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| Draft For BETA testing  Outcomes Assurance Assessment  [name of policy or program] |

DEPARTMENT NAME

Version

[DATE Last Updated: ]

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Document Control

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This table should be regularly updated. It is likely at the start that there will be many risks. Over time and with effective governance the number of risks should reduce.

# Outcomes Assurance statement

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Department/ Agency | [insert] |
| **Branch/ Division** | **[insert]** |
| **Name of policy/ Program** | **[insert]** |
| **Date of assessment** | **[insert]** |
| The probability that the program is valid is | [insert probability] |
| The number of premises is | [insert number of necessary conditions (outputs and assumptions) and sufficient conditions (outcomes)] |
| The sum of risks to premises (likelihood x consequence) is | [insert sum] |
| The average risk (likelihood x consequence) to a premise is | [insert average] |
| The overall level of Outcomes Assurance that can be provided for this policy or project is | **Outcomes Highly Likely/ Outcomes Likely/ Outcomes Possible/ Outcomes Unlikely/ Outcomes Highly Unlikely** |

## Validity Assessment

1. If all the outputs and assumptions held, what is the likelihood that each outcomes(s) or sufficient conditions(s) would follow?
2. deliberations of validity of the proposition

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Insert date/ version of proposition | Average probability  (0-1) | Average confidence in probability rating (0-1) | Reasons for lower estimates |
| Outcome 1 | .95 | .78 |  |
| Outcome 2 | .98 | .65 |  |
| Outcome 3 | .65 | .55 |  |
| Average |  |  |  |

## Groundedness Assessment

1. What is the likelihood that each premise in the proposition does not hold in the contexts in which our actions are undertaken?
2. deliberations of well GROUNDEDNESS of the proposition

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Premise | Probability of condition holding (0-1) | Average confidence in probability rating (0-1) | Reasons for lower estimates |
| **Outputs** (Necessary Conditions) |  |  | | |  |
| Premise 1 |  |  | | |  |
| Premise 2 |  |  | | |  |
| Premise 3 |  |  | | |  |
| Premise 4 |  |  | | |  |
| Premise 5 |  |  | | |  |
| **Assumptions** (Necessary conditions) |  |  | | |  |
| Assumption 1 |  |  | | |  |
| Assumption 2 |  |  | | |  |
| Assumption 3 |  |  | | |  |
| **Count** |  |  | | |  |
| **Average** |  |  | | |  |

## Management Response

A response to the Outcomes Assurance Statement.

# Background

## Policy Context

### Problem DEFINITION or Need for a policy or program

# Policy or program Name

## Objectives of the policy or program

### Strategic Impacts (Contingent conditions)

These are the impacts towards which the program must contribute to be of value to our overall organisational strategy or corporate plan. We cannot provide assurance these impacts will occur in full as they are contingent on external factors outside out control.

### Intended outcomes (Sufficient conditions)

These are the conditions or outcomes that the program must be sufficient for achieving. We provide assurance that these conditions will occur. Write these in the form of a condition statement with a number and timeframe. For example xx, people obtain employment that lasts for 13 weeks by the end of December 2025.

|  |
| --- |
| Intended outcomes (sufficient conditions). Usually one, or two, sometimes three, rarely more than that. |
|  |
|  |
|  |

### Intended Outputs (Necessary conditions)

These are the outputs determined to be necessary in order to bring about the intended outcomes.

|  |
| --- |
| Intended outputs (necessary conditions). Usually, 5-15 key condition statements. |
|  |
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### Actions (Efforts to change conditions)

These are the inputs or activities that we will use to generate our outputs.

### Assumptions (Assumed conditions)

These are the conditions that we rely on for our actions to lead to outputs, and our outputs to lead to outcomes, that we rely on, but are not doing anything to bring about, and there is some level of uncertainty whether we can rely on them.[[1]](#footnote-1) Almost any plan can be made to look sound when sufficient assumptions are made. Unfounded assumptions are the proximal cause of many great failed plans.

Of course, we make countless assumptions every day that we don’t need to attend to. These assumptions may range from relatively safe, to ‘heroic’. Think of the conditions you are relying on to be in place but are not 100% you can actually rely.

|  |
| --- |
| Assumptions about the operating context |
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|  |
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|  |

There are three options in the face of unfounded or unrealistic assumptions. The first is to accept the assumption and the associated risk. The second is to plan additional efforts so the assumption is no longer an assumption but a necessary condition that results from action. The third is to plan a different action where the assumption is no longer necessary.

## Proposition (Program) Design Logic

The following diagram should be read from bottom to top. It sets out the actions and conditions that together provide the proposition to be evaluated.

[insert program design logic diagram here, with date and version number]

## Justification (warrants)

A sound program logic must have reasons or warrants to accept it is valid. That the claims we are making about our efforts should be accepted. This requires justification. The first set of reasons you will need are the ones that justify why our actions and assumptions will lead to the necessary conditions. These may be fairly straight forward and uncontested, or they might be very contested and border on the ideological. These are sometimes referred to as ‘theories of change’.

### Reasons to engage in Actions

[State the reasons or warrants as to why we should accept that if all actions are implemented as intended then necessary conditions will be brought about.]

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| If we  [insert each action] | Then we will bring about [insert output or outcome] | Because  [Insert reasons] |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
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|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
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Revise the table above to ensure all actions, outputs and outcomes that are significant enough to appear in your program design logic are addressed in the table.

### Reasons to expect outcomes

[State the reasons or warrants as to why we should accept that if all Necessary Conditions are implemented as intended then sufficient conditions will be brought about.]

Now fill in the next table to provide the reasons why if we bring about all the necessary conditions and the assumptions hold that we can expect the sufficient condition to occur. There is only one row in this table. What you come up with could be considered a ‘theory of change’[[2]](#footnote-2), but it really is just a claim supported by reasons.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Overall, if we  [list all the necessary conditions and the assumptions] | Then we will bring about [insert the sufficient condition(s) | Because  [Insert reasons] |
|  |  |  |

### REASONS for NECESSITY

Not every action you may actually be necessary for an outcome. You may also wish to provide further justification as to why each action and associated condition (output or outcome) is *actually* necessary for overall success.

Sometimes we propose things that are redundant or not needed in order to generate an outcome. Often this may not be apparent at the start, may only become apparent after empirical data is collected as part of implementation, but it is important to ask whenever possible, is that action actually necessary?

You should consider efficiency form the outset, but it will be managed as a risk as part of *Outcomes Assurance Risk Management Strategy*.

# About

The practice of Outcomes Assurance is built on the theory of Propositional Evaluation.

[www.propositionalevaluation.org](http://www.propositionalevaluation.org)

Propositional Evaluation treats programs as propositions about the value of a course of action. It conceives of evaluation as a process of seeking to identify, mitigate and manage risks to a proposed or actual course of action delivering its intended outcomes.

There are three key steps to doing this.

* Develop a Propositional Design Logic diagram (see website)
* Complete an Outcome Assurance Assessment (this document)
* Develop an *Outcomes Assurance Risk Management Strategy* to identify and then manage the 10 key risks to program failure (see website).

The practice of Outcomes Assurance s not set and forget. Each step should be revisited, and reassessments done whenever substantial new information is available to ensure that the outcomes can remain assured.

Please provide any comments or suggestions on this template through the website.

## Drafting notes

The steps for completing this template are as follows.

1. Create a group of SMEs, proponents, or other key stakeholders with knowledge of and interest in the proposition (pr program).
2. In consultation with this group develop content for a Propositional Design Logic Diagram and draft a diagram (see website for steps on setting out a proposition and a sample template for the diagram) – Section 3.
3. Convene the group and ask each member to provide a probability rating between 0 – 1 of the validity of the proposition, i.e., a response to Question 1. Then record the average rating of the group for each outcome in Table 1. Include reasons for any lower estimates. See Section 1.1.
4. Convene the group and ask each member to provide a probability rating between 0 – 1 of the well groundedness of each premise in the proposition, i.e., a response to Question 2. Then record the average rating of the group for each premise in Table 2. Include reasons for any lower estimates. See Section 1.2.
5. Take the data from Tables 1 & 2 and Complete the Outcome Assurance Statement (Section 1).
6. Obtain a management response to the assessment – Section 1.3.
7. Use this information to develop an *Outcomes Assurance Risk Management Strategy* (template under development).

1. Policies, programs and plans tend not to ‘travel well’ because of unfounded assumptions. That is, the unfounded assumption that because a set of actions that worked ‘there’, for ‘them’ will work ‘here’ for ‘us’, with no great efforts made to provide justification or warrants provided for the claim beyond the shaky assumption that what happened in the past is a good indicator of the future. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. It is crucial to distinguish theories that provide reasons to accept a program will work from theories in the sense that the whole plan is some kind of theory, or likely to work in other times and places. Failure to distinguish the theories that underpin action from the set of actions themselves has led us to search for programs ‘that work’ in the same sense that we seek for theories that ‘are true’ – when it’s only the component parts or ‘mechanisms’ in specific ‘contexts’, that work while policies and programs a dynamic complex and adaptive such that they that resist being categorised as good or bad across time and space. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)