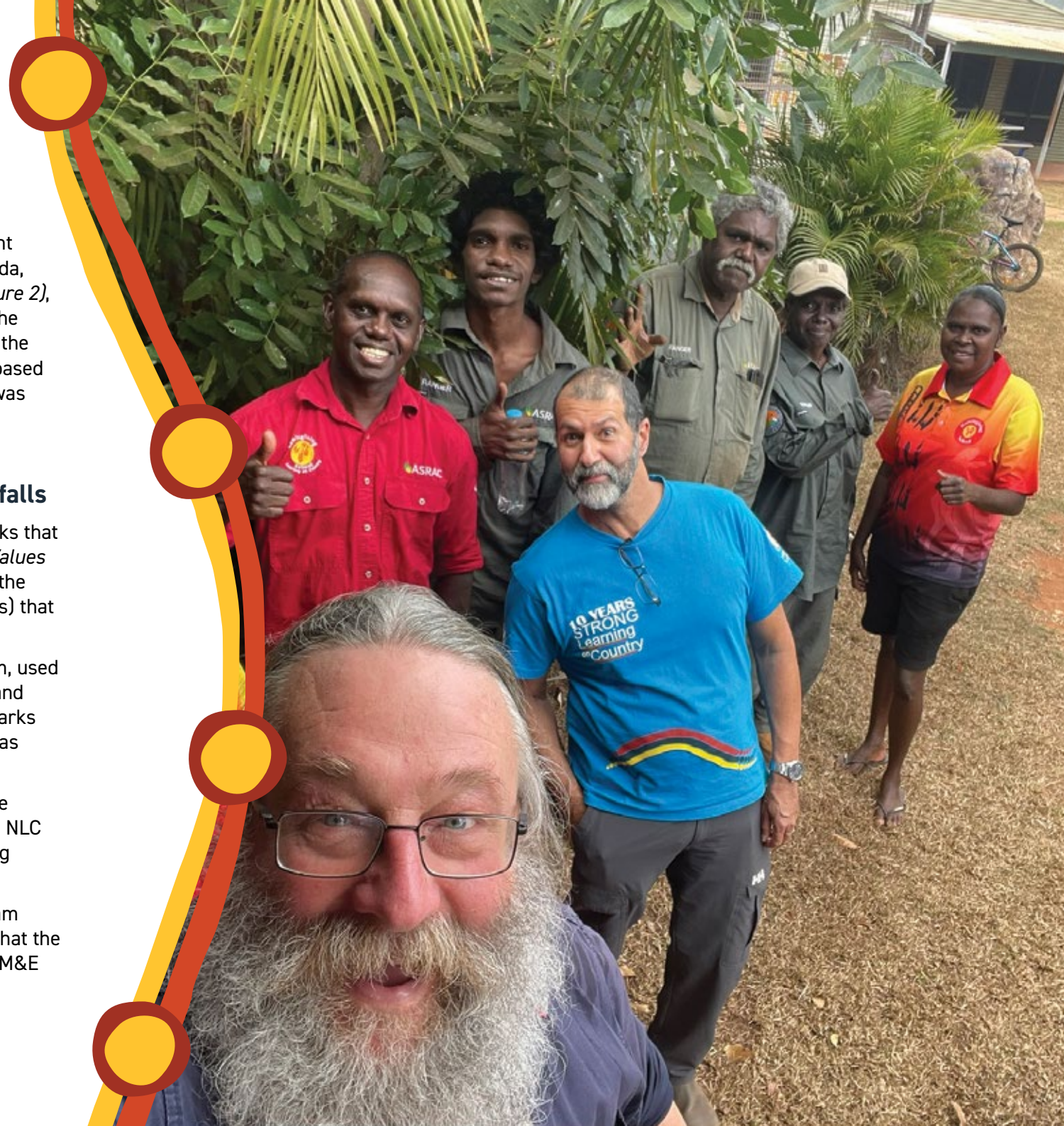


Figure 7: LoCP M&E process



This approach identifies: (1) What things are most important to the project/program/communities and stakeholders (*Values*) (Figure 4); (2) What threatens or gets in the way of outcomes related to *Values*; (3) What actions need to be taken to protect or improve or maintain the “health” (status); (4) What signposts (short-term) and indicators (longer-term) can we use to check results and progress.

To keep the workshops simple to understand, repeatable across different remote locations, and easy to record community ideas and feed-back, all M&E elements were color-coded, captured on sticky-notes and pinned on walls (Figure 7).

In general terms, these elements (even the colours) are all standard; what makes the LoCP different, is the bottom-up approach used to identify Indigenous community priorities (*Values*) and related, appropriate KPI's to assess results and progress.





Indigenous Values

The first step in designing a M&E process, was to identify what things remote communities believed were important and would assist the LoCP achieve better education and employment outcomes for their kids and their communities. These were termed *Indigenous Values* (Figure 4); but can also be thought of as community identified goals.

To identify *Values*, a series of face-to-face, in community, consultation workshops, with repeat visits, were run between 2020 – 2021. These workshops resulted in 10 *Indigenous Values* being identified and agreed by local communities and later by the LoCP Aboriginal Steering Committee (Figure 3).

Linking Values to on-ground work and outcomes

The next step was to link the *Values* (Figure 4) to the planning and operations occurring across the LoCP.

Most of the operational planning in the LoCP occurs at individual LoCP Sites with LoC Coordinators. This is then overseen by the LoC Program Management Team (LoC PMT). At each Site an Annual Operational Plan is created and submitted to the LoC PMT. From 2024, when the M&E process begins being implemented, all proposed activities in an Annual Operational Plan are linked to the *Indigenous Values*.

The cycle shown in Figure 8, when the M&E framework is fully operational, will occur annually at each LoCP Site.



Figure 8: M&E process cycle.

Assessing and reporting LoCP results and outcomes

The M&E process adds an assessment and reporting method related to progress toward achieving actions and outcomes related to the 10 Indigenous *Values*; and combining these results with the existing governance process. For this to occur, we needed to identify suitable KPI's for each *Value*.

As was the case with the *Values* – this was done using a community-led, bottom-up approach i.e. we fitted the indicators to community goals. The LoCP M&E Team has co-designed and is applying community agreed indicators, to assess the 'health' (progress toward outcomes) for each *Value* (Table 1).

Table 1: Health ratings – and what they might suggest

Value	Description & possible action
Very Good	On-ground actions being done in relation to this <i>Value</i> is working very well and delivering good results. Keep doing what you are doing in your operational plan.
Good	Good results are being achieved, but things could possibly be done better. Review last year's plan and all the information from the M&E Report; try and refine on-ground actions OR add new ones.
Fair	This rating suggests: that some progress is being made, but, either: more needs to be done; something different needs to be done; or something is getting in the way.
Poor	This rating suggests: either an action hasn't occurred in relation to this <i>Value</i> ; some issues assessed as Fair, are not being actioned; or possibly that something that it is outside what the LoCP Site control, is preventing action from happening.



LoCP Site-based M&E process

Having designed and tested the LoCP M&E framework, the assessment process works as follows:

1. A 3 day workshop is held, on-site for each Site.
2. For each *Value*, recommended Indicators, are discussed and agreed upon by the Local LoC Committee (LLOCC) members.
3. Each Indicator is, after discussion by the LLOCC, assigned one of 4 'health' ratings: Poor, Fair, Good or Very Good.
4. Two or three agreed Indicators are assigned a health rating; this rating is assigned a health rating number; and the overall health rating is an average of these results.

In addition to a health rating for each *Value*, the M&E assessment also collects the comments from the LLOCC on: Strategies, Signposts and Threats. All this information is used to review and refine operational plans.

How the overall M&E assessment process works

Between 2022 and 2024 the LoCP M&E Team worked with local communities to identify indicators/KPIs for each Indigenous *Value*. Starting in 2024, these indicators have been used to undertake some preliminary assessments of how annual on-ground actions in a Sites Operational Plans are contributing to outcomes related to the 10 Indigenous *Values*. (see *Preliminary M&E Results*).

Value: Strong Culture - health rating

Indicators	Health Rating
1: Cultural Protocols	Very Good
3: Traditional Knowledge	Very Good
6: Cultural Identity	Fair
Strong Culture health rating	Good

Table 2: Example of a Value's health rating

Guidelines that explain the LoCP M&E Framework, the related data collection 'tools' and analysis and the possible use of the results has been rolled-out to half the LoCP Sites.

Each LoCP Site has a Local LoC Committee ('LLOCC'; local Indigenous governance body) and Local LoCP Coordinator; together they have played a key-role in developing all aspects of the LoCP, including the M&E elements, such as *Values*, Indicators and Operational Plans.

M&E assessments, will be done annually for each LoCP Site. Because the focus of the LoCP M&E is on assessing progress and outcomes related to indigenous *Values*, the LLOCC's also plays a lead-role in the M&E assessment process; which managed by the LoC PMT.

The overall health ratings for each *Value* at a given Site is prepared at the end of each M&E Assessment Workshop (Table 2). An Annual M&E Report; which also includes Threats, Actions, Strategies and Signposts identified by the LLOCC during the assessment process, for each *Value*.

Average Rating

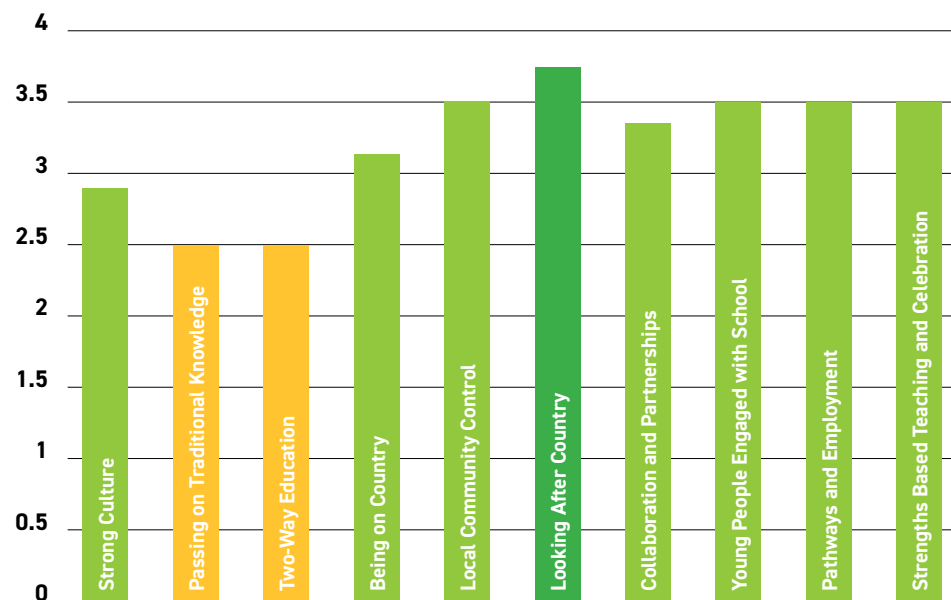


Figure 9: Example of Overall health for all Values at a given Site

This M&E assessment process was repeated for all of the Values. The results can be used to show the "health" of all Values at a Site (Figure 9). These results in combination with the Indicator results, provide a feedback loop for the review of Annual Operational Plans.

Preliminary M&E results

To date the LoCP M&E process has been rolled-out at almost half the Sites; and has been well received, and well understood, by Coordinators and LLOCC's at those sites. The preliminary M&E results are good, however, it is expected it will take several years before all Sites have the new M&E Framework incorporated into standard operational planning processes. Preliminary results from some Sites will start being incorporated into monitoring and reporting starting in 2026.

M&E Framework Rollout Timeline

The LoCP M&E Framework, assessment tools and reporting of results, has been 3 years in the making; and was only possible because a decade of work done prior to 2023.



2012

2015



2018

2019



2020-24

2023-24

LOCP DEVELOPMENT

- * Developing & growing LoCP
- * 4 to 14 sites

ID M&E ISSUE

- * 10 years of LoCP
- * LoC transfers to NLC;

CO-DESIGN

- * LoCP *Values* created
- * M&E Framework Development Project

DEVELOP

- * All Indigenous LoC Steering Committee formed; LoC *Values* created



Lessons Learnt

- * Western (balanda) planning, reporting and adaptive management methods can be applied to two-way / bottom-up programs/ projects.
- * But...it takes time to truly apply a bottom-up, Indigenous-led, co-design process.
- * It takes more time than is typically allowed; requires building of strong relationships and trust; and this requires long-term, well-funded programs/projects.
- * Like all programs/projects addressing complex, long-standing problems, it will take time to fully deliver meaningful outcomes.
- * The M&E Framework we are rolling out allows regular checks on progress and outcomes, while allowing longer-term community aims to be monitored and reported on.
- * This allows best practice methods such as evidence-based monitoring and reporting, and adaptive management to be applied; while at the same time, improving education and employment outcomes for remote Aboriginal communities.
- * Starting in 2026, the M&E process allows the LoCP to monitor and report on progress and outcomes related to the 10 Indigenous *Values*.

2024-26

2027-28

2030

TEST

TRAIN

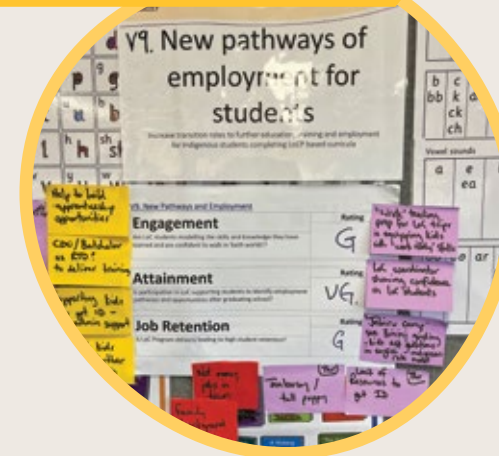
ADOPT

SOP

- * M&E Rollout Project Part 1



- * M&E Rollout Project Part 2





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